

# When a farmer grows for the people (s)he knows

*Exploring enabling and hampering factors farmers encounter  
in direct marketing channels*



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## Acknowledgements

This master thesis, the final part of my study Sustainable Development – Environmental Governance at Utrecht University, is about farmers that sell their food directly to customers. Food and farmers; two of my favourite subjects. In the past years I have had a variety of practical experience with food (I like to eat) and farming (I like to work on a farm once in while and grow my own food). It was great to work and explore these subjects from a scientific perspective. It took me a bit longer to start this thesis project. I felt a bit rushed and insecure about this sometimes. But perhaps it is often not so bad that things take more time. As my father often says to me: what you carefully sow now, you will harvest to the fullest later.

The last years in Utrecht have been great since I met many new friends, got many new insights in the world (of sustainability), and again, met many new friends. Now I am particularly looking forward to the period ahead of me: new things and new plans, and a brighter head. I said to many people that I will become a nicer person when this thesis project is over. Well, I'd better start living up to that promise.

But first, I want to thank all the respondents that I have spoken to. I am very glad that fourteen farmers have entrusted me with their experiences and thoughts, and enabled me to perform this research. Thanks Mendel for having confidence (in me) and the nice talks.

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## Summary

Consumers are increasingly more interested in the origin and quality of their foods. Food scandals, sustainability issues, an unjust position of the farmer and lost connection between farmer and consumer have propelled the interest in local produced, marketed and consumed foods in the Netherlands. Local food is often seen as part of a food system in which there is little geographical and/or relational distance between the production, distribution and consumption of foods. Direct marketing channels are often seen as part of a local food system. Farmers may choose to offset products directly in order to regain contact with customer and get a better price for the product. Despite this popularity and growing attention to local food, however, marketing is often appointed as a bottleneck within local food systems. The direct marketing of local food (i.e. with little relational distance) is often seen as less performing or less professional or less developed compared to other marketing channels. Yet literature study reveals that limited in-depth and empirical knowledge is available on the mechanisms underlying the hampering functioning of marketing channels, especially for the Netherlands. This study aims to get a better understanding on what issues farmers encounter in marketing their products directly to urban customers. Within the studies that are available, local food marketing is often seen as one type of marketing, while in practice many different varieties of local food marketing are present. According to Tregear (2011) this aggregation of different types of food marketing may lead to invalid conclusion regarding (direct) local food marketing. Therefore this research attempts to make a clear distinction between different types of direct marketing channels. It aims to contribute to the scientific debate on direct local food marketing in general, but moreover to the limited empirical knowledge that is available on direct local food marketing in the Netherlands. The research question is: What are enabling and hampering factors for farmers selecting and using specific direct marketing channels in urban areas? To answer this question, the study performs an exploratory qualitative research and consists of in-depth case study approach.

The theoretical part of this study consists of establishing a guiding conceptual framework for mapping the different marketing channels and detecting enabling and hampering factors. The framework is the guiding basis for the case study analysis. Local food literature reveals the following six marketing channels: farmers' market, farm sales, Internet sales and delivery, buying groups, box schemes and community supported agriculture (CSA). For getting a more in-depth understanding on the six direct marketing channels the researcher developed a conceptual framework based on the heuristics commonly used in marketing literature: Marketing Mix and business Model Canvas. The conceptual framework consist of the following characterizing elements: the type product and the value for its customer, customer relation, distribution and consumption junction (the place of product exchange), farm characteristics, farmers characteristics and activities, collaboration, and context. Acknowledging all these different elements with the different business that, different enabling and inhibiting may occur in within these elements.

For the empirical part of this study, fourteen farmers were (purposefully) selected and approached for an in-depth interview on the factors they experience. The fourteen farmers employ all different marketing channels, and each marketing channel type is at least represented by four farmers. Systematic analyses of the interviews reveal a wide variety of appointed enabling and inhibiting factors. Farmers using similar types of marketing channel (although arranged differently) are not conclusive about what factors are enabling or inhibiting them in their marketing activities. The effort of positioning the factors in the framework reveals that factors relate to the different characterizing elements of the framework. Yet, respondents may have different perspectives and experiences regarding those elements. Sometimes factors relate to specific themes (often related to element). The farmers are most conclusive about the fact that they feel generally supported by the increased current attention.

Further research is necessary to get more in depth understanding on the factors, i.e. to what factors are most pressing, and which are perhaps less urgent. The results show that specific characteristics of a marketing channel (e.g. the product, or the type of consumption junction, etc), and related themes (e.g. trust, convenience, etc) are relevant aspects to consider when studying marketing activities. One should be clear about these aspects in order to understand the factors that are enabling or hampering. This is because the marketing channels are so differently arranged, and include different or overlapping elements with other marketing channels.

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# Abbreviations, tables and figures

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## List of Abbreviations

BMC	Business Model Canvas
CBS	Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek (Statistics Netherlands)
CSA	Community Supported Agriculture
FAO	Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations
LEI	Landbouw Economisch Instituut (Agricultural Economics Institute)
PBL	Planbureau voor de Leefomgeving (Netherlands Environmental Assessment Agency)
PYO	Pick your own
RLI	Raad voor de Leefomgeving en Infrastructuur (Council for the Environment and Infrastructure)
SFSC	Short food supply chain
VWA	Voedsel en Waren Autoriteit (Netherlands Food and Consumer Product Safety Authority)
WUR	Wageningen University and Research Centre

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# 1 Introduction

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## 1.1 Background

This document comprises a report on enabling and hampering<sup>1</sup> factor that farmers<sup>2</sup> experience in offsetting their products directly to customers in urban areas. Traditionally farmers sold their produced food to inhabitants of cities and towns nearby (Steel 2013). Yet, the rapid industrial and agriculture development (in western countries) changed this picture radically during the 20th century. In the last 60 years food production and distribution are modernized due to developments in transport, freezing foods and communication, the developments of fertilizers and pesticides the internationalization of markets, and the development of mass retailing (Aubry and Kebir 2013; Hingley et al. 2011, p.342; Lamine et al. 2012). It became possible to get product from distant places, and also to produce products for distant places. As a result, we rely currently mostly on a conventional food and agriculture system that is characterized by global commodity chains, mechanization, and a specialized and standardized of food production, processing, distribution and trading (Hingley et al. 2011, p.342; Lamine et al. 2012). Also in the Netherlands, it is most common that cities are supplied with a variety of products that originates from various places of the world. The other way around, farmers around the cities nearly stopped to supply these urban areas with food, but mostly sell their products to distributors of retail chains (PBL 2013).

This conventional system has propelled food yield, yet it is a major contributor to environmental, oil, food, societal and financial crises, and therefore threatening a sustainable food future (FAO 2011; Rockstrom 2009 p.472). Within the Dutch context, the political, economical, social and financial situations call for fundamental questions about the future of agriculture (PBL 2013; RLI 2013). The agricultural sector, including the food trade, is of major importance for the Dutch economy (CBS 2012; RLI 2008). Yet, the Dutch agriculture sector is associated with high CO2 emissions, inefficiency with nutrients, food scandals, plagues and (animal) deceases, which revealed (PBL 2013; RLI 2013). Due to the increased efficiency within agricultural production and up scaling, the amount of farmers has considerably decreased; from 410.000 in 1950 to 70.390 in 2011. Yet it has become more difficult for farmers to get a just income. A decreasing share of the value of the products reaches the farmer because of the powerful position of the retailers. Farmers have to produce for a rather low price. Yet the high food quality standards of retailers and increasing production costs, leaves the farmer in a perilous (financial) position (Renting and Wiskerke 2010). The farmer is also confronted with a more industrial type of work.

More stakeholders in society (be it farmers, consumers, politicians etc) are confronted with the unfolding crises and the interest in developing other ways of food provisioning systems is increasing (Zwartkruis et al. 2011, p1-2). One can see roughly two paradigms in which the future of food is discussed: either improving the conventional system or developing alternative food systems (Wiskerke 2010). Locally produced and distributed foods are often seen as part of an alternative food system, in which there is little geographical and/or relational distance between the production, distribution and consumption of foods. Locally produced and marketed food has become more popular in recent years (Alkon 2008; Feenstra 2002; Foodmonitor 2012; PBL 2013). Farmers, organizations and consumers developed various ways in supply local foods within cities (PBL 2013; Schmidt et al. 2011). Examples of local food channels are direct sales on farms, farmers markets or community-supported agriculture (CSA) (WUR n.d.; Tippins, Rassuli and Hollander 2002). Such systems are associated with the purpose of cutting food miles (shortening the transport distance from production to consumption) and alleviating environmental problems related with the intensified, specialized, standardized and long-distance food supply chains. From a social point of view local food systems may aim to strengthening ethical and social capital, strengthening local economies, producing diverse and high quality product, alleviating the powerless position of farmers in the food chain (offering a better price). Furthermore local food is commonly seen as a way to provide in healthy and safe food (as a reaction on animal disease outbreaks) and recreate trust in food

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<sup>1</sup> In this research the term 'enabling' also refers to 'fostering': they are interchangeable. The same accounts for 'hampering' and 'inhibiting'.

<sup>2</sup> This research uses the term farmer for persons that perform some kind of agriculture to get an income. The term encompasses all types e.g. dairy farmers, gardeners, arable farmers and livestock farmers.

(no food from anonymous origin) (Feenstra 2002; Friedmann 2007; Geyfang 2006, p.386; Halweil 2002, p.342; Hingley et al. 2011; Jarosz 2008; Lamine et al. 2012; Renting and Wiskerke 2010; Van der Schans 2010, p40).

Some argue that local food is not a viable solution for the problems in the food chain for instance based on arguments that (1) local food can never feed the world, (2) the lack of efficiency, (3) local food tends to be exclusive available for rich urban people, and (4) local food is not necessarily more sustainable (e.g. still leads to high CO<sub>2</sub> emissions) (Colley 2008; Tregear 2011). The 'conventional' and 'alternative/local' paradigms are often discussed in polarizing ways. Renting and Wiskerke (2010) mention that the paradigms offer an extreme in which hybrids may occur. This study focuses on direct marketing channels that is seen as part of local food, however it does not aim to take a stand on whether local produced food is better than food from the 'conventional' system. It follows the idea that conventional and local food systems can complement each other in addressing sustainability issues, and sees value in studying both. This study chooses to look into local food, because several political and civil actions aimed to strengthen local food for more than a decade, yet the proportion of local food is still small (LEI 2012).

## 1.2 Understanding local food and direct marketing channels

There is no consensus on how local food should be defined (Blake et al., 2010; King et al., 2010 p.2; Matson et al. 2013). Subsequently, there exist several inter-related concepts regarding local food. For instance, *local food* is seen as food that is produced, processed, retailed and consumed food within the boundaries of a defined geographical area (Balazs 2012; Hand and Martinez 2010; Katchova and Woods 2013). This *geographical proximity* is however differently interpreted (Hand and Martinez 2010, p1). Some argue that food produced, distributed and consumed within 50 miles is local; others consider a whole region or a country as local (Matson et al. 2013, p.7). As Geyfang (2006) points out 'it will vary from produce to product, and the construction of local is both socially and culturally specific and fluid over time and space' (p.386). This is in line with Matson et al. (2013, p.7): '[...] local food may depend on both what food item you are discussing and where you are located. It may not be possible to have one definition that fits all circumstances. So local food should have a "flexible" definition that relies not only on the distance from which products are sourced, but also where the product itself was produced and how extensive a system is required to get it to the consumer.'

Local is also related to *relational proximity*. This concept concerns the amount of intermediaries involved to get the food from 'field' to 'fork'. Related to this is the concept of Short Food Supply Chains (SFSCs), which is often conveyed as a supply chain<sup>3</sup> that aims at shortening the relation between food production and consumption by limiting the amount of intermediaries involved (King et al. 2010, p.6). Local food supply chains are also commonly understood to function with rather few intermediaries, linked by relative solid trading partner relationships and are characterized by a high 'degrees of trust and information sharing' (King et al. 2010, p.6). This does not necessarily require a certain degree of geographical proximity (Hand and Martinez 2010, p2.). King et al. (2010, p.v) describes three routes to supply foods: (1) mainstream or conventional channels (supplied through long chain with several intermediaries), (2) direct marketing or (3) intermediated marketing (with one or two intermediaries). The latter two are mostly seen as food with *strong* relation proximity, i.e. the amount intermediaries are cut down to a minimum. To circumvent the issues of geographical and organizational proximity, this study follows the same approach of local food as Low and Vogel (2011): 'local food is based on the set of marketing channels (from farm gate to the consumer) used by farmers. Thus, direct-to-consumer and intermediated (direct-to-grocer/restaurant) food sales' (p.1). This study only regards direct (shorter term for 'direct-to-consumer') marketing channels<sup>4</sup>. Those have a high relational proximity in the sense that farmers directly sell their products to their customers<sup>5</sup>. The geographical distance is usually also short, but is not a specific aspect of this research.

## 1.3 Problem definition and relevance

This research aims to address multiple problems. With the increased demand for local food, especially in urban areas, the marketing of local food is in motion and many new direct and indirect local food initiatives have been developed in the past decade (PBL 2013). There is a societal need to further develop and further

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<sup>3</sup> A supply chain is 'the set of processes, trading partner relationships, and transactions that delivers a product from the producer to the consumer' (King et al 2010, p.6).

<sup>4</sup> In the remainder of this report the term 'marketing channel' refers to 'direct marketing channels'.

<sup>5</sup> The term 'customer' and 'consumer' are interchangeable in this report.

professionalize local food production, marketing and consumption (PBL 2013, RLI 2013). However, within local food, marketing is often appointed as a bottleneck for further development (Sint 2011; King et al. 2010). Yet, there is limited empirical knowledge available on *why* marketing is a bottleneck. Local food studies that are available (1) are mostly concerned with the concept of 'locality' considered from different theoretical (political, social movements or governance) perspectives (e.g. DuPuis and Goodman 2005; Wiskerke 2010), (2) describe the phenomenon or definition of local food (e.g. Kneafsey 2010; Tregear 2011) and (3) research the beneficial or unfavourable impact of local food (e.g. Colley 2008; DeLind 2011; Macias 2008). Marketing channels, and the mechanisms of its functioning, have been only limited at the focal point of studies. Some international research is available on marketing channels (e.g. King et al. 2010; Tippins, Rassuli and Hollander 2002). Yet, the development of many of marketing channels is a challenge for the researchers that study them, because those channels exist in different forms with different aims and originate from multiple needs and perspectives (Balazs 2012, p.405; Feenstra 2002; Tregear 2011). Often the different types of local food marketing are seen as one type of marketing; as one alternative to 'conventional' marketing. However the conclusions of the studies tend to disregard the diversity among the marketing (Tregear 2011). In other studies some of these different types of direct marketing are studied separately (e.g. farmers' markets by Schoutsen et al. 2010, and CSA by Seyfang 2006). But none have considered multiple marketing channels in one study. As far as the researcher is aware of, no study was published that includes different direct marketing channels in the Netherlands.

#### 1.4 Research aim

In this context this research perceives a need to get further understanding on the functioning of different direct marketing channels, and what this implies for farmers. It aims to identify hampering and enabling factors of different direct local food marketing channels in urban areas by means of an in-depth analysis of the experiences of farmers in employing these marketing channels. The diversity of the marketing channels is explicitly acknowledged, and instead of seeing them as one 'alternative' compared to conventional (inline with Tregear's critique). The factors that are shown may offer opportunity to compare between the different channels. This study aims to reveal if and what factor experienced by farmers differ along the different marketing channels.

As mentioned previously, it is a relatively new topic in academic research: hardly any studies or data can be found on this, particularly for the Netherlands. The approach in this research is therefore mostly exploratory. Focal point of exploratory design is 'the discovery of ideas and insights' (Churchill 1976, p.60). It is descriptive in the sense that it aims to identify hampering and enabling factors in the different marketing channels for farmers and to describe the *relationship or mechanism* between factor and channels. It is by no means the purpose to search for cause and effects relations (Churchill and Iacobucci 2002). This study consists of an in-depth case study approach, to get a better understanding on what issues farmers encounter in marketing their products directly to urban customers. The research serves mostly scientific purposes; nevertheless the results of the research are likely to lead to recommendation for farmers as well.

#### 1.5 Research questions, scope and limitations

The following research question is formulated: *What are enabling and hampering factors for farmers selecting and using specific direct marketing channels in urban areas?*

The following sub questions are formulated:

- a. What direct marketing routes have farmers developed to market local food?
- b. In what elements of marketing can enabling and hampering factors be detected?
- c. What are enabling and hampering factors within the marketing channels according to farmers, and why?
- d. Are there indications that the enabling and hampering factors vary between the diverse set of specific marketing channels?

This study regards direct marketing channels in which food may be produced outside or at the periphery of the city, but is consumed within the city. Note that only the relational distance is of relevance, the geographical distance is not included as criteria. Jarosz (2008) mentions that especially urban areas create higher demand of local food. To include marketing channels with a similar type of customer or market, the urban context is an important scoping characteristic of this research. The offering of services on the farm like care or tourism are not included as output, although they may be associated factors. It should be noted that consumers (the

'demand') are also an important player within local food, since they are the ones who buy it at a particular marketing channel. To get local food, usually consumers need to buy that at other places (e.g. at the farm or farmer market) then supermarkets, where they buy most of their foods. This may require more effort of the consumer (transport, time). Also consumers often need to pay higher prices. Although acknowledging the importance of the consumer perspective, it is not studied in this research. One of the reasons this perspective is excluded is that if consumers would be researched, it would be necessary to include a large amount of consumers to gather robust evidence from urban areas, while this is likely to limit the 'deepness' of this research. Yet 'in-depth' knowledge is the aim of the research. Furthermore, a more pragmatic reason, it is not feasible to include also the consumer perspective due the limited amount of time available.

## 1.6 Research steps and outline of thesis

The research questions are guiding the research steps as well as the outline of this thesis. This research will mostly employ a *qualitative case study* method. The first part of the research aims to get an understanding of local food marketing and consists mainly of desk research. It addresses sub questions *a* and *b* by employing literature sources, however also consults grey literature available on websites and other media sources because of the limit scientific knowledge available. This is a deductive approach in the sense that existing literature, knowledge and data are used to set a frame of what happens in marketing local food (Blaikie 2007; Ragin 1994). Literature on *marketing* and *local food* is used (research perspectives). Marketing is a major research field that may add to the limited knowledge available of local food (e.g. Churchill and Iacobucci, 2002). This part will end with a conceptual framework in which the different direct marketing channels are mapped (sub question *a*), and reveals elements in which possible inhibiting and fostering factors can be detected (sub question *b*). The resulting conceptual framework is not a theory or meant to *test* empirical findings, but aims to provide *guidance* in structuring the interviews with farmers (for detecting the factors, see chapter 3) and the analysis (Yin 1981, pp.60-64). There is still flexibility in modifying the topics within the framework during the research process. The conceptual framework is discussed in chapter 2.

The second part of this research consists of an empirical case study. This case study research design involves in-depth semi structured interviews with several farmers that market their products directly to consumers. To understand the different factors farmers experience within the diverse marketing channels, it is important that the selected farmers represent different direct marketing channels that are identified in chapter 2. Of each type of marketing channel at least four farmers are selected. Due to this purposeful selection it is not possible to give a representation of the population (see also Gerring 2007, p.112). The empirical research design is more in-depth discussed in chapter 3.

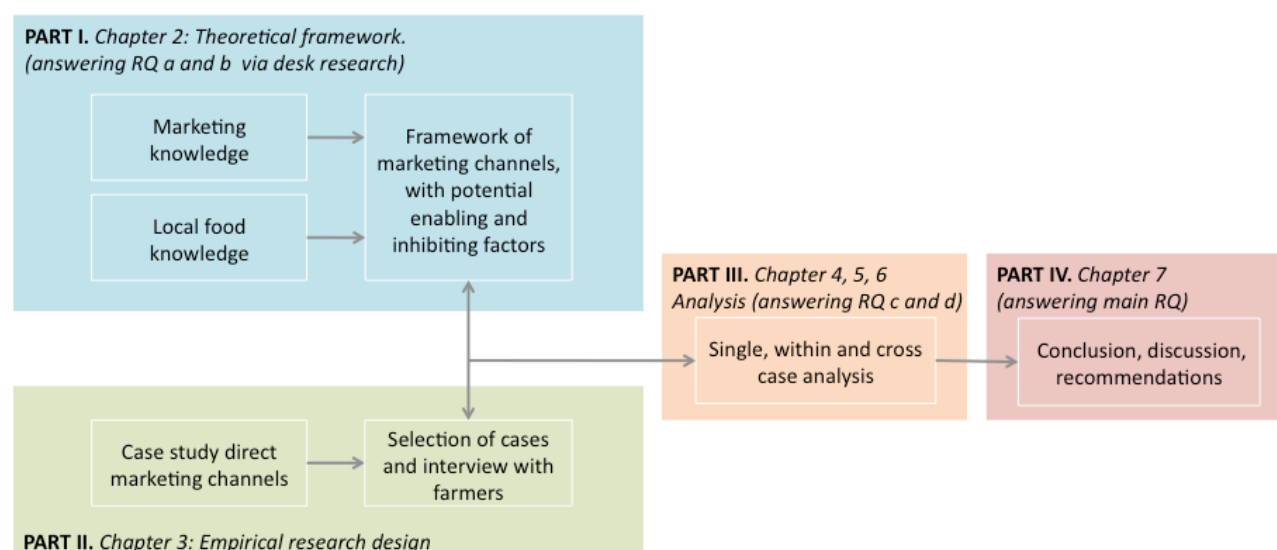


Figure 1.1 Schematic overview of research steps and thesis outline

The third part, chapter 4, 5 and 6, discusses the results of the empirical case study and deals with the sub questions *c* and *d*. The outcomes are descriptive. Chapter 4 consists of a case by case analysis of factors that are appointed by the farmers. Chapter 5 describes the results of a within analysis, in which the factors appointed *within similar types* of marketing channels are studied. In chapter 6 a cross analysis is performed to see what can be said about the factors appoint *across the different types* of marketing channels. The research will end with a conclusion, discussion, and recommendations in chapter 7. The steps and outline is schematically displayed in figure 1.1.

## 2 Conceptual framework

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This chapter aims to shed light on direct food marketing from a literature perspective. As mentioned in section 1.6 two research perspectives are included. Available international local food literature gives insight in which ways direct marketing may occur. Section 2.1 illustrates six different types of direct marketing channels from a local food literature perspective. Section 2.2 introduces marketing perspectives that may provide understanding in what different elements key to marketing activities. The elements are at the basis of the conceptual framework. In order to foster a systematic analysis of different types of marketing channels, the six marketing channels are mapped within the framework in section 2.3. In the empirical part of this study the framework is used as guidance to gather insight on enabling and hampering factors, and to analyse the results. To explain how this is done, section 2.4 places possible factors (detected in -grey- literature) into the framework.

### 2.1 Local food literature perspective: six marketing channels

With regard to direct marketing channels, often a distinction is made between farmers markets, farm sales, Internet selling, box schemes, CSAs and buying groups (Tippins et al. 2002). In this section the different types of marketing channels are briefly portrayed from a local food literature perspective. The description of the marketing channels is indicative and not absolute.

**Farmers' markets.** Martinez et al. (2010) define farmers markets as 'a common area where several farmers gather on a recurring basis to sell a variety of fresh fruits, vegetables and other farm products directly to consumers' (p.5). Schoutsen et al. (2010) described farmers markets as a place where (1) a farmer/producer sells his/her products, (2) no factory products are sold, (3) no fresh products can be sold by merchants, and (4) only additional range of dry products can be sold by merchants. Farmers market's can be solitary or connected to another regular market. Schoutsen et al., (2010) argue that there is no one single kind of farmers market: there are markets focussed on organic products or more on local products. Often markets are initiated by farmers or entrepreneurs, while others are initiated by consumers or local governments (Schoutsen et al. 2010). Some are organized as associations or foundations, but others have no formal structure at all. Most farmers markets are based in cities (Schoutsen et al. 2010, p.9). To attract customers, farmers at farmers' markets usually aim to provide a variety of products. So the multiple farmers present may compliment the assortment. This requires some cooperation between the different stallholders. Farmers' markets are often a main source of income for small-scale farmer that sell at such markets (Schoutsen et al. 2010, p.21). The face-to-face exchange seems to facilitate information exchange on food and the production (e.g. Milestad et al. 2010). In 2011 there were around 45 farmers markets in the Netherlands (WUR n.d., p.65).

**Farm sales.** Farmers can also sell food directly at their farms to consumers. Usually farmers sell their own products, but they may sell products of other (neighbouring) farms as well. Typically family members of the farm help selling within this scheme (Tippins et al. 2002). It can be a stall alongside the road or a shop on the farmyard (Martinez 2010). Some farmers also create Pick Your Own (PYO) schemes (Martinez 2010). Within PYO, consumers are allowed to access the farmers' field to select and harvest products they want to purchase. In the Netherlands, more farmers sell food at their farms as means to gain an extra income. This especially accounts for multifunctional farmers, which are farms that offer also other activities at their farm (e.g. care farms) (LEI 2013 p.5). Farm selling may reduce the transportation and transaction costs for farmers (Tippins et al. 2002). For consumers, a farm visit is commonly not only for the shopping, but also for the experience of being at the farm: the trip to the farm is also for leisure (WUR n.d.). Having consumers around on the farm, influences the labour activities of the farmer. Welcoming consumers, and exchanging information is becoming more important. It also means that sometimes, the working process will be a bit more fragmented and distract from core farming activities (Van Boxtel and Schlaman 2008). PYO schemes can be helpful to lower the product prices, resulting in a higher income without the need to perform labour and distribution (Tippins et al. 2002). In line with that, PYO is especially interesting for crops that require a high amount of labour (Martinez 2010).

**Internet sales / delivery.** In line with the above, it is also possible for farmers to sell through an Internet web shop. Usually web shops need to have a rather big assortment of product to be interesting for consumers (Van

Boxtel and Schlaman 2008). If farmers want to fulfil this need, either a broad assortment needs to be produced, or cooperate with other farmers. Often in combination with Internet selling is the home delivery of products (Ibid.).

**Buying groups.** Another marketing channel is buying groups (common synonyms are consumer co-ops, or food co-ops), in which a group of consumers collectively purchase food from a supplier or farmer (Little 2010 p.1798; Sustain 2014). It works generally as follows: a farmer presents what products it has to offer to the buying group members. Regularly a coordinator of the group (usually a consumer, but it can be the farmer as well) gathers the individual ordering of the consumer member (often through Internet), and sets out an order to the farmer. When the food is ordered, the food is delivered at a pick up point, where members of the group gather to split it into 'individual orders' (Little 2010 p.1806). Buying groups are limitedly studied, and if so, usually studied from a social movement or grassroots action perspective (Little 2010 pp.1798-1799). Most regularly consumers are the initiators (as described above), however also farmers looking for opportunities to market their product (or even shop owners) can initiate the formation of a buying group (Ibid. p.1802). Nevertheless the role of the consumer is central in such groups (Ibid. p.1805). One of the most common aims of buying groups is to gain affordable access to local (and often quality) food and to tackle distribution issues (interesting for both consumer and farmer) (Little 2010, p.1804). In the Netherlands more and more buying groups are active (see also Aseed 2014).

**Community Supported Agriculture.** Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) is a type of marketing in which there is a long-term relationship of joint support and commitment between farmers and its consumers. The consumers, also called 'community members', usually pay the farmer a seasonal membership fee at forehand (so prices are set in advance) to cover the production costs, which ensures the farmer with a secure income and capital (Lamine 2005). In return, members receive a recurring amount of the harvest during the year. CSA often sell vegetables, but sometimes also provide in milk, eggs or meat (Schrijver 2006). CSAs can be (1) farmer managed, meaning that the farmer organizes it by him self, and he makes all the decisions, (2) farmer led, or (3) deliberated between consumers and farmers (Ibid). In the Netherlands there are not so many CSAs present (Schrijver 2006, p.24). Farmers are more or less required to produce a variety of crops in order to be able to supply the community members. CSA structures can also work with pick your own schemes. An important motive for farmers choosing CSA is that the risks of a not so good harvest are shared among the members (Lamine 2005; Schrijver 2006). In the Netherlands there are only a limited amount of CSA farms, compared to USA and Belgium (Otters 2008; Schrijver 2006).

**Box scheme.** A box scheme is (usually) a direct marketing channel in which consumers and farmer also have a long-term commitment. Consumers 'enter into medium-term contracts' with a farmer. In return the farmers supply the customers with a weekly box or bag of fresh products (often vegetables). Key characteristic of box schemes is that consumers usually do not have a choice of which products are included: the farmer decides what is included. Often recipes or serving suggestions are included. Usually farmers deliver at certain pick up points. The aim of this reciprocal commitment is to guarantee the viability of the farms concerned and to establish an equitable relationship between producers and consumers' (Dubuisson-Quellier 2011, p.306).

## 2.2 Marketing literature perspective: elements of direct marketing channels

When studying and analysing direct marketing channels most commonly in the research field of direct local food marketing is a distinction between 'face-to-face, proximate, and 'spatially extended' marketing channels (i.e. geographical proximity<sup>6</sup>) (Aubry and Kebir 2013; Marsden et al. 2000; Renting et al. 2003). However, this gives limited insight in which precise ways in which direct marketing occurs in practice, e.g. the six marketing channels introduced above. As mentioned previously all too often direct marketing channels are seen as one type of marketing channels within research, with the risk of invalid conclusions (Tregear 2011). For these reasons it is important to understand where different marketing channels overlap and where they differ. For getting a more in-depth understanding on the six direct marketing channels and getting a grasp on what factors may influence the functioning of the channels, the researcher turned to heuristics commonly used in marketing literature. The researcher chose to regard direct marketing channels from a business model perspective. A

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<sup>6</sup> Also the relational proximity, that is the amount of intermediaries involved between farmer and consumer, is a typical element for a typology in local food marketing (see Aubry and Kebir 2010). However since this study only focuses on direct marketing channels, without any intermediaries, this element is not relevant.

business model describes the value an organisation has for the different stakeholders and what is needed to achieve that (Jonker 2012). Local food marketing channels are often seen as an alternative for conventional business models (Katchova and Woods 2011). According to Osterwalder (2004) using business models framework can help create better understanding on the relationship of different elements of businesses and its functioning. The proposition here is that business models frameworks could also be used as heuristics to analyse existing direct marketing channels with regard to food. Using these heuristics, it is the aim to create a framework to understand what characterizes the different marketing channels. It may provide useful insight in the elements of, and the overlap and differences between these channels, and consequently facilitate the empirical analysis of the diverse marketing channels.

There are several interpretations of which elements should be included in business models (see Osterwalder 2004). In this study two frameworks from marketing literature are included. The first framework is called the 'marketing mix'. The marketing mix is 'classification system' of elements of marketing that are controllable for someone who wants to sell its products in context with certain uncontrollable elements (e.g. the political, economical and institutional context) (Borden 1964). The marketing mix refers to the dimensions of what Product (what product is sold and what value it has for the consumer), Place (in which way the product is sold), Promotion (promoted through which channel) and Price (for what price) and the interplay between these different elements. The idea of the marketing mix is to create an awareness of the key elements of businesses that are necessary to sell products to targeted consumers. Figure 2.1a shows a schematic representation of the model. It has been limited used in marketing literature, however is in practice used tool for an entrepreneur to plan its marketing choices. Another framework is called the 'Business Model Canvas' (BMC). BMC originates from in-depth literature, practical implementation and case studies of Osterwalder (2004). According to him a business model consists of several elements e.g. the value proposition for the customers, the cost and value structure, the resources available and needed, the activities, the partnerships, the consumers and the relationship with the consumers, and the distribution channels through which the consumers are reached (Osterwalder and Pigneur 2010). One can see overlapping elements with marketing mix. See also figure 2.1b



Figure 2.1a Marketing Mix (Adapted from: and SmartDraw 2014)

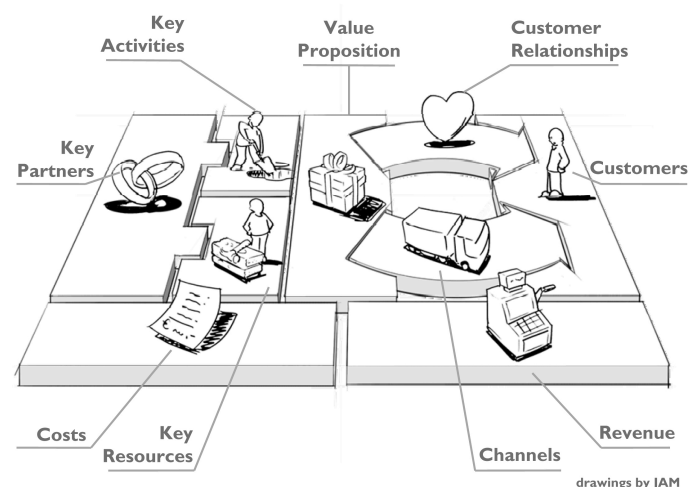


Figure 2.1b Business Model Canvas (Source: Osterwalder Pigneur 2010)

These interlinked elements are clustered into three groups. The first group is the customer segment that includes the value proposition, the customer relationship and customers. It regards the type of customer and how these customers are reached and served (Osterwalder 2002). In this case: the type of *customer* the farmer aims at, the *type of relationship* the farmer has with the customers and through which *channels* the customer is reached. Second, the infrastructure management describes what is required to produce and sell products to consumers. The infrastructure management that includes the resources one needs, the activities one needs to perform and the partners and relationships one has to build with other actors. The third group includes the cost and revenue structure, which entails the finances but can also include other values.

These frameworks indicate that there are some typical elements at the basis of marketing. This study takes the heuristics of BMC as a basis to gain understanding on the direct marketing activities farmers employ. Adapted



from the marketing frameworks introduced above, this research employs the following framework: (1) the farmers' rationales with respect economic and other values (2) the customer segment that regards the type of customer and how and where (= consumption junction<sup>7</sup>) these consumers are reached and served, (3) the company of these direct marketing channels considers the farm characteristics (including resources and structure), the farmers characteristics and activities and partnerships elements, and (4) the context in which this all occurs (see also table 2.1). Within the framework the farms' *internal marketing elements* (the customer segment and the company infrastructure) and the *context* relate to and influence the values the farmer wants to achieve (the *rationales*, and if the marketing channel lives up to that promise). Note that the customer segment is most directly related to marketing of the products. From an initial point of view one might think that the company infrastructure is less relevant for the marketing activities, however the customer segment cannot be understood without considering the business structure that is connected to customer segment. The different elements are interrelated (as also mentioned by Osterwalder and Pigneur 2010). The meaning of each element will be further explained in section 2.3.

*Table 2.1 Conceptual framework*

(1) Rationales		Value for farmer to choose direct marketing	
Internal elements	(2) Customer Segment	Product and value for customer	What products are delivered to what customers
		Customer relation	Organization of relationship with consumer
		Distribution channel / Consumption junction	Logistics and place of product exchange with customer
	(3) Company infrastructure	Farm characteristics	Resources, assets, financial, social capital, structure
		Farmer characteristic and activities	What activities are performed and by who
		Collaboration and partnerships	What partnership does the local food supplier has?
(4) Context		Context of farm	

Note also that the frameworks do not provide any theoretical underlining or are aimed to create prediction or hypotheses on factors. It is the aim to construct a framework that helps identifying elements (and the relations among these elements) that one needs to consider when trying to understand the functioning of direct marketing channels.

## 2.3 Mapping direct marketing channels

The framework of section 2.2 will be further elaborated on in this section. At the same it used to analyse in which ways the marketing channels described in section 2.1 differ or correspond. This section maps the different channels by considering the internal elements of table 2.1. The contextual elements are not part of the mapping. The rationales are considered in this section, but not included in the mapping. This will be further explained in 2.3.1. Table 2.2 gives an overview of the six mapped marketing channels. Note that not all business aspects and choices are included (particularly within the company infrastructure). Only the aspects that are relevant for characterizing the different marketing channels are discussed.

### 2.3.1 Farmers' rationales

Literature appoints different rationales for farmers. Often, similar rationales are appointed yet in practice the rationales differ between different marketing channels: the principal motives differ (e.g. Ilbery et al. 2005). According to Tippins et al. (2002) economic gain plays a major part in direct local food marketing. Farmers need to generate an income for living and income security, while in last decades the prices of food declined, gradually lowering the revenue of farmers (Ilbery et al. 2005). The farmer may choose a certain marketing channel, because it is more efficient or costs are relatively low. According to Tippins et al. 2002 one of the main aims is lowering costs, for instance transaction costs. Transaction costs are 'costs associated with the organization of the transaction between different partners. They consist of (1) information costs to get the necessary knowledge to be able to produce and to sell the good; (2) negotiation costs to get an agreement with the transaction partner; and (3) control costs to be sure that an agreement is respected' (Verhaegen et al. 2001). By excluding intermediaries transaction costs can be lower (ibid.). Furthermore, farmers may want to secure future of the farm and also reduce risk and uncertainty with regard to variations in production, price

<sup>7</sup> The place of product and information exchange can be regarded as the 'consumption junction' (Oosterveer and Spaargaren 2012).

and sales (Verheagen et al. 2001; Lamine 2005, p.324). And direct marketing may offer market access opportunities. The direct contact results also in the opportunity for information exchange and awareness (Little et al. 2010, p.1797; Milestad et al. 2010), which can be important in terms of innovation, and getting feedback in order to develop future activities (Brul 2006). This may foster the continuation of the business.

But also other than economic rationales can be appointed. With direct marketing farmers may aim to gain more control over own product: a farmer may aim to escape pressure of the supermarkets and gain more freedom on how and what when performing agriculture. They may choose to employ direct marketing channels because it includes a more diverse pallet of work (Van Boxtel and Schlaman 2008). Besides, farmers may also want to create a certain community or social benefit. From a social point of view local food systems may aim to strengthening ethical and social capital, strengthening local economies. Furthermore, farmers may find it important to choose local food production and marketing for sustainability reasons. As mentioned previously, local food is associated with the purpose of cutting food miles (shortening the transport distance from production to consumption) and alleviating environmental problems related with the intensified, specialized, standardized and long-distance food supply chains (Alkon 2008). Summarizing, farmers may select and employ direct marketing channels for income generation, business continuation and income security, access market, job satisfaction, community development and environmental rationales. For two reasons these rationales are not included in the mapping of the marketing channels. First, there is no indication that these rationales are related to specific marketing channels. And second, the rationales are not elements in which potential factors can be detected (factor can have an influence on to what extent the rationales, or the values of the farmers, are met).

