



A license to produce

Finding an alternative for the organic quality
label in the Netherlands

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December 2016

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“The important thing is not to stop questioning. Curiosity has its own reason for existing”

– Albert Einstein

Preface

Nobody writes a thesis completely by himself. I too owe credit to various people. I want to thank my friends, roommates, family members, fellow students, teachers and others, for their inspiring and helpful conversations.

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Abstract

Consumers' concern about agriculture grows. Dutch farmers too notice consumers' feelings of food insecurity. Farmers perceive that the distance between producers and consumers is increasing. In order to keep support of society, to make sure that they are able to farm in the future, farmers search for ways of creating food security. Farmers are aware that their future is at stake. Starting organic farming can be a solution for farmers, but organic farming is not always easy. Organic legislation is strict, inspection costs are high and farmers are critical on the straight organic legislation. In this thesis the processes of farmers inventing new strategies for selling their agricultural products are explained. Farmers do not want to farm in the non-organic way anymore, but do not see themselves as organic farmers either.

Dutch farmers search for an alternative between the industrial and modern character of non-organic agriculture and the fixed rules of organic legislation. While negotiating economic structures, social structures, ecological structures and political structures, farmers get a different mindset. They are submissive to consumers, answer consumers questions and in this way create consumer confidence. This consumer confidence is based on a personal way of trust and fundamentally differs from the systemic way of trust of auditing schemes in modern society.

Key words: anthropology, farmers, organic, agriculture, neoliberal food system, modernity, structure, agency, negotiation, governmentality, trust

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1. Introduction: Entering the debate of organic certification policies

“In food so many things are messed up nowadays”

On one of the first days of fieldwork at Karin’s farm, Karin tells me about the early days of her farm life. Whereas Karin is a pig-farmer now, she began as a chicken-farmer. At that time, Russia had an embargo on eggs from other countries, among which the Netherlands. Therefore Dutch eggs were first transported to Belgium, where they received a special stamp and were transported to Russia after. “In food so many things are messed up nowadays,” Karin sighs¹.

Karin has a point. These days producers of food muddle much in the field of food. Generally known is the ‘horse meat scandal’, when in the beginning days of February 2013 in many beef products in Europe instead of beef meat ‘horse meat’ was found². As a consequence, in the Netherlands a societal debate started about food security. Dutch consumers felt higher levels of food insecurity, because it seemed that consumers did not know exactly what they got down. Consumers' concern about agriculture grew (Wetenschappelijke Raad voor het Regeringsbeleid 2014, 19).

Dutch farmers too notice consumers' feelings of food insecurity. In society, resistance to non-organic intensive agriculture is growing³. Farmers perceive that the distance between producers and consumers is increasing. In order to keep support of society, to make sure that they are able to farm in the future, farmers search for ways of creating food security. Farmers are aware that their future is at stake.

Starting organic farming can be a solution for farmers, but organic farming is not always easy. Organic legislation is strict, inspection costs are high and farmers are critical on the straight organic legislation. In this thesis the aim is to explain the processes of farmers inventing new strategies for selling their agricultural products. Farmers do not want to farm in the non-organic way anymore, but do not see themselves as organic farmers either. In this thesis an analysis of ‘the’ Dutch farmer of these days will be given, showing how farmers understand, experience and negotiate the local agricultural, economic and social realities.

¹ Informal conversation Karin, 10-02-2016.

² “Paardenvleeschandaal: een overzicht”, Een Vandaag, accessed August 14, 2016, http://www.eenvandaag.nl/binnenland/49003/paardenvleeschandaal_een_overzicht).

³ “Boer zijn (7): Maatschappelijk verantwoord boeren”, Vergaderboer, accessed on August 25, 2016, <http://www.boerderij.nl/Home/Blogs/2016/2/Boer-zijn-7-Maatschappelijk-verantwoord-boeren-2753709W/>.

How they try to find a middle-way between the demands of the neoliberal food-system and their wish for organic farming. In other words, the central research question reads:

“How do Dutch farmers understand, experience and negotiate the demands of (organic) certification systems and the neo-liberal food system in relation to local agricultural, economic and social realities?”

Research into farmers’ motivations in general is very important, because by better understanding the characteristics of individual farmers’ practices, scientists generate knowledge in the processes on which farmers base their daily decisions. These daily decisions have economic and ecological influence on whole society (Duram 2000, 36). This research contributes to a better understanding of farmers’ practices.

Furthermore, this thesis analyses a new tendency in Dutch agriculture, of farmers’ refusing organic legislation policies⁴. My aim is to give an insight in this tendency. I chose to write a very ethnographic thesis, full of observations and vignettes. I think that by describing ethnographic observations, I am better able to show the story of the farmers in this research. I was on the farms myself. I experienced the struggles and dilemmas of farming life myself. That made me understand the difficulties these Dutch farmers experience on a daily basis. I saw with my own eyes how the farmers explained their struggles and dilemmas to their clients. I saw that this resulted in consumer confidence, which is the central argument of this thesis. In order to make you, the reader, understand the central argument as well, I wrote down my observations on the farms. In the same way as I experienced the struggles and dilemmas of farmers, I want you to experience the same.

