

**ORGANIC LIMITED:
THE CORPORATE RISE AND SPECTACULAR CHANGE
IN THE CANADIAN AND AMERICAN
ORGANIC FOOD SECTORS**

By

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ABSTRACT

The twentieth century saw the rise of industrialized food production in North America. In many cases, industrialized agriculture produces negative social and ecological effects. In response to the exploitive practices of industrialized agriculture, a number of counter movements emerged in the mid twentieth century, including the organic farming movement. The principles and practices of organic agriculture presented an alternative form of food production, distribution and consumption that accounted for the social and ecological costs associated with feeding mass populations.

Over the last twenty years, the organic food sector has seen phenomenal growth, that challenges organic's status as a counter-movement. Food safety issues have emerged the industrialized, globalized food system prompting concerned consumers to seek alternatives, contributing to organic food's rapid market expansion. As a result of its remarkable market growth, new actors have entered the organic food sector and organic food is now part of policies and regulatory frameworks of many OECD countries. Changes in both the structure of the organic food sector and the actors involved in it have challenged organic's standing as a counter-movement to the industrialized food system, and what it means for a food to be defined as 'organic'.

This thesis examines the changing political economy of the organic food sector in Canada and the US over the past twenty years. It looks at the corporatization of the organic food sector and the insertion of organic into various levels of governance, including national policy-making agendas and global trade agreements. As a result of these changes it is argued that organic has fundamentally moved away from its original status as a challenge to the status quo, and is now part of the global food regime that it once so adamantly opposed and sought to replace. By examining the pressures for changing the social and ecological principles of the organic movement, it is shown that it has effectively shifted from a social movement to an advocacy network.

Keywords: organic food, corporatization, social movements, international trade

Subject Headings: political economy, agriculture and food, social movements

DEDICATION

To my parents, Patricia and Ralph Clark. Without their unwavering support and love, this would not have been possible.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ANT	Actor Network Theory
AofA	Agreement of Agriculture
AAFC	Agriculture and Agro-Food Canada
BEL	Belgium
CAL	California
CCOF	California Certified Organic Farmers
CAN	Canada
CGSB	Canadian General Standards Board
CFIA	Canadian Food Inspection Agency
CNSOA	Canadian National Standards for Organic Agriculture
COAB	Canadian Organic Advisory Board
COG	Canadian Organic Growers
COPS	Canadian Organic Production Systems
COUP	Canadian Organic Unity Project
CS	Celestial Seasonings
COABC	Certified Organic Association of British Columbia
Codex	Codex Alimentarius Commission
CAP	Common Agricultural Policy
CSA	Community Supported Agriculture
CUSFTA	Canada-United States Free Trade Agreement
DDT	Dichloro-Diphenyl-Trichloro-ethane
EPA	Environmental Protection Agency (US)
EEC	European Economic Community
EU	European Union
FLO	Fair Trade Labelling Organization
FAO/WHO	Food and Agriculture Organization/World Health Organization
FDA	Food and Drug Administration (US)
FRA	France
FTAA	Free Trade Agreement of the Americas
GATS	General Agreement on Trade in Services
GATT	General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade
GMO	Genetically Modified Organism
GER	Germany
IBS	International Basic Standards for Organic Production and Processing
IFOAM	International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements
ILO	International Labour Organization
IMF	International Monetary Fund
ISEAL	International Social and Environmental Accreditation and Labelling Alliance
ISO	International Organization of Standardization
MEN	Mother Earth News
NFU	National Farmer's Union
NOP	National Organic Programme

NOS	National Organic Standards
NOSB	National Organic Standards Board
NOFA	Natural Organic Farmers Association
NSOA	National Standards for Organic Agriculture
NL	Netherlands
NSMs	New Social Movements
NYT	New York Times
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organizations
NTB	Non-Tariff Barrier
NAFTA	North American Free Trade Agreement
OAF	Organic Agro-Food
OCA	Organic Consumers Association
ORC	Organic Regulatory Committee
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperative Development
OFPA	Organic Food Production Act
OFFANA	Organic Foods Production Association of North America
OG	Organic Gardening magazine
OGF	Organic Gardening and Farming magazine
OTA	Organic Trade Association
PPMs	Production and Processing Methods
SPS	Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures
SCIC	Saskatchewan Council for International Cooperation
SCC	Standards Council of Canada
SOEL	Shiftung Okologie & Landbau (the Foundation of Ecology and Agriculture)
TBT	Agreement on Technical Barriers to Trade
TRIPs	Trade-Related Intellectual Property Rights
TAN	Transnational Advocacy Network
TNC	Transnational Corporation
UK	United Kingdom
UNCTAD	United Nations Committee on Trade and Development
US	United States of America
USDA	United States Department of Agriculture
USDL	United States Department of Labor
USDS	United States Department of Statistics
WEC	The Whole Earth Catalog
WFM	WholeFoods Markets
WTO	World Trade Organization

CHAPTER: 1 INTRODUCTION

When I think about organic farming I think family farm, I think small scale, I think hedgerows and compost piles and battered pick-up trucks. I don't think migrant laborers, combines, thousands of acres of broccoli reaching clear to the horizon.

Michael Pollan,
Behind the Organic Industrial Complex, 2001

Why Study Organic Food?

The term *organic* has been used as an adjective to refer to something that is pure, unprocessed and natural. Food, for the vast majority of human history was organically produced. Today, it is an alternative system of agro-food production in Canada and in the United States (US). Guiding those who believe that there are serious problems with the industrialized food system is an 'organic philosophy', which emphasizes the importance of environmental sustainability, attempts to ensure that the value and decision-making stays with the producer and encourages "...local knowledge and a sense of place" (Vos, 2000:251; Buttel, 1997:354-56; Guthman, 2001). The organic philosophy rejects most of the norms and practices of conventional, industrial food production. Conventional food systems do not account for the social and environmental costs of food production, which include the use of cheap labour and the externalization of the environmental costs. Organic agriculture on the other hand, originally sought to internalize and minimize social and environmental costs of the production processes.

What began as a small, concentrated group of dedicated men and women, who produced food in a holistic and socially responsible manner, is today a fast growing globalized industry. The production and distribution of organic food is a global multi-billion dollar business, which has experienced an annual growth rate of 15-20% over the

last ten years (OECD, 2003b:17). The world retail market for organic food grew from \$10 billion¹ in 1997 to \$25 billion in 2003, yet is still considered a niche market, only constituting 1-3% of global food sales (Millstone and Lang, 2003:88; Sahota, 2005:19). Nevertheless, the *Food and Agriculture Organization* (FAO) predicts that global sales of organic products will be worth nearly \$91 billion by 2010 (FAO, 2003). The North American market for organic food was worth \$13 billion in 2004 (Sahota, 2006:70). In 2004, retail sales of organic food and drink in Canada grew to \$900 million from \$750 million two years prior (Sahota, 2004:23; Sahota, 2006:70), while the sale of organic products in the American market increased from \$12 billion in 2002 to \$14.5 billion in 2005 (Yussefi, 2006:27) and Mexico's annual organic exports are valued at \$100 million (Lernourd and Piovano, 2004:138).

Not only are the sales of organic food increasing in Canada and the US, but the amount of land devoted to organic agriculture is on the rise as well (Table 1.1). Canada's percentage of land devoted to organic agriculture between 2000 and 2005 increased by 224%, while in the US the number of hectares devoted to organic agriculture during the same period of time increased by almost 100%.

Table 1.1: Total Hectares (in thousands) Devoted to Organic Agriculture (cropland and pasture)

Year	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Canada	164	188	340	430	477	531
US	821	949	780	950	1 230	1 641

Sources: Green and Kremen, 2003, USDA, 2006; Macey, 2004:23

There has also been a significant increase in the number of organic producers in Canada and the US (Table 1.2). The number of producers in Canada between 2000-2005

¹ Figures are in US dollars unless otherwise stated.

increased by approximately 21%, while in the US, during the same time period, the number of organic producers increased by almost 29%.

Table 1.2: Total Number of Organic Producers

Year	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Canada	2981	3236	3120	3317	3670	3618
US	6592	6949	7323	8035	8021	8493

Sources: Willer and Yussefi, eds. *The World of Organic Agriculture, 2000-2005*

Of the growing number of organic producers, a significant proportion is female. In 2001, 31% of organic producers in Canada are female, compared with the national average for conventional agriculture of 26% (Macey, 2007). Although statistics from the US are limited and unevenly collected, one organic farming organization reports that between 1993-2003, approximately 22% of organic producers were women, compared to 29% in conventional farming (OFRF, 2003). Yet despite the recent and spectacular growth in both land devoted to organic agriculture and the number of people practicing organic techniques, domestic producers in both Canada and the US continue to struggle to keep up with exploding consumer demand for organic food products (Organic Monitor, 2005c).

So what is driving the recent economic growth in organic food and agriculture? Major drivers of the expansion of the organic food sector in Canada and the US include consumers' growing concern over the environmental damage caused by conventional agriculture and rising fears regarding food safety in the global food supply (Daly, 1995; FAO, 2003; OECD, 2003b). The growing media attention to environmental damage and global warming has drawn increased awareness from concerned consumers. The globally integrated food system is understood by some scientists as one of the biggest producers of greenhouse gases and environmental damage because of its reliance on non-renewable resources to fuel global transportation systems and to produce oil-derived synthetic

fertilizers and pesticides (Bentley and Baker, 2005). In addition to attributing environmental damage to globalized agriculture, there is also growing concern over the use of biotechnology in the food system (Doyle, 1985; Fowler and Mooney, 1990; Howard, 2000; Altieri, 2001). For example, a report from the *North American Commission for Environmental Cooperation* shows that many of Mexico's heritage strains of maize are now contaminated with *Genetically Modified Organisms* (GMOs), threatening the biodiversity of Mexico's most culturally and economically important staple (CEC, 2004). Industrialized meat production and inhumane factory farms, have also gained public attention, as intensive farming techniques have been linked to polluted eco-systems, animal cruelty, food-borne pathogens and are a major contributor to the spread of disease among livestock, such as BSE (Kneen, 1999; Singer and Mason, 2006).

Despite the series of global and national regulations and standards meant to reduce the instances and spread of food borne diseases, the globalized food system is continually found to be the cause of the spread of contaminated food. Over the last ten years there have been numerous examples of food contaminations in the globalized food system that in some cases have resulted in human deaths; for example, the BSE crisis in Europe in the 1990s, and later in North America in the 2000s, foot and mouth disease in Europe, bird flu in Asia, contaminations in Chinese food imports, and numerous instances of salmonella and E.coli in the North American food system (Nestle, 2004). In 2007, the World Health Organization/Food and Agriculture Organization (WHO/FAO) reports that 30% of the population in industrialized countries suffers from food borne illnesses each year. In the US, 76 million cases of food borne illnesses occur every year (WHO, 2007). Instead of spreading affluence, the globally integrated food system based on

industrialized modes of production has increased environmental degradation and the spread of food borne illnesses.

In addition to the environmental and food safety issues that the globalized food system is responsible for, the social consequences of a food system based on neo-liberal principles of trade that replaced the Bretton Woods system beginning in the 1980s, are now becoming apparent. Millions of small-scale farmers have been displaced, forced to migrate to urban centres to seek employment (Otero, 1991; Friedmann, 1993; Friedmann, 1995:17). Those who continue to farm despite the challenges are in some cases forced to produce cash crops for export, instead of food for local markets (Barrientos et al., 1999; Shiva et al., 2003). Many of the small-scale family farms that fed growing populations in Canada and the US throughout the twentieth century are now gone, having been absorbed into bigger corporate farms because of the advancement of ‘green revolution’ technologies which were later paired with neo-liberal policy reforms (Dalhberg, 1979; Kloppenburg, 1988). Today, seasonal migrant workers perform most of the agricultural labour on farms in the US (and to a lesser extent in Canada), and many of these people are forced to find work because of poor economic circumstances in the ‘global south’ in hopes of improving their families’ lives (Collins, 1995).

Given the problems caused by the industrialized and globalized food system, the growth of the organic food sector, with its early principles and practices, might be thought to present a real and growing challenge and resistance to conventional food production. However, such hope must be cautioned against since the very nature of the organic food sector’s development and expansion threatens its original meaning and orientation.

Thus, the early twenty-first century sees the organic food sector at a highly paradoxical moment in its history. Organic agriculture has experienced a bifurcation, where, on one hand, organic agriculture is usually associated with small-scale, locally sustainable agro-food production outside of the industrialized food system; while on the other, it is increasingly becoming part of the global food regime and large-scale, capital-intensive, agribusinesses that incorporate supply, production and processing capacities into their business activities. As a result, two different systems of producing organic food now coexist, yet both purport to be producing 'organic' products. As Julie Guthman states,

...the organic food sector is increasingly bifurcated into two very different systems of provision: one producing lower cost and/or processed organic food...appealing to meanings of health and safety; the other producing higher value produce in direct markets and appealing to meanings of organicism, political change, and novelty...Practitioners in both systems are able to claim the moral high ground (Guthman, 2001:10).

The debate in social science studies of organic agriculture, labelled the 'conventionalization' vs. 'differentiation' debate, is well fleshed out in the October 2001 volume of *Sociologica Ruralis* where leading scholars on both sides, voice their arguments (see *Sociologica Ruralis*, 41.4, 2001). Generally, the differentiation side of the debate presents the claim that in the European context, and a number of other local contexts, organic agriculture continues to remain a distinct form of resistance to industrialized modes of production. In doing this it maintains a commitment to a different set of values despite the entry of conventional corporate actors into the organic food sector (Cacek and Langner, 1986; Lampkin and Padel eds., 1994; Henderson, 1998; Goodman, 2000; Hall and Mogyorody, 2001; Campbell and Liepins, 2001; Duram, 2005;

Fromartz, 2006). This group of scholars defends the position that as markets for organic food products develop, it is the growing discontent with the industrialized food system that assures the ongoing existence of organic agriculture as a counter-hegemonic force (Atkins and Bowler, 2001; Wilkinson, 2007). Others, making up the 'conventionalization' side of the debate, claim that the entry of conventional corporate actors into the organic sector has transformed organic agriculture such that it now resembles the practices of conventional forms of food production (Clunies-Ross, 1990; Tovey 1997; Buck et al., 1997; Guthman, 2004; Shreck et al., 2006). This study traces the development of the organic food sectors in Canada and the US, beginning in the early twentieth century, to gain a clearer understanding of what happens to a movement premised on challenging the status quo when it is exposed to the processes of globalization and the forces of corporate activity. By using a wide variety of sources, spanning multiple disciplines, this thesis examines the changing political economy of the organic food sector in Canada and the US; two countries which have a long, interdependent, and sometimes contentious relationship when it comes to food and agriculture policies and trade (Cohn, 1990).

Studies of national or regional contexts often focus their attention on the two biggest markets for organic food -- the European Union (EU) and the US. The EU market for organic products began to develop in the 1980s, while the American market for organic products began to expand in the mid 1990s. The European and North American markets have developed differently, partially because of the different interpretations of the cultural and social value of food production of their domestic populations. The EU

emphasizes the ‘multifunctionality’² of agriculture in its public policies more so than the US or Canada (Burrell, 2001; Winters, 1990). The EU also publicly funds certain aspects of organic food production through the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), whereas the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) performs no such function (Milestad and Hadatch, 2003).

Despite the considerable attention that the market growth of organic food has received, Canada’s expanding market for organic food and its importance in the global trade in organic products has been largely overlooked. According to Willer and Youssefi (2006), over the last five years, Canada and the US have had the highest global growth rate in the production and consumption of organic food. Canada is an important exporter of organic products to the EU and the US (Macey, 2004), while importing most of the organic products sold in domestic markets from the US. Canada’s increasingly important role in the global trade in organic products makes it an interesting link to examine as markets for organic products continue to expand. Studying the development of the organic food sectors in Canada and the US is both timely and important, since both countries are currently the major source of market growth for organic food in the world.

By looking at the changing institutional context of organic food and agriculture in Canada and the US, this thesis probes the contemporary structure of the organic food sector by examining how corporations have reorganized the organic food sector so that it can be more easily incorporated into the global system of trade. It assesses how changing structures of ownership and regulation compel the organic food sector to converge on the practices of the conventional sector. Overall, this thesis examines the implications of

² According to Coleman et al., *the multifunctional paradigm* is defined as “a paradigm organized around the belief that agriculture is an integral part of the countryside and provides non-market goods that would be under-produced without some degree of government support” (2004:95).

these changes for the capacity of the organic sector to maintain its traditional commitment to social and environmental sustainability. There are four aspects of the political economy of organic food that will be examined in this thesis -- the contending approaches to organic production, the phenomenon of industrialization/corporatization of the organic sector, organic food and agriculture's integration into public policy frameworks and the transformation of organic social movement. By examining these four aspects, this thesis shows that the expansive nature of capitalism facilitated through neo-liberalism and corporations' drive to maximize profits are the most significant determinants of change in the organic food sector in Canada and the US.

Major Themes

Scholars debating the implications of change in the organic sector have described the changes underway, but there are few recent studies that examine the customary role of the guiding organic philosophy in organic production, especially in the North American context (Peters, 1979; MacRae, 1990; Conford, 2001; Michelsen, 2001b). To appreciate the changes occurring in the organic food sector, it is necessary to develop a better understanding of what the traditional approach to practicing organic agriculture consists of, and its potential to challenge the global industrial food system. Chapter 2 identifies the transformative effects the Green Revolution had on agriculture in Canada and the US in the twentieth century. It then examines how the rise of industrialized agriculture sparked the establishment of an organic philosophy that promoted an alternative form of food production and challenged the social and environmentally exploitive relations of industrialization. It then identifies the connections between the three, primary tenets of the organic philosophy. As will be seen, the corporatization of the organic food sector is

redefining what 'organic' means as the definition is being formally replaced by a more instrumental conception of what makes a good 'organic'.

Thus, corporatization plays a major role in the changing nature of organic agriculture in Canada and the US. Although many studies tracing the corporate involvement in the organic food sector have focused on the US, corporate consolidation is by no means limited to the US. This study shows that corporate investment in the organic food sector is also occurring in Canada. Chapter 3 examines not only what corporations are involved in the organic food sector, but *how* conventional corporations have entered the sector and what strategies they have used to transform it in Canada and the US to meet their interests. US-based *Transnational Corporations* (TNCs) have played a significant role in the corporatization of the Canadian organic food sector but Canadian corporations have also participated in the consolidation of ownership (although to a lesser extent) and are important actors in the policy making process regarding organic food.

The role of public policy in the development of organic food sector is widely deliberated amongst scholars. Some argue that because there are separate policies for producing and handling organic products, organic agriculture remains distinct from the rules governing conventional food production, providing important normative distance from the industrialized food system (Michelsen, 2001a; Michelsen and Soregaard, 2002; DeLind, 2000). Scholars assessing broad patterns of change in the organic food sector, however, view the institutional pressures at the global level to harmonize policies and to standardize production as exceedingly difficult for more diverse forms of organic agriculture to resist (Vos, 2000; Mutersbaugh, 2005; Barrett et al., 2002). Although many scholars view strengthened regulatory frameworks for organic food as beneficial

for consumers of organic products, this thesis argues that the expansive nature of capitalism, and the institutionalization of neo-liberal principles meant to entrench the rights of capital, has played a far more significant role in expanding markets for organic foods than consumer demands. Many of the regulations, certification schemes and standards for organic agriculture emerged only after corporations recognized the economic potential of organic agriculture. Corporate actors significantly influence policy makers, and much of the organic public policy in Canada and the US reflects the corporate approach. Corporations formally alter the meaning and definition of organic agriculture through public policy and regulatory institutions at various levels of governance.

This thesis advances the position that the incorporation of organic food and agriculture into public policy frameworks originally designed for industrialized food has major implications for the integrity and meaning of organic. Chapters 4 and 5 focus on the evolution of two respective levels of public policy making in regards to organic food and agriculture. Chapter 4 investigates how policy regarding organic agriculture began as private sector regulations in the US and Canada and gradually moved to state/provincial levels of policy making and then to the federal level, as corporate activity in the organic food sector increased. Chapter 5 looks at the global dimensions of organic public policy by examining how the NAFTA and the WTO's authority over global trade constrain the ability for practitioners of organic agriculture to maintain the commitment to social and environmental sustainability (McMichael, 2004). It is argued that neo-liberal trade agreements and their affiliated organizations (i.e., ISO, Codex), put downward pressure on other organizations that attempt to keep organic agriculture's

social and environmental goals tied to the definition of organic such as the *International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements* (IFOAM). The NAFTA and the WTO reflect the neo-liberal market paradigm, and play an important role in facilitating the corporate expansion of the organic food sector.

To establish how the changing membership, institutional context and ideas influence organic agriculture as a resistance movement to conventional industrial agriculture, Chapters 6 and 7 explore the changing nature of the organic movement's status as a 'social movement'. Organic agriculture's historical link with the countercultural movements of the 1960s has led some to claim that its association with issues of social justice and independence from various spheres of power (including the state), continues to keep organic agriculture at a distance from conventional agriculture (Conford, 2001; Allen and Kovach, 2001). Canadian researcher Jennifer Sumner believes that the organic movement retains the counter-hegemonic qualities of its early formation in North America (Sumner, 2005). Michelsen claims that the organic movement is fundamentally based on social values (2001b:80), ensuring its independence from conventional forms of agricultural production. Yet others have identified a transformation in the organic social movement that emerged as conventional corporate actors enter the organic sector, and the organic sector enters conventional public policy frameworks (Bostrom and Klintman, 2006).

While there are a number of studies centred on the development of the European organic social movement (Conford, 2001; Michaelson, 2001b; Bostrom and Klintman, 2006), few recent studies use social movement theory to evaluate and assess the organic social movement in North America. Chapter 6 uses the policy process model to assess

the historical development of the organic social movement in Canada and the US from its roots in the 1960s counter-culture until the 1970s. It shows that as corporations and professional organizations entered the organic food sector, its status as a social movement changed and the ideological connection between organic agriculture and social resistance began to unravel.

Chapter 7 addresses the dramatic influence that corporate actors have on the objectives of the organic 'social movement', and argues that it has transformed from a social movement to an advocacy network. Although there are still some who advocate an entirely different system of food provision, the dominant organic advocacy network advocates economic expansion in the global food system despite the contradictions between social and environmental sustainability and the corporatized global food system. The relationship between the organic advocacy network and other contemporary food-related movements such as the anti-GMO and fair trade movements is examined to demonstrate the shifting socioeconomic and political orientation of organic agriculture in the twenty-first century.

This study concludes in Chapter 8 by summarizing the contemporary challenges to organic agriculture under the advancing influence of neo-liberalism and corporate involvement. It assesses the importance of studying organic agriculture to studies in political economy and evaluates the impact of globalization and corporatization on the social components of the organic philosophy. Since mounting a challenge to the status quo is an ongoing, historical process, some current forms of resistance to the corporate takeover of the organic sector are discussed to show various ways that concerned citizens

are fighting to maintain the social and ecological principles of the organic philosophy, which in some cases involves ‘going beyond organic’.

Research Design

The changing political economy of the organic sector was chosen as the focus of this thesis primarily because of the lack of its analysis in political science, although organic agriculture is quickly gaining broader scholarly attention as its economic importance increases and global markets expand. This thesis is an illustrative case as to how institutionalized neo-liberal principles can have converging effects on the social, economic and political relations of social movements that oppose ‘top-down’ authority, especially those that are market-based. Drawing on both qualitative and quantitative data, this study chronicles the socioeconomic and political development of the organic sector from the early twentieth century until the present. Examining the development of the economic, political and social contexts of organic agriculture in Canada and the US highlights some more general characteristics observed in the global political economy; namely, the influence that neo-liberalism has had on economic relations, its power in transforming social relations, as well as neo-liberalism’s privileged role in global public policy frameworks. By consulting primary sources and secondary sources from a range of disciplines, this thesis seeks to provide insight into how broader changes in the global political economy have had profound converging outcomes on a type of food production and related social movement that originally sought ideological distance from the logic of industrial agriculture.

Primary Sources

This thesis traces the development of the political economy of organic food and agriculture in Canada and the US through a variety of sources. Periodicals with reference to organic agriculture and organic techniques, such as *Organic Gardening* and *the Whole Earth Catalogue* were collected through archival research at Simon Fraser University and the University of British Columbia. These materials are extremely important in developing a better understanding of how the organic movement emerged in North America in the 1960s, what the original objectives of the movement were and how the core ideas associated with organic agriculture were disseminated to the public. More recently published pamphlets and brochures discussing organic agriculture gathered from local Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) such as *FarmFolk/CityFolk* and activist groups such as the *Organic Consumers Association* and *Canadian Organic Growers* are also useful sources in understanding the social context of the organic movement and the activities of civil society surrounding contemporary food issues.

In addition to collecting material from original sources, attending public discussions such as those hosted by the community organization *FarmFolk/CityFolk*, provide some key insights into the contemporary organic sector and some of the challenges it faces. Listening to speakers at public forums such as Saskatchewan farmer Percy Schmeiser discussing his legal battle with *Monsanto* over the GMO contamination of his crops, and *Nature's Path* CEO Arran Stephens account of his fight to have his company's products labelled 'GMO-free' at *the Council of Canadians' GMO-Free Canada* campaign was helpful in understanding current food issues in a global context. Attending other public forums that included activist/writer Brewster Kneen on the perils of the industrialized

food system and British food policy analyst Tim Lang's discussion of the food policy reform in the UK add 'global' context to the local food issue forums.

Other primary sources were also consulted that provide this thesis with valuable quantitative data. Quantitative data sources such as *Statistics Canada's Census of Agriculture*, and the *United States Department of Statistics* data on agriculture provide important annual statistics on the number of organic producers and land devoted to organic agriculture, as well as flows of imports and exports in North America, although comprehensive data on the demographics of organic producers is in the process of being collected by governmental agencies. Some trade statistics were also located through *Agriculture and Agro-Food Canada (AAFC)* and the *United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)*, although the *World Trade Organization (WTO)*, the *Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)*, the *Organization for Economic Co-operative Development (OECD)* and *International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements (IFOAM)* provided substantial data on issues relating to the trade in and market growth for organic products, as well as formal organic standards and certification requirements. Quantitative data sources, especially IFOAM's annual publication, *The World of Organic Agriculture: Statistics and Emerging Trends*, one of the first comprehensive collections of information on the global growth of organic agriculture, provides essential material as to how the organic sector is growing in North America in terms of production and consumption.

Policy documents from the *Canadian General Standards Board (CGSB)* such as the *Organic Production Systems Guidelines* and *USDA's National Organic Program* along with those from the *WTO* and other global organizations like *IFOAM* and the

International Organization of Standardization (ISO) are extremely important to understanding how organic agriculture is integrated into policy frameworks. Legal texts of WTO agreements like the Agreement on Technical Barriers to Trade and the Sanitary and Phyto-Sanitary Measures (part of the Agreement on Agriculture) are used in this thesis to assess the implications of transnational trade agreements on the structure of organic agriculture and organic food that is internationally traded.

Web-based industry reports such as those produced by the *Organic Monitor*, and the *Organic Trade Association* are extremely helpful in constructing a timeline of corporate investment in the organic/natural food sectors as these organizations collect data on changes occurring in the organic industry. Investor reports published by corporations like *Hain-Celestial*, *SunOpta* and *WholeFoods Markets* also provide detailed information as to the market trends and the various corporate strategies used in the organic sector in North America and abroad.

This thesis also includes information gathered from two separate farm tours around the Lower-Mainland of British Columbia, both sponsored by *FarmFolk/CityFolk*. I attended the *Incredible Edible* farm tour in the summer of 2005, where a small group of Vancouverites toured various farming establishments in the Lower Mainland of BC. The farm tour included visits to organic farms, conventional farms and large-scale greenhouses, which provided a better understanding of the logistics of farming on various scales, using various techniques. I also attended the annual *Feast of Fields* public event sponsored by *FarmFolk/CityFolk* where members of the public are taken to a local, small-scale farm to sample some of BC's local chefs' creations, take a tour of the farm, and to also talk to local organic producers. Attending public events that highlight local

and sustainable forms of agriculture is vital to understanding the distinctions between small-scale organic farming, and large-scale corporate farming that is a central issue to debates over the corporatization of organic agriculture in North America. Getting a first-hand account from those involved in organic farming and activism is important to understanding the connection between local forms of resistance to industrialized agriculture, and how the globalization of agriculture has far reaching influence on rural communities.

In addition to attending public events, this thesis draws on interviews conducted with individuals involved in the organic food sector in British Columbia. British Columbia was the first Canadian province to establish its own provincial standards and currently has the highest concentration of organic farms and producers in Canada. BC also exports a significant amount of its organic products to the US (Parsons, 2004; Macey, 2004; Statistics Canada, 2007). Almost all of the interviewees have been involved in the organic sector in some form for over a decade, making them excellent sources of information in regards to the development of the organic sector in BC and Canada in general since some of them have been involved in organic agriculture in various parts of the country.

The interviews took place throughout 2005 in BC's Lower Mainland. The main criterion for the participants selected was that they were involved in the organic sector. I conducted seven interviews with individuals including organic producers, managers of organic distribution firms and organic food retailers (including a food co-operative) and activists in the organic and fair trade movements, to get a clearer idea of what the current issues are for the organic food sector. I asked interviewees questions about how they

define organic, what their stance is on social justice as part of the approach to organic agriculture, what the current issues are facing their respective workplaces as more corporate actors enter the organic sector and how they think government regulation will influence organic agriculture in BC and Canada. Some of their responses are used throughout the thesis to contextualize the broader changes experienced by the organic food sector over the last twenty years.

Although the sample of individuals interviewed for this thesis is small, the interviews shed some important light on the current issues in the organic food sector in BC and abroad, since a number of interviewees work for companies that are owned by transnational corporations, (such as organic food distributor *ProOrganics* (owned by Canadian-based *SunOpta*) and organic/natural food retailer *Capers Community Markets* (owned by US-based *Wild Oats Markets*). One interviewee works for *Café Etico*, a Canadian distributor of organic/fair trade coffee that operates through direct trade networks with coffee farmers in South America.

Interviewing people who are involved in various aspects of the organic supply chain is useful in showing the regional dynamics of expanding markets for organic products, and getting a better sense of some of the current challenges faced in the organic food sector. All interviews were confidential and all participants signed consent forms before the interviews commenced. The consent form guarantees the confidentiality of identity, so where interview material is used, the interviewees are assigned pseudonyms.³ Participatory and interview materials helped to address the social outcomes of change in

³ Where confidential interview material is used, it is cited as Personal Communication (PC) accompanied by a number from 1-7 and the date of the interview. For example, a citation appears as “PC1, June 5, 2005”.

organic agriculture that other primary sources such as statistics, do not account for. Interviewing local organic producers and activists was also extremely important in understanding the context in which the organic sector is developing in Canada and the US and also helps to illuminate some of the major challenges small-scale organic producers face when corporate actors dominate the food system.

Secondary Sources

Using a number of secondary sources from a range of academic disciplines allows this thesis to explore various facets of the political economy of organic food, including public policy and the organic social movement. I believe that a multi-disciplinary approach to studying organic food that addresses both the local and national contexts of organic agriculture helps to show how organic food is being incorporated into global policy frameworks, transnational supply chains and global civil society. Secondary sources provide theoretical understandings of how economic sectors, like the organic sector, change over time and what influences this development.

The secondary literature consulted for this thesis was collected through document searches. Primarily drawing from political economy literature, this thesis includes books, articles and conference presentations from academics in mainly sociology and geography, where the majority of current academic studies on organic agriculture are located. Secondary sources concerning theories of globalization, corporate behaviour and strategies, international trade, agriculture, public policy, labour relations and social movements are used to develop a better understanding of the institutional context of the organic movement as it has developed since the mid-twentieth century. One of the most important books referred to in this thesis is Julie Guthman's *Agrarian Dreams* (2004),

which traces the evolution of organic agriculture in California using a political economy approach. Guthman's book is one of the only current, comprehensive studies on organic agriculture that assesses the political and economic changes observed in the California organic sector and the outcomes of these changes. Guthman's work provides a useful framework for this thesis.

Literature on social movements, such as the feminist, environmental and sustainable agricultural movements deserves more elaboration here, as it is important to contextualize the development of the organic movement in Canada and the US. Because all three movements emerged at relatively the same point in time, in addition to the lack of early empirical data on the organic movement as it developed in Canada and the US, social movements with similar countercultural ideologies are useful to get a better idea of the historical trajectory of the organic movement. Since the environmental and sustainable agricultural movements contributed to the ideological foundation of the organic movement, and a significant body of literature exists on these movements, they are important sources of information regarding the social organization of the organic movement.

Conclusion

Overall, this thesis assesses the changing organic food and agriculture sector in the context of broader socio-political change. Although many scholars argue that organic agriculture is ideologically opposed to industrial agriculture's negative socio-economic and environmental outcomes, the insertion of organic food into a system the privileges instrumental approaches to production processes has seriously compromised the organic movement's countercultural status and the definition of organic. Although discussions of

corporate activity in the organic food sector are not new, uncovering how corporations have come to dominate the Canadian and US organic food sectors, and how corporate actors have influenced regulatory frameworks and social activism surrounding organic agriculture and food, is a unique contribution of this thesis to studies in organic agriculture. My research reveals that extended corporate involvement in the organic food sector is a significant determinate in the changing structure and organization of production processes, and public policies pertaining to organic food, but also the organic movement's status as a challenge to the injustices of the industrialized, globalized food system.

My personal interest in food issues, particularly how food gets from producer to consumer, and most importantly who is involved in the production, processing, and distribution of food has been an important motivational tool in researching and writing this thesis. I believe that the corporate colonization of the organic food sector is an important and complex issue that needs to be brought to the attention of the public, which is continually faced with the prospect of unknowingly eating tainted and contaminated food that is produced in socially and environmentally destructive ways. It is the goal of this thesis to show how the corporatization of the organic sector signals a radical departure from the more diverse ways of practicing organic agriculture.

CHAPTER 2: A CLASH OF VALUES: THE ORGANIC PHILOSOPHY AND THE CORPORATE APPROACH TO ORGANIC AGRICULTURE

Introduction

Earl Butz, US President Richard Nixon's Secretary of Agriculture, was perhaps the least liked person by the practitioners of organic agriculture in the 1970s. In 1971, Butz expressed serious reservations regarding the legitimacy of organic agriculture and made a number of public statements about the questionable validity of organic techniques. One of the more infamous statements Butz made in regard to the viability of returning to organic agriculture in the US is that, "without the modern input of chemicals, of pesticides, antibiotics, we simply could not do the job. Before we go back to organic agriculture in this country, somebody must decide which 50 million Americans we are going to let starve or go hungry" (Belasco, 1989:119). Butz was not alone in rejecting organic agriculture as a viable alternative to conventional agriculture. In fact, many government officials, farmers, scientists and mainstream media from the 1940s until the 1970s believed that organic agriculture was inefficient, fraudulent, and sometimes even dangerous to human health (Conford, 2001; Berry, 1977). Supporters of organic agriculture, however, maintained the belief that organic agriculture could create a system of food production that is capable of not only feeding the population, but do it in a way that does not exploit the environment or producers.

The origins of the organic philosophy can be traced to pre-WWII Europe. As ideas regarding organic agriculture techniques crossed the Atlantic, early practitioners of the organic philosophy in Canada and the US made up a small and concentrated movement from the 1950s onward (Conford, 2001). At that time, the vast majority of producers

were engaged in chemical agriculture, leaving behind the 'backward' techniques associated with past forms of agriculture (Atkins and Bowler, 2001; Lipson, 2001; Millstone and Lang, 2003:56). The system of food production that depended upon synthetic inputs was criticized by various agricultural "radicals" for its externalization of the social and environmental costs of industrialized food production -- costs organic agriculture sought to internalize in a sustainable food system. By internalizing social and environmental costs, organic agriculture sets itself apart from conventional forms of agriculture that have successfully externalized most substantive environmental and social costs onto the state and society. Whereas conventional agriculture devotes little attention to process, "the counter-cuisine stress[es] process over product" (Belasco, 1989:46). The organic philosophy thus emerged as a reaction to structural changes in the agro-food system considered to be environmentally and socially unsustainable. Organic agriculture's guiding philosophy has provided dissenters from the status quo with an alternative to the social relations in conventional agriculture and the environmentally unsustainable system of agro-food production.

Today, some of those who initially shunned the organic movement are now participating in its expansion by converting from conventional agro-food production to organic, or adding organic production to their conventional practices (Abaidoo and Dickinson, 2002). Yet the way organic agriculture has been incorporated into the mainstream food system threatens many of the principles and values once associated with the organic food movement. The inclusion of corporate actors in organic food supply chains are helping to drive organic food's rapid market growth, while contributing to the

construction of a new approach to organic agriculture that embraces neo-liberal market principles and values profits through market expansion.

Although dichotomizing current organic practices and ideologies is problematic, since a large ‘grey area’ exists, there are several major differences between the approach to organic agriculture that internalizes social and environmental costs, and the other competing approach that does not. To examine the two sets of values guiding organic production in Canada and the US, this chapter first examines the historic trajectory of the organic philosophy to show where its tenets originated. It then moves on to analyze the tenets of the traditional organic philosophy that make up the traditional definition of ‘organic’. The chapter then discusses the corporate approach to organic agriculture and how it reflects the market logic of the neo-liberal paradigm currently governing the global trading regime.

The Roots of the Organic Philosophy

Nicholas Lampkin, a pioneering scholar studying the economic dimensions of organic agriculture, defines organic agriculture as:

...an approach to agriculture where the aim is: to create integrated, humane, environmentally and economically sustainable agricultural production systems, which maximize reliance on farm-derived renewable sources and the management of ecological and biological processes and interactions, so as to provide acceptable levels of crop, livestock and human nutrition, protection from pests and diseases, and an appropriate return to the human and other resources employed...(Lampkin, 1994:4).

What this definition refers to can be conceived of as an approach to organic agriculture that consists of three major tenets: economic viability, social sustainability and environmental sustainability. By no means, however, did all of the elements become part of the philosophy at the same point in time, nor does the concept of an ‘organic

philosophy' imply that all those practicing organic agriculture subscribed to all tenets in the same way. The environmental and economic concerns were the first to become significant characteristics of the organic philosophy; social elements were then more fully incorporated into the philosophy in the late 1960s. Despite the uneven development of the foundational principles of the organic philosophy, it will be shown that they are deeply interdependent.

As mentioned, the values and goals of organic agriculture emerged as a form of resistance to the rapid changes in agriculture brought about by the institutionalization of the Green Revolution. But before the Green Revolution transformed agriculture through industrialization, the majority of people around the world were practicing organic or natural agriculture simply because it was the only option available to them (Mitchell, 1975; McMichael, 2004). Although mechanization and chemicalization in agriculture occurred before the twentieth century, only after WW II did chemical farming become widely practiced by food producers in industrialized countries (Atkins and Bowler, 2001).

The Green Revolution can be conceived of as consisting of two major technologies that when used together increase farm yields and production efficiency through standardizing processes. Using synthetic chemicals and practicing monoculture define the Green Revolution as a paradigm shift in agriculture. Chemical weapons used during WWII were found to be effective as defoliants, and they were also discovered to be very successful at killing pests and weeds. DDT⁴ was first developed in 1874 by a German chemist, but it was not until 1939 that its effectiveness as an insecticide was discovered (Carson, 1962:20). Scientists demonstrated that by using chemicals like DDT to kill

⁴ DDT is an acronym for dichloro-diphenyl-trichloro-ethane

insects, higher agricultural crop yields could be attained (Clarke, 2001; McMichael, 2004).⁵ It was further realized that chemical fertilizers could effectively replace humus and manure as sources of minerals for plant nutrition. This was first identified in a report by a German chemist named Justus Liebig entitled *Chemistry in its Application to Agriculture and Physiology* in 1840 (Conford, 2001:38). Although the scientific data regarding chemical fertilizers existed well before the end of WWII, the ‘plentiful’ supply of oil and chemical warfare technology made chemical agriculture a viable economic option for farmers seeking to reduce the need for manual labour and to increase crop yields. The increasing use of oil to make a variety of products including fertilizers and pesticides, and the usage of energy-intensive farming equipment was very effective at increasing farm yields while reducing the need for manual and animal farm labour (Steffen, 1972:5).

Mainstream scientists and state agricultural departments promoted chemical agriculture as progressive, efficient and necessary to meet the food requirements of growing populations. As a result, farmers in Canada and the US continually increased their use of chemical fertilizers. Table 2.1 shows the rapid increase in fertilizer usage in Canada in the US between 1961-1971.

Table 2.1: Total Fertilizer Consumption in Canada and the US (in 10 000 metric tonnes)

Year	1961	1963	1965	1967	1969	1971
CAN	40.2	49.9	69.4	88.6	72.8	88.0
US	764.6	947.4	1 127.6	1 364.5	1 457.7	1 558.0

Source: FAO AGROSTAT database

⁵ DDT is labelled a *Persistent Organic Pollutant* (POP) by the UN, and in 2001 the WHO/FAO drafted an agreement to limit its usage due to its proven damaging effects on human and environmental health (Clarke, 2001:13).