### 2.3.2 Customer segment

**Product and value for customer.** In this study the customers are urban citizens that purchases fresh products directly from the farmer. The customer is not further regarded as a specific object in this research, only the farmers' perspective on the consumers is considered. All types of marketing channels seem to aim to sell 'quality', fresh, healthy and safe food (Schermer et al. 2010, p4). Often products are organically produced (Renting and Wiskerke 2010). Products can be cheese, vegetables, dairy, meat and eggs. There are no indications that a certain type of product is characteristic for a certain type of marketing channel. Marketing channels may differ with regard to the service that comes with the product, for instance (1) the convenience of home delivery for the customer (Van Boxtel and Schlaman 2008); the convenience of getting many different products at one place in the city, in the case of the farmers' market (Schoutsen et al. 2010); (3) the convenience of no need to think about what products to buy and what to cook, in the case of box schemes; (4) the opportunity to get local food for an affordable price, in the case of buying groups (Voedselcollectief Amersfoort 2014); (5) the wish to visit and see the farm the products come from in the case of farm sales (Van Boxtel and Schlaman 2008); or (6) the value of being involved with a farm in the case of CSA (Schrijver 2006).

**Customer relation.** As mentioned previously the *direct* contact of farmers with customers (and vice versa) is key characteristic of the marketing channels discussed in section 2.1. However, the way in which the relationships between farmer and customers are organized differs. Analyzing the six direct marketing channels one could see that customer relationships are arranged in roughly two ways. First, some marketing channels establish customer relations that are based on an incidental one-time transaction. Although consumers may purchase through these marketing channels at recurrent times, they have no commitment to do so. This type of relationship is typical for farmers markets, farm sales and Internet selling. On the contrary, within box schemes and CSAs customers and farmers are engaged in a longer-term mutual commitment. There is recurrent contact between farmer and consumer through a contractual agreement or a subscription (see also section 2.1.5 and 2.1.6); a mutual commitment in which farmers agree to deliver certain crops, for which consumers pay a certain price for a whole season (or other agreed upon period). The customers may have a 'say' in which products are produced and sold (in the case of CSA, see also Schrijver 2006). In this way customers may not only be customers, but also 'partners'. Within buying groups there is also often a long-term commitment, however often not with the obligation to buy products (Voedselcollectief Amersfoort 2014).

**Consumption junction and distribution channel.** As mention in section 2.2, the place of product exchange is called the 'consumption junction' (Oosterveer and Spaargaren 2012). Within the direct marketing channels the places where the selling and buying of food take place can differ (see also Aubry and Kebir 2013). Based on literature found on the different types of direct marketing, here a distinction is made between a (1) market place / shop based in the city, (2) a pick up point in the city, (3) home delivery, (4) a shop or stall at the farm, or

(5) a pick your own scheme. Note that these latter two junctions are both located on the producing farm. In that case the distribution or logistic does not come at the account of the farmer. In other words; the customer comes to the farm. When a farmer employs one of the first three consumption junctions, he<sup>8</sup> has to distribute the products as well. Some of these are characteristic for the marketing channels, e.g. farmers' markets work per definition with stalls in at market place (in the city), and box schemes usually work with pick up points. Logically, home delivery is an inherent characteristic of delivery marketing channels. However, pick your own schemes can be part of both CSA as well as farm sales. The same accounts for pick up points; they can be employed Internet sales, buying groups, box schemes and CSA schemes (Van Boxtel and Schlaman 2008; Schrijver 2006). Conclusively, the consumption junction is sometimes key characteristic of a marketing channel (e.g. delivery or farmers' markets), while in other marketing channels different types of consumption junction are present (e.g. in the case of CSA or farm sales)

### 2.3.3 Company infrastructure

**Farm characteristics.** The farm characteristics encompass the financial and labour capacity, resources and structure of the farm (adapted from Osterwalder 2002). It regards the financial capital, social capital and physical assets. The formal structure of the farm is also regarded here. From literature, there not many specific farm characteristics appear to relate to a specific marketing channel. One aspect comes to the fore with regard to Internet sales: often a web shop requires high investments, and therefore enough financial capacity is required (Van Boxtel and Schlaman 2008). And in CSA or box schemes customers often pre-finance the farmer for the whole season, which often gives the farmers some financial capacity (Schrijver 2006). With regard to labour capacity, it is not always paid labour that farmers employ. For instance typically buying groups and community supported agriculture volunteers (consumer) often perform supporting activities (Brunori et al. 2011; Little et al. 2010; Verhaegen and Huylenbroeck 2001).

**Farmers' characteristics and activities.** This element regards the capabilities of the farmer and the activities he has to perform. The personal characteristics, education and knowledge of the farmer are part of the capabilities. Within direct marketing channels, farmers employ not only core farming activities, but also have to take care of transport, communication and selling (e.g. Brunori et al. 2011) and sometimes work with volunteers (occurs more in CSA, box schemes and buying groups).

**Collaboration.** Marketing channels can be employed by individual farmers (Horlings and Marsden 2012, but can also include some kind of partnership with other farmers or stakeholders. Collaboration can be a specific strategy, since individual marketing activities of farmers may have only limited marketing reach (Knickel et al. 2008). The cooperation between farmers offers opportunity to lower transaction costs, finding market opportunities and decrease individual investment cost (Verhaegen and Van Huylenbroeck 2001). As mentioned in the section 2.3.2, customers can also be part of a partnership with farmers. These types of partnerships are not regarded here. Collaborative activities can occur in different forms: farmers can join forces in so-called farmer cooperatives<sup>9</sup>. The cooperative structure has strong roots in agriculture (Knickel et al. 2008; Matson 2013, p.16). Cooperatives of today are a way for farmers to respond to the high power of retailers and aim to increase market access and farm income (Knickel et al. 2008, p.248; Matson 2013), because it can help lowering the entry barriers, improve infrastructure and foster information sharing (Matson 2013, p.10). Collaboration can also be organized less formally; yet can have the same functions such as market access, information flow and sharing, transportation and distribution. There is no indication that a certain type of collaboration or actors relates to a certain type of marketing channels. Only in the case of farmers' markets, farmers usually collaborate in some sort of form with other stallholders (Schoutsen et al. 2010).

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<sup>8</sup> 'He' can also be 'she'

<sup>9</sup> A cooperative is formal structure that is managed by a board of directors elected by the members, which may be made up entirely of producers who will manage the organization to meet their members' needs (adapted from Matson 2013, p.16).

Table 2.2 Six types of direct marketing channels mapped in framework (internal elements only)

	Consumer Segment						Infrastructure management					
	Value for customer and product	Farmers' markets	Farm sales	Internet sales	Buying group	Box scheme	CSA	Farmer character-istics	Farm character-istics	Farmer character-istics	Collaboration and partnerships	Collaboration and partnerships
		Offer diverse amount of fresh local product at city for urban customer	Offer diverse amount of fresh local product at city for urban customer and farm visit / experience	The convenience of home delivery	Local foods for a better price	Local food with a surprise and information	Offer of products and involvement at farm					
	Customer relation	One time transaction, usually ones a week	One time transaction	One time transaction	Long-term commitment, but no obligation to buy	Long-term commitment, usually on a weekly basis. Farmer usually decides content of box	Long-term commitment, price and cultivation plan negotiation possible					
	Distribution channel/Consumption junction	Market place in city, usually ones a week	Farm (shop, stall or pick your own) in city fringe	Home delivery or pick up point	Internet ordering and delivery at pick up point	Usually delivery at pick up point	Various; pick up point, at farm (sometimes Pick Your own)					
	Farm character-istics	Social, financial, labour, physical capital	Social, financial, labour, physical capital	Social, financial (Higher financial capacity needed to investment web shop), labour, physical capital	Social, financial, labour (also volunteers), physical capital	Social, financial (option of pre-finance), labour (often volunteers), physical capital	Social, financial (option of pre-finance), labour (often volunteers), physical capital					
	Farmer character-istics	Agricultural activities* transport and selling products in stall in city	Agricultural activities* and selling products at farm	Agricultural activities*, collect order, delivery, Internet shop administration and web shop maintenance	Agricultural activities*, collect order, delivery, buying group, administration	Agricultural activities*, working with volunteers, preparing bags / boxes, delivery, box scheme administration, communication	Agricultural activities*, working with volunteers and CSA members, administration					
	Collaboration and partnerships	Collaboration with other stallholders and farmers	Can collaborate with other farmers	Can collaborate with other farmers	Can collaborate with other farmers	Can collaborate with other farmers	Can collaborate with other farmers					

\* All types of agriculture activities (depending on the type of product), for instance growing, harvesting, milking, producing products and production administration

## **2.4 Framework for detecting enabling and hampering factors**

The framework seems useful for systematic mapping the different marketing channels i.e. what elements are specific for the specific marketing and in which elements they differ and overlap. To get a grasp on which factors might be of influence, the framework is used as a guiding basis. It is argued here that scanning and analysing these elements can be helpful in detecting enabling and hampering factors within the different marketing channels. Specific elements of the marketing channels may have their own limiting and fostering factors. It is with regard to these elements farmers are questioned whether they perceive enabling and hampering factors in achieving their goals. This paragraph gives some potential fostering and enabling factors in order to illustrate the function of the framework. The examples are loosely placed within the framework elements. Note that the following paragraphs only give some examples of potential factors found in literature from abroad, or grey literature.

### **2.4.1 Potential factors in customer segment**

A few example factors that relate to the customer relation and value for the customer: in buying groups, CSAs and box schemes farmers form a more long-term relationship with consumers. Such local marketing channels offer also opportunity for farmers to alleviate the uncertainties in production and sales by sharing the risk among more stakeholders (Lamine 2005). Schermer et al. (2010) appoint that within such consumer relationships the presence of *trust* is a fostering factor. Understanding each other's ideas and capabilities is likely to be supportive as well. For instance when consumers understand and accept seasonality of certain products, direct marketing channels are likely to perform better (Brunori et al. 2011). However, the extra information provided (that goes with the product) may not be enough to persuade the consumer to pay a higher price (King et al. 2010 iv). Little et al. (2010) indicates that the organizational structure is crucial to maintaining buying groups. It can be challenging for such groups to create a stable organisation (Little et al. 2010 p.1806). In general, strengthening the relationship with the consumer and knowing where the products go, can increase satisfy the farmers' job satisfaction (Matson et al. 2013).

### **2.4.2 Potential factor in company infrastructure**

The farm assets e.g. the quality of the soil, the financial capacity, or the size of the farm can be factors of influence on the functioning of the marketing channels. Furthermore, customer participation or volunteer may influence workload. Answering many question and sharing information distracts the farmer from the agricultural activities and put pressure on labour. In the case of box schemes, farmers may need to put extra effort and money in the packaging, transport and (Verhaegen et al. 2001, p.444). Running a farm shops, stall or web shops also requires extra labour, increasing labour costs or time spending (Matson et al. 2013; Van Boxtel and Schlaman 2008). Pick Your Own scheme can be helpful in reducing pressure on labour and costs, however here liability issues appear. E.g. it is insecure what happens if consumers destroy something on the field etc. (Tippins et al. 2002). Therefore the investment costs can be high (King et al. 2010 iv). In CSAs often consumers have a say in which products are produced as well. Such marketing schemes often require the local food supplier to grow a variety of crops, which puts extra pressure on the labour intensity (Van Boxtel and Schlaman 2008). The ability of farmers to set an own price (e.g. in farm shops, farmers markets and) can be seen as supporting factor for the performance. The personal capabilities and preferences of farmers can be of influence as well, that is when farmers are well capable of adapting and performing their activities e.g. harvesting moments, crop planning, transportation, communication (Brunori et al. 2010).

With regard to collaboration some factors may come into place. Indicators for good collaboration are the presence of trust among the collaborators, leadership that is respected and tied within the community (Megyesi et al. 2010) and coordination and shared vision. When the collaboration is tighter, and the dependence on this relationship is an important within the marketing strategy, trust is of high importance (Schmidt et al. 2011). Reciprocity and a shared vision are indicators for a good collaboration. Individualistic behaviour of farmers can inhibit the collaboration (Knickel et al. 2010, p.262). In general, a more formalized collaborative organization can foster the performance of marketing channels. For instance, Schoutsen et al. 2010 appoint that a strong local organization improves the performance of farmers' markets. Furthermore, the type of initiating actors of collaboration may also be of influence. For example, farmers' markets organized by commercial initiation may perform better than government or foundation initiated markets (Schoutsen et al.

2010). However, flexibility of collaborative activities in organizations, especially at the starting phase, can be necessary to further develop (innovate) and adapt to changing situations (ibid).

### 2.4.3 Potential contextual factors

The last years the economy is characterized by several crises. According to LEI, the current financial crisis does not affect the agricultural sector in the Netherlands very much. Yet it may be of influence on the premium price objectives farmers may have. Furthermore, the powerful presence of big retailers influences the opportunity of how these direct marketing develop (Knickel et al. 2010, p.259). Direct marketing channels are often seen as less professionalized and consistent compared to supermarkets (Sint 2011, p.29). Van Boxtel and Schlaman (2008) appoint that especially web shops and farmers' market are sensitive for competition of other direct marketing channels. And Little et al. (2010) appoint that it may be difficult for buying groups to realize and maintain buying groups amongst the different mainstream marketing channels (p.1810). Perhaps an enabling factor could be found in the increased attention may be experienced as a fostering factor of marketing local food (Knickel et al. 2010). The farmer fills in the higher demand of quality and distinct foods and need to create some kind of community and reconnection (Bingen et al. 2010).

Policies may also influence the functioning of direct local food marketing channels. European and national agricultural policy focuses mostly on 'conventional' agriculture and sectorally organized policies (Knickel et al. 2010, p.262). Sector specific policies may hamper the farmer in marketing properly, because direct marketing channels often try to combine different aspects of community development, environmental benefits. On the other hand, in 'Nota duurzaam voedsel 2009' (Sustainable Food Policy 2009), the Dutch government touches upon the need for reconnecting the production of food and consumers. Also local governments have developed policies to support local and urban agriculture. These types of policies may support direct marketing channels. Furthermore, in the Netherlands, each municipality develops a land use plan. The plan includes the use of all buildings and land and structures the provisioning of permits. This influences the possibilities for local food farmers. An acknowledged agricultural company is allowed, without any need for further permission, to sell own products at the farm, through a web shop, or for subscription schemes. It is than seen as part of the 'agrarian activities'. However in some municipalities regard the sales of products from other farms or aligned products, not at the core of these agrarian activities. This would then require an adaption of the land use plan. Some local governments have become stricter regarding direct sales of food (Van Boxtel and Schlaman 2008). For farmer markets on the other hand are other permits required (ibid.) Dutch policies that can be an influential factor are legislations regarding environment (Wet Milieubeheer), housing and construction planning (Woningwet en Bouwverordening), markets and sales of food (e.g. Marketverordening en vestigingswet and Evenementenvergunning Algemene Plaatselijke Verordening, Gebruiksvergunning, Vestigingswet) (Van Boxtel and Schlaman 2008). Food safety policies are another relevant policy (Knickel et al. 2008). The Dutch food and drug administration is the responsible authority for monitoring the health of animals and plants, animal welfare, food safety and consumer products, and the enforcement of the natural law (VWA 2014a). Companies that sell food need to register under the General Food Law (Regulation EC 178/2002). Farmers sometimes need to apply for accreditation, registration, or permission when working with products (VWA 2014b). In the Netherlands safety standards and traceability regulation can be a limiting factor for local food marketing, because the cost of these are relatively higher for individual farmers (Knickel et al. 2008, p263).

The technological development may influence the performance of direct marketing channels. For instance the Internet offers also various opportunities for local food marketing, since it fosters the transmission of information between farmers and consumers, especially when the lack of information with regard to marketing is limited (Matson et al. 2013 p11): the transaction costs are lower; linking the farmer with customers can be done more easily, even if the geographical distance is relatively high. What also helps is that the Internet enables to sell products at any point in time (Matson et al. 2013). Furthermore the little scientific attention to local food marketing, and therefore limited available knowledge may be limiting the performance of direct marketing channels. For instance, Schoutsen et al. (2010) appoint that stakeholders request more understanding on the internal success and fail factors of starting and running a farmers market.

## 3 Empirical research design

This chapter elaborates on the empirical research design. This study encompasses a case study research strategy. Section 3.1 discusses the theoretical part of the research strategy. The data collection and research method is discussed in section 3.2.

### 3.1 Research strategy: case study

The empirical part of this study consists of a *case study research strategy*. Case studies are a typical strategy for exploratory research (Gerring 2004; Yin 1981, p.59), which aligns with the purpose of this research. It is important to note that a case study provides opportunities as well as limitations: it should be kept in mind that the internal validity of this research is therefore higher (i.e. in-depth focus on the cases), compared to the external validity (generalizing may be possible, but is limited) (Gerring 2007).

Before heading towards the implementation of case study research, first some theoretical and practical issues of this approach are discussed. First of all there is misunderstanding about the definition, and methodology concerned with case studies (Gerring 2004; Gerring 2007; Yin 1981). This research follows Gerring's (2004) definition 'a case study is at best defined as an in-depth study of a single unit (a relatively bounded phenomenon) where the scholar's aim is to elucidate features of a larger class of similar phenomena' (p.342). Also the proposition of Gerring (2007) is followed that both quantitative and qualitative methods can be employed within a case study. Yet the type of case studies (relevant for this research is the distinction between single case or within-case studies), including the use of the terms *population*, *sample*, *case*, *case study*, *unit*, *unit of analysis* and *observation*, can easily be confused (see table 3.1 and 3.2). The terms are nested within each other.

Gerring (2007) appoints that it is difficult to categorize a study 'neatly' into the different types of case studies, and to indentify the nested elements he argues that different sort of case study analysis will be employed at different stages of the analysis (Ibid. p.27). Furthermore since most research 'occurs at several levels of analysis, the terms of the elements are used in flux' (Ibid. p.26) within the same study. This study employs also analysis on several levels. Which will be further explained in section 3.2. This research refrains itself for categorizing the study strictly. The most important aspect of this research is that it tries to elucidate on the factors (i.e. as a result from the *observations*) that farmers experience within direct local food marketing channels in urban areas. The categorization within the case study elements is subordinate.

Table 3.1 Definitions of case studies

Term	Definition
<b>Case study research (design)</b>	Case study research may incorporate one or several cases. (p.20).
<b>Case study</b>	The intensive study of a <b>single case</b> for the purpose of understanding a larger class of similar <b>units</b> (a <b>population of cases</b> ). Synonyms: single-unit study, single-case study, within-case study. Note that while 'case study' is singular – focusing on a single unit – a <b>case study research design</b> may refer to a work that includes several case studies.
<b>Within case</b>	Analysis of <b>observations</b> within a single <b>case</b> . May be small-N or large-N.

Source: Gerring 2007, glossary.

Table 3.2 Definitions of elements of case studies

Element	Definition
<b>Population</b>	The universe of <b>cases</b> and <b>observations</b> to which an inference refers. Usually, much larger than the <b>sample</b> under investigation. Synonyms: breadth, domain, scope.
<b>Sample</b>	The set of <b>cases</b> (and <b>observations</b> ) upon which the researcher is focused. Assumed to be representative of some <b>population</b> , which is usually larger than the <b>sample</b> . A <b>case study</b> focused on a single <b>case</b> comprises a <b>sample</b> of one.
<b>Case</b>	A spatially and temporally delimited phenomenon observed at a single point in time or over some period of time – for example, a political or social group, institution, or event. A case lies at the same level of analysis as the principal inference. Thus, if an inference pertains to the behaviour of nation-states, cases in that study will be comprised of nation-states. An individual case may also be broken down into one or more <b>observations</b> , sometimes referred to as <b>within-case observations</b> .
<b>Unit</b>	In most situations, equivalent to a <b>case</b> . Pertains to the spatial (not the temporal) components of a <b>case</b> .
<b>Unit of analysis</b>	The species of <b>observations</b> that will be analyzed in a particular research design. If the design is synchronic, then the unit of analysis is spatially bounded (e.g. nations or individuals). Evidently, the unit of analysis may change in the course of a given study. Even so, within the context of a particular research design it must remain constant.
<b>Observation</b>	The most basic element of an empirical endeavour. Conventionally, the number of <b>observations</b> in an analysis is referred to by the letter N. (Confusingly, N is also used to refer to the number of <b>cases</b> .) If observations are comparable they may be represented as rows in a rectangular dataset.

Source: Gerring 2007, glossary.

## 3.2 Research method and data collection

### 3.2.1 Case selection

This case study research design involves several cases, i.e. farmers that market their food directly to urban customers. The different farmers are selected via stratified purposefully sampling<sup>10</sup> by means of two selection criteria. First, to understand the different issues farmers experience within the diverse marketing channels, it is important that the selected farmers represent all different types of direct marketing channels. Chapter 2 indicated six types of direct marketing channels. However, CSA as it is described here is not very common in the Netherlands (Otter 2008). Some argue that box schemes are the Dutch type of CSAs (Smallsight 2011; Michel Smits, personal communication, April 9 2014). Therefore these two types of direct marketing are clustered in the empirical part of this research. Of each type of marketing channel at least four farmers are selected. The second selection criterion is that farmers should sell their product to urban customers.

The cases are located through Internet research, contacting marketing channels and snowballing technique (see also Verschuren and Doorewaard 2010, p.181). In table 3.3 an overview of the selected farmers is given. Since farmers often employ more than one type direct marketing channel to sell their products, a selection of 14 farmers was enough to meet the first criterion. In some cases, the farmers do not only sell products to customers in the city but also to customers located outside the city. It is not feasible to make a clear-cut distinction between urban and non-urban customer related aspects. Although it was not a criterion, all farmers are producing and selling organic products. Some of the farmers are related to each other. De Raatakker, De Stroese Dame and De Kooihoek are farmers that all three sell their products at the same farmers' market in Utrecht. Furthermore De Knotwilg, Bio Romeo, Vierhuizen and Eko de Eerste sell all to a similar buying group. This choice has been made, in order to explore if farmers experience similar or different factors selling at a similar spot. For pragmatic reasons most cases are located at the centre of the Netherlands, close to the base of the researcher.

### 3.2.2 Data gathering

To gather data on hampering and enabling factors, semi structured interviews with the farmers are conducted. The interviews are mostly face-to-face interviews, but four of them are conducted by telephone. The researcher has experience in performing interviews before. However to prepare for the interviews and to ensure as much as possible that each interview is properly conducted, literature specific on interviewing is

<sup>10</sup> It is not the aim to give a representation of the population (see also Gerring 2007, p.112).



consulted (e.g. Baarda et al. 1996; Cambré and Waage 2009; Verschuren and Doorewaard 2010). For each interview a topic list is prepared, adapted to the respondent, but will always be guiding towards the problem definition this research addresses. In table 3.5 an overview of the general topic list is given in which the elements of the framework of chapter 2 can be recognized.

*Table 3.3 Cases*

Farms*	Farmers' markets	Farm sales	Internet sales / delivery	Buying group	Box scheme / CSA	Other marketing?
A Amelishof	Previously	X			X	Some restaurants
B De Kraanvogel		(X)			X	Other farmers
C Tuinderij De Croy		X		In future	X	Wholesales
D Veld en Beek			X**		X**	No
E De Raatakker	X			Considers	Considers	Wholesales, shops
F De Stroese dame	X	(X)				Wholesales
G De Kooihoek	X	(X)				Wholesales
H Tuinderij De Knotwilg	X	Previously		X		No
I Bio Romeo				X		Wholesales
J Kaasboerderij Vierhuizen		X		X		Wholesales, shop
K Eko de eerste		X	X	X***		Wholesales
L A8	X	X	X	X		Restaurants, shops
M De Stoerderij	Previously	X**	X**	In future		Nearby shops
N Groenekans	Previously	X	X			Nearby shop

\* The capital letter in front of each case corresponds with the letter in figure 3.1

\*\* One marketing channel that combines aspects of these.

\*\*\* Indirectly, through Bio Romeo



*Figure 3.1 Cases situated in centre and south of Netherlands (see for meaning capital letters table 3.4)*

In total 14 interviews are conducted in the period of April 1 until May 13, 2014. Supporting background data on the cases is collected through Internet and document research. Also some additional data is gathered by checking some issues with the respondents after the interviews. In the first contact with the respondent, preceding the interview, the researcher explained the purpose of the research. And during each interview the researcher introduced the topic of the research and its purpose again. The interviews generally start with

relatively simple and introducing questions in order to get the respondent accustomed of being interviewed. Such questions regard the tasks of the farmer, the size and history of the farm.

The data gathered from the interviews form a contextualised interpretation: It does not measure whether the respondents actually find and do what they say (Cambre and Waage 2009), but it regards the *perception* farmers have on factors that hamper or enable them in their marketing activities. The researcher organized as much as possible the topics from broad to narrow. Preferably open questions were asked for validity and reliability reasons. However some guiding questions (based on topic) are also asked in order to reveal concealed information, or to seek confirmation or denial (Ibid., p.341).

*Table 3.4 General topic list for semi-structured interview*

Interview topics	Example questions	Purpose research
<b>Characteristics of respondent</b>	For how long are you a farmer? How big is your farm?	Background information
<b>Type of marketing channels</b>	What type of direct marketing channels do you employ? Why did you select these marketing channels? Did or will you ever try other direct marketing channels? How does your marketing channel work? (Product characteristic, customer relation, consumption junction, farm characteristics, farmer characteristics and collaboration)	Descriptive knowledge
<b>Rationales</b>	For what reasons did you select this marketing channel? Are you satisfied?	Understanding rationales
<b>Factors</b>	What problems did or do you encounter within direct marketing? What do you feel are enabling and fostering factors for functioning of your marketing channel? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• With regard to the product, customers, customer relation, and distribution channel?</li> <li>• With regard to farm characteristics, farmer characteristics, partnerships?</li> <li>• With regard to the context?</li> </ul>	Understanding on perceived hampering or enabling factors

*Table 3.5 Interviewed respondents*

Name	Task	Interview date
Michel Smits	Gardener at Amelishof, Utrecht	9 April
Yvonne and Jaap van den Boon	Gardener at De Knotwilg, Beemster	19 April
Ravi van Marrissing	Gardener at De Raatakker, Wekerom	22 April
Arjan Swinkels	Diary and meat farmer (Water buffalo) at De Stoerderij	23 April (telephone interview)
Rinie Pen	Communication and marketing coordinator of arable farm / Bio Romeo, Ens	24 April (telephone interview)
Freek Atema	Dairy farmer (sheep) at De Kooihoek, Exel	25 April
Harry van Wenum	Dairy farmer (goat) at Stroese dame, Stroe	29 April
Geert Jan van der Burgt	Dairy and meat farmer, owner, producer and marketing coordinator at Veld en Beek, Doorwerth	29 April
Willem and Laetitia Hooft	Gardeners at A8, Doorn	30 April
Floor van Eden	Gardener at Groenekans, Groenekan	30 April (telephone interview)
Lidia van Leeuwen	Diary farmer, cheese producer at Kaasboerderij Vierhuizen, Zoeterwoude	1 May (telephone interview)
Wouter van Ril	Gardener at De Croy, Aarle Rixtel	2 May
Maarten van Liere	Mixed farmer at De Kraanvogel, Esbeek	5 May
Erik Ploer	Mixed farmer at Eko de Eerste	10 May

### 3.2.3 Data analysis

Qualitative case studies have been criticized for not providing robust research and being open to interpretation (Gerring 2007; Miles 1979; Yin 1981). An important part of robust case study design is the proper handling of

data: Yin (1981) mentions that 'researchers must preserve a chain of evidence as each analytic step is conducted. The chain of evidence (i.e. data) consists of the explicit citation of particular pieces of evidence.' This study is explicit in the steps that are taken and has a systematic approach in handling the data. Each interview is recorded<sup>11</sup>, and fully transcribed in the program F5. Based on this raw data three types of case analyses are performed.

The first analysis includes a *single case study* in which each the data consulted farmer will represent a case. Here appointed factors are separately gathered within the single cases (each farmer that employs at least one type of marketing channel) (chapter 4). To extract the different enabling and hampering factors, the raw interview data is systematically analysed through phases of reduction and abstraction (see also Baarda et al. 1996). The first phase consists of reading the raw material and reducing the content of the interview by excluding content that is irrelevant for answering the research question of this research. This is called the 'first reduction'. The original data is also still available. A 'second reduction' consists of classifying and labelling the interview fragments according to the different topics. In the second phase, the abstraction phase, the initial labels are further ordered, combined and clustered. The raw data (the notes of researcher and the recordings of the interviews) and the reduction and abstraction documents are available at request, with permission of the respondents. The content is too large to include in this document. It is important to note that the interviews were held in Dutch and that subsequently these results are translated from Dutch to English. To provide the factors respondent mention with illustrative evidence often quotes have been included. Yet these quotes are also translated from Dutch to English. It was inevitable to find that the translation may be slightly different than the original quotes. When the researcher had some additional questions for the respondents after the interview, they were contacted for clarification. In a few cases the respondents checked the results. These checks did not change the content of the appointed factors; only some changes regarding background have been adapted. The single case analyses are included in chapter 4 of this research.

A second analysis consist of a *within marketing channel analysis* (Chapter 5). This analysis aims to detect of each type of marketing channel, if and to what variation and overlap in appointed factors exists. The purpose is to see if specific factors may relate to the specific marketing channels. It uses the comprised analysis results of the single case analysis of chapter 4.

A third analysis encompasses a *cross analysis*. It starts with indicative comparison of the different types marketing channels amongst each other: cross marketing channel analysis. Yet, the emphasis is on another cross comparison perspective: a cross factor analysis. The aim is here to see what enabling and hampering factors or themes can be detected irrespective of the marketing channel. So, it takes the different and factors as unit of analysis.

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<sup>11</sup> Unfortunately in two interviews parts of the recordings are lost or unintelligible. In these cases the data is supplemented with the notes of researcher.

## 4 Single case analysis

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This chapter shows the analysis results of each case in separate subsections (after reduction and abstraction of the interview data: the interview analyses). Sometimes the results are complemented with data from other sources (e.g. websites of the farm). Every following section starts with background information to describe the marketing elements of the cases. This section will also include data on the rationales why respondents employ those direct marketing channels. After that, the factors that have been stated by the respondents in each case as either enabling and hampering factors are listed.

Before considering the fourteen cases be aware of the following issues: The factors are loosely placed within the different clusters of the framework (customer segment related factors, company infrastructure related factors, and Contextual factors) in separate subsections. This 'looseness' is necessary because some factors may relate to different elements within the framework. Furthermore, depending on the different types of marketing channels different factors are placed in different clusters. For instance, factors that relate to the location of the farm are part of *farm characteristics* (company infrastructure) in most cases, however in the case of farm sales, the farm is also the place of the product exchange with the customer (the consumption junction). In those cases factors that relate to location are placed in the consumption junction (customer segment). Also in some cases the customers are volunteers as well, and are subsequently part of the structure of the farm (e.g. in CSA schemes). Factors only regarding the customer relation will be clustered under customer contact/relation. Furthermore, when farmers employ more than one marketing channel, the text explicitly indicates if an appointed factor concerns one of the marketing channels or relates to all of them (general) according to the respondents.

A final note: these case-by-case interview analyses reveal the findings of the individual cases. The content of this chapter is rather elaborate. The researcher chooses to include the interview analysis in this report because they are at the core of the subsequent analyses in chapter 5 and 6. In this way the researcher aims to provide as much transparency regarding the data (and subsequent analyses) as possible, which is especially for qualitative research a delicate issue (see Hiles and Cermak 2007; Yin 1981).

### 4.1 Amelishof

#### 4.1.1 Background

Amelishof is horticulture garden of 1 acre at the Amelisweerd estate at the fringe of the Utrecht city. Initiated by nine women, the garden started as the Aardvlo in 1980. Since then Amelishof has gone through various transformations. Currently the garden is run by two gardeners that are in a partnership company (VOF), together with a foundation. The foundation provides a guiding framework for the activities of the farmer. The foundation and gardeners agree on three goals. First, since Amelishof is an old vegetable garden it should be managed as cultural heritage. This means that a big variety of crops need to be grown and the land is cultivated by hand. Second, the garden should be open for volunteers. And third, the crops need to grow organically. Right from the start Amelishof sells crops at the garden. In the beginning the farmers also tried to offset products to wholesalers, however they were too small to be interesting for wholesalers or they would not receive a reasonable price. They have sold their products also at farmers' markets in Amsterdam and Utrecht, but stopped in Amsterdam in 1998 and in Utrecht a few years later. Currently, the farmers have decided to offset their almost all their products through two channels: farm sales and a CSA / box scheme. From time to time the garden sales its products to a restaurant, but that is a limited amount. Offering care on a professional basis generates another part of the income.

The choice to sell through a CSA / box scheme channel is based on the rational that the respondents likes working with people, but also wants to prepare for future development. The gardener argues that when organic agriculture will become more large scale in the Netherlands, the prices will go down. Then it will be impossible to survive as a smallholder farmer. The CSA / box scheme suits with that:

[...] 'I always had the idea, although it is not that bad right now, but there is a chance that at some point organic farming becomes widespread and reaches a more conventional level. And then the prices will come under pressure. And then, it will become more difficult when you are a smallholder, because we cannot scale up. We cannot glue extra land to this garden. So, then how do you get through that? I think what might help is that you have at least a good contact with the customers. Then they are willing to pay a bit more, because they see how it goes and what you do. Subsequently, it has to become a CSA system, because then you involve the customer' (19:54).

The farm sales are also important. The gardener needs to get an income out of the garden. The respondent says he gets a reasonable income, but perceives to get a lower pay than many other farmers. However, he is comfortable with what he earns '[...] Actually, I'm never worried about money. When we need something, we can afford us to get it' (13:18). Besides economic purposes, community development (especially for CSA) and reconnection are important goals. The gardener mentions that job satisfaction is one of the main important things. The respondent explains to be very pleased with his job, and hope to do this for another 30 years.

#### 4.1.2 Factors related to customer segment

**CSA / Box scheme - Predictability of demand enables tuning production.** The season runs from May until Christmas and customers can (only) join the CSA / box scheme for a whole season. This makes it predictable for the farmer to grow crops.

**CSA / box scheme - Clear and simple scheme relieves (administrative) labour pressure.** The farmer argues also the fact that he does not offer the customers to stop the CSA / box scheme during holidays alleviates his work. In the first years of the scheme the participants were allowed to stop during holidays, and they notified the gardener by telling him, through notes and phone calls, all in different time spans. However this was confusing for the farmer and gave him a lot of labour pressure and frustration. He mentions the system they have now is much better:

'Now we also deliver during holidays. That is included in the price. And if you are on holiday, almost everyone has someone watching the house, watering the plants or feeding the cat. And then they get the vegetable box as well. So, that's not a problem anymore. At least, I hear nobody complaining' (21:57).

**CSA / box scheme - Participatory relationship is organized feasible for farmer.** The members have the opportunity to participate in a yearly meeting in where decisions are made regarding the crop plan and the price of the bag. The farmer argues that although sometimes members may request more of a certain crop, but when he can explain it is not possible, it is accepted. He is seen as the expert. And it is agreed that he has the final say (45:27).

**CSA / box scheme - Participatory relationship with customers enables fair pay.** With regard to the involvement of the participants on the price, he argues that it is sometimes a bit scary, because they can decide what one earns; will it be enough? However, this is never been a problem. In fact, in the beginning the participants during the meeting said the price should be higher, while he thought it would be too high. He had to temper that, and he noticed other farmers having the same experience: 'so it is not right, that you are afraid that you will earn less. Usually you get more money if the participants are going to interfere with it (45:27).

**CSA / box scheme - Transparency on numbers fosters trust and consumer relation.** The gardener experiences a high degree of trust between participant and farmer: 'I think that is because we are so transparent. That also gives confidence. We have nothing to hide, everyone can see all the business numbers [...] All members receive a printout of the finances operating statement.

**CSA / box scheme - Share of risk provides rest for farmer.** The participants and farmer agreed that there is a share of risk. So when part of the harvest fails, for instance when the lettuce is damaged during a hailstorm, it means that the box will be less filled with lettuce.

'A month later I can have new lettuce again, but good for the first three weeks I do not have lettuce. And I am not supposed to buy the lettuce [elsewhere]. It's just three weeks without

lettuce. And they [the participants] share in this setback. And if you spread this setback over ninety men, it is only but a small noose. If I have to carry it all by my self then it is a big setback. A hailstorm costs are thousands of dollars. And in this way we share the setback it jointly. It has never occurred yet. But the fact that we organized it like this, provides reasonable rest' (43:51).

**CSA / box scheme - Suitable and balanced activities for consumers and gardener fosters consumer relation and job satisfaction.** Most participants are member because they seek connection with the origin of their food. In order to create connection with the garden, the gardener organizes several activities for the participants. In earlier years he experienced that it cost him extra work, while not all the activities were well visited by the participants. He experienced that many participants have full lives: 'I sometimes organized co-working days [for the participants], and nobody came. I'm not going to do it too often, because I kept the afternoon free' (29:37). He feels that now he organizes activities, which cause no problems if no one comes: 'I can still work for myself' (29:37). He mentions that he now managed to organize activities (e.g. monthly potluck, harvest celebration) that are mostly well visited and enjoyed by participants. It is now balanced (54:22).

**CSA / box scheme - Private pick up points lower costs, lead to easy access (but people need to have sympathy).** Previously the gardener delivered products to pick up point in shops, but most shops want to earn something with it. He shifted to pick up point at members, all within 10 km of the garden. Those people enable to distribute rather easily, and without costs. Most of the pick up point members like the coming and going of participants at their places. And participants can easily reach their food (1:23:19).

**CSA / box scheme - Logistics are organized effective; pick up points are close, so it takes limited time for the farmer.** The respondent is content with the way the logistics towards the pick up points are structured. He delivers the vegetables usually in two rides with his car at ten to twelve pick up points within Utrecht (again, all within reach of 10 km). He is not interested in pick up points further away of the garden.

**Farm sales - Appearance of garden attracts consumers.** In recent years investments have been made to make the garden more attractive. There is a canteen and there are different spots on the site where people can sit and relax. The respondent feels this helps in attracting customers (48:12).

**Farm sales - Good location for attracting (leisure) customers.** The site of the garden is appointed as fostering aspect for farm sales. The garden is situated at Amelisweerd estate, which is full of leisure hikers and bikers (3:52).

**Farm sales - Other shops located nearby fosters attraction of customers.** Also the fact that Veldkeuken and Amelishof are located close to each other fosters the farm sales. Their selling activities seem to complement each other according to the respondent:

'The last few years they [restaurant and shop the Veldkeuken, Ed.] also bake bread. And that attracts customers, also for us. People think 'we can buy vegetables, *and* bread. [...] For the Veldkeuken it is very clear that they sell by far the most bread when our shop is open. So their customers are also our customers. That's nice, so if you can reinforce each other in this' (1:17:00).

**Farm sales - The pick your own opportunity for flowers attracts consumers.** According to the respondent the flower picking attracts many customers, which increases the farm sales:

[...] 'then [we] created the flower picking garden in order to stimulate the home sales. And indeed the home sales improved. We got more and more people on the garden for the flower sales. Yes, the fact that people can pick the flowers themselves makes people very excited. Pick your own attracts people' (26:26).