In this chapter an introduction is given to some important concepts in the debate of legislation policies. This theoretical overview consists of four parts: ‘the context’, ‘the effect’, ‘the process’ and ‘the outcome’. In the context section the background is sketched of the emerging of intensive agriculture in the Netherlands. In the effect section the motivations of farmers to change their non-organic intensive way of farming are explained, which can be ‘classical modern’ or ‘reflexive modern’ in nature. In the process section is shown how farmers use their agencies, when challenging the structures in which they find themselves. Farmers are situated in a position of governmentality in which they negotiate their alternatives. In the outcome section the ways consumer confidence can be build are described,

⁴ E-mail from Bionext, 08-12-2015.

by the creation of ‘systemic trust’ and ‘personal trust’. After the theoretical debate, the methodologies being used in this study are given.

1.1. The context: the neo-liberal food system

In the Netherlands agriculture is very intensive. When looking at other countries, the Dutch agricultural export per hectare is “the largest in the world” (Bager and Proost 1997, 81). No other country in the world produces more agricultural products per hectare than the Netherlands (Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek 2016, 61). As well, only the United States produce more agricultural products than the Dutch (Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek 2016, 61).

The industrialization of agriculture started at the end of the nineteenth century in the United States and Western Europe (Wetenschappelijke Raad voor het Regeringsbeleid 2014, 24). Business management of agriculture became more organized and systemized, manual work was replaced by machines (Wetenschappelijke Raad voor het Regeringsbeleid 2014, 23). With the invention of fertilizers and pesticides, the yield of crops increased (Wetenschappelijke Raad voor het Regeringsbeleid 2014, 23). Stock farms went on specializing in special stocks and started breeding specific qualities of animals. Antibiotics and growth stimulating techniques were used on a large scale. Mixed farms disappeared slowly, as farmers started specializing in one crop or stock (Wetenschappelijke Raad voor het Regeringsbeleid 2014, 24). In other words, agriculture became focussed on productivity and efficiency.

Besides, world trade changed on a large scale (Wetenschappelijke Raad voor het Regeringsbeleid 2014, 25). After the Cold War ended in 1989, the “global two-bloc system”, Russia and the USA, decreased, which made emerging of the “neo-liberalist ideology” possible (Eriksen 2007, 3). Trade of food (and trade in general) was not bound anymore to the level of nation-states only, but began to take place on a worldwide level (Wetenschappelijke Raad voor het Regeringsbeleid 2014; Mintz 2006). In other words, a new kind of food system has emerged: one which is global and neoliberal in nature. The emerging of this globalized neoliberal kind of food system or “neoliberal food regime” involves “the harnessing and management of biological processes and resources in order to generate profit” (Fitting 2014, 179). Thus, as well the emerging of the neoliberal food system made agriculture more focussed on efficiency and productivity.

The main point is that this neoliberal industrial way of farming asks great investments of the farmers. Because farmers experience a burden on their finances, scaling-up their farms is attractive. As a consequence, the average amount of land per farm has increased a lot, the total amount of animals has increased, farmers started to cultivate one variety of crop and farmers started to keep one stock (Wetenschappelijke Raad voor het Regeringsbeleid 2014, 24).

1.2. The effect: classical and post-modern opposition to the neoliberal food system

As the focus on productivity and efficiency in the neoliberal food system grows, opposition to this neoliberal food system is growing as well (Bager and Proost 1997, 82). Besides the fact that farmers experience that the distance between them and consumers increases, farmers do not want to become part of the “productivist paradigm”, in which the focus lies on an intensive, efficient and manufactured agriculture (Bager and Proost 1997, 83).

Simultaneously with the industrialization of agriculture, organic farming became more popular as well (Wetenschappelijke Raad voor het Regeringsbeleid 2014, 33). In the 1980s a change in thinking about environmental influence of agriculture occurred (see Bager and Proost 1997, 82). Because of growing demands of society for thinking about the environment, the Dutch government felt they could not close their eyes anymore for the environmental impact of agriculture (Bager and Proost 1997). As a result, the government introduced new legislation for agriculture to diminish “environmental impact” and created farmers “commitment” for her new environmental course (Bager and Proost 1997, 81-82). Because of a growing food insecurity of consumers and farmers’ concerns of the widespread use of chemicals in agriculture among other things, organic farming became more accepted (Wetenschappelijke Raad voor het Regeringsbeleid 2014, 33). In other words, “farmers’ environmental behaviour” changed (Bager and Proost 1997, 83).

In order to interpret how this change works, Kaltoft (2001) applies farmers’ motivations to the concept of “modernity”. Kaltoft (2001, 150-154) makes a distinction between “pre-modern”, “classical modern” and “reflexive modern” motivations of farmers to start farming in a more organic way. Modernity or modernism refers to a period in history, which started in the mid-fifteenth century (Stearns 2008, 161). After the Post-Ancient Era, modern thinking came into being (Stearns 2008, 161). Kaltoft (2001, 147) explains modern thinking by using the metaphor of “drawing a map”:

in pre-modern terms there is an identity between the map and the world. Modern perception can be characterized metaphorically by the idea of drawing maps: the map is a representation of objects in reality. The perception is not identical with the world, but a representation of objects made by a rational subject using or revealing universal context free mechanisms or laws.

