

XXVI European Society for Rural Sociology Congress 2015

FINAL PAPER SUBMISSION

Title: The role of the business logic for growing value chains of organic food – first results of an international case study analysis

Abstract No. 0295

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Abstract

Values-based food chains link farmers, processors, wholesale and retail traders in a way that the end-consumer receives a product with additional quality attributes such as regionality, fair trade, high animal welfare or nature conservation standards. The transmission of such additional values which are beyond general food standards requires chain specific objectives and well-targeted management strategies. When objectives and strategies follow an overarching logic, all businesses/initiatives can maintain the additional values of food products from field to fork.

The business logic provides the 'guideline' matching management of chain partners with core objectives. The paper is based on the hypothesis that the existence of an overarching business logic is a precondition for the transmission of specific quality attributes through the food chain. The theory behind the business logic is presented; with a focus on its role during growth processes. The theoretical framework is tested on 18 case studies representing a variety of well-established mid-scale businesses, initiatives and chains in nine countries.

Results show that all studied businesses/initiatives have consistent business logics for their internal organisation and cooperation and communication in the specific chain. The business logic ensures the effective value transmission based on e.g. controlling and information measures. However, the particular quality attributes - and identity - of the end-consumer product can get lost when expanding intermediates, mills or slaughterhouses, market lots to traders who do not share the same business logic. These results indicate that the business logic concept helps to identify success factors for growing values-based food processing and marketing.

ProceedingsVersion [ESRS2015_0295_proceedingsversion-June.pdf](#)

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Categories 2 Post neoliberal food transitions

Presentation Oral

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