#### 4.1.3 Factors related to company infrastructure

**CSA / Box scheme - Pre finance structure of the box scheme enables to overcome financial gap in spring,** when investments need to be made. Two out of three members of the box scheme pay the membership fee in advance. Previously the gardener has to borrow money during the month March and April, when little crops

are sold, but investments for the new crop seasons are needed. Then in May, June money is coming in. And in August there is enough money to pay back the borrowed money. Yet now, since the farmer started with the box scheme he could bridge this lack of liquidity due to pre finance from the members (41:50).

**Farm sales - Collaboration with partners with complementary input enables organizing attractive customer activities.** Amelishof collaborates with the Veldkeuken (nearby restaurant and shop in the sense that they organize some activities for customers together. The gardener mentions that the collaboration goes more or less automatically because both of them do what they are good at, while having the same customers. They complement each other, and do not want to be competitors:

‘We are not in each other’s way. So we are not a restaurant or catering company. Although we are getting an outdoor kitchen, but we will use it restricted. We will not serve alcohol here. We give here some tea, but it's free. We will not sell tea. That would not be right with regard to the Veldkeuken’ (1:17:22).

**Farmers’ market (in retrospect) - Capacity of the farm was too limited to cope with high demand.** The respondent mentions that the capacity of the farm was too limited to deal with the success at the farmers’ market. It led to overstrained employees. Furthermore they had to purchase products from wholesalers, in order to cope with the demand. But that was not right according to the respondent: ‘In fact we had become a trader, but we are a horticulture garden and we are at the market to sell our own products. But that did not match anymore, because already three-quarter of the products were not ours’ (5:43).

**General - Structure of farm with foundation enables funding.** According to the farmer the structure of the business split up in a foundation and a VOF has many benefits. Within this framework the farmers can decide themselves on how to grow crops and in which way it performs its marketing. It facilitates the decision-making, which at first was a timely process. Furthermore it ensures continuity of the business. And enables the opportunity to get funding from funds (1:14:22) e.g. for making the garden more attractive.

**General - Structure of farm with foundation enables to work with volunteers that alleviate labour pressure.** And it offers the opportunity to have volunteers at the garden without problems with social security. Now he feels the labour pressure is more balanced. He argues that he has more time then before to think about what marketing choices he makes (1:14:22).

**General - Farmers’ experience and authenticity contribute the functioning of direct marketing and job satisfaction.** The farmer has been a gardener at Amelishof for more then 30 years. It has stabilized the garden and its marketing plan. The story of the respondent indicates that the farmer is capable of making decisions. The choices the farmer has made support job satisfaction and the stability of the garden. He argues that you have endless choices you can make. The decisions to drop the farmers’ market enabled the farmer to keep a better overview. The farmers’ market was too big and required too much labour. Including volunteers on the farm also requires that you need to be able to work with people that are less experienced:

‘I think it's fun to work together with people. That should indeed suit you. I used to have a colleague with volunteers, who did not like it. They say ‘I'm happy when they leave at five o'clock, then I can finally do something’. Well I do not experience it like that. Yes, I feel it a few times, when it is very busy. But overall I do like it’ (17:27).

During the years, the farmer experienced a shift in how at first he was focussed on getting customers, while nowadays he is focussed on doing what he likes and what he is good at. ‘Namely that you are in the very early market-oriented wondering about how do I get my customers. Then at a certain point you will see that it is running [...]. Then you think that it is also important to have fun. If you only worry about getting customers, you run out of energy. Yet you need to get energy from somewhere. So gradually it shifts that ‘I'm going to do what I like ‘ and the customers who fit to that will join. And then the real fun starts. [...] and people love it’ (57:00). He argues that is probably common for a business in development, to be more market oriented. This authenticity is however important; paying more attention to your inner qualities, own abilities and energy is ‘healthy for you and your environment’ (1:00:00). In this way he is able to do a job he likes a lot. ‘I am here now for thirty years, and I hope to be here for another 30 years.

**General - Farmers' capacity to grow variety of crops fosters job satisfaction.** For the CSA scheme and farm sales you need to grow a variety of crops. He is proud of how he manages to grow 300 varieties every year (37:32), and to be able to supply his customers with products all from the garden.

**General - No partnership regarding offsetting products, limits worries.** The respondents mention that he is happy not to collaborate with other farmers in exchanging products or marketing products, because that only causes extra labour or worries according to the farmer (1:19:17). He wants to sell his own products in the way he thinks is best. In this way he does not have extra responsibility.

**General - Farm sales and CSA / box scheme complement each other.** The choice of combining box scheme with farm sales limits product loss. When there is a too small amount of crops for in the box, he can sell this product at the farm sales (1:08:17).

#### 4.1.4 Contextual factors

**General - Increased societal attention to local food.** The gardener experiences 'tailwind' for local and organic food in this time these years. Since it is still relatively small, he thinks it will grow further. People want to connect with local food more and more (1:26:29).

**General - Experiences little competition because the demand is higher than the farm can serve.** Sometimes it is a bit scary when a new gardener starts, but in fact he has not experienced competition yet (55:48). He often gets request for a pick up point at Leidsche Rijn, however he thinks it is too far away. He thinks another gardener should supply there. There is room for much more gardeners around Utrecht the respondent argues (1:21:14).

**General - Local policy may lead to unfair competition however supports as well.** With the growing societal attention, the farmer observes that governments try to support urban agriculture, also with financial funding.

'At first this annoyed us. Like, there is suddenly a lot of funding for food production. And what about us? We work very hard to earn a penny, and somewhere else gets a lot of money just like that [...]. That's actually unfair competition. We did not like it, especially my wife did not' (1:02:18).

But the farmer mentions that they benefit from it as well. 'We have applied for funding for our greenhouse, and also received it. So we profit from it' (1:02:42). But he argues this is incidental, he does not want recurrent government funding for reasons above. The funding for the greenhouse, he argues, was meant to be able to buy a historic greenhouse. 'This is a historical garden, and requires a historical greenhouse. Normally as a gardener it is economically unthinkable to put down. Those things cost 15.000 Euros that you will never earn back. But here, it really fits' (1:03:00).

## 4.2 De Kraanvogel

### 4.2.1 Background

De Kraanvogel is an arable and vegetable farm in Esbeek, Noord Brabant. A few years after Maarten van Liere took over the arable farm of his parents, he and his wife decided to start to run the farm biodynamic (00:21). Shortly after the conversion they experienced difficulties in offsetting their products: the sales of biodynamic products through wholesalers stagnated (1:00). They felt that there was no other option to sell directly to consumers, if they wanted to live from biodynamic farming. They chose to produce and offset through a box scheme (for more than 20 years now). During the years after, they shifted step by step the company structure; they started growing a big variety of crops (5:05). For some years they did mixed farming, which also included dairy, meat and bread production (2:41). But due to the labour intensity they are now only performing horticulture (4:08), and they have some chickens. Maarten and his wife run the farm together with help from volunteers. Currently they sell their products to approximately 170 customers that live in Tilburg and Eindhoven and surrounding villages (11:24). The boxes are delivered to around 15 pick up points at private addresses (33:23). A small amount of the products is sold as farm sales (4:35) or is exchanged with other farmers (4:40). The farm sales, for incidental customers, are limited and therefore excluded in this research. Only rarely products are sold to wholesalers.



They aim to grow further to 180 customers this year. Maarten mentions that this way of farming and marketing is not the easiest way. 'It remains a challenge [...], but you get a lot in return. Namely, you know for whom you are doing is, we are appreciated by the customer. Relationships with customers are very warm. So you clearly step out of the anonymity (16:32). They do not have to work in vicious circle of continuous up scaling (17:59), or 'being slavish to the food industry' (59:57). Respondents worry about future, because they have no successor. Their farm is their pension. That is a general agricultural issue (54:38).

The farmers try to produce vegetables year round, and strive for a varied selection of products. From February to the end of April they have to purchase some vegetables from wholesalers or nearby farmers (14:49). The respondents regard their box scheme system as a type of CSA, because the customers support specifically the existence of their farm to survive. They can subscribe at any point of the year. Customers can choose out of four types of vegetable boxes. They can try it first for a few weeks, and then decide if they want to continue (12:10). If someone decides to continue, he is connected to the farm for one season. The farmers decide which products are produced. They present the financial status every year to the customer members. The farmers organize about four extra activities on the farm to enable the customers to get an idea of how it works on the farm (23:58).

#### 4.2.2 Factors related to customer segment

**Product variety attracts customer.** The respondents feel that the wide variety of products the farmers offer to the consumer attracts customers (14:53).

**Frugal Dutch character limits customers' commitment.** The respondents mention that they think that it is more difficult in the Netherlands to realize a box scheme / CSA farm because of the general Dutch character. Maarten mentions that he thinks Dutch are less willing to commit one self to such a scheme, compared to Belgium or America. He thinks Dutch are more frugal or 'penny-wise'. It is therefore more difficult to attract customers. They also experience that within their customer base: In principle new customers should return a form to the farmers after the trial period, in which they commit themselves for one year. The farmers mention that around 40% of those customers do not return the form but still receive a vegetable box. Maarten argues that those customers just want a box with vegetables and not a 'share of the harvest' (20:30). Although these customers are not officially member, the farmers still supply them with the boxes.

**Extra activities help to acquire and keep customers.** The respondents feel that the activities they organize are key factor to maintain their customers. 'People appreciate it if they can see it sometimes, those activities are a must in that respect' (24:31). Furthermore they invite every year children of classes of nearby (Waldorf) schools to take part in activities on the farm. Often the parents of these children also become enthusiastic and interested in becoming a box scheme member (24:46).

**Good relation with existing customers fosters attraction of new customers.** Currently the respondents gain most of their customers through mouth of word. They mention that the existing customers are even actively willing to acquire new customers if necessary. To illustrate: 'If we feel the need, we tell people [existing customers] that we have to recruit new customers. Than there are always people willing to step into the breach that say 'there is a bazaar or a green market [...], give me some vegetables and I will [recruit] there for you'' (25:20). It is not like many customers are attracted this way, but it does happen (25:40).

**Clear and simple system decreases labour pressure, and communicates easy to customer.** The box scheme system they have currently in place is according to the respondents 'a good system' (38:26). They want to keep it clear and simple for the customer (36:50). At first they had a system in which they took into account the holidays of every customer member. This caused a lot of administrative and labour hassle for the farmers, and many subscription stops at the point they have the biggest supply (in summer). Now they deliver 50 boxes per year to each customer. The customers pay for 48 boxes, so they can go on a holiday for 2 weeks, but they can also let others collect their vegetable box. The respondents mention that this system is ideal for them, and that the customer is ok with it as well: No one thinks it is a problem [...] everyone understands. People easily say 'I let my neighbor pick up the box, because I pay anyway'. So in this way we are still able to deliver if the garden is full. That is so much better now' (38:58).

**Direct contact and consumer understanding enables to offset products of other quality.** The direct consumer relation also limits the production loss. For instance last year copper worms affected their potatoes. The

potatoes are perfectly edible, however some parts needed to be removed. It would be never possible for them to sell them to wholesalers. Moreover, explaining the issue to their customers and giving them a kilo extra potatoes, resolved the issue without a problem. Everybody thought it was fine (40:03); 'people understand' (41:10). In this way they were still able to offset their product (40:44).

**Transparency and good customer contact; customers can help out if needed.** The respondents mention that within their structure they did not include risk sharing (e.g. for a failing harvest), or pre-financing with their customers. However they mention that the relationship is that good, that if there is an immediate problem they can do an appeal to the customers (41:10). They have the trust that it will work out. The respondents mention that it occurred already once (but do not recall what was the occasion). They have always managed it, and they regard transparency as an important part of it (21:39).

**Difficulty of farmers to communicate inhibits the participation of customers.** Previously the respondent mentioned that 40% of their customers do not sign the 1-year commitment with the farm, but still they receive the vegetable box. They mentioned that is partly due to the Dutch character, but moreover the mention that it has also to do with their communication in which they explain their perception of the box scheme (21:08). They say that it often takes a while for new customers to understand how the system works (23:05). The respondents mention that this type of direct marketing demands a capacity that is far bigger than just producing food. They give examples of other farmers with similar scheme that are very effective in their communication, but for them communication takes a lot of effort (1:04:15). They appoint that it is partly due to their higher age (27:40, 36:13). The farmers' wife mentions 'it could well be that young people, that would take over the farm, may have a stronger charisma' (27:17).

**Location limits attraction of customers to the farm.** Due the location of the farm in a typical agricultural area with a considerate distance from the cities, they do not have customer members nearby. It is therefore difficult to involve customers in the farm, while this involvement is ideally what they strive for: 'People enjoy being here if they come and visit this farm once in two years, or once in three years. But they do not experience this place as *their* place [...], that is for our farm a bottleneck...' (32:13).<sup>12</sup>

#### 4.2.3 Factors related to company infrastructure

**Agricultural experiences of farmers make it easier to produce more and serve more customers.** A few years ago the farmers served 130 customers. Currently they serve 170, and will expand it to 180. The respondents feel that it does not require that much more effort (51:57). 'We have more help, for sure. But [...] somehow it is also streamlining... You grow into it' (52:05).

**With the help of volunteers labour the labour pressure is acceptable.** The respondents mention that this way of producing and marketing is rather labour intensive. However, with the help of volunteers they manage it. They say that there are always volunteers that help out, either on the land or with the delivery (10:38). 'Sometime you worry if the work of this week will be finished, because we need to harvest this, and harvest that, and pack, and weigh... O well, it is sometimes a bit thrilling. But the work always gets done' (10:51). Compared to the high pressure of farmers that sell at farmers' market, the respondents argue, the labour pressure they experience is limited (1:08:39).

#### 4.2.4 Contextual factors

**Policy inhibits small-scale direct marketing.** Especially with regard to meat processing, the respondents feel inhibited by food policies. They mention that most policies are established for bigger and conventional companies (44:39). They illustrate it with the following example:

'The chickens that do no longer lay eggs, we offer them to [our customers]. Previously a slaughter company in Uden slaughtered them. But suddenly it was not possible anymore due to salmonella legislation. And that was rather inconvenient, because we did not have the time or the knowledge to do it ourselves... There should be a way out, we thought. Well, I spend hours and hours to apply for a registration at the Productboard of meat, poultry and eggs. And in the end I did not get it, because I was too small. And because I did not get the

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<sup>12</sup> Although not directly mentioned by the respondents, this difficulty of connecting with the customer is also illustrated by the fact that 40% of the customers are not officially connected to the farm (by signing a contract).

registration, I could not get my chickens slaughtered. So, can you think of anything crazier?' (45:33)

The respondents had 60 to 80 chickens, while you need to have 250 if you want to be able to get them slaughtered. Eventually they have slaughtered the chickens themselves with the help of acquaintance that owned a poultry company before (46:33). They mention that this is just an example of that small companies are inhibited by regulations that is focused on bigger companies (47:08). Therefore for smaller companies the costs turn out higher (44:39).

**Opening up European legislation creates opportunity for fraud and food scandals in organic agriculture and threatens trust from customer.** The EU regulation on organic policy will be changed, due to the involvement of new countries in the EU. They worry about the consequences, and feel that this opens up opportunities for food fraud. Although they are directly connected to their end customer, the respondents still fear that this would affect them for not being trusted anymore as organic farmers (49:23).

**Increased societal attention outweighs competition.** The respondents feel that there is an increased attention for food and related types of food marketing. They experience that people want to know more about the origin of food, and they feel that this is still growing. With this growing demand, the respondents experience no competition (1:02:17). From a production perspective they feel that this type of direct marketing is still in its infancy, because of the stronger power of the food industry (59:57).

## 4.3 Tuinderij de Croy

### 4.3.1 Background

Tuinderij de Croy is situated in Aarle Rixtle in the province Noord Brabant. It is run by Wouter van Mil (respondent) and Marieke Boudewijns. Currently it is around a two-acre organic vegetable garden that markets its products through a box scheme and a farm shop. The box scheme is offered all year around to their customers. They include in the boxes their vegetables but complement if necessary with products from other farmers or wholesales. And they also offer fruit boxes. With a total of 290 vegetable and fruit boxes they serve currently around 290 customers. Customers pay for the boxes every three months, in advance (44:15). These customers can collect their boxes at pick up points at private homes (1:49). Those are all situated in a range of 15 km from the farm. This includes the city of Helmond, but also nearby villages. The farm shop is open every Saturday during summer. De Croy started in the beginning of May 2014 (after the interview date) with providing products to a buying group in Eindhoven (31:15).

The box scheme is the financial motor of the company (15:24). The respondent feels that his box scheme is not CSA scheme. He mentions that he does not share (harvests) risk with his customers or communicates on the crop plan, which is sometimes the case CSA scheme. He feels that he needs the flexibility to make his own choices and also does not has the capacity to communicate well. 'I am not a good communicator. And I often see that people running a CSA are very good communicators' (47:39). He polled the interest of involving consumers more in this way. The outcome was that 5% of his customers were interested and that is not enough to change a system, he thought. He think consumer contact is important, but not in this way (48:54).

The respondent has chosen for this structure because he likes variation in his work (10:46). He mentions that is not only a gardener, but also a wholesaler and a shop man. On the small scale he works, performing all those tasks him self is more efficient (10:10). As a consequence the direct marketing is then necessary for making some money (9:05). And this small-scale approach enables him to take good care of soil. That he sees as a long-term investment (15:30). Furthermore he mentions that he thinks it is important for him to have contact with and involve the customers and be small-scale as a part of organic agriculture: 'I find this has still a human aspect, while the field next to this garden [leek field] is also organic, and there they have very large tractors with 30 Poles that do the job in no time. I do not see the human aspect in that. I regard that as industry, even if it is organic. [...] It's nice that someone does that, but that's not something for me (10:46). He mentions that his wife likes very much the farm shop. 'She says that she does not do it necessarily for the revenue. Because it is relatively much work compared to the amount of products you sales. But what she really experiences is the added value of the connection with customers' (25:16).

He says they start also with the buying group because sometimes he has too many products. Earlier he tried to sell them to wholesales. 'But that is relatively much work for little revenue. Furthermore they [wholesalers] are complainers. So I enjoy it much better to find a different channel for that' (33:08). He mentions that he can get a better price as well, and the amount of sales may be higher (33:08). It still is unsure whether this is possible with this buying group; it is still in its start up phase (32:37). Wouter says that he is very happy with the way his farm performs now, and he is developing, and that he is able to fulfil his dream of being a farmer in this way (14:04).

#### 4.3.2 Factors related to customer segment

**Farm sales - Offering the consumers to walk around the garden and pick flowers fosters consumer relation and attracts other customers.** The respondent mentions that the shop is attractive for customers. They grow many flowers at the garden and farm shop customers are allowed to pick those flowers. The respondent mentions that they want to create a relaxing atmosphere (25:50). This helps to maintain customers, but also attracts new customers. As the respondent illustrates: 'it costs nothing, and clients can stroll around and see the garden, taking a bunch of flowers with them. And the next week they return and bring back other family! That works and it is a lot of fun. (25:38)

**Farm sales - Good location of farm attracts many people.** An enabling factor is that the farm is situated in an area that attracts many people (1:05:36). The farmer mentions that many people hike here or take bike rides. And the area connects the city of Helmond and surrounding villages. Many people pass by the farm. 'This yields, at the very least, attention' (1:05:50). He feels it is a helpful factor for his farm sales (1:06:00).

**CSA / Box scheme - Extra activities and newsletters foster customer contact and job satisfaction.** The respondent organizes some extra activities for its customers, for instance 'taste tests'. 'And then I really experience that customers are interested in that, because they say that it is so cool' (23:22). He also communicates through a newsletter in which he explains his activities but also discusses general food issues. He mentions that he feels that customers appreciate, and really enjoys speaking to his customers (23:40). In line with this, the appreciation and feedback he gets on the products from his customers motivate him. 'I mean, from a financial perspective this job is ok. But if you want to become rich, please do something else. You just need that appreciation to uphold, and to sustain. Well, I get plenty of appreciation. That human aspect is so stimulating. That makes it very much pleasant to do my job' (1:02:25).

**CSA / Box scheme - More customers are in debt increases effort for farmer to collect the payments.** Currently more customers are in debt with the farmer. He mentions that he never experienced that before, but thinks that more people are in trouble waters in financial terms. The respondent says it takes more effort and time for him to collect his money (44:15).

**CSA / Box scheme - Quick service demanding customer may not understand slowness system.** He thinks also that people for some reason are less aware of the commitment and the pre-finance structure, so that might also be part of the problem why they don't pay in time (44:35). He explains that some (potential) customers do not understand the importance of commitment with the farm. The respondent says that everything has to go fast in this era. An example:

'Last week I spoke to someone on the phone that instantly wanted to buy a vegetable box. I said that was not possible; 'sorry, bad luck'. But he said, I am in the car, where should I go? I said 'bad luck' again, but he still did not get it... Well, everything that is ordered and harvested I prepared in boxes in my van. All customized. [...] I cannot react on simple push on the button, and produce instant [another box]. That is simply not possible. And I do not want to do it' (45:00).

He says he has no answer yet to this demand for a quick service. He does not know which structure would be suitable for that yet.

**CSA / Box scheme - Selection of customers that accept system fosters job satisfaction, not saying yes all the time.** Since the demand is high, he mentions that he is in a position that enables him to select loyal customers that accept the system as it is. 'In this way, it saves me a lot of work' (1:08:59). To explain this he mentions that in some neighborhoods people have demands that do not suit to his box system. Serving them would imply a

lot of extra labor, so he chooses only to supply those that accept the system as it is. He already works a lot, and does not want to put in more labor (1:09:30).

**CSA / Box scheme - Pick up point, based on trust reduces labour pressure, saves energy and money.** The respondent mentions that the customer relation is a trust relationship (2:12). It [the system] is based on trust instead of a controlled system. That save a lot of money and energy' (2:45).

**CSA / Box scheme - Trust relation offers room for human error or theft.** However, on the other hand this system enables more room for human error. For instance if a customer accidentally pick up the wrong box (2:12). It also happens that boxes get stolen (2:20). Then, the respondent argues, he has to put quite some effort to solve it, end eventually lose a lot of time (3:25).

**CSA / Box scheme - Predictability of demand enables tuning production.** The respondent knows how many customers he has; customers are rather loyal because they are subscribed. In this way he can exactly tune his production (36:40)

**CSA / Box scheme - Logistics system is well organized yet inflexible; limits further growth.** Furthermore it takes some time to adapt the logistics. The respondent cannot suddenly add many new customers to its system. It is now sharply tuned, but not for further growth (1:09:03).

**CSA / Box scheme - Unique product and service leads to little competition.** On the other hand, there are no similar box schemes around, and the respondent experiences no competition (38:56, 58:00). There are some other initiatives starting like a web shop and buying groups, but it is unclear whether these will be competing for the customers of De Croy (58:00). He believes that the unique value of his products, the boxes, will remain unique. There is an organic shop close by, but the respondent argues that he is actually a competitor for that shop, instead of the other way around (1:00:01).

**General - Production system is inflexible, long feedback loop with regard to changes in demand and supply.** Another issue is appointed by the respondent is that feedback loop with regard to supply and demand is inflexible. First of all he mentions that he cannot suddenly decide to attract more customers, because his company structure cannot cope with to that. 'You have a feedback loop of about a year. If my customer base is growing, then I have not yet adjusted my crop plan. And the crops are growing now; I cannot produce some more instantly... That tuning remains a process that takes time. It is not possible with big steps. Or just what you think you want to do. It grows organically' (38:09). He grows slowly (1:13:29). Also the other way around, if there is a peek in the production of a crop, when he has too much, he cannot easily offset it (directly) (36:36). For instance when the weather influences the production and harvesting:

'I have a very nice crop plan. That theoretically fits exactly with the number of vegetable boxes, and there is some surplus for the shop. But if it is very warm for a week, then the crops slide closer together in terms of harvest. And then I've got too much of a crop at one point in time. And to prevent to be short of a product at another point in time, I always have one or two extra cultivations. [...] That's just the insurance. It's always like that when the weather is warm, you have a lot of lettuce and spinach which is ready at once' (34:01).

He hopes to solve this inflexibility, by selling the surplus to the buying group in Eindhoven (see 4.3.1).

**General - Customer contact puts high pressure on labour and performance of other farming activities.** According to Wouter the consumer contacts take a lot of time. 'I find that I am sometimes telephoned too often. I mean... Ok, on Monday we bash packets together. Tuesday we bring them around and take care of customer emails and contacts. Well, I would like to be finally a gardener again on Wednesday and Thursday, because that was what it is all about. Once... And then when you work with your hands in the mud, the phone rings again. You phone gets covered in mud, and the work stops again. So, at some point you have too much things at the same time. And I really try to structure it well, that I really have days I can go just to spend at something particular. But of course, that never succeeds' (26:30). It is important to make your customers understand your structure. Also the writing many invoices and administrative chores that go with the direct contact cost much time (44:15).

**General - Nice soil and environment enable to produce and offset good quality products.** According to the respondents the soil he has is of extraordinary good quality, which results in the production of good quality vegetables. Normally the fertile top layer is about 40 cm, but here it is about 70 to 80 cm. 'So, I have very good fertile soil which delivers me really good products. For organic production you are really dependent on preconditions, well I found very good preconditions. I can produce really nice products' (1:03:47). Also the natural environment, which is a (bio) diverse landscape, is helpful for a good production. For instance the insect that live there in the nature, are also functional for the farm; they help pollinate the flowers and fruit crops (1:04:36). This latter aspect does not affect the direct marketing performance.

**General - Product that is non-hybrid<sup>13</sup> and tasty is effective in attracting customers and strengthening customer relation.** The respondent mentions that the fact he works as much as possible with non-hybrid species' (he also breeds them with a friend), which gives him a tastier product. That turns out to be good and unique selling point in terms of customer relation (20:24). 'You can show it and let customers taste it. [...] That certainly woke up a group of clients that really appreciate it. So, this [non-hybrid breeding] is actually converted in customer loyalty' (22:57).

**General - Variety of work and customer contact fosters job satisfaction.** The respondent has mentioned (as part of rationale) that he likes the variety in his work (10:46). And also the customer contact with customer fosters job satisfaction (25:16).

#### 4.3.3 Factors related to company infrastructure

**CSA / Box scheme - Too unique structure; there are no colleagues around for collaboration.** The respondent mentions that there are no farmers close by with similar box schemes: 'It is rather unique, not in the Netherlands, but here in the area' (38:56). He mentions that this is a bottleneck:

'I would like to have colleagues to cooperate with. I believe the demand is high enough. But now I have to keep pulling my own cart all the time. It would be nice if you can pull it a bit wider, and accelerate together without losing the concept. [...] I think that is a bottleneck: I feel a bit like Remy' (39:00).

The respondent feels that collaboration would provide the opportunity to ease the box scheme marketing a bit more for everyone.

**General - Box scheme and farm shop complement each other.** The respondent mentions that the box scheme marketing, the farm shop and the running of the garden are interrelated. It is one business structure. But the box scheme is the financial motor of the company (15:24).

**General - Cultivation plans and box scheme schedule limit (labour and time) efficiency.** The box scheme requires the farmer to grow many different crops, in serial (so not every crop is ready at the same time) (8:08). He says it is not efficient enough (09:05) 'I have to a little work here, and a little work there... I cannot produce efficient (9:10). With regard to the time schedule, Mondays and Tuesdays are days that put high pressure on the labour. On Monday they have to harvest everything, and on Tuesday the boxes are composed. He cannot do that by himself. Marieke and a volunteer need to help out. 'We get it done, but is... it are days of high pressure' (18:21).

**General - Capacity to hire experienced trainee alleviates labour pressure (can take over marketing parts) and fosters job satisfaction.** The respondent mentions that this year the labour pressure is expected to be lower, because they have a paid intern (28:27). He may help with customer relations.

#### 4.3.4 Contextual factors

**General - Government support does not reach farmer.** The respondent feels that governmental support is not effective. If there are subsidies available he is often too small for getting them (42:25). He argues that the bureaucracy also deprives opportunities to foster collaborative direct marketing initiatives: He has enough plans to propel collaboration or work on food and agriculture marketing in the area, not only for him (52:50), but he feels that the bulk of the money that is available for this remains in bureaucratic spheres or consultancy

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<sup>13</sup> Non-hybrid are types

and does not end 'on the ground' (50:28). 'Then nothing happens. And that happens way too much. I think it is a shame. Really, it upsets me' (51:28). The respondent mentions that with regard to marketing ideas, he therefore wants with entrepreneurs, not with (bureaucratic) governmental officers or consultancy.

**General - Misuse of green image by others, leads to confused customers.** The respondent mentions that regularly his green image and story of local food is misused. In a shop his picture was posted, suggesting that his products were there, but that was not the case (53:36). The same occurred on the menu of a nearby restaurant. It has improved, and direct links have been removed, but still the message of the restaurant owner is confusing for customers. He thinks it is annoying to explain it: 'It is not in my interest, my story is getting mixed up, and I have to explain to my customers that it is not right. I think that is really bothersome' (53:36). He mentions that he has to be alert and is still confronted with that (54:24).

**General - Increased societal attention for local food.** The respondent notices increased societal attention for food. He experiences that in many ways (1:02:18). He feels that the demand is high (39:00).

## 4.4 Veld en Beek

### 4.4.1 Background

Veld en Beek stems from the idea of Jan Wieringa who had a dream to become an organic farmer. He wanted to produce organic dairy and started gathering a group of customers that would be interested in a more long-term relationship with the farm. With enough consumers being interested he started keeping cows in 1999, in different places and rented areas close to Wageningen (3:01). Three years ago, Veld and Beek managed to buy a farm in Doorwerth, livestock and processing equipment (3:55). Nowadays four farmers run the farm. Geert-Jan van der Burgt, the respondent, entered since two years the partnership of farmers. He is responsible for the milk processing and distribution of the products. He was already longer involved with the company as a volunteer and consumer (I-1:30).

The structure of the company and its marketing channel is rather unique. The farmers produce dairy, meat and vegetables that they distribute to five pick up points, refrigerated trailers, in Wageningen, Oosterbeek, Bennekom, Renkum and Doorwerth (the farm) every Thursday evening or Friday morning (9:15). In order to get access to these products, one has to become a member of the cooperative foundation Veld en Beek (for 2.50 euro's per year). Once a member, consumers get a key of one of the trailers. The members can enter the trailer at every hour of the week (3:01). There one can get the product he ordered (bottled dairy products, weekly) via internet/email, or obtain other products via 'Pak en Schrijf'. The latter are products that are always available, and do not need to be ordered (members can 'take' the products, and 'write it down' in the administration at trailer). Most members have a default order, a 'subscription' (13:14), but they are flexible in changing that at any point in time: being a member does not obliged consumer to order or buy products every week (13:34). At the end of the month the members pay through automatic deduction (5:55). Products are packed in refillable bottles.

The farmers own the company Veld and Beek which owns the land, and the farm. The foundation Veld and Beek, that has currently 1500 (consumer) members, owns the livestock. From a legal perspective, it is important to note that the farm does not *sell* products to *consumers*, but supplies its members with products. It is an internal supply for the 1500 members of cooperation/foundation. The farmers are paid by the cooperation for the *service* of taking care of the livestock and producing products (I-2:50). It can be considered as a 100% internal delivery (I-3:52). With regard to product marketing the farm does not collaborate with other farmers (34:42). The members can do suggestions about the products or assortment, however the farmers decide (11:50). There is general meeting (ALV in Dutch) every year for the members where the finances and the whereabouts of the foundation are discussed. Usually around 30 or 40 members show up. The respondent mentions that most of the members may not realize that they are member of a foundation (10:11).

The researcher regarded this type of marketing scheme related to CSA and box scheme, due to the longer-term commitment of consumer through a membership. It is different from a buying group in the sense that all orderings are done individually (while in a buying group ordering are done collectively). The respondent mentions however that this system is not as far going as a CSA scheme, because the farmers still own the farm. 'The members [that is the cooperation] have nothing to do with the labour, the vegetable garden, the

equipment' (1:53). There is also no risk sharing for the customers, all the (economic) risks are for the farmers (39:20).

And, as mentioned above, the farmer started the farm in order to connect with the consumer, or have a long-term relationship. The four farmers need to generate an income out of the farm. The respondent mentions they are satisfied with the system. The turnover has almost doubled (4:27), due to a growth of the amount of members. The farmers plan to keep the system as such, but aim to innovate by introducing automatic registration of the customer at the refrigerated trailers.

#### 4.4.2 Factors related to customer segment

**Trust is key to a good performance of the system.** The respondent mentions that trust between consumer and producer is an important aspect of this system:

'That's a little reflected in the newspaper Headline [...] in the Telegraaf... I believe it is; "Farmer Jan sells trust". And that is the essence. You give confidence to consumers that they are honest with writing down what they take home. And conversely, we gain the trust of consumers that we produce our high-quality products on time, and provide it to our members. That is a powerful concept' (6:56).

According to the respondent mutual trust is appointed as a fostering factor of the functioning of the system.

**Accessibility of system enables to involve many consumers on a constant basis (loyalty).** The low entry barrier, a 2,50 membership fee, fosters the accessibility for consumers. It is a simple system for the customer (14:38). Although there is no obligation to order, the weekly orderings make sure that there is a constant flow of sales (12:51). There is a high amount of loyalty; the members do not suddenly go away (correction respondent).

**Distribution system limits type of products that are at offer.** The respondent mentions that the recent growth is mostly due to an increase of member. They are discussing in what way they can grow further, because people are not just going to buy more basic dairy (there is no much stretch in that). In order to grow further they are offering vegetables to the same members, however it is not easy to suit that into the current distribution system. With regard to the vegetables they can only grow and offer crops that have a long shelf life (5:55).

'For example, lettuce, is a very tasty product. In the vegetable section in the store you have to spray [lettuce] three times a day, or eight times a day. And we get there [at the trailer] once a week. Is it possible? [...] Last year we tried it. But that did not work out right. So lettuce we do not sell anymore. That is not because the foundation does not want it, but because of the logistics. It is not solvable within our current system' (15:08).

The producers would like to offer more products, but have to limit themselves to products that have a long shelf life, can be easily stored and are available for a longer period (e.g. potatoes, onions, carrots) (15:46).

**Customer relationships based on trust limits company costs.** In principle the customer members can steal products rather easily. Once in while they check if this might be the case, but it has never been a reason to adapt the system. Moreover, as said above, this trust is key and it decreases economic costs: '[...] we are not going to do it in such a way that we can register it [stealing]. [...] That's a very clear choice to keep that trust. And there is also an economic reasoning behind this. Then you have to do stock registration, and personal registration... That does not fit our system' (7:36).

**Adequate dealing with customer feedback fosters the trust relationship and sales.** Consumers have the opportunity to contact the farmers, for instance when they have a question, when something is wrong with the refrigerated trailer or when there is something with the ordering or with the product. He mentions that they respond to feedback seriously, and when there is a problem they take the time to solve it. The consumer appreciates this according to respondent (19:36). He mentions that it is worth the time to do this; it helps to keep customers with a relatively constant purchase aboard: 'Look, if you sell someone a bottle of milk, that is 1.25 [Euros]. But if someone has a weekly order of 1.25 per week, now that is something else. Because, in theory you lose 10 years of sales if that person steps out' (19:08).



**Special member agreement enhances flexibility within production.** For the most part, Veld en Beek provides individual members with products. However they have a few 'institutional members' (organizations) that purchase a larger amount of products for a lower price. They can only get the products if there is left after delivery to individual members. If not the institutional members do not get provided. This flexible relationship enables the farmers to deal with fluctuation in production and orderings, while still being capable of fulfilling the individual members demand (0:07).

#### 4.4.3 Factors related to company infrastructure

**Location of the farm fosters the sales.** The farm is based in an area with many 'potential customers'. In Wageningen and surroundings live many inhabitants that are high educated and have above-average earnings. The respondent mentions that they are not particularly aiming at these type of customers, but he guesses that most of the clients fulfil this profile. This fosters the sales (21:46).

**Ability to develop automation fosters consumers' accessibility and relieves labour pressure.** Although currently not running yet, the automation system will foster the consumers to obtain the products, but moreover it will relieve administrative labour pressure

**Thinking outside the [organic] box and using existing structures fosters working of distribution system.** The respondent mentions that are good at thinking outside the box, illustrated by the fact of how they develop the automation. They want to have a good working system, and included not only new solutions offered by organic companies.

'It is fine to use 95% existing software, and adjust it for the other 5%. [...] It is beneficial to build upon on existing structures. [...] You do not have to do everything yourself. So, that implies that we are unique sales system with members, a delivery system with members that partially order and partial 'Pak en Schrijf', that is put into a regular business software package. It is as simple as that (37:13).

In this way, the respondent argues, they managed to develop a good system.

**Company structure enabled farmers to obtain farm, livestock and processing machinery that is necessary to provide a constant flow of products.** This structure is chosen because then it was possible to buy the farm and livestock. They wanted to reduce uncertainty and the continuous urge to find temporary locations etcetera.

**Foundation structure enables to produce milk freely (without milk quatum) for the members.** Furthermore they have no problems with milk quota anymore, because they are a 100% internal delivery: the activities of the farm are, according to the respondent, not part of the (world) market. In this way the farmers are free to produce as much as they want. 'We do not have a milk quota. We think we do not need, because every Dutchman may own a cow, of which he may drink the milk from. We do not need a quota, because we have no cows. The consumers own the cows indirectly, and he drinks his own milk. In other words, we believe it is a quota market regulation mechanism. And we act out of the market' (28:08).

#### 4.4.4 Contextual factors

**Unique product and service leads to little competition** - The respondents experience currently no competition, because their system and their products and their marketing scheme is rather unique. Only when a farmer starts selling products in a similar structure in the area, they may experience competition, but this is currently not the case (24:00).

**Increased societal attention to local food.** The increased societal attention fosters the marketing of the products (35:56).

**Policies and regulations complicate functioning of (innovative) system.** Some policies and regulation inhibit the functioning of the system of Veld and Beek. For instance, the respondent mentions that they have a disagreement with the controlling body of dairy. The farmers believe that it is important to be checked by a third party, in order to ensure quality and hygiene. However, they think they do this check on a voluntary basis, because they are not an industrial market party: As said, they deliver products to the internal members. The

controlling body thinks Veld en Beek is obliged to be checked by them and they are also obliged to fulfill to all the requirements. They disagree with regard to two requirements. The first one is the labeling (currently there is no label on the bottle, but information is given above the products and by the color of the cap) and the second one is the sealing of the bottles. The respondent mentions that this not says anything about the quality and hygiene of the products, and that the controlling body cannot insist, because of the internal stream of products. If they have to fulfill these requirements, this will complicate and lead to extra labor (30:09). It is still unsure whether they have to adapt their bottling system (32:24). The problem behind it is that in general regulation is lagging behind societal developments, as for instance the novel structure they have.

'I think on the one hand, the government strongly calls for more responsibility of the individual citizens. Take more initiative [...]. But the legislation lags behind, and therefore its controlling organization lags behind accordingly. They cannot do differently, because they must abide by the rules' (32:50).