In addition to using synthetic fertilizers, mono-cropping was essential to standardize outputs and increase productive efficiency. The term monoculture refers to the planting of one type of crop, which became the norm on conventional farms across Canada and the US. Monoculture was understood by agricultural departments as the most efficient way of producing a high volume of crops in the shortest period of time (Berry, 1977; Skogstad, 1987; Basran and Hay, 1988; Kneen, 1989). Before monoculture became the norm, most farms were poly-cultural, meaning they consisted of a mix of crops sown in the same area that were rotated from year to year. By practicing crop rotation, the soil maintains its nutrient balance because the same nutrients are not leached from the soil continuously by the same type of crops. Poly-culture requires much more manual labour to maintain a weed and pest free environment, and it is often practiced on small plots of land. Monoculture on the other hand, requires a standard, specialized set of inputs developed for particular breeds of plants, and an entire field can then be harvested in an identical way. Monoculture, then, reduces the amount of labour necessary to grow and harvest successfully, and it also takes much less time to harvest crops with machinery (Friedmann, 2000:492).

As monoculture became the norm, sales of mechanical farm implements began to correspondingly rise. From 1969-1973, farm implement sales in Canada grew from \$410 million to \$656 million, more than a 62% increase in a four-year period (Mitchell, 1975:62). Thus, the idea relayed to farmers by both governments and agribusiness was that Green Revolution technologies could free them from the physical labour that was necessary to produce crops, while increasing the profitability of their farms. The utilization of Green Revolution technologies on a wide scale is what truly defined the

emerging industrializing processes of agriculture and they effectively re-arranged production processes to maximize efficiency, increase farm yields, transforming what it meant to be 'a farmer' (Friedmann, 1991).

Many resisted the idea that industrializing agricultural processes was the best way to produce food for a modern population. In response to the rise of chemicalized and monocultured agro-food production in industrializing countries, ideas about returning to more natural forms of agriculture began to surface in Europe in the 1940s (Tate, 1994:11; Raynolds, 2004:735). Although a countless number of individuals in both Europe and North America contributed to the basic ideas related to the organic philosophy (Peters, 1979), there were three major contributors to the organic philosophy in the early twentieth century who presented a coherent and direct challenge to conventional agricultural techniques. Britons Lady Eve Balfour and Sir Albert Howard, and American J.I. Rodale were practitioners who championed organic techniques and gave a voice to organic agriculture as a viable alternative to conventional agro-food production. All three organic practitioners were also highly influential in establishing formal organizations and associations for organic agriculture that would inspire organic practitioners across North America to pursue a more sustainable form of food production.

Balfour, who would eventually become a founding member of *The International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements* (IFOAM), was one of the first scientists to experiment with organic techniques as described in her work *The Living Soil* (1943). She earned an Agricultural Diploma from Reading University in 1917, and became a champion of the organic techniques she found to be extremely beneficial to the health of the soil and plants (Conford, 2001:88). Balfour fundamentally challenged the notions put

forth by other scientists at the time concerning the beneficial use of chemical inputs and the argument that non-chemical farming⁶ produced low yields and was financially costly to the producer. Balfour demonstrated on her experimental farm in England that organic agriculture could be financially viable and could, in fact, save farmers money by recycling vegetable and animal wastes to produce nutrient-rich humus (Balfour, 1943:Chapter 3). Her ideas about organic agriculture as a sound environmental *and* economic alternative to conventional agriculture questioned the role agricultural chemical companies played in food production, and viewed farmers' reliance upon them as financially costly and environmentally harmful to the health of the soil. Two years after *The Living Soil* was published, Lady Balfour, Sir Albert Howard and a number of other supporters of organic agriculture formed *The Soil Association*, in Britain, which became a venue for discussing soil health and how to educate the public about its importance.

Sir Albert Howard is one of the most widely acknowledged pioneers of organic agriculture and his work promoting and practicing organic techniques helped to raise organic agriculture's profile as a viable alternative to conventional agriculture around the world (Merrill, 1976; Belasco, 1989). Howard was one of the first to make the causal connection between the health of the soil and the quality of food and human health by running a number of experiments with composting and crop rotations. *An Agricultural Testament* (1943) was one of the first books published that explored organic farming techniques.

⁶ Though it is commonly assumed that organic agriculture is strictly non-chemical, certain substances are allowed in preventing pest destruction, such as copper sulphate (the Bordeaux mix). Chemicals such as copper sulphate are industrially produced, but do not qualify as synthetic chemicals because they are naturally occurring (Ryan, 2001:16).

As a trained chemist, Howard was critical of what he called ‘laboratory hermits’ and their dislocation from what was happening ‘in the field’ (Berry, 1977:46). Howard decided that the best way to bridge the gap was for him to go out into the fields and experiment with agricultural techniques that worked with nature instead of trying to conquer it. Through his experiments, he found that he could successfully produce healthy crops and soil without synthetic chemical inputs.

Howard spent almost a decade in India (1924-31) experimenting with ways to add nutrients back into the soil without synthetic chemicals. In *An Agricultural Testament*, he introduced the *Indore Process* (named after the Indian state where the technique was developed), which is a composting method that uses vegetable wastes and manure to produce nutrient-rich humus to fertilize the soil and crops (Conford, 2001:246). With the publication of *An Agricultural Testament*, the Indore Process began to be practiced world wide to grow a number of agricultural crops such as rice, sugar cane, coffee and fruit (Howard, 1943:Chapter 4). As a result of his experiments, and the connections he made between the health of the soil, the crops and people, he cautioned that chemical-based, agro-food production had negative consequences for the environment and public health because it relied on external, non-renewable, chemical inputs for financial success (Vos, 2000:246).

The Soil and Health: A Study of Organic Agriculture (1947), another of Howard’s publications, took on the negative outcomes chemical agriculture reproduced. It denounces the exploitation of the environment for profit, and stresses the importance of people having some political role in how their food is produced. Howard promoted a system of “...farming which puts a stop to the exploitation of land for the purpose of

profit...” claiming that “the electorate alone has the power of enforcing this and to do so it must first realize the full implications of the problem” (Howard, 1952:13). Howard became the first to associate social goods with organic farming techniques, arguing that industrialized, chemical agriculture focused exclusively on the economic elements of agro-food production, basing decisions on the forces of supply and demand. While he was developing the Indore Process in India, Howard made attempts at fair labour practices by providing labourers on his experimental farm with rest breaks, medical services, prompt payment and standard work hours. By using organic techniques and valuing the human labour inputs, Howard attempted to attach some social benefits to his agricultural experiments at the Agricultural Research Institute in Pusa, India (Conford, 2001:55).

One of the main arguments Howard put forward in his writings is that applying industrialized modes of production to food, and treating it as any other commodity, erodes the social importance of food to communities, and encourages food to be produced in a fashion much like other commodities. He further understood that general public awareness through the broader dissemination of information about how the food system works would have to play a pivotal role in the successful conversion from unsustainable agricultural techniques *back* to more sustainable ways of producing food. Knowledge and understanding of the costs associated with chemical agriculture were important tools in making the public aware of the damaging cycle of externalizing social and environmental costs. He had witnessed the shortcomings of monoculture through its susceptibility to infestations of pests and diseases, even with chemical applications (Conford, 2001:54). His arguments were highly critical of a system of food provision,

which encourages chemical application and monoculture that benefits agribusiness more than the family farmer.

Although Howard did not originally use the word ‘organic’ to describe his agricultural techniques, he did lay the foundation for a proto-definition of organic agriculture that contains three essential elements that must be present to have a safe and sustainable agro-food system: fertile soil, freshness of food products and stabilized cost (Belasco, 1989:71; Howard, 1952:28). All three of these requisites would serve as the foundation for the organic philosophy of producing sustainable, high quality food circulating in localized food chains. The factor of stabilized costs of foodstuffs proved elusive to promoters of the organic ideology, because organic agriculture still had to participate in market transactions based on supply and demand. However, the ideas put forth by Howard provide a foundational basis for the organic philosophy that would later come to also emphasize social and environmental goods.

Howard’s ideas became highly influential to those who believed chemical agriculture was harmful to the soil’s fertility and to human health. Howard’s writings reached North America through J. I. Rodale in the 1940s. Rodale is credited with being the first person to use the term ‘organic’ in North America (Kuepper and Gegner, 2004). Rodale was inspired by Howard’s ideas and activities, and decided in 1940 to move from his home in New York City to establish an experimental organic farm in Emmaus, Pennsylvania. He named the farm *The Soil and Health Institute* in 1947, and later renamed it *The Rodale Institute*. The Rodale Institute continues to advocate organic agriculture today, and has the mandate of “put[ting] people in control of what they eat” (Rodale Institute, 2006a).

Rodale felt that there was an intimate link between the health of the soil and the health of people. Although Rodale incorporated many of Howard's ideas into his activities at the Rodale Institute, he added his knowledge of food nutrition to his championing of organic agriculture. Rodale promoted organic agriculture as a healthier alternative to food produced through chemical agriculture (Belasco, 1989:71). Working with Howard, Rodale experimented with organic techniques and decided to put his efforts into print. The Rodale Press was established and first published *Organic Gardening and Farming* (OGF) in 1940, and then *Prevention Magazine* in 1950. Both of these periodicals were meant to educate Americans about healthful food and the importance of practicing sustainable agriculture by using 'organic' inputs.⁷

Rodale saw the environmental benefits of promoting and maintaining biodiversity and the nutritional value of 'non-chemical' agricultural methods in improving food quality and the health of the soil (Clunies-Ross, 1990; Rodale Institute, 2006b). His ideas regarding 'regenerative agriculture' provided the organic philosophy with its foundational principles, which emphasize environmental sustainability. Limiting dependence on non-renewable resources was key to Rodale's ideas about sustainable agriculture, and he challenged the practices of chemical farming that relied on synthetic inputs derived from petroleum (Berry, 1976:140). Although, Rodale's work and organizations did not speak to social issues pertaining to agriculture per se, he did realize the intrinsic social and cultural value of the 'family farm' to agriculture. He, like Balfour and Howard, was critical of corporate expansion into agriculture, as it displaced many people from rural areas (Kuepper and Gegner, 2004). Despite Rodale's ceaseless efforts

⁷ The role of these periodicals in disseminating the organic philosophy to the public is discussed further in chapter 6.

to convert farmers from practicing conventional agriculture to experimenting with organic techniques, the financial incentives supplied to farmers who chose to chemically farm by governments proved to be too strong in the 1940s. As a result, those practicing organic agriculture in the US and Canada remained a small, although devoted, group of people (Belasco, 1989:71).

The development of organic agriculture in Canada followed much the same trajectory as the US. Since both Canadian and American farmers used Green Revolution technologies, the negative outcomes of industrial forms of food production became a concern for some Canadians and Americans. Many of the ideas that became part of the emerging organic movement in Canada originated from Europe and the US. Howard and Rodale's promotion of the connection between the health of the soil and healthy food helped to establish organic farming organizations in the 1950s. Filmmaker Christopher Chapman established the *Canadian Organic Soil Association* in Ontario in the 1950s, which was later renamed the *Land Fellowship* (Hill and MacRae, 1992). Chapman, along with fellow leader Spencer Cheshire, travelled across Canada distributing information about the benefits of organic farming to the soil, the nutrient-content of food and to human and environmental health. Although organic techniques received little attention from the farming establishment in other parts of Canada, organic agriculture received a warmer welcome in Quebec, where European immigrants to Quebec had been practicing organic agriculture for quite some time in their home countries (MacRae, 1990). Both the efforts of the Land Fellowship and early organic farmers in Quebec helped to lay the foundation for the organic philosophy to emerge in Canada.

The nascent organic philosophy emerging from practitioners' dedication to finding a more sustainable way of producing food was primarily a challenge to conventionalized chemical agriculture in North America. Unlike conventional farms that require expensive chemical and mechanical inputs, composting, manual labour and crop rotation methods often allow organic producers to reach a satisfactory level of productivity, proving to sceptics that organic agriculture was economically viable, and if practiced on a wide scale would not lead to mass starvation (Harter, 1973; Harrison, 1993). This viability was the foundation for the development of a more general vision of an alternative mode of organizing the production and consumption of food.

The Components of the Organic Philosophy

The three elements of the organic philosophy -- economic viability, environmental and social sustainability -- are difficult to clearly separate because in many ways, they are interdependent and a commitment to one element entails a commitment to the others. The three elements that comprise the organic philosophy that are visible today, were developed over time with the last element, social sustainability, becoming part of the philosophy in the latter 1960s. All three tenets are substantive issues of process, meaning much of the value embodied in the end product is a result of a number of practices occurring throughout the production process. Combined, they create a holistic food system capable of providing an alternative to the relationships between farmers, agribusiness and the state found in conventional agriculture. The organic philosophy promotes a way of producing food that is significantly different from the methods promoted by the Green Revolution, though organic agriculture is not necessarily a more socially progressive form of food production.

Economic Viability

Although idealized visions of a socially conscious and environmentally sound way of producing food are indeed part of the organic philosophy, it is also tempered with the reality that organic agriculture has to financially sustain those who practice it. This element of the organic philosophy is the most important to organic producers selling their products for income, although a firm commitment to the environment also plays a major role in the reasons behind people's practicing organic agriculture (Abaidoo and Dickinson, 2002). The organic philosophy promotes the idea that producers should be able to make a reasonable living from producing food without exposing themselves to toxic chemicals and without exploiting nature or fellow humans in the process. One of the key ways to keeping organic agriculture economically viable is to keep social and economic relations local.

The organic philosophy's basis on localized agro-food chains is meant to assure that the value of the product remains as close to the producer as possible. Locally oriented supply chains oppose those that are spread across vast distances, which move profits away from the point of production. According to Statistics Canada, a conventional farmer participating in transnational agro-food chains gets only 25% of the consumer dollar spent on agro-food, while the rest goes to processors and retailers (MacRae et al., 2004:27). MacRae et al. further show that, "globally, distributors, shippers and retailers now retain 2/3 of the economic value of food, while the farm sector (9%) and input sector⁸ (24%) share the other third" (Ibid). Retaining value at the point of production is possible by limiting the number of 'links' in the food supply chain, thereby reducing the

⁸ The 'farm sector' refers to the primary stages of production, such as the production of raw commodities. The 'input sector' refers to the secondary stages of production, such as food processing.

divisions of value garnered from the sale of organic food. Therefore, farm gate sales, box schemes, farmer's markets, food co-operatives and retail outlets that purchase locally grown foods directly from the producer, facilitate the retention of value by the producer (Ikerd, 1999).

Environmental Sensitivity

Environmental sensitivity is most often associated with organic agriculture by the general public, and is the only tenet that has been widely instituted into public policy in Canada and the US (CAN/CGSB-32.310-99; US/OGPF90, Sec. 2104 (7 USC. 6503)). Yet the only environmental elements taken from the organic philosophy and put into public policy are those that pertain to the material attributes of the end product, such as banning the use of synthetic inputs and GMOs in 'certified' organic agriculture.⁹ The organic philosophy not only considers the environmental damage caused by using synthetic inputs derived from fossil fuels and the questionable safety of biotechnology, but it also accounts for the environmental costs that add up throughout the agricultural production process. There are three elements of environmental sustainability in the organic philosophy: localized agro-food chains, small-scale establishments and biodiversity.

Localized food chains serve the dual purpose of keeping profits in the hands of producers, while reducing the environmental impact involved in the transportation of food. Remaining sensitive to the needs of the environment at all stages of the production process is only possible when the stages are in close geographic proximity to one another. This is so because large distances between the points of production and the points of consumption involve an increase in transportation costs and packaging. Both are fossil

⁹ This point is discussed in further detail in chapter 5.

fuel intensive processes, and so non-local supply chains are discouraged by the organic philosophy. Larger geographic distances also increase the instances of spoilage and waste of product, as it is estimated that twenty-five percent of food produced in the global food system rots in transit (Imhoff, 1996:429).

In addition to the rejection of distancing, the organic philosophy discourages reliance on fossil fuels by keeping farming establishments functioning on a small scale. In 1998, the *United States Environmental Protection Agency* (EPA) reported that the largest cause of pollution in the US was conventional agriculture, and this is largely due to its reliance on mechanized inputs and fossil fuels (Clarke, 2001:14). Similarly, in Canada farming practices that are reliant on fossil fuels contributed 13% of the greenhouse gas emissions in 1996 (MacRae et al., 2004). Keeping the scale of farms small helps to reduce the environmental impact of agricultural practices because there is far less dependence on fossil fuel intensive technologies such as tractors and threshers to tend and harvest larger plots of land. To avoid these environmental costs, manual labour and maintaining a small-scale farming operation are essential as they reduce productive dependency on fossil fuels. Larger-scale food production also encourages monoculture, which produces more waste than can be recycled back into the production process and depends on complex mechanization.

Another more recent addition to the organic philosophy's commitment to environmental sensitivity and biodiversity is the banned usage of GMOs in organic agriculture. GMOs, and other forms of biotechnology, are not only viewed as potentially dangerous to human and environmental health, but also as tools of agribusiness used to create dependency of farmers on agribusiness technologies (such as in the case of

Monsanto's 'Terminator' or Suicide Gene) (OCA, 2006a; Shiva, 2000; Howard, 2000). The emphasis on biodiversity by the organic philosophy encourages the cultivation of what is native to one's bioregion and the preservation of 'heritage' strains of plants and animals.¹⁰

Under the organic philosophy, keeping organic agriculture an environmentally sensitive form of agriculture requires producers to account for the environmental costs associated with agricultural production occurring throughout the production process. Thus, the elements of environmental sustainability are fundamental to the adherence to the organic philosophy; however, keeping these substantive environmental values intact in the production process is largely dependent upon a commitment to maintaining a link between social relations and economic relations in organic supply chains.

Social Sustainability

Social sustainability was the last tenet to be added to the organic philosophy, but it is equally important as economic viability and environmental sensitivity (Shreck et al., 2006). In a number of ways, it is the most important element of the organic philosophy, because it concerns the link between the people and the land, which is the best way of preserving the economic viability and the environmental sensitivity of organic agriculture (Berry, 1977). Though all practitioners of organic agriculture have not necessarily subscribed to socially progressive ways of producing food (i.e., fair labour practices), the sheer nature of the labour intensiveness associated with organic agriculture demands that the link between social relations and the production process be acknowledged. Social

¹⁰ With industrialized agriculture, many of the most hardy, robust species of flora and fauna have been singled out to impose uniformity and standardized inputs for stages further along the supply chain. Some (but not all) organic growers are still committed to preserving biodiversity through a heterogeneous population of flora and fauna. An estimated 80-90% of vegetable and fruit varieties that were prevalent in the 19th century were lost by the end of the 20th century (Henry, 2001).

sustainability can be conceived of as attempt to preserve rural communities and culture, which presents an alternative to what the focus on economic relations over social relations that industrialized forms of food production promote (Oelhaf, 1982).

Since organic agriculture does not use chemical inputs or practice monoculture, manual labour is in many cases is necessary to complete various farm tasks (e.g., weeding, harvesting) in a poly-cultural setting. Poly-cultural organic farms contribute to social sustainability by producing goods that come to fruition at various times during the year. The year-round labour requirements for organic farming have been shown to reduce the cyclical unemployment of contemporary farming and the under-employment that exist in conventional farm production (Buck et al., 1997:8). In the conventional agricultural sector in North America, most agricultural labour today is seasonal/casual labour. Seasonal labour qualifies as being employed for less than 150 days per year (Youngberg and Buttel, 1984:174). The labour requirement for a small-scale organic farm to successfully function is on average, 15% higher than the labour necessary in conventional agriculture. Because of the higher labour requirement, “organic farming... supports more jobs per hectare of farmland contributing to social stability of farm populations and rural society” (Atkins and Bowler, 2001:69; Harwood, 1984).

Some practitioners of organic agriculture have also attempted to address the gender inequalities that exist in the social relations of more traditional forms of food production. Though not all practitioners of organic agriculture subscribe to feminist principles, as organic agriculture was adopted by groups of people with socially progressive attitudes, some aspects of feminism have been integrated into the organic philosophy (Belasco, 1989; Berry, 1977). Feminist scholars critical of the social relations in conventional

agriculture see capitalist forms of food production as transferring the domination over the market to men, while women are relegated to the household where they performed unpaid labour that largely goes unrecognized in the capitalist economy (Friedmann, 1978; Whatmore, 1991; Cohen, 1997; Barndt, (ed.) 1999). As organic agriculture grew in popularity, mainly amongst socially progressive individuals who rejected conventional social relations, it was recognized that if an organic food system was to be economically and environmentally sustainable, all relations in the production process must be reproduced in a manner that paid attention to the structural inequalities in social relations. One of the major components of sustaining progressive social relations is to recognize the gendered nature of work by valuing the contributions that men and women make to food production.

Some of those practicing the organic philosophy in the early 1960s recognized that feminist principles largely reflect the progressive social relations that organic agriculture needs to maintain its commitment to economic viability and environmental sustainability. Since organic agriculture was premised on the recognition of issues of process and avoiding hierarchical power structures, the social objectives of the organic movement and the feminist movement emerging in the 1960s were similar in nature. So, the early organic movement borrowed a number of social principles from the feminist movement, which promoted the idea that women's labour (which traditionally has been unpaid, care giving work) needed to be recognized, valued and included in the costs of production (Tickner, 1993:67). For this reason, women in North America and Europe have had a significant presence in organic agriculture (Mearnes, 1997; Welling, 1999; Bjorkhaug, 2004). In an interview with "Alice" a representative for a Canadian organic food

distributor, she stated that after working in the conventional agriculture sector, both in business and government, she felt that the gender dynamics in the organic sector were different. She found that the organic food sector was far less male-centred, and less part of the 'old boys club' than she found to be predominant in the conventional sector (PC1, Feb. 8, 2005). Though not all organic practitioners and supporters subscribe to the progressive social principles advanced by feminists, some people involved in the organic sector today incorporate the principles of feminism into organic production processes. The organic philosophy values the diversity in social relations that inhabit less institutionalized forms of food production, which encourages a proliferation of social sustainability into the practices, associated with organic agriculture.

The most influential characteristic of organic agriculture that makes principles of social sustainability themselves *sustainable* is their small scale and localization, which are also fundamental to environmental sensitivity. Keeping land ownership in the hands of individual farm families aids rural communities in economically sustaining themselves and helps to keep control over various aspects of the production process local. Therefore, valuing the process, which an organic good undergoes, facilitates the inclusion of principles of social sustainability in organic production. As Tad Mutersbaugh notes in his discussion of the political economy of organic coffee, the local, grassroots nature of organic agriculture is what has also made it *sustainable* agriculture (2002:1167).

The organic philosophy has been based on mutually dependent types of *sustainabilities*; economic and environmental sustainability both of which encourage a commitment to social sustainability. By maintaining a clear commitment to each of these components, organic practitioners, and supporters of the organic philosophy are

committed to social and environmental sustainability. What sets the organic philosophy apart from other ways of producing food is its integration of social and environmental costs. By including the costs that are externalized through industrializing processes, the organic philosophy provides an alternative to those who believe that externalizing the costs of production and unlinking social and economic relations is an unsustainable and unethical way to produce food.

The 'Corporate' Approach to Organic Food Production

The organic philosophy presents a number of informal barriers to the entry of corporations seeking to maximize profits through expanding markets. So, corporate actors seeking to enter the organic food sector aim to re-define organic and have devised an alternate approach to organic agriculture that meets the instrumental requirements of corporate logic. This section demonstrates that the corporate approach to organic agriculture is meant to reconcile the production of organic with the imperatives of market expansion and profit accumulation. This process requires hollowing out the substantive elements of the organic philosophy in favour of an instrumental reduction of 'organic' to the material qualities of the end product. This section develops the notion of a competitive corporate approach to organic production that is based on prioritizing the qualities of the end product over the characteristics of the production process, or what is called the 'produce over process discourse' (Buttel, 1997:360; Belasco, 1989:46). The product over process discourse reflects the logic of the neo-liberal order that took hold in the 1980s.

In an effort to regain some of the economic power lost through the oil crisis of the 1970s and the global recession, the US pushed for economic reforms in the *International*

Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank that would help to open up foreign economies to US investment and products. Inspired by the principles of liberal trade, officials in the US and international economic institutions created what is called the *Washington Consensus*. The Washington Consensus consists of a plan to liberalize the global economy and transnationally regulate the free flow of capital (Cohen and Clarkson, 2004:2). The Washington Consensus contains a series of objectives including the increase in mobility of capital across national borders, the expansion of market access through privatization and forcing states to treat foreign investment similar to domestic investment (national treatment) (Clarkson, 2004:155). Neo-liberals promised those who reformed their economic policies that liberalizing national economies was the best way for countries to get out of debt, and to improve their economic prosperity. Structural Adjustment policies administered through the IMF and World Bank, were important components of the Washington Consensus, and forced recipients (mainly developing countries) to privatize public services, reduce government spending, and open up domestic markets to international competition, including agricultural sectors (Wood, 1999:133).

By demanding that countries refrain from managing the economic activities in certain economic sectors like education, health and agriculture, institutionalized neo-liberalism through the World Bank, IMF and the *World Trade Organization* (WTO) has helped to expand markets and profits for corporations, while impoverishing the most vulnerable members of society (Cox, 1999:22). Marjorie Cohen describes the neo-liberal model of global capitalism that emerged with the Washington Consensus as ‘vampire capitalism’ because it aims to drain the life from the welfare state and have its functions performed

by the market (Cohen, 1997:30). The US has prospered from the liberalization of sectors it specializes in (investment, finance, agricultural exports), while many developing countries are now in further debt than ever before (Brodie, 2004:14). Much of the costs of restructuring fell onto the unpaid economy, disproportionately affecting women's economic and social wellbeing (Elson, 1991; Collins, 1995; Brodie, 2004; Cohen and Brodie, 2007). In essence, the Washington Consensus took away the ability for many countries to manage economic activities based on the needs of their own citizens and instead protects the rights of capital (private property) (Marchuk, 1991; Gill, 1992).

The institutionalization of neo-liberalism and its privileging of corporate rights over democratic rights of citizens have informed a very different approach to organic agriculture than the organic philosophy prescribes. As corporations have realized the profit potential of organic food, they have actively reformulated the definition of organic so that it allows for the expansion of markets for organic products, while reducing the importance of the social and environmental goods incurred throughout the organic production process. Advocates of the instrumental definition of organic have used the logic of neo-liberalism to justify the globalization of production processes and to legitimize the idea that transnational corporations (through their involvement in organic agriculture) can be ethical market actors.

The focus on the qualities of the end, material product by corporations has allowed them to use many of the same strategies as corporate actors in the conventional sector to concentrate profits and to globalize production processes to reduce overhead costs. Since price continues to be the concern of mainstream consumers, the only way for corporate actors to expand the market for organic products is to lower the price passed onto the

consumer (Synovate, 2003; Hallam, 2003:185; Walnut Acres, 2005). Practicing organic agriculture based on an instrumental definition allows corporate actors to externalize the social and environmental costs incurred during the production process, while still producing an 'organic' product. In this way, corporate actors using the instrumental definition of organic are able to out-compete those adhering to the organic philosophy, and capture a greater share of expanding markets in organic food.

Since the instrumental interpretation of the definition of organic does not consider how organic food is distributed as integral to the end product's qualities, a good can still be considered organic even if it is not distributed through, local means. Under the premise that expanding markets for organic products encourages organic production methods, the corporate approach to organic food production encourages the sale of organic products through conventional distributional channels like supermarket chains (Thomson, 1998). By using the instrumental definition of organic, organic products are easily incorporated into conventional supermarkets, which capitalize on growing consumer concerns about food safety by offering organic foods. In the US, for example, since 2000, consumers now purchase almost half of organic products through conventional supermarkets, while in Canada, in 2003 between 45-50% of organic products were sold through conventional retailers (Murdoch and Miele, 2000:478; Dimitri and Greene, 2002:2; Macey, 2004:25).

Corporate actors engaged in organic production processes claim that they provide consumers with ethical options compared to conventionally produced food. Corporate actors in the organic food sector argue that the overall increase in the consumption of organic food is environmentally beneficial, because it means that less synthetic chemicals

and GMOs are released into the environment, making organic food a more environmentally friendly option over conventionally produced foods (OTA, 2006). The emphasis upon the end product, orients the corporate organic philosophy towards promoting regulations that protect the integrity of the end product, like ‘certified’ organic labels that justify the premium price (e.g., no GMOs or synthetic chemicals), while allowing those who practice it, to claim corporate organic food is equally environmentally friendly as organic food produced in a more manner (Willer and Yussefi, 2004). Formal regulations pertaining to ‘environmentally related issues’ are embodied in transnationalized standards and rules and are supported by corporate actors because the transnational rules (following the logic of neo-liberalism) do not include issues of process (Lohr and Krissoff, 2000; DeLind, 2000).

Despite the environmental damage done through transporting goods around the world, corporate actors justify the expansion of distances between nodes in the organic production process as essential to meet consumer demand for organic food that is not grown in their bioregion. Because local supply chains cannot generate sufficient quantities of organic products that are demanded (Macey, 2004), the instrumental definition of organic serves to justify globally integrated supply chains for the purpose of increasing variety and supply of goods to consumers, who are also willing and able to pay a premium price for food. Global transportation networks are argued to be necessary to meet consumer demand for organic products, which remain environmentally responsible, despite their reliance upon non-renewable resources that contribute negatively to the environment (Bentley and Barker, 2005).

In her book *Empire of Capital*, Ellen Meiksins Wood addresses the notion of ‘ethical’ corporations in a capitalist system. She states that, “even the most ‘responsible’ corporation cannot escape [the] compulsions [of putting exchange value before use value], but must follow the laws of the market in order to survive—which inevitably means putting profit above all other considerations, with all its wasteful and destructive consequences” (Wood, 1999:14). Despite the ethical rhetoric, the primary reason why corporate actors engage in organic food supply chains is to encourage the expansion of markets to accumulate more profits from the sales of organic food. Corporate actors have applied the neo-liberal logic that currently dominates the global economy in an effort to make organic food’s insertion into the global economy much easier. In essence, the corporate approach to organic agriculture undermines the substantive elements of the organic philosophy that identify elements of the process as vital to what makes a good organic.

Although the expansion of organic agriculture has positive environmental outcomes in terms of reducing the use of synthetic chemicals, much of the environmental goods are reduced through the incorporation of organic food into conventional transportation networks. The corporate approach to organic production processes has been met with increased success in meeting consumer demands through free, open markets but it has also hollowed out the definition of ‘organic’ so that it only refers to the qualities of the end, material product with little consideration for the social and environmental goods. Today, the organic label refers to the qualities of the material, end-product, and tells consumers very little about who produced it, how it was produced and the distance it travelled to reach them. By adhering to an instrumental definition of organic, corporate

actors undermine the commitment practitioners of organic agriculture have made towards including social relations and environmental principles as integral parts to economic processes in organic agriculture and to the very definition of 'organic'.

Conclusion

Early practitioners of organic agriculture were aware of rising corporate interest in organic agriculture as early as the 1970s (Belasco, 1989:99), but it is difficult to determine whether they anticipated how the involvement of corporations in the organic sector and rising consumer demand would present an ideological challenge to the viability of the organic philosophy. Many early advocates following Howard and Rodale's ideas wanted organic techniques to gain in popularity and wanted people to purchase more organic products, but they also wanted organic agriculture to be practiced based on principles that pay significant attention to including what happens throughout the production process as an important determinant of organic food's qualities.

Examining the trajectory and bifurcation of the organic philosophy shows that as organic food has gained in popularity and corporations entered the sector, the meaning of 'organic' has fundamentally changed. The two interpretations have split supporters of organic agriculture into those who believe in maintaining organic agriculture's links to the substantive goals of its social movement roots, and a competing interpretation that defines organic according to minimal regulatory definitions based on the material attributes of the end product that allow organic food to be compatible with capital accumulation. The set of organic principles that now exist cater to two different worldviews; one which sees the current global food system, based on the principles of neo-liberalism as environmentally, socially and economically unsustainable. The other

philosophy of organic, views this system as an opportunity to open markets for organic food to profit from its rising popularity. Although not all of those involved in the organic food sector fit neatly into either of these categories, the typology introduced in this chapter provides a better understanding of the two current approaches to organic agriculture. The next chapter discusses the strategies used by corporations to establish the corporate approach to organic production within the organic food sectors of Canada and the US.

Table 2.2: Contending Approaches to Organic Production

	Shared Values	Organic Philosophy	Corporate Approach
World View	promote the expansion of organic agriculture	markets for organic food are determined based on keeping social, environmental and economic relations interconnected	converges with neo-liberal market principles; free, open markets are the best way to spread organic agriculture
Economic Elements	price premium	value stays with producer; short supply chains	expand markets, accumulate profits
Environmental Elements	no GMOs or synthetic inputs	poly-culture/ biodiversity; small-scale production; localized supply chains	reduction of GMOs and synthetic inputs into the environment
Social Elements		democratic, grassroots, decision-making; producer-centred	

CHAPTER 3: BUSINESS AS USUAL? CORPORATE STRATEGIES IN THE ORGANIC FOOD SECTOR

Introduction

The year 2000 proved to be a landmark year for the organic food business in Canada and the US. 1999 saw twelve major corporate acquisitions of organic firms and by the end of 2000, there had been thirteen further major acquisitions of organic firms in the US. Interest in the organic food sector since then, has not waned -- while the acquisition rate has decreased, almost every major agro-food corporation now holds a financial stake in the organic food industry (see Appendix 1). But if the corporate activity observed today in the organic food sector seems sudden, dramatic and anything but 'business as usual', a closer examination of the strategies used to corporatize the organic sector reveals that they are in fact, *not* new. Many of the corporate activities in the organic sector have their origins in the conventional agro-food sector, though several corporate actors in the organic food sector began as small scale businesses within the sector, such as *WholeFoods Markets* (WFM). It is the task of this chapter to assess the ongoing process of corporatization in the organic sector, looking at how corporations have effectively restructured the conventional agro-food sector through industrializing and transnationalizing production processes. This chapter then focuses on specific corporate strategies used by *Transnational Corporations* (TNCs) to concentrate ownership and profits in the organic sector. To conclude, the discussion shifts to examine the implications for the organic sector as the corporate approach to organic production is successfully put into practice.

Restructuring the Agro-food Sector: From Agriculture to Agribusiness

Understanding the cooperative relationship between the state and business is vital to understanding why corporations became interested in organic agriculture in the late 1990s. This section explores the emergence and governmental support for industrialized agriculture and how the preference for industrialized forms of agriculture over more socially and environmentally sustainable food production has facilitated the corporatization of the food system in North America (Friedmann, 1993; Friedmann and McMichael, 1989). This section discusses the concepts of appropriationism and substitutionism and how these industrializing processes have transformed the agricultural sector and are now used in the organic sector. Finally, this section argues that once corporations consolidated the conventional food sector and market growth slowed, their interests in expanding markets and profits drew them toward the natural and health food sector.

Governments in both the US and Canada have supported their domestic agricultural sectors since the early twentieth century treating agriculture as a ‘domestic issue’. National governments created a number of programmes for agriculture after having experienced the 1930s ‘dust bowl’ that was part of the Great Depression in North America. To remedy the mass unemployment and devastation to the agricultural sector, both the US and Canadian governments instituted programmes that financially supported farmers to assure that the agricultural sectors experienced some degree of economic security from market forces and ‘forces of nature’, such as droughts and pestilence.

In the early 1940s, agriculture was viewed by national governments as serving a national interest; some food production fed domestic populations, while other agricultural sectors were directed towards export markets. Because the Bretton Woods global trade

regime accounted for the need of states to support and protect their agricultural sectors, national governments could pursue agricultural policies as they saw fit (Friedmann and McMichael, 1989). National governments created a system of support for farmers to help stabilize their incomes and control the supply of commodities to stabilize prices (Basran and Hay, 1988; Cohn, 1990).

Although the types of agricultural supports in Canada are diverse, one of the major distinctions of Canada's support system is the utilization of supply-side management policies. As part of the development of a stable agricultural sector, the Canadian government set up a number of support systems for farmers (Atkins and Bowler, 2001:90; Friedmann, 1993). Supply-side management policies were meant to control the supply of particular commodities deemed economically important to national economic strategies thereby keeping prices relatively stable. Canada also instituted supply side management programmes that stabilized commodity prices for farmers in various sub-sectors such as dairy and poultry. Marketing boards such as the dairy board were set up to manage the supply of dairy for domestic consumption. Marketing boards for poultry and pork were set up to control the supply of products on the market to stabilize the prices that farmers received. Other sub-sectors like wheat and grains (mainly concentrated in Western Canada) that sell products on the world market did not receive similar stabilizing payments as those who produced for the domestic market. Similar to domestically oriented sub-sectors, wheat does have a marketing board, but it is not a form of subsidization of farmer's incomes (Canadian Wheat Board, 2007).

The US also embarked on stabilization policies but they differ in some significant respects from Canada's agricultural support programmes of the post war period. The US,

as with Canada, has a number of diverse programmes for agricultural sectors. One of the major distinctions between the US and Canada's programmes, is the US' use of price supports. In the post-war era, the US government adopted a system of price supports that guaranteed farmers a stable price for their commodities when difficult economic times arose; in years of overproduction the government agreed to buy the excess (USDS, 2006). With the passing of the Agricultural Adjustment Act in 1933, a system of price supports, acreage controls and government loans to farmers was established. Some commodity producers such as wheat producers were given government funds to limit amount of commodities produced to keep prices stable. The income supports based on market prices subsidized farmer's incomes when commodity prices fell (Knutson et al., 2007:88). In the dairy sector, producers are guaranteed government funding by the government purchasing the product from processors at a predetermined price. Certain agricultural sub-sectors that were important exports for the US continue to receive government support such as wheat, cotton, corn, rice, peanuts and soybeans.

Government support for agricultural sectors has changed and shifted overtime, but it was not until the late 1970s that the Canadian and American governments' attitude towards agriculture fundamentally changed (Wolfe, 1998). Instead of treating agriculture as vital to food security and separate from all other sectors of the economy, the growing acceptance of neo-liberal market principles as the best way to manage *all* economic sectors gained support by both governments. This signalled a paradigm shift from national economic strategies towards managing economies based on market rationality (McBride, 2001). Those faced with the pressures to liberalize agricultural production have been forced to either 'get big, or get out' (Berry, 1977:41).

In the 1980s, the distinct ways Canada and the US support their agricultural sectors have led to a number of disputes between the trading partners, each claiming that the others' policies distort trade (Cohn, 1992). Canada, and many other countries, often criticize US export subsidies (such as those for corn and rice) claiming that they are illiberal, while the US has raised concerns over the legitimacy of Canada's marketing boards, such as the Wheat Board (Cohn, 1990:11). Despite the different ways the US and Canada support their agricultural sectors, both countries understand industrialized forms of agriculture as the most economically efficient and effective way of producing food for domestic consumption and exports abroad.

Yet, despite the shift in governmental attitudes towards the societal purpose of agriculture, financial support for some agricultural sectors still remains intact. In Canada, government programmes still exist for dairy and pork, while export subsidies are still applied to various agricultural sub-sectors in the US, like wheat and rice. The continuing governmental support programmes are highly contentious issues in WTO trade negotiations and have, to date, not been resolved. Although government support programmes still exist, the changing view that agriculture is a sector of the economy that primarily contributes to economic growth rather than domestic goals, has led to changes in the structure of food production (Coleman et al., 2004:3). Once mainly consisting of numerous small-scale farming establishments, today corporate actors have become heavily involved in various stages of the food supply chain.

When the American and Canadian governments created systems of protection for agricultural producers and the national food supply from fluctuating market prices and forces of nature, they both favoured industrialized forms of agricultural production.

Instead of protecting small-scale, poly-cultural family farms that had characterized previous eras, national governments favoured industrialized production as the most efficient, way of producing food. Industrialized agriculture in contrast to less-intensive types of food production is characterized by a number of large-scale businesses that provide farmers with farming implements like tractors and fertilizer, while also processing the commodities grown on the farm. The advancement of food technologies (i.e., chemical preservatives, food colourings) was also an important component to the spread of industrial food production (Bonanno et al. eds., 1994).

Industrialized forms of producing food are based on the Fordist principles of mass production and mass consumption. A principal characteristic of mass systems of production is the imperative of uniformity and the standardization of inputs to supply the processing stage with raw materials (Friedmann, 1991:74). Industrialized agriculture can be defined as a system of food production that is based on monoculture, and mechanized and chemicalized inputs. On mechanized farms that use monoculture, the necessary farm labour is reduced, as human labour is replaced with machine power (Steffen, 1972:5). Industrial agriculture produces an abundance of commodities the surplus of which could be sold on the global market, such as wheat and corn.

Partially due to the economic reforms that were part of the Washington Consensus, which eased restrictions on the movement of financial flows, corporations began to consolidate various sections of the food chain in the 1980s. Heffernan and Constance have labelled the corporate consolidation of ownership in the food sector that followed the Washington Consensus' prescription of deregulating global finance and investment as 'merger mania' (1994:39). Mergers created huge corporate conglomerates consisting of a

number of smaller firms with vast amounts of capital to invest to secure market shares, and reduce competition. Today, it is estimated that the production of over 80% of all value-added food products is controlled by 100 firms worldwide (Lang, 2003:18). According to UK food researcher Tim Lang, the majority of the meat, and poultry sectors in the US have been consolidated in the hands of US based TNCs ConAgra, Cargill and Tyson (Lang, 2004:27). Continental, Cargill, ConAgra and ADM, now control 90% of the world's grain trade, while the top thirty food retail corporations, like the US retail giant Wal-Mart, are involved in one-third of global grocery sales (ActionAid International, 2006:4). Despite the rhetoric of free market logic, where a large number of producers compete on a level playing field (perfect competition), corporate agriculture has received a privileged position in public policy, and now agribusiness controls a significant proportion of the production processes in North America.