Modern thinking is about drawing maps, explaining the world with science. It is about looking to nature in a scientific way, seeing nature as a number of objects which have to be explained by subjects (Argyrou 2005). In Kaltoft's example, this means that "reality" is the object and a "map" the subject. In other words, in modern thinking "man" has to domesticate "nature" (Argyrou 2005). Modern thinking is about professionalization and industrialization, controlling nature with human-made technologies (Stearns 2008). About producing in the highest efficient way. Modern thinking stands in contrast to Romanticism, because modernity is about controlling passions and instincts (Argyrou 2005).

In this modern world we want to make objective knowledge about the world. Modern thinking is about explanation, rationalization (Argyrou 2005).

Modernity, for her part, was followed by "post-modern thinking": "[p]ost-modern perception is characterized by reflection on map drawing, an indefinite number of maps can be drawn, none of them being a privileged representation of reality" (Kaltoft 2001, 147).

In other words, where '(classical) modern' perceptions are about the rational idea of explaining the world by means of drawing maps, 'post-modernism' is about reflecting on the fact that drawing maps results in objective knowledge about how the world is.

To return to the point of farmers' motivations, classical modern farmers, in this way, see organic farming as a "technical solution" to the "environmental problems" agriculture encounters nowadays (Kaltoft 2001, 152). These farmers search for more efficient ways "of controlling nature" (Kaltoft 2001, 152; Argyrou 2005). They see nature as "subjective" and something which has to be in human control (Kaltoft 2001, 152). Classical modern farmers search for more efficient ways of generating profit in agriculture. They are "individual utility maximizers" who make their decision because of economic advantages (Bager and Proost 1997, 85).

Post modern farmers on the other hand, make the decision for farming organically, because they have different "values" than non-organic farmers and reflect on these different

values (Kaltoft 2001, 153). Post-modernity is characterized by “reflection”. Reflexive modern farmers’ are ‘modern’ as well, since they reflect on the choices they make (Kaltoft 2001, 153). Reflection on for example the antithesis of “human versus nature” (Kaltoft 2001, 147). Reflexive modernity can be typified by a process of “individualization” (Kaltoft 2001, 153). The individual reflexive modern farmer wants to decide about his “own life” and choose to change his “choice of lifestyle” (Kaltoft 2001, 153).

1.3. The process: challenging the neoliberal food system

In the previous sections, we have seen that farmers’ environmental behaviour has changed. Farmers want to farm in another way than the conventional non-organic way of farming. But how does this process of farmers’ opposition to ‘the system’ work? In the part that follows, I will roughly sketch the four most important concepts I use in this thesis to explain how this process of opposition looks like. The concepts are “structure”, “agency”, “governmentality” and “negotiation”.

1.3.1. Structure and agency

When finding an alternative to the neoliberal food system, farmers find themselves located into “structures” (Duram 2011). Structures can be defined as “the enduring economic, political, and social factors that act to limit human actions” (Duram 2000, 36). In other words, structures are patterns that influence people’s choices. Scientists like Gellner (2008) and Durkheim argue that people only behave in light of collective values. Gellner and Durkheim see societies as systems and sub-systems which live together in harmony. When something in society changes, harmony has to be repaired. Gellner and Durkheim focus on the whole system instead of individual behaviour (Barrett 2009, 64). In the case of farmers, structures can be “economic” (market demands, production costs), “political” (agricultural policy, legislation in general), “social” (family ties, health problems, demands of society) or “ecological” (ecosystems, soil health) in nature (Duram 2000, 40-46).

However, as many actors, citizens and people indeed are influenced by the systems (or structures) in which they live, it’s important to note that people always have an individual agency as well. “Agency” here, refers to the ability of individuals to act in an independent way and make their own choices (Barrett 2009). In other words, farmers have the ability of making their own choices of changing course.

1.3.2. Governmentality and negotiation

The debate of structure versus agency is a common debate in social sciences. The debate is about to what extent human behaviour is influenced by socialization of people around the individual or autonomy of the individual.

Philosophers like Michel Foucault argue that human behaviour is rather determined by a combination of both “structures” and individual human “agency” (see Lyon 2011, 223). Foucault uses the term “governmentality”, which signifies “the means by which an individual becomes a subject capable of governing him- or herself through self-regulation – someone who is both subject to someone else by control and dependence, and tied to his own identity by a conscience or self-knowledge” (Foucault 1979 in Lyon 2011, 223). In other words, Foucault emphasises that having agency about one’s actions, does not mean that there can be no other party that has control over the individual as well. Governmentality is about negotiating between different parties, different actors of power (see Lyon 2011). In other words, farmers find themselves in the position of “governmentality” when challenging the structures they find themselves (see Foucault 1979 in Lyon 2011, 223).

Thus, governmentality is a process of “negotiation”. The process of negotiation can be determined in two sub-processes: a “distributive” process and a “integrative” process (Leeuwis 2000, 947). A distributive negotiation process signifies “stakeholders hold on to their own perceptions and positions” (Leeuwis 2000, 947). In distributive negotiation processes, stakeholders use negotiation to “divide the pain” (Leeuwis 2000, 947). An integrative distribution process on the other hand, signifies the “stakeholders develop new (and often wider) problem definitions and perceptions on the basis of a creative collective learning process” (Leeuwis 2000, 947). In integrative distribution processes, stakeholders try to create “win-win solutions”, a middle-ground in which both parties are satisfied (Leeuwis 2000, 947). In integrative distribution processes, actors take up a flexible position when dealing with the dilemmas they face. In the case of farmers, this flexible position is what enables the farmers to negotiate the structures of farming life.