The same accounts for local government. After years of being tolerated they are not allowed to have the trailer in the city of Wageningen anymore, because of the local land use plan. The issue here is that it is unclear what actually happens at these refrigerated trailers: 'Are there products being sold? No, there are no products for sale there. It is only a pick up point for products. What is that in terms of the land use plan? Is it retail? Is it storage? Is it...?' (29:06). The local government argues the activities conflict with the land use plan, yet it is unclear what the requirements are in this case. The farmers try to solve the issues with dialogue.

## 4.5 De Raatakker

### 4.5.1 Background

The Raatakker is a vegetable garden in Wekerom close to the Veluwe. The garden is run by Ravi van Marissing for seven years. First he had a partner within the company, but now he works on his own. The farmer rents currently 2 acres of land to grow his vegetables. He mainly offset its product at the organic farmers' market every Friday in Utrecht, which he has done since the start. In fact he was invited and started to sell vegetables at this market, before he had rent his own land. So it started with the marketing channel (I-00:01:58). At this market the respondents also sells products of other nearby farmers and from wholesales. He considers delivering through a box scheme and a buying group in Amersfoort. At the market he has personnel.

The respondent explains that he decided to sell at farmers' market because he wanted to have contact with the customers, and needs to get an income. He worked at box scheme farm before, yet that did not fulfils that need. At the farmers' markets you can really talk with them (I-3:00 & II-18:24). And, the market offers a stable income: 'I realized that it is not only fun, but also somewhat lucrative, more lucrative than growing vegetables. It (the farmers' market) has become the basis, it is the engine of my business actually. It gives a steady income, all year round. And that is very nice' (I-4:02). The respondent mentions that he is content with the performance of the market: 'I did not expect that it would grow this much. And it still grows, it is unbelievable' (I-7:22). Furthermore he mentions that he gets a better price then selling to wholesalers (I-4:58).

### 4.5.2 Factors related to customer segment

**Different products foster attraction of customer.** According to the respondent you have to understand the demand of customer. He argues that offering a different assortment then in you find in shops, attracts customers (I-9:39).

**Different expectations are sometimes frustrating.** The respondent experiences sometimes expectations of customers that do not match reality: 'It is sometimes frustrating that people think that you grow all the foods your self.' And he does not. He says that misunderstanding about this between customer and him occurs. 'Customers of the other vegetable stall [at the same farmers market] are sensitive for this. That customer only wants products of farmers from local vegetable gardens, or a box scheme from the region'. He thinks sometimes the expectations of customers are too high (II-1:37). He also gets comments that he is not regional enough with regard to Utrecht. This may lead to loss of customers.

**Running the market and the farm takes a lot of time.** The respondent mentions that time is an issue. He has a lot of work but time is scarce. To illustrate this he mentions that he often gets a questions about why he does

not start selling at another market; 'Nobody knows how much work a market is. Of course it is possible [to start a stall at another market]. But the point is to remain a farmer. I do not want to become a trader (II-16:48).

**Customer friendliness and nice appearance of the market stall fosters the attraction of customers.** 'I think we secretly are doing very well, in terms of product range and customer friendliness and appearance. That is what we get back. [...] people are having fun doing their shopping here. And, people are so surprised at what we all have. There are simply more and more customers' (II-5:42).

**Renovation inhibits market performance and attractiveness for customers.** There is a renovation site close to the market. Nobody, not the local government thought about the impact it has on the farmers at the farmers' market. It causes a lot of nuisance, and a lot of hassle. The respondent thinks it influence the market performance (II-8:30).

#### 4.5.3 Factors related to company infrastructure

**Capacity to know your limits helps to keep it job satisfaction.** It is an important factor to do this type of work. And you have to understand your own capacity and boundaries (II-9:39). According to the respondent it depends on the people whether something works or not (II-11:41).

**Capability to create balanced crop plan between consumer demand and own capacity.** The respondents seems capable of creating a crop plan that suits the. He argues that there is always a demand for lettuce, and growing that is something to distinguish your self from others. However it is practically not possible for him to grow this: 'If you sell 70 heads of lettuce sales every week, and I have to buy at least 150 plants per one kind when purchasing from plant grower. And I want to have five kinds of lettuce at market. So then I have to buy 750 plants every week. That is practically not possible. So, I like it very much my own course' (II-18:56). On the other hand he decided to grow marrowfat peas and regular peas, because they are demanded as well. Those are not the easiest crop, but they supplement the assortment (ibid.).

**Growing diverse crops puts pressure on income.** The farmer says that the diversity and small scale of the crops he grows does not give him much income (II-05:42).

**Limited labour / time capacity limits growing more varieties of crops.** The respondent mentions that he would like to grow more crops. But the distribution and administration would be impossible for him to cope with as he works by him self (00:10:48-0). He is therefore dependent on wholesales (II-1:37).

**Location of farm inhibits attraction of customer.** The respondent mentions that he does not mind the distance from Utrecht, however it is difficult for him to get the customer at his land. He would like to. 'The distance is simply to high, but that is just like that in Utrecht, it is almost impossible to get closer'. There is just not enough agricultural land around Utrecht according to the respondent (II-3:27).

**Complementary partnership with nearby farmers helps to provide in a varied offer.** The respondents collects other crops and fruits from nearby farmers. There are oral agreements made during wintertime on who is going to grow which crops. Those agreements are made based on everyone's experience and preference. 'Sowing rucalo and baby leafs I do not like, while others enjoy doing that every week. [...] Everyone has his own strength; I like working with machines. That the potatoes come from my farm is therefore obvious' (II-4:57).

**Box scheme (expectation) - Expected high amount of administrative work scares of.** The respondent considers offsetting products through a box scheme, however he is reluctant to the amount of administrative work (I-4:58)

**Box scheme (expectation) - The obligation to grow a certain amount of crops.** The respondent feels that CSA / box schemes creates an extra responsibility of growing a wide variety of crops to which you may not be able to fulfil (I-4:58).

**Buying group - other weekly rhythms make it impossible to supply.** The respondent explains that he would like to supply buying groups. 'I am a huge proponent. But I notice that I just have too little time to do it right. I have to make sure that on Sunday - which is so opposed to my weekly rhythm - there is an order list available' (II-9:46).

**Buying group - No distinctive products available limits attractiveness for buying group to order.** It is also difficult to get in to the buying groups, because there are already many farmers involved that offer similar products. He argues he is not distinctive enough (II-11:06).

#### 4.5.4 Contextual factors

**High attention for local food.** On the one hand the growing attention to local and organic food fosters the ability to reach customers (II-7:22). City people want to reconnect with the agricultural land more nowadays (II-11:41) Yet for certain crops, potatoes, the respondent experiences there is less demand than there is offered at the *market*; The competition is higher (II-6:11).

### 4.6 De Stroese Dame

#### 4.6.1 Background

De Stroese Dame is a brand of goat cheese that is produced at a 7,5 acre farm in Stroe (at the Veluwe) (2:04). Harry van Wenum took over the farm from his parents (that ran a cow dairy farm before) and runs it now together with his wife. They sell their cheese at the weekly farmers' market in Utrecht. People can also buy cheese at their farm, but they do not have a shop (they have to call in advance) (4:57). Sometimes they organize on-farm activities and tours. Then they also offer visitors the opportunity to buy cheese. During the year they sell also at some occasional markets, for instance at the Slowfood market in Barneveld. These direct sales account approximately the half of the sales. They also sell indirectly through restaurant, among them a Michelin restaurant in Zwolle, and some shops.

The respondent mentions that wanted to become a farmer, but seeing his parents being trapped in the farmers' squeeze (up scaling of the farm), he wanted to do it differently. He also did not want to farm on a large-scale, because of the environmental issues. After internships at several farms they decided to farm with goats. 'Then we finally saw a concept that appealed to me a lot; being a goat farmer that also processed its own product into cheese, milk and meat, and market that directly at farmers' markets. [...] It is an interesting way to keep the margins on your product for yourself, instead of bringing that away to all kind of wholesalers and factories (6:36). The farmers' market is an important pillar of the company (11:00). The respondent explains that it is much fun to bring products to the city, because it is how it was done in the Middle Ages as well. Furthermore he mentions that it is much fun to talk with the customers (10:28). The respondent mentions he is happy with the performance at the farmers market, but there are also some caveats (10:28). He feels there should be much more possible if you regard the amount of (rich) people that live in Utrecht and surroundings (11:49).

On the market they try to collectively improve the service for customers by facilitating a farmers' market web shop. Customers can then order their groceries online, which they can collect at the market in the afternoon (20:56). In this way they want to reach people that do not have much time to shop (19:20). According to the respondent this initiative is still in its infancy. He argues that they need to further develop; to market it better and expand it with delivery service instead of a pick up service in order to make it attractive for customers (21:35).

#### 4.6.2 Factors related to customer segment

**Prejudice about goat cheese limits sales.** The respondent feels that there are prejudices on goat cheese. He thinks that the first reaction of many people has a negative connotation, because they only tasted goat cheese from the factory:

'The first response is negative. Also because [...] when they taste it, they taste cheese that comes from the factory. And that is simply not tasty. This may sound weird, but goat milk is a very sensitive product, more sensitive than cow milk. And if you milk the goats, and pump it into a tank, and then a car comes that pumps it out of that tank to slosh it to the factory. And there it is pumped again, and then it is heated, and pasteurized... You know, in this way the milk is broken before cheese is made. The fat particles move apart and then a strong flavour appear, that is 'goats' air' (32:27).

While the respondent mentions that if you taste their cheese, which is only pumped once and freshly produced, you see that it tastes way better, which also very easy to digest. Yet, he mentions that is difficult to persuade consumers to taste it:

[...] you really have to convince people sometimes "taste it, this is something quite different" And even then, when people actually try it, they still can not taste it because it [the prejudice, ed] is stuck in their head. So we definitely run into these prejudices (33:00).

**Product is unique and highly priced; this scares of customers.** The cheese the respondent sells is rather highly priced, much higher than conventional factory cow cheese. The costs of producing cheese from organic, goat *and* raw milk increase the costs drastically. Therefore only a limited amount of consumers are able to buy it. He argues that is also why they sell in the city; more people are around there that can afford it (35:24). In the area where the farm is based people are not interested in his cheese (36:03).

**Positive feedback fosters loyal consumer contact, sales and job satisfaction.** The direct consumer contact, enables to get feedback from the customers that 'You'll get to see what people want, what they like, and how they appreciate it. You also see that many people are very much involved with the products and the companies. At Open Farm days we always get many people from Utrecht that come visit [our farm]. They want to know where their food comes from. I think that is amazing. It is so much fun. It is very nice... And of course, in this way you get a very good price for your product (10:28).

**Getting peoples' attention is difficult because people are already overwhelmed with information.** The respondent mentions marketing communication is difficult because people are already overwhelmed with information. The respondent mentions ironically: 'There are still people coming that say, "Hey, a farmers' market here in Utrecht, that is so nice! Is this new?" Yes, since twenty years! [...] Then I think, how is that possible? It is so difficult to get publicity. We have been on the radio several times, and broadcasted on the local television (17:52)'. He feels that many (city) people walk on the market, but do not really see what they are looking at. Sometimes people do not realize that they are buying goat cheese, unless he tells them. Or, customers ask him if he has goat cheese, while this is the only product he has (34:09).

**Renovation inhibits attractiveness of market for consumers** – Close to the farmers' market there is lengthy renovation going on that decreases the attractiveness for customers to enter the market. There is much nuisance of dust and noise (47:23). Furthermore the local government has moved the bicycle parking and the bus stop, which decreases the accessibility for customers. 'These external circumstances, in which we have no influence on, have become very problematic lately. They have a negative effect' (48:00).

#### 4.6.3 Factors related to company infrastructure

**Well thought through business plan helped in making time for direct sales.** The respondent mentions that they carefully thought about the structure and the feasibility of their business. They thought thorough about the amount of goats that would be needed. He argues that they made a good choice to include a serious amount time and money for the product processing and direct sales into their business plan, which helped them to do the direct marketing better. 'If you do not think about these aspects as a company in advance, but you just start milking, and only then you might start thinking about that you want to make a product your self... You might just be able to that. But then you may already have too many animals in stock, and you have a much higher milk production than you can handle [...]. And then you certainly have no time left for selling your product' (8:19). He argues that you almost have to sell your products to wholesales, and then you will have no influence on the price (9:20). He sees some of his colleagues at the farmers' market struggling with this lack of time and attention to marketing of the products.

**Professional approach to marketing foster publicity and sales.** The respondent mentions that they have chosen a professional marketing approach, because initially the sales lagged behind (22:43). A graphic designer and a marketer helped the farmers thinking about the core qualities of the company and the story (about what and who they are) they would be able to communicate to the customers. It was an intense process according to the respondent, but they managed to come up with a strong name (Stroese Dame), a strong logo, nice flyers and banners and a clear story (e.g. illustrating their 'craftsmanship') that they could easily communicate. This investment worked very well. 'It was for our company a big boost. We were suddenly much more recognizable,

and we were approached much more for events, and the sales went up (29:40). The farmers also successfully pitched their product and (marketing) story at a contest, with a result that their cheese is now served in a top restaurant of Johnny de Boer in Zwolle (29:02). The respondent doubts if this specific achievement also led to more recognition by local customers. Sometimes customers ask for the 'Johnny de Boer' cheese, but that occurs limited (31:05). That also might be because of the fact that the respondent is modest in showing this achievement (31:19).

**Variety of work and limited capacity to hire labour leads to high labour pressure.** The respondent mentions that they still have too little time and too much work. It is though, because 'you have three professions' (37:02). They have no means to hire employees, because to cover the high labour costs they would be forced to upscale their farm. And that is what they did not want in the first place (37:46). Instead they make other choices: They earlier also sold at the farmers' market in Apeldoorn, but due to the high labour pressure decided to sell only at the Utrecht Farmers' market, and also a bit more to shops. That gave them more room to focus on the marketing activities for Utrecht market (38:00). Sometimes also clients of the nearby care farm come help (39:32).

**Location of the farm limits to get people at his farm (but is not a problem for offsetting).** Being 50 kilometres away from the city is not a problem for the farmers. They are in Utrecht very fast (40:31). But it is sometimes a problem for the respondent to get customers to the farm (43:02). However still some people take the effort, also because raw milk goat cheese is so unique (43:15). Furthermore an initiative that wanted foster local food production and consumption in Utrecht regarded the farm to be too far away to be considered as local (more than 5 km away), and was therefore excluded. He thinks that is an unrealistic approach.

**Farmers' collective marketing plan raised attention to farmers' market.** The respondent put much effort in professionalizing the farmers' market. First he developed and helped implementing a marketing project for two years supported with funding of the province of Utrecht (15:15). Another marketing project he initiated a few years later, focused on the collaboration between the farmers and further professionalization at the farmers' market. The EU funded this. The respondent mentions that these projects have yielded 'in any case the name recognition, logo's and improved appearance of the market' (15:25), and extra activities where organized at the special seasonal markets to make the market attractive. They also put in effort to show to the customers that they are real farmers: 'Many people do not realize that. They think it is all trade. In this way we try to illustrate our added value' (17:09). Every week they create recipes with a grocery list, of which the products are all available at the market. 'Many people find this very nice. And it works too!' (16:06). By means of a contest they managed to get e-mail addresses of customers. In this way they are able to communicate customers directly with a newsletter and sales offers (17:00). They also make use of an improved website, Facebook and Twitter (17:09). He mentions that it pays off: ' [...] you saw an increase of the revenue of all the stallholders. And the market became attractive for new stallholders as well (15:30).

**Collaborative marketing approach is inhibited by limited time or capacity of colleagues.** The respondent mentions that he is very much involved with marketing of the farmers' market. He develops the recipes, and runs the website etcetera. He mentions that it is difficult to collaborate with the other farmer with regard to joint marketing efforts. He feels that either they are too busy, or they do not see the importance of it (18:24). He thinks that is a pity. 'Because I think that if you do it together, you have a bigger reach (18:50). For instance on Facebook they can reach 450 people (through 'likes') but only one or two farmers post something on the Facebook page once in a while (19:00).

#### 4.6.4 Contextual factors

**Much competition of convenience marketing channels.** The respondent experiences much competition in Utrecht. Traditionally Utrecht has always had some good organic shops, and currently even more and more organic shops and organic supermarket appear. And this takes away customers from the market: 'In the shopping mall in Nieuwegein recently came a new Ekoplaza [*that is an organic supermarket chain*]. We always got many customers from that area. And now they do the groceries there... That is also what they tell me like 'you probably won't see me that often anymore, because we now have an Ekoplaza nearby' (12:21). The respondent mentions that people like the products, but it is more convenient for them to go to a store nearby, where you can buy other products as well, and keeps you dry when it rains (12:40).

**Cheese factories market unsafe image of raw milk.** The respondent mentions that Dutch cheese factories that produce pasteurized cheeses, do not like the presence of raw milk cheese at the market. 'It is only due to the fact that France and Italy have many raw milk cheeses and find it important, that it [production of raw milk cheese] is still protected on European level' (44:00). Yet instead, factories have the power to perform public marketing activities in which raw milk cheese is negatively connoted with regard to health risks, while the safety of their products is emphasized (44:30). The respondent mentions that this is unjust; he argues that pasteurized milk is harder to digest, and people get more and more milk allergy. 'While you don't get that [allergy] from raw milk' (44:57). This unsafe image presses on the popularity of raw milk cheese in the Netherlands.

**Good local market policy preserves clear and trustable image of farmers' market.** The respondent mentions that the local government has constructed one of the best policies on farmers' markets in the Netherlands. Only producers are allowed, and a SKAL certificate is required. There is no 'grey area' of producers that are not organic yet etcetera. (13:45). This fosters the credibility of the farmers' market.

**Bike policy of local government inhibits accessibility for consumers.** In the last year the local government of Utrecht has implemented a strict policy on bike parking. If people park their bikes outside the appointed areas, the bikes are being removed. 'Then the customers just don't come anymore; they stay away, because they cannot access the market with the bike' (47:30).

## 4.7 De Kooihoek

### 4.7.1 Background

De Kooihoek is a milk sheep farm in Exel. Freek Atema runs the farm together with his wife. They make cheese from the sheep milk. They sell their products directly at the weekly farmers' market in Utrecht for 25 years (since the start of the market), and indirectly to a stallholder at the farmers' market in Amsterdam, wholesale and shops (00:7). They offer a variety of products at the Utrecht farmers' market, including hard and fresh cheeses. For indirect sales they only produce hard cheeses (00:38). He also sells sheepskins at the farmers' market. The market in Utrecht represents currently around 1/3 of the total income.

The respondent mentions that it is good to be among people and to have contact with the customer. And he likes it to be able to sell a variety of products. The farmer mentions that he is content with the performance of the market. It is also a good variety to away from the farm ones a week (5:53).

### 4.7.2 Factors related to customer segment

**Sheep cheese is special product that limits the attraction of customers.** The respondent experiences that consumers are not used to sheep cheese. People are more comfortable with cow cheese. His product may therefore limit the attraction of customers (9:34).

**Consumers accept different quality or other product, which limits loss of products.** It is also possible to sell products that have another quality that a wholesales would never want to buy. 'Sometimes it occurs that the texture of cheese is a bit different. That cheese you cannot sale to wholesales. But if you let people taste it at the market, than they may like it'(3:39) and buy it. The last years this worked well. This also accounts for sausages that are made of some older sheep; the wholesales do not want them, however at the farmers' market the respondent is able to sell them (3:50).

### 4.7.3 Factors related to company infrastructure

**Location of farm is distant from farmers' market.** The farmer mentions that the farm is located more than an hour drive from the market in Utrecht. He mentions that is not ideal, it takes a lot of time. But he says he has to: 'There are little markets present at the location of my farm' (9:40). The people in the surrounding of Exel are not interested in sheep cheese. Nevertheless he feels that the location of his farm is beautiful (15:26).

**Variety of work and limited capacity to hire labour leads to high labour pressure.** The respondent argues that selling at the farmers' market requires much labour. On the market day he starts at 7 AM and ends at 9 PM. The preparation for the market including the products takes a lot of time (5:00). He mentions that he is not

sure whether the extra labour with selling at the farmers' market can beat the less labour intensive indirect sales in financial terms. But he says not to be interested in that too much and points out that selling directly is much more fun (5:53). Also, he is not interested in hiring more people to help him out. He mentions that he likes it to be in control. Financially it would not be possible to do that, also the extra administration it would require would not help him (14:43).

**Different ideas of stallholders inhibit collaboration.** To some extent the farmers at the Utrecht farmers' market work together in bringing more customers to the market. The respondent mentions that he has his own style of selling to his customers, and is not always happy with the way his neighbouring colleges approach it. 'I do not like it so much to sell pushy' (12:23). He refrains himself a bit from that.

#### 4.7.4 Contextual factors

**Strict hygienic regulation limits especially smallholder farmer.** The respondent mentions that hygienic regulations sometimes inhibit his opportunities. For instance, he is not able to sell raw milk at the farmers' market, while customers request it. He mentions that it is good that such regulations exist, but it would be beneficial that, especially for small farmers, some regulation were a bit less demanding. He mentions that he more or less learned to cope with these types of regulations.

**Increased attention to local and organic food.** According to the respondent local and organic products are increasingly getting societal attention. He mentions that this increased attention occurs only in certain levels of society; nevertheless he feels that it is growing (11:24). 'You won't hear me complain about that' (11:35).

### 4.8 De Knotwilg

#### 4.8.1 Background

Jaap and Yvonne van den Boon run a vegetable garden of 7 acre in the Beemster, nearby Amsterdam (31:20). They currently sell at the Noordermarkt in Amsterdam on Saturday, and in The Hague on Wednesday. Their garden is fully adapted to selling at farmers' markets: in order to have a constant supply for the market they grow many different crops, that can be harvested at different point in times (in serial) (1:40). They also offer products that naturally grow at their farm (like nettles) (5:50). As their specialty they offer soft fruits in summer. They complement their assortment with purchases from wholesales, that is directly delivered at the markets, and from nearby farmers (28:02). At the market they also sell a few vegetable boxes (9:00). Furthermore the farmers supply two buying groups. Those marketing channels proceed however with difficulties (21:44). Previously they also run a farm shop and a road stand, but they stopped with that (8:03). The farmers have in total around have 20 employees working in the garden and on the markets (27:28).

The farmers chose to offset on farmers' market because they feel they did not have another choice. Previously they sold products to wholesalers, but that did not work well for them (see below), so they started selling at farmers' market in the 80s (0:41). They feel that there is no other way in offsetting, because they are too small for wholesales (2:31). But in addition she says that they do not want it differently anymore, because they think the consumer contact is important as well (3:27). 'We want to contribute to creating awareness of [people in] the city. That people taste and experience the farmland' (33:00). They are happy with the performance of the market (6:58).

#### 4.8.2 Factors related to customer segment

**Farmers' market - Increased quality of the market fosters the attraction of customers and is competitive advantage compared to other shops.** The respondents mention that the quality of products they deliver on the market is much better than compared to a chain of wholesales and shops. Together with their colleagues they can provide customers with a broad assortment. They think that is why they are able to deal with the raise of many organic and food shops like Marqt (12:04). Also they say: 'We can clearly tell the customers where their food is from'. According to them those shops cannot (13:08).

**Farmers' market - Farmers' experience helps selecting suitable markets.** The respondents feel that they are quite experienced in making choice what markets may be a success or not (after some trial and error) (14:53). They feel they also learned what products suits to their markets, and that you have to sell what your good at:



'You have to know what you are doing. [...] In the beginning, in The Hague, the market was not running so well. And then I thought 'maybe I should start selling herbs. But that was not so smart. You could better invest in [...] your uniqueness, instead of expanding continuously' (15:05).

**Farmers' market - Consumers accept different qualities that limit loss of products.** The respondents feel that products with a different quality do not need to be wasted. They argue that have more control, and can lower prices if that is necessary (35:16).

**Farmers' market - No clear message at farmers' market (not all is organic) may confuse customer.** The respondents mention that unclarity about a non-organic stallholder at the market leads to confused messaging to the customer. They think that may damage the trustworthy image of the market (25:00).

**Farmers' market - Balance of different types of market stalls is required to gain a good income.** The respondents feel that the market should offer a wide variety of stallholders. That is currently the case on both markets, but previously at The Hague market there were eleven vegetable stalls and only one dairy stall. This resulted in limited sales for them (26:53). They mention that the specialty of each stallholder now, keeps the balance right. 'It would be difficult for us, if suddenly a stall with berries would come at the market. [...] That would be disastrous' (23:15).

**Buying group - Mismatch of expectations limits sales.** The respondents feel that the expectations of customers within the buying group do not match the possibilities of the farmers (16:33). Of one of the buying groups the respondent (she) mentions:

'They want you to make a list of products fourteen days in advance, or ten days in advance. And in February, for example, they say 'we want a nice fresh supply again'. And then it is still winter. Well I had a number of products at that time, chard and some other things. But not many different crops: just a few types of products. And then they decided not to buy it, because they want at least eight different products' (16:45).

The respondents mention that the buying group may not be aware that this is not feasible for the farmers. It also occurred that the farmers had a surplus of a certain products, but also then the buying groups were not interested. The buying has turned down the opportunity to order some products several times now. Similar experiences they have with the other buying group. There are often long e-mail exchanges on the products and the price, and then it occurs that the group decides not buy products. While the respondents for instance spend a lot of time in the e-mail conversation (19:42). The discrepancy between the expectations from customers and what is feasible for the farmers might also be due the juvenility of the buying groups (17:13).

**Farm sales, road stall (experience) - Consumer relation based on trust lead to theft/unacceptable losses.** The respondents stopped with selling food at the road stall because of serious amount of theft. 'At a certain point it went wrong. And at that moment it got a snowball effect. People thought probably 'well, if stuff is getting stolen, I can do it as well'. At some point whole crates were stolen!' (8:31). Therefore they stopped with the stall.

**Farm sales, shop (experience) - Running the farm shop took too much (inefficient) time.** It was not effective enough. 'It became a meeting point for friends. So they talked a lot, but hardly bought anything. Very little sales and at the same time I could not do anything else' (8:45).

#### 4.8.3 Factors related to company infrastructure

**Farmers' market - Structure fosters constant sales of income and better planning.** The farmers markets, two times a week, offers the farmers a constant sales. They can plan much better (7:31).

**Farmers' market - Wholesalers bringing extra products to market reduces labour effort and assets needed.** The fact that products that are purchased from others are delivered at the markets makes it logistically rather easy for the farmers. They do not need a big vehicle to get the products, or put extra effort (22:10).

**Farmers' market - Complementary partnership with nearby farmer helps to provide in varied offer.** The respondents mention that the collaboration with other farmers 'works', and helps them to establish a varied offer product at the farmers' market (22:10).

#### 4.8.4 Contextual factors

**Farmers' market - Competition of convenience market stores.** The farmers appoint to experience competition of nearby organic convenient stores (e.g Marqt<sup>14</sup>) (13:08).

**General - Currently policy is not against small organic farming anymore.** The experience that policy is currently rather neutral compared to 30 years ago. At first they were rather bothered with agriculture legislation that inhibited the development of the smaller organic vegetable garden (32:11).

### 4.9 Bio Romeo

#### 4.9.1 Background

Bio Romeo is a company related to the 75 acre arable farm 'Metamorphosis' that is owned by Krispijn van den Dries, Digni van den Dries and Peter Keij. The farm sales its products indirectly to wholesales for shops and restaurants, and directly through consumers in buying groups<sup>15</sup> (1:14). Since January 2014 Rinie Pen, the respondent, is responsible for the administration, communication, cleaning, coffee and the marketing of the buying groups. She says she is like a 'jack of all trades' on the farm (2:17).

Bio Romeo started with selling to a buying group two years ago (3:19). Currently they provide twelve buying groups (16:08-8) with vegetables, fruit, eggs and cheese (3:29). These products come from their farm and fourteen nearby farms (situated within a range of 25 km from Ens) (1:14). The process is as follows: On Friday the collaborating farmers send to Rinie what products they have to offer, this may differ every week (48:06). She sends these offerings on one (excel) list to the buying group, and that will come available on a 'web shop' that is only accessible for members of that buying group on Mondays (46:56). For a week, until Sunday, the members of the buying group have the opportunity to order. After that someone collects all the orders and sends it back to Rinie on Monday before noon. She sends the orderings to all the individual farmers before 5:00 PM. All the products are collected on Tuesday from all the farms. And on Wednesday the orders are delivered to a pick up point of the buying groups by one of the farmers (each time a different farmer) with a transporter van (19:26). They are now all located within a one-hour drive from Ens (16:14). At the pick up points, members of the buying groups await the farmers to receive the order.

The buying groups work with volunteers that help with taking care of the (collective) ordering, packaging at the pick point and further distribution. Most buying groups order biweekly. According to the respondent starting buying groups consist usually of 25 to 30 families. Relatively mature buying groups consist of around 70 families. Bio Romeo has initiated a foundation 'Samen rooien' ('harvest together' in English) that aims to help starting up buying groups (3:19).

The respondent explains that they choose to market products through buying groups, because they think it is important to connect with the consumer. She says that it is important to understand the consumer:

'We want to know what do consumers thinks is really important? Does he mind if he gets a bag of beetroot in different sizes? And does the consumer care when carrots are really big and thick, or does he prefer lots of small carrots? So what is really important for consumers? Well, we discover this, now we supply directly. Now we get that kind of feedback' (11:10).

Furthermore, by marketing directly, the farmers circumvent the farmers' squeeze. In contracts with the big retailers farmers have no room for manoeuvre, for a very low price. If something goes wrong with the crops, then it will cost the farmer lots of money. Farmers have to fulfil the demand according to the contract, other wise you will get a big fine (12:55). This is also inhibiting the development of the company; it will not be able to invest in necessary innovations. So in this way Bio Romeo stays out of the farmers' squeeze and they get a

<sup>14</sup> See <http://marqt.nl/> [Accessed 19 June 2014]

<sup>15</sup> Only rarely the deliver to customers that come directly on their farm (3:19)

better price for the products as well. At the same time the retailers have very strict criteria for the products. Furthermore, it happens that they have products the retailer do not want, or import from foreign countries. As with potatoes:

‘At one point, the whole barn is still filled with potatoes, but new potatoes are all imported from Italy, Spain, you name it. While we still have plenty of organic potatoes of very good quality. We would like to sell them to the retailers, but they say that the consumer wants new potatoes. But we do not know whether the consumer finds that too’ (27:08).

She also says it is a lot of fun (19:26). In summary, the respondent appoints that Bio Romeo sells products directly to the consumer, through buying groups, in order to get a better understanding on what the consumer really wants, to circumvent strangling contracts with and high demands of retailers and to maintain freedom in what and how you produce, to get a better price, and to minimize waste. The respondent mentions that they are happy with delivering to buying groups (21:25), and they aim to do that more. In two years they have managed to start supplying 12 buying groups. They have invested in this, and hope to break even within three years (21:30). At the end of this year they hope to supply around 35 to 40 buying groups (16:08). It is not their aim to be the biggest supplier of buying groups. They aim to stick to the region they have now. They also try to help other farmers and farmers’ cooperation to start supplying buying groups, by sharing their knowledge (16:14).

#### 4.9.2 Factors related to customer segment

**Buying groups with too many members inhibits social cohesion and ordering.** The respondent explains that around 70 family members may be a kind of optimum: if you are too big, people do not know each other, and then the social cohesion drops. If that happens, also the (amount of) orderings drop (3:19). She mentions this on the basis of their experience with big buying groups.

**Lack of tasks agreement inhibits members understanding and commitment.** It happens that buying groups are not performing so well. According to the respondent it is important that members understand that participating in a buying group is not without obligation (31:52). Members have to understand they are members, and not only consumers (29:20). The respondent explains it occurs that in the beginning phase of a buying group, enthusiastic members do much work and carry the highest burdens, but they usually cannot maintain doing that for a long time. She mentions that those member then feel that it is too much work, that it is almost like a job (10:25). She mentions that it is then often more difficult to involve the other members:

‘They [the initial enthusiastic members] expect others to help them, but they did not agreed on this in advance. And the other people say, ‘I want that vegetables for 30% cheaper than in the supermarket, but I don not want to do any work’. And then people drop out [of the buying group, Ed]. It’s not worth to them they say. [...] Unfortunately we still see that happen too much’ (10:30).

So the lack of an equal division of labour, or task agreement may inhibit the buying groups performance:

‘Well, the buying group is dependent on the division labour. If one or two people have to do it to do, it will not perform well. And we see in other buying groups, where the labour is not distributed well, the orderings decline. And the enthusiasm declines. That’s what we see’ (29:20).

If the labour is more equally distributed among the members, right from the start, the pressure on a few volunteers is much lower and it is much more fun as well (31:52). If members know what is expected from them from the start, buying groups are likely to be more successful. If there is little support within the buying group with regard to all the tasks, it may occur buying groups fall apart (37:31).

**Good internal communication is related to the availability of volunteers at the pick up points, which is key to smooth delivery and job satisfaction.** When there are little volunteers available, which is the case at some buying groups, it can be very difficult for the farmers to do the delivery. In one case it happens often that there is no parking space for the transporter available, the delivery is not expected so nobody or little people are available to unload the transporter. This takes a lot of time (around an hour, resulting in higher costs), and

decreases job satisfaction for the farmer. On the other hand, at other buying groups there are many volunteers available and the job is done very quickly. Then there is also time to have a cup of coffee and a chat (about the products). According to the respondent a lack of communication within the group is at the basis of these problems (37:31).

**Mutual transparency of supplier and buying group is needed for good performance.** Understanding on what goes wrong is important. With regard to buying groups that do not perform that well (from Bio Romeo's perspective) the company tries to contact and speak with them. Otherwise it can be difficult to get a grasp on what is actually going on. It is also important for Bio Romeo to get an understanding on what the buying group feels (32:41). The other way around, the respondent feels that the image of Bio Romeo maybe leads to question by some of the buying groups after a high amount of (positive) media attention lately (10:25). She explains it is important to communicate that Bio Romeo does not want to be a giant food salesman, or be the best and biggest buying group supplier of the Netherlands. It is important to communicate that they want to cooperate with the buying groups, and to find ways they can help each other. In some cases, she feels that this message may not be understood right by some of the buying groups.

**Unrealistic (enthusiastic) expectations endanger the functioning of buying group.** It is also important that buying group members have a realistic understanding on. Sometimes the enthusiasm was so high, customers wanted a delivery of products every week. The respondent thinks that frequency it is too difficult and too much for a volunteer organization to keep up with. It might kill the enthusiasm and eventually kill the buying group it self (10:25).

**Customers accept products of 'other' quality.** By selling directly, the respondent explains, there are way less unmarketable products (19:26). Customers accept products that they cannot sell to wholesalers and retailers:

[...] 'we cannot deliver beets that are heavier than, let's say, 150 grams each. If they are heavier than they [retailers] do not want to purchase them from us. If they are lighter, they also do not want them. So we are required to grow a certain size. This means that all mini beetroot and all the big beets are disposed or become animal feed. That is terrible. Also, while it now appears that the consumer has no trouble with different sizes' (13:10).

#### 4.9.3 Factors related to company infrastructure

**Location in an area with many organic farmers in the neighborhood enables varied product offer.** In the surrounding of Bio Romeo there are many farms around where they can collaborate with. The collaboration of Bio Romeo with the farmers is key to variety of products the company can offer to its customers.

**Product exchange fosters farmers' partnership and increases efficiency.** Costs and environmental savings are possible since the farmers meet every Tuesday on a farm to exchange products with each other; it reduces the amount transport. This helps Bio Romeo getting a variety of products rather efficiently (3:19).

**Professional approach and foundation Samen Rooien fosters performance of buying groups.** The respondent explains that they get many requests of buying groups, but they noticed that not all buying groups are successful (from their perspective i.e. manage to survive and order products). The respondent mentions that buying groups tend to start very enthusiastic, yet are unaware of what it comprises. For Bio Romeo a well performing buying group is important, because they represent a big client (37:31). Yet, as a company, Bio Romeo has neither money, nor time to facilitate the set up of buying groups. Initiating the non-profit foundation seems a smart tool to provide guidance to buying groups. A foundation has the opportunity to get funds and subsidies (3:19).

Within this foundation people are recruited to guide buying groups right from the start. They provide hands-on knowledge and tools of how the buying groups can organize them selves (i.e. how to start the website, how to work with the ordering web shop, how to get more members, how to way and package, which tasks there are) (8:15). According to the respondent, the foundation really helps to create stable buying groups. She says that buying groups that started without the help of the foundation start to perform less: 'we just see that orders are declining. We hear people complain. When we deliver the vegetables we hear so often, who [of the volunteers] does not want to cooperate because they always work during the day, and who cannot help in the afternoon

because it does not suit' (9:52). It seems to the respondents that they have problems with getting enough volunteers and communication within the buying group (see above).

**Investments and risks are high, but the arable farm with enough cash flow enables necessary investments.**

The respondent mentions that selling to buying groups in the way they approach it, requires high investments. The choice of supplying many buying groups implied that they had to innovate without being sure whether this marketing channel would be success (22:20). They had to purchase a van, accounting software and crates and weighing scales for each buying group, they had to hire the respondents to take care of the administration etcetera, and they had to develop a logo (21:30). The respondent explains these investments were only possible because of a well performing arable farm with enough cash flow (22:20).

**Good structure and clear agreements enables them to deal with peak performance.** The respondent mentions that they have a tight schedule. Labour pressure is high on Mondays and Tuesdays for the respondent. But they can manage because of a good structure (43:53).

#### 4.9.4 Context

**Increased attention to origin of food.** The general consumer demand for local and cheap (30% lower prices than in retail store) and fresh products is high (25:34). The respondent mentions that this increased demand of consumers to know where the food comes from fostered the interest of buying groups. More and more buying groups contact Bio Romeo that want to sign up.

**No competition.** The way Bio Romeo markets through buying groups with a group of farmers with a professional approach, is rather unique. The respondent mentions that they do not experience any competition (49:33).

### 4.10 Kaasboerderij Vierhuizen

#### 4.10.1 Background

Kaasboerderij Vierhuizen is a cheese farm located in Zoeterwoude close to cities The Hague, Leiden, Delft and Zoetermeer. Since 2011 the farm and products are organically certified. The farm is run by Theo, Freek and Lidia van Leeuwen. Freek is the son of Theo and Lidia. He will, together with his wife, take over the farm within the coming years (34:24). Lidia van Leeuwen, the respondent, is currently responsible for the cheese production and the marketing.<sup>16</sup> The farm offsets roughly half of its product directly to customers via a farm shop. This shop is open on Monday, Wednesday, Friday and Saturday from 9 am to 5 pm. The farmers also supply buying groups since January 2012 (8:38). Once a month they deliver cheese to one buying group in Amsterdam (Vokomokum) (10:39). They also sell to another buying group in Amsterdam, but that group purchases such small amounts that they send the products by mail (31:22). Furthermore they sell products to a wholesaler once every six weeks and to two organic supermarkets in Leiden and Delft (most of the other half) (5:42). The farmers do not cooperate with other farmers to offset their products (19:10), however they do sell products to other farm shops through the 'GroeneHart Cooperatie'<sup>17</sup> (6:49). The respondent mentions that they find it important to sell directly through the farm shop, because they can keep an eye on the quality of the product (12:20). She also says that they supply the buying groups, because they support the idealism of the customers of those groups. It is a side activity that represents only a very small amount of the earnings. The respondent mentions that they are happy with the buying groups (11:04).