To explain the capital accumulation and economic restructuring of agriculture evident in North America the 1980s, a group of academics studying agriculture looked to Kautsky's *Agrarian Question* written in 1899 to help them explain how the global restructuring of agriculture was happening (Kautsky, 1988; Bonanno et al. eds., 1994). Although Kautsky's discussion of the transformation of agriculture focused on Europe in the nineteenth century, much of his discussion regarding the industrializing processes used by capital to accumulate profits through the control over production offers a reasonable explanation of the concentration of corporate power in the food system, over a hundred years later in North America. Goodman et al.'s *From Farming to Biotechnology* (1987) reintroduces Kautsky's ideas to explain the massive changes occurring in the food system, from the development and proliferation of biotechnology throughout the food

system, to the decline of the family farm during the 1980s *Farm Crisis*. Goodman et al. (1987) use Kautsky's notion that for capital to reduce the risks associated with agriculture it must reshape farming processes, so that food production can take place in a factory setting (or use industrial modes of production), which offers more stability and uniformity of supply (Mann, 1990; Goodman and Redclift, 1997).

Goodman et al. (1987) identify the processes *appropriationism* and *substitutionism* that Kautsky discusses to explain how capital industrialized agriculture and concentrated ownership. Appropriationism involves corporations gaining ownership over aspects of production from nature, so as to control them and concentrate profits. An example of appropriationism is the vertical integration of other parts of the supply chain under the ownership of agro-food corporations that supply inputs to other nodes in the agro-food supply chain. Corporations purchase family farms to consolidate land under centralized ownership and manage agricultural establishments according to business principles. Vertical integration is also an effective way of limiting future competition. By purchasing segments of the supply chain like seed distribution, a corporation can control what farms are able to purchase seeds from them (Howard, 2006). This way, agricultural production processes are restructured so that they are part of an industrial agricultural system that can be controlled and maintained by agro-food companies.

In Sarah Whatmore's (2002) examination of the dominant role of agribusiness in the global agro-food system, she uses Goodman et al.'s concept of *substitutionism* to explain how agro-food corporations manipulate stages in the production process of agriculture to move value to the stages in the supply chain that they dominate. The process of substitutionism is most effective in highly intensive agro-food processing systems where

“...agricultural products...[are] reduced to an industrial input, and then replaced by fabricated or synthetic non-agricultural components in food manufacturing”

(Whatmore, 2002:62; Friedmann, 1994:263). In other words, naturally occurring production processes are disciplined so as to control and aspects of production previously subject to natural processes. A prominent example of substitutionism is the conversion of corn into high-fructose syrup that is added to processed food products. Today, 45% of all corn produced in the US is converted into high-fructose syrup (a five-fold increase in the last thirty years), as high fructose corn syrup is a main ingredient in many processed foods, from candy bars to fruit-derived juices (McMichael, 2004:7). Substituting manufactured ingredients for natural ingredients is therefore a good way to concentrate profits in the processing stage of production because the need for natural processes is diminished.

Through the processes of appropriationism and substitutionism, profits are moved off of the farm and are concentrated further along the supply chain (processing, distribution and retailing sectors), which are predominantly controlled by agribusiness. As a result of appropriating and substituting industrialized processes with natural ones, profits are now highly concentrated in the processing and distribution sectors of the agro-food production system. For example, the value producers receive from retail food sales has steadily declined in the past three decades, with the exception of processed fruits and vegetables, which only declined by 2% between 1993 and 2000 (Table 3.1).

Table 3.1: Farmers' Share of the Retail Food Dollar (US)

Select Commodities	1970	1993	2000
Cereal and Baked Products	16%	7%	5%
Processed fruits and vegetables	19%	19%	17%
Choice Beef	64%	56%	44%
Pork	51%	37%	30%
White Bread	9%	5%	5%
Market Basket of food products	37%	26%	20%

Source:Heffernan and Hendrickson, 2003.

Although events like the 1970s oil crisis and the US-Soviet grain deal undoubtedly contributed to the 'Farm Crisis' of the 1980s (Kneen, 1989; Buttel and LaRamee, 1991; Cohn, 1990), the growing power of corporations involved in the food system also played a major role in the decline of family farms in both Canada and the US. There has been a steady decline in the number of individually owned and managed farms in Canada and the US. Between 1961 and 1971 the number of individually owned farms in Canada declined by 115, 000, while in the US between 1964 and 1978, the number of farms declined by 900, 000 (Statistics Canada, Series M12-22; USDA, 2002b). Table 3.2 shows that in both Canada and the US, since the early 1980s the total number of farms has steadily declined, while the average area in acres increasing in Canada, and remaining fairly stable in the US.

Table 3.2 Total Number of Conventional Farms: Area (in Acres), Total Land Under Cultivation (1981-2002)

		1981	1986	1991	1996	2001
Canada	Total Number of Farms	318 361	293 089	280 043	276 548	246 923
	Average Area in Acres	207	231	242	246	273
	Total Land under Cultivation (in hectares)		67 825 757	67 753 700	68 054 956	67 502 466
		1982	1987	1992	1997*	2002*
United States	Total Number of Farms	2 240 976	2 087 759	1 925 300	1 911 859	2 128 982
	Average Area in Acres	440	462	491	487	441
	Total Land under Cultivation (in hectares)	399 424 000	390 166 000	382 832 000	386 070 000	379 959 000

Sources: Statistics Canada, 2004; USDA, 2004.

*Adjusted for coverage.

1 hectare = 2.471 acres

More recent statistics show that the trend of declining numbers of farms in Canada and the US continues. Between 2001 and 2006, the number of Canadian farms declined by 7.1% (Statistics Canada, 2007), while the decline was smaller in the US between 2001 and 2005, with the number of farms declining by 2.5% (Hoppe and Banker, 2006). The decline in the numbers of individual-owned farms in the US however, is accompanied by a slight decline in land devoted to agriculture. In Canada, the land devoted to agricultural production remained between 67 and 68 million hectares from 1996 to 2006 (Statistics Canada, 2007), while in the US the land devoted to agriculture between 1997 and 2002 has declined from approximately 386 million to 379 million hectares.

The shift from large rural farming populations to a small number of corporate-run farms has led to a major shift in employment in rural areas. The shift in the agricultural labour market has been characterized as “labour displacement and replacement,” meaning the replacement of uncommodified family labour with wage labour (Friedmann, 1978). Some family farms converted to managerial styles of ‘lean’ production to compete with corporate farms, which often results in the need for off-farm employment of farmers and their families. The labour on corporate farms that cannot be performed by machines is often done by temporary seasonal workers, who are cheaper than local workers to employ (Smith et al., 2002:48). Through the *Seasonal Agricultural Worker Programme*, Canada had over 18, 000 foreign migrant workers in the agricultural sector in 2002 (Justica, 2006), while in 2004, it was estimated that there were over 2 million foreign migrant farm workers in the US (Ahn, Moore and Parker, 2004:1).

Much of the employment in agriculture that used to be situated on small-scale farms, according to Statistics Canada, has shifted from the production segment of agriculture, or what is labelled the *agriculture group* (e.g., farm workers, veterinarians), to the service segment or the *agro-food group* (workers in food retail, processing food and beverage services) (Keith, 2003:4). By 1996, 77% of all employment in the Canadian agro-food sector was in the agro-food group, showing a significant shift in employment from primary stages of the agro-food supply chain to processing and distribution stages (Keith, 2003:7). Statistics Canada reports in its February 2002 issue of *Perspectives*, that while farm employment has fallen, and output has not, farmers have not seen an increase in profits since 1996 (Statistics Canada, 2002b). But the profits that have been made from agriculture are highly concentrated in the Canadian sector. In 2001, the largest farms in

Canada (5% of the total) earned one-third of the total farm revenues (Qualman and Wiebe, 2003:15). In the US, a 2005 USDA report on agriculture found that large and very large farms make up 9% of the total number of farms, but account for 73% of farms sales (Hoppe and Banker, 2006). The National Farmer's Union is very critical of the shift in agricultural production from small-scale farms to large-scale farms charging, "the governments of Canada have surrendered much control over agriculture to transnational corporations. Current government policy, in effect if not intent, is often no more than the promotion of these corporations' agendas...[which]...conflict with the best interests of farmers, farm families, rural communities, as well as with those of consumers" (NFU, 2005).¹¹

Beyond further intensification of industrializing processes on the farm, another major strategy used by corporations is through the development of new food products and the expansion of markets for these products. As Marion Nestle argues in *Food Politics*, the conventional agro-food corporations have aggressively engaged in the development and promotion of healthier food products to "...overcome the infamously slow growth of the food industry as a whole" in the 1980s (Nestle, 2003:318). What aided in the corporate drive to invest in the natural and health food market was also facilitated by the rise in cases of tainted and unsafe food coming out of the industrialized, globalized food system.

Food safety scares throughout the globalized food system have called into question the industrializing processes used by agribusiness. Events such as the E. coli crisis of the 1980s, the 1989 'Alar food scare'¹², the BSE and botulism cases, and bird flu have

¹¹ The National Farmer's Union represents all types of farmers (though mostly small-scale) in Canada and the US. The NFU supports farmers who practice sustainable, organic and conventional agriculture.

¹² The Alar food scare occurred when high levels of the chemical were found in apples circulating through the US food system.

highlighted the perils of the globalized food system. Reports of tainted and unsafe food have made people around the world ask questions about where their food is coming from, and what is happening to it in the process (Friedland, 1994:225). As a result, consumers increasingly demand traceable, healthier, cleaner, safer and more ‘natural’ products from the agro-food sector (Murdoch and Miele, 2000:478; Levenstein, 1994:162).

The food dangers created through the corporatized, globalized food system have led to the creation of a growing market niche for a ‘natural’ and organic food market. Agro-food corporations now view the natural and organic food market as a new market to exploit, as concerned consumers are willing to pay a premium price for what they perceive of as ‘safe food’. The result has been the colonization of the organic sector by corporations using similar strategies as applied in the conventional agro-food sector throughout the post-war period.

Conventional Corporate Strategies Applied to the Organic Sector

As far back as 1969, a poll conducted by *National Analysts Inc.* on ‘Americans’ health practices and opinions’ indicated that a majority of Americans believed foods grown using natural techniques were more nutritious than those grown with chemicals (Levenstein, 1994:163). Although there continues to be controversy over whether organic food is indeed safer and more nutritious than conventional food, corporations are eager to capitalize on consumer fears about food safety. This section discusses what agro-food researcher Phil Howard (2006) has identified as the three principal means by which organic food has been integrated into the conventional agro-food sector: acquisitions by agro-food companies, the forging of relationships built through strategic alliances and the introduction of organic brand name products. This section shows how

agro-food companies have become very successful in applying conventional corporate strategies to the organic sector, as consumer demand continues to rise and the global market for organic products continues to expand.

Acquisitions-Vertical and Horizontal Integration

The acquisition of firms producing organic food by conventional agro-food companies began in the early 1980s and has taken place through the two processes of: vertical and horizontal integration (see Appendix 1). As mentioned, vertical integration occurs when one firm invests in another firm that specializes in other stages of the supply chain; for example, an agro-food processor acquiring a seed distributor. Through vertical integration, outputs from one stage of the supply chain can serve as inputs for another stage. Vertical integration brings all the production processes in a supply chain under centralized management, thereby reducing uncertainty and transaction costs, while limiting competition (Cohn, 2002:333). US bio-tech corporation *Monsanto*, for example, is one of the biggest TNCs in the agro-food sector, and has acquired a number of small firms to gain market shares and exert control over segments of the agro-food supply chain (Otero, 1991). According to a 1998 article in *Canadian Business*, by 1998, *Monsanto* controlled 88% of the GM seed market (Reynolds, 1999). Together with other agro-food companies such as *Cargill*, *Continental* and *ConAgra*, *Monsanto* now vertically controls large segments of the conventional agro-food supply chain, all the way from 'seed to shelf' (Heffernan and Constance, 1994; Lehman and Krebs, 1996).

Vertical integration has occurred to varying degrees in the organic food sector and vertically integrated supply chains include individual farmers, cooperatives, wholesalers, processors and retailers (DeLind, 2000:202). An example of the vertical integration of

organic firms into the conventional agro-food sector is US-based *M&M Mars*' (best known for its snack foods) purchase of the organic seed company *Seeds of Change* in 1997. In the case of *M&M Mars*, the acquisition of *Seeds of Change* is not meant to supply its other subsidiaries, but to gain market share in a primary stage of the organic supply chain. *M&M Mars* has no intention of converting its product lines to conform to organic regulatory standards, so investing in *Seeds of Change* is best understood as a strategy to profit from the sales of organic seeds, without investing in the other elements of the organic food sector. To date, the acquisition of *Seeds of Change* is the sole effort by *M&M Mars* to incorporate organic firms into its business strategy.

One of the best current examples of a transnational agro-food corporation attempting to vertically integrate organic firms is Canadian-based *SunOpta*'s purchasing of businesses in both Canada and the US. *SunOpta*, previously named *Stake Technologies*, is the largest provider of organic soy in North America, and is also involved in producing organic corn. It supplies organic feed to organic poultry producers in both Canada and the US, and is the only large-scale supplier of organic chickens in Canada (Sligh and Christman, 2003:18). Since 2002, *SunOpta* has acquired three Canadian organic processors in an attempt to consolidate control over that segment of the organic sector: *Simply Organic*, *Organic Kitchen*, and *Kettle Valley Dried Fruit Ltd.* (*SunOpta*, 2003:44-45).

Although *SunOpta* mainly concentrates in primary processing, it has also expanded its portfolio to organic distributors in Canada. *SunOpta* has acquired three Canadian organic distributors: *Distribue-Vie (Que)*, *Snapdragon Natural Foods Inc.*, *Wild West Organic Harvest* and *Pro-Organics*. All of the organic processors that *SunOpta*

purchased used to be small, independently owned firms. “Alice”, a representative of one of the Canadian organic processors purchased by *SunOpta*, stated that corporate interest in the Canadian organic sector is not as strong as in the US, as corporate interests do not have as much power in Canada (PC1, Feb. 8, 2005). But *SunOpta*’s business strategy does reflect similar strategies used by US-based corporations. Like other big corporations in the US, *SunOpta* purchases smaller firms in the organic sector to consolidate ownership over a significant segment of the Canadian organic sector. In an interview, “Pete”, a manager of a member-supported food co-operative in Vancouver that carries organic products, said that his co-op used to get a lot of its products from *ProOrganics* and *Wild West Organic Harvest*, until *Wild West* opened up its own organic retail store across the street from the co-op after *SunOpta*’s purchased both firms. Now, the co-op sources its products from elsewhere. Instead of continuing to work with other small businesses involved in the organic sector, *SunOpta* has purchased businesses to directly compete with businesses that it once supplied with organic products (PC5, Apr. 14, 2005).

According to *SunOpta*’s 2003 annual report, “*SunOpta* has become the largest distributor of organic fresh foods in Canada and is quickly reaching its objective of becoming the first national distributor, integrated from organic fresh foods, to grocery, to dairy and dairy alternatives” (*SunOpta*, 2003:14). *SunOpta* has achieved this through its internal growth strategy, which includes “aggressive acquisitions” of many small-scale Canadian companies (*SunOpta*, 2003:25). Through its acquisition of organic firms at various stages of the supply chain, *SunOpta* has vertically integrated a number of sub-

sectors, such as organic soy, and continues to have the mandate of further vertical integration in Canada.

In California, a number of large-scale organic farming establishments have vertically integrated from the field to the grocery store shelf. As Pollan reports in 2001, mega-farms (like *Earthbound Farms* and *CalOrganics/Greenways*) have consolidated ownership over half of the \$400 million (US) in sales the organic produce sector in California generates (Pollan, 2001). *Greenways Organic* is a 2, 000 acre organic produce operation that not only grows organic produce, but also controls the packaging stages of production as well. *Greenways* products are sold in both the US and Canada. Like *Greenways Organic*, many organic farms are now part of transnational supply chains that are in the process of further expansion. *Earthbound Farms* is the biggest producer of bagged fruits and vegetables in North America with over 26, 000 acres of agricultural land in California, Arizona and Mexico (Pollan, 2006). *Earthbound Farms* has also vertically integrated (from 'seed to salad') into *Natural Selection Foods*, and contracts 200 growers throughout California (Howard, 2006:18).

While vertical integration is a common corporate strategy to gain control over the organic sector, horizontal integration has also been observed as a more popular way of acquiring organic firms. Horizontal integration refers to the acquisition of firms that are involved in similar stages of the supply chain, and can also include the expansion of a firm's activities (Howard, 2006). The consolidation of ownership of organic firms through horizontal integration by transnational agro-food companies thus concentrates the profits from sales of organic food without having to make the costly changes

necessary to integrate organic production processes into conventional agro-food supply chains.

Horizontal integration in the organic food sector is occurring at all stages of the supply chain, including the production of organic produce. In 2005, 26% of Canadian organic farms earn less than \$10, 000, while 46% are considered 'large' earning over \$50, 000 in 2005. Most of these large organic farms (almost 71%) are located in Saskatchewan (Macey, 2004:4). But most of the organic crops like wheat, grown on the large organic farms in Canada do not serve domestic markets. Instead, they are bound for the US for further processing.

Today, most of the organic products sold in Canada and the US travel vast distances; many come from California, which a representative for *SunOpta* referred to as the 'salad bowl' of North America (PC3, Mar. 22, 2005). Although California does not represent all state's organic sectors, it is the source of a significant proportion of organic produce for North America. Statistics gathered by the *Agricultural Issues Centre* at the University of California, shows that the trend of corporatization of organic agriculture is fully underway in California. In 2000, only 1 farm grossed \$1 million or above in that year, but that one farm compromised 41% of sales of organic products for the state. In 2005, there were 4 farms grossing over \$1 million, and the percentage of gross sales grew to 67% (Klonsky and Richter, 2007:11).

A prominent example of the horizontal integration of organic firms at another stage of the production process is *Monsanto's* acquisition of the organic seed breeder *Seminis* in 2005. This move by *Monsanto* has further consolidated the seed sector by adding organic seeds to the list of agricultural inputs under *Monsanto's* control (Organic Monitor,

2005a).¹³ While *Monsanto*'s involvement in the conventional agro-food sector is formidable, its involvement in the organic sector pales in comparison to the *Hain-Celestial Group, Inc.*, a conventional agro-food processor that has shifted its business strategy to become the major organic processor in North America. *Hain* is one of the most aggressive agro-food corporations currently acquiring organic firms through horizontal integration in both Canada and the US.

Before *Celestial Seasonings* (CS) became part of *the Hain Food Group*, it was one of the first independent natural food processors in the US, established in 1970 by Mo Siegel. CS specializes in herbal teas and supplying consumers with 'ecologically sound products' from its Boulder, Colorado base through food co-operatives and health food stores. In the spirit of the libertarianism associated with early alternative agricultural movements, Siegel was intent on keeping unionism out of CS by providing his workers with 'better benefits than any union could' (Belasco, 1989:99-100). By 1978, CS employed over 200 people and made \$9 million in profits. CS became so large that, in the late 1970s, it stopped dealing with food co-operatives in the US altogether (Belasco, 1989:99). In that same year, CS expanded its enterprises and developed new overseas supply chains that included production facilities and distributional outlets around the world. It was one of the first US businesses associated with the alternative food movement to go global. Purchased by *Dart* and *Kraft* in 1984, CS went on to become worth \$10 million, while it was still considered by its founder to be a beacon for the alternative food economy.¹⁴ CS

¹³ Monsanto/Pharmacia, together with Novartis, Aventis, Astra Zenca and Du Pont control 32% of the global seed market, and 100% of the transgenic seed market. See Shiva, 2000.

¹⁴ Kraft/Philip Morris also acquired Canadian based LifeStream Foods in the 1980s. LifeStream was established by Arran Stephens in 1971, and had sales that year were \$9 million (CAN), making LifeStream one of the most profitable natural food lines in Canada (Nature's Path, 2007).

was purchased in 2000 by *the Hain Food Group* that created the *Hain Celestial Group* (Hain-Celestial, 2005a).

Before acquiring CS, the *Hain Food Group* purchased twelve smaller organic processing firms in Canada and the US through out the 1990s. After acquiring CS, the newly named *Hain-Celestial* went on to acquire sixteen more organic firms (see Appendix 1). The strategy of horizontally integrating organic firms under *Hain's* ownership has proven to be highly profitable. Four years after *Hain* joined forces with CS, *Hain-Celestial* collected \$544 million in profits in 2004 (Hain-Celestial, 2005a; Organic Monitor, 2005a). Most of *Hain's* organic manufacturing facilities it purchased are located in the US, and most of its organic processing subsidiaries source their raw materials from the US and to a lesser extent Canada (Hain-Celestial, 2005a:5). *Hain's* business strategy is to "...be the leading manufacturer, marketer and seller of natural and organic food...by anticipating and exceeding consumer expectations..." (Hain Celestial, 2005a:1). This strategy includes further purchasing of organic processors, as expressed by *Hain* in its 2004 annual report declaring its interest in acquiring *Spectrum Organic Products*, which it did so in 2005. Through its major corporate investor, *H.J. Heinz* (20% equity), *Hain* has the financial resources to continue its consolidation of the organic processing sector through a strategy of horizontal integration. *Hain* now exerts a significant amount of control over the production processes of its organic firms, and demands uniformity, standardization and timely delivery of inputs to maintain its competitive edge.

Another TNC that has horizontally integrated organic firms into its business activities is US-based *Dean Foods*. *Dean Foods* has aggressively acquired the majority of organic

milk producers in the US in an effort to secure greater market share, beginning with the purchase of *Organic Cow of Vermont* in 1999, *White Wave* in 2002 and *Horizon Dairy* in 2004. *Horizon Dairy* and *White Wave* collectively control 60% of the organic milk sector in both Canada and the US (Howard, 2006:18). Other conventional agro-food companies, such as *Dole* and *Chiquita*, have also used similar strategies of consolidating organic sub-sectors. Together, *Dole* and *Chiquita* have heavily invested in the primary stage of organic supply chains, and they now collectively control 50% of the world's organic banana trade, incorporating organic products into their existing corporate strategies (MacDonald, 2004:L8).

General Mills is another conventional agro-food processor that has acquired numerous organic processing firms and has horizontally integrated them under its management. *General Mills'* purchases of organic processors *Cascadian Farms* and *Muir Glen* has allowed both firms to expand in order to meet rising consumer demand for processed organic products. With the purchase of *Cascadian Farms* by a large conventional agro-food processor such as *General Mills*, the firm has grown so large that it no longer sources its raw materials from the US, where it was first established. As Pollan explains, "Cascadian Farms...the corporation can't even afford to use produce from Cascadian Farm the farm anymore: it's too small...the company buys...from as far away as Chile" (Pollan, 2001).

Transnationalized organic supply chains help to supply the organic market in Canada and the US, as domestic production cannot keep up with demand. The move towards an international division of labour has become more prevalent as transnational agro-food corporations increasingly control organic firms. The success of using corporate strategies

that integrate pre-existing firms into companies outside of the organic food sector is evident from the rush to secure a market share in organic products in the early 2000s (Table 3.3).

Table 3.3: Top Ten Conventional Food Manufacturers: Investment in Organic Food

Manufacturers (Alphabetical Order)	Acquisitioned /Hold Equity in Organic/ Natural Food Firms	Date of first Acquisition/ Purchase of Equity
Cadbury-Schweppes (UK)†	Yes	2002
Coca-Cola (USA)	Yes	2001
ConAgra (USA)	Yes	2000
Danone (FRA)	Yes	2001
Kraft (USA)	Yes	2000
Masterfoods/ Mars (USA)	Yes	1997
Nestle (CH)	No	
Pepsico (USA)	No*	2003
Tyson (USA)	No*	2001
Unilever (UK/NL)	Yes	2000

* introduced in-house brand

† indicates nationality of ownership (home nation)

Sources: Lang et al., 2006; Howard, 2005; Glover, 2005; Draffin, 2004; Organic Monitor, 2005a; 2005b.

Strategic Alliances

Strategic alliances are important ways agro-food corporations enter into cooperative relationships with other firms without purchasing them. Strategic alliances are established through the coordination of a few firms to manage stages of supply chains, from the seed production and genetic manipulation, to the manufacturing, packaging and the sale of agro-food products (Kneen, 1989; Bonanno et al. eds., 1994). Firms that participate in strategic alliances agree to share resources regarding a particular project that they both will financially benefit from. When a firm participates in a strategic alliance with another firm, it allows both firms to adjust to new market conditions more quickly than if they were to enter a market by themselves. For this reason, it has been

argued by Sparling and Cook in their examination of strategic alliances between agro-food companies under the NAFTA, that strategic alliances are less financially risky than vertical or horizontal integration (Sparling and Cook, 2000:91).

William Heffernan, in his examination of corporate activity in the industrialized food system, identifies strategic alliances or *network clusters* that are used to reduce market competition through cooperative behaviour between groups of firms (Heffernan, 1999:3). Network clustering emerged in the 1980s and refers to the oligopolistic concentration of ownership amongst a few corporations and their cooperation with each other to gain market shares. Establishing strategic alliances as a competitive market strategy has made it possible for the market share of the top twenty US food manufacturers to double from 1967 to the early 2000s (Lang, 2003:18).

Strategic alliances differ from vertical integration, as they are relationships between TNCs based on the coordination of production processes and not the centralization of control over all production processes in a supply chain by one TNC. *Cargill* and *IBP*'s relationship is an example of agribusinesses establishing cooperative relationships with one another to control production processes while sharing in the profits. *Cargill* and *IBP* now control 74% of Canadian beef packing plants and the vast majority of beef packing, corn exports, soybean crushing, soybean exports, flour milling and pork packers in the US (Howard, 2006:17). US based agribusiness *ADM* has also made an effort to incorporate Canadian processors into its portfolio and has attained control over 30% of Canadian flour milling capacity in 1995, which expanded to 47% in 2003 (Qualman and Wiebe, 2003:12).

One of the best examples of a strategic alliance in the conventional agro-food sector is the alliance between *Monsanto* and *Cargill*. *Cargill*'s mandate is to increase its size every five to seven years, which includes forging strategic alliances with other agro-food companies (Heffernan, 1999:6). Instead of participating in direct competition with one another, *Monsanto* and *Cargill* have agreed to cooperate by exchanging information while concentrating in separate stages of the supply chain. For example, *Cargill* and *Monsanto* have formed a cluster in which *Monsanto* provides the genetic material and seed, while *Cargill* performs the grain collection and processing (Howard, 2006:18). *Monsanto*'s strategic alliance with *Cargill* has extended to the organic food sector with the establishment of *Cargill*'s strategic alliance with *French Meadow* (a US based organic bakery) in 2002 and *Hain Celestial* in 2003 (Howard, 2005). *Cargill* exclusively supplies its patented "plant sterols" to *Hain* for its *Rice Dream Heart Wise* product line (Cargill Health and Food Technology, 2003).¹⁵

In addition to *Hain* acquiring a number of organic processing firms through horizontal integration, it also participates in strategic alliances with other conventional agro-food corporations. Like its relationship with *Cargill*, *Hain* in 2005 established a strategic alliance with *Yeo Hiap Seng*, a major agro-food processor in Asia. Instead of competing with each other in the market, *Hain*'s relationship with *Yeo Hiap Seng* has allowed *Hain* to be involved in the Asian market "...without too much investment." This strategy has allowed *Hain* "...to determine if the category and the expansion opportunity deserves more investment where we can work synergistically with our existing operations to enhance our overall business" (Hain Celestial Group, 2006). *Hain* has also entered

¹⁵ The consumption of plant sterols, which are considered the 'good' types of cholesterol, have been shown to lower the 'bad' type of cholesterol in humans (IFIC, 2003).

into another strategic alliance under the name of *Hain Pure Protein* with a private equity firm called *Pegasus Capital Advisors* after *Hain* acquired *College Hill Poultry* in 2005. *Hain* will most likely continue its rapid expansion into the organic sector through acquisitions, but also through strategic alliances with firms inside and outside of the agro-food sector. Strategic alliances, then, enable agro-food corporations to gain control over various stages of the organic supply chain without the same financial risks as integrating organic firms through acquisitions.

Brand Introduction

Another strategy used by transnational agro-food corporations to enter the organic sector and boost sales is the diversification of product lines. To meet rising consumer demand for more healthy foods, while maintaining consumer loyalties to particular brands, transnational agro-food corporations in the late 1990s began to make improvements on pre-existing product lines (calorie reduction, addition of nutrients, fat free) and introduced new brands of agro-food products with organic qualities (see Lang and Heasman, 2005; Nestle, 2003). In the agro-food sector, there are two ways a product brand can be introduced: through a food manufacturer or through a food retailer. A manufacturer's brand is the product of the manufacturer and can be distributed throughout retail outlets. A retailer-introduced brand is owned by the retailer and is only distributed through that retailer. Like other firms that are part of the agro-food supply chain, food retailers have the desire to have greater control over pricing to compete with other food retailers (Coleman et al., 2004:42). Most food retailers carry a mix of manufacturer and retailer-introduced brands of food products (Burt and Sparks, 2002).

Agro-food corporations introduce brands for a number of reasons. Food manufacturers introduce their own brands to garner consumer loyalty and wider distribution, but also to differentiate their products from the competitors (Lang and Heasman, 2005:156). Consumers may associate quality with certain food labels, so introducing a new brand may capitalize on pre-existing consumer loyalty. Successful brands gain consumer loyalty because they deliver added value beyond merely meeting the criteria of what constitutes a particular product (Burt, 2000). Once consumer loyalty is established, food manufacturers and retailers can build on this loyalty by increasing the prices of the brand-name products since consumers associate the brand with a certain level of quality and taste that the competition does not possess. Consumer loyalty to a particular brand can also increase the distribution of manufacturers' brands because of consumer demand. Retailers that introduce in-house brands can also capitalize on consumer loyalty and consumers' association of the retail outlet with a certain level of quality.

Manufacturers' brands and retailers' in-house brands often compete with each other on the food retailer's shelves, so there is a need for both manufacturers and retailers that introduce their own brands to differentiate their products from the competition.

Transnational agro-food corporations that embark on the strategy of brand introduction to build consumer loyalty to particular brands offer consumers other varieties of products using the same label, such as the introduction of *Ragu Organic* in 2005, *Ben and Jerry's Organic* in 2003, and *Campbell Soup's* introduction of *Campbell's Organic* in 2003 (Howard, 2005). *ConAgra* introduced *Hunt's Organic* in 2005, and *Orville Redenbacher's Organic* that same year (Howard, 2005). By introducing an organic

version under the same brand name, consumers can identify with a familiar label, like *Ragu*, or *Campbell's*, but also purchase a food product with additional characteristics that are perceived as healthier.

In addition to agro-food manufacturers and processors introducing organic brands, many major food retailers introduce in-house brands that carry their name. For example, *Loblaws* in Canada introduced its *President's Choice Organics* line in 2001, with the objective of offering at low prices, and wider variety organic products, which have been avoided by many of their consumers because of the premium price (Weeks, 2006b:D4). In a similar fashion Canadian and US food retailer *Safeway* has also introduced its own brand called *O Organics* in 2006 (Howard, 2006:18). Since both *Loblaws* and *Safeway* carry organic 'in-house' brands and manufacturer brands that share similar material characteristics (both use certified organic ingredients), price may be the ultimate determining factor for a retail food shopper who wants to buy organic products, but is otherwise discouraged by the premium price (Thomson, 1998; Walnut Acres, 2005). Other conventional retailers in Canada have begun to sell organic food, including *Thrifty Foods*, *Sobeys*, *A&P*, and *Metro Inc.* (Que.). As with conventional agro-food processors, the top ten global food retailers have also introduced organic food products onto their shelves to financially benefit from organic food's premium prices (see Appendix 2). In the US, large-scale food retailers like *Kroeger*, *Albertson's* and *Wal-Mart* are now embracing organic products and are increasing the number of products they carry, although none of these food retailers have introduced their own in-house organic product lines.

The increase of food retailers' incorporation of organic products into their business strategies has resulted in a shift of organic sales from the small-scale outlets to large-scale corporate retailers. The integration of organic products into conventional food-retailers' stock has effectively changed where people purchase organic products. This shift in purchasing habits is reflected in the growth of sales of organic through large-scale food retailers over the last decade. According to US statistics, in 1991, 7% of all organic products were sold in conventional supermarkets and 68% were sold in health food/natural products stores. As a result of the organic sector becoming more corporatized in 2000, 49% of all organic products were sold in conventional supermarkets and 48% was sold in natural food/health food stores and 3% through direct to consumer methods (e.g., box schemes) (Dimitri and Greene, 2002:2).

Although similar longitudinal statistics are not available for Canada, sales of organic products in 2006 exhibit similar trends observed in the US in 2000. According to Macey's 2007 report to the *Organic Agriculture Centre of Canada*, 41.1% of all sales of organic products in Canada were through conventional food retailers, 32.9% through natural food retailers, and 2% through direct to consumer methods (Macey, 2007:2). *Hain-Celestial* reported that \$45 billion of its sales of organic and natural foods were through 60,000 conventional food retailers across Canada and the US, making conventional food retailers increasingly important actors in organic supply chains as organic food gains a larger share of the retail food market (Hain-Celestial, 2005a:4). According to "Jen", who owns a small-scale organic distributor in British Columbia, the biggest challenge for her business is not necessarily the competition with other small-

scale distributors, but with large-scale food retailers like *SaveOnFoods*, which can offer organic products for much less than her business is able (PC6, Jul. 2, 2005).

Implications of the Corporate Strategies for Substantive Elements of the Organic Philosophy

So far, this chapter has discussed the conditions in which organic food entered the industrialized food sector, and some strategies used by corporations to capitalize on the organic label through acquisitions, strategic alliances and brand introduction. This section discusses the main implications of the corporate strategies used in the organic sector for the viability of the organic philosophy. It examines how conventional corporate strategies undermine the ability for the organic philosophy to be put into practice. This section concludes with an in-depth look at *WholeFoods Markets* (WFMs), a natural/organic food retailer that has been one of the most successful firms applying the corporate approach to selling organic foods in the US and Canada. WholeFoods Markets uses many of the same strategies as conventional agro-food corporations have used to capitalize on the growing popularity of organic food.

The purchasing of smaller organic firms by larger conventional agro-food corporations is an excellent way of consolidating production processes under the control of one parent company. Consolidating production processes helps to streamline processes that may contribute to lower production costs in the long run. It has also been argued by supporters of the incorporation of organic food into the conventional food system, that when conventional agro-food corporations purchase organic firms, organic products get wider distribution and give consumers access to healthier food (Klonsky, 2000:242). But from the perspective of maintaining a connection between productive

processes and the organic philosophy, the involvement of conventional agro-food corporations in the organic supply chain presents a number of challenges.

One of the original goals of organic agriculture was to keep ownership of organic businesses at the grassroots level to allow for a large group of supporters of organic values to work together to foster a sustainable food system. For organic agriculture to be a socially conscious action, it must be inclusive and responsive to the needs of the people involved in the production process. Decision-making over acceptable practices for organic practitioners for example, should be disaggregated and heterogeneous among many people, since broad consensus is a fundamental element to organic culture. But with a small number of corporations acquiring organic firms and attempting to consolidate entire organic sub-sectors, like *Dean Foods'* activities in the organic milk sector, fewer and fewer people are involved in the decision-making over the organic sector as a whole. Transnationalized, industrialized agro-food chains controlled by few corporations move decision-making further away from the people who are involved in food production, which takes away their ability to represent themselves and the needs of their communities. As Clunies-Ross argues, "...paradoxically, just as consumers are beginning to make a negative link between food quality and the industrialization of the food process, attempts are being made to draw producers of organic food into the commercial food sector in an effort to meet consumer demand" (Clunies-Ross, 1990:212).

With the consolidation of decision-making power into the hands of corporations, which are responsible to shareholders expecting growth in their investments, organic firms are then oriented towards profit maximization, and the reduction of overhead costs.

As Howard notes in his contribution to the publication *Natural Farmer*, the consolidation of power over the agro-food sector by a small number of firms gives them “...disproportionate influence on not just price, but also the quantity, quality and location of production” (Howard, 2006:18).

The consolidation of power over the agro-food system contributes to what is described as ‘food from nowhere’ because the majority of the decisions about what food is produced and how it is produced are usually made far away from the points of production, processing and distribution (Bove and Dufour, 2001:55). In an interview with “Joe” a representative from one of Canada’s largest companies which has invested in organic food, he stated that although the company he represents insists on high labour and environmental standards through third-party certification in Canada, it is far more difficult to determine whether the same standards are enforced abroad (PC3, Mar. 22, 2005). So, in essence, products produced abroad may not necessarily meet the same standards as those applied domestically, which have some major implications for maintaining a commitment to the organic philosophy.

The transnationalization of production processes further removes the grassroots from decision-making by locating various parts of the productive processes wherever the lowest labour costs and environmental standards may be found (Bonanno et al. eds., 1994). Transnationalization also erodes the trust that is built through localized agro-food networks. As a result, standards and coding systems are now essential to sustaining the consumer confidence that was once fostered through personal relationships (Allen and Kovach, 2000:223). Locating various aspects of the production process around the world encourages further regulation to allow firms to participate in organic agriculture, because

the local, personal relationships that characterize more traditional forms of organic agriculture are impossible to sustain.

Practitioners of the corporate approach to organic food production processes claim that despite not accounting for environmental costs throughout the production process, the reduced amount of synthetic inputs used in all types of organic farming aids in reducing dependence upon non-renewable resources and environmental degradation. However, these gains are undermined by the de-emphasis of the corporate approach to process. To meet consumer demand, the corporate approach to organic production processes does not address the environmental costs associated with Green Revolution technologies and other structures of the conventional agro-food system such as transnational supply chains and monoculture.

The desire to widen the distribution of organic food as prescribed by the corporate organic philosophy increases the 'food miles' organic products travel. By denying the importance of where an organic product is produced, the corporate approach to organic production diminishes the reduction of the environmental impacts of the agro-food system as a primary goal of organic agriculture (Powell, 1995:122). Those critical of the global transportation system of agro-food claim that every calorie of agro-food energy produced in the conventional agro-food system requires ten more calories of energy to transport it to its destination (Imhoff, 1996:426; Lang and Heasman, 2005:235-37). By using global transportation networks, many of the environmental goods associated with the organic philosophy are lost, since non-renewable resources fuel the global transportation network necessary for a globalized food system that is a major producer of greenhouse gases (Bentley and Barker, 2005). By using the same transnational

transportation networks as conventional agro-food, one contributor to the OECD's report on organic agriculture notes, "...the environmental credentials of organic products are compromised where they are transported over long distances" (Hallam, 2003:186).

Practicing monoculture on a large-scale is part of the corporate approach to organic production because unlike using GMOs and synthetic inputs, it does not impact the material qualities of the end organic product. Ronnie Cummins of the *Organic Consumer's Association* (OCA) expresses concern with the lack of emphasis practitioners of the corporate approach to organic production processes place on the environmental implications of large-scale organic agriculture. As Cummins charges, "no way in hell can you be organic if you have over a few hundred cows. After a certain size, the operation cannot be ecologically sound anymore...large monocultures, using large energy inputs and receiving subsidized water...[are] three elements that are anti-environmental and unacceptable for those who want ecologically sound farming..." (quoted in Ruiz-Marrero, 2004). Through the practice of monoculture, and transnational supply chains, environmental sensitivity that supporters of the organic philosophy practice, are hollowed out by large-scale organic monoculture that does not consider biodiversity and mixed farming as integral to the definition of organic. Both of these significant transformations to organic food's environmental principles in production processes are aimed at reconciling the definition of an organic good with rising consumer demand for healthy, safe, widely available, uniformed, processed foods.

Shifting scales and modes of production from small-scale operations to the large-scale corporate operations that are acceptable under the corporate approach to organic production processes has serious implications for the treatment of labour in organic

agriculture. Considering the primary motivation for corporations to enter the organic sector is profit, there has been less attention paid to embedding economic relations in social relations in organic production processes, which has largely stemmed from efforts to cater to consumer demands for cheaper organic products. A recent study from the University of California shows that workers on organic farms are not necessarily better off than those working on conventional farms as common understandings of organic agriculture suggest, (with one major exception being exposure to agricultural chemicals) (Roane, 2002). As reported by Kit Roane in her article on farm workers in organic agriculture, in the case of Southern California, agricultural labourers in the organic sector are often exposed to dangerous, unsanitary conditions for wages that often do not meet state minimum wage legislation, such as state regulations pertaining to hand weeding (Roane, 2002). Similarly in Arizona, Roane reports questionable labour practices in the organic sector including worker complaints of being threatened by employers, unfit living conditions and children under 14 working on organic farms (Roane, 2002).

Corporate consolidation has also had spill over effects for the treatment of labour on organic farms operating on a smaller-scale. Amy Shreck et al.'s 2005 University of California study published in 2006, is based on interviews with organic producers in California, and shows that small-scale organic producers claim they are unable to provide benefits for their workers, because they do not earn enough profit to even provide benefits for themselves, let alone their workforce. Thus, the prices that organic farmers receive for their products are argued to be not enough for farmers to be "socially sustainable" with regard to their labour force as corporate competitors that can meet economies of scale offer more competitive pricing of their products (Shreck et al., 2006;

Daily Democrat, 2005). Critics of this position, like Mick Blowfield, find little validity in such claims: “Farm-owners may argue that they cannot afford to provide better conditions where labour costs increase and opportunities... but additional costs may be more than offset by savings in other external inputs and higher prices” (Blowfield, 2001:5). Nevertheless, the influence of corporate consolidation in the organic sector has had overarching implications for the treatment of labour both on corporate farms as well as those who remain independent from large-scale TNCs.