When studying farmers strategies of dealing with the structures of farming life, anthropologist Sarah Lyon (2011) asks as well for a focus on processes of negotiation. In her book, she describes how Guatemalan producers of organic certified products are coping with the rules which are posed upon them. Farmers are located between different structures and with their own agency, make choices about what to do. They do not obey to all of the rules of fair trade organic farming – which can be seen as a structure, because of family ties and social relations – which can be seen as another structure (Lyon 2011). “Under strict certification

standards, [producers] must negotiate a middle ground between the demands of transnational commodity markets and the local patterns of social life” (Lyon 2011, 143). The farmers search for the margins within the rules of fair trade farming they have to pursue.

1.4. The outcome: building consumer confidence

As farmers are negotiating the structures of their farming lives, some make the decision of becoming organic. The point at issue is that the farmers in this research do not want to farm in the non-organic way, neither are they organic certified farmers. The question is: why?

In this section I will scientifically unravel the organic certification system as an example of modern thinking. I will show how the way organic legislation creates consumer confidence is an example of modern thinking. This form of confidence is ‘systemic’. Hereafter, I will show the different manners literature addresses to create consumer confidence in alternative ways of certification. This kind of confidence is ‘personal’.

1.4.1. Systemic trust in the organic quality label

There is a growing literature for farmers to start farming organically (Kaltoft 2001; Friedmann and McNair 2008; Dupuis and Gillon 2008; Duram 2000). ‘Organic’ can be defined as the “management system that respects nature systems” (Kahl et al. 2012, 2763). Organic is about using “natural resources” instead of “synthetic ones” when producing food and “taking into account sustainability and agro-ecology”⁵ (Kahl et al. 2012, 2763).

Thus, organic presents herself as something very different from modernity, respecting nature instead of domesticating it. But is that correct? In fact, the way the organic quality label builds consumer confidence can be seen as an example of modernity. This organic surveillance works on the basis of “systemic trust” (see Thorsøe and Kjeldsen 2015, 161). Where personal trust is about the “bet” of acts of other people in the future, systemic trust is about trusting the ‘system’ (Sztompka 1999, 25; Thorsøe and Kjeldsen 2015). In the food system of modern society, ‘trusting the system’ means that trust is not built from producer on consumer, but trust is based on “access points” (Giddens 1984 in Thorsøe and Kjeldsen 2015, 161). These ‘access points’ are intermediary actors, which are located between producers and consumers (Thorsøe and Kjeldsen 2015, 162). In the case of organic legislation, the ‘access points’ are the certification agencies. The consumer confidence which is created by certification agencies is not personal, since we do not pose trust in the access points

⁵ For a figure of logo of the organic quality label, see Appendix I.

themselves, but in the system by making use of the access points (Thorsøe and Kjeldsen 2015, 161-162). That makes auditing systems still anonymous.

The systemic way the organic quality label builds this consumer confidence, in fact can be seen as an example of modernity. The organic quality label provides “clearness” and accountability” (Shore and Wright 2004, 100). We need certification systems, because of our assumptions that auditing results in “scientifically validated knowledge based on universally accepted methods” (Lyon 2011, 224; Kaltoft 2001). We thrive for universalization through rationalization (Argyrou 2005).

1.4.2. Personal trust in alternative ways of certification

Thus, modern society relies more on systemic trust relations than on “personal trust relations” (Thorsøe and Kjeldsen 2015; Giddens 1990). According to Möllering (2006), personal forms of trust can be constituted based on three different ways: “reason”, “routine” and “reflexivity”.

To begin, trust based on ‘reason’ means “making a bet about the future contingent action of others by balancing the benefit of trusting with the risks and costs of trust being broken” (Sztompka 1999 in Thorsøe and Kjeldsen 2015, 162). Someone does not want that his/her reputation is damaged. In the case of agriculture, producers are aware trust posed in them is “fragile” and therefore do not want to damage their “reputation” (Thorsøe and Kjeldsen 2015, 162). However, this does not necessarily mean that the producer and consumer have to know each other personally (Renting 2003). Also when food comes from far away, the supply chain can be ‘short’ in nature. As long as an agricultural product is “embedded with value-laden” information about who produced it, the consumer is enabled “to make connections”, with “the place” where it is produced, “the norms and values” of the producer and “the production methods”, consumer confidence is created (Renting et al. 2003, 400).

Next, when consumers know producers personally, trust is created on the basis of ‘routine’. Trust based on routine means that you trust another person, because you have always trusted this other person and that always worked out. In small communities, trust on routine is especially present. This because in small communities, actors “are likely to meet each other and therefore have their reputation at stake” (Putnam 2000 in Thorsøe and Kjeldsen 2015, 161). In other words, when producers and consumers are likely to meet each other, it is unlikely that they will mess things up, because it would be too painful. Thus, trust

between producers and consumers is created because of “face-to-face interaction” when consumers buy their agricultural products “directly from the producer” and “personal interaction” is present (Renting 2003, 399). In this personal interaction, the producer is “personified”, what makes him/her a “human being” who shares the same norms and values as the consumer (Thorsøe and Kjeldsen 2015, 167-168).