#### 4.10.2 Factors related to customer segment

**Farm sales - Overall customers understand, but a few unpleasant customers demands put pressure on job satisfaction and time.** The respondent feels that most customers understand how it works at a farm shop (17:33), yet there are also customers that have expectations that are based on the convenience in the supermarket: 'People who are very focused on supermarket, when they come they want two hundred grams of cheese' (17:50). She explains that if customers do very small purchases, she mentions that it is in fact not worth the effort 'running for them' (because she does not stay in the shop when there are no customers, but tries to

<sup>16</sup> See also <http://www.kaasboerderijdevierhuizen.nl/Wie-lidia.html> [accessed 8 June 2014].

<sup>17</sup> The GroeneHart Cooperatie is a cluster of farmers that aim to strengthen marketing of the products by joint effort. See also <http://groenehartstreekproducten.nl> [accessed 16 May 2014].

do other chores). Such demands are sometimes challenging, because they do not fit with a farm shop that only sells cheese. She mentions that it is for them difficult to explain to customers that it is for the farmers very much work. 'My husband did try to talk to one of those customers once and said 'I think you could better shop at the supermarket' (17:40). However that customers still returns, and also purchases the same small amount of cheese.

**Farm sales - Many opening hours and high demand put pressure on labour, time, leisure and other farming activities.** According to the respondent does the farm sales require much time. They struggle with this currently (12:20). She mentions: '[...] a farm shop is nice, but if you have no time to even have a moment to drink a cup of coffee... I think that goes too far. Also because we are now 60 years old' (14:29). Also she says: 'Currently we have four days that the shop is open. That we manage only just. But I am always very happy when it is five o'clock (15:50). She mentions that she is limited in doing other activities on the farm or at home, because she has to be in the shop every 15 minutes (16:07). They try to solve this by training an employee that can take over shop once in a while, but it is currently unclear if that will work (14:29).

**Farm sales - Positive feedback from customers fosters job satisfaction.** With regard to the farm sales, the respondent mentions that the customers appreciate the product very much, and they get much positive feedback in return. 'For us this (feedback) makes our profession very attractive (13:07)'.

**Farm sales - Positive (product) experiences of customers fosters attraction new customers.** She also mentioned that happy customers bring new customers with them, through word of mouth (13:07).

**Farm sales - Good location of farm fosters accessibility for customers.** According to the respondent the location of the farm fosters the attraction of customers that go to the area for leisure. Customers that visit the farm shop come from the nearby cities (11:43). She mentions:

'We are really located in the middle of a polder, where you have a view on the flats of Zoetermeer. And the centre of The Hague is a half an hour bike ride away. But, it is so quiet and it is so beautiful here, that people go here for a bike ride, and then they also pass our farm. So they find our farm' (26:42).

Furthermore she mentions that a well-known goat farm nearby attracts many people from the city by organizing many (children) activities (in some weekends there are thousands of people on the yard of that farm): 'The people that go to the polder for [that farm], also pass by our farm. And very often they buy the cheese here, because they find it too crowded there [at the other farm, Ed.] (26:42). Even when the children have grown up, and there is no need to go to the other farm anymore, some consumer still keep on buying the cheese at Vierhuizen.

**Buying groups - demand is too small to be lucrative and time consuming.** Since the demand is too small, it requires much effort, while getting little turnover (32:49), and it takes up some extra time for delivery etcetera (9:56). They do it out of leniency, because they like it. They support (young) people that are interested responsible food and that increases their job satisfaction (33:50). It is worth the extra effort (9:56).

#### 4.10.3 Factors related to company infrastructure

**General - Age of the farmers limits room for change the way of marketing.** The respondent mentions that her son may choose to do differently, but they do now according the way they did. She also hopes that her son and daughter-in-law (that will take over the farm), manage to do it differently, so they have enough free time and can perform other activities as well ('that they can look beyond their own yard') and stay healthy (34:24).

#### 4.10.4 Contextual factors

**Overall interest in local and organic and little competition.** Increased societal attention fosters sales. And the respondent mentions that demand outweighs the competition (21:15).

## 4.11 Eko de Eerste

### 4.11.1 Background

Eko de Eerste is a mixed farm of 70 acre in the Polder of Flevoland (58:03). This family farm produces cow cheese, meat, eggs and vegetables (25 acre, 8:14). The respondent is Erik Ploer. His parents-in-law took over the farm of the grand parents in 1987. At that point the farm was converted to an organic farm. They currently have around 12 employees, 10 fully paid incomes (55:12). They also have many international interns throughout the year (59:09). The respondent joined the farm thirteen years ago. He mentions that his parents-in-law at that time managed to set a good basis for the current success of the farm (22:46)

Since 1987 the family started to make their own cheese (3:15). They also started with selling products in a small farm shop (1:15). This shop gradually grew towards a complete organic food shop, with about 1000 products in its assortment (5:58). To attract more customers they started with home delivery of products in 1993, which also grew slowly (6:12). Currently the farmers deliver in five regular routes to around 100 private customers and 20 shops (10:05) in cities and villages nearby three days a week (5:58). Customers can order products via e-mail on a weekly basis. When products are delivered they receive the new offer in their groceries. The offer is also e-mailed to the customer at the end of the week (9:08). Once a year they have an open day for customers at the farm (28:47).

Through Bio Romeo, the company that delivers to buying groups (run by Krispijn van den Dries, see 4.10), they sell also cheese and eggs (15:59). The respondent mentions that they are not closely involved with the delivery to those buying groups: krispijn is the contact point for both farmers and customers and he is responsible for the ins and the outs (19:27). Members of the buying group know that the cheese and eggs come from Eko de Eerste and some have visited the farm as well (19:00). Furthermore a closely related tradesman (of former intern) sells cheese of the farm at the Noordermarkt in Amsterdam, and also in other European countries (17:48). But that is not really directly from the farmers (18:16). Their cheese and eggs they sell directly to customers, or to nearby farmers and one tradesman. However most of the vegetables they do sell to wholesalers (only some of it they sell directly) (11:37).

The respondent mentions that they sell mostly directly, because they do not want to be dependent on wholesalers (12:17). It is always insecure what price you would get, and whether the wholesalers would buy everything or not. By selling directly, they can set their own prices. If they need to raise the prices because the costs are increasing, they can explain that to their customer. They do not ask the highest price, because they want to keep the cheese affordable for everyone (12:40): 'As long as you earn enough, it is enough' (13:36).

Besides being less dependent, the respondent mentions that it also much more fun: to the wholesaler the products go away on pallets. If all is well you will hear nothing more of it. You will never hear something 'gosh that is a beautiful [product, Ed]'. But you only hear it if something is wrong, if there is some hail damage or something, then you will get a pallet back' (14:00). The farmers mention that they are satisfied of how the sales run. He mentions that they are very busy with the shop and the deliveries, and they are still growing (20:34).

### 4.11.2 Factors related to customer segment

**Farm sales - Too remote location for a farm shop.** For the farm shop their location is not ideal. They cannot attract enough customers (but that is also why they chose to install a delivery service). It would be better to be located at the fringe of a city (49:21).

**Internet sales / delivery - Customers trust the company and stay put.** The respondents mention that they have very loyal customers that order products from them every week. Customers stay put for many years. According to the respondent those customers must have a large amount of trust in the company to do that (24:01).

**Internet sales / delivery - Driving around with the van attracts new customers.** The respondent mentions that they don't have to do much to attract new customers, because the van with their name on it, delivering the product does the work for them: 'Actually, without us putting effort in it, actually we get one or two new clients every week I think (34:02).

**General - Farm visits on open days or/and opportunity to walk around freely attracts customers.** According to the respondents customers really appreciate the visit to the farm during open days (28:47): 'People think it is just a lot of fun, like 'gosh those chickens produce our eggs', and 'from those porks our meat comes from', and 'those cows, there we get our milk, and cheese, and meat'. And it's all on one yard' (23:00).

The respondent mentions that also many customers of the shop walk around the farm, for instance to see the calves. That opportunity for customers is rather unique for farms these day: 'there are not many companies where you can do that. So people feel that [this place] is also a bit of their place, and is also a bit their business so to speak' (23:34). This opportunity however is not important for all customers (28:47).

**General - Customer with unrealistic, cheeky demands inhibit job satisfaction.** The respondent mentions that some customers, both at the farm shop as well at the delivery, may have demands that they cannot fulfil. He feels the customer is sometimes not aware of that, and that is difficult (26:01). For instance some customers show up at the farm shop outside the opening hours, and still want to buy products. Opening the shop for that customer would imply extra work for the farmer, and not all customers think about it. He mentions that is difficult sometimes, and you still give the customers sometimes what they need, especially at the start, because you need all the income you can get (24:52). 'But this comes at the expense of your family and your free time. If you sit in the garden on a Sunday afternoon celebrating a birthday, you do not want to help six customers' (25:35). Furthermore sometimes there are customers that do not like the quality of the delivered products. When these complaints are recurrent (while the farmer doubts the complaints are reasonable or resolvable, because none of the other customers have that complaint) it goes at the expense of your job satisfaction (39:41).

**General - Experience helps in dealing with misunderstanding or unfeasible demands of customers.** However the respondent indicates that experience helps to better deal with customers and misunderstanding. He says they clearly say to customers that come outside the opening hours to come back at moments when the shop is open (24:52). Also, to deal with complaining customer, he mentions that he learned to say to that it is maybe better to stop ordering at Eko de Eerste, but start shopping at a shop where the customer can select the products him or her self.

**General - Broad range of products attracts customers.** According to the respondent the broad range of products their farm offers is quite rare in Netherlands. He feels that this is what customers want. He thinks that there is much more room for this type of farms (53:58). He also point to the societal benefits of employment (55:12).

**General - Good quality cheese attracts customer.** The fact that you can offer customers cheese, a qualitative good product attracts many customers. The freshness of the cheese is a strong feature for the farmer shop (55:46). That was a flywheel to attract customers to the shop, and also an opportunity to expand the assortment of the shop (5:26).

#### 4.11.3 Factors related to company infrastructure

**Internet sales / delivery - Capacity to invest in automatic payment decreases labour pressure.** Currently the customers pay through automatic payment. At first they processed around single 120 invoices per week, but now that it is done automatically. About the handling of single invoices he mentions; 'It costs an awful lot of time and money to keep that up to date, and to get the money... Yes, you also need to remind people to pay the groceries they got two months ago. Because that often happens' (40:28). The respondent says that this helps them a lot; it is better to lose some customers (that did not want to pay automatically), than to get stuck with the administration (41:32).

**Internet sales / delivery - A good performing farm behind the Internet sales enables to sell at an affordable price and attracts customers.** According to the respondents it is not easy to attract customers with Internet sales (26:47). He thinks the fact that there is well performing farm (22:46) behind their Internet sales, compared to many other Internet sales initiatives fosters the attraction of customer (27:18). First of all because they can offer a broad and good assortment at an affordable price, but above all that customers want to know what their food comes from (27:41). He mentions that many Internet shops are not farm based, but entrepreneurs that purchase products from farmers. But he thinks customers prefer to have contact with a farm. 'The customer thinks that is important' (27:24).



**Internet sales / delivery - Growth over the years enables the opportunity to hire labour (for logistics).** The respondent mentions the growth over the years enabled the freedom for the farmers to hire extra labour, so he for instance has time for his family as well (38:28).

**Internet sales / delivery - The choice to grow slowly fosters little mistakes.** According to the respondent a fostering factor for their farm and marketing is that they slowly expanded their marketing channels. Logistically it is difficult to serve suddenly more customers. But growing slowly makes it possible to expand logistics in a feasible way. He thinks that most of the orderings of customers are correctly delivered. You have to take the time to adapt (22:01) and communicate this to the customer (36:50).

**Internet sales / delivery - Inflexible logistics limit the fast attraction of new customers.** On the other hand, the current capacity of the logistics limit the amount of customers they can attract. New customers have to fit in the full delivery schemes, and that is not always possible (36:50), while the respondent believes there are a lot of potential customers. Furthermore, the respondent explains that 'you cannot suddenly add 20 more customers to your route', because the customers expect the delivery to come at a certain moment of the day. They often stay at home for that, and one cannot suddenly change that (34:30).

**Buying group - Fast growth of Bio Romeo leads to mistakes.** To illustrate, he mentions that the amount of buying groups served by Bio Romeo may have grown too fast. Due to media attention many new buying groups were interested to buy from Bio Romeo. According to the respondent it is especially difficult to adapt production and logistics to serving a new buying group, because you get not one but many customers at once (20:34). That offers room for mistakes. Yet it is important not to run the risk of losing such a big amount of customers. He mentions that it might be wiser to explain to buying group that they have to wait for a few months before they can order (21:05).

**General - Strong team of family members saves labour costs, fosters performance of farm and creates affordable prices for customers.** The respondent indicates that a strong fostering factor is the solid team they have that includes many family members. He mentions that his parents-in-law and brother-in-law work here: '[...] so you have four people who do not need to have a salary every hour. We see at the end of the year how much is left (50:08). And about a close related family he says that they also help out a lot, for instance in the store, without the need of being paid strictly by the hours.

'[...] so you have quite an amount of work power that you do not need to pay immediately. In the end of course there must be some money left for those people; you also have to pay your bills. But it is not that you have to pay salary taxes etcetera, because it is your own business. And I think that gives a huge opportunity to grow as well, and also to try some things that are actually not profitable, but you still do it. For instance, we have 250 chickens. Well that is possible, because you do not have to pay someone to take care of the chickens. [...] Ultimately it has to yield something. And it does, due to the fact that you do not have to pay your full wages (50:20).

So, the family members help reducing labour costs, while still performing an amount of labour, that also opens up the opportunity of further development of the farm, e.g. the expansion of the amount of products at offer (chicken eggs). Furthermore the respondent argues that the team is flexible and the members have what it takes to go for it (52:12). Different members can help each other out, and can replace each other if necessary (51:45). According to respondent: 'That is a strong point of the company: a large group of people who have what it takes to go for it. And also get along well with each other' (52:20). In the end, the respondent mentions that they are in this way possible to produce affordable products for customers (55:12)

**General - Product exchange complements assortment with a shared effort for all farmers.** The weekly exchange of products between farmers at their is a fostering factor for supplementing the assortment, without much effort for every single farmers (7:09).

#### 4.11.4 Context

**Farm sales - Local government tolerates shop (without permit).** The respondent mentions they officially need a permit for having the shop at the farm. They never thought about it. The local government visited the shop

once and they seem to tolerate the shop at their farm. In that sense the local government supports their farm shop (43:58).

**General - High labour costs, leads to high labour pressure.** An hampering factor that also influences the marketing activities is the high labour costs in the Netherlands. The respondent mentions that if you need to hire people you need to have a big capacity to do that. He says that they manage, because they are big enough now, but they still have to be very critical hiring labour. You do as much as possible by your self. Therefore, the labour pressure is sometimes high. During holidays and Sundays the paid workers are not at the farm, but then the family has to run the activities, e.g. perform preparations for the shop and the deliveries (26:16). And it is not possible to run the farm and marketing on cheap school students: 'You need also permanent employees, that [...] the responsibilities that you need to give them' (43:01). So you need to invest in good labour, but the prices only keep rising. He mentions that this also limits the opportunities of new farmers or entrepreneurs that want to start something like this. It costs a lot of money (41:43).

**General - Certification and other permits lead to high costs.** Another issue is the high costs of certification, controlling and permits. They need to have Skal certification for being organic. They need to fulfil to HACCP and Eurogap regulation (45:36). The respondent mentions that it is important that their practices are being checked, and that their organic and hygienic quality is guaranteed (towards the customer) (47:15), but all in all it takes a lot of time (to facilitate checks) and costs them a lot of money (45:50).

**General - Increased societal attention.** The fact that there was more interest in organic food fostered the sales (5:45) and the opportunity to attract new customers (32:13).

**General - Experiences little competition because there is more demand than the farm can serve.** It turns out that the demand is much higher than there is competition (31:36). Even a close new competitor (internet shop) did not take any of their customers. Also because they do it differently (they have higher prices) (35:48). There is much potential for similar farmers.

## 4.12 A8

### 4.12.1 Background

A8 is a 2-acre organic horticulture garden situated in Doorn. Willem and Laetitia Hooft run the garden since 2006. Initially the soil of the land was in bad quality (1:30) and it took them 4 years to convert it into an organic garden (2:14). They are now Skal-certified, and are candidate for Demeter certification (i.e. the label for biodynamic agriculture). The farmers produce a variety of vegetables, flower and plants; often old and non-hybrid species (3:00). They produce all year around (9:35), because they have a more constant inflow of money (10:34), and they want to show that it is possible to feed your self with local products in the winter as well (10:47). They are very much interested in the breeding crops with a wide genetic variation (non-hybrid) (36:36).

Three years ago they started with selling their products (2:35). They began with selling once a month at the farmers' market in Wijk bij Duurstede. There they were only allowed to sell flowers and plants, because of the presence of other stallholders that sold vegetables (20:29). Occasionally they sell at other regional markets as well (00:28). Three years ago also the buying group of Amersfoort approached them. So they started selling to them to as well (6:28). They sell to this buying group because they can offset many products at the same time (8:27), the products are very much appreciated (7:40), and the farmers like the customers that are very much interested in the origin of food (7:36). Currently they also sell directly at their own mobile stand at their farm (mostly for customers close to Doorn, 15:56). Occasionally they deliver products to the customers. Indirectly they also supply some restaurants, catering services and companies (4:24). Sometimes they also exchange their products for services or products with farmers or customers (no money is involved) (1:01:26). They do not want to sell through box schemes, because they think it is important to let the customers chooses their own products (15:08). The farmers mention that they get a better price by selling directly (3:00). The farmers' plan to increase the opening hours of their farm shop (1:00:08), and increase the amount of crops they grow. For the latter they need to invest in a greenhouse and an irrigation system (59:19). They also aim to continue with breeding their own crops (59:46).

#### 4.12.2 Factors related to customer segment

**Farmers' market - Selling only durable products (plants) at farmers market limits product loss.** The respondent mentions that the type of products, plants, are very much suitable for farmers' markets. They realized that they no have limited losses of the leftovers after the farmers' market. Products like lettuce have a short shelf life. If you harvest them, but do not sell them at same day, you can throw it away as waste. The farmers do not have a cooling. So only selling plants limits the product loss (19:29)

**Farm sales - Personal attention attracts customers and fosters long-term consumer relation.** The respondent mentions that they intend to give personal attention to their customers. For instance at the farm they offer sometimes coffee or they jointly harvest some products. She mentions that this extra attention attracts certain customers (27:38).

**Farm sales - Not convenient enough to reach more customers.** The respondents experience competition of box schemes initiative: 'People think that is more convenient' (14:14). Convenience is something they cannot offer. 'We do not have the infrastructure like a large company that can focus on selling 'pure convenience' (25:50). They have no other convenience products (e.g. toilet paper and easy to cook recipes) at offer. 'The people who come here really need to make an effort. They have to step on their bike. And then it takes about 30 minutes, while you ended up solely with some lettuce and coriander' (26:00). People with 9 to 5 jobs usually have too little time to come to the farm. While these potential customers might be very enthusiastic, the farmers have not opportunity to serve them in the current company structure (26:10). They experience that most customers at the farm sales are unemployed (56:32).

**Farm sales - More farm shops around are a potential fostering factor for attracting customers.** The respondents mention that recently more farm shops have started, close to theirs. Those farm shops sell mostly meat, dairy and vegetables. They feel that more farm shops closely located to each other with complementary products will be a fostering factor for them to attract more customers: 'So, actually there will be a kind of shopping street on the outskirts of the village. [...] You could get all your groceries in one bike ride' (46:10). It increases the convenience for customers.

**Farm sales - Shop is not professional yet.** The shop is not professional according to the respondents. The woman says: 'the shop we ride out [of the barn, Ed.], and then that is a shop, with crates, that we build up quickly. It is a bit disordered' (45:51). That needs to be improved according to the respondents (45:59).

**Farm sales and delivery - Flexibility of farmers supports consumer relation and attraction of customers.** In their story, it comes to the fore that the farmers are rather flexible in their service towards customers regarding to opening hours, delivery and price. For instance they are often open at Sundays, which is very much appreciated by the customers (17:28). They also mention that they help customers on demand; sometimes customers (individuals but also some restaurants) call at noon that they need some vegetables in the afternoon. The farmers mention that they like it to be flexible (17:28) and to serve those customers and deliver that (16:20). They feel that they can do that because it is their own business, and they enjoy doing that (17:34).

**General - Trust relationship helps attracting customers.** The respondents mention that showing the customers how they work in the garden and having certification helps creating trust among customers. They think that helps in attracting customers to come and visit them (18:35).

**General - Being too kind leads to lower revenue.** At the other side of the medal, the respondents mention that they are sometimes to kind. Delivery sometimes takes up to much time, of which the sales hardly compensate the costs (16:09). They try to be more critical with this, by setting a minimum amount purchases. She also mentions that for some people eating organic food is too expensive; therefore she charges to some of those customers a lower price. Or she gives them extra vegetables. 'Actually, that is not so smart... We are not really business minded' (47:34).

**General - Education and knowledge of farmer attracts customers and fosters customer relation.** By being well educated, the respondents feel that the farmer has considerable knowledge about their products and food in general (e.g. about breeding, GMOs and pesticides). They feel that this knowledge helps answering questions of customers. 'Customers like this' (31:11). They think it is important to have this knowledge, and to be able to

communicate this to the customer. More and more people are looking for such information (38:55). And they feel that more customers come to buy at their stall or shop (42:52). And about half of those new customers become customers they see on a regular basis (43:7).

**General - Other (non-conventional) products characteristics leads to loss of customers.** The respondents feel that they sometimes lose costumers, because the customers do not get accustomed to the characteristics of the products they have at offer (14:00). They mention that people used to buying vegetables at Albert Heyn are often not used to vegetables with different sizes and different colours, and expect to have vegetables available year around. It is difficult to communicate to the customers that these characteristics are ok. It sometimes takes time (13:34).

#### 4.12.3 Factors related to company infrastructure

**Farmers' markets - Farmers' experience helps selecting suitable markets.** It helps the farmers being more critical about choosing which regional markets they want to have a stall on due to the growing experience they have. They encountered last years that not every market is a success (21:03). They are now aware that the type of regional market should fit their ideals and profile (21:17).

**General - Inflexibility of structure and crop season delay, inhibits dealing adequately with shifts in supply and demand.** The respondents mention that they experience inflexibility with regard to changes in demand. They make a crop plan a season in advance, in which they have to guess how much demand there is for each crop. They consider including products that customers request for particular crops into the crop planning (57:42). However the farmers are not able to fulfill short-term request of certain crops when they do not grow it. 'The speed at which we can respond to changes in the market is very low. It is actually one year' (55:15). 'In a short-term development [of shifting demands, Ed.], we cannot function well [...]. A crop has to grow first, then harvested, and it also needs to fit [in the crop plan]' (54:54). 'If you run a regular shop, you just order more products. But we... everything we sell comes from our land' (48:54). The respondents feel that it is difficult to deal with this.

**General - Limited capacity to hire labour leads to high labour pressure.** The family runs the garden. They feel that they can manage it for now, but they have to consider how to do this in the near future. They do not want to depend on volunteers (although many volunteers has offered their services) (1:00:21), but they want only paid employees (1:00:44). They think people should get paid for the work they do (1:00:54), however currently this is not possible.

**General - Cash flow gap limits opportunity to invest.** Despite the continuous production and sales of products, the farmers experience in the months March and May (the threat of) a cash flow gap. They need to invest in seeds and plants, and in gardening equipment that secures a year round produce (e.g. a green house) (1:05:36).

#### 4.12.4 Contextual factors

**Farmers' market - Economic decline led to fewer sales at farmers' market.** In the first year they sold products at the farmers' market in Wijk bij Duurstede, the sales went well (22:44). But a year after the sales went down, for all the stallholders. Little amount of customers visited the market. The respondents feel that this is due to the fact the customers have less to spend in this time of economic decline (23:00).

**Farmers' market - Mentality of shopkeepers associations inhibits permits.** The respondents do not experience much competition, however they feel that many shopkeepers see them as competition. With regard to some farmers' markets and regional markets they feel resistance from them. The respondents get hostile reactions (23:58). They also were not allowed to sell weekly at a farmers' market in Wijk bij Duurstede because they would be competition for the shopkeepers there (24:51)

**Farm sales - Local policy inhibits building shop at the roadside of the farm.** The respondents feel limited in running the farm sale by local policy. They would like to have built the barn with a shop close to the road, but they did not get a permit to that from the local government. This is because they are neighbouring a historical estate (Huis Doorn), and they are not allowed to sell anything in sight of that estate. In this way they were

forced to build the barn behind the house, but that is not in sight of passing people and it is now an extra barrier for potential customers to enter the yard (44:31).

**General - High costs of 'money system' limits room for maneuver for small farmers.** The respondents mention that it is a limiting factor for them that bringing cash money to the bank has high costs (1:02:11). At the same, it is also very costly to buy a mobile ATM subscription and equipment, to make paying by card possible (1:02:36).

**General - Borrowing relatively small amounts of money is difficult.** To overcome the cash flow gap and to have the opportunity to invest (e.g. for improving product offer and improving farm shop) the farmers would like to borrow money. However currently it is very difficult for them to get a loan (1:07:09). The capital requirements are too high. And furthermore, in meetings with the bank they experienced that it is easier to talk about a loan over 500.000 euros than 10.000 (1:07:09). The service is much better if you come to the bank for a bigger loan, but that is not what they need (1:07:37).

**General - Increased attention to food** – The respondents mention they experience the increase attention to the origin of food as a fostering factor (38:55, 41:57).

**General - Food scandals and critical public opinion challenges trust of customers** - On the other hand, the respondents mention they suffer from food scandals. For instance last year there was a food fraud with organic meat. As a result the respondents get questions from customers like 'Do you do it like that as well?' or 'the certification system is not trustable'. Also customers mention that 'you don't taste the difference between organic or normal' (53:02). The respondents mention that these reactions are actually weird, because frauds are usually occurring in large scale and complex systems, with many intermediaries. They are however providing directly to the customers (so no intermediaries are involved). Furthermore they are regularly checked by Skal and are transparent about their ways of production. Yet, still people do not always trust it (51:50).

**General - Taxes are planned in period when investments need to be made and cash flow is lowest.** The respondents feel inhibited by the fact that more and more taxes need to be paid in the period of March and April (to cover for the gaps in the governmental budgets) (1:05:46), while that period is exactly the period they need the money to invest; e.g. buying seeds and plants (1:06:45).

**General - High certification costs are inhibiting for smallholder farmers.** The respondents mention that they need to have certification for organic farming to communicate a trustable story and out of idealistic reasons. However, according to them the costs for certification are out of proportion. 'It is way too expensive. We only have 2 acres. And we pay a similar amount as Albert Heijn [farms owned by biggest supermarket chain in Netherlands, Ed] and they have I don't know how many acres! This is out of proportion, that is ridiculous' (49:46). They are trying to change situation this together with other smallholder farmers and opt for better differentiation (51:09).

## 4.13 Stoerderij

### 4.13.1 Background

The Stoerderij is a small water buffalo<sup>18</sup> farm in Son and Breugel, close to Eindhoven (1:05). The farm is started by Arjan Sinkels in 2010 with the purchase of nine buffalo calves in 2010 (11:04). It consists currently of 27 water buffalos. Arjan Swinkels sells buffalo milk, ice cream and meat. The milk and the meat are organically certified. Since one and half year (11:04), customers can order products online and then collect the orderings on an agreed time at the farm (1:58). He seems to have combined elements of both farm sales and Internet sales in one channel. The researcher regards this channel mostly as farm sales. Aspects that have to do with the online ordering will be regarded as part of Internet sales. In the near future the respondent will also sell to a new buying group in Eindhoven (that already has 2000 sign ups according to the respondent) (6:07). He also sold at farmers' markets a few times (14:57). He is trying to sell some of his products through other (farm) shops (19:33). He is running the farm and the marketing by him self. Sometimes volunteers help him. He

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<sup>18</sup> Water buffalos have Asian roots, yet are suitable for Dutch climate as well, see also <http://www.destoerderij.nl/de-waterbuffel> [accessed 8 June 2014].

organizes sometimes activities (sometimes in collaboration with other farmers) to attract customer, like a farmers' dinner (22:19) or excursion (19:33). Besides running the farm, Arjan has another job as a consultant (11:20). His current customers come from many different places. Some people come from the nearby villages, but also many come from cities like Eindhoven, and even from The Hague, Antwerpen and Brussel. He mentions that especially people with Turkish roots are interested in his raw buffalo milk (19:33)

The respondents mentions that he sells his food directly because selling to supermarkets would be 'signing your death warrant' (01:58). He thinks selling through supermarket would be convenient in the sense to reach many customers: [...] 'I do not have a problem to sell at supermarkets when there is just a certain price for it in exchange, and that price margin persist' (7:45). But he appoints to the problem that price is not persistent, because it depends on the world market. And when you are part of that world market volatility and too dependent on supermarkets, you are stuck. He mentions therefore he wants to have close contact with the end-user (6:58). More he wants to be able to set his own prices (10:13). 'They [supermarkets] purchase for such keen prices, that you cannot earn anything. Or at least earn very little' (1:58).

He thinks that only selling through farm sales is not enough to make a living out of it. Other marketing channels, like Internet shops with delivery or specialty shops are also needed. He says that one of his examples is the Groote Voort: they are able reach a high amount of customers, without selling it at the supermarket, but use other direct and intermediate marketing channels (30:46). He starts selling to the buying group, because it is interesting to be able to offset a relative large amount of products at the same time (5:00).

#### 4.13.2 Factors related to customer segment

**Farm sales - Unique product helps to attract but also inhibits the attraction of customers.** The products the respondent produces and sells is rather unique. The respondent thinks that the way he brands his product is important for selling his products. He says that you have to make sure that your product is unique or 'rare'. He chooses a rather unique product that is organically certified, but moreover presents it as 'stoer', which is 'tough' or 'forceful' in English: 'And thus it always remains unique because the meat I sell is the only 'tough' meat from the Netherlands. And it could still be that another buffalo farmer begins [producing, Ed.], which is also organic, but that's not 'tough' meat' (6:58).

**Farm sales - Uniqueness of product inhibits the attraction of customers (on daily basis).** That uniqueness together with the branding he mention as a fostering factor (there is little competition), however, it is also a limiting factor to reach a wider public. He mentions that his products are not products that customers are going to buy on a daily basis, because buffalo products are something special. He thinks that some people think buffalo milk is a bit too strange. He wonders sometimes that whether he would produce milk of regular cows he would sell more (26:27).

**Farm sales - Pick up is not convenient enough for 'lazy' customer.** The respondent mentions that his way of selling by ordering on Internet and pick up and the farm. He says that although the attention is rising, not many people are coming (12:46). He feels that customers rather shop to get all the groceries once or twice a week, and when they do that they do that at the supermarket (24:41). [...] I've noticed that people certainly like it. Only they generally do talk about it more than they buy. And I mean, I try to attract customers here now and then by organizing excursions and that kind of things. And then you hope that when they [potential customer eds.] have been here once, they know where to find me. But then again, it just keeps ... the big shop remains just very attractive, because it is often cheaper, and it's easier. That is the bottleneck where I run into with my own sales' (3:46). He also says that it is just not convenient that customers have to come at the farm all the time. It takes too much time for the customer (14:57). Arjan mentions that this might be a problem for more farmers. And it cost money to make it more convenient, e.g. by means of delivery (14:57).

**Farm sales - Location is fine to attract customers.** The respondent feels that the location of his farm is rather good. The fact that he is located at a connecting road at the boarder of a village helps to attract customers (26:27).

**Farm sales - Consumer contact fosters appreciation, but takes a lot of time.** The respondent mentions that customer contact when selling his product takes much time. He really likes to chat with his customers, and sees it as part of his way of marketing. It also gives him appreciation. But he feels he cannot always afford him to chat, because of other awaiting activities. He mentions, with irony in his voice: 'In the end, it is all about the

money. And well, you do not earn that by having a nice conversation with every customer also have to earn something' (18:05).

**Farm sales - Temporary farm limits the attractiveness of the farm for customers.** The respondent mentions that the farm he hires is being demolished within a few years. That is difficult for him; he cannot make it very attractive, also does not get the permits to do so (26:27).

**Internet sales - People do not see product.** The respondent feels that currently a limiting factor for his sales is that when the customers purchase the products on the Internet, they cannot see it. But he mentions that in the near future this becomes more mainstream (like it has become more mainstream to order shoes online) (14:57).

**Buying group (expected) - Dependency of buying group on volunteers may inhibit the performance.** The respondent feels that delivery to the buying groups is a kind of a test. He is not sure whether it will be a good marketing channel. He thinks the fact that it works with volunteers may inhibit the performance of the buying group (06:07).

#### 4.13.3 Factors related to company infrastructure

**Farm sales - Other job limits the time for investing in farms' appearance.** On the other hand the other jobs limits him in paying enough attention to the farm. He would like to make the farm a bit more attractive, but feel he has no time for it:

'I have an office job five days a week. And in the evenings and weekends I have to do the other jobs [at the farm, Ed]. And also twice a day milking, in the morning and evening. So the clearing and cleaning is often something that remains undone. And I think that is something I can do, to make it nicer, with beautiful flowers, so that people find it more attractive. [...] So that is also an obstacle that I experience' (26:27).

It also puts pressure on his personal life: 'it means that you are just working a lot, and social life is limited to a pair of water buffalos, and colleagues at work (11:40).

**Farm sales - Other job gives opportunity for trial and error and slow growth.** The respondent mentions that the fact that his other job helps him to slowly develop his farm (12:50). From a financial perspective, he has no worries and it gives him the opportunity for trial and error: [...] 'I have the room to see what works and what does not work. I am not really with my back against the wall in terms of finances' (11:30). He wants to become a full time farmer, and thinks that with small steps is the best way for him (12:46).

**Farm sales - No partnership regarding offsetting products, limits worries and responsibilities.** The respondent explains that he is not very fond of collaborations in selling his products. He feels that he wants to do things his own way, and he has no time for it (22:14).

**Farm sales - Complementary collaboration enables organizing attractive customer activities.** Collaboration with partner with complementary input enables organizing attractive customer activities. However he does sometimes collaborate with nearby farms to organize activities for customers. Then he works together with someone that can do things he cannot. As an example he mentions an activity he organizes together with another farmer. They organize a 'farmers' dinner'. The respondent indicates that the other farmer is good in cooking, and he is not. In this way the collaboration is complementary (22:45).

**Farmers' market (experience) – Farmers experience helps selecting suitable markets.** The respondent mentions that he has sold ice cream on farmers' market before. He mentions that it may be a good means to get some publicity for the products, but the earnings have never outweighed the costs (the registration fees). The respondent mentions that this is due to the cold weather circumstances; people were not interested in buying ice cream (14:47).

#### 4.13.4 Contextual factors

**Farm sales - Interest in transparency of food is increasing.** Within society attention to transparency, sustainability and animal welfare is rising according to the respondent. He feels that also that customers are more willing to pay for it (12:46).

### 4.14 Groenekans

#### 4.14.1 Background

Groenekans is a 2-acre big vegetable garden at Groenekan, close to the city of Utrecht. The garden uses 1 acre for growing vegetables, the rest of the area is used as living area and nature development. Floor van Ede is one of the three gardeners that run the garden. They currently sell their products through Internet sales and at their garden (1:17). The Internet sales recently started through a web shop. Previously it was done via e-mail. People have to become a member in order to order products. It is open to anyone, but you have to subscribe via their website. An order can be made once a week (but that is not obliged) through a private web shop (3:28). After that the ordering is delivered at one of the three pick up points at private places in Utrecht and De Bilt (7:28). With this type of Internet sales they wanted to provide in alternative for box schemes, where customers cannot choose which products they want. One third of the sales are done via this channel (8:11). It started with requests from friends (4:21), and currently around 20 orderings are placed every week (by 50 customers) (13:45). Another third of the sales occurs at their garden (8:11) in two ways; they have a shop farm shop that is open on Wednesday afternoon and Saturday (13:27), and an unmanned road stall that is open during all day (1:17). The rest of the products are sold indirectly to nearby shops and a trader.

In general the respondent mentions to be satisfied with the way it runs now, but mentions that they want to increase the share of direct sales, because they have to earn a bit more (8:11). You get 40% more then when you sell indirectly. Furthermore she mentions that it is fun to reconnect with people: 'We really enjoy it to not stay anonymous'. It offers opportunity to job satisfaction (10:16). The respondent says that ironically they don't know the customers that visit the road stall (25:31).

#### 4.14.2 Factors related to customer segment

**Farm sales - Good location for attracting customers.** The respondent mentions that the location of the garden so close to Utrecht is a big strength. That was the opportunity to start with at the first place. The fact the garden is located to thoroughfare/main road helps the sales at the road stall and farm shop: 'I've never counted, but there are really a lot of people passing by. So the road is very convenient. And the amount of people within a radius of 5 km is just very convenient' (31:36). Furthermore the people in the area are relatively wealthy according to the respondent: 'The people living here, for a large part, can afford it' (34:05).

**Farm shop - Customers with unrealistic or unpleasant demands inhibit job satisfaction.** The respondent mentions that in their neighbourhood live many rich people. She sometimes experiences difficulties within the communication with people that have too high demands or treat her like a 'gofer' (e.g. when customers say: 'please pick me some tomatoes'). She does not feel appreciated, and mentions that those customers are not aware that their marketing system is not set up to instantly do that. Maybe by being clear about that will resolve the issue in future, however she finds that really bothersome (15:31).

**Farm shop - Story and knowledge about products fosters good customer relation.** The respondent indicates that it is important that they themselves sell the products, and not another (young) worker at the farm shop. She argues that it is important that someone experienced sells the product, someone who can tell the story of the product:

'You need to have experience with cooking, you should be able to tell a good story about your product, and you should have eaten all at least one time. Well, try to find someone for such a small company that grows chards, and turnip-tops and forest garlic and who knows what else. Then you need prepare someone for the job very thoroughly' (27:00).

That is why they want to sell the crops them selves. And she mentions that in this way they can always tell the correct story to their customers. For instance they can explain it when a certain crop is not available due to



plant disease. The respondent mentions that their customers understand it, and then they buy something else. She feels that you cannot do that with other (cheap) personnel.

**Farm shop - The choice of selling by them selves increases labour pressure and limits other marketing options.** The other side of the coin is however, that by selling them selves they have an increased labour pressure, and limits the time to perform other farming and marketing activities (that is also why they stopped with the farmers market).