The concentration in ownership of organic firms has meant a loss of independence for organic producers in determining how production processes should be organized, and what they should include (Welling, 1999:41). As an organic farmer named George Laundry from Salt Spring Island, BC charged, the concentration of ownership in the agricultural sector and the high land prices and property tax in Canada restricts the opportunities for young people to get involved in organic farming (PC2, Mar. 1, 2005). Corporatization of agriculture in general, threatens the ability for individual small-scale farms to co-exist with an agricultural sector that is dominated by corporate interests. As Vandana Shiva, an Indian scientist who actively speaks out against business practices employed by agribusinesses like *Cargill*, argues, agribusiness’ control over a number of agro-food sub-sectors is “...replacing diversity-based agricultural and forest systems with monocultures of the ‘green revolution’...” (Shiva, 1993:152).

Another challenge to maintaining links between the organic philosophy and practices in the organic sector is the introduction of organic brands into conventional food retailers. Conventionalized organic products are criticized for misrepresenting organic food’s reputation as an alternative to the prevailing food system (Buck et al., 1997; Klonsky,

2000:242). Organic brands introduced by conventional agro-food companies undermine the organic philosophy. Others argue that conventional agro-food corporations' interest in acquiring organic firms is more about improving their public image, than changing the way they do business (Cuddeford, 2004; Howard, 2004; Sligh and Christman, 2003; Pollan, 2001). By introducing organic brands through conventional retail food outlets, the industrialized agro-food system is not challenged or questioned but is rather, re-enforced. Buying organics in large superstores, such as *Wal-Mart*, encourages conventional forms of production, which stress standardization, efficiency and price competitiveness; all of which stand in opposition to the more substantive elements of the organic philosophy (Raynolds, 2004:737). The pressure from retailers on processors and producers to supply organic products at the cheapest possible cost compels processors and producers to move towards larger scales of production which may seriously compromise any commitment to the substantive values associated with the organic philosophy.

'Corporate' Success in the Organic Food Sector: WholeFoods Markets

Throughout this chapter, the involvement of TNCs in the organic food sector has been discussed. But there is one business that has successfully applied a number of conventional corporate strategies in the organic food sector that has disciplined a segment of organic production processes to the norms of neo-liberalism found in the conventional agro-food sector. *WholeFoods Markets* (WFM), as it is in many ways the archetypal business for defining the corporatization of the organic food sector, accurately depicts the contradictions of corporate domination of the organic food sector. Although WFM initially set out as an alternative to the business strategies found in the conventional food

retail sector, today WFM's approach to food retail has converged upon similar conventional practices found in the conventional sector, and has undermined many of the principles of the organic philosophy.

WFM first emerged in 1980 with the merger of *Safer Way Natural Foods* and *Clarksville National Grocer* in Austin, Texas. It began as a small natural and organic food retailer that sourced most of its products locally. WFM is a self-described 'natural food retailer' and includes in its marketing strategy the promotion of itself as the alternative to conventional food retailers that lack ambiance and attention to displaying their products. WFM posts photographs and biographies of organic producers in its stores who supply WFM with its vegetables and fruits, informing consumers of the origins of the organic products (Kabel, 2006). The primary goal of WFM in its own words is to "make grocery shopping fun" and make food purchasing an experience as opposed to a necessary chore (WFM, 2005b:1). Its success as the leading 'natural' and 'organic' food retailer has also made it the most profitable natural foods retailer in North America, selling over \$4.5 billion worth of organic and natural foods in 2004.

WFM's promotion of itself as an alternative food shopping experience has paid off and has attracted millions of consumers in Canada and the US contributing to WFM's rapid expansion and growth (Burros, 2007). In 1991, there were 10 WFM stores in the US, in 2005 there were 175, and this number continues to expand (FamilyFarmDefenders, 2005). WFM is currently the 21st largest supermarket (by sales) in Canada and the US and is ranked 479th of all US companies based on sales (Howard, 2006:18; WFM, 2005b:4). Over the last twenty-seven years, WFM has purchased

eighteen other smaller companies in attempts to consolidate ownership over the natural/organic foods retailing sector (Associated Press, 2007).

WFM's successful business strategy has fostered its growth as the biggest natural and organic food retailer, but the desire to consolidate the distributional segment of organic supply chains under centralized management is exhibiting similar oligopolistic behaviour of corporations found in the conventional agro-food sector. In addition to expanding its operations across Canada and the US, WFM is also expanding its presence on the other side of the Atlantic, by purchasing UK-based *Fresh&Wild* supermarkets in 2004 (Demetriou, 2004). In early in 2007, WFM made a merger bid for *Wild Oats Markets* (which owns previously independent *Capers Community Markets* (Capers) in Vancouver, BC), its major rival in the US (WFM, 2005a; Martin, 2007). In an interview with "Brian" a representative from Capers, he mentioned that when *Wild Oats*' purchased Capers in 1996, more financial resources were available to Capers to develop its own product line and to support its local social causes. Brian claims that although a foreign company now owns Capers, its structure and operations have not fundamentally changed. Brian also mentioned that small companies are not necessarily more ethical, or socially conscious than big companies (PC7, Apr. 27, 2005). In June 2007, the US trade commission granted a temporary injunction to block the merger bid for *Wild Oats* made by WFM to restrain WFM from having a monopoly in the natural/organic foods sector in the US (Associated Press, 2007). But if WFM's merger bid is allowed to go ahead, it remains to be seen if Capers will be able to maintain its independence and reputation as an ethical business, as WFM aggressively consolidates control over the distribution of organic food in North America.

WFM's internal expansion demands that its suppliers be able to handle larger purchase orders, and provide standardized, dependable quality goods on a large scale in order to take advantage of economies of scale (Mark, 2004). In addition to practicing business strategies used by conventional food retailers like Wal-Mart, WFM has taken similar steps to keep labour organization out of its business model. In its earlier years, WFM practiced what has been described as 'democratic capitalism' that uses self-directed teams of employees, creating what is described as a horizontal form of labour organization (Mark, 2004; Dimitri and Richman, 2000:14). Much like Wal-Mart's 'associates', WFM does not call its workers 'employees' but 'team members'. New employees are given a four-month trial period before their 'team members' vote on whether they should remain on the team.¹⁶

Yet, as it expanded and became more profitable, WFM's employees were not satisfied with WFM's model of 'democratic capitalism' and became interested in unionizing. But unfortunately for WFM associates, John Mackey, the CEO of WFM, shares a similar attitude towards unions as the first CEO of Celestial Seasonings, Mo Siegel. Mackey considers unions 'parasites,' and has also responded to criticisms of WFM's business strategy by noting that his company is in the business of whole foods, not "holy foods" (Harris, 2006:62), and is also quoted as saying "where in our mission statement do we talk about trying to be liberal, progressive or universal?" (quoted in Guthman, 2004:110).

Despite being listed as one of Fortune Magazine's '100 Best Companies to Work for in the US', WFM has been embroiled in a number of labour disputes (Sharpin, 2006).

¹⁶ Other natural/organic food stores have employed the team format for employees such as Capers Community Markets in BC.

Workers at WFM are not part of a trade union, and according to wholefoodworkersunite.org, WFM is quite hostile toward unionization. A Madison, Wisconsin store attempted to unionize but failed because the WFM's executive management blocked the effort. One member's contribution to the website states that "...many of us have... seen that as the company has grown, the focus has shifted to profits and expansion at the expense of worker respect and fair compensation... Despite what WFM says, unionizing is the only way for workers to be guaranteed participation in their employment" (wholeworkersunite.org). In response to workers' complaints regarding questionable labour practices at WFM, the United States Department of Labor (USDOL) took WFM to court over \$226, 000 in overtime wages that had not been paid to some of its 'team members' (FamilyFarmDefenders, 2005).

As the organic sector continues to include more corporate actors and becomes part of the mainstream agro-food system, the corporate approach to producing, processing and distributing organic food, as in the case of WFM, puts profits before its workers and many of the substantive principles of the organic philosophy. The corporatization of the organic food sector, as discussed, has serious implications for the survival of the organic philosophy and social sustainability in all segments of the organic supply chain. WFM has led other corporate actors in the organic food supply chains, have taken an instrumentalist approach to employing the organic philosophy into business activities. Substantive goals have largely been dismissed as areas of concern that should be pursued outside of market transactions.

Conclusion

This chapter has attempted to explain the processes of corporatization; from early industrialization and transnationalization of the conventional agro-food sector to the current business strategies employed in the organic food sector. The profit-seeking nature of the corporation has transcended the boundary between conventional and organic agriculture. Only technical differences in the material, end product exists once corporate actors enter the organic food sector. Corporate involvement has transformed the organic food sector, so it is now populated with actors that value organic products for their market value over its social and environmental goods. Yet, despite the influence that corporate actors from the conventional food sector have had on reshaping the structure of the organic food sector, the principles of organic agriculture have also had an influence on the same corporations. The environmental principles put into organic agriculture policy for example, have forced corporate actors entering the organic food sector to alter the way they do business (no GMOs or no synthetic pesticides at any point in the production process). Many corporate actors now involved in the organic sector that once dismissed organic agriculture as unscientific, are now embracing many of its methods

Though the methods of organic agriculture have indeed influenced corporate activities to some degree, the viability of putting the organic philosophy into practice is seriously compromised as organic firms continue to aggressively consolidate ownership in the organic sector by employing conventional corporate strategies. Firms within the organic sector have also been influenced by corporate strategies outside of the sector, such as WFM. In some ways, the challenges for the organic food sector to maintain a commitment to substantive values that form the basis of the organic philosophy are a result of its growing economic success that largely hinges on globally integrated agro-

food supply chains. As Vos notes, “[the] ideological lineaments of organic farming...represent an historically persistent cultural paradigm...yet ...this paradigm may be increasingly called into question by the burgeoning economic successes that organic farming has recently been enjoying” (2000:252). Thus, the organic sector’s insertion in the global economy imposes significant contradictions into the institutional formation of the organic sector, including organic agriculture.

The corporate consolidation of ownership over the organic sector has occurred at a number of stages of the supply chain; from the distribution of seeds to processing, to the distribution of agro-food products to the public. Acquiring organic firms, forging strategic alliances and introducing organic brands have all been effective corporate strategies that have yielded huge profits for conventional food corporations, while challenging the efforts to keep the social relations embedded within organic agriculture. The expansion of the organic food sector and the distribution and variety of its products available on a global scale can be attributed to organic food’s integration into the global economy through corporate activity and transnationalized supply chains—attributes which the organic philosophy historically rejects.

CHAPTER 4: FROM PRIVATE TO PUBLIC: INSTITUTING ORGANIC FOOD REGULATIONS INTO PUBLIC POLICY FRAMEWORKS

Introduction

At the end of 2006, Canadian organic agriculture had gained important national political and economic status. Instead of a patchwork of private certifiers, various provincial regulations and standards, the Canadian government passed legislation that created a national organic label for Canada, along with a national set of guidelines for the production processing and handling of 'certified' organic products (CGSB, 2006). Many actors, including importers of Canadian organic food products in the EU and the US, welcomed the Canadian organic standards, as supporters of national standards believe they give consumers a reliable, recognizable label while giving producers a standardized set of guidelines and regulations to abide by across the country. Some, such as transnational agro-food corporations with subsidiaries in both Canada and the US, were pleased that the Canadian organic standard was very similar in nature and scope to the national organic standard that was ratified by the US government in 2001. Although the overall percentage of agricultural land devoted to organic agriculture in 2004 was only 1.3% (430 600 hectares) of total land devoted agricultural production in Canada and .5% (950, 000 hectares) in the US and account for only 1-3% of total food sales, organic agriculture in both contexts is now viewed as an economically valuable agricultural sub-sector that requires public regulation to expand (Haumann, 2004:150).

Although regulating the production processes involved in organic agriculture is not new, the institutionalization of standards and principles into public policy in Canada and the US is. Traditionally monitored by the private sector, policies surrounding organic

agriculture have undergone a transformation as the market value for organic products has rapidly increased, and both Canadian and American governments have realized the export potential of organic agriculture. But what has truly set the institutionalization of organic food and agriculture public policy apart from its predecessors is the idea that organic agriculture must be regulated through a series of enforceable legal frameworks that largely do not include any substantive issues associated with organic agriculture, such as fair labour practices or farm size (Guthman, 2004). The product over process model favoured by corporate actors is thus reinforced in public policy designed to regulate the production processes associated with organic food. Unlike the more holistic vision of organic agriculture that includes social, economic and environmental sustainability, organic regulations instituted into both US and Canadian public policy frameworks reflect the corporate approach to organic agriculture.

This chapter examines how the substantive goals of the organic philosophy have been hollowed out from the definition of organic as the rules governing the organic production processes have entered multi-levels of public policy. The public policies at the federal level are designed to facilitate the expansion of markets for organic products, and place far less emphasis on the social and environmental benefits of practicing the organic philosophy. The first section of this chapter traces the trajectories of both conventional agricultural policies and organic food and agriculture policies to demonstrate that initially, they developed in different contexts with distinct and often incompatible goals and systems of decision-making. They both functioned however, under the Keynesian system of economic management, which treated the agro-food sector much differently than the market-oriented system of economic management that would follow. The

second section explores how, as the economic importance of organic food became apparent in the late 1980s, organic food and agriculture public policies developed to reflect the neo-liberal approach both Canada and the US have taken towards agriculture and agro-food sectors. Overall, this chapter shows that as the rules and principles regarding organic food and agriculture have become institutionalized into federal policy frameworks, the regulations for organic agriculture have privileged efficiency and market-competitiveness over the social and environmental goods incurred through the means of practicing organic agriculture.

From Private to Public: the Changes in Organic Agriculture Policies

There have been three major transitions in the development of organic agriculture policies since practitioners of organic agriculture first began to come together in the 1960s to create organic agriculture organizations. Initially, organic producers established informal groups based on their shared ideas about how organic agriculture should be practiced. Local communities of organic practitioners organized groups that produced their own set of guidelines largely maintained through trust-based relationships. The second transition occurred as markets for organic food expanded, and distances between producers and consumers grew. More formal private associations emerged to formulate producer 'codes of conduct'. The third transition was the integration of private sector organic regulations into public policy frameworks, which resulted from the growing consumer interest in organic products, and the entry of new actors into the organic sector in the late 1970s. The main purpose of public regulation since it emerged in the organic sectors in Canada and the US, is to monitor the authenticity of organic products and to assure consumer confidence while facilitating business interests in expanding markets.

This section discusses the factors that contributed to the shift of organic regulations from the hands of private, grassroots organic producers' organizations to those of state and provincial governments. First, this section outlines how the norms informing organic food and agriculture policies in the private sector emerged from organic agriculture's opposition to the cooperative relationships between government and agribusiness. It then traces the emergence of private organic agriculture associations and organizations that helped to establish and promote organic principles and standards. Lastly, this section shows that the incorporation of private regulations into public policies was largely in response to the growing demands of business interests in expanding markets for their organic products.

The Industrialized Model of Food Production: The Rise of "Cheap Food" Policies

The emergence of informal, grassroots organizations of organic producers was a response to the privileging of industrialized agriculture by federal governments in the post-war period. In the post-war era, food security was of prime importance to the American and Canadian governments, as food shortages were experienced during WWII. At the time, governments reasoned that the food security of domestic populations was too important to leave up to unbridled market forces (Giangrande, 1985; Basran and Hay, 1988, Skogstad, 1987). Under Keynesian economic strategies, national governments secured an adequate supply of food available at a reasonable cost to their citizens, but the privileged position of industrialized agriculture in government policy did not go unchallenged. Critics refer to the system of national agricultural management in North America as 'cheap food policies' (Mitchell, 1975).

The term 'cheap food policy' refers to the state's effort to support increased agricultural outputs, while lowering food prices for consumers through industrialized agriculture. The over-production of commodities facilitated by supply side management policies helped to keep commodity prices low, and forced farmers to produce increasingly higher volumes to earn enough income to support themselves. Cheap food policies encouraged the rapid industrialization of North American agricultural systems in order to produce increasing amounts of food (Clunies-Ross, 1990). There were no formal limitations on practicing non-chemical farming, but it made little economic sense for most farmers to do so because government support was contingent on high farm yields and uniform outputs, which were only attainable through industrialized agriculture.

As cheap food policies helped to develop an industrialized agricultural system and keep food price low for consumers, the cost of cheap food was beginning to emerge in the 1960s. The negative social consequences of industrialized agriculture come in the form of rural unemployment, farmer indebtedness and a loss of control individual farmers have over what they produce and how they produce it (Giangrande, 1985; Clunies-Ross, 1990). Although supply-side agricultural management policies in the early stage of their development did address some social issues, such as shielding farmers from fluctuating commodity prices and unforeseen 'forces of nature', other elements of the production process, particularly the ecological problems created by the industrialized agro-food system, were overlooked by governments in their quest to secure a stable, cheap food supply. Cheap food policies garnered criticism because they ignore the social and environmental costs of industrialized food production and are viewed as providing more benefits to agribusiness than to the individual farmer (Berry, 1977; Warnock, 1987).

The early organic movement emerged as a critical reaction to the social and environmental consequences of the industrialized system of agro-food production. Because of the links between industrialized agriculture and government policies, organic practitioners sought political and economic autonomy from the state (Guthman, 2004). Independence from state intervention allowed private actors to develop norms of organic agriculture that were responsive to their needs and objectives allowing them to practice a type of food production that internalized many of the costs of agricultural production. The desire for distance appeared to be mutual between agricultural departments and organic producers who wanted private sector rules for organic agriculture to develop independently from the state (Merrill, 1976).

Early Organic Producers Associations

Early regulations for organic agriculture were formulated in sometimes overlapping stages and reflected the principles of diversity and horizontal decision-making structures, both components of the organic philosophy. Most organic agriculture in the early post-war period was geared towards self-sufficiency, meaning organic producers insisted on keeping distanced from government subsidies and agribusiness. Instead, organic producers used the resources that were available to them (physical labour, compost) that did not require them to participate in the conventional agricultural sector. From the desire to remain independent from the political and economic relations in industrialized agriculture, informal grassroots organizations were established that set down some guidelines for organic production.

Although more formal organic organizations developed in the late 1960s, the first major effort to organize practitioners of organic agriculture occurred on an international

level. Lady Eve Balfour helped to institutionalize standards for organic agriculture by establishing the *Soil Association* in 1946. Though the *Soil Association* would later welcome members from around the world who sought a venue to exchange information with others about organic farming, in its early days it had ideological ties to fascism in Britain (Griffiths, 2004:188). So, despite the later association of organic agriculture with socially progressive ideas in the 1960s, some early organic agriculture associations were anything but progressive.

The standards for organic production used by the *Soil Association* were a codified set of principles used to evaluate the quality of an organic product. The *Soil Association's* standards for organic agriculture in were initially meant to protect legitimate organic producers and consumers from fraudulent claims. In its early years, the *Soil Association* asked its members to register their farming establishments and sign a document stating that they would abide by the *Soil Association's* standards for organic agriculture (Vossenaar, 2003:12). Early efforts to regulate organic agriculture thus began as voluntary sets of standards maintained through self-monitoring.

In addition to the establishment of the *Soil Association*, more localized forms of organization emerged across the US that were comprised of neighbouring organic producers who personally knew, trusted, and shared knowledge with each other. There was a degree of mutual assurance and respect that organic producers were indeed putting into practice many of the social and ecological principles of the organic philosophy. Trust through personal relationships was a very important component to the success of early organic agricultural associations. As Granovetter argues in his work on the importance of social relations in establishing trust in economic relationships, “densely

knit networks of actors, generate clearly defined standards of behaviour easily policed by the quick spread of information about instances of malfeasance” (Granovetter, 1985:419). Early grassroots standards reflected the local conditions in which they were developed and accounted for soil type, available resources and topography, thus making them responsive to the needs of the organic producers and the requirements of the particular geographic setting (Berry, 1976:152).

There were also groups of organic producers and supporters who viewed organic agriculture as a viable way to challenge the social relations in the 1960s society, and remain independent from government influence. Some groups coming out of the counter-culture in California, British Columbia and Ontario decided to establish communes in the country to live independently from what they viewed, as the oppressive social norms of American society. As Guthman explains, “most of these communes practiced what were later codified as organic techniques, not necessarily by intention, but because self-sufficiency was a cornerstone of their ideology” (Guthman, 2004:6). But despite the claim that communes were able to escape social conventions and establish alternative forms of social organization, many of them were not free of the gender norms prevalent in conventional society at the time (Belasco, 1989). Because of the lack of consideration given to breaking down traditional gender norms in communes, many women questioned whether what communes really offered them was any different than the social relations found in conventional society. Many women who were interested in organic agriculture, inspired by the feminist movement and who rejected the male-dominated communes, began to practice organic agriculture while applying socially progressive principles (Guthman, 2004). The growing interest and participation of

women in organic agriculture during the 1960s helped to infuse the goal of social sustainability into the emerging organic philosophy.

Early organic producers, who decided not to establish alternative forms of collective living, established privately regulated principles to determine acceptable practices in organic agriculture (e.g., small-scale poly-cultural farms, using compost). Most of the principles established through informal, grassroots associations were a reflection of what many organic producers were already practicing. The first formal organic organization in Canada was the *Canadian Organic Soil Association* in the 1950s (Hill and MacRae, 1992:5). The *Canadian Organic Soil Association* later renamed *The Land Fellowship*, sponsored speakers so that they could travel across Canada to educate the public about organic agriculture. Speakers who travelled across Canada also helped establish a number of organic farming organizations in the 1970s. In 1975 *the Canadian Organic Growers* was established in six provinces and held conferences and meetings across Canada that served as spaces for practitioners to exchange information and gather knowledge about organic agriculture (MacRae, 1990).

The Establishment of Organic Certification Schemes

As organic food gained in popularity, more actors entered the organic sector to capitalize on the premium prices that organic food's niche market status garnered. Since many of the standards promoted by organic associations were based on self-regulation, the influx of increasingly diverse actors (who were often not part of the associations) in the organic sector diminished the standing of trust and led to collective action problems. In essence, some began to free ride off the self-regulatory nature of organic associations, while those committed to the substantive principles of organic agriculture voluntarily put

those principles into practice (Ikerd, 1999). Many of the small, local organic associations had few enforcement mechanisms, due to the nature of grassroots associations relying on members regulating their own behaviour. Penalties for misusing the organic label were often unclear or non-existent, opening up the opportunity for those seeking to profit from premium priced organic food to label their goods organic when they were in fact not organically produced. But as markets for organic food expanded, and so too the distances between producer and consumer, it became far more difficult to maintain personal trust-based relationships.

Partially because of the misuse of organic labelling and the ineffectiveness of self-monitoring, some informal networks began to transform into more organized associations that allowed for organic producers to institute more formal methods of monitoring. It was these private associations that transformed the informal principles that were part of a trust-based network into a formalized system of rules based on the enforcement of regulation regarding organic agriculture. The first organic agricultural association in the US was established in 1970 when a group of farmers from Vermont established the *Natural Organic Farmers Association* (NOFA). The NOFA enabled organic producers and supporters of organic agriculture to come together under an umbrella non-governmental organization. Knowledge was shared between members and the NOFA eventually grew and split off into a number of local chapters (Henderson, 1998:17). The NOFA also began to grant organic accreditation and certification to its members on local and regional bases (Lohr, 1998:1126). Certification schemes were meant to assure buyers of organic products that a certain level of organic standards was met throughout the production process.

The certification of organic farms refers to the evaluation of an organic product to assure that it meets a specific set of criteria or standards. The establishment of certification bodies for organic products was by far the most significant element to the institutionalization of organic agriculture into private, sector-wide regulations. By making certification mandatory in a particular industry, only those who meet the certification requirements can participate in the market (Stringer, 2006; Kaplinsky, 2000, Gereffi, 1999). Certification is then, a successful way of addressing fraudulent organic claims and excludes those from the industry that do not meet the required criteria, because it addresses the collective action problem of past self-monitoring schemes. Certification in the organic sector is quite rigorous. As Guthman explains, “to be certified, growers had to fill out elaborate paperwork including a farm plan; agree to initial annual and perhaps spot inspections; fulfill whatever requirements for crop or soil sampling; pay various dues, fees and assessments; and of course, agree to abide by the practices and input restrictions designated by that agency and the law” (Guthman, 2004:129). Many of the early requirements used for organic certification in the 1970s are still relied upon today.

The Rodale family also established its own certification programme in the early 1970s that awarded producers with a *Seal of Approval* granted only after independent laboratory tests of soil from farms claiming to be ‘organic’ indicated that humus was present in the sample (Belasco, 1989:161). In 1972, the Rodale family established an organic certification programme that included 56 California organic growers. The Rodale Institute also helped to establish the *Oregon-Washington Tilth Organic Producers Association* (Baker, 2004:1). *California Certified Organic Farmers* (CCOF) emerged in

1973 from the programme Rodale initially established. The CCOF was a collective of 50 California organic producers and consumers (Dimitri and Richman, 2000:4). Some organic agricultural associations included substantive goals in their certification guidelines, in addition to regulations regarding allowable inputs and crop rotation. The California-based *Farm Verified Organic* (est. 1979), for example, includes standards for water conservation, labour practices and farm size in its certification schemes (Guthman, 2004:129). To become certified by *Farm Verified Organic*, producers must meet all of the standards set by the certifier. *Farm Verified Organic* now certifies producers, processors and handlers of organic products globally, including in the province of Quebec.

Those in Canada who wanted to be certified in the 1970s, often looked to foreign certifying associations as certification bodies in Canada were established much later than their American counterparts and significantly later than similar establishments in Europe. Although there were organic producers throughout Canada as early as the 1950s, there is little statistical evidence showing how many people actually practiced organic farming in Canada at that time. According to the Canadian-based agriculture organization *EarthCare*, there were only about 10 organic farmers in Saskatchewan in the early 1970s (EarthCare, 2007). The first organic (and biodynamic) agricultural certifier to operate in Ontario was *Demeter*. *Demeter* began certifying organic producers in 1982, 54 years after it was first established in Germany. Other provinces began to establish their own certifiers as the number of organic producers began to grow in the 1980s. The *Organic Crop Improvement Association* in New Brunswick was followed by *Le Mouvement pour*

l'agriculture biologique (MAB) in Quebec, both established in the 1980s (Hill and MacRae, 1992).

Despite the emergence of small-scale standard-setting associations across states and provinces, the majority of states and provinces remained without state/provincial level regulations (Amaditz, 1997). In the states and provinces without certification and standard-setting bodies, organic practitioners and consumers largely relied on the integrity of the trust-based networks common in all states and provinces before the more formalized associations emerged.

The establishment of private certifying associations met many of the needs of organic producers and consumers as they established standards to evaluate the production processes of organic food. Since market competition and output are central issues for organic producers in a globalized market, maximizing efficiency and yields as well as maintaining quality is essential in order to compete with larger producers that can meet economies of scale, and reduce overhead costs (Jackson, 1998). Tad Mutersbaugh, in his study of organic certification systems, claims “monitoring systems...introduce bureaucratic costs that rest heavily on producer organizations and disrupt or differentially affect local governance and economic management within producer organizations and villages” (Mutersbaugh, 2002:1166). For this reason, certification schemes often benefit actors who already have access to financial resources and whose production processes are not linked to localized agro-food chains.

Over time, the emergence of a growing number of certifiers, some state-sanctioned some not, contributed to a complex web of rules, regulations and standards that sometimes overlapped and were unevenly enforced (Vossenaar, 2003:12-13). Although

certifying associations had the power to revoke certification if practitioners were found to not be adhering to certification guidelines, these enforcements lacked legal structure and recourse. Because there were no legally enforceable regulations, it was difficult to determine whether producers were actually meeting the standards set out by certifying associations. Thus, the need for government intervention in organic agriculture stemmed from the failure of self-regulation as cases of misuse of the organic label multiplied, which threatened the integrity of the privately sanctioned 'organic' labels in the 1980s (McLeod, 1976:205; Rundgren, 2003:6; Vossenaar, 2003:14).

Organic Regulation Goes Public- State and Provincial Involvement

To foster confidence in the organic label, organic certification schemes began to expand to the state/provincial levels of decision-making, despite the continuing importance of local and regional organic associations. The move towards involving the government in enforcing regulations signaled a radical departure from the initial position of organic practitioners who insisted on autonomy from the state (Vossenaar, 2003:14). However, some in the organic agriculture sector argued that institutionalizing organic food and agriculture into government regulations could preserve integrity in relationships between producers and consumers, albeit not on a personal level. With public certification, organic products could be sold beyond the farm gate, and the market for organic products could expand, in a rigorous system of certification and regulatory enforcement. Having principles codified into law also created a closed market that allows only those who met all the criteria to participate in the organic food marketplace.

Some supporters of organic agriculture maintained skepticism of government involvement, and claimed that the orientation of governments towards agriculture,

“...[was] in direct opposition with the philosophy of bioregional associations which subscribe to environmental principles of self-regulation, and local autonomy” (Berry, 1976:152). As Marsden et al. argue, rarely do policy makers have intimate knowledge of local practices and few are actually from farming backgrounds (Marsden et al., 1996:363). Thus, public regulation of organic agriculture began to divide those in the organic sector into one group that wanted government involvement to help expand markets, and another that objected to the intrusion of governments into their private activities.

The first foray into making private certification public was in 1973 when Oregon became the first state in the US to pass a law regulating organic food and agricultural processes in response to reports of fraud and inconsistencies in organic claims. In 1979, California passed its own *Organic Food Act*. Other states soon followed suit, but substantial differences in state organic farming regulation persisted across the US. Some states required third-party certification to determine whether a product met the standards of what constituted organic, while others did not. In some cases, ad hoc systems of self-monitoring by organic producers continued to be relied upon. According to Amaditz (1997), the most serious problem facing the development of a coherent certification system prior to 1990 was that producers and marketers in 28 unregulated US states could make claims based on other states’ definitions, creating confusion for consumers. To solve this problem, individual states with growing numbers of organic producers and consumers began to establish state-level regulatory frameworks to police products labeled ‘organic’. As of 2003, 14 American states with significant numbers of organic producers established state-level regulation and certification schemes (USDA, 2003). California is

the leading state with the highest number of certified organic producers and cropland in the US (USDA, 2006).

Across the Canadian provinces, throughout the 1970s and 1980s there was little coordination between organic agriculture associations and governments, and certification programmes developed on a much smaller scale and at a slower pace than in the US, mainly because there were less organic producers and a smaller market for organic products in Canada. Certification standards remained independent of provincial governments in Canada until the 1990s when Quebec instituted provincial regulations regarding the use of the term organic and organic agricultural techniques through *Conseil d'accréditation du Québec* (CAQ). Organic producers in Quebec were then required by law to meet the standards set by the government of Quebec. As of 1999, Quebec has had a mandatory standard that is recognized by the USDA as equivalent to its own (Doherty, 2004). The CAQ has the authority to certify establishments producing organic products as complying with Quebec's provincial organic standards, and allows for Quebec to have access to the US markets.

In 1993, British Columbia established the *Organic Agricultural Products Certification Regulation* to establish a programme to certify organic producers in BC (BC Reg. 200/93). The *Certified Organic Association of British Columbia* under the *BC Food Choice and Quality Act* administers organic certification regulation in BC. The USDA also recognized BC's provincial regulations as equivalent to its own in 2003. BC's interest in pursuing provincial standards that meet USDA guidelines reflects the fact that BC has the highest proportion of land area dedicated to producing organic fruits and vegetables in Canada (Parsons, 2004:3). Outside BC and Quebec, provinces relied on

private, third party certification accredited by the *Standards Council of Canada* (SCC). Until the recent adoption of a national Canadian organic standard by the federal government at the end of 2006, private certification was the only option for Canadian organic establishments not located in BC or Quebec.

The impetus for expansion and formalization of certification of organic production processes was twofold; market actors wanted increased access to markets beyond specific localities and from consumers who wanted quality assurance. Michelsen and Soregaard identify the paradox of organic food and agriculture policy entering the public realm in the EU context, which is applicable in North American context as well: "...public and uniform certification systems seem to be paramount for the growth of organic farming. Hence, it seems to be a real paradox that organic farming must give up its self-rule and identity in order to obtain importance in agriculture" (Michelsen and Soregaard, 2001:80). The public regulation of organic standards was difficult to avoid as producers and consumers of organic foods increased throughout the 1980s. The expansion of markets that extended beyond direct producer/consumer interactions, in many ways, was dependent upon regulations that could reliably be enforced. Although small, informal organic producers' associations continue to exist today, much of the authority over enforcing standards and regulations was taken on by state and provincial governments. But to truly expand beyond local markets, federal regulations had to be established.

Institutionalizing Organic Food Regulations into National Policy Frameworks

In both Canada and the US, institutionalizing organic agriculture into federal agriculture policy has proven difficult, and in some cases controversial, as government interpretations of the goals and standards of organic agriculture differ considerably from

those who practice organic agriculture that adheres to the organic philosophy. What has characterized policy processes in both countries is the debate as to whether national standards should reflect the organic philosophy complete with its commitment to substantive values or if the primary impetus for regulations should be market growth. Private actors representing both sides of the debate have played an important consultative role with both federal governments in devising national standards, although actors with more of an interest in market expansion over codifying social and environmental sustainability have a privileged position with the federal government. The national policies for organic agriculture have been formulated to largely reflect the market approach to food production and it is the primary reason why federal governments have involved themselves in regulating organic production processes at all. The most important role for federal level regulations is to facilitate the expansion of international markets to export domestically produced organic products, though how organic has been instituted into national levels of policy making in Canada and the US differ in some considerable ways.

As will be seen, the focus on market competitiveness in federal level public policy led to convergence in how Canada and the US regulate organic agricultural practices. The continued expansion of policy regimes for organic food and agriculture into national policy agendas has contributed to the marginalization of the original substantive and critical elements of the organic philosophy, in favour of the product over process model favoured by corporate actors in the organic food sector.

Regulating organic agriculture has been a priority for many governments in OECD countries like Germany, Sweden and Denmark since the 1980s, as their markets

developed at an earlier stage than those in North America (Tate, 1994:16; Michelsen, 2001b:4). The self-regulation of organic practices that some organic farmers preferred because of its independence from the state, did not necessarily reflect the interests of all organic farmers, especially those who wanted to market their products abroad and those who felt their reputations were being tarnished by cases of fraudulence in inconsistently regulated organic food markets. Those who were critical of the lack of uniformity in private regulation in the organic sector encouraged the institutionalization of organic agriculture into government-enforceable regulations (Michelsen, 2001a:73). The tension between supporters of private regulation and supporters of public regulation is present in the case of the US and later in Canada as markets for organic products expanded in the 1980s and 1990s.

Some observers of the developing policy regime for organic agriculture claim that even although policies and standards for organic agriculture are integrated into existing national and global public policy frameworks, organic agriculture continues to present a challenge to the norms and principles governing public policy making for conventional agriculture (Michelsen 2001a, 2001b; Allen and Kovach, 2000; Bostrom and Klintman, 2006). Others claim that policy standardization and the move toward global harmonization of public policy for organic food and agriculture is a symptom of the converging forces of economic globalization that has aided in conforming organic agriculture to the neo-liberal norms and principles governing the global economy (Guthman, 2004; Raynolds, 2000; Buck et al., 1997).

Although Bostrom and Klintman claim in their comparative study of the developing US and Swedish organic policy frameworks that national contexts do indeed mark

organic agriculture policies as distinct from conventional agricultural policies, upon closer examination of American and Canadian organic policies, it appears that they do exhibit some degree of convergence on the neo-liberal model now applied to agricultural policies. However, the convergence of Canadian and American organic public policies does not mean that both countries have instituted organic into policy frameworks in the exact same way. As political scientist Colin Bennett notes, “often convergence is used as a synonym for similarity or uniformity...[but] convergence implies a pattern of development over a specified time period” (Bennett: 1989:219). Regulations regarding conventional and organic agriculture are far from identical, but the public policy governing organic agriculture has been fashioned with similar goals in mind, to incorporate it into the global agro-food regime. Alternative forms of agriculture are now part of regulatory frameworks meant for conventional agriculture and as Fredrick Buttel argues, these regulatory frameworks now embody the “product over process policy discourse” (Buttel, 1997:360).

Regulating Organic Agriculture at the Federal Level

The US and Canada have been relative latecomers in regulating the production, processing and handling of organic food on a federal level. According to a 2006 CBC Radio interview with Jill Eisen for the programme *Ideas: When Organics Goes Mainstream*, Michael Pollan states that organic agriculture was virtually ignored by governments in Canada and the US until the 1990s (Pollan, 2006). In fact, it took over a decade after European countries began instituting organic agriculture into public policy for the US and then Canada to institute their own national organic standards. As the global market for organic products in OECD countries continued to rise throughout the

1990s, the Canadian and American governments wanted their organic agriculture sectors to capitalize on this growth. So as the market value for organic products grew, both federal governments took very different attitudes towards organic agriculture than they had in the past. As a representative from IFOAM noted at the 2001 OECD workshop on Organic Agriculture, "...one of the main aims of establishing organic standards and regulations has been to foster trade in organic products" (Bowen, 2002).

The United States

In the early 1970s, the USDA conducted a nation-wide survey of organic agriculture that revealed its rapid market growth and profit potential (Kuepper and Gegner, 2004:4). The USDA was looking for a competitive market solution to the farm crisis hitting America's 'corn belt' as a result of high energy costs brought on by the oil crises of the 1970s. Since organic agriculture used little or no oil-based synthetic inputs, it appeared to be a logical type of agro-food production for the USDA to investigate.

The USDA supported *Report and Washington University's Centre for Sustainable Agriculture and Natural Resources* published *Recommendations on Organic Farming* in 1980. In the report, the conclusion was made that commercial organic agriculture could be competitive with conventional agriculture and could provide an alternative for conventional producers struggling to financially manage growing energy costs and farm debt. Referring to the USDA's report on organic agriculture, US Secretary of Agriculture Bob Bergland told *Science* magazine in 1980,

we think it is an important report—the first recent report to look at organic farming as a legitimate and promising technique. The past emphasis has been on using chemicals, but this has been driven by availability of low-cost oil. The economics of farming have now changed substantially. We now depend on imported oil...and farmers are worried about these forces over which they have no control (Carter, 1980:254).

Despite the promising results of the report, the USDA could not take the position that organic agriculture was somehow a better option than conventional agriculture, considering that the vast majority of producers in the US practice conventional agriculture (Kuepper and Gegner, 2004). So the USDA promoted organic agriculture while it also began to devise strategies to regulate organic agriculture to, as Guthman states, “assure consumers freedom of choice and to provide a niche market for strapped farmers. This allows for organic food to be grown and sold alongside conventional food without disparaging the rest of the food supply that the government must stand behind” (Guthman, 2004:164).

Although the market for organic products continued to be dwarfed by the market for conventional food products, the USDA’s interest in the economic potential of organic agriculture grew as did organic practitioners’ interest in devising a national set of standards to govern organic production processes. Because of the growth in size of the domestic organic market in the US in the 1980s, the development of a US national organic standard served the interests of domestic consumers who wanted a recognizable, uniform labeling system and it served the interests of some organic producers eager to expand their operations across the US, and abroad. By having a formal set of regulations pertaining to organic agriculture, organic producers could become certified under a national label that would assure consumers of the authenticity of purchased organic products, and would be recognized by the international community.

A USDA label on all organic products that met a formal, nationalized set of regulations would allow more domestic American organic producers and processors to export their premium priced products abroad. So in 1984, the *Organic Foods Production*

Association of North America (OFPANA) was formed to lobby the US federal government to create regulations regarding the organic sector. The OFPANA consisted of producers, shippers, retailers, distributors, exporters and importers of organic products. The OFPANA was a small and private lobby group that would later become the *Organic Trade Association* (OTA), and continued to play an important consultative role in shaping federal regulations in the US and Canada in the 2000s. From its inception, the OTA has argued that harmonized, national standardization eliminates the overlap of organic production standards at the sub-national level. Harmonized national standards provide consumers with a reliable label to evaluate organic products that are imported from abroad (OTA, 2006). The OTA is also highly supportive of efforts to increase the ease at which organic goods move in the global economy.

The lobbying by environmentalists, organic producers, consumers and organic associations such as the OTA played a significant role in the inclusion of the *Organic Food Production Act* (OFPA) in the 1990 US Farm Bill (USDA, 1990; Tick, 2004). The OFPA was the first effort by the US government to institutionalize some of the principles of organic agriculture, such as allowable inputs. Although some in the organic agriculture community, like the OTA, applauded the recognition that organic agriculture received by the US federal government, others were more sceptical of how organic policy would be incorporated at the federal level.

Numerous advocates of the organic philosophy expressed concern regarding the impact of national policies on the capacity of organic agriculture to maintain a critical alternative to conventional modes of production. Supporters of the organic philosophy feared that federal level regulations would only emphasize the technical, material

elements of organic foods and leave out many of the substantive elements of practiced organic agriculture like fair labour practices and small-scale poly-culture. US organic producers feared that federal regulations would water down more localized, practitioner-developed standards in order to be applicable to a wide variety of organic products being produced in a wide variety of circumstances. As one critic of the impending US regulations for organic agriculture claims, “the pragmatic approach to organic growing is pushing our ethics into obscurity and irrelevance...” (Urwin, 1986:10-11).