Finally, trust based on reflexivity means that trust is created because of “repeated interactions by reflective actors” (Thorsøe and Kjeldsen 2015, 162). Trust based on reflectivity is created, because actors are open to each other and communicate in an open way (Giddens 1990; Beck et al. 1994 in Thorsøe and Kjeldsen 2015, 162). In the case of agriculture, farmers act as “reflective actors” who explain consumers about the choices of farming they make (see Thorsøe and Kjeldsen 2015, 162). Farmers communicate continuously to consumers about the production process of their agricultural products. This does not have to be necessarily by means of “face-to-face” contact, but can occur by use of internet as well, for example with “online trading” and “e-commerce” (Renting 2004, 400). The big advantage of internet is that producers can be “addressed directly” and therefore are in the position of giving quick responses, which enables them to “sustain their self-presentation” and therefore create consumer confidence (Thorsøe and Kjeldsen 2015, 168).

In this thesis, I will give an answer to the question why farmers react against the organic certification system. These farmers do not want to farm in the non-organic modern and industrial way. Since we have seen that organic legislation is an example of modern thinking, it would be a logical result that these farmers are against modern thinking as well. Do these farmers indeed oppose modern thinking or is there another explanation which underlies farmers’ refusal of organic legislation policies? In this thesis an analysis of ‘the’ Dutch farmer of these days will be given, showing how farmers understand, experience and negotiate the local agricultural, economic and social realities. How they try to find a middle-way between the demands of the neoliberal food-system and their wish for organic farming. What turns out is that in order to satisfy to the call of consumers for more transparency in the field of food, Dutch farmers get a new mindset. A compromise between non-organic agriculture and the farmers’ wish to farm in the organic way.

1.5. Methodologies

During my anthropological fieldwork from the 8th of February until the 13th of May 2016, I have spent time on three different farms in the Netherlands: a pig farm (of Karin), a buffalo farm (of Reinier) and a fruit farm (of Lisa). Karin, Reinier and Lisa became my key informants. On the farms, I not only talked to the farmers themselves, but I spoke to all kinds of actors at the farms as well. I had conversations with employees, volunteers, farmers' family members, an employee of pest control, buffalo/pig-chargers and clients.

Besides, I made appointments for interviews with eight other farmers: one pig farmer, two cow-farmers, one sheep farmer, one fruit farmer, one vegetable farmer, a mixed farmer and a non-organic pig farmer⁶. I chose to do research on all these ten farmers, because they all consciously made the choice not to (continue) farm(ing) according to the organic certification system. All the farmers invented new strategies to sell their farm products. The interview questions and research topics can be found in Appendices III.

Since my original plan was to investigate organic farmers, my mum brought me into contact with a manager working at Bionext. Bionext is a Dutch association for organic producers and traders. I heard organic farming nowadays is a tuff job and I wanted to know how farmers dealt with the strict organic rules. I wondered how they searched for the margins within organic legislation. The trouble was that it would be very hard to receive honest answers of these farmers. Because these farmers commit fraud, it would be very difficult for me to convince them to tell their stories to me. For this reason the manager advised me to do research on farmers who consciously made the choice of not joining the organic quality label. In this way, I would get to know the difficulties of being an organic farmer and at the same time I would not get into trouble with endangering farmers' interests. The manager recommended Karin's and Reinier's farm. My supervisor brought me into contact with Lisa's farm. At the Bio-beurs, an organic fair organized by Bionext, I got names of other farmers who did not want to join the organic quality label. Furthermore, I used the 'snowball method': everyone I spoke to, I asked if they knew other farmers who were willing to talk to me during my anthropological fieldwork.

⁶ During fieldwork I had one appointment with a non-organic pig farmer: Gijs. Gijs will be introduced in Chapter 2. Because all the farmers with whom I spoke were not officially organic farmers, you can argue that they were all 'non-organic' farmers. However, I do not see my research participants as non-organic farmers, because in many ways they farmed organically as well. Their way of farming differed pretty much from the non-organic way of farming. Only in some cases their way of farming differed from organic legislation, which did not make them organic farmers officially.

In this research I applied “method triangulation”, which means that I used several research methods (see Boeije 2010, 176). The first one was the act of “being there”, which is one of techniques in anthropological research. Being there means that the anthropologist is on location and is just hanging out: observing people in an informal way in their daily activities (DeWalt and DeWalt 2011). While ‘being there’, people get used to the presence of the anthropologist and in this way ‘rapport’ (a trusting relationship with the anthropologist’s informants) can be built. As an anthropologist, I ‘was there’ on the farms as well. At Karin’s pig farm and Reinier’s buffalo farm, I spent around 5 weeks in total, trying to be around 3 days a week. I stayed overnight at the farms at least one night a week. The fruit farm was the only farm I did not visit during the week. Since farmer Lisa told me beforehand she was never present on the farm during the week, we decided that I could hang out at her farm on Saturdays. During the three months I went to Lisa’s farm every Saturday.

At the farms I hung around, mostly having conversations with farmers at the kitchen tables, but as well during all farming tasks, which had to be done. At these three farms, I had informal conversations with all actors. From these conversations I made notes. I transferred these notes into a Word-document on my computer and coded the data in NVivo. I coded the transcripts of interviews in NVivo as well. As my research participants were Dutch, my field notes were in Dutch. When writing the final thesis, I translated my observations and the conversations to English. I am aware of the fact that with translating, I run the risk that the subtle meaning in the Dutch combinations of words is different than the phrases in English.