**Road stall - Consumption junction based on trust saves costs, fosters opportunity for extra income, and attracts customers (and outweighs the losses)** The road stall saves employment costs, yet offers a good opportunity for extra income. The respondent states that many people pass by on different moments of the day, so day are easily served: 'One person comes when he lets his dog out, and the other one when the kids are just out of school. [...] Everyone comes along at his preferred time, and can bring something home [buy food] (32:00). She mentions that there is always a loss; 'Not everybody pays. But it is acceptable. You get a premium price compared to a [regular] shop. And the greater part does pay' (25:31).

**Internet sales / delivery - Direct contact increases consumer understanding when something is wrong.** The respondent mentions the direct contact offers the opportunity to explain difficulties to the customer. One example is when the orderings were put in the delivery car at the end of the day in winter, for delivery the next day. However the crops were ruined because of the freezing temperature during the night. The respondent mentions that also then the customers understand, and could even appreciate that the winter has an influence on their food as well (29:55).

**Internet sales/ delivery - Sympathy of pick point owner is needed to be successful.** The respondent mentions that the people living at the addresses of the pick up points need to have some sympathy for the initiative. They had some experience that those persons found it sometimes annoying that there were crates standing at their yard, or that customers forgot to pick some vegetables, or actually did not like it that many customers had to enter their yard. The communication between the farmers and those people at the pick up points went not so smooth. But now that the respondent found new pick points, she realize that it is important that those people like to do it that much that you don't mind to have crates or customers at the yard (15:31): 'they really be have a bit more sympathetic with us, with our company, or with this system in order to ensure that it runs properly' (15:40). And when it is not the case, than that is much more difficult.

**Internet sales / delivery - Pick up point in nice neighbourhoods propels sales and attraction of new customers.** The respondent mentions that the location of the pick up point also influences the sales and the attraction of new customers. They experienced that when they shifted one of their pick up point to a nice neighbourhood. Soon after more neighbours became customer as well (5:30).

**Internet sales/ delivery - Human error.** Within the customer contact, the ordering system and logistics, there is sometimes room for error. Usually communication mistakes, but all within acceptable boundaries according to the respondent (15:31)

**General - Farm sales and web shop complement each other.** The respondent mentions that they are now able to supply different type of consumers with different demands. 'Somebody who buys at the web shop thinks it is fine to order, however other people want to feel, smell and see the vegetables' (23:32). In this way they are able to reach a variety of types of customers.

**General - Unique concept leads to little competition.** The respondent mentions there are other gardeners in the area as well, however everybody has its own customers (34:54). There are so much people around (31:36). Recently a pick your own garden has started nearby. The respondent argues that this garden and other gardens are such different concepts, that they will attract other customers (34:54).

**General - Keeping it simple limits policy issues.** The respondent argues that they currently do not have many issues that inhibit nor foster her in marketing their foods. *Some subsidies have been requested, but not regarding marketing.* They do not organize activities that would require catering permits, or build things that would require other permits (41:37). They had some issues with HACCP regulation (of cutting cabbages), but that was easily resolved. They keep their practices as simple as possible and then little policies issue interfere.

However, in future they might want to include some catering services or process some products, but then they would need permits (46:22). They choose not to do that yet. Permits for events would be needed, but they did not request.

#### 4.14.3 Factors related to company infrastructure

**Internet sales / delivery - Web shop and administration program decreases labour pressure.** At first the Internet ordering occurred through email exchange. The gardeners send an email to the customers, and then the customers could send an ordering back, and then they would take over the ordering in their own Excel program. 'At a certain point we noticed that we were at the maximum of our capacity. Because all people wrote an email with their orders and they preferably [ironically] added another question for instance 'when are the snow peas ready?' Well you wish to answer those questions. But at a certain point we were writing a lot of emails' (18:16). It was also frustrating for them: '[...] typing over ordering in these times... maybe 30 years ago it was normal, but in these times you think it should be possible to do this differently, [in] this digital era. So it was frustrating that it was not different' (22:15). With this new ordering system through a web shop the decreased labour pressure, also because it includes automatic payment. Now they have time to work in the garden in the evening, instead of typing in orderings. The administration program has the same effect (18:16).

**Internet sales / delivery - Service of friend lowered costs for development of web shop.** Developing a web shop is very expensive. According to the respondent it was only possible to realize this with the help of a friend (18:16).

**Internet sales / delivery - Limited development capacity of small firm it is difficult to develop web shop time wise.** The respondent mentions that they wanted to start with the web shop 6 years ago, and it is finished now almost. The development of web shop took time; 'In a big company you can say to an employee 'this is your task', but here we have to do that besides the regular work' (18:16).

**Internet sales / delivery - Proximity of pick up points enables easy and quick (bike) delivery.** They pick up point are that close that they are even able to deliver the products by cargobike. This saves time, because it saves the hassle of parking within the city and you can take short cuts. (38:37)

#### 4.14.4 Contextual factors

**General - Increased societal attention to organic and regional food.** The respondent mentions that organic food is not considered stupid anymore, and regional foods has increasingly become at the general interest. The respondent experiences clearly the increased attention to local foods: 'you can benefit from it' (31:36).

**General - Little competition because demand is higher then the farm can serve.** The demand is also much higher than, because it is so dense with potential customers (37:36). Until now, she experiences that contacts between other farms are fostering each other's performance instead of competition.

## 5 Within marketing channel analysis

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In chapter 4 an overview is given of the marketing channels and factors that are appointed by the respondent in each of the single cases. It turns out that all the different cases employ unique ways of marketing their products. Furthermore, as one can see a broad lists of factors are appointed. In this chapter the researcher aims to give a more compressed understanding of the findings. Yet the variation of appointed factors challenges this analysis. Sections 5.1 to 5.5 discuss the appointed factors of each type of marketing channel, in order to see if there is and variation and overlap within that specific marketing channels. Each section includes a table in which the marketing channels of the cases are mapped. It also contains an elaborate table with the factors appointed. The conceptual framework is guiding in the arrangement of the factors. Within the framework, sometimes the factors are clustered in different themes. A theme is a cluster of factors related to the same 'topic', and can be related to an element of the framework, but also to a more specific aspect within that element. These themes can include both fostering and hampering factors. The researcher constructed the themes in order to see if, within the variety of factors the farmers appoint, perhaps similar themes can be detected. Within the text, the themes are displayed in italic. It remained a challenge to position the different factors within the themes, because factors are often related to multiple themes or elements. Therefore the factors are loosely clustered, also to enable further analysis in chapter 6, but should not be considered as strict headings.

In this analysis a division between rationale and factor has been loosened up. Because what some farmers appointed as rationales, is appointed by others as a factor (and vice versa), or sometimes as both. It seems that in practice a clear-cut distinction between factors and rationales is difficult. If a factor originates from a rationale, the origin is still displayed within the tables. Furthermore, some farmers that employ *one* marketing channel that include characteristics of *multiple* marketing channels. When this was the case (for De Stoerderij, and Veld and Beek), the researcher explains for which marketing channel the factor is relevant. On the other hand, many farmers have employed multiple direct marketing channels. When respondent mention factors that account for all the marketing channels, then these were included in the different sections of the specific marketing channel as well. This chapter ends with some concluding remarks in section 5.6.

### 5.1 Within farmers' markets

In eight cases farmers have experience with marketing at farmers' markets. The farmers of A8, De Kooihoek, De Raatakker, De Stroese Dame and De Knotwilg offset currently products at farmers' markets. For most of them it is an important source of income for their companies. De Raatakker, De Stroese dame and De Knotwilg mention that the farmers' market is the pillar of their company. Respondents mention they sell at the markets because (1) it gives them the independency e.g. the ability to set their own (lucrative) prices (De Raatakker, De Stroese Dame, A8, De Knotwilg) (2) they are able to acquire a 'steady income' (De Raatakker, De Knotwilg), (3) they can connect with the customer, which is more fun (De Knotwilg, De Raatakker, De Kooihoek, De Stroese Dame), and (4) the opportunity to offset a wide variety of products (De Kooihoek). Generally the farmers are happy with the performance of the markets. De Stroese Dame mentions that there is room for improvement. Note that farmers of De Raatakker, De Stroese Dame and De Kooihoek are selling at the same market (in Utrecht). For all respondents accounts that they want to get a fair price for their products. Table 5.1 gives an overview of the characteristic elements of each marketing channel.

In table 5.2 an overview is given on what factors the respondents have mentioned. The respondents of Amelishof, De Stoerderij and Groenekans mentioned they sold through farmers' markets before, but they currently not do that anymore. Two factors mentioned by Amelishof (on labour) and De Stoerderij (regarding the weather circumstances) are also included, but mostly the factors of the other five are discussed. Within all the different structuring categories both fostering and hampering factors are given. The table illustrates that the different respondent mention a wide variety of factors.

#### 5.1.1 Customer segment

The respondents have chosen for direct sales, which includes direct contact with the customer. With regard to the customer segment, respondents mention a myriad of factors.

**Product and service characteristics.** The products that each farmer sells, varies. This may explain the variation in the factors that are appointed. For instance, the respondent of De Raatakker mentions that when selling vegetables and fruit, the variation of products he offers attracts customers. The two farmers that sell animal

*Table 5.1 Mapping characteristics of cases that employ farmers' markets*

Elements		De Raatakker	Stroese dame	Kooihoek	Knotwilg	A8
Customer segment*	Value for consumer	Citizen in Utrecht interested fresh organic vegetables and fruits from de Raatakker, other local farms. Complemented with offer from wholesalers	Citizen in Utrecht interested in high quality raw milk goat products	Citizen in Utrecht interested sheep cheese, meat and skin	Citizen in Amsterdam and The Hague interested in fresh organic vegetable and (soft) fruits grown by farmers, nearby farmers and from wholesalers	Citizen in Wijk bij Duurstede interested in organic plants grown by farmers
	Customer relation	One time transaction				
	Consumption junction	Weekly market In Utrecht	Weekly market in Utrecht	Weekly market in Utrecht	Weekly market in Amsterdam and The Hague	Weekly market in Wijk bij Duurstede (+ some incidental markets)
Company infrastructure	Logistics	Weekly ride from Wekerom to Utrecht and picking up products from other farmers	Weekly ride from Stroe to Utrecht	Weekly ride from Exel to Utrecht and picking up products from other farmers	Weekly ride from Beemster with own products to Amsterdam, and The Hague. Complementary products are delivered by wholesalers at both markets	Weekly ride from Doorn to Wijk bij Duurstede
	Farm characteristic	2 acre farm in agricultural area run by 1 farmer, Paid employees at farmers' market	Farm in Stroe, 7,5 acre, run by 2 farmers	Sheep farm in agricultural area run by farmer and wife.	7 Acre vegetable garden in Beemster, mostly adapted for marketing through farmers' market	2-acre vegetable, flower and plant garden in Doorn run by 2 farmers
	Farmer and activities	Growing, harvesting, transport, administration, communication	Care for goats, milking, cheese making, transport, administration, communication	Care for sheep, milking, cheese making, transport, communication	Growing, harvesting, transport, administration, communication	Breeding, growing, harvesting, transport, administration, communication
	Collaboration	With colleagues at farmers' market, and with nearby farmers to complement assortment of local products	With colleagues at farmers' market	With colleagues at farmers' market	With nearby farmer to complement assortment	n.a.

products appoint other factors. Both the respondents of De Stroese Dame and De Kooihoek describe that their cheese products are rather special, compared to regular (supermarket) cheese. Because these products are less common for consumers, it limits the sales. In addition the respondent of the Stroese Dame mentions that the high price limits the attraction for a part of the potential customers. Two respondents (De Kooihoek and De Knotwilg) mention that it is a fostering factor that customers at the farmers' market accept products with

characteristics that wholesalers would not accept (e.g. a different size, or a different taste). Therefore it limits the loss of products for these farmers. On the other hand, the respondents of A8 state that their customers do not always accept the different characteristics of their products (compared to supermarket quality), which in their view leads to the loss of customers.

**Customer contact and consumption junction.** The customer contact occurs right at the place of the consumption junction. Therefore factors regarding these elements are clustered together in table 5.1b. First of all, the weekly market is for most respondents (De Raatakker, De Stroese Dame, De Kooihoek, De Knotwilg) a lucrative source of income. The recurrent sales every week secures a year round income for the farmers (note that these aspects were appointed mostly as rationale). Furthermore De Raatakker, De Kooihoek and De Stroese Dame explicitly point out that positive feedback on their products they get from their customers fosters their job satisfaction. The other two respondents mention it as well, but as rationale.

Respondents of De Raatakker and De Stroese Dame mention also factors related to the *appearance and functioning of their market stall*. According to the Raatakker their customer friendliness and the appearance of their stall is a fostering factor for attracting customers. The respondent of De Stroese Dame also appoints this; he mentions the explicit personal and professional investment in this appearance attracts customers. However, he also mentions that it is still difficult to attract the attention because people are currently overwhelmed with information. The respondents of A8 mention that the knowledge and stories the respondent has about the products (and food in general) attracts customers.

Furthermore, De Knotwilg and De Raatakker supplement their assortment with products from wholesales. The respondent of De Raatakker feels sometimes frustrated that *customers expect* that all the products he sells in his stall come from his land.

With regard to *functioning of the whole market*, the respondent of the Stroese Dame mentions that a collective marketing plan (together with the other stallholders) improved the attractiveness and the publicity of the farmers' market. This should also account for De Kooihoek and De Raatakker, but they did not explicitly mention it. This fostered the sales for all stallholders according to the respondent. The respondents of De Knotwilg mention that the increased quality of the market as whole also attracts customers. However, they feel that the image of their market is under threat, because of the presence of stallholders that sell non-organic products. This may lead to confusion or feelings of misleading among customers. The respondents of De Knotwilg also explain that for them it is important that there are not too many other stalls that sell similar products. If stallholders have complementary product offer, it enables them also to get a good income. Although it could be regarded as an incidental aspect, but both respondents of De Raatakker and De Stroese Dame mention that a nearby long term renovation inhibits the attractiveness of the market.

### 5.1.2 Company structure

**Farm characteristics.** One can see that some *farms located* further away the city see that as an inhibiting factor for involving customers at the farm (De Raatakker and De Stroese Dame), while for another respondent it is an inhibiting factor in the sense that it takes a lot of time to travel (De Kooihoek).

The respondents of A8 experience also that their choice to grow everything *themselves limit them to react on changes in supply and demand for certain crops*. It is simply for them not possible to instantly provide customers with a product if they did not include that into their seasonal crop plan. The fact that the other two respondents that sell vegetables (De Raatakker and De Knotwilg) did not mention this, may be due to the fact that they complement their assortment with supply from wholesalers. So they can adapt to the increased demand, because they can do additional purchases.

**Farmers' characteristics.** The respondents mention different farmer characteristics as fostering factors. Both respondents of A8 and De Knotwilg explicitly mention that they feel they have the right experience now to select incidental farmers' markets that suits them. This is also appointed by De Stoerderij (in retrospect). The respondent of the Raatakker mentions that knowing your boundaries and capabilities to make a balanced plan between your capacity and customer demand. The respondent of the Stroese Dame is explicit about the fact that his professional approach to business plan include time for marketing and the marketing plan it self were a fostering factor for his marketing performance. It seems that the factors appointed by the respondents vary (from experience to knowledge to knowing your capacity to professional effort). In addition, the respondents

of A8 mention a rather different factor. They mention that they are sometimes not business-minded enough, which leads to selling products for (too) low prices.

Within four of the five current cases the respondents mention *labour capacity* issues *within their activities*. Respondents of A8, De Stroese Dame and De Kooihoek mention that the variety of work *and limited capacity to hire labour* leads to high labour pressure. The respondent from De Raatakker reasons the other way around and mentions that the *limited labour capacity limits him to grow a more variety of products*. This indicates that there is a tension between labour pressure and the variety of work (or products). At the same time respondent

Table 5.2 Factors appointed by farmers that employ farmers' markets

	Themes		Factors
Customer segment	Product and service characteristics		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ Different products fosters attraction for customer E</li> <li>- Sheep cheese is a very special product that limits attraction of customers G</li> <li>- Prejudice about goat cheese, limit sales F</li> <li>- High price limits amount of customers** F</li> <li>+ Selling only durable products at market, limit loss L</li> <li>+ Consumers accepting different qualities of product limits loss of products* G, H</li> <li>- Different expectations on products lead to loss of customers L</li> </ul>
	Customer relation and Consumption junction	Customer contact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ Positive contact. Feedback fosters job satisfaction* (E), F, G, H, L</li> <li>- Different expectations on origin of products are sometimes frustrating E</li> <li>+ Weekly market leads to constant and lucrative source of income *E, F, G, H</li> </ul>
		Stall functioning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ Customer friendliness and nice appearance of the stall foster the attraction of customers E</li> <li>+ Professional approach to marketing fosters publicity and sales F</li> <li>- Getting consumers attention is difficult because people are overwhelmed with information F</li> <li>+ Knowledge of farmer attracts customers and fosters customer relation L</li> </ul>
		Market functioning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ Farmers' collective marketing plan raised attention to farmers' market F</li> <li>+ Increased quality of market attracts customers and is competitive advantage for compared to other shops H</li> <li>- No clear message of farmers' markets image (not all is organic) may confuse customers, H</li> <li>+ Balance of different types of market stalls required to gain a good income H</li> <li>- Renovation inhibits market performance and attractiveness for customers E, F</li> </ul>
Company infrastructure	Farm characteristic	Location	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Location of farm limits attraction for customer E F</li> <li>- Location of farm is distant from farmer's market, puts pressure on time G</li> </ul>
		Structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Inflexibility of structure and crop season delay inhibits to deal adequate on shifts within supply and demand L</li> </ul>
	Farmers characteristics	Capabilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ Farmers' experience helps selecting suitable markets H, L, M</li> <li>+ Capacity to know your limits helps to keep job satisfaction E</li> <li>+ Capability to create balanced crop plan between customer demand and own capacity E</li> <li>+ Including time for direct sales in business plan F</li> <li>- Being to kind leads to fewer turnovers L</li> </ul>
		Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Variety of work and limited capacity to hire labour leads to high labour pressure F, G, L,</li> <li>- High labour pressure limits growing more varieties of crops himself E</li> <li>- Growing diverse crops limit the amount of income E</li> <li>+ Wholesalers bringing extra products to market reduces labour effort and assets needed H</li> </ul>
	Collaboration with	Colleagues at market	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ Collaboration lead to farmers' collective Marketing plan F</li> <li>- Collaborative marketing approach is inhibited by limited time or capacity of colleagues F</li> <li>- Different ideas of stallholders limit collaboration G</li> </ul>
		Farmers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ Complementary partnership with nearby farmers helps to provide in a varied offer E, H</li> </ul>
Context	Society / economic		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ Increased attention to local / organic food A, E, G, H, L</li> <li>- Economic decline led to fewer sales L</li> <li>- Food scandals and critical public opinion L</li> </ul>
	Policy and institutions		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ Current policy is not against organic farming anymore H</li> <li>- Strict hygienic regulation limits especially smallholder G</li> <li>+ Good local market policy preserves clear and trust image of farmers market F</li> <li>- Bike policy of local government inhibit accessibility for customers F</li> <li>- High certification costs are inhibiting for smallholder farmers L</li> <li>- High costs of money system, limits room for maneuver for small farmers L</li> <li>- Borrowing relatively small amounts of money is difficult L</li> </ul>
	Competition / power		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Much competition of convenient marketing channels F, H</li> <li>- Cheese factories market unsafe image of raw milk F</li> <li>- Mentality of shopkeepers association inhibits getting permits L</li> </ul>

A = Amelishof (previously), E = Raatakker, F = Stroese Dame, G = Kooihoek, H = Knotwilg, L = A8, M = Stoerderij (previously), N = Groenekans (previously); + = Fostering factor, - = Inhibiting factor, \* = appointed as rationale

of De Raatakker mentions that he would rather grow less varieties because then he would be able to work more efficient and get a better income, however that does not align with the demand on the farmers' market. The respondent of De Knotwilg mentions that the fact that wholesalers deliver the products to the farmers' market saves them labour (and the need to invest in transport facilities).

**Collaboration.** Stroese Dame, De Raatakker and De Kooihoek sell at the same market in Utrecht. As mentioned above, the respondent of the Stroese Dame mentions that the *collective marketing plan* they developed fostered the sales for everyone at the market. De Raatakker and De Kooihoek did not mention this joint marketing effort.<sup>19</sup> The respondent of the Stroese Dame feels also that the success of the joint marketing effort is limited by the time and effort the other stallholders spend on it. The respondent of the Kooihoek mentions that there are different ideas on how to market needs to be done, which may lead to limit the performance of the collaboration. These exclamations may appoint that the joint marketing approach is at tension with the capacity or/and the ideas of the different stallholders. However it is not within the reach of this study, to make more statements about this. With regard to collaboration with farmers, De Raatakker and De Knotwilg mention that collaboration with nearby farmers helps to complement the assortment with more diverse local products.

### 5.1.3 Context

**Societal.** Respondents mention a great variety of contextual factors. All of the respondents experience an increased societal attention that fosters their marketing performance. The respondents of A8 mentions that they feel that the economic decline leads to fewer sales. They feel also that food scandals and a critical public opinion leads to suspicious customers. They feel that this limits their sales.

**Policy and institutions.** Also very divers policy factors are mentioned. In line with the increased positive societal attention to local and organic foods, respondents of De Knotwilg mention that they feel currently not inhibited by policies anymore (which was the case in earlier years). The respondent of De Kooihoek feels, as a smallholder, inhibited by the strict hygienic policies (but he finds his way). The respondent of De Stroese Dame however mentions that the fact that the local government has a very strict bike parking policy in the city centre inhibits the accessibility for customer. He also mentions that the clear and strict market policy is very good, because it safeguards the organic and producer image of the market. Respondents of A8 mention some institutional related factors. They indicate that the high costs for certification is an hampering factor. And it is difficult for farmers to borrow a small amount of money (for investment, see also 5.2.2 Farm characteristics) from banks. Also the transaction costs for payment through ATM or bringing cash money to the banks are high.

**Competition.** The respondents of De Stroese Dame and De Knotwilg experience much competition of other marketing channels like organic shops and supermarkets. The respondents of A8 experience that shopkeepers see them as competitors. It has also occurred that they therefore did not get a permit for farmers' market. De Stroese Dame takes a few steps further back within the conventional cheese production chain. They feel competition from milk factories that try to exploit an unsafe image of raw milk products. It is according to this respondent difficult to compete with such powerful marketing schemes.

### 5.1.4 Summarizing

The within farmers' market analysis reveals a wide variety of factors. With regard to farmers' markets, table 5.1b reveals factors that (loosely) relate to the themes product characteristics, customer contact, stall functioning, market functioning, location of the farm, labour capacity and resources, farmers' activities and capabilities, collaboration with farmers and colleagues at the market, and society, policy and competition. A few factors within these themes are underlined here, because they are mentioned by more then three respondents: one can see that most respondents (four out of five) mention that the customer contact fosters the job satisfaction. Also four respondents of the five respondents indicate that the 'weekly market leads to a constant and lucrative source of income' (Consumption junction; customer contact). Furthermore most farmers appoint to a tension between their labour capacity (farm characteristic) and the various activities they have to perform. All respondents experience an increased societal attention as a fostering factor. Note however nothing can be said about the whether the most mentioned factors or themes are more important than factors that are mentioned by less respondents (more about this in chapter 6).

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<sup>19</sup> The interviewer did not ask for it, because she knew it after she spoke with the respondent of the Stroese Dame, which was the last of the three.

## 5.2 Within farm sales

As one could see in table 3.4, many of the consulted cases employ farm sales. Amelishof, Eko de Eerste Groenekans, Kaasboerderij Vierhuizen and De Croy set up a specific farm shop, which is opened at set hours. A8 has a mobile vegetable stall that is also opened at set hours. Amelishof and De Croy offer also pick your own (flowers) opportunities for customers. Groenekans has also a road stall. De Kooihoek, Kraanvogel, and Stroese Dame sell also at their farm, but only occasionally and by appointment; they do not run a shop or stall. They are not considered within this analysis. The Stoerderij also sell only by appointment, yet this is currently the only marketing channel he employs. The farm uses Internet to contact with customers. Factors regarding the Internet aspect are mostly discussed in section 5.3, but furthermore this marketing channel is regarded as farm sales. The Knotwilg sold at a road stall and farm shop before, but they stopped. Some of their experiences are also included in the analysis. Table 5.3 gives an overview of the eight farms that currently and particularly focus on selling through farm sales. Table 5.4 gives an overview of the different factors that are appointed.

Table 5.3 Mapping characteristics of cases that employ farmers' markets

Elements		Amelishof	De Croy	Vierhuizen	Eko de Eerste	A8	De Stoerderij	Groene-kans
Customer segment*	Value for consumer	Organic vegetables and flowers	Organic vegetables (flowers)	Organic cow and sheep cheese	Organic Cheese, vegetables, eggs	Organic vegetables and plants	Organic buffalo milk, ice cream and meat	Organic vegetables
	Customer relation	One time transaction						
	Consumption junction	Farm shop	Farm shop	Farm shop	Farm shop	Mobile farm stall	Pick up at farm appointment	Farm shop and road stall
Company Infrastructure	Farm characteristic	2 acre garden with foundation	2 acre	40 cows, 20 sheep	70 acre	2 acre	27 buffalos	2 acre
	Farmer and activities	2 gardeners that grow, harvest, sell, customer activities	2 gardeners that grow, harvest, sell, customer activities	3 farmers that milk, make cheese and sell	4 farmers, around 8 fte employees	2 gardeners that grow, harvest and sell	1 farmer that milks, makes ice and sells	2 gardeners that grow, harvest and sell
	Collaboration	Collaboration with nearby restaurant	n.a.	n.a.	Product exchange with farmers	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.

\* Distribution channel from farm to customer is removed, because the farm is also the place of selling. Therefore distribution is not applicable.

### 5.2.1 Customer segment

**Product and service characteristics.** With regard to product and service characteristics (i.e. the way of selling at the farm) both enabling and hampering factors are mentioned. A wide variety of products attract customers according to the respondent of Eko de Eerste. Two respondents mention that also a good quality of products fosters the attraction of customers (According to De Croy and Vierhuizen). According to De Croy, De Groenekans and Stoerderij their products and service are so unique in their neighbourhoods, that they experience little competition. This offers the opportunity to attract customers. However, this uniqueness is at the same time an hampering factor for the Stoerderij as well. The respondent mentions that his buffalo products are so unique; customers do not regularly purchase them. In line with this, the respondents of A8 mention that their product have different characteristics then supermarket vegetables, and mention that this also limits the attraction of customers. According to the respondents of De Croy, Groenekans and A8, the knowledge and stories they can tell about their products attracts also customers. Furthermore the flexibility of the service A8 offers, is appointed as a fostering factor.



**Customer relation.** Several respondents mention aspects within consumer communication as either fostering or hampering factors. Respondents of De Croy, Vierhuizen, Eko de Eerste and Groenekans mention that they sometimes encounter with expectations of customers which they cannot or don't want to fulfil, because it does not fit in their company structure (e.g. otherwise leading to extra work). The respondents appoint that it inhibit the job satisfaction if customers do not understand it that certain demand are not within reach of the farmers capacity, especially if it occurs on a recurrent basis (e.g. the customers keeps demanding something that is not possible for the farmer). However, at the same time, all respondent of Vierhuizen and Eko de Eerste mention that their increased experience helps them to deal more adequate with such customers. The other way around, the positive contact, and positive feedback the farmers get from the customers increases their job satisfaction (Amelishof, De Kraanvogel, De Croy, and Stoerderij) and to the attraction of new customers (Vierhuizen). The respondent of A8 mentions that the personal attention they give to their customers on the farm fosters a long-term relation. They also mention the fact that the customers trust the farmers in producing fair organic products fosters the customer relationship. Trust of the customer in the company, is also appointed as fostering factor by Eko de Eerste.

**Supply and demand.** When growing vegetables, A8 mentions that they cannot instantly react on changes in demand. They have chosen to not purchase any products from wholesalers or other farmers. But when customers demand something they cannot react quickly. Previous to the crop season they have to 'guess' what customers demand will be. (The Croy mentions this also as an hampering factor, but that is mostly related to box schemes production plan, see section 5.5.1).

**Consumption junction.** As pointed out in table 5.2b a myriad of factors are mentioned regarding the consumption junction. Taking a closer look, they loosely touch upon four different themes. First *convenience*. According to the respondent of the Stoerderij that heading towards the farm to get the products lacks convenience for the customer, and therefore limits the attraction of customers. The respondents of A8 mention that although they have a wide variety of product, customers still lack an amount of products that are offered in supermarkets. Second, Groenekans employs an unmanned road stall, and the Knotwilg has done that previously. The respondent of Groenekans mentions that this exchange based on *trust* enables them to attract more customers and an opportunity to get an extra income without many costs. The loss due to theft for them is limited. However, the respondents of De Knotwilg have an opposite experience and mention that they had to stop their road stall, because the losses due to theft were unacceptable high. In that sense, they could not trust their customer (or passing people), which led to higher costs. Third, the location of the farm, which is the location of the consumption junction, is frequently appointed. Respondents of Amelishof, De Croy, Vierhuizen, Stoerderij and Groenekans mention that they are located in areas that attract many people, either for leisure (Amelishof, De Croy, Vierhuizen) or passage (De Croy, Vierhuizen, Stoerderij, Groenekans). On the contrary, Eko de Eerste appoints that the remote location of his farm, inhibits the attraction of customers. From a different perspective, respondents of Amelishof and A8 mention that they also (will) benefit from other (farm) shops around them that sell complementary products, because customers have the opportunity to get more products in the 'same ride'. And fourth, the *appearance* of the farm is also mentioned. The respondent of Amelishof mentions that the appearance of the garden attracts customers. Also the opportunity to walk around at the farm (Amelishof, De Croy and Eko de Eerste) and pick flowers (Amelishof and De Croy) attracts customers. Other respondents mention that the appearance of their farm is in fact an inhibiting factor. Since the Stoerderij is located in a temporary farm, he is not able to invest in the appearance. And A8 mentions that their mobile stall has no professional appearance yet.

## 5.2.2 Company infrastructure

**Farm characteristics.** Amelishof is connected with a foundation, which enables the farmers to attract external funding to make the farm more attractive. Furthermore it enables to work with volunteers, which alleviates the labour pressure on the garden, and allows the farmer to make time for thinking about marketing strategies (see also 5.5.2). De Croy mentions that they have the capacity to hire an experienced volunteer that will help alleviating the labour pressure, while A8 mentions they have not the financial capacity to hire any labour. A8 also mentions that while they have limited financial capacity, they also experience a cash flow gap during the spring. This limits them to invest in further development of their marketing channels and equipment to stabilize production. The respondent of Eko de Eerste explains that because they work on the farm with so many family members, they can keep the labour costs low. Subsequently they have the room to invest in the offer of new products, and can sell products at affordable prices (for the customer). Furthermore, the respondent of De Croy mentions the fact that he has access to very good soil (in a good environment), he is

capable of producing very good quality products (which subsequently fosters the attraction of customers, see 5.2.1)

**Farmer characteristics and activities.** With regard to farmer characteristics one topic is often mentioned: the respondents of Amelishof De Croy, Vierhuizen, Stoerderij and Groenekans appoint that direct customer contact

Table 5.4 Factors appointed by farmers that employ farm sales

	Themes		Factors
Customer segment	<b>Product and service characteristics</b>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ Unique product and concept leads to little competition C, N, M</li> <li>- Uniqueness of product inhibits attraction of customer on daily basis M</li> <li>- Other (non-conventional) product characteristics leads to loss of customer L</li> <li>+ Broad range of products attracts customer K</li> <li>+ Product that is non-hybrid and tasty is effective in attracting customers and strengthens customer relation C</li> <li>+ Good quality cheese attracts customer J</li> <li>+ Story and knowledge (education) about products fosters good customer relation C, L, N</li> </ul>
	<b>Customer relation</b>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Customer with unrealistic or unpleasant demands inhibit job satisfaction C, J, K, N</li> <li>+ Experience and capacity helps in dealing with communication J, K</li> <li>+ Positive contact and appreciation fosters job satisfaction A, C, J, M</li> <li>+ Positive experiences of customer fosters attraction of new customers J</li> <li>+ Personal attention attracts customers and fosters long term relation L</li> <li>+ Trust relationship helps attracting customers K, L</li> <li>+ Flexibility of farmers supports customer relation and attraction of customers L</li> </ul>
	<b>Consumption junction</b>	<i>Convenience</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Pick up is not convenient enough for 'lazy' customer M</li> <li>- Not convenient enough to reach customer L</li> </ul>
		<i>Trust</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ Consumption junction based on trust saves cost, fosters opportunity for extra income, and attracts more customers N</li> <li>- Consumption junction based on trust lead to theft / unacceptable losses H*</li> </ul>
		<i>Location</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ Good location for attracting (leisure) customers. A, C, J, M, N</li> <li>- Too remote location for farm shop K</li> <li>+ More farm shops around foster attracting customers A, L</li> </ul>
		<i>Appearance</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ Appearance of garden attracts consumers A</li> <li>+ Offering customers to walk around on garden and pick flowers attracts customers A, C</li> <li>+ Customers can walk around at farm freely, attracts customer K</li> <li>- Farm shop is not professional yet L</li> <li>- Temporary location of farm limits investment in attractiveness for customers M</li> </ul>
Company infrastructure	<b>Farm characteristic (labour, resources and location)</b>	<i>Supply and demand shifts</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Production system is inflexible; long feedback loop with regard to changes in demand and supply L (C)</li> </ul>
		<i>Structure</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ Structure with foundation enables working with volunteers and relieves labour A</li> <li>+ Structure with foundation enables to get funding to make garden more attractive A</li> </ul>
		<i>Labour capacity</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ Capacity to hire experienced trainee alleviates labour pressure (can take over marketing parts) C</li> <li>- Limited capacity to hire labour leads to high labour pressure L</li> <li>+ Strong team of family members saves labour cost, fosters performance of farm and eventually leads to affordable prices for customers K</li> </ul>
		<i>Recources</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ Good soil and environment enables production and marketing of good quality products C</li> <li>- Cash flow gap limits capacity to invest L</li> </ul>
	<b>Farmers' characteristics and activities</b>	<i>Time</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Customer contact takes time, and puts pressure on other farming activities C, M</li> <li>- Many opening hours and high demand put pressure on labour and other farming activities J</li> <li>- Running the farm shop took to much (inefficient) time H</li> <li>- The choice of selling by them selves increases labour pressure and limits other activities N</li> </ul>
		<i>Farmer capabilities</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Being to kind leads to lower revenue L</li> <li>- Age of farmers limits room for change way of marketing J</li> </ul>
		<i>Activities &amp; time</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ Variety of work fosters job satisfaction A, C</li> <li>+ Farmers' experience and enjoyment to work with people contributes to functioning of direct marketing A</li> <li>- Varied cultivation plan limits (labour and time) efficiency C</li> <li>- Other job limits time in investing in farms appearance M</li> <li>+ Other job gives opportunity for trial and error and slow growth M</li> </ul>
	<b>Collaboration</b>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ No partnership regarding offsetting products, limits worries and responsibilities A M</li> <li>+ Collaboration with partners with complementary input enable organizing attractive customer activities A M</li> <li>+ Product exchange complements assortment with shared effort for all farmers K</li> </ul>

A Amelishof, C De Croy, H Knotwilg (previously), J Vierhuizen, K Eko de Eerste,, L A8, M Stoerderij, N Groenekans

\* Based on previous experience

Table 5.4 (continued)

	Themes	Factors
Context	Society	+ Increased attention A, C, J, K, L, M, N - Food scandals and critical public opinion challenges trust of customers L
	Policy and institutions	- Local policy inhibits building shop at the roadside of the farm L - Taxes are planned in period when investments need to be made and cash flow is lowest L - Government support does not reach farmer C +/- Local policy may lead to unfair competition however supports as well A + Local government tolerates farm shop without permit K + Keeping the system simple limits policy issues N - High labor costs leads to high labour pressure K - Borrowing relatively small amounts of money is difficult L - High costs of money system, limits room for maneuver for small farmers L - Certification costs are high K, L
	Competition	+ Experience little competition because the demand is way higher then the farm van serve A, C, J, K, N - Misuse of green image by others, leads to confused customers C

A Amelishof, C De Croy, H Knotwilg (previously), J Vierhuizen, K Eko de Eerste,, L A8, M Stoerderij, N Groenekans

and the choice of selling the products by them selves, *costs time* and distracts them for performing other farming activities. The *inefficient* time it required was the reason for De Knotwilg to stop with farm sales. Amelishof and De Croy mention that they enjoy the *variety of work* that comes a long with their business and marketing channels. The respondent of Amelishof indicates that he has the right capacity and experience to keep it well functioning. The respondent of De Croy mentions that the variety of work however comes to the expense of the (time) *efficiency*.

Furthermore respondents mention factors that are rather specific for the different cases. For instance the respondent of the Stoerderij has a full time job besides his farm. This limits the amount of time he has for investing in the appearance of his farm. On the other hand, this other job gives him the *room to grow slowly* and the *opportunity for trial and error*, because he does not need to get his full income out of it. The respondent of Vierhuizen mentions that their high *age* limits the flexibility to change their marketing practices. And, the respondent of A8 mention that they are sometimes not business-minded enough in relation to their customers (e.g. by being too kind and charging low prices).

**Collaboration.** In all of the cases, farmers mention they hardly collaborate to offset their products. The respondents of Amelishof and De Stoerderij explicitly mention that they like to do things their own way, and do not want to have extra responsibilities. Both mention however that they do collaborate with nearby actors in organizing attractive customer activities. They work together because they feel that they *complement* each other. The respondent of Eko de Eerste works together with other farmers to complement the assortment, with a weekly product exchange.

### 5.2.3 Context

**Society.** All of the respondents appoint to the increased societal attention as a fostering factor. A8 mentions however that food scandals and critical public opinion challenges the trust of customers. As a consequence, they appoint, the respondents encounter suspicious customers with regard to their products.

**Policy and institutions.** Respondents mention a mixture of factors regarding policies, which seem rather case specific. Mostly policies inhibit the function of the marketing channels: in the case of A8 the farmers were not allowed to build the farm shop at the front of the house. They also feel constrained by the fact that they have to pay more and more taxes in the period when their income is the lowest (spring). The respondent of De Croy mentions that although government is available to develop more direct and collaborative marketing initiatives, due to the bureaucratic system it hardly reaches the farmers that need it. According to the respondent of Amelishof, government support of urban agriculture may lead to unfair competition, but they incidentally have profited from it as well. The respondent of Eko de Eerste mentions that feel somehow supported by the local government, because they tolerate the farm shop (while not having a permit for it). In the case of Groenekans, the respondent explains that they keep their farm shop and stall simple enough, so they have little trouble with policies.

There are also some diverse institutional related factors mentioned (some of them are also mention in 5.1). Eko de Eerste and A8 indicate that the high costs for certification is a hampering factor. The respondent of Eko de Eerste also appoints to the high societal labour costs. And according to the respondents of A8 it is difficult for farmers to borrow a small amount of money (for investment, see also 5.2.2 Farm characteristics) from banks. Also the transaction costs for payment through ATM or bringing cash money to the banks are high. They experience that as hampering factors.