As the US national standards were being developed in the late 1990s, concerns were raised with the standardization that federal regulations would create, and that bureaucratic red tape and high certification costs would prevent small-scale organic producers from meeting those regulations and attaining certification. Gene Logsdon, a Wisconsin organic dairy farmer, expressed doubts about the move to standardize and institutionalize organic agriculture into federal level policies: “the concern that many of us have is that in the process of putting organics into a regulatory framework, we might produce a conceptual model which is so complex that we face prohibitive costs and intimidate farmers with unmeaningful rules and paperwork...” (Logsdon, 1993). Ronnie Cummins, the executive director of the *Organic Consumers Association* (OCA), argues that the USDA deliberately ‘watered down standards’ to privilege powerful industry, while ignoring the needs of small-scale organic farmers and growers in the US (Cummins, 1998).

The ‘privileged position’ of business interests was evident early on in the policy-making process (Lindblom, 1977). In 1992, the *National Organic Standards Board* (NOSB) was established to create a national organic program for the US, and to supply

the USDA with suggestions for what the *National Organic Standard* (NOS) should include. The NOSB has a diverse membership and includes producers, handlers, processors, retailers, environmentalists and consumer groups (Coleman and Reed, forthcoming). In 1997, the NOS was presented by the USDA but there were some notable exemptions in the proposed legislation that did not include the recommendations of the NOSB. As supporters of the organic philosophy had feared, the USDA opted to not include many substantive goals associated with organic agriculture (Nestle, 2004:232).

The drafted NOS legislation regarding organic standards did not restrict the use of GMOs, bio-sludge or irradiation from the technical definition of what products could carry the 'organic' label. The USDA was sensitive to the objections from the conventional agro-food sector that regulations for organic agriculture should not include any language that negatively portrays other forms of agro-food production, and claimed that irradiation and GMOs did not alter the material aspects of an organic product, and therefore should not be included as banned inputs and processes (Nestle, 2003:233). But due to the massive public outcry and protest (over 275, 000 complaints), the USDA was pressured to include in the NOS regulations that products under the USDA's certified organic label could not contain GMOs, bio-sludge or be irradiated (Baker, 2004:2). Despite the attempts by some conventional agricultural producers to influence the content of NOS, concerned practitioners and consumers of organic products politically pressured the USDA to regulate all inputs and processes that change the material aspects of organic products because it was perceived as an issue of food safety. But critics in the conventional agro-food sector claimed that the USDA decision to include banning GMOs

and bio-sludge in the NOS and organic production processes was politically motivated, and not based on scientific evidence (Nestle, 2004:233).

The amended OFPA, which included the NOSB's recommendations to ban certain substances and processes, was implemented in 2002 and covers all organic "cultivated crops, wild crop, livestock, livestock feed, and handling (preparation and processing) operations" (Riddle and Coody, 2003:52). The OFPA created a standardized set of criteria to judge all organic products grown in the US to insure the buyer of the authenticity of the products purchased and established an accreditation agency under the *National Organic Program* (NOP). Accreditation refers to the authority given to certifying associations to certify producers, processors and handlers as 'certified organic' establishments allowed to label their products as "USDA certified organic". The NOP and the OFPA regulate the use of the label "organic" and certify products that fall into one of three categories: '100 percent organic', 'organic' or 'made with organic ingredients' (USDA, 2002d). The USDA frames the OFPA as a "marketing label," not a 'code of conduct' and is focused on consumer protection from false 'organic' claims (Bostrom and Klintman, 2006:164). From the position of the USDA, the NOP is not meant to include any substantive principles associated with the organic philosophy.

Despite the inclusion of the NOSB's recommendations, the OFPA makes no mention of labour standards or issues of ecological sustainability that are associated with organic agriculture. In an interview, Cummins criticizes the final OPFA because it "...say[s] nothing about subsidized water, animal treatment, labour standards or food miles..." (Ruiz-Marrero, 2004). The exclusion of some substantive environmental standards (e.g., water usage, farm size) and the entire exclusion of social standards (e.g., fair treatment of

labour) were exempt from the final OFPA (Guthman, 2004:117). For example, under the *Applicability Preamble* of the NOP, contained in the section *Changes Requested But Not Made* is point 10: 'Fair Labor Practices on Organic Farms'. Although some contributors to the creation of the NOP were eager to include labour standards in the actual NOP legislation, fair labour practices are not considered integral to regulations pertaining to organic agriculture because, "other statutes cover labor and worker safety standards" (USDA, 2002c). But as Guthman points out, there is little or no reference to labour in any enforceable regulations pertaining to organic agriculture, and labour as a distinct interest group has been virtually left out of the policy process (Guthman, 2004:182). As organic regulations have become part of public policy frameworks, many of the most socially progressive and ecologically sensitive aspects of the organic philosophy have been excluded.

Another issue, which demonstrates the lack of inclusion of substantive principles found in the organic philosophy in the NOP, is the absence of regulation pertaining to farm size. As previously discussed, farm size is a pertinent issue to organic producers subscribing to the organic philosophy, because small, poly-cultural farms are able to foster biological diversity and recycle farm wastes. In the NOP, there are no restrictions on certifying organic 'factory farms' that produce excessive farm wastes, and often crowd one species of livestock in confined spaces. As stated in the NOP: "The final rule does not contain such a prohibition [on factory farms] because commenters did not provide a clear enforceable definition of "factory farm" for use in the final rule" (USDA, 2002d:93). Under the NOP, large-scale corporate organic farms are viewed as equivalent to small-scale farms because the technical, end product they produce is identical. The

lack of distinction between factory and small-scale farms demonstrates the absence of formal recognition of the importance of what happens throughout organic agricultural processes in the USDA organic regulations.

Organic producers who oppose the lack of definition of farm size in the NOP, such as a small-scale organic producer from US-based *Marquita Farms*, argues that “the federal standards are just about what ‘thou shalt not do’. It doesn’t talk about what you should do: soil conservation, reducing the distance food had to travel, staying away from monoculture” (Mark, 2005). The regulations are meant to ‘level the playing field amongst producers’ while securing national and global market access for economically competitive producers. As DeLind notes, the institutionalization of the technical aspects to organic agriculture and the “...lack of specific definition allow[s] many...to associate [organic food] with important characteristics of scale, locality, control, knowledge, nutrition, social justice, [and] participation...” even though actual production processes may not display these qualities (DeLind, 2000:200). But unlike the public outcry that followed the drafted NOS and OFPA for not including inputs and processes that altered the material components of an organic product, the exclusion of social and ecological goals associated with the organic philosophy received far less public acknowledgement by the organic sector.

Canada

The ratification of the NOS in the US continued to have an important role in how Canada shaped its own national organic standard until it became law in 2006, though Canada’s national organic standards attend to some issues of process that the US regulations do not, such as ensuring the humane treatment of animals (CAN/CGSB-

32.310- 2006:iii). Yet, much as in the case of conventional agriculture, the US is Canada's leading trading partner in organic products, while Canada does not hold the same influential position with the US (Cohn, 1992:4). Canada's lack of a national standard was an ongoing trade issue for EU importers of Canadian organic products that wanted a Canadian national organic standard equivalent to their own. In fact, Statistics Canada reports that the primary motivation behind the establishment of a Canadian national organic standard was "to meet these nations' [EU] standards" (Wunsch, 2003:187). Although Canada had an informal national standard since 1999, it was not put into law by the federal government until December 22, 2006 (OTA, 2006; COG, 2007).

Canada, like the US, is a relative latecomer in developing federal policies for organic agriculture. The Canadian government first began exploratory research into organic agriculture the same year the EU fully implemented its organic standards in 1991, which were developed during the 1980s (EEC no. 2092/91). In 1991, the *Canadian Organic Unity Project* (COUP) was formed to develop a regulatory system to govern the production and handling of organic agricultural products in Canada, as the export potential for organic products was recognized (Doherty, 2004). The *Canadian Organic Advisory Board* (COAB) replaced the COUP in 1993 and held a consultative role with the *Canadian General Standards Board* (CGSB) in developing national standards in 1997 (CGSB, 1999). The CGSB drew up a lengthy outline of the proposed *Canadian National Standards for Organic Agriculture* (NSOA) regulations, while proposed outlines of standards were debated between the CGSB and the COAB. The CGSB consulted with committees from the organic sector such as the Standards Committee on

Organic Agriculture, which represents producers and interest groups like the OTA, continued to deliberate into the early 2000s (AAFC, 2004 OTA, 2005a).

Canada's decision to institutionalize public policy for organic food and agriculture at the federal level moved more slowly than in the US but, like the US, it included a number of interest groups in the policy process. The ad hoc *Organic Regulatory Committee* (ORC), made up of private sector actors, suggested in 2003 that a Canadian organic standard should consist of a federal regulation, a national organic standard and maintenance system, an optional national symbol, competent authority, network of organic certification bodies, surveillance and enforcement system, advisory body, national registry and funding arrangements (ORC, 2003:7). The ORC included representatives from national and regional organizations as well as certifiers and businesses with an interest in implementing a national organic standard. Representatives from all areas of the organic sector were consulted in the drafting of a *Canadian National Standard for Organic Agriculture* (CNSOA) including the *Canadian Organic Growers*, *Organic Crop Producers & Processors Ontario* and the *Organic Trade Association* (ORC, 2003).

In discussions between the CGSB and private sector representatives in the ORC regarding the Canadian organic standard, the consensus between provinces in developing this regulatory standard was paramount. If provinces wished not to be responsible for regulating organic practices themselves, the ORC suggested that they might delegate jurisdiction to the federal government (ORC, 2003:6). Canada's ratified national organic standard recognizes both Quebec and BC's provincial standards as equivalent (CFIA, 2003).

Canada has largely fashioned its organic agricultural policies to converge with the existing US model. The motivation behind Canada's effort to converge its policies to the US' is to increase the flow of its exports to the US market. In an interview with "Alice" who was involved in the painstaking thirteen year deliberation process of developing the Canadian organic standard, she suggested that the similarities between the US and Canadian organic standards were intentional, as the model of standards and certification used by the USDA was developed in tandem with Canadian standards. But, much like in the development of the US' NOP, there were divisions amongst the organic producers as to what should be included in the national standards and what should not. She also mentioned that the absence of a national organic standard for Canada presented a serious barrier to trade for producers in the Canadian organic sector, and that its implementation was necessary to assure consumer confidence in Canadian organic products (PC1, Feb. 8, 2005).

The Canadian National Standard for Organic Agriculture, as put forth by the CGSB and like the USDA's NOP, includes no comments or regulations regarding labour conditions on organic establishments, or a dedication to any of the major social principles of the organic philosophy (USDA, 2002d). Much like the NOP, the final draft of the *Canadian Organic Production System (COPS)* refers to organic agriculture as "...based on principles that support healthy practices...[that] aim to increase the quality and the durability of the environment through specific management and production methods. They also focus on ensuring the humane treatment of animals" (CGSB, 2006:7; CAN/CGSB 32.310-2006). The CNSOA only pertains to criteria necessary to certify crop and livestock production, handlers, transportation and labeling. Although the COPS

standards addresses some of the technical environmental principles of organic agriculture like banning synthetic pesticides, it does not address farm size or the social goods that have been a part of the organic practices.

Much like the American policy process in devising a national organic standard, supporters and practitioners of the organic philosophy have criticized the policy process regarding a national standard for Canada. Some Canadian organic producers did not support a harmonized national standard, and claimed that it will make existing programmes redundant, and de-legitimize small-scale farmer's certifications at the regional and provincial levels who cannot afford another set of certification (Welling, 1999:61, Doherty, 2004). Some organic producers have opted to not be certified under national standards partially as an act of political protest to what they view as state sanctioned regulations devised to control the activities of organic producers and to impose heavy certification costs upon them, privileging corporate ownership and the management of the organic sector (Seiff, 2005).

In a 2005 interview with George Laundry, a small-scale organic farmer who is also the Director of the Farmer's Institute on Salt Spring Island in BC, he expressed some major concerns over the implementation of Canada's national organic standard, and what it means for small-scale organic producers. Laundry stated that he agreed that a Canadian national standard should be in place, but that it should be independent from government departments, like a medical association. At the time of the interview, he did not believe that such a proposal was likely to materialize, but Laundry did accurately predict that Canada's organic standard would closely resemble the US national standards, to facilitate further corporate activity in the organic sector (PC2, Mar. 1, 2005). Because

of the ability for corporate actors to influence the policy process, Laundry also predicted that organic agriculture practice in a way that internalizes social and environmental costs had only ten more years until it was entirely replaced with industrialized forms of organic production.

Proponents of the Canadian national organic standard claim that not having a national organic standard disadvantaged Canadian producers domestically and globally, and cost Canadian consumers because of multiple certification requirements (Klonsky, 2000:234). But it is unclear as to how federal level regulations will benefit domestic production for domestic consumption in Canada, when multiple levels of certification add costs to organic production. As of 2004, Canada imported most of the processed organic goods sold in Canada from the US including soybeans, food ingredients, fruit juices, frozen vegetables, and dried fruit. Sales of processed organic products make up almost 90% of all organic products sold in Canada (Gold, 2005; USDA, 2005:3). In terms of domestic consumption, according to Macey's 2004 report to Agriculture and Agro-Food Canada (AAFC), 62% of organic produce, 60%-85% of grocery and 10% of dairy products purchased in Canada are imported from the US (Macey, 2004:26).

In 2003, the AAFC reported that exports of Canadian organic products were worth over \$63 million (CAD) to the Canadian economy (Kortbech-Olesen, 2004:5). Most of Canada's current organic production is for export rather than domestic processing or consumption (USDA, 2005:2). The US imports 42% of Canada's organic exports, which mainly consist of organic goods minimally processed such as produce, grains and seeds, while the majority of the rest are destined for the EU and Japan (Macey, 2007:8). Concerned organic producers groups have blamed the large volume of organic imports

from the US to Canada for the slow growth of organic farming in Canada. *Canadian Organic Grower's* executive director Laura Telford has expressed concern over the fact that Canada imports the vast majority of its organic products, which are often more cheaply produced in the US than they could ever be in Canada. She argues that the flood of imports gives Canadian farmers little incentive to convert to organic farming because of the associated start-up costs (Stephenson, 2007:9). We have yet to see the outcomes of Canada's national organic standard, and whether it will create benefits for Canadian organic producers, although it is unlikely to change the reliance Canada has on US imports, since the national regulations were devised to facilitate trade, not promote domestic production for domestic consumption.

Conclusion

This chapter has argued that the primary motivator for institutionalizing organic agriculture into public policy is to help expand the market for organic products beyond the localized markets. While many organic producers in both Canada and the US have benefited from harmonized, enforceable national standards, others have questioned whose interests the present set of policies represent. The trust-based relationships that had for so long sustained the organic sector became less practical as diverse actors entered the organic sector, and as distances between producer and consumer expanded. The main motivation behind the US and Canadian federal governments' integration of organic agriculture into public policy frameworks was to facilitate trade in organic products and the overall expansion of markets, though as shown in this chapter there are notable differences between what is included in the USDA standards and those devised under the CGSB.

Without any legal mechanisms to include process in the organic supply chains, public policy pertaining to organic food and agriculture has effectively hollowed out the social and ecological goods that have been so important to the organic agriculture. This has allowed for markets to expand, and has facilitated the expansion of the corporate approach in the organic food sector. The privileging of the corporate approach to organic production that focuses on the end, material product in national policies has had major implications for the viability of organic agriculture practiced on a small scale by diverse groups of people. The traditional way of practicing organic agriculture has been excluded from national policy frameworks, as the economic value of organic products is deemed far more important than organic agriculture's contributions to social and environmental sustainability.

CHAPTER 5: GLOBALIZING ORGANIC FOOD: REGULATING ORGANIC IN REGIONAL AND GLOBAL TRADE AGREEMENTS

Introduction

Although organic food's incorporation into the policy agendas of Canada and the US is a relatively recent occurrence, organic food has been part of the international discourse of food and agriculture for over fifteen years. Organic food made its global policy debut when Finland, in 1992, notified the Committee on *Technical Barriers to Trade* (TBT) of its 'Draft Decree on Indications Referring to Organic Agricultural Production for Foodstuffs'. The notification states that products can only be labelled 'organic' if they are subject to 'inspections and surveillance under the Decree' (Finnish Ministry of Trade and Industry, 1992). The purpose of the notification to the Committee on TBT was to establish a set of standards for organic products produced in the European Economic Community (EEC), or imported into the EEC, as there was little reference to organic food in the global trade arena prior to Finland's notification. The Decree became the Council Regulation (EEC) no. 2092/91 and continues to be the set of standards and regulations for organic agriculture in Europe today. The European guidelines presented to the Committee on TBT signalled the official entry of organic food into the global trade regime.

As far back as the 1940s, with the establishment of the *Soil Association* in the UK, and the emergence of the *International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements* (IFOAM) in the 1980s in Germany, organic agriculture has received considerable attention from the international community as an alternative to industrialized food production. As the profit potential of globally traded organic products has been

recognized, new actors such as governments and corporations have joined the international community in promoting organic agriculture. As organic food is incorporated into the global trade regime, it is subject to the same trade agreements as any other globally traded agricultural product, which has serious implications for the ability of supporters to put into practice the organic philosophy.

This chapter examines the implications that the *North American Free Trade Agreement* (NAFTA)¹⁷ and select agreements administered through the *World Trade Organization* (WTO) have for organic agriculture, as it enters the global trade regime. It is argued that harmonizing national trade policies, as promoted by the NAFTA and the WTO, restricts the role ‘process’ plays in distinguishing the characteristics of ‘like’ products,¹⁸ which works against the logic of the organic philosophy. The entry of organic products into the global trade regime enforces the neo-liberal market logic, which denies the importance of process to the end, material product in the organic production process. This chapter demonstrates that trade agreements institutionalize the corporate approach to producing, processing and distributing organic food.

The first section discusses how neo-liberal principles of trade embodied in the NAFTA and the WTO disadvantage approaches to organic agriculture that seek to ensure that economic relations are embedded in social relations. The second section looks at the WTO trade agreements, the Agreement on *Technical Barriers to Trade* (TBT) (that regulates the inclusion of ‘process’ in the rules for tradable goods) and the *Sanitary and*

¹⁷ The NAFTA extended the *Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement* (CUSFTA) to Mexico beginning in 1994.

¹⁸ A like product is “a product which is identical, i.e. alike in all respects to the product under consideration, or in the absence of such a product, another product which, although not alike in all respects, has characteristics closely resembling those of the product under consideration. (The Anti-Dumping Agreement, Art. 2.6; Subsidies and Countervailing Measures Agreement, Art. 15.1, fn. 46.) (www.ftaa-alca.org)

Phyto-Sanitary (SPS) Measures, which are the food safety agreements that are part of *the Agreement on Agriculture*. It is shown how these agreements privilege the corporate approach to managing the organic production process. The third section takes a closer look at three international organizations that regulate organic food and agriculture, two of which are recognized by trade agreements as international authorities on setting standards: the *Codex Alimentarius Commission* (Codex),¹⁹ and the *International Organization for Standardization* (ISO)²⁰ and the *International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements* (IFOAM), which is an independent organic standards-setting organization which is recognized by Codex and ISO. The third section shows that despite various efforts by IFOAM to formally promote the substantive aspects associated with the organic philosophy, it is unable to withstand the pressure to accept the neo-liberal approach to trade as embodied in trade agreements and other efforts to globally harmonize organic standards.

The NAFTA and the WTO: Basic Principles of Trade Applicable to Organic Food and Agriculture

As mentioned, the main reason why organic food entered the global trade regime was not to spread its traditional aims of environmentally sensitive farming techniques or promoting social justice, but to expand markets for corporate actors involved in the organic food sector. Trade agreements such as the NAFTA and the GATT/WTO function to entrench the rights of capital (Brodie, 2004), and as organic products enter the global trade regime, they are subject to the same rules of trade as all other food and

¹⁹ The Codex Alimentarius Commission is an authoritative body in the interpretation of the WTO's Sanitary and Phyto-Sanitary Measures.

²⁰ "Because International Organization for Standardization would have different abbreviations in different languages, it was decided when the organization was established, to use a word derived from the Greek word 'isos' meaning 'equal'" (www.iso.org/iso/en/aboutiso/introduction/index.html)

agricultural products. This section shows how the principles and scope of the NAFTA and select WTO agreements apply to organic agriculture. Although neither the NAFTA or WTO agreements specifically addresses organic agriculture, the legally enforceable rules that privilege neo-liberal approaches to economic activities have serious implications for organic agriculture, as it has moved beyond localized supply chains.

The NAFTA

The NAFTA was signed in 1994 by Canada, Mexico and the US, and is built upon the neo-liberal principles of the CUSFTA signed in 1989 between Canada and the US. In the 1980s, the US preferred to enter into bilateral trade agreements out of frustration with the speed of multilateral trade negotiations (Schaeffer, 1995:255). Both agreements have the objectives of eliminating barriers to the trade in goods and services, and eliminating restrictions on foreign direct investment between its member states.

The NAFTA helps to create a regional trade bloc that encourages the transnationalization of production processes and the harmonization of regulations pertaining to economic activities among member states (Cohen and Clarkson, 2004). Article 102 of Chapter 1 of the NAFTA, states that one of the primary objectives of the trade agreement is to “eliminate barriers to trade in, and facilitate the cross-border movement of, goods and services between the territories of the Parties...” (NAFTA, 1994: Chap. 1, Art. 102). In essence, the NAFTA is premised on creating a regionalized market with few restrictions on the movement of goods, services and investment. By signing onto the NAFTA, member states have encouraged the opening up of domestic economic sectors, privatization, deregulation and the strengthening of rights to private property (Kratowil and Ruggie, 1986:757).

The NAFTA includes a number of rules that favour instrumentalist forms of production demanded by corporate actors, while limiting the inclusion of social and environmental principles in national regulations (Grinspun and Kreklewich, 1994). The social and environmental conditions of member countries are of little concern to corporate actors eager to expand markets for their products. Social and environmental regulations are considered to be illegitimate barriers to the free flow of goods, services and investment (Cohen, 2007). In this regard, the NAFTA is based on the principle of National Treatment; it reads, “with respect to a state or province, treatment no less favorable than the most favorable treatment accorded by such state or province to any like, directly competitive or substitutable goods, as the case may be, of the Party of which it forms a part” (NAFTA, 1994: Chap. 3, Art. 301). In essence, the principle of National Treatment states that like products must be treated the same, whether they are domestically produced or produced by foreign firms. Where the product is produced, who produces and how it is produced cannot be used as legal grounds to deny access of a product to a member country’s domestic market.

Chapter 11 of the NAFTA also extends the principle of National Treatment to investment. Art. 1102 of Chapter 11 states that “(e)ach Party shall accord to investors of another Party treatment no less favorable than that it accords, in like circumstances, to its own investors with respect to the establishment, acquisition, expansion, management, conduct, operation, and sale or other disposition of investments” (NAFTA, 1994: Chap. 11, Art. 1102). By extending the principle of National Treatment to investment, the inclusion of a number of social or environmental regulations tied to foreign investment is limited because they would restrict many foreign corporations from investing in various

sectors of a country's economy. In essence the NAFTA locks in the rights of corporations to control production processes and invest in almost any sector of a country's economy, which limits the inclusion of more substantive principles in any regulation that relates to the trade in goods and the movement of investment across borders.

Before the institutionalization of the NAFTA, citizens could relatively depend on their governments to organize economic activities to provide them with social and economic security. However, the NAFTA promotes the regional integration of markets so that governments cannot secure public goods by treating domestic businesses differently than foreign ones. Organizing economic activities for political or social reasons, such as supporting rural communities by shielding domestic markets from cheap imports, are deemed to be barriers to trade under the NAFTA. The NAFTA applies to the trade of most agro-food, with a few exceptions such as eggs, poultry and dairy, between the US, Canada and Mexico and sugar and syrup goods between the US and Mexico (NAFTA, 1994: Chap. 7, Annex 703.2, Sec. A and B).

Specific to trade in agricultural goods, regional institutions like NAFTA, have been shown to constrain the policy options available to member-states and to encourage the convergence of policy-making outcomes. Tim Josling (2001), in his study of regional trade agreements and agriculture, shows that the regional integration of agriculture production networks is part of a larger effort to harmonize regulation at the multilateral level. The global integration of agricultural policies is facilitated by regional institutions, which include the liberalization of agriculture in their agreements (Josling, 2001:190). In Robert Schaeffer's examination of free trade agreements and their influence on

agriculture, he claims that by deregulating activities of agribusiness, regional institutions further contribute to the transnationalization of agricultural supply-chains, and promote the 'monopoly power of TNCs' (1995:259).

Despite not being explicitly mentioned in its text, organic products that cross borders in North America are subject to the rules and regulation of the NAFTA.

Institutionalizing neo-liberal principles through regional trade agreements like the NAFTA facilitates the ability of corporations to avoid the substantive principles associated with organic agriculture, as reflected in federal-level policies in Canada and the US that do not address farm size or fair labour practices. This satisfies corporate actors, since including elements of the organic philosophy in its technical definition contributes to overhead costs and decreases the profitability of sales of organic food (Lindsay, 2005).

The NAFTA encourages market expansion to capitalize on international demand, and most of the public policy at the national level in Canada and the US follows the logic of producing for export markets by producers. Canada orients most its organic production towards satisfying the US market, while US production is directed towards supplying domestic demands, but also exporting to Canada (USDA, 2002a; Macey, 2004). The transnationalization of organic food supply chains is evident from the volume of organic products exported from Mexico to the US, and exported from the US to Canada. Between 60-85% of all organic grocery products sold in Canada are imported from the US, while Mexico exports almost 90% of its organic produce to the US (Macey, 2004:26; Sligh and Christman, 2004:17). Harmonizing standards and regulations for organic agriculture and food facilitates the expansion of a 'North American' market exceeding

the limited profit potential of localized supply chains. Allowing for foreign control of various segments of domestic organic sectors undermines the organic philosophy's effort to keep decision-making local and keeping production processes closely tied to local communities.

By participating in the regional trading bloc that privileges a form of economic production that does not include the social costs to production, practitioners of the organic philosophy find themselves at a market disadvantage. As Reynolds notes in regard to harmonized certification requirements, "...organic certification appears to reassert industrial and commercial quality conventions, based on efficiency, standardization, bureaucratization, and price competitiveness" (Reynolds, 2004:10). Because one of the major issues for consumers wanting to purchase organic products is price²¹, cheaper organic products traded amongst NAFTA member states or circulated through regionalized supply chains have a market advantage over organic products that voluntarily internalize social and environmental costs. Since there are no limits on who can invest or participate in organic supply chains, corporate actors are privileged in the NAFTA and can provide cheaper organic products to a growing market by either regionalizing supply chains, or purchasing domestic firms and then integrating them into already transnationalized supply chains.

The WTO

Considering that the Uruguay Round negotiations used the legal texts of the NAFTA as a model, many of the benefits extended to private business in the NAFTA are also a

²¹ In 2005, a global internet-based consumer survey conducted by market researcher *ACNeilson* found that 45% of those surveyed in North America said that the number one reason they did not purchase organic food was price. Comparatively, 43% of Europeans listed price as the major barrier to purchasing organic food (ACNeilson, 2005:5).

part of multilateral agreements administered through the WTO, including the Agreement on Agriculture. Due to corporate influence in its development, critics such as Vandana Shiva et al. refer to as ‘an agribusiness treaty’ (Shiva et al., 2003:7). Until the ratification of the Agreement on Agriculture, agriculture and trade in food products was not part of multilateral trade agreements. Though agricultural trade has some degree of regulation imposed upon it at the international level, it continues to be treated differently than the global trade in other products.

Under the GATT system previous to the Uruguay Round (1986-1994), there were many difficulties in applying the rules and principles of trade evenly as there was no legal enforcement body. Often more powerful members of the GATT would ignore agreements that they did not benefit from, while weaker members had little choice but to participate for fear of being excluded from the global trade regime all together (Wolfe, 1998; Cohn, 2002). The Uruguay Round’s main objectives were to address the uneven application of agreements among members to address some newer trade issues, such as services, investment and intellectual property, and to develop a comprehensive agreement on trade in agricultural products. The Uruguay Round would be referred to as the ‘single undertaking’—meaning that signatories had to agree to all of the agreements presented throughout the Round, with several exceptions for developing countries (Wolfe, 1998:94).

The WTO was created to develop, administer and enforce the GATT agreements as well as other agreements pertaining to services, investment, intellectual property and agriculture among member states, and also to develop more comprehensive agreements through successive trade rounds. As Hoekman and Kostecki argue,

the underlying philosophy of the WTO is that open markets, non-discrimination and global competition in international trade are conducive to the national welfare of all countries. A rationale for the organization is that political constraints prevent governments from adopting more efficient trade policies, and that through the reciprocal exchange of liberalization commitments these political constraints can be overcome (Hoekman and Kostecki, 2001:1).

The WTO offers members a mechanism for resolving trade disputes when they arise either through the dispute settlement mechanism, the application of safeguards or the implementation of a member's negotiated exceptions from WTO agreements. Although the hope in creating the WTO and the Dispute Settlement Body was that they would alleviate the number of trade disputes, this has not been accomplished (McMichael, 2004). Agriculture, despite the creation of a multilateral agreement on agriculture, continues to remain a major area of trade disputes between countries, and developing countries have continued to struggle economically, which contributed to the collapse of the Doha Round in 2007.

Despite the success of the WTO in institutionalizing the principles of neo-liberalism into enforceable laws of trade, the rules continue to not be applied equally or evenly. The more economically and politically powerful member states such as the US and EU still use the principles and rules of the WTO for their own advantage and in some cases, do not adhere to dispute settlement rulings. For example, Brazil brought a case against the US governments' subsidization of US Upland cotton producers to the Dispute Settlement Body in 2002. The Dispute Settlement Body ruled in favour of Brazil (and the Appellate Body upheld the ruling in 2005) yet to date, the US has not implemented the recommended changes to its cotton subsidy program (WTO, Dispute DS267).

Despite its shortcomings in successfully solving trade disputes involving food and agricultural goods, the WTO wields significant power in demanding policy harmonization between participating members and standardization of the criteria to judge the integrity of tradable goods and services. Policy harmonization is also required for national organic standards and regulations. Some observers have heralded policy harmonization for the production and movement of organic goods as promoted by the WTO claiming it "...reduce[s] information asymmetries along the marketing channel from producer to consumer" while reducing the costs passed onto the consumers through harmonized certification schemes (Lohr, 1998:1125; Lohr and Krissoff, 2000:212). Today, the diverse standards of localized organic production networks are being replaced with harmonized, global standards as organic food production methods and products are subject to the rules of the global trade regime (Mutersbaugh, 2004). Thus the move towards public policy harmonization for organic agriculture and the international movement of organic products presents a paradox, since in many ways organic agriculture is based on localism, diversity and democratic decision-making and other substantive goals traditionally not included in the neo-liberal market ideology. In many of the agreements formalized through the Uruguay Round, the end product was recognized as the only aspect of the production process that could be used to restrict the movement of goods across borders.

The Agreement on Technical Barriers to Trade and the Sanitary and Phyto-Sanitary Measures

In addition to understanding how the neo-liberal principles embodied in trade agreements influence the production processes of organic agriculture, specific agreements that are part of the WTO, and also instituted into the NAFTA, need further examination.

As with the NAFTA, internationally traded organic products fall under similar legal jurisdictions of the WTO as other agricultural products. Both the agreement on TBT and SPS measures “concern the application of technical measures, food safety and animal and plant health regulations” (OECD, 2003a:119). The most relevant agreements to organic agriculture are the revised Agreement on *Technical Barriers to Trade* Agreement (TBT) administered through the GATT, and the Sanitary (human and animal health) and Phyto-Sanitary (plant health) Measures (SPS) that is part of the Agreement on Agriculture negotiated through the Uruguay Round.

The TBT and the SPS only cover globally traded goods (the GATS deals with services). Before the SPS was established, many of the regulations regarding food safety, and animal and plant health were part of the TBT (created during the Tokyo Round of GATT negotiations) (Stanton, 2004). The SPS deals specifically with “rules for food safety, and animal and plant health standards (SPS Measures, ‘Introduction’, 1998). Up until the end of the Tokyo Round in 1979, technical barriers to trade were the most widely used non-tariff measures exporters had to encounter. As a result of the Tokyo Round, 32 GATT members signed on to a pluri-lateral agreement called the Standards Code or the Agreement on Technical Barriers to Trade. The conclusion of the Uruguay Round strengthened and clarified the TBT (TBT, ‘Technical Explanation’).

The TBT covers “all products including industrial and agricultural products” (TBT, Art. 1.2). It also covers regulations, standards, testing and certification procedures that facilitate the free movement of goods across borders, but it does not allow for what the WTO considers ‘unwarranted protection for domestic producers’ (OECD, 2003a:8; TBT, Art. 5.1.2). The TBT requires that member states use existing international standards to

encourage policy harmonization, but there are special provisions made for developing countries and security interests (TBT, 'Preamble'). The SPS gives states the ability to deny entry of agro-food into domestic economies based on process, if it is deemed a threat to "...human, animal or plant life or health, [but it] should not arbitrarily or unjustifiably discriminate between Members where identical or similar conditions prevail" (SPS, Art. 2, par. 3).²² Specifically pertaining to agriculture, Sec. B of Chap. 7 of the NAFTA also extends to the trade of agricultural products and the application of SPS Measures (NAFTA, Chap. 7, Art. 712, 'Basic Rights and Obligations'). As of 2003, only one trade dispute was raised regarding organic labelling under the TBT. The details of the trade dispute have not been made public, but the majority of trade disputes regarding labelling have stemmed from the claim that labels have been used by a member state to discriminate against a like product from another member state (OECD, 2003a:9).

Both the Agreement on TBT and SPS Measures are based on technical *regulations* applied to the material aspects of the end product, whereas *standards*, which usually contain issues of process, are considered substantive aspects of evaluation. Both agreements allow for member states to develop standards for goods that go above and beyond technical regulations, but "in the case of standards, non-complying imported products will be allowed on the market, but then their market share may be affected if consumers prefer products that meet local standards such as quality" (OECD, 2003a:120). This means that products that meet the lowest common regulation must be given the same market access whether or not they are sourced inside of a country's economy, although local products may have a market advantage because of consumers'

²² "Sanitary measures can be specific process criteria, certifications, inspection procedures, or permitted use of only certain additives in foods" (OECD, 2003:132).

belief that their national standards are higher than imported products of similar material quality (Pedersen, 2003:246).

If a production process does not directly affect the qualities of the end product, it cannot be used as grounds to deny entry of a foreign good into a member's domestic market. Although member states have the capacity to pursue domestic policies that promote "technical regulations and conformity assessment procedures," labour and environmental standards are not included in the WTO's technical definitions of what constitutes 'organic' (OECD, 2003a:8). SPS Measures are based on risk assessment that is grounded in scientific evidence; regulations regarding food safety must be based on science that the SPS Committee has deemed sound and widely established. Thus, unsafe practices for workers (such as farm workers hand weeding or using a short-handled hoe)²³ in food production cannot be used as reasons to deny access because the working conditions do not compromise the safety of the food—only the safety of the worker.

A principle of trade that both the Agreement on TBT and SPS Measures share is the opposition to trade restrictions based on *processes and production methods* (PPMs) that do not shape the material characteristics of a final product. Using PPMs as grounds to deny the access of a foreign-produced good into a domestic market is in direct conflict with the principle of national treatment as outlined in the GATT (GATT, Art. 3). A member state cannot use activities occurring during the production process in a foreign country to deny entry of its products into the domestic market, unless it can scientifically be proven to damage human, animal or plant health. Process standards are quite different

²³ The 'short handled hoe' was banned in 1975 because it was determined to be the cause of many back injuries among farm workers in California. Hand weeding is used instead, which has also been proved to cause serious injuries among farm workers. There is legislation in California that bans hand weeding, but organic farmers are exempt from the regulation because of organic agriculture's dependence on manual labour. See Jennifer Coleman, 2004.

from product standards. Product standards refer to the outcomes of a domestic party using a product, while “process standards are meant to control negative environmental by-products of the production process in foreign countries” (US Congress, 1995:149). Production processes occurring in another country are difficult for an importing country to monitor, and production processes cannot be legally used to deny the access of an import to a domestic market under WTO rules (US Congress, 1995:149). The inability for states to consider PPMs when importing products has a number of implications for federal-level environmental standards of member states.

The issue of PPMs was raised in the 1990s with the dolphin-tuna case between the US and Mexico. The US wanted to deny the access of Mexican-caught tuna because the way it was harvested entangled and killed dolphins, which violated the US’ *Marine Mammal Protection Act*. Mexico lodged a complaint in 1992, and the GATT dispute settlement panel ruled that the US was indeed in violation of the GATT. The panel report was circulated, but it was not adopted. The US and Mexico settled their trade dispute ‘out of court’ (WTO, Environment: Dispute 4, 1992). The WTO still does not allow for PPMs to be used by importing countries, and as a report issued by the US Congress notes, “a central issue with respect to PPMs is whether [WTO] laws can differentiate between different goods based on the processes or methods used in their production, if those processes or methods are not reflected in the observable and measurable physical characteristics of the product itself” (US Congress, 1995:149).

The Mexico/US case drew attention toward trade issues pertaining to production processes, and the case was later referred to as a ‘product versus process’ issue, which continues to generate disputes in the global trading system. The issue of processes and

production methods in global trade is a major issue for those who would like to see environmentally damaging production processes (e.g., clear-cutting rainforest) used in foreign countries as grounds to deny access of their products to an importer's domestic market, in hopes that they will eventually be phased out. Supporters of the WTO's position on denying the inclusion of PPMs as grounds for denying entry of a foreign good to a domestic market, claim that eco-labelling (based on what occurs during the production process) is in violation of WTO agreements, particularly the agreement on TBT (Hobbs, 2001:272; Jacobsen, 2002:11; O'Brien et al., 2000:148). The WTO continues to struggle with environmental concerns presented by member states, and how environmental standards should, if at all, factor into trade policies of member-states (Kerr, 2001:63).

All WTO members must accept other WTO members' standards as equivalent to their own, as long as they are based on 'sound' scientific evidence. But what is to be considered sound 'scientific evidence' has proven more difficult to ascertain than the regulation suggests. The principles embodied in the SPS Measures have garnered criticism from those who claim they deny member states the ability to discriminate against importing products they determine to be dangerous to human health that other member states do not. This was in fact the case for France, when it banned the import of hormone-treated beef from the US and Canada (WTO, Dispute Settlement, DS26, 1996). France's scientific evidence claimed that hormone-treated beef was hazardous to human health, while the US and Canada claimed it was not (Hoekman and Kostecki, 2001:196). The US claimed in 1996 that the EU's refusal to import hormone-treated American and Canadian beef was in violation of GATT Art. III, or XI, SPS Art. 2, 3 and 5, the

Agreement on TBT Art. 2, and the Agreement on Agriculture's Art. 4 (WTO, DS26, 1996). The Panel reviewing the trade dispute ruled that the EU was in violation of Article 3.1, 5.1 and 5.5 of the SPS Measures. The EU requested an Appellate Body to review the case, but the Appellate Body upheld most of the Panel's findings (the EU was in violation of Art. 3.1 and 5.5). Despite this ruling, the EU has stated that it cannot comply with the Appellate Body's findings, and the trade dispute over EU imports of hormone-treated American and Canadian beef continues.

The case of hormone treated beef sheds some light on the difficulties involved in defining what 'sound' scientific evidence is, and how it can be interpreted differently amongst member countries. Rulings that undermine a state's decision to deny the entry of goods that are deemed to be harmful to human health, threaten the ability for states to enact food safety regulations for fear they will be struck down at the WTO. Regulations that restrict the entry of a good that are considered not based on scientific evidence are treated by the WTO dispute settlement bodies as non-tariff barriers (NTB), as in the case of France's ban of US and Canadian hormone-treated beef.

NTBs can include any type of restriction on imports that is not in the form of a tariff, such as labour standards. An NTB is defined as "any governmental device or practice other than a tariff which directly impedes the entry of imports into a country and which discriminates against imports, but doesn't apply equal force on domestic production or distribution" (OECD, 2003a:41). Although the treatment of labour and issues of farm size are fundamental to keeping economic relations embedded in the social relations that are part of organic agriculture, under the SPS Measures, issues such as how labour is treated in the production processes and the size of organic farms are not allowed to be

included in national regulations. Since there is no ‘scientific’ basis for including fair labour standards and farm sizes as enforceable parts of national regulations for organic food production, including more substantive goals in national regulatory frameworks is almost impossible for WTO members. Members have little recourse against imported organic products that may not meet their own social and environmental standards put into practice by domestic producers. This can disadvantage domestic producers who voluntarily put organic principles into practice, by adding to the final cost of the product.

International Authorities on Organic Agriculture Standards: The Codex, ISO and IFOAM

Scholars studying the inclusion of organic food in the global trade regime, such as Dabbert (2003), claim that the recognition of the WTO and the Codex will only increase the profile of the organic sector and strengthen its association with food quality and safety in the global marketplace. Lohr and Krissoff (2000) and DeLind (2000), believe that the recognition and harmonization of policies at the global level will encourage the spread of organic agriculture worldwide. The Agreement on TBT and SPS Measures states that harmonization of international standards is possible if all members attempt to base their regulations upon pre-existing, well-established ones, such as those established by the *International Organization for Standardization (ISO)*²⁴.