Each time during conversations, I told my informants that the information they provided me, could be used in my thesis. During most informal conversations I made notes. In this way, my informants were reminded about the fact that I was not a normal ‘friend’, but a researcher who could use the things they told me. Besides, in my first conversation with my informants, I introduced myself as a researcher of Utrecht University and told them when they did not want me to use something they said, they had to tell me.

While being at the farms, I made use of ‘participant observation’. I participated in the farmers “daily activities”, “rituals”, “interactions” and “events”, and in this way tried to understand them (see DeWalt and DeWalt 2011, 1). At Karin’s farm, I helped employee Johan cleaning the pig stables, feeding the pigs, spraying the pigs with iodine and hounding pigs in the iron carriage for going to the slaughterhouse. I had conversations with Karin during our coffee and lunch break(s) three times a day, or sitting in the living room, while writing my notes. At Reinier’s farm, I also had conversations at the kitchen table, but mostly I talked to Reinier while driving in the car. At least once a week, I drove with him to

Eindhoven, to pick up yoghurt and ice cream at an ice-maker, made of his buffalo milk. I helped him with all kinds of tasks which had to be done. At Lisa's farm, I started the day with feeding the animals. Since Saturdays at Lisa's farm are always hectic and busy with a lot of activities going on, I made sure I was present at the farm at half past seven. In the early morning, while feeding the animals together, I could ask Lisa my questions without the disturbance of one of the many tasks Lisa has to do on Saturdays. At half past eight we made the farming shop ready. Mostly at half past nine, Lisa excused herself and welcomed a new client who was interested to rent a coop for his/her horse, Lisa went on to do some administration or Lisa ran away to do another important task. I then 'worked' in the farming shop, selling fruit, vegetables and other food products to clients. During the ten o'clock coffee break and the lunch break, I saw Lisa again and together with Lisa's mum, dad, volunteers and 'horse girls', we had conversations at the kitchen table⁷. After the coffee break, I mostly helped Lisa, Lisa's dad or volunteers, doing work in the orchard.

Not only have I talked with farmers, but also with employees active in the field of organic farming. I wanted to get insight in current farmers' power structures farmers face in daily life. To get inside in these power structures, I made use of the "vertical slice approach" (see Stryker 2005). This meant that I did not focus on the farmers only (the bottom up level, the ones with less power), but on agricultural organizations too (top-down, the ones with more power). This strategy enabled me to get insight in the distant actors operating in the field of (organic) farming and the power relations between these different actors. As well, talking with people of agricultural organizations helped getting new insights on organic certification. These experts worked with farmers, but were not farmers themselves. That made them perfect informants to discuss Dutch agriculture and the usefulness of certification policies in general. Through the conversations with farmers and other people in the 'field', I figured out I needed to conduct interviews with employees of Bionext, the Ministry of Economic Affairs, Milieucentraal and the LTO. The Ministry of Economic Affairs and the LTO both highly influence farmers' economic situations. Interviews with Bionext and Milieucentraal were useful to get insight in usefulness of organic legislation in general. At the internet pages I found email-addresses of the right employees within these organizations. It was good to talk to them, because these interviewees provided me a critical lens on alternatives of organic certification.

⁷ Lisa rents coops for horses to people who live nearby. These people do not have enough space to house their horses at home.

During interviews I always asked my informants if I was allowed to record the conversation. As well, I told the interviewees that if they did not want to talk about something, or wanted to tell something ‘off the record’, they had to tell me. All my interviewees agreed that I could record the conversation. Afterwards, I transcribed the interviews.

However, ‘anonymizing’ my informants was a bit problematic for me. Although I gave all my informants pseudonyms and do not mention the names of the farms in this thesis, there is a possibility that informants can be traced back by the people they know. Because the world of organic agriculture in the Netherlands is small, everyone knows one another. I am aware of that. Although my informants cannot practically be traced back, I let my key informants read my thesis. In this way, I let them decide if the information they provided could be written down in this thesis. Moreover, in order to be “reciprocal” to the farming community, I sent all my informants a summary with recommendations about my research, by way of thanks to their answers on my questions (see Robben 2012, 22). The summary (in Dutch) can be found in Appendix II.

In this thesis I used (public) data of Facebook as well. In chapter 4, I wrote down a discussion of clients on Reinier’s Facebook post. Although the responses of these clients are open to the public and I anonymized the clients, I am aware that these people never gave me permission to use their responses in a master thesis. However, how does this public Facebook debate differ from a conversation that clients have in Lisa’s farming shop, while the clients think I am a regular employee? I see public messages on Facebook as a “public space” which is not “covered under informed consent” (DeWalt and DeWalt 2011, 215) and therefore accept the fact that they did not give me full permission.

1.6. This thesis

This thesis consists of five chapters. In the next chapter (Chapter 2), I will give a sketch of the agricultural context of Dutch farmers. I will describe the economic realities which result in farmers' motives of farming in a different way. Farmers' motives can be ‘classical modern’ and ‘reflexive modern’ motives in nature. This chapter is meant to get an understanding of what the issue is in industrial intensive agriculture that results in farmers' opposition to non-organic agriculture. In Chapter 3, I will show the agricultural realities of farming life. The dilemmas and structures in which farmers find themselves, while negotiating the agricultural system, on the basis of three examples. In Chapter 4, I will show the social realities of how

farmers' wish to negotiate the system, results in an alternative way of organic legislation. Farmers create a different mindset which provides consumer confidence creating a different system.