**Competition.** The respondents of Amelishof, De Croy, Vierhuizen, Eko de Eerste and Groenekans mention that the *demand is much higher than there are competitors*. So competition is for them not really an issue. A8 mentions that they experience some competition of convenience stores, however they also mention that those serve another market then those convenience stores. Although not really a case of competition, the respondent of the Croy mentions that the green image of his company is sometimes misused by other business. He finds that disturbing because it leads to confusion amongst his customers.

## 5.2.4 Summarizing

The factors appointed by the respondents that employ farm sales relate to product and service characteristics, customer contact, convenience, trust (in the case of road stall), location of the farm, appearance of the farm, structure of the farm, labour capacity, resources, farmers' capabilities and activities, supply and demand shifts, society, policy and competition. But again, within the themes, a variety of factors have been appointed. More then four of the seven respondents mentioned the following factors: first, respondents indicate that the customer contact fosters the job satisfaction. Yet most of them also experience (incidental) unpleasant customer contact. Furthermore most respondents feel that their farm location (which is also the consumption junction) fosters them to attract customers. Also with respect to farm sales, all respondent feel supported by the increased societal attention. Five out of seven respondents experience little competition, because the demand outweighs the demand. Same as in farmers' market, all respondents experience an increased societal attention to local food or the origin of food.

## 5.3 Within Internet sales and delivery

### 5.3.1 Characteristics

Within five cases respondents mention that Internet is used as part of the marketing activities, but each of them organizes and employs them differently. The issue here is that it is difficult to distinguish between when Internet is used as a means to communicate, or as a full marketing channel. Customers can order through a web shop at Groenekans, which is then delivered at pick up points. Similarly, customers of Veld en Beek order products via e-mail, usually a weekly repeating order, that the can pick up at refrigerated trailers in their neighbourhood. Through e-mail customers can order products at Eko de Eerste and A8 that are delivered at home. Customers can reach the Stoerderij via e-mail, and can pick up the products at the farm.

Table 5.5 Mapping characteristics of cases that employ Internet sales / delivery

Elements		Eko de Eerste	A8	De Stoerderij	Groenekans
Consumer Segment	Product	Vegetables, eggs, meat, dairy	Vegetables and plants	Bufallo milk, ice cream and meat	Vegetables
	Customer relation	Long term contact, but no commitment to order (via mail)	Incidental purchase (via phone or mail)	Incidental purchase (via mail)	Weekly opportunity to order via personal webshop
	Consumption junction /logistics	Home delivery, weekly	Home delivery, by appointment	Pick up at farm, by appointment	Pick up points, weekly
Company	Farm characteristic	70 acre farm	2 acre garden	17 buffalos at temporary farm	2 acre garden
	Farmer and activities	Team of family	2 gardeners	1 farmer with full time other job	2 gardeners
	Collaboration	Weekly product exchange with farmers	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.

The researcher regards this marketing channel mostly as farm sales (see section 5.2), however some elements of using the Internet are relevant here. The marketing channel of Veld en Beek is excluded in this section, because the appointed factors relate to CSA / box scheme characteristics: no Internet specific factors are mentioned.

Table 5.5 gives an overview of characteristics of the specific cases. It illustrates that there is big variation in characteristics within the four channels. They have a different product offer, organize the customer contact and consumption junction differently. Also farmer and farm characteristics differ a lot. For all accounts, that the customer contact can be recurrent but is in principle an one-time or incidental transaction. Table 5.6 gives an overview of the factors the respondents appoint.

### 5.3.2 Customer segment

**Product characteristics.** With regard to product characteristics, only the respondent of the Stoerderij mentions factors regarding product characteristics. He feels that the uniqueness of his product may limit the attraction of customers. At the other hand this 'uniqueness' also attracts customer (from rather distant places). He mentions that the product branding is also key to the attraction of his customers.

**Consumption junction.** According to the respondent of Eko de Eerste, the convenience of home delivery attracts customers, and helps to keep the customers stay put. A lack of convenience is what the respondent of de Stoerderij feels as limiting a limiting factor: customers need to collect their orders at the farm, which limits the attraction of customers. Groenekans is the only farm that distributes the ordering via pick up points in the neighbourhood of their customers. They experience that pick up points in good neighbourhoods attracts new customers. The also mention that the people at the pick up points need to have the sympathy for the scheme in order to function well.

### 5.3.3 Company infrastructure

**Farm characteristics.** Within the company infrastructure, respondents also mention a variety of factors. The respondent of Eko de Eerste feels that the farm behind the Internet sales attracts customers, and also helps to create capacity. He mentions also that slow growth is key to a good performance of the marketing channel. Another different factor is appointed by the respondent of De Groenekans. She mentions the fact that they had capacity to develop the web shop, because of the help of a friend. Otherwise it might have been too expensive for them.

**Farmer activities.** According to the same respondent the Internet shop development was a long process that took a long period of time. She mentions that the limited time they had to invest in the development inhibited the (speed of the) innovation. But now web shop is there, she mentions that the marketing channel decreases labour pressure for the gardeners. The respondent of De Stoerderij mentions that his other job limits him to invest in the appearance of his farm. Yet, at the same time it secures him with the room for experimentation. The factors appointed here, may illustrate a tension between *time* and *development*.

### 5.3.4 Context

**Increased societal attention to local food vs convenience.** All of the respondents mention that the increased attention to local food is a fostering factor. However, the respondent mentions that despite this interest overall the customer is still mostly interested in acquiring its product at supermarkets, because it is more convenient. That limits currently the attraction of his scheme. He does appoint however that in general people increasingly order products through Internet (on demand); since the acceptance of Internet purchase is higher, it is a fostering factor.

Table 5.6 Factors appointed by farmers that employ Internet sales

	Themes	Factors
Consumer segment	Product characteristics	+/- Unique products helps and limits attraction of customers M + Product branding fosters sales M
	Customer relation	- Customers cannot taste and see product M (N) + Flexibility of farmers supports consumer relation and attraction of customers L - Human error with orderings N + Good customer relations creates understanding with customer when something goes wrong N
	Convenience	+ Convenience helps customers to stay put K - Not convenient enough for customer M
	Consumption junction	+ Pick up point need to have sympathy in order to function well N + Pick up point in good neighbourhood propels attraction of new customers N
Company	Farm characteristic (labour, resources and location)	+ A good performing farm behind the Internet sales enables to sell at affordable price and attracts customers K + Slow growth foster little mistakes K + Help of friend made it possible to develop web shop N
	Farmers' activities	- Little time limits innovation, e.g. lengthy development web shop N - Other job limits time M + Other job secures income and time for experimentation M + Internet web shop decreases labour pressure N
Context	Society	- Customer is lazy M + Importance of Internet M + Increased attention K,L,M,N

K = Eko de Eerste, L = A8, M = De Stoerderij and N = Groenekans

## 5.4 Within buying groups

At the time of this research, five farms deliver products to buying groups (see table 5.7). They do that at different scales and at a different intensity. For the Knotwilg, Vierhuizen, and Eko de Eerste delivery to the buying group is more a side marketing activity. For A8 it is an important marketing channel besides many others (it accounts for approximately 25% of the turnover). It is the only *direct* marketing channel Bio Romeo has. This company explicitly puts effort in structuring their business to deliver to various buying groups. They sell currently to 12 buying groups within an hour ride from the farm. Eko de Eerste delivers indirectly to the same buying groups as Bio Romeo. De Knotwilg is connected to two buying groups in Amsterdam. Vierhuizen delivers to one in Amsterdam and one in The Hague. De Knotwilg, Bio Romeo, Vierhuizen and Eko de Eerste have a buying group in Amsterdam in common. A8 delivers to a buying group in Amersfoort. De Raatakker would also like to deliver to the buying group in Amersfoort, but that did not succeed so far. Some of factors appointed by De Raatakker are also included below. Both De Croy and De Stoerderij start at the time of writing with delivery to a new buying group in Eindhoven. If you regard table 5.8 one can see that most factors are appointed by Bio Romeo. This may be due to the high involvement and interest of Bio Romeo in buying groups (and actively help buying groups to start). While most of the other farms consider the buying as a side activity. They do supply the buying groups because they have sympathy for the initiative. The cross case within marketing channel comparison is there for limited.

### 5.4.1 Customer segment

**Product characteristics.** There are no specific factors with regard to the product characteristics mentioned by farmers that currently supply to buying groups. According to Bio Romeo the fact that the consumer accepts products of a different size, limits the loss of products for them (appointed as rationale). The respondents of De Knotwilg mention that it is difficult for them to offset products to the buying groups, because the expectations of the buying group and the farmer mismatch. For instance, it happened that customers expect an offer of a wide variety of product in February. Yet, at that time of the year, it is not feasible for the farmers to produce it. The respondents feel that the customer does not understand it, that this demand is unrealistic. They mention also that often put effort in e-mailing with the buying group, but the buying group usually decline the purchase opportunity the variety of products at offer is too limited.

Table 5.7 Mapping marketing characteristics of cases that supply to buying groups

Elements		De Knotwilg	Bio Romeo	Vierhuizen	Eko de Eerste*	A8
Consumer Segment	Product characteristics	Vegetables and fruits	Vegetables	Cheese (cow)	Cheese and eggs	Vegetables (non-hybrid)
	Customer relation	Incidental	Long term, biweekly opportunity to order	Long term, but no obligation to buy	Long term, biweekly opportunity to order	Long term
	Consumption junction Distribution / Logistics	Delivery at distribution points in Amsterdam	Delivery to 12 distribution point for 12 buying group (12)	Pick up point and by mail	Delivery to 12 distribution point for 12 buying group (12)	Delivery at distribution point Amersfoort
Company Infrastructure management	Farm characteristic	7,5 acre garden, 2 farmers, 12 part	75 acre arable farm, 3 farmers Structure with foundation	40 cows, 20 sheep, 3 farmers	70 acre, 4 farmers, around 8 fte employees	2-acre vegetable, flower and plant garden in Doorn run by Willem an Laetitia Hooft
	Farmer and activities	Breeding, growing, harvesting, transport, administration, communication	Breeding, growing, harvesting, gathering other products, transport, administration, communication	Breeding, growing, harvesting, transport, administration, communication	Cheese making, egg gathering	Breeding, growing, harvesting, transport, administration, communication
	Collaboration	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	Bio Romeo	n.a.

\* Through Bio Romeo

**Buying group scheme characteristics (internal).** Bio Romeo has had much practical experience with different buying groups in the last years. The respondent mentions that some buying groups start overenthusiastic and want to order weekly. Yet, she feels that they are not aware of how much effort it takes for such a group, consisting only of volunteers, to organize and keep the group running when weekly ordering. According to the respondent the expectation are sometimes unrealistic which eventually may decrease the (initial) enthusiasm and the amount of purchases (eventually). Also, when the customer member of the buying group (i.e. the volunteer) do not set out a balanced task division (e.g. website maintenance, coordination, accounting, weighing product) from the start, the functioning of the buying group will decrease, according to the respondent. She mentions that when the execution of the tasks relies only on a few members, they will soon find out that the tasks are too big. But then there may be no other volunteers that can or want to help out. The respondent illustrates that a clear and balanced task division is key to a volunteer organization like this. She feels that internal communication from the start is needed. In line with this, the respondent of De Stoerderij is afraid that an organization relying on volunteers may inhibit the functioning of the buying group. This observation is confirmed by one of the buying groups that approached in advance of the research. The volunteer of that group mentions that the buying group does not always performs well because they rely on volunteers. He mentioned that sometimes the internal communication goes wrong, and that members are too busy to fulfil their volunteer task (properly) (Huibert van Wijk, Personal communication, 1 April 2014). The respondent of Bio Romeo also mentions that if buying groups consists of too many members, the social cohesion within the group will drop. This influences the willingness to volunteer, and the functioning of the buying group (and the purchases).

**Customer relation.** Bio Romeo indicates that mutual *transparency* is required and if there is discontent it should be communicated. The respondent indicates that they see it as they *collaborate* with the buying groups (instead of only selling), and therefore transparent communication is needed.

**Supply and demand shifts.** According to the respondent of Eko de Eerste it is important as a farm to have enough capacity to offset to (new) buying groups. He mentions that more buying groups are interested to start. In the case of Bio Romeo, he thinks they may grow a bit too fast. Having suddenly many new customers is difficult to cope with. He feels that it leads to more mistakes within the orderings. Yet losing a buying group as

a customer, because you lose not one, but many customer at the same time. So *slow growth* enables the farm to deal adequate with the increased demand (according to the respondent of Eko de Eerste). On the other hand, according to the respondent of Vierhuizen the demand of the buying group is for them too small to be lucrative.

**Consumption junction.** The respondent mentions that the availability of (enthusiastic) volunteers at the pick up point (the consumption junction) fosters a smooth delivery and job satisfaction. If this is not the case, it complicates the delivery. None of the other respondents mention anything about this.

Table 5.8 Factors appointed by farmers that supply to buying groups

	Themes	Factors
Consumer segment	<b>Product characteristics</b>	+ Customers accept products of an 'other' quality* I - Mismatch of product expectations (demand vs what is feasible) limits sales and takes time H
	<b>Buying group characteristics</b>	- Unrealistic (e.g. ordering frequency) expectations endanger the functioning of buying group I - Lack of task and agreements and limited internal communication inhibit social cohesion and the ordering I - Dependency of buying group on volunteers may inhibit performance M*** - Buying group with too many members inhibits social cohesion which limits the ordering I
	<b>Customer relation</b>	+ Mutual transparency and collaboration of supplier and buying group is needed for good performance I
	<b>Consumption junction</b>	+ Good internal communication is related to the availability of volunteers at the pick up points, which is key to smooth delivery and job satisfaction I
Company Infrastructure	<b>Supply and demand shifts (capacity)</b>	- Fast growth of Bio Romeo leads to mistakes K - Demand is too small to be lucrative J
	<b>Farm</b>	+ Professional approach together with foundation fosters performance of buying group I + Arable farm enables necessary investments I + Good structure enables them to deal with peak performance I + Location in an area with many organic farmers in the neighbourhood enables varied product at offer I
	<b>Farmers</b>	- Other weekly rhythms make it impossible to supply** E
	<b>Collaboration</b>	+ Products exchange with farmer increases efficient gathering variety of product I
Context	<b>Society</b>	+ Increased attention to local food E, H, I, J, K, L
	<b>Competition</b>	+ No competition I - No distinctive products available limit attractiveness for buying groups to order** E

C = De Croy, E = Raatakker (potential), H = Knotwilg, I = Bio Romeo, J = Vierhuizen, K = Eko de Eerste, L = A8, M = Stoerderij  
\* Mentioned as rationale, \*\* Not supplying to a buying group yet, \*\*\* In personal communication with Huibert van Wijk (1 April, 2014)

## 5.4.2 Company infrastructure

**Farm characteristics.** With regard to the capacity and structure of the farm, only the respondent of Bio Romeo mentions some (fostering) factors. The respondent mentions that (1) the professional approach they have, together with a foundation that supports the start up of buying groups, fosters the buying group performance, (2) the arable farm enables them to make the necessary investments to supply buying groups at this scale, (3) with the structure they have developed, they manage to cope with the peak performance and labour pressure, and (4) a location with many other organic farms around enables collaboration (see below).

**Farmer characteristics.** The respondent of the Raatakker mentions that he has not the capacity to supply the Amersfoort buying group, because it does not align with his weekly rhythm (that is structured towards the farmers' market).

**Collaboration.** None of the respondent collaborates with other actors when offsetting to buying groups, except Bio Romeo. The respondent of Bio Romeo mentions that the weekly product exchange with farmers enables them to get a variety of product very efficiently.

## 5.4.3 Context

**Increased societal attention to (local) food.** Respondents of all farms experience the increased societal attention to the origin of food, or the locality of food, as a fostering factor.

**Competition.** Since Bio Romeo is rather unique in the professional approach they have regarding buying groups, the experience no competition, according to the respondent. However the respondent of De Raatakker



experiences competition in his attempt to offset to the buying group in Amersfoort. He feels his products are not distinctive enough; the buying group has already enough connections with other farmers that offer a similar products.

#### 5.4.4 Summarizing

With regard to the buying groups, appointed factors relate to product characteristics, buying group characteristics, communication, supply and demand shifts, consumption junction, farm characteristics, farmers' activities and collaboration. Again, most respondents experience the increased attention towards the origin of food as a fostering factor.

### 5.5 Within CSA / box scheme

Four farms employ a type of CSA / box scheme (see table 5.9). For De Kraanvogel and Veld en Beek it is (nearly) their only marketing channel. Amelishof and De Croy also offset products through farm sales. De Kraanvogel, Amelishof and De Croy sell mostly vegetables. The farmers regard them selves as gardeners. Veld en Beek sells dairy products (no cheese), meat and also some vegetables. The farmers of both Amelishof and Veld en Beek are in a partnership with a foundation. Veld en Beek developed a unique structure, where customers are member of the foundation. Table 5.10 gives an overview of the factors mentioned by the respondents. Within CSA / Box schemes customers usually have a long-term relationship with the farm. In all the case of Amelishof, De Kraanvogel and De Croy the customers subscribe for a season. At Veld en Beek one becomes a member of a foundation, which is not season specific. In all cases farmers work with pick up points

Table 5.9 Mapping characteristics of cases that employ CSA / box schemes

Elements		Amelishof	De Kraanvogel	De Croy	Veld en Beek
Consumer Segment	Value for consumer and product	Vegetables box	Vegetable box (and chicken)	Vegetables and fruit box	Diary (no cheese), meat, vegetables
	Customer relation	Seasonal subscription	Seasonal subscription	Seasonal subscription	Members of foundation in Wageningen area
	Consumption junction	Pick up point at private address in Utrecht (max 10 km from farm)	Pick up point at private address in Tilburg, Eindhoven and surroundings	Pick up point at private address Helmond and surroundings (max 15 km from farm)	5 pick up point at 24/7 refrigerated trailers in Wageningen and surroundings
	Distribution / Logistics	Weekly delivery	Weekly delivery	Weekly deliver	Weekly delivery
Company	Farm characteristic	2 acre farm at fringe city, foundation			40 cows and 20 sheep, foundation
	Farmer and activities	2 gardeners	2 gardeners	2 gardeners	4 farmers, devided responsibilities
	Collaboration	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.

#### 5.5.1 Customer segment

**Product characteristics.** According to De Croy his vegetable products taste very good due to a good soil (see below) but also due to the fact that he uses non-hybrid varieties. He mentions that this attracts customers. The product variety the farmers of De Kraanvogel offer also attracts customers. Also the respondent experiences that direct contact with the customers enables the farmers to offset products of a different quality (i.e. products that a wholesalers would not accept because it has a different sizes, has some spots, etc.). He mentions that customer usually understands it.

**Scheme characteristics (acceptance and understanding).** Both Amelishof and De Kraanvogel have developed their box scheme as such, that it is both *clear and simple* for the farmers as for the customers. For instance, both cases removed the opportunity to temporarily stop the subscription (e.g. when customers go on a holiday). This relieved the administrative burden for the farmers and decreased room for miscommunication. (Note that the administrative burden is exactly what scares of De Raatakker to develop a box scheme). Most customers accept this simplification of scheme mentioned above. The respondent of De Croy mentions also

that the fact that he tries to find customers that accept the system as it is, which fosters the functioning and job satisfaction. He also mentions that potential new customers do not always understand they cannot be served immediately. Customers do not always *understand* that the production planning and logistics cannot be suddenly adapted.

**Customer commitment and payments.** The respondent of Amelishof mentions a lot of fostering factors with regard to the agreements with customers. He has limited financial worries, because; the financial *transparency* and participation of customers in price setting helps him to get a fair pay and fosters customer relation. Furthermore, the pre-financing by the customers helps the farmer to overcome the financial gap in spring and the share of (harvest) risks gives the farmer rest. Although in a different structure, the notion that transparency fosters the willingness of customers to help out and pay a reasonable price, is also experienced by the respondents of De Kraanvogel. On the other hand, the farmer of De Croy has other experiences. He has to put in increasingly more effort to get the customer payments (he mentions more people are in debt with him). The respondent of De Kraanvogel mentions that frugal Dutch character is hampering a large amount of his customers to commit themselves to the box scheme.

**Customer relation and communication.** Besides frugalities, the respondents of De Kraanvogel explain also that sometimes customers do not understand the working of the box scheme. They appoint to the difficulties they have in communicating that correctly to the customers: they think as a CSA farm good communication skills are necessary, and they feel that their own communication capabilities might limiting. So they mention that part of the misunderstanding lies in their ability to communicate.

**Customer relation and activities.** Amelishof, De Kraanvogel and De Croy mention that organizing activities for the customers helps to foster the customer relation (and to keep the customers), but is also helpful in attracting new customers (e.g. by word of mouth of present customers). The respondent of Amelishof appoints that it is important to provide in a balanced amount of activities, in the sense that it should not inhibit the farmer to perform the farming activities if nobody shows up. The farmer of De Kraanvogel experiences however a hampering factor in the sense that it is difficult for them to get the customers to the farm, because the farm is located remote from most of their customers.

**Characteristics of distribution and pick up points.** The respondents mention various fostering and hampering factors with regard to the consumption junction. All of the cases have pick up point at private addresses. The respondent of Amelishof mentions that the pick up point are nearby, which limits the amount of effort to put in the logistics for the farmer. The respondents of De Croy feels that his logistics are so sharply tuned, efficient, but inflexible, it limits him to grow. The private pick up point and the product exchange based on trust lowers the costs for the farmers, while enabling easy access for customers, according to the respondents of Amelishof, De Croy and Veld en Beek. Nevertheless the trust based product exchange offers room for human error, or theft, as mentioned by De Croy and Veld en Beek, but it outweighs the saved costs. According to the respondent of Amelishof the people living at the address of the pick up point need to have sympathy for the scheme in order to function. Veld en Beek find that their pick up points limits the type of products they can offer to their customer. Products that are offered weekly in the cars need to have a long shelf life. He mentions that they can now not produce all the types of products they like. Veld en Beek mention the fact that their pick up points are based in areas with relatively many rich people around, is a fostering factor.

### 5.5.2 Company structure

**Supply and demand.** The respondent of De Croy mentions that since he knows how much he has to produce, it enables him to fine tune the production. At the other side of the coin, he finds the inflexibility of the system sometimes difficult. He mentions that when there is a shift in demand there is a long feedback loop in order to adapt his system, and he cannot always produce to the fullest capacity he has. In the case of over production he can offset that in the farm shop. Veld en Beek mention that a special membership agreement enables them to deal with shifts in supply and demand (i.e. a few special members that acquire rather high amounts of the product, get it for a low price. But they get the product only, if the regular members are served). Veld en Beek mentions also that the design of their scheme, the fact the customers are member and purchase rather predictable, is a fostering factor to have a constant sales.

Table 5.10 Factors mentioned by respondents that market through CSA / Box scheme

	Themes	Factors
Consumer segment	<b>Product characteristics</b>	+ Product variety attracts customer B + Direct contact and consumer understanding enables to offset products of other quality B + Product that is non-hybrid and tasty is fosters attraction of customers and strengthen customer relation C
	<b>Scheme characteristics</b>	+ Clear and simple delivery scheme relieves (administrative) labour pressure A, B - Expected high amount of administrative work E** + Selection of customers that accept system fosters job satisfaction C - Quick service demanding customer may not understand slowness of system C
	<b>Participation</b>	+ Participatory relationship with customers enables fair pay A + Transparency on finances fosters trustable consumer relation A, B + Pre finance helps farmer to overcome gap A* + Share of risk with customer provides rest for farmer A* - More consumers are in debt, which increases the amount of effort for the farmer to collect the payments C - Frugal Dutch character limits customers' commitment B
	<b>Communication</b>	+ Participatory relationship is organized feasible for farmer A + Good relation with existing customers fosters attraction of new customers B - Difficulties of farmers to communicate inhibits the participation of customers B + Adequate dealing with consumer feedback foster trust relationship and sales D
	<b>Activities</b>	+ Suitable and balanced activities for consumers and gardener fosters customer relation, the attraction of new customers and job satisfaction. A + Extra activities help to acquire and keep customer B, C - Location far away from city limits attraction of customers for activities B
	<b>Consumption junction</b>	+ Private pick up points lower costs, lead to easy access customers (but people need to have sympathy) A, D + Consumer relation based on trust reduces labour pressure (and costs) C, D - Consumer relation based on trust leaves room for human error and theft C, D + Location of farm and marketing scheme fosters sales, rich people D + Logistics are organized effective; pick up points are close, so it takes limited time for the farmer A +/- Logistics system is well organized but inflexible: limit further growth C - Distribution system limits type of products at offer D
Company Infrastructure	<b>Supply and demand shifts</b>	+ Predictability of demand enables tuning production A, C - System is inflexible; long feedback loop with regard to changes in demand C + Special member agreement helps to deal with fluctuations in production D + Accessibility of system attracts consumers and leads to constant sales D
	<b>Farm characteristic (labour, resources and location)</b>	+ Structure with foundation enables working with volunteers and relieves labour A + Structure with foundation enables to get funding to make garden more attractive A + Structure of company with foundation enabled farmers to obtain farm, livestock etc to provide a constant flow of products D + Foundation structure (internal delivery) enables farmers to produce milk freely (without milk quatum) D + Good soil enables production and offset of good quality products C + Capacity to develop automation fosters consumer' accessibility and relieves labour pressure D + With the help of volunteers the labour pressure is acceptable B - Cultivation plans and box scheme schedule limits (labour) efficiency C + Capacity to hire educated trainee relieves labour pressure (can take over marketing parts) C - Customer contact puts high pressure on labour and performance of other farming activities C
	<b>Farmers' capabilities at the farm</b>	+ Farmers' experience and enjoyment to work with people contributes to functioning of direct marketing A + Farmers' trust in own experience / authenticity attracts customers and fosters job satisfaction A + Farmers' capacity to grow variety of crops foster job satisfaction A + Agricultural experience of farmers makes it easier to produce more and serve more customers B + Choice to use existing structures (Thinking outside the box) fosters working of distribution system D - the obligation to have certain crops available** E
	<b>Collaboration</b>	+ Collaboration with partners with complementary input enables organizing attractive customer activities A + No partnership regarding offsetting products limits worries for farmer A - Too unique structure; there are no colleagues around for collaboration C
Context	<b>Society</b>	+ Increased societal attention to local food A, B, C, D
	<b>Policy and institutions</b>	+/- Local policy may lead to unfair competition however supports as well A - Policy inhibits small scale direct marketing B - Opening up EU regulation creates opportunity for fraud and threatens trust of customer B - Government support does not reach farmer C - Policies and regulation complicate functioning of (innovative) system D
	<b>Competition/pointer?</b>	+ Experiences little competition because demand is higher then the farm can serve A, B + Unique product and service leads to little competition C, D - Misuse of green image by others led to confused consumers C

A = Amelishof, B = De Kraanvogel, C = De Croy, D = Veld en Beek, E = De Raatakker (potential)

\* Mentioned as rationale

\*\* Not supplying to a buying group yet

**Foundation, labour and assets.** Amelishof and Veld en Beek run their farms in partnership with foundation. Within this structure, they detect enabling factors that (indirectly) influence the direct marketing. The respondent of Veld en Beek mentions that this structure provides them with the financial capacity to obtain the livestock, the farm and the processing equipment to make sure they have a constant flow of production for its members. That is because the foundation, consisting of member customers, owns the livestock. Furthermore, because they regard the production of the farm as internal delivery, it enables them to produce milk freely, and do not have to bear in mind the milk quatum. On the other hand, they experience that existing policies inhibit them in offsetting within this unique structure (see also section 5.5.3 context). The respondent feels that policies are lacking behind. For Amelishof this foundation structure enables the farmers to attract external funding, and the allowance to work with volunteers, which alleviates the labour pressure on the garden, and allows the farmer to make time for thinking about marketing strategies. Veld en Beek mentions that they have also enough capacity to invest in automation process of the marketing scheme, which relieves labour pressure. As a company asset, De Croy mentions that the good quality of his soil ables him to produce very good quality of products, which attracts customers to his box scheme.

As mentioned above, the opportunity to have volunteers on the farm alleviates the work for the farmer at Amelishof. But this also accounts for De Kraanvogel. They also have volunteers that help them out on the land, and with the packaging and delivery of the boxes. They indicate that they could not manage the CSA scheme without them, volunteers enable them to work like this. The respondent at De Croy mentions that they have the capacity to hire an educated intern, which helps them to relieve the labour pressure. He feels that growing a variety of crops that is required inhibits him to work efficiently. De Croy mentions that the customer communication puts high pressure on his farming activities. He feels disturbed sometimes.

**Farmers' capability at the farm.** The respondents appoint a variety of factors that relate to their own farming capability. The respondent at Amelishof mentions that his experience with gardening, his capacity to work with volunteers and his authenticity (doing what he likes) fosters his job satisfaction and the ability to serve customers. The respondents of De Kraanvogel similarly indicate that their experience helps them to serve more customers. The respondent of Veld en Beek mentions a factor that relates to decision-making and vision of farmers. He feels that thinking outside of the narrow organic agriculture box, helps them to progress their marketing scheme: they chose to use existing structures to improve their distribution system (automation).

**Collaboration.** With respect to the box scheme marketing activities, none of the four cases decided to collaborate with other farmers or other actors. The respondent of Amelishof mentions that he purposefully does not collaborate, because it would burden him with extra responsibilities. The gardener of De Croy however, would like to collaborate with farmers that have a similar scheme. He thinks it would make things a bit easier, that one could help each other. But in his surroundings there are no similar colleagues around.

### 5.5.3 Contextual factors

**Societal attention.** Respondents of all the four cases mention that they experience an increased societal attention from consumers that supports them in offsetting the way the do now. They do not appoint in which ways.

**Policies.** As mentioned in section 5.5.2, Veld en Beek feels inhibited by the policies that lack behind. Those policies are too rigid for the unique structure they have developed. Also respondents of De Kraanvogel and De Croy feel inhibited by policies. The farmer at De Kraanvogel appoints that most policies (e.g. hygienic regulation) are established for large scale farming and marketing, which complicates to market products on a small scale. De Croy mentions that when (financial) government support is available, it hardly reaches the actors (the farmers) that have to implement. Amelishof mentions that the local government now supports urban agriculture. That leads to unfair competition, however the respondents benefits from that as well. It seems that all of the respondents appoint to policies that influence their marketing practices. They regard them mostly as hampering factors, however urban agricultural policies may be a fostering factor as well.

**Competition.** Respondents of Amelishof, De Kraanvogel and De Croy mention that they experience little competition; because the demand is way higher then they can serve. As mentioned above (5.5.1), De Croy and

Veld en Beek think that their product and service is too unique for competition; they offer something different to the customer.

#### 5.5.4 Summarizing

Factors appointed in CSA / Box schemes factors relate to the structure of the farm, labour capacity, farmers' capabilities to perform the required farm activities, collaboration. But most appointed factors relate to the customer segment. Those are participation, the agreements with the customer (transparency and trust), the supply and demand, the activities for customers, the communication, the location of the pick up points; the logistics towards pick up points. Most respondents experience an increased societal attention.

#### 5.6 Concluding remarks

The previous sections describe the factors appointed by respondents, within each type of marketing channel. The within analyses reveal a wide variety of enabling and hampering factors. Farmers using similar types of marketing channel (although arranged differently) are not conclusive about what factors are enabling or hampering them in their marketing activities. It varies a lot, case by case. However, after the effort of positioning the factors in the framework it seems that in some instances *similar themes* can be appointed. Yet, respondents may have different perspectives and experiences regarding the factors related to those themes. The summarizing sub paragraphs revealed the (relatively) most mentioned factors, yet as mentioned previously the relatively high amount of appointed factors or themes creates no opportunity to state anything about the relevance of these factors compared to 'less' appointed factors.

Note however that most cases (within each section) represent similar marketing channels that correspond with the mapped key characteristics of the framework (see section 2.2 and 2.3). Yet, the framework is loose, and leaves much room for different arrangements. Indeed the findings of chapter 4 and 5 show there is much variation in the arrangement of each channel. Combination of different elements and adaption to different circumstance make each approach distinctive. These findings may illustrate the wide variety of direct marketing channels that are being employed. When farmers employ similar marketing channels, they still vary for instance in type of products, characteristics of the farm, location, personal preferences and scale of the farm. It is important to be aware of this for further analysis.

Wrapping up, the appointed factors seem too varied within the specific marketing channels to conclude anything more than that it appears that some similar themes are addressed by the different farmers within one specific marketing channel. The 'increased societal attention to the origin of food' is mentioned as a fostering by many cases, but that factor is not marketing channel specific (it exceeds the specific marketing channels). More about this in the next chapter, which includes a cross marketing channel analysis. Although there is still a variety in the factors, these themes reveal that indeed certain characterizing elements of marketing channel brings along specific themes of factors.

## 6 Cross analysis

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Chapter 4 gives insight in the factors mentioned by the respondents of the individual cases, and chapter 5 clustered those finding specifically for each type of marketing channel. The conceptual framework guided in clustering the different factors regarding different elements. As mentioned before, within these elements, there are many different factors, however some factors could be grouped into themes. A few of those themes seem specific for the different marketing channels, because of the key characteristics of that marketing channel.

This chapter performs a modest cross analysis, based on the clustering of the findings in chapter 4 and 5. Section 6.1 includes an indicative comparison of the *different types marketing* channels amongst each other: cross marketing channel analysis. Yet, the emphasis of this chapter lies on another cross comparison perspective, which can be found in sections 6.2, 6.3 and 6.4. It discusses whether and what enabling and hampering factors or themes can be detected irrespective of the marketing channel. So, it takes the different themes or related elements as unit of analysis (instead of the marketing channels as in section 6.1). It is the aim to analyse if there are *recurrent themes* across the marketing channel. Across themes are included in this chapter when three or more respondents (irrespective of the marketing channel) mention factors related to the same theme. In section 6.1 to 6.3 the across themes are again loosely clustered in customer segment, company infrastructure and contextual factors. Based on this theme some indicative conclusions are given. Section 6.4 discusses some other cross marketing channels observations. Like in chapter 5, the rationales are now also included as part of the factors. When this is the case, this is appointed in the text or table. The chapter will end with some concluding remarks in section 6.5.

### 6.1 Cross marketing channels analysis

In this section a brief cross comparison between the different marketing channels is performed. One could see that sometime similar themes are addressed. It is not feasible to compare the different marketing channels fully (including all the different appointed subthemes) amongst each other. For this the findings are too specific and divers. So the first part of this section only regards the head themes of each of the marketing channels (6.1.1). The second part considers what sub themes are specific or diverging between the different types of marketing channels (6.1.2)

#### 6.1.1 Comparing the cluster of themes

Taking a quick look at the 'factor' tables in the different sections of chapter 5, one can see that with respect to farmers' market, farm sales and CSA / box schemes, respondents appoint more factors compared to buying groups and Internet sales (see also figure 6.1). It is not possible to make conclusions about this difference in *quantity* of appointed factors, because it is not clear what cause of this variation in quantity is. For instance, it could be due to the fact that farmer just experience more fostering or hampering factors within certain marketing channels compared to other marketing channels. But it is also possible that more farmers employ a certain marketing channels (e.g. the analysis of farm sales includes seven respondents compared to the analysis of buying groups which includes four respondents). More respondents may consequently lead to more input. Furthermore, when farmers employ more then one marketing channel, one of the marketing channel might be regarded as more important than the other (e.g. most respondents regard the buying groups as a side marketing activity, except for Bio Romeo). In such cases, it could be that most factors would relate to the most 'important' of the marketing channels, because that is the core marketing activity (and the most salient activity). It is also possible that the interviewer has had influence on the number of factors appointed. More about this in chapter 7.

Just as an *indicative* comparison, it is possible to regard what themes of factors are proportionally most mentioned within each type of marketing channel. Although the cases and the data are diverse, a proportional analysis may reveal some clues whether there is difference in type of factors between the marketing channels (see figure 6.1). It is rather impossible to conclude anything about these proportions, however it gives a schematic overview of comprehensive lists of factors illustrated in the previous chapters. At first sight one can

see in figure 6.1 that proportionally a similar amount of the factors related to similar themes of the framework. Without overstating the numbers in figure 6.1, one could see that for all types of marketing channels account that relatively most factors relate to the customer segment. Of all of these marketing channels, respondents that employ CSA / box scheme marketing channels, appoint relatively most factors (both fostering and hampering) related to the customer segment. It is not possible to be conclusive about this, but it might be due to the fact that such schemes consist of a long-term commitment between farmers and customers).

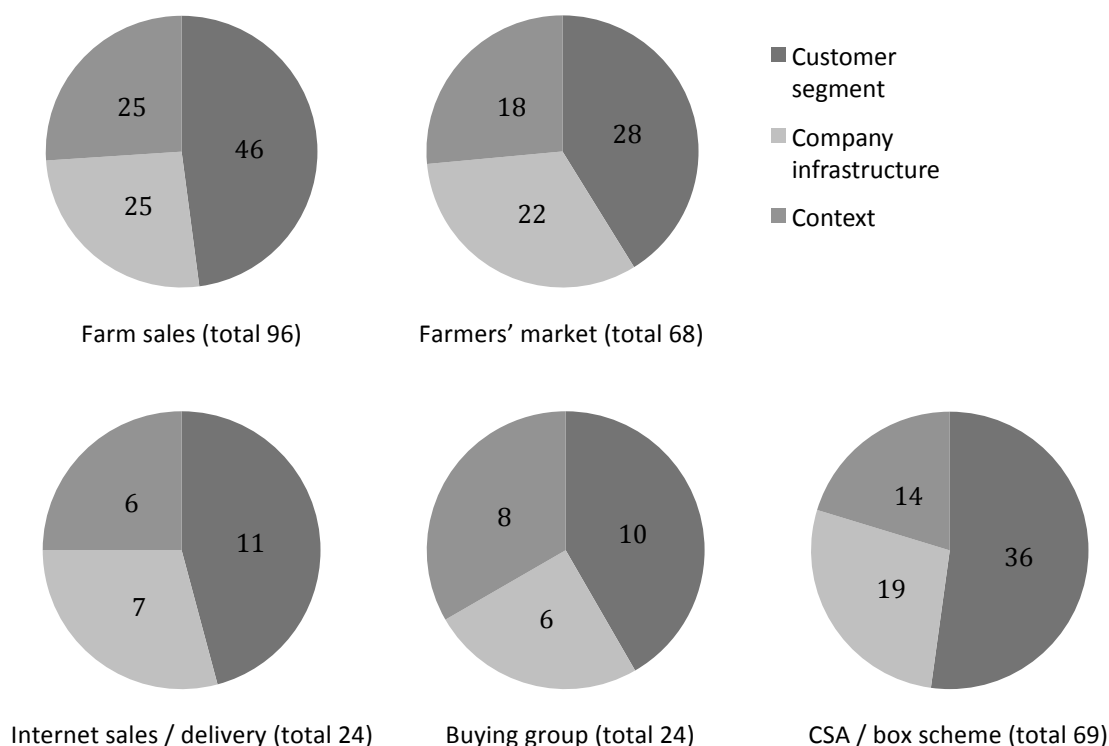


Figure 6.1 Number and relative proportions of appointed factors within each type of marketing channel (indicative overview!)