Member countries developing organic standards are strongly advised to develop them in coordination with other standards-setting bodies like the ISO and the *Codex Alimentarius Commission (Codex)*, both of which are recognized by the Agreement on TBT as authorities on international standards setting (TBT, Annex 1). The SPS Measures also encourage WTO members to harmonize their regulations on “as wide a basis as

²⁴ See footnote 17.

possible, [and] Members are encouraged to base their measures on international standards, guidelines and recommendations...” (SPS Measures, Art. 3). The Codex and the ISO are recognized by the WTO and the NAFTA as international standards setting organizations. Members of the NAFTA (Chap. 7, Chap. 9, Art. 905) and the WTO are obliged to harmonize their standards pertaining to food and agriculture with the Codex and ISO. In the NAFTA, Codex standards are cited as basic requirements that all members must meet. Since both Codex and ISO’s standards operate on the principle of National Treatment, very few production processes, unless they can be scientifically proven to threaten human, animal or plant health, can be used as grounds to deny the entry of a foreign good into a domestic market, or to apply anti-dumping or countervailing duties.

The Codex is recognized by the WTO as the scientific authority on which the SPS Measures are based. As stated in the SPS text, the Codex “...is recognized as the authority for all matters related to international food safety evaluation and harmonization” (OECD, 2003a:133; SPS Measures Art. 3, para. 4). The Codex was set up by an FAO/WHO joint-initiative to agree on some international standards for ‘healthy food’ in 1961 (Atkins and Bowler, 2001:182). Since Codex’s mandate is primarily food safety, its goal is to assure compliance to food standards that apply to the final product (Doyran, 2003:30). The main objective of Codex is to protect consumer health, and promote the international trade of food through the harmonization of food standards. It creates fair practices, standards and guidelines for global trade in animal and food products. Yet some have questioned the authority of the Codex, as it is criticized as being a bureaucratic agency that has little transparency to the general public. Stephen

Shrybman has called the Codex an ‘elite club of scientists in Geneva’ that remains inaccessible except to a select group of TNCs and professional business associations (Shrybman, 1999:13). The privileged access that TNCs and business associations have to the Codex has undoubtedly influenced the standards set by the organization, as only business interests are represented in Codex’s discussions over food related standards (Schaeffer, 1995:261; McMichael, 1994).

Coinciding with the market for organic products, in 1991 the *Codex Committee on Food Labelling* considered “voluntary and mandatory information provision for process attributes...” of organic produce and elaborated on the guidelines for the production, processing, labelling and marketing of organic products (Caswell, 1997:18; Kilcher et al., 2004:28). One of the Codex’s primary responsibilities is to monitor national organic standards to ensure they are not acting as trade barriers to other states’ organic products (Lohr and Krissoff, 2000:211, Jacobsen, 2002:10). In 1999, the Codex adopted more inclusive guidelines for the production, process, labelling and marketing of organic products called the *Guidelines for the Production, Processing, Marketing and Labeling of Organically Produced Foods* (Hobbs, 2001:278; Codex, 2001; Vossenaar, 2003:14). The text of the guidelines reflects the broader goals of trade liberalization found in the Agreement on TBT and the SPS Measures, as the *Codex* consulted a number of international organizations, as well as others representing industry, trade, and consumers who share similar goals of freer trade in organic products (Doyran, 2003:31).

Countries like Canada and Japan have adopted many of the guidelines that Codex has included in its policy document on organic agriculture into their own national organic public policies. In the event where a WTO member state suspects national organic

regulations are functioning as barriers to trade, the *Codex* is used by the WTO in settling trade disputes; “the WTO may rule against the importing country if the exporting country is found to comply with international standards for organic food products, such as those being formulated by the Codex, even if the exporting country does not comply with the more stringent requirements of the importing country” (Jacobsen, 2002:11).

Another organization that is recognized by the WTO as an authority on international standard-settings is the ISO. Originating from the *International Electrotechnical Commission*, the ISO was established in 1947 to create international coordination and unification of industrial standards. Despite the voluntary nature of ISO-generated international standards, ISO has a “strategic partnership with the WTO” to promote a free and fair global trading system. The Agreement on TBT as part of the GATT includes ISO’s *Code of Good Practice for the Preparation and Adoption and Application of Standards*. Where international standards exist, as with those produced by the ISO, “the Code states that standardizing bodies should use them as a basis for standards they develop” (ISO, 2006). Much like the Codex, the ISO’s purpose is to harmonize standards internationally to “...contribute to making the development, manufacturing and supply of products and services more efficient, safer and cleaner. They make trade between countries easier and fairer. They provide governments with a technical base for health, safety and environmental legislation” (ISO, 2006).

To adhere to the Agreement on TBT, Canada and the US have both used ISO (also holding official observer status with the SPS Committee) guidelines in fashioning their organic standards. Although diverse national standards for organic agriculture exist, on a fundamental level they must conform to the liberal market principles embedded in WTO

agreements (OECD, 2003b:133,140). Both the Canadian and American organic programmes and regulations conform to international standards regarding certification by complying with the ISO's mandate of international harmonization of standards (Bostrom and Klintman, 2006:174; OECD, 2003b:124; USDA, 1999; AAFC, 2006). Both Canadian and American organic certification programmes conform to the ISO's Guide 65 (General requirements for bodies operating product certification systems), which established the generic principles for certification bodies as adapted for organic accreditation by IFOAM (Lohr and Krissoff, 2000:211).

All third party certifiers and provincial certifiers in Canada are accredited under ISO 65 guidelines carried out by *the Standards Council of Canada* (SCC) (AAFC, 2004). Canada and the US also support 'equivalence recognition' as promoted by ISO, which refers to the application of existing regulations by states to ensure that there is some degree of coherence between state-policies pertaining to the same issue area. Thus, the ISO is an internationally recognized standard setting organization that aids in the harmonization of certification standards across the globe (Jacobsen, 2002:12). ISO, in its regulations on organic agricultural standards, deems IFOAM as the primary organic standards setting body.

International Federation of Organic Agricultural Movements

Although regulating the production processes associated with organic agriculture have for a long time been based on a system of self-regulation, organizations at the supranational level now play an important role in setting standards for organic practitioners. In fact, many global organizations have preceded national efforts to institutionalize organic agriculture into public policy. IFOAM was established in Bonn,

Germany in response to the growing consumption of organic products in Europe in 1972 (Willer and Yussefi, 2004). IFOAM is the internationally recognized institutional body of 700 members comprised of researchers, certifiers, educators and growers who determine the standards that guide the international trade of organic products. It is a private entity that represents over 500 farming organizations in more than 100 countries including 140 certification entities (Lohr, 1998:1127).

IFOAM first produced standards for organic agriculture called the *International Basic Standards for Organic Production and Processing* (IBS), in 1980. IFOAM's IBS has three major functions: protecting the organic guarantee from 'field to table', facilitating trade harmonization and avoiding duplication in regulations (Vaupel and Rundgren, 2003:96). The IBS sets standards for how organic products are produced, processed and handled on a global level. The IBS is a model for other certifying agencies, governments and policy makers to use in developing their own standards; however, they cannot be used on their own as a certifying standard (Kilcher et al., 2004:27). IFOAM's standards are used as a benchmark for national organic standards and, as a number of IFOAM documents stress, primarily function to assure consumer confidence in organic labels and products (Westermayer and Greier, eds., 2003). ISO regards IFOAM's IBS and IFOAM's *Criteria for Programmes Certifying Organic Agriculture and Processing* documents as *the* international standards for organic agriculture—although the standards set by IFOAM are not legally enforceable (Commins, 2003:78).

IFOAM includes a number of social and ecological goals in its mandate (IFOAM, 2002; 2005c; 2005e). For example, IFOAM not only promotes and supports organic agriculture worldwide, but it also has taken a stand against the infringement of

intellectual property rights on the property rights of farmers and their economic independence (IFOAM, 1999). IFOAM promotes the inclusion of social standards in public policies for organic agriculture and the movement of organic products as outlined in the IBS. In the IBS' *Principal Aims of Organic Production and Processing*, IFOAM lists the recognition of 'social and ecological impacts of organic production and processing' and claims to support supply chains that are "socially just and ecologically responsible" (IFOAM, 2005f:8). According to Barrett et al. (2002:308), "IFOAM has aims that relate to workers' rights, their basic needs, adequate economic return and satisfaction from their work and a safe working environment. They are also committed to promoting farm organizations to function along democratic lines and uphold principles of equality and power." As the vice president of IFOAM stated in 2002, "social justice is part of the organic philosophy" (IFOAM, 2002). IFOAM has also recognized women's contributions to organic agriculture, and in its initiatives includes encouraging more women to become involved in organic agriculture and the bureaucratic aspects of IFOAM (IFOAM, 2005f).

IFOAM also has an interest in labour issues in organic agriculture and has made an effort to link the goals of organic farming on a global scale with those in the fair trade movement. IFOAM's world board has devised a project entitled, *Social Audits in Agriculture: developing best practice and co-ordinating with environmental certification* in co-ordination with *Fair Trade Labelling Organization and Social Accountability International* (IFOAM, 2005g, Blowfield, 2001). IFOAM has suggested that the ICFTU/ITS Basic Code of Labour Practice (SA8000 code a standard that addresses social practices in the workplace) be used in certification schemes to protect labour in organic

supply chains (IFOAM, 2004). This particular code addresses issues of child labour, forced labour, discrimination and freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining.

IFOAM, along with the *Fair Trade Labelling Organization* (FLO), is also a member of the *International Social and Environmental Accreditation and Labelling* (ISEAL) Alliance. This alliance consists of a number of certifying organizations that are concerned with social and environmental criteria in certification schemes. The ISEAL Alliance was formed to gain international recognition for members' respective programmes (Mallet, 2003:89). The stated goal of the ISEAL Alliance is to foster "...positive social and environmental change that ensures a healthier environment and better social and economic conditions for producers and their communities." Yet the initiatives of the ISEAL Alliance are limited to conforming to the criteria based on the WTO's Agreement on TBT (Mallet, 2003:90-91). Standards devised by the ISEAL Alliance must not act as technical barriers to trade, and this includes not using PPMs as grounds to discriminate against a WTO member's goods.

Importantly however, IFOAM stresses the issue of equivalence and promotes the harmonization of national regulations to a basic set of international standards for all organic production and processing (van Elzakker, 2003:82; IFOAM, 2005b). IFOAM favours international standards and believes all national regulations pertaining to organic food should harmonize towards the international standards that itself and the Codex has set (IFOAM, 2005a). In addition to Codex's recognizing IFOAM's status in setting organic standards, the WTO and the OECD also recognize IFOAM's position. IFOAM was originally established to harmonize standards developed by private and voluntary

sector bodies and works with other institutions in order to increase its democratic base to assure that all certifiers are treated equal and that their policies harmonize with other agencies, such as the FAO and ISO. Supporters of harmonized regulation and certification suggest they offer a needed degree of confidence to purchasers and buyers of organic products. Proponents of streamlined legislation cite a reduction of certification costs passed on to the customer as a major benefit of policy harmonization regarding the production and trade of organic products (Lohr and Krissoff, 2000:212; Allen and Kovach, 2000:223).

An important effort has been made to harmonize organic food and agriculture standards by international organizations focusing on trade in conventional and organic foods. The *UNCTAD/FAO/IFOAM International Task Force on Harmonisation and Equivalence in Organic Agriculture* has periodically met since 2003 to harmonize international standards regarding organic food, and to foster further international trade in organic products by levelling the playing field of regulation, while establishing a universal set of standards that protects the integrity of organically certified products (Westermayer and Geier eds., 2003). Varying levels of national organic standards, certification and labelling criteria have been recognized by UNCTAD, FAO and IFOAM as barriers to trade in organic products, and a source of consumer confusion, as stated by an IFOAM representative in the document that came out of the task force entitled *The Organic Guarantee System: The need and strategy for harmonisation and equivalence* (Rundgren, 2003:6). Therefore, the task force has proposed progressively harmonizing standards for organic food and agriculture amongst trading partners. Including social principles in enforceable legislation has proven to be difficult, as IFOAM harmonizes its

standards with WTO principles and agreements that do not include the treatment of labour or the environmental impacts of production processes as issues that are allowable in policies regarding production regulations (IFOAM, 1999). As Mick Blowfield, a critic of the declining attention paid to labour standards in organic agriculture notes, "...there has been little attempt to make these [labour] codes a legal requirement, not least because to do so could lead to challenges at the World Trade Organisation." (Blowfield, 2001:2).

Initially, IFOAM was created from the idea that the spread of organic agriculture around the world would be beneficial for society because the organic philosophy; which it initially followed, promoted social justice, land stewardship and localized markets for organic foods (IFOAM, 2002b). However, IFOAM has altered its course somewhat, in order to remain relevant in global policy discussions regarding organic agriculture, and has had to harmonize its regulations and standards to meet those of other WTO-supported global organizations like ISO and Codex. Paradoxically, the global agro-food trading regime, which IFOAM once stood in opposition to, is now promoted by it as the best way of spreading organic agriculture.

Although IFOAM officially holds the position that it supports social justice as an important component of what makes a good organic, it supports policy harmonization with the WTO equivalent with Codex and the global expansion of organic supply chains. It thus faces the paradox of promoting social justice as fundamental to organic agriculture, as it facilitates transnational organic food supply chains. As Reynolds contends, IFOAM "embodies sharp contradictions between its original movement-oriented and [its] more recent market-oriented organic norms and practices" (2004:729). According to DeLind, a supporter of the organic philosophy, "organic has little hope of

succeeding in any meaningful way if its definition is not also predicated on putting more people back on the land, creating useful work that produced a just income collectively in the interest of their own long-term development. Organic without a social vision is dangerously incomplete” (DeLind, 2000:9). The conditioning framework of neo-liberalism makes many of the social and environmental goals of the organic philosophy more difficult to realize as organic products enter the global trade system.

As far as the global trade of organic products is concerned, there are indeed positive outcomes of harmonization as it reduces the duplication of policies and costs for those involved in the production process. Harmonized global public policy for organic food and agriculture provides consumers with some assurance that organic products carrying organic labels meet at least minimum technical product-oriented requirements. But what harmonizing organic agricultural public policy at the global level negates are the values of localism, diversity and grassroots decision-making to the integrity of the organic production process and the livelihoods of thousands of organic farmers. Developing public policy in the context of the WTO’s efforts to further liberalize trade amongst member states removes process as an important component of what makes a good ‘organic’.

Conclusion

This chapter has examined how the principles of neo-liberal trade agreements, like the NAFTA, the WTO and the organizations that represent interests in expanding trade, have seriously threatened the ability for supporters of the organic philosophy to practice socially and environmentally sustainable forms of food production in Canada and the US. It has also shown that the authority and privileged positions of the Codex and ISO in

trade agreements has helped to overshadow the more substantive principles associated with organic agriculture, forcing IFOAM to alter its agenda. As organic food continues to be integrated into the global trade regime, the organic philosophy continues to lose ideological ground.

Both the NAFTA and the WTO work against including production processes as an important determinant of the qualities of the end, material product, which has set organic agriculture apart from conventional agriculture. Insisting on localized supply chains, small-scale production and emphasizing the importance of poly-culture in preserving biodiversity, all issues of process included in the traditional organic philosophy, are necessarily excluded from global regulations for organic products and production processes. Considering trade agreements largely represent the interests of corporate actors eager to have markets expand for their products, it is not surprising that the fundamental aspects that separates the corporate approach to organic food production from the approach to organic agriculture that considered the importance in maintaining the linkage between social economic relations, which pays attention to the ‘how’ and the ‘who’ – are absent from enforceable legislation pertaining to organic food. Keeping the substantive elements of the organic philosophy out of trade agreements is essential for the spread of the corporate approach to organic food production, as it facilitates further integration of organic food into the global trade regime.

CHAPTER 6: THE DEVELOPMENT AND TRANSFORMATION OF THE EARLY ORGANIC SOCIAL MOVEMENT

Introduction

Today organic food is carried in conventional grocery stores and revered in mainstream health and lifestyle publications as a healthier and perhaps the environmentally conscious choice compared to conventional fare. The historical origins of organic agriculture in Canada and the US; however, are anything but conventional or mainstream. Organic agriculture arose as a type of food production that challenged many aspects of the conventional food system and mainstream culture in the 1960s. But as the organic ‘social movement’ evolved as the popularity of organic foods grew, the organic movement attracted a diverse group of actors with a wide range of interests. Many of the newer actors to join the movement in the 1980s had goals of expanding the market for organic products while engaging with national and sub-national governments to regulate and label organic production processes; two things the organic social movement has for a long time, rejected. Though some members of the organic social movement continue to challenge the exploitive relations of the conventional food system, the membership, objectives and organization of the organic movement have undergone significant change over the last forty years. The growth and influence of corporate actors has transformed the political and social dimensions of organic agriculture.

Timothy Vos sees the organic agricultural movement as “a critique of the (globalizing) hegemony of productivist agribusiness...[that] propose[s] a new vision of society-nature as a whole” (Vos, 2000:251). Although this definition may still apply to the organic practitioners and supporters who continue to subscribe to the substantive

principles of the organic philosophy, it is more difficult to apply Vos' definition to the broader organization of the organic movement that now includes professional business associations representing conventionally organized corporations like *Hain Celestial*. This chapter argues that from its beginnings in the 1960s up to the late 1970s, two primary factors were instrumental in allowing the corporatized vision of organic agriculture to dominate the discourse of organic food. First, the over-reliance upon the market as the primary mobilizing structure made the organic movement vulnerable to corporate influence. Second, the lack of formal controls over membership in the organic movement allowed corporate interests to enter the sector, leading to a major shift in goals and objectives of the movement.

The Origins of the Organic Social Movement

This section examines how the organic social movement was established and how it related to other social movements at the time that were intent on achieving radical change in the agro-food system. The organic movement in Canada and the US largely remained a series of disaggregated groups of practitioners and supporters of organic agriculture until the countercultural movements of the 1960s added a distinctly 'social' element and a clear set of 'political' goals. The organic movement that emerged in Canada and the US can be conceived of what Antonio Gramsci calls 'civil society' that mounts a challenge to the status quo. As Gramsci explains in the *Prison Notebooks*²⁵, eventually, contradictions appear in the dominant structure, which stimulate the creation of an opposition to the structure, a 'counter-hegemony' (Gramsci, 1971:178). While part of civil society consists of a 'top-down' process that serves to reinforce the hegemonic

²⁵ The 'Prison Notebooks' is a collection of Antonio Gramsci's writings penned while he was imprisoned in Italy during 1928.

culture to secure the advancement of capitalism, the early organic movement was part of the critical 'bottom-up' element of civil society whose members collectively challenged the industrialized food system in the world order (Cox, 1999:7). Conceptualizing the early organic movement as part of the ongoing process of resistance to the hegemonic capitalist forces can help explain the transformation of the organic sector and its changing orientation towards the state and the market (Sumner, 2005).

Modern social movements regarding food issues have a long history, beginning with the agrarian peasant movements of the early to mid-twentieth century, which were based on regaining the economic security of agrarian traditions from market-led transformation (Paige, 1975; Freyfogle, 2001). Early organic practitioners consisted of gardeners and farmers who had more of an interest in technical issues, such as learning composting techniques, over sparking a social revolution (Guthman, 2004; Conford, 2001). But some organic practitioners believed that organic agriculture could be used to stimulate social and political change. Those who attached political significance to organic agriculture's ideological opposition to industrialized agriculture looked to earlier agrarian movements that organized agro-food production around the premise of working with nature (Peters, 1979). The most influential force that helped to transform the organic approach to food production pioneered by Balfour and Howard in the 1940s into an organic social movement with political goals was the emergence of the 1960s counterculture in North America.

The counterculture of the 1960s emerged as social movements were established to combat the social, economic and political inequalities in Canadian and American societies, and around the world. Social movements, according to O'Brien et al., are "...a

subset of the numerous actors operating in the realm of civil society. They are groups of people with a common interest who band together to pursue a far-reaching transformation of society. Their power lies in popular mobilization to influence the holds of political and economic power” (O’Brien et al., 2000:12; Morris and McClurg-Mueller, 1992). This definition captures the nature of the early organic social movement--members of society who had the vision of reforming agricultural practices by presenting a viable alternative to the status quo. Bostrom and Klintman supply a useful definition of the organic movement as, “...cases where the actors are fully devoted to the idea, principles, and practices of organic production, indeed as a cultural challenge to conventional/industrially oriented agriculture” (Bostrom and Klintman, 2006:167). Social movement literature is useful in assessing how the early organic movement in Canada and the US developed over time. Studies of social movements focus on how they are established, how they evolve and how they meet their goals. The policy process model used in examining social movements looks at three factors of social movements that experience change: political opportunities, mobilizing structures and framing processes (Tilly, 1978, 2004; Tarrow, 1983, 2005).

Political Opportunities

Political opportunities are defined as the political climate of a country that sets the boundaries and possibilities for the establishment of a social movement. Political opportunities address how political constraints impact the development of a social movement and the opportunities for collective action, and the ability for a social movement to meet its desired outcomes (goals and objectives) (McAdam, 1982), although economic constraints also factor into the political opportunities as well. In

many cases, it is the political institutional setting which experiences some sort of change that stimulates the establishment of a social movement. In the case of the early group of organic practitioners, there were two distinct political opportunities that arrived in the late 1960s that transformed it into a social movement. The first was the growing public awareness of the negative outcomes of industrializing processes of the economy. The second change that offered a political opportunity that helped establish the organic social movement was the existence of social movements that were extremely critical of the socially and environmentally exploitive nature of capitalist forms of production.

Industrialized agriculture was well established in both Canada and the US in the late 1960s, leaving little room for the inclusion of organic principles in agricultural policy. However, growing public awareness of the negative social (rural depopulation, exploitation of agricultural labour) and environmental (pollution, endangered species) outcomes of industrialized agro-food production forced certain segments of society to question the capital accumulation of agribusinesses and their cooperative relationships with the state. The early group of organic practitioners began to promote a set of ideas that represented their interests in expanding organic agriculture, and used the environmental and social degradation endemic to industrialized agriculture to get their message across. The general population was also convinced by the scientific community of the superiority of industrialized forms of farming over other economically inefficient methods associated with organic farming. Because of the growing environmental abuses and the exploitation of labour found in industrial models of agro-food production, supporters of organic agriculture were given something to mount a social challenge against.

The industrialization of agriculture was indeed an important political opportunity for the creation of the organic movement. But because organic agriculture had been rejected by the state and mainstream market actors since WWII, there had to be another political opportunity that presented itself in the late 1960s that would help to mobilize people into action to support organic agriculture in some collective way. The political and economic climate of the 1960s—including the Vietnam War and the coming of age of the ‘baby boom’ generation, set the stage for some form of social protest to emerge (Dalton and Kuechler, 1990; Tilly, 2004). The middle class established in the post-war era allowed many young people to attend post-secondary institutions that encouraged them to think critically about their society’s norms and values.

Having increased access to information through advancing telecommunications networks helped to educate young people about the inequalities occurring in the rest of the world. People in industrialized societies began to question the legitimacy of various spheres of power (military, political, economic) and the role of power in creating these inequalities. A number of social movements meant to challenge the norms and values of mainstream society began to emerge as a result. The anti-war, civil rights, women’s and environmental movements all gained support from the middle class youth who were dissatisfied with the status quo (Belasco, 1989).

As mentioned in Chapter 2, the feminist movement of the 1960s brought with it a number of principles of gender equality that appealed to many organic practitioners and supporters who rejected conventional social relations. Food issues were important to women, as women are traditionally the primary purchasers and preparers of food for their families. Many feminists at the time who were also concerned about sourcing healthy

and cost-effective food for their families were eager to get involved in a type of food production that did not come at the expense of exploitive practices, found in the conventional agricultural sector.

For women who did not have access to credit to purchase large areas of land, or expensive machinery, organic farming was an ideal way to grow a variety of food in a small area without a lot of money (Allen and Sachs, 1991; Chiappe and Flora, 1998). Eco-feminist Vandana Shiva sees the link between women and sustainable types of food production as taking the form of a 'female principle'. She claims that diversity, horizontal forms of decision-making and addressing problems collectively are components of the female principle. The female principle also applies to women's relationship with the environment and food production. Working with the environment as opposed to dominating it, informs women's relationship to food and the land (Shiva, 1989:73; Sachs, 1992). Norwegian researcher Hilda Bjorkhaug agrees with Shiva in her discussion of the links between the principles of the feminist movement and the organic movement noting that, "the 'organic' ideology has several links to what might be called the feminine principle" (Bjorkhaug, 2004:5). The strongest link between the feminine principle and the organic approach to food production is the shared notion that processes need to be recognized as integral parts of outcomes. The feminist movement and its recognition of process added a distinctive social context to the emerging organic movement, as other social movements of the era such as the sustainable agriculture movement did not address issues of gender equality (Allen and Sachs, 1991; Mearnes 1997).

In addition to the feminist movement, the sustainable agriculture movement helped to establish some principles that the organic social movement would also share. The sustainable agricultural movement was critical of the use of technology in industrialized agriculture that displaced rural farming communities from the land and supplied the general population with highly processed and nutritionally deficient food (Henderson, 1998:113). By vilifying agribusiness as the enemy of family farmers and the concentration of land ownership as major threats to the agrarian traditions of rural America, the populist goals of the sustainable agricultural movement were able to highlight the exploitive nature of mainstream, industrial agriculture (Youngberg and Buttel, 1984:174). So, appeals were made by members of the early sustainable agricultural movement to mobilize the general public by appealing to those who objected to capital accumulation by agribusiness and rural displacement.

To present an alternative to industrialized agriculture, the sustainable agriculture movement promoted the idea that agro-food production should return to its agrarian roots. This entails reconnecting people to the land through localized market interactions, and consumers were directly connected to the producers (Schumacher, 1973 and Berry, 1977). The sustainable agricultural movement was not interested in lobbying the state for agriculture policy reform. 'Back to Landers' in the late 1960s rejected engagement with the state entirely and had no interest in changing political institutions. They were more interested in maintaining the distance between their private activities and what they viewed as the intrusion of government, reflecting a libertarian political view. Wendell Berry's *The Unsettling of America* (1977) spoke to supporters of the sustainable agriculture movement, who were concerned with the restoration of the pastoral landscape

in the US. Visions of the pastoral landscape, presented by Berry in his writings, served as important motivational images for members of the sustainable agricultural movement to participate in collective action in the form of re-establishing the disappearing family farm and practicing self-sufficient farming (Belasco, 1989:76). Berry's ideas transcended borders, and his works were equally influential to Canadians who were concerned with the rapid depopulation of the rural countryside.

The sustainable agricultural movement offered the emerging organic social movement a number of ideas to internalize in practitioners' advocacy for organic agriculture. There is also a supportive relationship between the environmental movement and organic agriculture, though not all agree as to the strength of the link. Some scholars investigating the socio-politics of agriculture such as Fredrick Buttel, argue that reforming industrial agricultural practices was not a central element to the platform of the mainstream environmentalist movement, and the coherence between agricultural and environmental movements is often overstated (Buttel, 1997:358). But as Michelsen argues, the similar holistic view of the relationship between humans and the environment did provide a clear link that connected the environmental and sustainable agricultural movements. This shared 'world view' also extended to organic practitioners and contributed to the establishment of the organic social movement (Michelsen, 2001a:63). Both the environmental and sustainable agricultural movements challenged the status quo of the 1960s and were part of the counterculture that laid important ideological foundations for the organic social movement to be established.

The issue of food quality and its relationships with the environment were important links between the sustainable agricultural, environmental and organic social movements

(Levenstein, 1994:184). The rise in general awareness of environmental problems and the dangers associated with chemical use, helped to draw attention to the troubles of the industrialized agro-food system (Marshall, 1974:51). Rachel Carson's book *Silent Spring* (1962) is often identified as an important publication that helped to bring awareness to the public of environmentally damaging practices. Environmentalists also had concerns regarding the chemicals used in industrialized agriculture and the environmental implications of their use.²⁶ In Canadian historian Harvey Levenstein's chronicling of eating habits in the US, he attributes the rising public interest in organic food in the 1970s to the growing fears of DDT and pollution—issues commonly associated with the environmental movement (Levenstein, 1994:162). The environmental movement rejected the production processes involved in over-processed food and encouraged people to move towards a 'whole food' vegetarian diet that relied less on fossil fuels and less food processing as prescribed by Frances Moore Lappe's *Diet for A Small Planet* (1971), adding another link between environmentalism and organic agriculture.

Both the environmental and the sustainable agriculture movements presented a challenge to the status quo and the industrialization of agriculture. They both rejected the industrializing processes of modern society, but they were quite different in terms of their goals and objectives. Early environmentalists campaigned for less pollution and environmental degradation, while those in the sustainable agricultural movement had the goal of getting people back on the land, but placed less emphasis on whether farmers practiced chemical agriculture or not. However, neither fully covered the aims of the developing organic movement. The 'Back to Land' movement was more concerned with

²⁶ Meadows et al.'s *Limits to Growth* published in 1972 had an apocalyptic vision of the future because of industrial economies' dependence on finite natural resources and global overpopulation. This book was important in helping to mobilize the public to join the environmental movement.

repopulating rural landscapes without directly challenging the wider social ills associated with the industrialization of agriculture (Jacob, 1997:5). In social movement literature, the types of social movements promoting a return to simpler ways of living (less reliant on highly manufactured goods) have been described as ‘anti-modern’ movements that idealized the pre-industrial styles of living as the ‘source of moral and physical recovery’ (Brand, 1990:29). In contrast, the organic movement promoted organic agriculture for a modern society.

Similarly, some supporters of organic agriculture did not want to associate themselves with the environmental movement of the 1960s at all, because they felt it did not address many of the social issues that arise in debates regarding sustainability. As radical ecologist and libertarian Murray Bookchin states,

...it may be well to distinguish the ecological outlook of radical agriculture from the crude ‘environmentalism’ that is currently so widespread. Environmentalism sees the natural world merely as a habitat that must be engineered with minimal pollution to suit society’s ‘needs,’ however irrational or synthetic these needs may be. A truly ecological outlook, by contrast, sees the biotic world as a holistic unity of which humanity is part (Bookchin, 1976:10).

Others saw a crisis looming in the environmental movement, and viewed the creation of an organic social movement as a far more viable option that addressed the social, economic and environmental degradation associated with the industrialized food system. Gurney Norman, a contributor to *the Whole Earth Catalog* (WEC), an influential publication in the North American counter-culture, stated that “...organic gardeners as in the forefront of a serious effort to save the world by changing man’s orientation to it, to move away from the collective, centrists, super-industrial state, toward a simpler, realer one-to-one relationship with the earth itself. Most of the current talk about ‘ecology’ in America is simply the noise that accompanies all fads” (Norman, 1971:50). Wendell

Berry was also concerned with the direction the environmental movement was taking in the 1970s, and urged readers of the WEC to practice organic agriculture, as it was intimately linked to environmental sustainability and it was also a form of political protest: “a person who is growing a garden, if he is growing it organically, is improving a piece of the world” (Berry, 1970:5). The dissatisfaction with the progression of the environmentalist movement helped to contribute to the establishment of the organic social movement as distinct from the existing social movements. Though the contents of the WEC cannot be considered representative of all those who were concerned with environmental issues and the social fractures created by the restructuring of the agricultural sector, the source does provide some evidence of what some concerned citizens were thinking in the early 1970s.

Mobilizing Structures

In addition to assessing the political opportunities, the policy process model also addresses mobilizing structures of social movements. The concept of a mobilizing structure refers to the organization of a social movement, and the networks, both formal and informal, that exist to help mobilize people and engage them in collective action (McAdam, et al., 1996:2). In essence, mobilizing structures refer to the *means* social movements use in meeting their objectives. The means used in achieving goals include the political, social and economic resources available to mobilize the population. In many cases, mobilization is directed towards lobbying the state and other political institutions to stimulate social change. However, unlike the environmental movement in its lobbying the state to restrict the use and abuse of environmentally hazardous materials and practices, the early organic social movement rejected engaging with the state in

achieving its goals, partially because of its libertarian ideas borrowed from the sustainable agricultural movement and 'Back to Landers'. Although not engaging with the state afforded organic practitioners significant independence in determining how social protest would take shape, the disaggregated nature of mobilization also limited the amount of political resources it could draw upon (Berry, 1976; Egri, 1994:150). The organic social movement, in its most radical form, wanted to create an alternative market that was independent from state involvement and practitioners turned towards the market as its major resource in mobilizing the population. The market was viewed as the primary mobilizing structure for the organic social movement.

In its earliest days, the organic social movement, like most other social movements in their infancy as shown by Meyer and Tarrow (1998:19), had little in terms of well-structured organizations to mobilize the population. So, the best means possible for the widest distribution of the social and political goals of organic agriculture was determined to be through market transactions. Members of the early organic social movement believed that the public, if provided with the right information, would choose organic products over conventionally produced foods. Since the conventional agro-food market rejected organic food's health and environmental claims, the only way to make organic food available to the public was through alternative markets that did not require the involvement of actors from the mainstream. Members of the early organic movement believed that creating alternative food networks was necessary to circumvent the destructive involvement of the state and agribusiness. The belief that promoting the consumption of organic food was the best way to achieve change is reflected in the comments of a member of the early organic movement: "...we should cling, with

whatever optimism possible, to the idea that the same economic forces that brought us environmentally bad products will be the ones to get them out of the marketplace...the organic force that is surfacing...has the elements to revolutionize the marketplace” (Goldstein, 1976:223).

The organic social movement looked at the market as a politically neutral institution that was able to accommodate an alternative form of production and distribution to conventional means. The market was viewed as a powerful vehicle to distribute organic food to the public, and also to recruit more members into the movement by using interactions between producers and consumers as the opportunity to educate people about the social, environmental and economic benefits of organic agriculture. Since the early organic social movement lacked a cohesive form of organization, informal, grassroots networks were established between members along organic supply chains as membership grew. In the 1960s, the membership in the organic movement expanded to include food co-operatives, small health food stores, and local agricultural associations (Guthman, 2004:6).

Food co-operatives were determined by some to be one method of supporting organic producers by those in the organic social movement, making organic food available to the public and spreading information about organic farming to mobilize the public against the industrial agro-food system. As Elaine Lipson discusses in her article for *MS. Magazine* on women and organic farming, women were often at the helm of food co-operatives in the 1960s and 1970s, seeking alternative ways to source healthful food products in bulk quantities (Lipson, 2004). According to “Jen”, a manager of a small-scale organic food distributor, when the *Wild West Organic Harvest Co-operative* was established in

Richmond BC in 1976, it was run primarily by women and embodied many of the social principles of the organic philosophy (PC6, Jul. 2, 2005). Small-scale organic outlets like farmer's markets and independently owned health food stores were viewed by members of the organic social movement as "symbols of the new America Revolution," and as an alternative to the corporate-run agro-food system, because they cut out the 'middlemen' from the supply chain (Belasco, 1989:73).

Although it is difficult to determine how large the early organic movement was in terms of the number of members or how successful it was in spreading its message to the public, the rapid growth of alternative food networks gives some indication as to the successful use of the market as a mobilizing structure. Between 1969 and 1979 approximately 5, 000 to 10, 000 new food co-operatives were established across the US (Belasco, 1989:90). In California alone, there were over 300 health food stores and 22 organic restaurants in 1970 (Newsweek, 1970:100). According to the *Organic Gardening and Farming Association*, by 1972 there were approximately 3, 477 organic food stores in the US (Myers, 1976:136). In an interview with Rachelle Cooper, historian Catherine Castairs discusses her ongoing research into the history of health food stores in Canada, noting that the number of stores in Toronto jumped from thirteen in 1957, to well over 100 in 1979. She states that the reasons for the market growth in health foods in the 1960s and 1970s in Canada were very similar to what influenced the market expansion in the US, such as the influence of Rachel Carson's book on public perceptions about pesticide residues in food (Cooper, 2006).

In 1971, Arran Stephens, (who would go on to establish BC-based *Nature's Path Foods* in 1985), established Canada's largest organic supermarket, *LifeStream*. The goal

of the supermarket chain was to provide consumers with wholesome, healthy foods. With the success of *LifeStream*, Stephens then expanded the company into food processing including milling grains, and making granola, breads and cereals. By 1977, *LifeStream* was grossing \$9 million (CAN), making it one of Canada's most successful natural food retailers (Nature's Path, 2007). It was so successful that *LifeStream* published a vegetarian cookbook that sold over 125, 000 copies in Canada. In both Canada and the US, advocates of organic agriculture shared a common set of values, and as Robin Myers contends, "the idea of natural, organic farming became the basis for a consumer movement; health food stores spread, and their products even entered the chains as consumer knowledge and independent buying habits grew" (Myers, 1976:136).

Increasing the consumption of organic food was promoted as the primary means of achieving social change. By purchasing food that was not associated with state-subsidies, or agribusiness, consumers could 'vote with their dollars' and therefore protest against the industrialized agro-food system. Jerome Goldstein describes the value that the organic social movement put on consumer choice as a mobilizing structure: "when you buy organically grown foods produced by a family farmer who is not supposed to be able to make a living on the land, you become an organic force helping to reverse a trend that has driven people off the land and made farming the profession of an old generation" (Goldstein, 1976:215). Through conscious consumption via informal networks of organic production, consumers could help to sustain the rural way of life, just labour practices and the overall health of the environment.

Framing Processes

So far, this section has uncovered how organic agriculture became a social movement and the various forms of organization that emerged to support its goals. The focus now shifts to understanding the motivation of individuals to support organic agriculture, what social movement theorists' call *framing processes*. Framing processes refers to shaping of the subjective reality of individuals and how subjective reality influences the shape of social movements (Snow et al., 1986; 1988). Essentially, framing processes address how social movements are *organized* in terms of their membership, and how values and norms of the membership (individuals or associations) influence the movement itself, including its direction and overall goals (McAdam et al., 1996:5).

The framing process that helped to attract membership to the organic social movement, stemmed from the existence of other countercultural movements made up of those who disagreed with the status quo. Many participants in social movements of the 1960s were recruited from the educated middle class that questioned the exploitive nature of capitalist forms of production. As Ingelhart notes, movements like the environmental movement gained notoriety not only because the environment was more damaged than it was in the past, but also because the public was more aware and sensitive to the quality of the environment in which they lived (Ingelhart, 1990:44). Persons who became educated about environmental and agricultural issues were propelled to act on this growing awareness of the negative outcomes of the industrial agro-food production system (Friedland, 1994:219). Since links were made between the health of the environment and the nutrition content of food, the organic social movement was able to attract a diverse

membership that included people concerned with the issues that overlapped the organic philosophy and environmental movement.

A 1970 *Newsweek* article addresses the growing diversity of the organic movement from its early days as it gained notoriety in the mainstream: “for years, organic gardeners have been considered part of the harmless lunatic fringe, along with flat-earthers and UFO spotters...[but]...the organic-food community now includes not only...vegetarians [and] macrobiotics ...but large members of environmental activism, housewives with tired blood and sophisticated gourmets...” (Newsweek, 1970:100). The organic movement as it gained support from members of the public, successfully gained media attention that helped to change societal perceptions as to what organic agriculture was, and who was involved in it.

The way ideas were transmitted to members of the organic movement and the general public was a very important vehicle in helping to frame the issues so that people were prompted to organize and participate in collective action. Publications were crucial in terms of disseminating ideas to the general public and prompting them to collectively act. A number of publications contributed to the objectives of the organic movement to mobilize citizens, although not all explicitly discuss or mention the association between organic agriculture and social activism. Publications out of the *Rodale Institute* (previously the *Soil and Health Foundation*) spoke more to organic gardeners and farmers than to radicals wanting to spark an organic revolution.²⁷ Yet publications from the Rodale Press did educate readers about the environmental harm caused by

²⁷ Other important publications for the Rodale Press include the *Encyclopaedia of Organic Gardening* (1959), *How to Grow Vegetables and Fruits by the Organic Method* (1961) and *The New Farm* (1975) periodical (mainly geared towards organic farmers).

chemicalized agriculture, compromised food quality and the role agribusiness played in attempting to discredit organic practices.

In 1970, *Organic Gardening and Farming* (OGF) (est. 1942) magazine acknowledged that people under 30 were the primary demographic driving the expansion of the organic food market. In M.C. Goldman's piece for *OGF* on the growing market for organic products in Southern California, she describes how participation in the organic food market by the "with-it" kids helped to get older members of society to participate in the organic movement by educating them on the economic, social and environmental ills of industrialized agriculture. As one shop owner tells Goldman in an interview, "a full third of our turnover now comes from the 'upper-class hippie' group" (Goldman, 1970:39). Goldman frames the growing interest in organic agriculture by young people as a major source of political influence over time: "the influx of young people is like a blood transfusion to the health-food business, particularly to the retailers of organically-grown foods...People under 25 will control the balance of the vote within a few years" (Goldman, 1970:40).

Although Rodale Press publisher J.I. Rodale was not interested in promoting organic agriculture's association with the political radicalism associated with the counterculture of the 1960s, he did realize that younger people's increased understanding of the problems with industrial farming and its environmental impacts was essential in expanding the organic movement and organic agriculture (Levenstein, 1994:198). Those who were concerned with social, political and ecological issues in the 1960s recognized organic agriculture as a method of food production that challenged the status quo, by remaining politically and economically independent from agribusiness and government.

The challenge organic agriculture presented to the status quo helped to fully establish the organic movement as a “social” movement. *OGF*²⁸ and *Prevention* magazines promoted similar ideas about more natural gardening and farming techniques. *OGF* and *Prevention* were important sources of information for the informal, disaggregated membership of the organic social movement, with *OGF* more focused on organic gardening techniques, while *Prevention* focused on health and nutrition (Raeburn, 1995:226).