Finally, in Chapter 5 I will bring this research to a conclusion in which I show how farmers' wish to farm in a different way than non-organic farming, meets with keeping one's head above water because of the low food prices in the food system, by finding alternative ways to create trust in their agricultural products.

2. The market hall

“Our cheese is not too expensive, but the others are too cheap”

It is my first day of fieldwork on Reinier’s buffalo farm. While sitting at the table in the living room, Reinier tells me his story of becoming a farmer. After working as a consultant for some years, he found out he was not happy in his office job. He went on ‘wwoofing’⁸ on an organic goat farm in France. The farm was small and therefore the cheese was expensive. But the French farmer said: “our cheese is not too expensive, but the others are too cheap”. That made Reinier think. He wanted to be farmer, but not in the non-organic way his parents did. He did not want to farm on a large scale. The French farmer showed him that farming small, focussed on the local market, was possible as well⁹.

In this chapter I will sketch the situation of farming within the global food system, the ‘economic realities’ of farming in the Netherlands. Which actors have influence in farming Holland? How do these actors interact? In other words, what does the market hall look like, in which farmers, organizations and consumers interact? In the first section of this chapter, I will show how non-organic meat is produced and why some Dutch farmers do not want to farm in the non-organic way. Hereafter, I will show how ‘organic labelling’ can be seen as an example of modernity and modern thinking. Next, I will address farmers motivations for farming in an organic way. I will answer the question why farmers like Reinier do not choose the non-organic way of farming. Motivations can be ‘reflexive modern’ or ‘classical modern’ in nature. Given the fact that both reflexive modern farmers as classical modern farmers refuse the organic quality label, in this chapter I will provide the first step to the argument that the farmers of this study are not mere anti-modernists who refuse modern thinking.

⁸ WWOOF stands for “Working Weekends On Organic Farms”. By joining one of the WWOOF organizations, people can work as a ‘volunteer’ on an organic farm. The volunteer receives free food and accommodation on the farm, in exchange for the ‘voluntarily’ work he does on the farm (“The History of WWOOF”, WWOOF Netherlands, accessed August 9, 2016, <http://www.wwoofnetherlands.org/about/history-of-wwoof/>; “How it works”, WWOOF International, accessed August 9, 2016, <http://wwoofinternational.org/how-it-works/>).

⁹ Informal conversation Reinier, 08-03-2016.

2.1. Producing efficiently

Every morning I am helping Johan cleaning the pig stables. Johan is a senior citizen, working as an employee at Karin's pig farm. Johan had a regular pig farm as well, but stopped farming when none of his daughters wanted to succeed him. At Karin's pig farm, Johan works as a freelancer. Johan is well-known in the region because of his huge knowledge about pigs. He is retired, but farmers are willingly hiring him when they have shortage of personnel.

Every morning Johan and I feed the pigs and clean the stables. After Johan and I have made the stables ready, we always take a look in the female pigs' (sows) coops. Johan notices that a pregnant sow is standing in the 'normal stable', together with the other sows. That is not the way it should be. Pregnant sows belong in the 'birth stable', where they have their own niche and can give birth to the piglets in a peaceful way. Later we will transport this sow to the birth stable¹⁰.

Johan and I always look if a sow needs to be put at the coop of the male pig (boar) too, in order that she can be pounced upon. I help him put the right sow in the boar's stable. Johan knows exactly when sows are in heat. Slowly walking along the stables, he peers at the pigs. Armed with a broom I step into the stable with the sows. "We need that one", Johan says, while pointing at one sow.

"It is not a camp site over here!", Johan shouts to the pigs who are blocking the stable door by lying in the front of the opening. He opens the door of the boar's stable and instructs me to make sure the boar stays inside. "Ksst" I say, when putting the broom on the boar's head. Whereas Johan is running in the stable, hunting the right sow to the stable's door, I am trying to prevent the other sows of getting into the boar's stable. A tough job, because the sows are curious and strong. "Get out of the way!" Johan says, when the right sow is approaching. Curious she walks into the boar's stable. Finally we have done it.

The boar does not want to leap upon the sow. He is curious, but prefers eating hay instead of jumping on his new stable partner. Johan and I lean on the metal fence of the coop, shouting some encouraging words and watching if the sow is leant upon. "Come on!" Johan says, "or do I have to do it myself?"¹¹.

¹⁰ Observations, 18-04-2016.

¹¹ Observations, 11-02-2016 and 15-02-2016.

After a morning of hard work, Johan and I are sitting at the kitchen table, drinking a cup of coffee. Johan tells me that he works at a regular pig farm in the afternoon. It is the pig farm of Gijs. Johan explains me that at Gijs' farm, pigs are inseminated in an artificial way. To catch pig sperm, an artificial sow is used on which the boar can lean upon. The sperm is diluted and is injected into the sows. Therefore, Gijs knows exactly when sows are 'leant upon'. When sows have to give birth, they receive another shot. Gijs has no problems of not knowing when sows are pregnant, hunting the sows or hoping the boar is willing to pounce upon the sow. Making use of pig insemination is a lot more efficient than doing it the way Johan does on Karin's farm. Nevertheless, Johan does not prefer artificial insemination: "it is like a factory. Crazy that that is possible, with living creatures"¹².