### 6.1.2 Specific themes/factors related to specific elements of marketing channels

Looking once more through the comprehensive list of factors appointed in chapter 5, one could detect that certain themes are specific for that marketing channel. In this subsection those themes are highlighted.

Two types of factors seem to be specific for the farmers' markets: (1) fostering and hampering factors that relate to the functioning of the farmers' market as a whole, and (2) factors that relate to the collaboration between the colleagues at the farmers market. A specific hampering factor for attracting customers within the farm sales is the lack of convenience for attracting customers. Within the Internet sales / delivery respondents mention a factors that relate specifically to the customer relation and delivery characteristics. Factors related to convenience are also appointed (two out of four respondents). A specific theme for buying groups is 'the characteristics and performance of the buying group in it self'. Factors related to 'participation' and 'activities for the customer' are specific for CSA / box schemes. The next sections will shed light on the themes that are recurrent across the different marketing channels (and not diverging).

Wrapping up, the appointed factors seem too varied within the specific marketing channels to conclude anything more than that it *appears* that some similar themes are addressed by the different farmers of one specific marketing channel. It seems that these specific themes / types are closely related to the specific characteristics of the marketing channels.

## 6.2 Cross ‘customer segment’ analysis

### 6.2.1 Product and marketing channel

The type of product may influence the performance according to respondents (employing different marketing channels). See table 6.1 for an overview of the products farmers sell, and through which marketing channel different marketing channels they do that. Table 6.2 gives an overview of similar factors that are mentioned by respondents across the different marketing channels.

*Table 6.1 Overview of type of marketing channel and type of product*

Farms	Direct marketing channel	Vege- tables	Cheese	Diary, meat
A Amelishof	CSA / box scheme, farm sales	X		
B De Kraanvogel	CSA / box scheme, (farm sales)	X		
C Tuinderij De Croy	CSA / box scheme, farm sales	X		
D Veld en Beek	CSA / box scheme			X
E De Raatakker	Farmers' market	X		
F De Stroese dame	Farmers' market, (farm sales)		X (goat)	
G De Kooihoek	Farmers' market, (farm sales)		X (sheep)	(x*) (sheep)
H Tuinderij De Knotwilg	Farmers' market, buying group	X		
I Bio Romeo	Buying group	X		
J Kaasboerderij Vierhuizen	Farm sales, buying group		X (cow)	
K Eko de eerste	Farm sales, Internet sales / delivery, buying group	X	X (cow)	X (cow)
L A8 doorn	Farmers' market, Internet sales / delivery, buying group	X		
M De Stoerderij	Farm sales, Internet sales / delivery			X (buffalo)
N Groenekans	Farm sales, Internet sales / delivery	X		

\* Side product

**Type of product influences attraction of customers.** First of all, the respondents of A8 (vegetables), De Stoerderij (Buffalo milk), De Kooihoek (sheep cheese) and De Stroese dame (goat cheese) all experience that consumers are sometime resistant to buy their product because it is not the most common product you find at the supermarket. Since these farmers cover all five different marketing channels (see table 6.1a), one could argue that this factor is not specific for one type of marketing channels. However, at the same time, respondents of De Croy, De Stoerderij and Groenekans (that also employ different marketing channels) mention that the uniqueness of their products is a fostering factor. From these results it appears that the uniqueness of the product may be of influence for the attraction of customers, but farmers are ambiguous whether it is positive or negative.

**Customer (does not) accepts product with different qualities / characteristics.** Furthermore, respondents from De Kraanvogel, De Kooihoek, De Knotwilg, Bio Romeo mention, while they also employ different marketing channels, the fact that customers accept products with other qualities or characteristics, limits the loss of products. So according to some respondents product characteristics (and what the customer thinks of this) matters. No matter what marketing channel.

*Table 6.2 Recurrent factors related to product characteristics across marketing channels*

Product	Mentioned by*
A product that is unique fosters (inhibits) attraction of customer	C, M, N (G, F, M, L)
Customers accepting products with different qualities limits loss	B, G, H, I (L)
Varied offer (in surrounding of consumption junction) attracts customer	B, E, K (A, H, L)

\*The brackets illustrate that respondents experience the opposite of the mentioned factor

**Diverse product offer attracts customers.** Another factor, appointed by respondents of De Kraanvogel, De Raatakker and Eko de Eerste, is that the diverse types of products at offer, fosters the attractiveness for consumers. In addition, respondents of De Knotwilg, A8 and Amelishof mention that if other neighbouring



(farm) shops or stalls have a complementary offer of products, this also fosters the attraction of customers. Note that these farmers mostly sell vegetables, yet all through different types of marketing channel. This might illustrate that according to the farmers a varied offer is an important factors, when selling vegetables, irrespective of the marketing channel.

### 6.2.2 Consumption junction

Table 6.3 gives an overview of factor themes that are appointed by more than three respondents.

*Table 6.3 Recurrent factors related to consumption junction across marketing channels*

Consumption junction (CJ)	Mentioned by*
CJ based on trust limits costs (lack of trust leads to unacceptable losses)	A, B, C, D, N (H)
An attractive CJ, attracts customers	A, B, C, E, F, K (L, M)
Convenience	A, D, K (L, M)
Good location of CJ with many potential customer fosters (inhibits)	A, C, D, J, L, M, N (B, K)

\*The brackets illustrate that respondents experience the opposite of the mentioned factor

**Trust is important when there is no contact between farmer and customer at consumption junction.** Within CSA / box schemes all farmers work with pick up points (Amelishof, De Kraanvogel, De Croy, Veld en Beek). In this case there is often no direct contact between customer and farmer at the consumption junction (except for the customer that lives at the address of the pick up point): the exchange of product is based on trust. The same accounts for selling through a road stall (Groenekans and De Knotwilg previously). There is often also no direct contact with the customer, and trust is also appointed as a factor. For Amelishof, De Kraanvogel, De Croy, Veld en Beek, this product exchange based on trust saves (employment) costs. Four of them mention that human error (Amelishof, De Croy) or theft (De Croy, or Veld en Beek) may lead to some losses, yet this does not outweighs the costs it saves. However the respondents of De Knotwilg mention that this trust was abused, which led to unacceptable losses. All respondents that exchange products without direct contact mention that trust is important. This indicates if trust is at place (and is not -too much- abused), the costs for product exchange can be low.

**Appearance of consumption junction may be important when there is contact between farmer and customer.** Respondents of Amelishof (farm sales), De Raatakker (farmers' market), De Stroese Dame (farmers' market), A8 (farm sales) and De Stoerderij (farm sales) mention that the appearance of the consumption junction, where they receive the customer, matters. In the case of Amelishof, De Raatakker and De Stroese Dame the 'good' appearance attracts customers. While the respondents of A8 and De Stoerderij feel that the 'lack of a good' appearance inhibits the attraction of customers. Respondents of Amelishof, De Croy and Eko de Eerste and mention that opportunities like flower picking, wandering around the farm or extra personal attention also improves the attractiveness of their consumption junction. So, when the consumption junction is an inherent part of attracting customers, consumption junction with a 'good' appearance or extra 'activities' are fostering factors (according to eight of the fourteen respondents).

**Convenience attracts customers.** Respondents of Amelishof (pick up point), Veld en Beek (pick up point) and Eko de Eerste (delivery) mention that the convenience they offer attracts customers, while respondents of A8 (farm sales) and De Stoerderij (pick up at farm) mention that the lack of convenience inhibits the attraction of customers. So, across the different marketing channels, some respondents mention that convenience is a fostering factor for attracting customers (or when there is a lack of convenience; a hampering factor).

**'Fitness' of location attracts customers.** Perhaps in line with the convenience, nine respondent mention factors related to the 'fitness' of the location of their consumption junction. Respondents of Amelishof, De Croy, Vierhuizen, Stoerderij, Groenekans (all farm sales) mention that they have a strong location in terms of many passing people. Or, as mentioned previously, the fact that their consumption junction is located nearby to other shops with complementary products (e.g. Amelishof, A8) also fosters the attraction of customers. For Eko de Eerste (farm sales) and De Kraanvogel (CSA / box scheme) their remote location inhibits the sales of their products.<sup>20</sup> Furthermore, respondents of Groenkans and Veld en Beek mention the fact that their

<sup>20</sup> Also the respondent of De Stroese Dame has mentioned that with regard to the farm sales. For that reason they started selling at the farmers' market (see also section 4.6).

consumption junction is located in an area with relative wealthy people attracts also customers. Since nine respondents mention the fitness of the consumption junction location (i.e. the presence of many potential customers) as either a fostering or hampering factor, one could modestly conclude that location of the consumption junction matters.

### 6.2.3 Customer contact and relation

**Customer contact fosters job satisfaction.** In the cases were farmers directly have contact with their customer, many respondents mention that the direct customer contact fosters the job satisfaction. Although by some appointed as rationale, the respondents of Amelishof, De Raatakker, De Stroese Dame, De Kooihoek, De Knotwilg, Vierhuizen and A8 appoint the overall positive contact they have with customers as a fostering factor.

**Unrealistic consumer demand and expectations within customer contact are appointed as inhibiting factors.** Yet, according to respondents of De Croy (farm sales and CSA / box scheme), Vierhuizen (farm sales), Eko de Eerste (farm sales and Internet sales / delivery), and Groenekans (farm sales and Internet sales / delivery), De Raatakker (farmers' market) and De Kraanvogel (CSA / box scheme), the contact with customer does not run always smoothly. The former five respondents mention that customers may have unrealistic demands or expectations of the product or the service. However the communication capacity to deal with this demands helps in the case of Eko de Eerste and De Croy. The respondents of De Kraanvogel appoint to their own capacity as well: yet they feel that they miss the capacity to communicate. These findings illustrate two aspects. First, that six respondents, irrespective of their marketing channel experience that some times customers have unrealistic demands. And second, the capacity to communicate may alleviate this issue.

**Transparency of farmer fosters long-term customer relation.** The respondents of Amelishof, De Kraanvogel, Bio Romeo, Eko de Eerste and A8 (all employing different marketing channels) mention that transparency within the customer relation is a fostering factor for them. They appoint that since customers can have insight in the farmers' practices (e.g. the way of farming, or the finances - in case of CSA / box schemes -) they trust the farmers. This enables long-term customer relationship. Perhaps, transparency may be necessary to maintain long-term relationship between farmer and customer.

Table 6.4 Recurrent factors related to customer contact across marketing channels

Customer contact	Mentioned by*
Customer contact fosters job satisfaction	A**, E**, F, G, H, J** L
Customer with unrealistic demands (or lack of capacity to communicate) inhibits smooth customer contact	C, J, K, N (B (C, K))
Transparency	I, K, L

\*The brackets illustrate that respondents experience the opposite of the mentioned factor

\*\*Appointed as rationale

## 6.3 Cross 'farm structure' analysis

### 6.3.1 Farm characteristics

**Structure of farm with foundation opens up additional opportunities.** In three cases, the farms are somehow connected to foundations. All three respondents mention that these constructions all offer opportunities that are not possible in a business setting. For Veld en Beek accounts that since the foundation owns (finances) the livestock they have enough capacity for investment. Furthermore, to run the farm as a foundation gives them also the room to implement an innovative CSA / box scheme (and circumvent some policy barriers). In the case of Amelishof a foundation owns the right to rent the garden, but moreover enables the farmers to work with volunteers without having problems with labour and employment policies, and to get additional funding. In the case of Bio Romeo, they initiated a foundation that aims to set up and help buying groups. They mentioned that this foundation helps them to initiate more successful buying groups, but moreover they can get additional funding for this. Conclusively, in these cases (where the farmers employ different marketing channels), the foundations foster the performance of their business.

**Inflexibility vs choice to grow slowly.** Although for different reasons, four respondents mention some inflexibility within their company structure. They appoint that this structure limits in the sense that they cannot

react on sudden changes in demand. The respondents of De Croy and A8 mention that if changes in demand occur, the feedback loop to grow additional (or different) crops is one season (plants simply do not grow faster). Also the box scheme system of De Croy, including its logistics, results in limited flexibility according to the respondent: the capacity of the logistics can only slowly be adapted. The respondent of Eko de Eerste mentions similarly that in the case of shifts in demand, the adaption of ordering preparations and logistics takes time in order to function well. The respondent of De Stoerderij mentions that he chooses to grow slow. So, some respondents experience limited flexibility for further expansion of their company. However, while A8 and De Croy appoint this limited adaptive capacity as an inhibiting factor, Eko de Eerste and the Stoerderij appoint it as an inherent part of their business to grow slow.

*Table 6.5 Recurrent factors related to farm characteristics across marketing channels*

Farm characteristics	Mentioned by*
Structure with foundation opens up additional opportunities	A, D, I
Inflexibility of system to deal with shifts in demand	C, K, L, M
(Limited) Capacity to deal with high labour pressure effectively	A, B, C, H, K (F, L)
Capacity for development and investment	A, D, I, K, N
Employing different marketing channels can be complementary	C, K, N

\*The brackets illustrate that respondents experience the opposite of the mentioned factor

**Capacity to deal with high labour pressure.** Most farms are run by the one or two farmers. Most of them mention that it is a lot of work (see also 6.2.2). Yet to hire labour is not easy, because of the high labour costs (Eko de Eerste). The respondents of Amelishof, De Kraanvogel, De Croy and Eko de Eerste have the capacity to get additional help to run their farming and marketing activities. But they do that in different ways. Both Amelishof and De Kraanvogel have volunteers wh. De Croy, De Knotwilg and Eko de Eerste have the financial capacity to hire labour. Moreover, the respondent of Eko de Eerste mentions that the big team of family members involved in the farm also enables to perform more activities (without the need to pay it directly). The respondents of A8 and De Stroese Dame explicitly mention that they have not the financial capacity to hire labour (this may also account for other respondents, but they have not mentioned it as a factor).

**Capacity for development and investment.** Some respondents mention that they experience to have the capacity to invest for further development as a fostering factor. But the ways this capacity is acquired differs. In the case of Bio Romeo and Eko de Eerste, the well performing farm behind their marketing activities gives them the financial capacity to develop the marketing channels further. And, the respondent of Eko de Eerste mentions that they do not need to pay out the salary of family members immediately, which gives them (besides dealing with the high labour pressure, see above) the opportunity to invest and try new things. As mentioned above, for Veld en Beek accounts that the structure (the foundation) enabled to invest in a farm and livestock, and to improve the marketing (with automation process). The respondent of Amelishof mentions that the pre-finance structure helps him to do the necessary investments. The respondent of Groenekans mentioned that the help of a friend help them to develop the web shop for relatively low costs (otherwise they would not have the capacity. All in all, respondent from different type of marketing channels have access to different means in which they further develop their marketing channels.

**Employing different marketing channels can be complementary.** As mentioned previously, most of the farms employ different direct marketing channels. Four of the fourteen farms (Veld en Beek, De Raatakker, Bio Romeo and De Stoerderij) employ one direct marketing channel. De Kooihoek and De Stroese Dame emphasize (and structure their company mostly to) one marketing channel that is the farmers' market. They regard the other direct marketing channels they employ as side marketing activities. The respondents of Amelishof, De Croy, Eko de Eerste, A8 and Groenekans employ multiple direct marketing channels without stating that one marketing channels is more important then the other. The respondents of De Croy, Groenekans and Eko de Eerste mention that the selling through more marketing channels fills in draw backs of the others; they are complementary. This may account for the others as well, but that has not been explicitly mentioned.

### 6.3.2 Farmers characteristics and activities

**Diverse amount of activities takes time.** Many respondents mention that they have to perform many different activities. First of all, having a diverse amount of products at offer is appointed as a fostering factor (see also 6.1.1) when producing directly for customers. In the case of vegetable production, this requires the farmer to

structure its business to grow a variety amount of crops (e.g. Amelishof, De Raatakker, De Croy, De Knotwilg, A8). The respondents of De Croy and De Raatakker mention that it is difficult to work efficient when growing so many varieties. It costs much time and is labour intensive. However, some respondents mention that this need to grow a variety of crops is an inherent consequence of their choice to offset directly, which they often also like (e.g. Amelishof, Knotwilg). They do not appoint it as either a fostering or hampering factor.

However it is not only about producing a variety of food; farmers also have to perform many other activities. For instance you also have to take care of distribution, communication, marketing, etc, which increases the labour pressure (according to Stroese Dame, De Kooihoek, A8) even more. Many respondents mention that they like the customer contact and marketing and they see it as a core aspect of their business. However it takes up much time and distracts them from performing other (farming) activities (e.g. De Stoerderij, De Croy, Vierhuizen, Groenekans). Groenekans mentions that replying emails etcetera takes a lot of timer. Explicitly taking into account the time for customer contact and in the business is appointed by the respondent of De Stroese Dame as a fostering factor to deal with this. Also the respondent of De Croy mentions that structuring customer contact helps. But both argue, that they still experience that they have too little time. So, although the activities differ within the different cases, many (eight) respondents experience a feeling of having too little time or working inefficiently (yet some experience it as an inherent part of their business as well).

**Farmers' experience and knowledge.** The variety of activities put pressure on the time and labour capacity of the farmer, however also relates to the personal capacity of the farmer to perform these activities. As the respondent of De Kraanvogel mentions 'only agricultural knowledge is not enough'. He points to the need that they need to be a good communicator as well (which he thinks he is lacking). And, according to De Croy you need to be an all-rounder. While some respondents seem to feel rather confident and experienced in performing this wide variety of tasks (e.g. knowing how to grow diverse crops; Amelishof, A8, De Croy) or making decisions (e.g. deciding which markets to select; De Stoerderij, A8, De Knotwilg), others feel they lack certain capacity (e.g. the capacity to communicate; De Kraanvogel). Perhaps, they key aspect here is that it is important to be aware of what you can, and cannot do. Making decision based on your capabilities is fostering the performance. Appointing this awareness as a fostering factor is touched upon by two respondents: For instance the respondent of the Raatakker mentions that it is important to know you personal boundaries and adapt your cultivation plan to that. This implies for De Raatakker to grow less crops. And the respondent of De Croy mentions that, although he would like to, he is not a good communicator enough to become a full CSA scheme. Based on these finding, it seems that farmers' experience and knowledge matters for six of the respondents.

*Table 6.6 Recurrent factors related to farmers characteristics and activities across marketing channels*

Farmer characteristics and activities	Mentioned by*
Divers amount of activities is labour intensive, inefficient and takes time	C, F, G, H, J, L, M, N (C E en F)
Farmers' experience and knowledge foster the performance of diverse activities	A, D, H, L, M (B)

\*The brackets illustrate that respondents experience the opposite of the mentioned factor

### 6.3.3 Collaboration

Overall, most respondents mention not to collaborate, or collaborate to a limited extent, with other actors. Amelishof and De Stoerderij collaborate with other actors to organize activities for customers. They both mention that the other actors can perform complementary activities they cannot do then them selves. Respondents of De Knotwilg and De Raatakker mention that they can establish a more varied product offer at the markets, because other farmers can supply them with complementary products. So the case that collaboration occurs, some respondent mentioned that the complementary aspects of this collaboration, foster the success.

*Table 6.7 Recurrent factor related to collaboration across marketing channels*

Collaboration	Mentioned by
Complementary capabilities foster collaboration	A, E, H, M

## 6.4 Cross ‘context’ analysis

Within contextual factors respondents mention a variety of factors, but some factor are frequently mentioned across the cases with different marketing channels. Table 6.8 gives an overview.

*Table 6.8 Recurrent factors related to the context across marketing channels*

Context	Mentioned by*
Increased attention to local food, origin of food etc	A, B, C, D, E, G, H, I, J, K, L, M, N
Policy inhibits (neutral / fosters)	A, B, C, D, F, G, L (A, F, H, K)
Competition is limited due to high demand (convenience stores)	A, B, C, I, J, K, N (F, H, L, M)

\*The brackets illustrate that respondents experience the opposite of the mentioned factor

**Increased societal attention is a fostering factor.** Almost all respondents mention that the increased societal attention is a fostering factor for them. It often not explained in which way, or what is the direct link to their product marketing. Yet the respondents experienced ‘the wind the back’. This factor seems clearly experienced across all different marketing channels.

**Policy and institutional context is more often inhibiting than fostering.** Many respondents mention that policies influence their marketing practices. In most cases it is an inhibiting factors, however respondents appoint to different type policies: e.g. urban or local agriculture policy (Amelishof, De Croy), hygienic regulation (De Kraanvogel, De Kooihoek, Veld en Beek), high certification costs (Eko de Eerste, A8) and local planning policy (De Stroese Dame, A8, Veld en Beek). Respondents of Veld en Beek, De Kraanvogel, De Croy feel that agricultural policies are focussed on supporting large-scale farmers, yet inhibit the functioning of small (innovative) farmer. Respondents of De Knotwilg mention that policy has improved compared to during the 80s. Respondents of Eko de Eerste and Groenekans are rather neutral regarding the influence of policies. Some policies are appointed as fostering: urban agriculture policy (Amelishof), market policy (De Stroese Dame). It seems that policy is a factor that influences the marketing channels, yet the type of policy and whether it is a foster or an inhibiting varies across the different cases (although mostly inhibiting).

**Presence of competition (or not).** Seven respondents employing different marketing channels mention that they experience limited competition, because the demand is higher than the farm can serve. However, De Stroese Dame, De Knotwilg, De Stoerderij and A8 do experience however competition from supermarkets or organic shops, or the powerful marketing lobby from the industry (De Stroese Dame). So, one could conclude that for some respondents across the difference marketing channels competition is an inhibiting factor, yet for most respondents the demand outweighs this competition.

## 6.5 Concluding remarks

This chapter aimed to perform cross analysis. It gave insight in what themes of factors are experienced across all the marketing channels. One can see that although similar themes are addressed, the specific factors may differ. For instance regard the case of misunderstanding or incomprehension between farmer and customer. The respondents of De Kraanvogel argue that they realize there is sometimes misunderstanding with the customer of how their CSA / box scheme works. They feel that this misunderstanding is due to that they find it difficult to communicate. Other respondents experience also this incomprehension, but feel that the inhibiting factor is at the consumer side. The fact that the others do not mention the difficulty to communicate (or vice versa) does not mean that the factor does not exist. So, in their exclamations they point to a similar outcome (that is incomprehension or misunderstanding), yet they mention different factors. Another example is labour capacity. Eko de Eerste mentions that the labour costs are a problem (a contextual factor), while others appoint to the limited capacity they have as farm to hire labour (farm characteristics). Also in this example respondents address the same problem, however they give different explanations.

It seems that part of these differences also relate to different characteristics of the cases. That is perhaps also the reason why respondents are more conclusive about contextual factors, because these are relatively similar. Respondents are most conclusive about that the increased societal attention to the origin of food is a fostering factor for them. Furthermore most also mention policy related factors (for the biggest part as an inhibiting factor). Figure 6.2 gives a (‘quick and dirty’) schematic overview of the detected recurrent themes. The findings of this chapter are only meant to illustrate potential themes of factor that across the different marketing

channels. It gives an exploratory overview of what factors might matter. It cannot be seen as a complete or comprehensive overview. Note also that although the sections above only regard the mostly appointed factors (more than three), but again nothing can be concluded regarding the *relevance* or *importance* of these factors.

Based on these findings, perhaps the most valuable result of these analyses is that specific characteristics of a marketing channel (e.g. the product, or the type of consumption junction) are more relevant when analysing marketing activities, instead of the type of marketing channel as a whole. This is because the marketing channels are so differently arranged, and include different or overlapping elements with other marketing channels. The next chapter will shed a more elaborate light on the implication of the results.

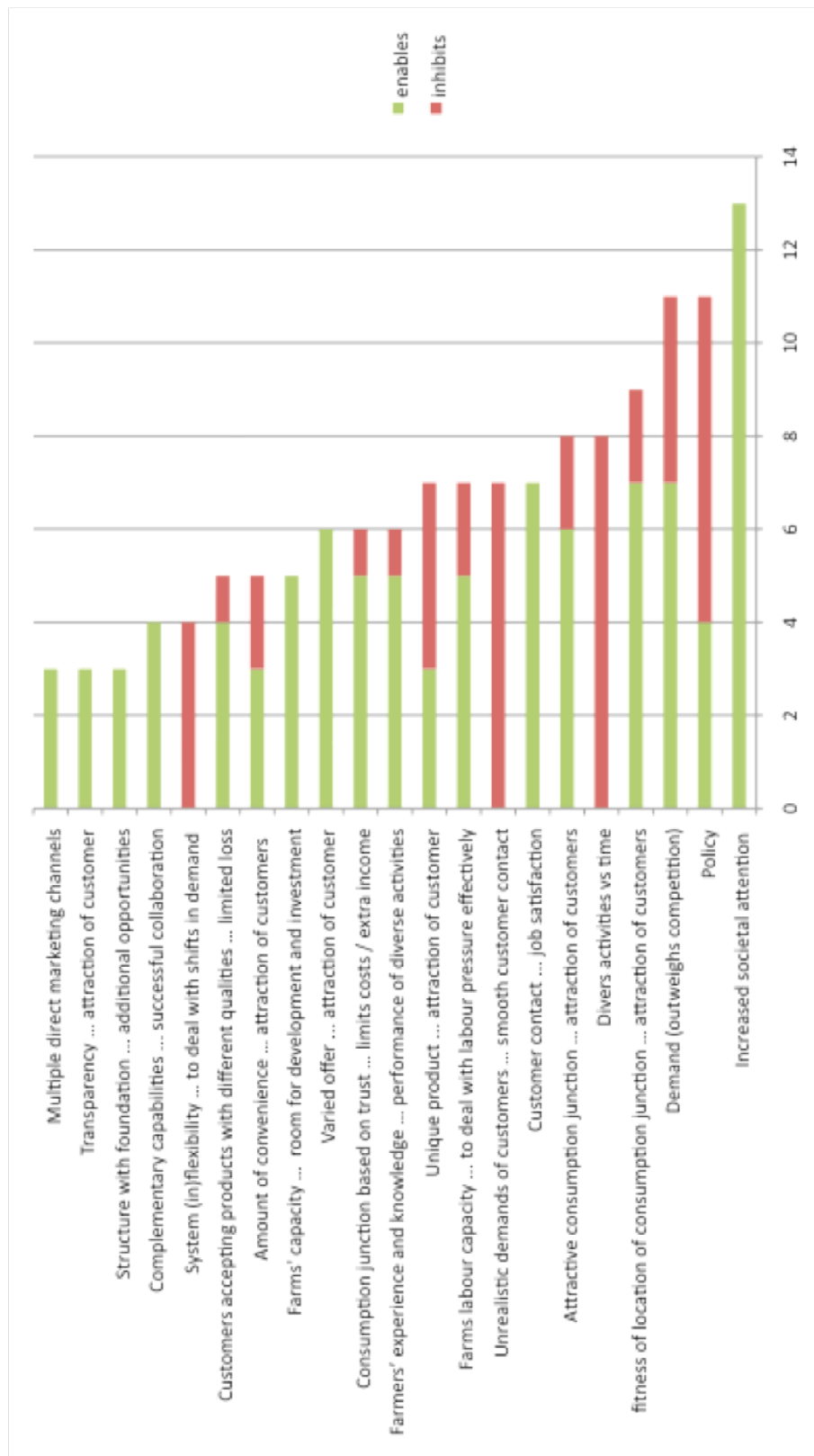


Figure 6.2 Recurrent themes and factors mentioned by respondents (numbers on x-axis represent number of respondents)

## 7 Conclusion, discussion and recommendations

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### 7.1 Conclusion

Within local food systems, marketing is often appointed as a bottleneck. Yet there is little knowledge available on what mechanisms are underlying this, especially in the Netherlands. This study explored what enabling and hampering factors farmers experience when selecting and using specific direct marketing channels in urban areas. It tries to contribute to the lack of insight of the functioning of these marketing channels in the Netherlands. This section discusses the answers to the research questions of this research.

**Farmers have developed six types of direct marketing channels.** Based on Tregears' (2011) critique, that many studies regard different direct local food marketing channels unjustly as one type of marketing, this study explicitly makes a distinction between various types of direct marketing channels. Based on local food literature six types of marketing channels are distinguished: farm sales, farmers' markets, Internet sales and delivery, buying groups, box schemes and CSAs. In the Netherlands box schemes are often seen as a kind of CSA, and therefore this study considers these two as one direct marketing channel.

**Six elements of marketing channels and context enable mapping *and* detection of enabling and inhibiting factors.** Marketing literature helps in providing a framework that enabled systematic mapping of characterizing elements of these marketing channels. These elements are key aspects of marketing activities. Elements were grouped in two clusters: the first cluster entails the customer segment which includes the following marketing elements: (1) product and value for customer, (2) how the relationship between farmer and customer is organized, and (3) how exchange of products is arranged at the consumption junction. Second, the company infrastructure includes (4) the farm structure and characteristics (including resources and assets), (5) farmer characteristics and activities and (6) collaboration and partnering. These six elements form the internal marketing elements. These elements help mapping the different characteristics of the six marketing channels. Also part of the framework are the rationales of farmers for employing direct marketing channels, and the contextual situation. Each of the marketing channels has certain typical elements. For instance selling at a farmers' market occurs at a stall on a market in a city, while a buying group is served through pick up points (consumption junction). Or another example; buying groups, CSA and box schemes farmers are characterized by a long-term relationship (a mutual commitment) between farmers and customers, while farm sales, farmers' markets and Internet delivery it is not (type of customer relation).

The conceptual framework (and its clusters) is not a strict typology, but it helps to understand what aspects are important in marketing. It is argued here that if these elements are key to the functioning of a marketing channel, perhaps enabling and hampering factors can be detected related to these elements.

**Wide variety in arrangement of marketing channels *and* in appointed factors.** The empirical part of this study shows that farmers organize their direct marketing in various ways, in which also elements of various 'typical' marketing channels are included. Through purposeful selection of fourteen the cases all five types of direct marketing channels were at least represented by four cases. The different cases reveal that each farmer organizes the marketing differently. Even when marketing channels may be regarded as the same type, the way they are organized differs considerably.

The respondents of each case mention several and a wide variety of factors (chapter 4). The within analysis (in chapter 5) reveals that farmers, employing similar marketing channels, are limitedly conclusive about what factors are enabling or inhibiting their marketing activities. This study does not explain the wide variety, but could possible relate to the different arrangements of the marketing channels or the different perceptions farmers have.

**Recurrent themes (and factors) across different marketing channels.** The cross cases analysis (chapter 6) reveals that sometimes, specific themes (a cluster of related factors, associated with a similar 'topic') relate to specific elements of the marketing channels. For instance, factors that relate to the 'functioning of market stall'



are specific for farmers' markets. But, it seems that some themes or factors are recurrent across the different types of marketing channels. Ten themes can be detected within the customer segment (that seem mostly not marketing channel specific, but more element specific). With regard to the product characteristics the findings show that the uniqueness of the product may be of influence for the attraction of customers, but farmers are ambiguous whether it is positive or negative. The findings also illustrate that the customers' perception on product characteristics (compared to 'conventional' products) matters, and that a diverse product offer attracts customers. Glancing through recurrent themes and factors within the consumption junction, one could regard that marketing channels that include a consumption junction without direct contact (pick up point or road stall) trust is important in order to function well. Furthermore, when the consumption junction is an inherent physical part of attracting customers (in the case of farm sales, farmers' markets, CSA / box scheme), a 'good' appearance or extra 'activities' are enabling factors. Also convenience is a fostering factor for attracting customers (or when there is a lack of convenience; an inhibiting factor). The fitness of the consumption junction location (i.e. the presence of many potential customers) is appointed as either a fostering or inhibiting factor. With regard to customer relation the study reveals that customer contact foster job satisfaction. The results also show that customer contact is sometimes challenging (some times customers have unrealistic demands), yet the capacity to communicate may alleviate this issue. Furthermore it illustrates that transparency may be necessary to maintain long-term relationship between farmer and customer.

If one looks at the company infrastructure, the following factors are appointed related to the farm characteristics. First, a farm structure related to a foundation, enables to get more labour or financial capacity. Second, many respondents experience limited flexibility for further expansion of their company and marketing activities due to logistic or crop season boundaries. Third, many farmers experience high labour pressure (but some see it as an inherent part of their marketing structure), yet some farmers have the human and financial capacity to alleviate that. And fourth, when farmers have access to labour and financial capacity it fosters the further development of their marketing channels. Respondents also appoint to factors that relate to farmers characteristics and their activities. In more than eight cases respondents feel that the diverse amount of activities puts high pressure on their time, and limits them to work efficiently (yet some experience it as an inherent part of their business as well). Furthermore farmers appoint that enough experience and knowledge fosters the performance of marketing channels (when there is a lack, it may inhibit). Most respondents mention that they do not collaborate, or collaborate to a limited extent. But when collaboration occurs, complementary input of the different actors is appointed as a fostering factor.

Respondents mention also a variety of contextual factors. Almost all respondents experience that the increased societal attention to local and / or organic food helps them in their marketing activities. Furthermore it seems that policy is a factor that influences the marketing channels, yet the type of policy and whether it is a foster or an inhibiting varies across the different cases (although mostly inhibiting). And finally, although some experience competition, for most respondents the demand outweighs this competition.

**Wrapping up**, the results of this research give insight on what factors farmers' experience when they employ different direct marketing channels. Farmers mention a wide variety of both enabling and inhibiting factors within and across the diverse marketing channels. The detected (recurrent) themes indicate that specific factors may not relate to a specific type of marketing channels, but relate more with the different specific characteristics of the elements of these channels. The presence of recurrent factors and themes, does not imply that other factors are less salience or relevant. Nothing can be said about the salience of the factors.

## 7.2 Discussion

The empirical results give insight in what enabling and inhibiting factors the fourteen different respondents experience. As mentioned repeatedly before, the wide variety of factors challenged the analyses. This variety is partly due to fact that the respondents simply experience a wide variety of factors: that they have different perceptions. Furthermore, what some farmers may appoint as either an enabling or inhibiting factor, others may regard as an inherent part of their marketing activities (they do not regard it as factors). Acknowledging this indicates that this variety is the observed reality. The results may also dependent on the variation between the cases. In addition, in retrospect, some methodological aspects may also have influence on the results. To put the results in context, and getting an overall grasp on how the findings should be implemented, some considerations are discussed here regarding the cases, framework, interviews, analysis, respondents and interviewer.

**Framework in theory and practice.** First of all, let's take a look at the employed framework. The framework has proven its value in understanding in which elements the different marketing channels differ and overlap. It helped to give a quick overview of the characteristics of each of the cases. The conceptual framework seems to work well in guiding the interviews. Discussing some of the elements or themes may have helped to reveal data, of which farmers' may initially not be aware of. However to structure the different factors within the framework was challenging. This was not only because of the amount and variety of factors, but also because the factors and elements are interrelated. The business model approaches (discussed in chapter 2) explicitly mention that the different elements of the models are interrelated (the elements influence each other). It is perhaps not surprisingly that it is also the case here. The categorization of factors in elements and themes has to some extent led to an 'artificial' categorization. Furthermore, the theoretical distinction between rationales and factors was practically also a challenging choice within this research. The original view of this research was that factors have an influence on the functioning of the marketing channels (that is if the rationales are met). Yet, in some cases rationales and fostering factors are seen as one: the reason why the farmer employs a certain marketing channel could also be a factor why (s)he feels the marketing channel functions that well. In future research, the researcher would not make this distinction. To solve this difficulty, without losing validity, it is explicitly mentioned when the rationales are included as factors in the analyses.

**Research approach and researcher.** The interviews with the respondents were semi-structured. With the topic list (based on the framework) as guidance, the researcher aimed to let the respondents come up with factors. However, inherent to the selected research approach, the interpretation of the interviewer and subsequent guiding questions may have influenced the results. Furthermore the research includes many cases, resulting in much interview data (in a limited amount of time). The researcher has put explicit effort in handling the data in a systematic and transparent approach. However one must be aware of the several nested steps within the analyses which may have led to loss, or different interpretation of data.

**Farmers and data.** It is of utmost importance to understand that the results describe the *perceptions* of fourteen farmers, based on single interviews. This research cannot state whether and to what extent the respondents really experience these are factors. It is not possible to check if the respondents (or at least not within the scope of this research). It is also not possible to check if respondents have mentioned all factors they have experience. Furthermore, the results may be influenced by the mood of the respondent, or how busy the respondent is. Some respondents were more talkative than others. Also, some respondents seemed enthusiastic to participate (e.g. saying they had an interest in the outcomes as well), while this may account less for the others. It seemed also that some respondents were more prepared than others (some respondent already prepared a list of factors already in advance). These aspects may have influence on the results.

### 7.3 Recommendations

The external validity of the results of this study is limited, because it reveals factors based on the perception of fourteen respondents. It is unclear to what extent different factors are relevant for other farmers as well. But also within the results, some questions remain unanswered. For instance, the results do not give insight in which of all the factors are most pressing or important for the farmers. This would be interesting to know in terms of formulating recommendations for either farmers or policy, but with the broad result of this study it is not possible. However the exploratory findings provide a possible starting point for further research. A few suggestions regarding topics and research approach for future research are described here. First, the effort of ranking the factors from on a scale of salience or importance for farmers, may provide understanding on *keystone factors* that are relevant for further development of direct marketing channels. Second, it appeared to be of utmost relevance to be *explicit in the different characterizing element* of direct marketing channels. Because characterizing elements differ, even within the same type of marketing. The variety of factors seem to relate more to different characteristics or elements of marketing channels, rather than just the type of marketing channel. Therefore the researcher suggests studying direct marketing channels explicitly from an element or theme perspective. Third, some of the themes that popped up are interesting concepts for further focused research. For instance 'trust', 'complementary collaboration', 'convenience', 'transparency' or 'flexibility' could be *central concepts in further studies* of direct marketing channels. Fourth, because of wide variety of factors and the variety of respondents and their perceptions, one could consider working with *focus groups*. Focus group can help to detect a more compressed idea of what are key enabling and inhibiting factors. The themes and factors this study touched upon can be used as input for such focus groups. Within this

method, perhaps also most pressing factors can be revealed. And last, the inclusion of (more) *cases in which farmers stopped* with direct marketing could reveal more knowledge about hampering factors.

As mentioned above, due to the exploratory nature of the findings, it is too early to give recommendation with regard to policy or society. However, one of the respondents appointed to an aspect that might be helpful in the further development of direct marketing channels: 'I would like to have colleagues to cooperate with. Now I have to keep pulling my own cart all the time. It would be nice if you could accelerate together. I feel a bit like Remy' (slightly adapted from original quotes from Wouter van Mil, interview 2 May 2014, (39:00)). Indeed, creating opportunities to exchange ideas, solutions and marketing approaches with other farmers, and perhaps also with other stakeholders, may foster the functioning of direct marketing channels.

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