One indication of the expansion of the organic social movement and its successful framing of the issues is the growth in readership of the organic social movement’s flagship publications: *OGF* and *Prevention*. In 1958, *OGF*’s circulation was approximately 60,000. One year later, *Prevention* and *OGF* together had a circulation of 260, 000. By 1970, *OGF* subscriptions alone grew to 650, 000 (Levenstein, 1994:162). Despite the fact that *OGF* did not explicitly promote social change to accompany practicing organic farming, it was widely viewed as *the* source of information for members of the organic social movement. *OGF* in 1971 was considered by many to be the ‘bible’ of the organic movement as it provided readers with the tools necessary to participate in organic farming’s alternative market; what many considered to be the true act of rebellion against the industrialized food system (Greene, 1971:31). One contributor to *The Whole Earth Catalog* (WEC) in 1971, declared *OGF* to be “the most subversive publication [and that]...the whole organic movement [is] exquisitely subversive” (Norman, 1971:50).

Although the WEC served the wider counterculture as well as the organic social movement, much of its contents from its inception in 1968 proved to be useful to

²⁸ ‘Farming’ was later dropped from the title of Organic Gardening and Farming as magazine shifted its focus to organic gardening.

practitioners of organic techniques who relied upon information about sustainable agricultural techniques over technological fixes (Armstrong, 1981). As stated on the inside cover of every issue of the WEC, its purpose was to “...develop power of the individual to conduct his own education, find his own inspiration, shape his own environment...” in response to the “...power and glory—as via government, big business, formal education, church—[that have] succeeded to the point where gross defects obscure actual gains” (WEC, 1970). The WEC regularly included reviews of organic gardening books, including Howard’s *An Agricultural Testament* (1943), and a number of publications from the Rodale Press (Berry, 1969:33). The purpose of reviewing organic gardening books was to inform readers about alternative ways of living, while attaching some political significance to action. Since the WEC was pitched to those who felt disenfranchised by their governments and society in general, it was a useful publication in getting the organic philosophy out to the socially concerned public, though its contents are by no means representative of the diverse group of people that considered themselves part of the organic movement.

Because of the WEC’s staunch anti-corporate, anti-government position, it was an ideal publication for the ideas associated with the organic social movement to grow. Although the WEC was only in circulation for 4 years, it had a lasting impact on recruiting new membership for the organic social movement. As its readership expanded, it served as a global hub in an information network that continues to challenge the status quo. According to the Whole Earth website (which replaced the printed version some years later), the *Whole Earth Catalog* was the ‘unofficial handbook of the counterculture’ (www.wholeearthmag.com).

Another influential publication that helped in issue framing was *Mother Earth News* (MEN). In the January 1970 volume of the WEC, MEN was introduced to WEC readers as a publication that “looks like it may survive” (WEC, 1970:19). MEN was pitched to members of the organic social movement as it was full of recipes and suggested that readers try various organic and natural foods, while also catering to members of the ‘Back to Land’ movement. MEN’s advertisement in the WEC stated, “the MOTHER EARTH NEWS is...for today’s influential ‘hip’ young adults. The creative people. The doers. The ones who make it all happen. Heavy emphasis is placed on alternative lifestyles, ecology, working with nature and doing more with less” (WEC, 1970:19). MEN highlighted issues of ecology and self-sufficiency in its progress—two of the qualities associated with the organic social movement. MEN continues to be a publication geared towards those who want to practice self-sufficiency and sustainability. By 1972, the US circulation of MEN reached 60, 000 and then grew to 600, 000 paid subscriptions in 1980 (Armstrong, 1981:197). Its purposes and goals have changed little since they were first introduced in 1970 and many of the information it continues to disseminate remains relevant to practitioners of organic agriculture today.

Feminist publications focusing on organic farming emerged from women’s desire to educate each other and to find new and different ways of sourcing and preparing healthy food. Publications emerged that helped to spread information about more healthy and environmentally friendly ways of eating. In 1973, *Country Women*, a feminist periodical was launched in the US as a source of information for women who were interested in farming without expensive chemicals and machinery, learning new recipes and

communicating with other women who were equally concerned about food issues (Belasco, 1989:82).

Although the WEC, MEN and Country Women were US-centred publications, they were also distributed in Canada. Canada also developed its own periodicals about health food and nutrition. *Alive* magazine, launched in the 1970s continues today to provide Canadians with news and information about health food and healthy living. *Healthful Living Digest* established in the 1940s in Winnipeg offered its readers information on nutrition, alternative forms of health care and organic agriculture. The early emergence and on-going existence of health-related periodicals in Canada shows that some of the same concerns about the industrialized food system highlighted in US publications were also addressed in Canada (Cooper, 2006; Castairs, 2007).

This section has discussed the political opportunities, the mobilizing structures and the framing processes of the early organic social movement. The organic social movement emerged largely as a reaction to the political institutions that privileged industrialized modes of production over the more traditional, agrarian principles associated with the organic philosophy. The inability for the environmental and sustainable agricultural movements to address all of the social, environmental and economic issues that organic agricultural associations were concerned with also protected space for the establishment of a coherent organic social movement with a clear set of goals and objectives for collective action. The early movement, complete with its goal of revolutionizing agriculture attracted a solid membership, and used the market as its mobilizing structure because it was viewed as a politically neutral institution. However,

other factors such as the changing political circumstances and demands of consumers would shift the goals of the organic social movement away from its revolutionary origins.

The Organic Movement in Transition

Once the early group of organic practitioners was established as a social movement, its goal was to further expand its membership; however, paradoxically its expansion threatened its identity. Even as early as 1971, J.I. Rodale questioned where the organic movement was headed. When interviewed for a New York Times (NYT) piece, he stated, “we are afraid of becoming legitimate...I don’t know how to operate if we’re in a majority” (Greene, 1971:68). While Rodale feared what would happen if the movement was to cater too much to mainstream interests, others doubted the future of the organic agriculture all together, seeing little future for the movement, at least in terms of its mainstream market potential.

Hilda White, writing for the journal *Food Technology* in 1972, did not see much of a future for organic food in the mainstream: “if [corporations] were to expand into the organic food market, [they] would be supporting a cause which seems to be based on misunderstanding and fear...if [corporations] were to enter the organic market, [they] would be endorsing a movement which...would retard efforts to increase world food supply” (White, 1972:33). Despite the worries from those inside and outside of the organic movement, it would persevere and expand. However, it would move beyond its initial radicalism of forging alternative agricultural networks as it was integrated into the mainstream food retail market. The focus of some advocates of organic agriculture shifted from materialist concerns relating to transforming the exploitive economic and political structures of the food system, to appealing to the public’s growing concern over

food safety and health—concerns that do not necessarily involve the redistribution of material resources. The promotion of organic food as a safer, healthier and a more environmentally friendly option was far more compatible with the “post-materialist values” of ‘new’ social movements (NSMs) over the materialist concerns of environmental and social sustainability that the organic philosophy include.

Ronald Inglehart and David Appel have defined *post-materialist values* as values that put a “...greater emphasis on such goals as self expression, quality of life and belonging and are associated with a decline in traditional values” (1989:45). Materialist values in contrast, are defined as those, which emphasize economic and physical security (Ibid). Scholars studying social movements attribute the rise of NSMs in the 1960s and 1970s to growing public concern with issues of quality of life within industrialized societies. Because of the post-war prosperity and absence of armed conflict in liberal democratic countries in Europe and North America, according to Inglehart and Appel, the post war generation put less emphasis on economic and physical security as previous generations that lived through two world wars and the Depression (Inglehart and Appel, 1989:46). The shift towards post-materialist values influenced the direction of social movements emerging in the post-war era.

NSMs move beyond the goals of previous movements that had sought to answer questions of economic and political power and redistributive issues, such as the labour and agrarian movements (Brand, 1990:25). Scholars have characterized the emergence of NSMs as a reaction to the problems that manifested as a result of industrialization and technological development and its perceived negative social, ecological and economic outcomes (Offe, 1985). Others have identified NSMs as symptoms of a paradigm shift in

values and an increasing conflict between old materialist concerns, and newer post-materialist preferences (Inglehart, 1984). NSMs, with their focus on post-materialist values, aim to mobilize ideas and values to stimulate collective action and to achieve social change, as opposed to drawing on the material interests of collective identities, such as class.

Many NSMs, such as the environmental movement, aim to transform the world by providing an alternative to the mainstream ‘technocratic and bureaucratic socio-political systems’ based on material consumption (Ayres, 1997:13) and have the goal of making an alternative world vision a reality. The organic social movement that subscribed to the organic philosophy, as it existed in the 1960s and 1970s, included materialist concerns (economic security) of ‘old’ social movements and post-materialist concerns (quality of life) of ‘new’ social movements. Since the early organic social movement included some objectives of the agrarian movement (land repatriation), but also some from NSMs like the environmental movement (ecological conservation), it contained both materialist and post-materialist goals in its objectives making it somewhat unique compared to other movements at that time. But as political and economic circumstances changed, its goals became far more focused on post-materialist values such as food quality and safety and the environmental benefits of organic farming so as to appeal to mainstream consumers.

The shift away from “conformity” and “ideology” of social movements to gain broader membership bases is what della Porta and Tarrow label ‘progressive politics’ (della Porta and Tarrow, 2005:3). Class-based politics faded from the mainstream social movements, and more ideas-based movements emerged that spoke to the public’s concerns over the sustainability of industrialized production processes and their

dependence upon non-renewable resources (Hechter, 2004). Stuart Hall claims that the rise of values and ideas-based movements and the networks involved in them have been by-products of the post-Fordist decline of industrialized economies, and thus class identification amongst individuals. This has created, what he characterizes as “...fragmentation and pluralism...[a] weakening of older collective solidarities and block identities” (Hall, 1991:58). Because of the rise of post-Fordism in the 1970s characterized by a rise in flexible workforces and production systems as well as advancements in technology (Jessop, 1993), traditional class delineations became fragmented and the popular support of class politics as a catalyst for a more equal and just society declined. Ideas-based movements gained in popularity and the ability to mobilize broader segments of the population that were not motivated by calls for socio-economic transformation. The proponents of the organic social movement therefore had to shift their goals to accommodate the shift towards ‘quality of life’ politics that characterize the post-Fordist era (Dalton et al., 1990).

To expand the membership of the movement to the mainstream, the organic social movement had to alter its objective from revolutionizing the mainstream, to engaging with mainstream society in the 1980s. Engaging with those who were not interested in revolutionizing the food system forced advocates for organic agriculture to highlight organic food’s environmental attributes, so that people who were concerned about environmental degradation could purchase organic foods to make an environmentally positive consumer choice. The opportunity for the organic social movement to gain political momentum largely emerged in response to rising consumer demands for what was perceived of as safer and healthier food across Canada and the US. The highly

publicized problems with the conventional agro-food system drew public attention to environmental and food safety issues in the 1980s, such as the discovery of grapes found in the US agro-food chain contaminated with cyanide (Buttel and LaRamee, 1991:164). A number of other food safety scares across North America gave credence to the organic social movement's claims that the industrialized agro-food system produced a number of negative outcomes that organic agriculture, practiced traditionally, could avoid (e.g., 'long' supply chains with opportunities for contamination). Tim Lang labels the period between 1980 and 2000 in post-industrial countries as a time of 'public crisis', where concerns about pesticide residues on food, unnecessary additives, the role food plays in degenerative diseases and food contamination cases made the public seriously question the safety of the industrialized, globalized agro-food system (Lang, 2004:28). For the organic social movement, the public crisis in the capacity of the state to protect the public from dangers in the food supply, served as an opportunity to re-state the benefits of organic farming and attract new members to the movement.

Not only was the organic social movement attracting new, mainstream consumers, but many of the original members of the movement began to enter the mainstream culture as they matured. Many of the original radical members of the organic social movement in the 1970s who came from middle-class backgrounds were beginning to settle down and begin careers by the 1980s. Most of the young, radical members had no intention of abandoning their ambitions for careers in the 'mainstream' to take up organic farming, cooking or working in a food co-operative (Belasco, 1989:106). Yet the belief that organic agro-food was superior in quality and taste to food produced in the industrialized agro-food chain still resonated with the middle class 'yuppies' of the 1980s, who were

concerned with health, fitness and conscious eating (Raynolds, 2000:154). The term yuppie refers to what Alice Kahn first defined as “the emerging group of urban professionals who “combin[ed] fierce upward mobility and strong consumerism with some remarkably progressive cultural and political interventions” (quoted in Guthman, 2003:48). To spread the objectives of the organic social movement in the mainstream market, the movement had to appeal to consumers’ desire to improve their (and others’) ‘quality of life,’ and the notion that by purchasing organic food, consumers could contribute to a better type of agro-food production without dramatically changing their day-to-day food consumption habits, or participating in public protest.

Despite the belief that organic food was of superior quality to conventional agro-food by committed members of the organic social movement who were now part of the mainstream, the mainstream culture by the 1980s valued the convenience and choice the globalized, industrialized agro-food system offered. One of the benefits of the industrialized agro-food system for consumers in North America was its ability to provide them with a wide variety of fresh foods all year round (Friedmann and McMichael, 1989). Many mainstream consumers who were concerned about food safety and who were also willing to purchase organic food, were not prepared to compromise their desire for ‘food on demand’ and eat only local food products, as the organic philosophy suggests (Redclift, 1997:336). Thus, the ‘new culture of consumption’ for organic and other types of ‘ethical’ foods, and the increase in highly individualized tastes, forced the organic social movement to alter its objectives to focus on the goals that spoke to these new political realities (Murdoch and Miele, 1999:473).

The organic movement was part of the counter-hegemony that emerged in response to the detrimental social, economic and environmental affects of industrialization, and had original intentions of replacing the industrialized system of food production with organic agriculture. But in attempting to expand, the counter-hegemony must also "...actively [resist] the pressures and temptations to relapse into pursuit of incremental gains for subaltern groups with the framework of the bourgeois hegemony" (Cox, 1993:53). For the organic movement to promote organic agriculture to the general public its goals and some of its values had to be compromised. Instead of demanding members conform to the more radical objectives of the early organic social movement that rejected consumer interaction with the conventional agro-food sector, the diversity and subjectivity of the membership was opened up to those who politically supported organic agriculture, but who did not necessarily practice organic agriculture. Because of the shift in objectives of the organic social movement that did not mount a radical challenge to capitalism per se (as market interactions are vital to the expansion of organic agriculture), organic food's public image in the mainstream media dramatically improved.

A 1980 article in the journal *Science* claimed that organic farming had finally become 'legitimate' (Carter, 1980). The piece explains how organic farmers (of the day) had successfully distanced themselves from the reputation as a 'back-to-nature romantic left over from the 1960s' contributing substantially to their new-found legitimacy (Carter, 1980:254). In 1980, the USDA estimated that there were 24, 000 organic producers in the US partially due to its growing acceptance by the public as a legitimate practice, as reflected in growing consumption of organic food (OG, 1989:43).

Throughout the 1980s, *OGF* continued to distance itself from the social goals held by the more radical members of the social movement attached to organic agriculture, it continued to be the source of information for members. As during its earlier days, *OGF* magazine was an important part of the organic social movement's framing processes as circulation grew to 1.3 million in 1980. *Prevention* magazine's circulation in 1980 was 2.4 million (*BusinessWeek*, 1980:85). However, the nature of *OGF* began to change as the Rodale Press was seeking broader readership, reflecting the organic social movement's desire to appeal to mainstream consumers. J.I. Rodale's son Robert wanted his family's magazine to reach out to mainstream consumers concerned with health, nutrition and food quality. Robert Rodale in a *Business Week* article describes the new marketing strategy *OGF* embarked on in 1980-- to boost annual revenues of the magazine, Rodale was seeking big-name advertisers beyond the vitamin supplement and health food companies of the magazine's past. The Rodale Press was also set to expand the distribution of its publications beyond health food stores and into mainstream bookstores (*BusinessWeek*, 1980). Although the president of the Rodale Institute in 1980, Robert J. Teufel said that the institute still subscribed to the ideas of 'planned growth,' for *OGF*, he was also eager to expand: "we are still not reaching enough of the sensitive part of the population. There is a broadened national interest in the health field and survival. If we don't fill that gap, someone else will, and they won't do it as well" (*BusinessWeek*, 1980:88). Although the Rodale Press was never overly interested in participating in radical social activism, the shift towards the mainstream by the Rodale Press signalled a significant shift in the overall movement's direction.

Thus, what was necessary for the organic social movement to keep its momentum and gain membership from the mainstream was what della Porta and Tarrow call 'reframing the issue' (della Porta and Tarrow, 2005:3). Reframing the goal or issue of a social movement goes beyond merely shifting focus to reworking how the idea itself is framed and promoted to the public. In the case of the organic social movement, as the mainstream market became the mobilizing structure, the goals of the movement itself placed more emphasis on issues of food quality, safety and environmentalism. Consuming organic food (over producing it, or eating it locally) was promoted as the primary means of membership in the organic social movement and the best way of changing the industrialized agro-food system. So, essentially, the organic movement re-framed the issue so as to put the responsibility for change in the hands of the consumer, while limiting the overall goal to expanding organic agriculture without radically questioning the status quo.

Numerous studies in social movements have explored the issue of co-optation as movements mature and attempt to expand (e.g., Lacy, 1982; McAdam, 1983; Coy and Hedeem, 2005). Cooptation generally occurs when challengers of the mainstream alter their claims so that they can be pursued more widely (Meyer and Tarrow, 1998:21). To expand, social movements are sometimes forced to alter their claims to gain attention from the state to achieve some degree of political change, what Cohn has characterizes as a 'liberal strategy' (Cohn, 2003:359). The issue of institutionalization in the environmental movement is explored in Forbes and Jermier's (2002) piece, which shows that the intention behind institutionalizing (stimulating policy change by engaging the 'establishment') rarely results in meaningful policy change. Opposed to the more critical

stance of the earlier organic social movement, the 1980s saw the movement shift its issues and goals to accommodate mainstream tastes, and to work towards affecting political institutions through more organized institutionalized action, while has been shown in other cases to result in co-optation and demobilization (Piven and Cloward, 1977).

The shift in strategies creates what Warren Belasco calls ‘the crossover dilemma’, a pitfall encountered by social movements seeking to maintain their momentum by pitching their goals to the mainstream. When a movement seeks to accommodate the interests of the mainstream, the supporters of the original goals are often alienated from the movement because of the compromise of the original goals (Belasco, 1989:93). The hollowing out of the more substantive elements of the organic social movement bifurcated the movement into the radicals, who still identified with the earlier movement’s goals, and the moderates who embrace institutionalized politics in an effort to gaining some sort of meaningful access to political institutions. The moderate contingent includes actors like business owners who want to expand the market for organic food, and therefore need government recognition to partake in more expansive trade networks. The shift of decision-making from the state-level to transnational bodies like the WTO creates what Meyer and Tarrow label as a ‘fragmentation of the coalition’, which they argue, erodes the overall opposition of the movement to the status quo (Meyer and Tarrow, 1998:21).

Despite the shift in focus of the organic social movement to the mainstream to gain support, supporters and practitioners of the organic philosophy invest in ‘alternative food networks’ to avoid participating in the conventional agro-food market (Whatmore, 2002).

Community-Supported Agriculture (CSA) networks became an important part of its organizational structure of the organic social movement in the late 1980s. They were created to establish socio-economic links between local agricultural producers and local consumers, supported by the sustainable agricultural movement to advocate change in the agro-food system (Powell, 1995:122).²⁹ These networks base trade on direct distribution schemes and local food links; as Powell notes, "...the idea behind all of them is to provide growers with a guaranteed market for their produce, and to give consumers access to a food at a reasonable price. Usually growers and consumers... live within a short distance of each other, and there may be social links as well" (Powell, 1995:122). The preference by some members of the organic social movement for whole, organic products at the local level has ensured that some element of the movement remains true to its philosophical roots (Goodman, 1991:59). However, the rising mainstream consumer demand for organic agro-food products in the 1980s radically changed the composition of the movement's membership and allowed for conventional business practices to be included under the banner of the organic movement (Guthman, 2004:40).

Conclusion

The policy process model as developed by social movement theorists, was used throughout this chapter and to assess the major changes in the development of the organic movement in Canada and the US. This chapter shows the important link between the emergence of the organic movement and other countercultural social movements that were influenced by the rise of post-materialist values amongst the postwar generation.

²⁹ CSAs emerged out of Europe and began to be organized in Canada and the US in the 1980s. Members are required to pay an annual fee that is then meant to help farmers and growers financially sustain themselves in a competitive market economy. In return, members have access to the farmers and growers' products once they are in season.

Despite the rejection of organic agriculture by the mainstream in the early development of the organic social movement, as lifestyle choices became an important issue to many, organic food gained appeal amongst those concerned with food safety and health issues.

The political and economic contexts that emerged in the 1980s had a transformative affect on the organic social movement. In many ways, the organic social movement's use of market interactions to gain popular support for its objectives became an important factor in the shucking of its materialist goals associated with 'old' social movements. As the mainstream became an important source of support for the movement, the demand for radical change in individuals' lifestyles as a prerequisite for membership became unrealistic, if the organic social movement was to become politically and economically relevant. The mainstream population with interests in consuming organic products had grown accustomed to convenient, fresh food on demand and expected as much from the organic sector.

CHAPTER 7: NEW ACTORS, NEW DIRECTIONS: THE CONTEMPORARY ORGANIC MOVEMENT AS AN ADVOCACY NETWORK

Introduction

To some degree, two constituencies have always existed in the organic movement. One, consisting mainly of organic producers, has put far more emphasis on the substantive socio-economic and ecological goals associated with organic agriculture, while the other that includes consumer movements, focuses on the environmental and health benefits of farming without synthetic chemicals. Yet as the 1980s progressed and the market for organic products expanded, another constituency emerged that deviated from the organic objectives of independence and self-sufficiency. The corporate constituency promotes the expansion of organic agriculture while encouraging the institutionalization of organic production processes into the mainstream agro-food system (Buck et al., 1997). The establishment of professional organizations was in an effort to bridge the gap between the radicalism of the counterculture of the 1960s, from which the organic movement emerged, and the new political and economic realities of the post-industrial, consumer culture of the 1980s.

Continuing to use the policy process model, this chapter traces the evolution of the organic social movement from the mid-1980s until the present. This segment of the movement's trajectory is distinguished from its previous incarnation by the entry of conventional corporate actors into the world of *Non-Governmental Organizations* (NGOs) promoting organic agriculture. This chapter argues that because of the entry of new actors into the organic movement, the movement itself has transformed from a social movement into a *transnational advocacy network* (TAN). Building upon the policy

process model advanced by Tilly (1978, 2004), Tarrow (1983, 2005), McAdam (1982, 1983) and McAdam et al., (1996), Margaret Keck and Kathryn Sikkink (1998) have developed the transnational advocacy network model to help explain movements that extend beyond national political boundaries. Here, the strength of this model in explaining the changes observed in the organic movement in North America is reinforced.

The Rise in Professional Organizations in the Organic Social Movement

Studies in social movements have observed that as movements mature and become established, there is a degree to which the organization of the movement becomes institutionalized in mainstream society. Meyer and Tarrow argue that, "...classic social movement modes of action may be becoming a part of the conventional repertoire of participation," a 'movement society' (Meyer and Tarrow, 1998:4). They claim that social protest has become normalized through its institutionalization in post-industrial societies, such that social mobilization has become a part of modern life. Better access to information and media has made today's society much more in tune with social, political and environmental issues, including food safety. But as for the organic movement's status as a social movement, the inclusion of actors who are traditionally the target of social protest, such as governments and corporations, makes its characterization as a social movement questionable, even as a part of 'the movement society'.

As the number of professional associations supporting organic agriculture in the mid-1980s grew, the organic social movement's objectives moved beyond convincing mainstream consumers to engage in alternative market relations, to inserting organic agriculture into the mainstream market. Instead of presenting an alternative to the

'hegemonic status quo of market consumerism and mass consumption' (Gill and Law, 1993), the organic advocacy network promotes the practice of organic agriculture and the expansion of the organic market into the conventional agro-food system, and thus its conformance with the principles of the global trading regime.

The concept of an advocacy network has been used to explain how policy change occurs, and specifically how actors' beliefs and common understandings of the problem influence the policy process (Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith, 1999). But the concept has also been used to explain how groups that are connected by similar interests are able to meet their collective goals across diverse political landscapes (Keck and Sikkink, 1998). According to Sikkink, social movement studies often place too much emphasis on the structure of a movement in determining its objectives and mobilizing structures, whereas the advocacy network approach argues that the agency of members is highly influential in determining objectives and organizing campaigns (Sikkink, 2005:151).

This is not to say that social movements are all together different from advocacy networks. In some cases, advocacy networks and social movements borrow ideas from each other, have overlapping memberships, share resources and in some cases may compete with each other for legitimacy (Keck and Sikkink, 2000:217). Members in networks are often diverse and can include not only traditional NGOs found in social movements, but also businesses, and governmental organizations (O'Brien, et al., 2000:110). However, it is important to note that power differentials do exist, and often the stronger actors in the network tend to drown out the actors with fewer resources (financial, political or otherwise) (Dalton, 1990:27). What truly separates the structure of an advocacy network from that of a social movement are the efforts made by members of

the advocacy network to influence their immediate political situation by involving themselves in political institutions (Keck and Sikkink, 1998:4). There are two major points in the advocacy network model that helps to explain the changes observed in the organic movement; first the role of membership in the network, and second, the role of actors' interests in shaping objectives of the advocacy network.

Applying the classification of advocacy network to the organic movement is not new to studies in organic agriculture. In Bostrom and Klintman's 2006 comparative study of organic regulations in Sweden and the US, they identify the existence of two constituencies, with varying degrees of interest in the expansion of organic agriculture. Bostrom and Klintman's definition of the organic movement was discussed in Chapter 6, but they also have developed a useful definition of what constitutes an organic advocacy network, which as they rightfully claim, defines the current form of organization of those with an interest in the expansion of organic agriculture. The 'organic advocacy network' is understood to include "...all organizations and individuals that actively support and are engaged in organic production in any way" (Bostrom and Klintman, 2006:167).

As opposed to the members of the organic social movement defined by Sumner (2005) in the North American context, those included under the guise of the broader organic advocacy network do not necessarily subscribe to the social, economic or even the environmental principles traditionally associated with organic agriculture, yet the members of the organic social movement are still part of the broader advocacy network. As observed in other advocacy networks, once they are established the common principles that brought members together are often interpreted differently amongst them (Keck and Sikkink, 1998:36). Because of the existence of two constituencies that vary in

their commitment to the social and economic principles of organic agriculture, yet are similar in their dedication to its more instrumentalist principles, it is clear that something broader than the previous organic social movement currently exists.

As the organic social movement evolved in Canada and the US, the number and diversity of the actors involved multiplied. Instead of 'Back to Landers', 'middle-class hippies' and farmers, the developing market potential for organic food drew in many interested parties seeking to gain from the growing politicization of food issues and organic agriculture's niche market status. Although the organic social movement had always valued the market as an effective way of spreading organic agriculture and transmitting organic values to the public, some of the members of the organic movement who joined in the mid-1980s prioritized the expansion of the market for organic products and profiting from the market expansion over the more substantive goals of the organic philosophy.

The early organic social movement's dependence on trust-based market interactions as the main mobilizing structure, made it easy for outside actors to enter the organic market, since there were no formal rules as to how business should be conducted in the organic sector. It was assumed by members of the organic social movement that since one of the major reasons why the movement emerged was to reject, and to provide an alternative to conventional business practices, these practices would be banned from inclusion in the movement (Merrill, 1976). Yet there were business associations inside the movement that wanted to maximize their profits through the expansion of markets. Many of the business-oriented members, observing the premium prices organic products fetch, were eager to make organic production processes more economically efficient to

reduce production and transaction costs and spread organic agriculture (Raynolds, 2000). Business interests were also eager to engage with the state to set regulations that would further facilitate market growth and global trade in organic products. The new professionalized, business-oriented constituents, what Egri refers to as ‘the pragmatists’, drove the institutionalization of the organic social movement and helped to transform it into an advocacy network (Egri, 1994:151). The growing involvement of professional organizations and associations helped to change the major goals of the movement itself.

Organizations within the broader organic advocacy network tend to fall into one of three categories in terms of their orientation towards the global agro-food system. As argued by Cox (1999:10-11) and O’Brien et al. (2000) in their discussions of globalization and civil society, there are three types of NGOs that make up civil society: conformers, reformers and radicals. Conformers accept the status quo in regard to the global trading system, while reformers want some degree of change to the way the global system of trade functions. The radicals completely reject the system and usually want the global trade regime dismantled or replaced with something new. Both conformers and reformers tend to be more professionally organized than radical ones. As Guthman points out, as many of the loosely knit networks made up of organic producers’ associations matured, they transformed into more professional trade organizations and certifiers as the market for organic food expanded and state legislation became necessary for its further growth (Guthman, 2004:111).

One of the most influential and powerful associations that can be considered a conforming organization in the organic advocacy network is the *Organic Trade Association* (OTA), first established in 1985 under the name *Organic Foods Production*

Association of North America. It includes organic businesses in both Canada and the US including *SunOpta*, *WholeFoods Markets* and *Hain-Celestial* (OTA, 2005b). OTA is a transnational association linking businesses on both sides of the border through their mutual business interests. It changed its name in 1994 to account for the portion of its membership that is involved in other parts of the production phase of organic products. Today, its membership consists of all sectors, from the farm to retail outlets, and it represents 'the industry's interests to policy makers, the media and the public' (OTA, 2006).

OTA's mandate is to promote the organic business interest, which includes protecting the growth of organic trade to 'benefit the environment, farmers, the public and the economy'. The OTA receives funding from its members, who currently include some of the biggest investors in the organic food industry: *Cascadian Farms* and *Campbell's Soup* (OTA, 2005b). Nowhere in the OTA mandate is the promotion of small-scale, disaggregated production in the organic food sector mentioned, nor does it promote the idea that its members adhere to more substantive goals associated with organic agriculture. Its activism on behalf of organic firms was highly influential in getting organic regulations on the agenda of policy makers in both Canada and the US, and helped politicize the importance of labelling and certification schemes of organic products. It was an important source of perspective and information for both the US and Canadian governments as they devised their own national organic standards. The OTA has helped the organic food industry gain legitimacy in the mainstream through its lobbying of governments for organic regulations and labelling in addition to its

willingness to embrace conventional business practices and conventional agro-food corporations like *Hain-Celestial*.

An example of a professional association that is considered a reformer is the *Organic Consumer's Association* (OCA). Originally named the *Pure Food Campaign* in 1992 by its founder, Jeremy Rifkin, its name was changed to OCA in 1998 to reflect its focus on organic food and agriculture standards. It has over 850,000 members including 3,000 food co-operatives in both Canada and the US. Its goal is to protect consumers from fraudulent claims made by organic food labels, while promoting 'health justice' and sustainability, as well as a number of other related issues such as the fair trade and anti-GMO campaigns. The OCA does not believe that national organic standards go far enough to truly represent the early principles of the organic movement, but instead sees the current sets of standards as catering to big business in the organic food sector.

The OCA, and its current president, Ronnie Cummins, took issue with the National Organic Standards as put forth by the USDA (and supported by the OTA) in the early 1990s. Far more critical of the exemption of more substantive goals than other members of the organic advocacy network, the OCA takes an anti-corporate attitude towards the organic food industry and often publicly criticizes agro-food corporations, like Horizon Dairy, who has almost consolidated the entire organic dairy sector in the US (as discussed in Chapter 4). The OCA suggests *Safeguard Organic Standards* that would block large corporations from only subscribing to the instrumental principles of the organic philosophy (OCA, 2006b). It encourages consumers to boycott certain companies for their business practices that do not coincide with organic principles, and also pressures national governments and companies to preserve organic standards and

lobbies to have them strengthened (OCA, 2007). The OCA, like other consumer associations, believes that the neo-liberal global trading regime privileges the interests of TNCs over the interests of consumers (Williams, 2005:42). But, while the OCA may reject the corporatization of organic agriculture per se, it still firmly believes that the market and the 'ethical' consumer are the best means of achieving social change. Like other prominent actors in the organic advocacy network, it is mainly concerned with consumer issues in the mainstream market, as the slogan on its website reads, "put your money where your mouth is" (OCA, 2007).

While not a transnational organic association, *Canadian Organic Growers* (COG) is a professional organization that is another reformer that like the OCA, in principle supports sustainability and social justice. COG is made up of farmers, gardeners, retailers, consumers, policy-makers and educators, and is a member of IFOAM. It has local chapters across Canada and publishes a quarterly magazine called *The Canadian Organic Grower*. Unlike the OTA or OCA, COG's mandate includes bioregional organic food systems, emphasizing the importance of localized organic supply chains to sustainability of the agro-food system in Canada (COG, 2007). But like OCA, COG has taken issue with the conventionalization of organic production processes. In 2006, the *Vancouver Sun* featured a three part series on organic agriculture, the first of which was titled *Organics Industry Goes Mainstream* (Weeks, 2006a). The article includes excerpts from an interview with Laura Telford, the executive director of COG. She laments the shift in focus of the organic movement from social change to meeting consumer demand stating, "my biggest problem is...they're not really adopting organics in the way our organic pioneers had imaged" (Weeks, 2006b:D4).

While social justice may be supported in principle, like other professional organizations included in the organic advocacy network, COG does not have a mandate to pressure its policy-making members to address the importance of social issues in organic regulations and standards. It is clear from examining the Canadian and US national organic regulations and standards discussed in Chapter 5, that there is little attention paid to working conditions in the organic sector, or other social justice issues associated with the organic philosophy.

Professional associations like the OTA, OCA and COG have been involved in policy agenda setting and do not call for a radical dismantling of the global agro-food system, as earlier actors in the organic social movement once did. The radicalism associated with organic agriculture in the 1960s is not so much a part of the professionalized organic advocacy network as it exists today, although challenging capitalist agriculture still exists in other younger food-related movements. The global ‘Guerrilla Gardening’ network, for example, rejects the corporatization of the food system, but also rejects organic agriculture because it is ‘co-opted by capitalism’ (Windsor Guerrilla Gardening Collective, 2007).

Although the Guerrilla Gardeners have rejected the label ‘organic’ because of its perceived cooptation, this group that is active in both Europe and North America can be considered an example of a radical member of the organic advocacy network because in its objectives, it exhibits similar goals as the early organic social movement. The Guerrilla Gardening network is composed of groups of people in urban centres around the world who believe in non-violent, direct action at the grassroots level to challenge the negative environmental, social and economic outcomes of industrialized production

systems. Although radical members of civil society sometimes use violence to get their point across, Guerrilla Gardeners refrain from using violence for political means.

Guerrilla gardening, in principle, rejects capitalist agro-food production, which includes corporate control of the agro-food system, GMOs, monoculture and the globalized agro-food system writ large. Guerrilla gardening is 'political gardening' often characterized by sowing seeds on private and public property without consent, in mainly urban areas. It has no official list of members, as the act of trespassing on private property is illegal in most if not all countries. Guerrilla gardening is often associated with the more radical contingent of the environmental movement, and the broader 'alternative' globalization movement, which seeks to transform the exploitive nature of capitalist relations (see www.primalseeds.org). Despite the rise of professionalized NGOs in the organic movement, there appears to be some room for a radical contingent to promote some of the earlier political and social goals of the organic social movement.

The Professionalization of the Organic Movement

The professionalization of organizations in social movements, as observed by Tilly (2004) has shifted the focus of the organic social movement towards health and environmental benefits. Observers of the institutionalization of social movements contend that shifts in focus often erodes the original goals of movements, as uncovered by Guthman in her examination of organic agriculture in California (2004) and discussed by Patricia Allen and Carolyn Sachs in their examination of the sustainable agricultural movement in the US (Allen and Sachs, 1991). Similar to what Tilly argues in his extensive examination of social movements, the organic advocacy network, as it has included more professionalized associations, has abandoned segments of the local and

regional interests that were once a vital part of its objectives (Tilly, 2004:157). This is what Meyer and Tarrow refer to as ‘the paradox of professionalization’.

Professionalization, although necessary to gain attention from the state, may eventually undermine sustained efforts at mobilization because the goals of the organizations shift to influencing policy, over collective action at the grassroots level (Meyer and Tarrow, 1998:15).

The inclusion of professionalized organic associations, including business and consumer associations has helped to move the organic activist network away from its original social and economic goals of creating an alternative to the conventional agro-food system. This is what Robin Hodess, in reference to the evolution of the environmental movement, has labelled the ‘establishment complex’ (Hodess, 2001:140). This complex is often caused when business interests, often thought of by the NGO community *as* the establishment, start promoting values once associated with social movements, as part of their marketing strategies (Cox, 1999:11). For example, ‘green’ marketing campaigns and labelling consumer products as ‘eco-friendly’. The inclusion of more professional organizations, with large memberships and substantial financial resources eager to engage with the state and participate in the global agro-food system, has been a significant step towards organic becoming part of the mainstream retail market, and its inclusion in public policy.

Because of the resistance of the organic social movement’s members to engaging with the state, their goals have not been well represented in the broader organic advocacy network. As Bostrom and Klintman argue “as a result of an institutionalization of movement practices, the advocacy network can continue to provide stimuli for a

reformed conventional agriculture, while the movement has lost the capacity to fundamentally challenge it” (Bostrom and Klintman, 2006:171). Although the more substantive issues associated with the organic philosophy are concerns of some of the transnational actors in the organic advocacy network, they do not tend to be major issues in their campaigns, especially regarding social issues. Though associations such as the OCA and COG agree with fair labour standards in principle, social issues have not been as important as regulation, or market expansion, and have not been a major component of their policy recommendations.

Issue Linkage: The Anti-GMO and Organic Movement

Early in the organic movement’s history, it was closely associated with other social movements of the time, as it adopted some of the principles of the environmental, sustainable agricultural and feminist movements. But as technological advancements began to influence food production, and the organic social movement matured into an advocacy network, it found itself a new movement to identify with—the anti-GMO movement. This section shows that as a result of the incorporation of actors into the organic movement the organic advocacy network is now linked with other food and agriculture-related campaigns, like the anti-GMO movement. The issue linkage between such movements is an effort to maximize organic food’s commercialization as a ‘greener’, ‘healthier’ and perhaps above all ‘safer’ consumer food choice.

One of the most important ways a social movement gains public support is by keeping its issues relevant to average people’s lives. The professional members that make up the organic advocacy network were influential in altering the objectives of the network as they were presented to the public, creating what Keck and Sikkink call

'information politics'. Advocacy networks 'relay ideas in order to alter information and value context' to mobilize the public. Mobilizing information is used to create new issues and categories that grab people's attention by changing their perception of the issue (Keck and Sikkink, 1998:2,16). In the case of the organic advocacy network in the 1980s, to promote the consumption of organic food as a form of social protest, some members of the organic advocacy network drew attention to the dangers of the industrialized food system to convince people to purchase 'safe' organic products. The 1980s BSE crisis in Europe for example, helped to frame the issues of the organic movement in terms of food safety as it was revealed cows were being fed rendered animal protein derived from other cows--something organic agriculture prohibits. Thus, the network gained momentum and popular support for policy action through issue linkage. Food safety gained more public attention in the US and Canada after a number of food safety scares in the North American agro-food chain in the late 1980s and throughout the 1990s (e.g., the Alar food scare, E.coli and salmonella contaminations) (McGrath, 1991; Schlosser, 2002). In the 1989 Spring edition of the produce industry's paper, *The Packer*, the headline read, "At Issue: Product Safety; Organics: Hot Demand, Short Supply" (Friedland, 1994:225). The organic advocacy network uses the media attention to food safety issues to link its objective of expanding organic agriculture to a safer food supply that, it argues, the conventional agro-food system can not provide (Soil Association, 2001:5).

Concerns over food safety even prompted the recruitment of celebrities to help publicize the network's objectives; in a 1989 *Organic Gardening*³⁰(OG) magazine feature, American actor Meryl Streep was interviewed about her personal campaign against high levels of agricultural chemical residues in children's food (OG, 1989). Conducting public opinion polls has also been an important part of mobilizing the public through the dissemination of information. Citing the 'Fresh Trends' consumer poll in the 1989 issue of *the Packer*, a 1991 issue of OG demonstrates how concerned the public was about food safety issues. More than 80% of respondents had concerns about the safety of their food, which led to an 18% to change their food purchasing habits (OG, 1991:43).

Linking organic food with food safety issues was particularly beneficial to the organic advocacy network in meeting its objectives of increased consumption of organic products. In another survey conducted by *Organic Gardening* in 1989, 48% of those surveyed 'regularly' ate organic fruits and vegetables, and over half of them chose organic for its health benefits (OG, 1989:42-46). Thus, the promotion of organic agriculture was reframed both as both a human health issue pertaining to chemical residues on food, and also a food safety issue linked with other consumer movements such as the anti-GMO movement. Linking the organic and food safety issues qualify as what Bennett labels, 'loose activist networks' which overlap multiple issues, goals, and possess flexible member identities (Bennett, 2005:213).

³⁰ Originally, J.I. Rodale's organic magazine was called *Organic Gardening*. Because of the growing number of organic farmers in the 1970s, Rodale added *and Farming* to the title, but returned to the earlier title in the late 1980s reorienting the magazine's focus to organic gardeners and consumers.

Organic agriculture's association with food safety issues, or what Bell and Valentine (1997) label the 'ethical eating counter trend,'³¹ was the main driver of expansion of the organic food market in the early 1990s. But as GMOs received growing negative publicity in the 1990s, the organic advocacy network most strongly linked its issue with the anti-GMO movement that framed its cause in the context of food safety.³² The anti-GMO movement emerged in reaction to the growing control by agribusiness over the genetic manipulation of agro-food. By 1998, it was reported that 30% of all soybeans grown in the US and over a quarter of all maize was genetically modified (Clorfen-Casten, 1998).³³ This number has jumped to 85% of all soy in 2003 along with 45% of all maize (Singer and Mason, 2006:208).

The movement was able to frame the GMO issue to mobilize public support against GMOs with a number of highly publicized legal cases. *Monsanto* launched a lawsuit against Saskatchewan farmer, Percy Schmeiser for violating intellectual property law. As Schmeiser described in his public talk at the Vancouver launch of the Council of Canadians *GE-Free Campaign* in 2005, *Monsanto* claimed that Schmeiser planted *Monsanto's Roundup Ready* canola seeds in 1998 without paying the patent fees (since *Roundup Ready* is genetically altered and its use is patent protected). Schmeiser himself did not plant the seeds, as they were blown over from an adjacent farmer's field (Schmeiser, 2005). Schmeiser claimed that *Monsanto's* seeds had polluted the strain of

³¹ The ethical eating counter trend, as understood by Bell and Valentine, rose in response to the rise of the fast food industry in the US. Networks that are part of the ethical eating counter trend include vegetarian, Fair Trade, direct farmer-to-consumer marketing and the Slow Food Movement (Bell and Valentine, 1997).

³² Genetic modification is when genes are introduced into species of plants and animals that would otherwise not occur in nature, for example animal genes in plants or vice versa. Often, the technology and research used to splice genes is conducted by large biotechnology firms, and under intellectual property laws, its use is controlled by patent-holding firms.

³³ The US and Canada are the leading producers of GM crops along with Brazil, Argentina, China and South Africa. Neither Canada nor the US requires producers to label products containing GMOs.

canola he had been breeding and developing for fifty years. In 2004, *Monsanto* won its case against Schmeiser at the Supreme Court of Canada, although Schmeiser did not have to pay damages to *Monsanto* (www.percyschmeiser.com).

Another case, which drew the public's attention to GMOs, occurred in 2000 when it was reported that a GM-strain of corn (*Aventis'* Starlink brand) not meant for human consumption, had made its way into the US food chain (Borenstein, 2005). The GM-corn contained a type of soil bacteria that could possibly trigger allergic reactions in consumers with allergies to the type of bacteria (Nestle, 2003:2-3). Both cases publicized a number of issues the anti-GMO movement addresses: the political power of agribusiness and the lack of corporate responsibility for the spread of GMOs in the environment in the agro-food system.

The anti-GMO movement is a diverse group of members including farmers (e.g., National Farmer's Union), environmental groups (e.g., Greenpeace, Friends of the Earth), concerned scientists and citizens (Council of Canadians, 2005). Some anti-GMO groups want GM foods to carry labels, while the more radical constituency calls for a ban of GMO technology all together (such as banning terminator seeds) (Nielsen and Anderson, 2000). Mobilizing against GMOs has been politically effective in Europe, where the EU has restricted the use and circulation of GMOs, under its *Directive 2001/18/EC* legislation, while some food retailers in Europe have gone completely 'GMO-free' (Bullock et al., 2000).

The strong link between the organic and the anti-GMO networks' issues is the banned use of GMOs. The anti-GMO network recommends that concerned consumers should pressure governments to ban or limit the use of GMOs in the agro-food system, and to

buy organic products because organic agriculture regulations ban the use of GMOs.

Although GMOs were not referenced in the early organic social movement (because they did not exist until the 1980s), today the organic activist network rejects GMOs entirely, and was influential in including banning the use of GMOs in organic agriculture regulations in the EU and US (Baker, 2004). Linking organic and anti-GMO campaigns through what della Porta and Tarrow label, 'transnational collective action' (della Porta and Tarrow, 2005:2-3) helped to boost the organic sector as it was viewed as a sure way to keep GMOs out of one niche in the food system. The organic advocacy network and the anti-GMO movement are now part of a larger transnational food issues network.

The organic and anti-GMO movement share two goals—to bring public attention to the negative environmental and human health affects of practicing conventional agriculture, and to link conventional agriculture with food safety issues. As Keck and Sikkink claim, “advocacy networks have been particularly important in value-laden debates...where large numbers of differently situated individuals...have developed similar world views” (Keck and Sikkink, 1998:9). In addition to the organic advocacy network linking its issues with the anti-GMO movement, some scholars have also found ideational links between the organic and other movements like the fair trade movement (Raynolds, 2000; Rice, 2001). Despite the fact that some members of the organic social movement have joined forces with the fair trade movement, most popularly in the production and trade of coffee in alternative trade organizations, when looking at the wider organic advocacy network, the issue linkage between the broader organic advocacy network and the fair trade campaign is not very strong and certainly is not as strong as the issue linkage between the anti-GMO and organic advocacy network (Blowfield, 2001).

Café Etico, a Canadian NGO that has direct trade links with co-operatively organized coffee growers in Latin America for almost fifteen years, carries organic coffee, but in an interview with an activist involved with the NGO, “Grace” said that *Café Etico* was far more concerned with social justice than whether coffee growers are ‘certified organic’. Through federally funded Co-Development Canada, *Café Etico* does not dictate to growers the standards of production. The direct trade relationship was developed well before organic production standards were implemented by the farmers themselves, who decided to ‘go organic’ because it was healthier for the environment and the community (PC4, Apr. 13, 2005). Women also play a significant role in the coffee co-operative that *Café Etico* works with, as it supports grassroots, horizontal forms of decision-making that involve all members of the community.

Fair trade has a much closer relationship to the organic philosophy with its emphasis on social goods as opposed to the corporate approach to organic production processes. But both the organic and the fair trade movements have experienced institutionalization to some degree (Gendron et al., 2006; Ransom, 2005). Linking the fair trade and organic labels on products is largely driven by consumers’ demands, not the organic advocacy network’s mutual concern with the fair trade movement regarding the exploitive labour practices in the globalized economy (Guthman, 2004:119). However, like the anti-GMO campaign, the organic advocacy network and the fair trade campaign focus on change to influence the purchasing habits of consumers to meet their goals.

The organic advocacy network today consists of a variety of actors with diverse interests. Its members are in different socio-political contexts and linked through the objective of spreading organic agriculture. How organic agriculture should be expanded

and what should be included in organic regulations is where members of the network tend to deviate. Some professional associations such as the OCA claim that ‘voting with consumer dollars’ is the most useful way of helping to expand organic agriculture on a global scale (OCA, 2007). ‘Green consumerism’ has become more popular as the public is made more aware of environmental problems. Those with sufficient disposable incomes wishing to make ethical consumer choices can now do so without radically changing their lifestyles. The transition of organic agriculture from a form of political resistance to a way of producing speciality food products for the affluent has earned organic food the nickname ‘yuppie chow’ by those still involved in the organic social movement (Guthman, 2003:45). But ethical consumerism does come at a price (often higher than conventional agro-food), and the broader organic advocacy network has offered few suggestions in terms of making organic food in the global economy affordable and accessible to all people -- not just those who can afford to pay a premium for ‘safe’ and ‘clean’ food.

Although the ‘new progressive food politics’ in which the organic advocacy network is now a part has the objective of changing patterns in conventional agro-food networks through consumer choices, challenging the organization of the global economy goes largely unquestioned by the organic advocacy network. The food sovereignty networks³⁴ and others sites of food activism such as the Slow Food movement, do challenge the structure of the global food system by advocating reform of the current system of trade, and its treatment of food and agriculture (Goodman and Dupuis, 2002:19; Miele and

³⁴ Food sovereignty networks include organizations that campaign for local and regionalized agro-food systems and the movement away from the global agro-food system organized around the principle of comparative advantage. Food sovereignty as prescribed by Tim Lang (2004) and Philip McMichael (2004), has the objective of making agro-food production sustainable by moving states away from export-led growth strategies as prescribed by the neo-liberal market paradigm.

Murdoch, 2002; McMichael, 2004). Some have taken issue with hinging the desire for social change through organic agriculture as it relates to the political economy of organic food onto market transactions. As Allen and Kovach state in their exploration of the social implications of organic food entering the mainstream market, “[it] requires collective action in the form of a social movement, not the ‘invisible hand’ of the market” (Allen and Kovach, 2000:230).

Conclusion

Organic agriculture is often associated with environmentalism and sustainability, and is understood to have a close ideological connection with other social movements seeking socio-political change to the status quo (Allen and Sachs, 1991). Social movement theory is useful in assessing the shape of the organic movement when its membership was poised to challenge norms associated with industrial agriculture, as other movements like the Slow Food movement continue to do (Petrini and Watson eds., 2001; Miele and Murdoch, 2002). The shift of the organic social movement to the organic advocacy network has been accompanied by a shift in objectives that has limited the political traction of organic agriculture and its ability to mount a challenge to industrialized forms of food production.

Today, the organic advocacy network is primarily geared towards meeting consumer demands over the more substantive social and environmental goals. The organic advocacy network is built upon its diverse membership, including business associations and governmental organizations that are not seeking political and economic reform of the corporatized, industrialized agro-food system. The effectiveness of professional business associations in informing the public about how the expansion of organic agriculture will

benefit the environment and personal well being has helped to reframe the issues of the network. Professional associations with financial and political resources that dwarf those of the more radical, less institutionalized constituencies have successfully reframed the issue to highlight their particular interests of market expansion and uniform regulation to further facilitate the corporate approach to organic food production.

CHAPTER 8: CONCLUSIONS- MOVING BEYOND ORGANIC? CONTRIBUTIONS TO POLITICAL ECONOMY AND FUTURE PROSPECTS FOR SOCIAL RESISTANCE AGAINST THE GLOBALIZED FOOD SYSTEM

Introduction

In September of 2006, organic food's reputation as healthier and safer than conventionally produced food was in jeopardy. Over one hundred people across the US became sick from ingesting bagged organic spinach that was tainted with E.coli bacteria that originated from *Natural Selection's* massive organic produce operations in California. A 77-year-old woman and a 23-month-old girl died from ingesting the spinach. Though Canada imports *Natural Selection* brand bagged spinach, no Canadians fell ill. After being investigated by the US Food and Drug Administration, *Natural Selection* was cleared of responsibility for the contaminated spinach. Instead, it was found that improper handling in the vast distance between the field and the plate was to blame for the contamination (CBC, Sept. 18, 2006). Just a month later across Canada and the US, organic carrot juice was pulled off supermarket shelves because of possible botulism contamination. Four Americans became sick from drinking the tainted carrot juice. One of the makers of the carrot juice was *Earthbound Farms*. *Earthbound Farms*, like *Natural Selection* is one of the many owners of large-scale corporate organic farms in California (CBC, Oct. 2, 2006). The episodes of tainted organic food products circulating in the North American food system sparked panic across Canada and the US calling into question the safety of organic food products.

The implications of a globalized, corporatized organic food sector are clear. Despite the arguments made by advocates for a globally integrated, transnationally organized organic food industry, the integration of organic food into the industrialized food system

is compromising the qualities of organic food and risking the health of people in pursuit of profit. It has been the goal of this thesis to explain how corporations are colonizing the organic food sector in Canada and the US, and how the product over process discourse has transformed the organic food sector, and marginalized the approach to food production that is premised on keeping the link between social and economic relations as a fundamental point of producing food organically.

Early practitioners and supporters of organic agriculture imagined that an ‘organic future’ could be realized, which would replace the industrialized agro-food system with a “post-industrial ecologically sustainable system of family farmers [who] are again agrarian crafts persons” (Egri, 1994:131). The contemporary influence of the corporate organic philosophy in the organic sector would have undoubtedly surprised early organic advocates like Howard, Balfour and Rodale. Few could have imagined, just thirty years ago, the dramatic turn organic agriculture has taken in the US and Canada. This conclusion discusses how investigating the changing political economy of organic food and agriculture in Canada and the US is a useful contribution to studies in political economy. It examines what the corporatization and institutionalization of the organic movement can tell us about the consequences for alternative food systems entering the global trade regime, and the capacity of neo-liberalism to infiltrate social movements that are seemingly immune to co-optation. It also examines some related forms of social resistance against the globalized, industrialized agro-food system. Though the organic philosophy was not fully realized, it did lay important groundwork for those fighting for a more socially and ecologically sustainable agro-food system today.

Themes of the Changing Political Economy of the Organic Agriculture

This thesis has attempted to show that the organic sector, in terms of the structure of its principal actors, ideas and institutional frameworks, has changed to such a degree that it no longer resembles early understandings of organic agriculture as a challenge to more industrialized forms of food production. By examining the four key elements of the political economy of the organic movement -- the principles of two distinct interpretations of 'organic', the economic dimensions of corporate strategies, the way interest groups influence public policy and the changing dynamics of the organic social movement, it is clear that 'organic' as a political force, no longer challenges industrial capitalism the same way as it once did. As corporations in the organic sector strive to meet growing consumer demand for 'clean, green and safe' food the technical qualities of the material, end product have been institutionally privileged over the social and ecological values assigned to organic production processes.

By embedding economic relations in social relations, early practitioners of organic agriculture envisioned an alternative means of providing food for the community. They imagined that by keeping social and economic relations connected, an alternative means of food provision would emerge that provides people with healthy, environmentally friendly food that included the social and environmental costs of food production. The overall goal of early practitioners and supporters of organic agriculture was to make it as ecologically sustainable as possible by omitting the use of synthetic chemicals to increase yields or kill pests. Practicing poly-culture on a small-scale was also an important means of promoting biodiversity and an alternative to industrialized production. By spreading information about the social, economic and environmental benefits of organic farming to

the general public, supporters of organic agriculture believed that once consumers were aware of the negative outcomes of industrialized agriculture, they would be motivated to engage in localized, organic supply chains. Producers and consumers engaging with each other through local organic supply chains would then be re-connected through personal, trust-based relationships that would foster a moral economy.

However, the organic philosophy also has important *political* dimensions; one of the major political positions of the early movement was its refusal to include conventional agro-food corporations or national governments in the organization and management of organic supply chains because of their roles in industrialized agriculture. Keeping out the main drivers of industrialization in the agro-food system was a fundamental aspect of keeping organic agriculture a challenge to the status quo. Originally, the goal was to establish a completely different food system that would not only challenge the industrial food system, but would replace it. Organic practitioners and supporters hoped, that once organic agriculture took over as the status quo, governments would have to shift support from industrial agriculture to organic agriculture.

Early organic practitioners were staunchly opposed to any type of political organization that represented the relationship between agribusiness and the government. Independence from state and corporate interference motivated organic farmers to have de-centralized and pluralistic forms of organization that allowed for a diversity of definitions of organic to exist, depending upon what members of private, localized farming groups decided organic should mean. Some groups emphasized social goals in their mandates, while other producers' groups put more emphasis on ecological sustainability. What all groups did share was a general rejection of industrialized forms

of food production. Having a flexible definition of organic, allowed for organic practitioners in various bioregions, and with various resources available to them to practice sustainable agriculture, without having too many restrictions or 'one size fits all' bureaucratic regulations imposed on them. Maintaining flexibility in farming styles, while committing to sustainability, allowed organic practitioners to remain somewhat independent from centralized forms of decision-making.

Even if organic practitioners had decided to universalize the definition of organic early on in the development of the organic movement, it would be difficult to maintain a distance from corporate actors, as the contemporary global political economy is organized around neo-liberal principles. The privileged place corporations have in the global economy and their desire to ever expand markets and accumulate profits has proven too difficult for the organic sector to resist. Once corporations entered the sector they promoted the more instrumental definition of organic as the preferred interpretation to be included in public policy. Authored namely by agro-food corporations and national governments, the institutionalized definition of organic that guides production processes and is now part of national regulations in both Canada and the US, reflects corporate and governmental interests in expanding free, open markets for organic food. Though there are a number of benefits to corporate activity in the organic sector, i.e., providing populations with organic products that cannot be produced locally, and reducing the use of synthetic inputs in food production, the structural changes that conventional corporations have imposed upon the organic sector seriously threaten its status as an alternate and environmentally benign approach to food production.

Organic food has also been rapidly inserted into global policy frameworks, which further conditions its development away from its early principles, entrenching the corporate approach to organic production processes. The corporatized definition of organic has not only been institutionalized at the national level in Canada and the US but also in global regulations like the WTO's SPS Measures and Agreement on TBT, the Codex, ISO and to a large extent, IFOAM. Despite IFOAM's stated aim to keep social justice a part of the policy discourse of organic agriculture (IFOAM, 2002a), its limited political and economic influence in global policy making has forced it to alter its objectives. IFOAM has now included in its mandate ideas promoted by the WTO to encourage states to decrease their 'disguised barriers to trade'.

As organic agriculture has become part of the global trade regime, its regulations are now conditioned by the WTO's policies, which deny the inclusion of *process and production methods* (PPMs) as legitimate grounds for members discriminating against other members' imports. As Rigby and Caceres observe in their examination of standards for organic agriculture, organic "standards are far more able to refer to prohibited inputs than to specify precise criteria for the assessment of whether producers and processors are acting in a manner that is 'socially just' or 'ecologically responsible'" (Rigby and Caceres, 2001:27). The 'product over process policy discourse' that the WTO and the corporate approach to organic production processes share emphasizes the characteristics of the end product over those of the production process; how the organic food is produced and who produces it, is largely inconsequential. But for many, the end product's value *is* derived from how it is produced and who produces it. Recognizing the

importance of the production process to the characteristics of the end product is more than just a matter of protectionism; it is a matter of livelihood.

Including the production process as integral to the characteristics of the end product is indeed a contentious trade issue, as illustrated in the hormone beef and the GMO trade disputes between the EU and the US and Canada. The EU has fashioned its organic agriculture policies along the multifunctional paradigm, as introduced into the CAP, while the US and Canada have regulated organic based on the competitive market paradigm. The product over process discourse has had far more success in the North American context than it has in the EU pertaining to the regulation of organic food, showing that the dominance of the corporate model of organic production, like conventional food production, has regional dimensions.

The spread of organic agriculture is not entirely devoid of benefits, even though the corporate approach to organic production processes is now institutionalized into regulation and policy. The rising consumer demand for organic products has helped spread organic farming, which has converted millions of hectares of farmland around the world from conventional to organic management, reducing the amount of synthetic chemicals used to produce food (Willer and Yussefi, eds., 2005). The spread of organic agriculture has also the potential to reduce the amount of GMOs in the food supply, though the Schmeiser versus Monsanto case shows that it is increasingly difficult to contain the spread of biotechnology in agriculture. These goals are, however, hardly exhaustive of the original organic vision.

Globalized organic food now relies on the same transnational system of food transportation that conventionally produced food does, contributing to global warming

and greenhouse gases (McNeely and Scherr, 2001). Transnationalized organic supply chains have increased food miles to satisfy consumer demands for a wide variety of organic foods year round. Transnational supply chains also increase the need for resource intensive packaging. The corporate approach to organic production also does not offer much in terms of social sustainability. Large-scale monoculture is now the norm in centres of organic agriculture like California, which in some cases employs low-paid, unskilled migrant labour. Locally-based, small-scale organic agriculture that helps to nurture personal, trust-based relationships in communities is quickly disappearing as corporate owners consolidate production processes and centralize decision-making processes that are often far removed from the point of production. The environmental and social principles embodied in the production process that are central to maintaining a commitment to the organic philosophy have proven difficult to maintain and achieve as the sector converges on the norms and practices associated with the conventional agro-food sector (Friedmann, 1993; McMichael, 2004).

Contributions to Studies in Political Economy

Political science and political economy have seen few studies of organic agriculture in general, and specifically comparisons of the development of the sectors in Canada and the US. Many important aspects of this study of the transformation of the organic sector touch on key issues in studies of political economy, including the role of institutions, the development of public policy and social forms of resistance to the power of capital. The examination of the organic sector in the US and Canada began by critically addressing the question Tracey Clunies-Ross (1990) posed seventeen years ago: ‘can organic farming remain true to its social movement roots while it economically expands?’ The

cooperative relationship between spheres of economic power such as corporations and spheres of political power such as national governments and global economic institutions was argued to be a significant driver of the changes observed in the organic movement and its guiding philosophy. Corporate actors and organizations that represent their interests have had a crucial role in not only standardizing productive processes, but also incorporating organic food into existing national and transnational public policy frameworks. Institutionalizing organic practices has transformed the organic sector from a type of food production that keeps social and economic relations tightly bound together, to one that is premised on divorcing these relationships to improve economic efficiency and to expand markets for organic food to profit from consumer fears over 'tainted food'.

Examining the changing political economy of the organic sector reveals a number of things about wider issues in political economy and the dominance of neo-liberal ideology in the contemporary global economy. Some political economists examining economic globalization have claimed that it has largely been a project led by corporations that seek to, "...facilitate corporate cross border activity by reducing costs of establishing a global network of corporate interaction, while creating a more predictable international environment" (Reinicke, 1999:14). Taking a closer look at the changing structural dynamics of the organic movement shows that corporations have wielded significant power in re-shaping productive processes (industrialization, transnationalization) and shaping policy directions of governments in Canada and the US. Examining the extent of corporatization in the organic sector also supports the claim that as transnational corporate interests grow in particular sectors, formally local production processes are integrated into regional and global production networks (Dicken, 1999; Castells, 2000;

Gereffi and Korezeniewicz, 1994). Once corporate interests are dominant in the policy process, public policy begins to reflect their interests over other interest groups who have less political and economic resources to draw on.

Corporations, however, do not work alone in institutionalizing economic globalization, and patterns of economic development have emerged over time (Helleiner, 1994). National governments have played important roles in liberalizing various sectors of their economies, and handing power over to supranational institutions like the NAFTA and the WTO, which further consolidates corporate power (Cohen, 2007; McBride, 2003; Panitch, 2003; Gill, 1995). Neo-liberalism institutionalized in both the NAFTA and the WTO has influenced policy formation in member countries, and this is also viewed in the organic sector (Hansenclever et al., 1997; Scholte, 1997; Korten, 1995). This is not to say that the state is becoming less relevant in organizing the global economy, as states have cooperated in establishing institutions that help provide global economic stability (Haas, 1990:59), but the transformation of the organic sector does point towards a shift in jurisdictions of the state and its capacity for autonomy in various spheres of the economy. As Castells (2000) and Dicken (1999) argue, space and place are not becoming irrelevant as the power of global institutions grow; they are rather, being reinvented and reconfigured.

In chapter 5, it was argued that the move from the private to public policy is the most significant factor in organic agriculture's political institutionalization, as it shifted from a type of food production that was privately controlled by disaggregated citizen-based groups, to being publicly regulated at local, regional, national and global levels. This study of the changing nature of the organic sector contributes to a better understanding of

how neo-liberal principles, once institutionalized, encourage the harmonization and convergence of regulations through global policy institutions. Though states continue to have some autonomy in the decisions they make, it is clear that once neo-liberalism is incorporated into global political and economic institutions, policy divergence is made more difficult for states to maintain and pursue (Clarkson, 2004). The US' organic food and agriculture policies, developed throughout the 1990s, reflect the desire of US corporations and the US government expand trade through to institutionalizing the corporate approach to organic production. The US, however, has shown a greater degree of autonomy in designing its organic food policies because of its global economic power relative to Canada's. Canada's national organic standard was largely a result of trading partners, such as the US and EU, demanding Canada put its own national organic standard in place (Willer and Yussefi, 2005). Thus, the development of Canadian organic food and agriculture policy was stimulated by the desire of the Canadian government to keep global markets for Canadian organic food exports open and to preserve its standing in the multilateral trading system. So, Canada's national standard reflects a degree of convergence towards the pre-existing standards of other policy regimes, specifically the US.

By looking at the relationship between changing actors and institutional contexts of organic food, we can see how these changes influence the strategies, structure and membership of social movements. The case of the organic movements shows how social movements based on market transactions as the main form of collective action, are vulnerable to cooptation and outside influences that can undermine their original goals of social change. Both supporters and detractors of organic agriculture believed that organic

food would never become part of the mainstream, since it was assumed that the structures and organization of organic production would not converge on conventional production processes because of the guiding philosophy's explicit rejection of conventional economic and political structures, as well as actors (White, 1972; Merrill, 1976). As shown in Chapter 3, under the organic philosophy, the market for organic food products was constructed around keeping social and environmental relations part of the production process. Though originally members of the organic movement viewed the market as a politically neutral institution, and thus used it to create alternative agro-food networks, the early organic movement's basis on market transactions and consumer activism did little to protect it from corporate interests. As Bjarne Pedersen, in his assessment of relying on the market to deliver social goods, notes,

when consumers are entrusted with the responsibility for continued development of sustainable food production, it is necessary to thoroughly examine the ability of the market to drive such development. In this respect, there may be some problems with a pure market model...(Pedersen, 2003:246).

Viewing the market as a "place of opportunities" that can be used to challenge capitalist forms of production is difficult to do when the "imperatives" of the market in a capitalist society are premised on exploitive social and environmental relations (Fridell, 2007:15; Wood, 1999). The market, as thought by some of early organic practitioners that valued independence from the state, was viewed as a place where consumers are able to make their own choices, and thus collectively influence production processes through market activities. Other early supporters of organic agriculture who wanted to revolutionize the entire system of food production, believed that if consumers were given the right information about organic farming and the dangers of industrialized farming,

more people would be willing to make the choice to support organic agriculture and it then would replace industrialized agriculture. Few early organic practitioners would have envisioned the ‘two-tiered’ food system that exists today, with organic food available to those who have enough disposable income to afford it, and ‘cheap food’ from the industrialized food system for everyone else (Hawaleshka, 2004:22). That was not the original intention of the organic movement, but it is the current system that organic food is now a part. Many, in the organic movement’s early days, did not count on the growth of the organic food market in the mainstream would be in response to growing food safety issues in the conventional food sector, and not society’s rejection of industrialized forms of food production. As shown throughout this thesis, the most significant changes in the organic sector are a direct result of corporations incorporating the production and distribution of organic food into the industrialized, globalized system of agro-food.

Tracing the corporatization of the organic sector can also reveal some insights into how other contemporary consumer-based movements may evolve in the context of constitutionalized neo-liberalism. For example, criticisms have surfaced regarding the Fair Trade Movement, and its use of conventional transnational supply chains, suggesting that its activist elements have been co-opted by corporate interests seeking to capitalize on its premium prices (Rice, 2001; Ransom, 2005; Fridell, 2007). The case of the organic movement shows that the market is not a politically neutral institution. Thus, excluding the state as a focus of lobbying and pressure to achieve social change may make social movements more susceptible to corporatization. Though professionalization and institutionalization of social movements presents challenges to keeping a movement responsive to its grassroots principles and members (Tilly, 2004; della Porta and Tarrow,

2005), there is something to be said for the pre-emptive institutionalization of founding principles and norms. Doing so in the early stages of a social movement's development can erect barriers of entry to new members who might seek to change its objectives (Coy and Hedeem, 2005), though in the face of growing corporate power and its privileged position in public policy, institutionalizing principles and values may still have not kept out corporations eager to expand markets and make more profits. Movements that are vulnerable to co-optation because of their orientation towards market activities, must also target political structures and include political goals (policy change) in their instruments of social change if they are to truly mount a resistance to the status quo.

Social Resistance to Industrialized Agriculture

So what does the future hold for organic agriculture now that the organizational basis of the neo-liberal inspired corporate model of production and trade has gained significant ground? A USDA study on the growing market for organic products in the US claims that if consumers do not demand that organic products be environmentally and socially sustainable, as well as healthier and safer, there is a danger that these aspects may be forgone in the production process all together (Dimitri and Richman, 2000:2). Some, in an effort to resist the co-optation of the term organic, have opted for using other words like 'authentic' to describe the qualities of their 'organically grown' products (Merrigan, 2003:280), while others have protested by avoiding national certification schemes all together, relying on the trust-based relationships established through short supply chains (Logsdon, 1993; Seiff, 2005).

Although the power of economic globalization is sometimes viewed as an inevitable and unstoppable force, unique forms of social resistance continue to mount challenges

against the force of globalization (Lipschulz, 1992; Norberg-Hodge, 1996; Ayres, 1998; Guidry et al., 2000; O'Brien et al, 2000). Indeed, there are numerous efforts underway to mount resistance to industrialized agro-food, whether it is conventionally or organically produced. The increased media coverage of global warming and its link to fossil fuel emissions may help to draw public attention to the benefits of localized food systems that require far less fossil fuels than transnational supply chains. Growing public awareness of the connection between environmental degradation and the globalized, industrialized food system may add pressure on governments to rethink the privileged position of industrialized agriculture in public policy, as a growing number of concerned citizens demand political action. The environmental benefits associated with localized food supply chains offer a political challenge to the logic of both conventional and organic food circulating through the industrialized food system.

Some businesses are actively internalizing the social and environmental costs associated with food production in an effort to resist the globalized food system. The main thrust of this thesis is not to show that business in the organic sector is detrimental to keeping the organic philosophy in practice *per se*, but to show that corporate behaviour that is privileged in national policies and trade agreements is the force that fundamentally changed the organization of the organic sector. That being said, some businesses emerging from the organic movement have resisted the corporatizing forces of the globalization and have tried to remain true to the organic philosophy. US-based *Rootabaga Enterprises* (now *CF Fresh*) and Canadian company *Nature's Path* are two organic/natural food businesses that continue to mount a challenge to the corporate organic approach.

Rootabaga Enterprises was established in 1984 in Washington State. In 1989, it merged with *Cascadian Farms* before *Cascadian Farms* was acquired by *General Mills*. President Roger Wechler, with a desire to re-focus on fresh produce, then split from *Cascadian Farms* and created *CF Fresh* in 1993 (CF Fresh, 2007). It has remained quite small compared to other competitors, but *CF Fresh* has based its business model on delivering quality organic food to customers with premium service. Not only is *CF Fresh* focused on keeping its customers satisfied with its products, but it is also conscientious about where it sources its products. The company supplies direct support to the farmers it works with via ‘grower representatives’, which keeps horizontal forms of decision-making intact. These intermediaries provide the growers and farmers with knowledge, expertise and assistance, maintaining direct links between producers and consumers. In addition to *CF Fresh’s* commitment to workers throughout the supply chain, it also supports non-profit organizations like the *Organic Farming Research Foundation*, which helps to support organic farmers, as well as conventional farmers who are transitioning to organic techniques (Dimitri and Richman, 2000:20). *CF Fresh* has been able to co-exist with much larger corporate entities involved in organic food distribution. This business has forgone the financial benefits of being controlled by a TNC, and remains locally based with its original management still controlling the day-to-day activities of *CF Fresh*.

British Columbia-based *Nature’s Path* is another example of a small company that has managed to remain true to the core values of the organic philosophy even as it has expanded. *Nature’s Path* has remained independent since its establishment by Arran and Ratana Stephens in 1985. Arran Stephens comes from a farming background, and is still

the CEO of *Nature's Path* today. *Nature's Path* was born out of the *LifeStream* natural foods line that Stephens began in 1977. Stephens has fought to remain independent, and after *Kraft/Philip Morris* acquired *LifeStream* in 1981, Stephens bought it back in 1995 as *Nature's Path* achieved enough financial success to allow him to do so (Nature's Path, 2007). *Nature's Path* today has facilities in BC and Washington state, sourcing most of its products as locally as possible. Although *Nature's Path* is the largest distributor of organic cereals in North America, Stephens has remained an active member of civil society joining forces with *the Council of Canadians* to speak out against GMOs in the food system and the corporate consolidation of the agro-food sector in North America (Council of Canadians, 2005). Although the corporate organic philosophy has gained momentum as consumer demand increases for organically grown products, both *CF Fresh* and *Nature's Path* show that it is possible for businesses to function in the organic sector that attempt to include progressive social principles in business activities.

In addition to businesses fighting to maintain a place for the organic philosophy in the corporatized organic sector, members of civil society have adjusted their tactics to promoting local agro-food chains as the most socially, environmentally and economically sustainable way to produce food, and the most effective way of mounting a challenge to the industrial agro-food system (Steele, 1995; Lang and Heasman, 2005; McMichael, 2003). Organic is still promoted because of its contribution to reducing the use of synthetic chemicals in food production, but local production networks are now deemed to be the best way to achieve food sustainability and security in order to fight corporatization of the food system.

Local NGOs with a focus on food issues have actively campaigned on a platform that links a number of food issues. Food policy networks, such as those in Toronto, and Vancouver in Canada as well as in the UK, work to develop policy options that link food sustainability and security by promoting the re-localization of agro-food chains (Friedmann, 2007:392). Some members of food policy networks, like Toronto-based *FoodShare* and Vancouver-based *FarmFolk/CityFolk* (FFCF), work with the community by hosting public forums, supporting farmer's markets and distributing information to promote local systems of production, which it sees as the best means of achieving food security and sustainability over practicing organic production methods.

FFCF is a firm supporter of organic agriculture, but believes that mounting a social challenge to the industrialized agro-food system is by far the best way to reconnect the social, environmental and economic spheres of agricultural production (FFCF, 2007). Localized agro-food chains that include re-establishing trust-based relationships as well as eating in season, are viable ways to challenge the industrialized agro-food system. One of the most important aspects of FFCF work is that it goes beyond merely promoting the consumption of sustainably produced food, to also supporting producers and lobbies for policy change at the local and provincial level. It is essential, if socially and environmentally sustainable agriculture is to mount a challenge the status quo, that its supporters present viable policy options to governments insisting that community members have an active role in policy design; and above all, not relying on 'conscious consumption' as only means of achieving social change in the agro-food sector.

In this section some strategies that continue to challenge the market logic of neo-liberalism and its influence on organization of the global agro-food system have been

examined. While ethical businesses are important, policy change should remain one of the most important aspects about contemporary food issue movements. Groups like the National Farmer's Union support sustainable agriculture and organic agriculture (although not exclusively), and have presented policy documents to various levels of government outlining the promise of sustainable agriculture as the only option that will support farmers and the environment in the future (NFU, 2005). Localizing agro-food systems is now viewed as the best way to reconnect the social and economic relations that are lost through industrializing processes, while reducing food production's impact on the environment (Friedmann, 2007). The key to a sustainable food system that guarantees the security and safety of the food supply in addition to maintaining communities is, as J. Ann Ticker suggests, "... changing our relationship with nature... [Only then] can real security, for both our natural environment and its human inhabitants be assured" (Tickner, 1993:66).

This conclusion has examined some of the major themes of this thesis, its contributions to studies in political economy and prospects for resistance against the industrialized agro-food system. By showing how organic production processes were institutionalized and transnationalized, this thesis has attempted to show that some of the most important aspects of the traditional organic philosophy, such as fair labour practices and localized supply chains, have already lost their standing as vital elements of organic agriculture as corporate interests have colonized the organic movement in the US and Canada. One of the major lessons we can learn from examining the changing political economy of the organic movement is that relying on the market as the primary means for social change puts adherence to substantive goals at risk when neo-liberalism is

privileged in the institutions that govern the economy. This conclusion has shown that there are various ways of combating and resisting economic globalization from the 'bottom up' by promoting sustainability through localized agro-food chains and engaging in the political process. Thus, moving beyond 'organic' may in fact be the only way of presenting a viable challenge to the globalized, industrialized food system.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: TIME LINE OF CORPORATE INVOLVEMENT IN THE ORGANIC/'NATURAL' FOOD SECTOR 1984-2007

Year	Strategies/#	Details
2007	Merger bid	-WholeFoods Markets makes bid for Wild Oats Markets
2006	Acquisition-1	-SunOpta acquired Purity Life Health Products
	Brand Introduction-3	-ConAgra introduced PAM organic -Kellogg introduced Keebler Organic and Kellogg's Organic
2005	Acquisitions-6	-Cadbury-Schweppes acquired Green and Black's -Charterhouse Inc. acquired Rudi's Organic Bakery, and significant equity in The Vermont Bread Co. -Hain Celestial acquired Spectrum Organic Products -Monsanto acquired Seminis (major breeder of conventional and organic seeds) -United Natural Foods acquired Roots & Fruits -Homegrown Naturals acquired Annie's Naturals
		Brand Introduction-4
	Strategic Alliances-1	Hain Celestial forged strategic alliance with Yeo Hiap Seng (Asia)
2004	Acquisitions-8	-Cadbury-Schweppes acquired Nantucket Nectar -Dean Foods- acquired of Horizon Dairy -Hain-Celestial acquired JASON products, Harry's Snacks (1) and Kineret (1) -Heinz acquired Linda McCartney Vegetarian Foods (2) -Kraft acquired Balance Bars -SunOpta acquired full equity of Organic Ingredients Inc. (dist.) -Whole Foods Markets acquired Fresh & Wild (UK) (supermarket)
		Acquisitions-10
2003	Brand Introduction-3	-Campbell's introduced Campbell's Organic -PepsiCo introduced Tostitos Organic -UniLever introduced Ben and Jerry's Organic
	Strategic Alliances-1	-Hain-Celestial forged a strategic alliance with Cargill
	Acquisitions-9	-American Capital acquired Coleman Natural Products -Booth Creek acquired Petaluma Poultry -Cadbury-Schweppes acquired Hanson Natural -Dean Foods acquired White Wave/Silk -Hain-Celestial acquired Imagine Foods, Rice Dream and Soy-Dream -SunOpta acquired Wild West and Simply Organic
2002	Partial Equity-1	-Solera gained significant equity in Homegrown Naturals
	Brand Introduction-2	-HJ Heinz introduced Heinz Organic -Whole Foods Market introduced '365 Everyday Organic Value' line
	Strategic Alliances-1	-Cargill forged a strategic alliance with French Meadow
2001	Acquisitions-7	-Coca Cola acquired Odwalla Organics

Year	Strategies/#	Details
		-Hain-Celestial acquired Friti De Bosco, Millina's Finest, Mountain Sun, Yves Veggie Cuisine (CAN), Shari Ann's and Lima (BEL)
	Partial Equity-1	-Groupe Danone acquired partial equity (40%) in Stoney Field Farms
	Brand Intro-3	-Dole introduced Dole Organic -Loblaws introduced President's Choice Organics -Tyson introduced Nature's Farms brand name
2000	Acquisitions-13	-Kraft acquired Boca Burger -Hain Food Group acquired Celestial Seasonings -ConAgra acquired Fakin' Bakin, Light Life, Foney Baloney, Gimme Lean, Smart Dogs, Smart Menu Strips and International Home Foods -Kellogg acquired Kashi -Whole Foods Market acquired Food 4 Thought Natural Food Market and Deli -UniLever acquired Best Foods and Ben&Jerry's -Homegrown Naturals acquired Fantastic Foods (renamed Fantastic World Foods)
1999	Acquisitions-12	HJ HEINZ invested \$100 million in Hain Food Group (20%) -Dean Foods acquired Alta Dena and Organic Cow of Vermont -Hain Food Group acquired BreadStop, Casbah, Earth's Best, Health Valley and West Soy -General Mills acquired Cascadian Farms, and Muir Glen -Kellogg acquired Morning Star Farms and Worthington Foods -Tanimura and Antle acquired Earth Bound Farms
	Brand Intro-1	Muir Glen introduced Sunrise Organic
1998	Acquisitions-5	Hain Food Group acquired Terra Chips, Deboles, Garden of Eatin and Arrowhead Mills -Heinz acquired Nile Spice
1997	Acquisitions-5	-Hain Food Group acquired Bearitos, Little Bear and Westbrae -M&M Mars acquired Seeds of Change -General Mills acquired Small Planet Foods
	Brand Intro-1	Gerber (subsidiary of Novartis) introduced Tender Harvest
1996	Acquisition-1	-Wild Oats acquired Capers Community Markets (BC)
1995	Brand Intro-1	-General Mills introduced Gold Medal Organic brand
1994	Acquisition-1	-Smuckers acquired After the Fall
1989	Acquisition-1	-Smuckers acquired Santa Cruz Organic
1987	Acquisition-1	-Nestle acquired Arrowhead Water
1984	Acquisition-1	-Smuckers acquired RW Knuden
	Merger -1	-Earthbound Farms merged with Mission Ranches (CAL)
1981	Acquisition-1	Kraft/Philip Morris acquired LifeStream (CAN)
1980	Merger-1	-Safer Way Natural Foods & Clarksville Natural Grocer merged to form Whole Foods Market in Austin, Texas

1. Listed in Brand names at Hain Celestial Website-date of acquisition unknown

2. Listed on HJ Heinz website, date of acquisition unknown

3. See Glover, 2005.

4. As listed in Sligh and Christman, 2003.

Hearty & Natural was acquired by Stake Technologies (*SunOpta*) perhaps in 2002.

Sources: Chart compiled from information in Howard, "Organic Industry Structure, August 2006"; Sligh and Christman, 2003; Glover 2005; Draffan, 2004; Organic Monitor, 2005a, 2005b, 2006 WholeFoods website, *SunOpta* Annual Report, 2003, Hain Celestial 2006b; OCA, 2007.

**APPENDIX 2: TOP TEN CONVENTIONAL GLOBAL FOOD RETAILERS:
INVESTMENT IN ORGANIC AGRO-FOOD**

Retailers (Alphabetical Order)	Carry Organic Products	Date of organic product introduction
Ahold (NL) †	Yes	199?
Aldi (GER)	Yes	Date unknown
Carrefour (FRA)	Yes	1999-No GMOs on shelves
Ito-Yokado (JA)	Yes	1996
Kroger (USA)	Yes	2003
Metro (GER)	Yes	1996
Rewe (GER)	Yes	1988
Schwarz (GER)	N/A	N/A
Tesco (UK)	Yes	1992-No GMOs on shelves
Wal-Mart (USA)	Yes	2006

† indicates nationality of ownership (home nation)

N/A- information not available

Sources: Lang et al., 2006; Howard, 2005; Glover, 2005; Draffin, 2004
Organic Monitor website

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