In the Netherlands, farms like that of Gijs are the rule. Dutch agriculture is very intensive (Bager and Proost 1997). Agricultural products are produced on a high scale (Wetenschappelijke Raad voor het Regeringsbeleid 2014, 23). Mixed farms slowly disappeared, as farmers have started specializing in one crop or stock (Wetenschappelijke Raad voor het Regeringsbeleid 2014, 24). It is the neoliberal industrial way of farming (Bager and Proost 1997). In order to be able to farm in this neoliberal agricultural way, farmers have to make large investments (Wetenschappelijke Raad voor het Regeringsbeleid 2014, 24).

Gijs' farm is an example of farming in an industrial way, based on modern thinking, focussed on productivity and efficiency (see Stearns 2008; Fitting 2014, 179). Johan tells me Gijs has eight locations of pig farms. On the one Johan works, approximately 7000 pigs are sheltered. That makes around 50.000 pigs in total. Every week 1000 pigs go to the slaughterhouse.

As I keep on asking Johan questions about Gijs' farm, one morning Johan tells me proudly he fixed an interview for me with Gijs. "So that you can see Gijs' farm with your own eyes," Johan says¹³. And so it happens. On a Wednesday afternoon, together with Johan I go to the pig farm of Gijs.

Gijs' farm consists of three big stables and an ex-private house. The private house is rented to other people. Gijs himself lives at another farm. I am

¹² Informal conversation Johan, 11-02-2016.

¹³ Informal conversation Johan, 15-02-2016.

allowed to ask Gijs a few questions and then we go to have a look around the stables. Inside there is a penetrating smell of ammonia. The floor of the stables consist of concrete with grating in it. Under the grating, there is the sweltering pig's dung of some weeks. The container is only emptied when it is full. The pigs are dirty. Not because of mud, but because of their own shit.

The first stable has no windows. All the pigs live in the dark. The door of each room has a red light which reports if the neon lights in the pig coop is on or off. Behind each door there is a small passage with 6 coops on both sides. In every coop around 12 curious pigs observe me. Their tails are cut off, so that they cannot bite each other. It is warm and moist inside. Every coop had a yellow plastic bin with forage which is delivered automatically. Water is also automatically supplied. Outside water pipes with taps are installed, to regulate the water supply with possible medicines in itself¹⁴. Later in the afternoon, I drive back with Johan to Karin's farm. I realise that Karin's way of farming is very different¹⁵.

Karin did not want to produce according to the “productivist paradigm”, which is focussed on efficiency, intensifying and the manufacturing of agriculture (Bager and Proost 1997, 83). Pig farming in the non-organic way pays too little attention to animal well-being according to Karin.

2.2. Quality labels and modern thinking

Farmers like Karin who refuse producing according to the “productivist paradigm” and start producing on a small scale, mostly become organic farmers (Kahl et al. 2012, 2763). Yet, also organic farming can be seen as an example of “modern thinking” (see Stearns 2008; Argyrou 2005). The reason why organic certification can be seen as an example of modernity, lies in the way auditing institutions builds “(systemic) trust” (see Thorsøe and Kjeldsen 2015, 161). In chapter 4 I will go more deeply into the different trust building processes.

¹⁴ Observations, 17-02-2016.

¹⁵ Of course, it is Gijs' own decision to farm in the non-organic way. Nevertheless, farming in the non-organic way is not a completely free choice. Often non-organic farmers are heavily mortgaged and cannot just change their way of farming to a more organic one. They first have to pay off their debt to the bank.

An important characteristic of quality labels, is that they provide “clearness” and “accountability” (Shore and Wright 2004, 100). That is exactly the reason why Bionext employee Margriet trusts the organic label. During our interview she explains me why:

“[w]hen I walk in the supermarket and I see a bucket with yoghurt with a picture of a farm and a text saying ‘natural yoghurt’ or something, it is possible that this yoghurt comes from another farm, not corresponding with this picture. With the organic label, I know that the things I find important, they correspond. That the animals had a good life, that there is no poison on my apple and that I can trust, auditing is done well. That the quality label is worthy”¹⁶.

Margriet’s case shows that we strive for certification systems, because of our point of view that auditing results in scientific objective facts (see Lyon 2011; Argyrou 2005). The rules that lie on the basis of the organic label are an example of an “universally accepted method” that produces this “scientifically validated knowledge”, a feature of modern thinking (see Lyon 2011, 224; Argyrou 2005).

For Milieucentraal¹⁷ employee Erna, this aim for objectivity of quality labels is important as well. With Milieucentraal Erna works on a project to diminish the amount of quality labels in the Netherlands. During our conversation, she explains to me how important it is for quality labels to have not only an independent auditing institution, but to have an independent agency who is making the requirements as well. According to Erna, the independent agency who designs the requirements makes the difference between a quality label and a manufacturer label:

“in this case Unilever¹⁸, they formulate requirements themselves, they manage the requirements themselves. (...) And their products are checked independently and the inspector is acknowledged. (...) But in fact, (...) we prefer quality labels. Then you have an extra party, that is an independent party which formulates and manages the requirements. Because otherwise it is dependent on ‘how much trust do you have in Unilever, to say something

¹⁶ Semi-structured interview Margriet, 21-04-2016.

¹⁷ Milieucentraal is a Dutch organization which informs consumers about living a ‘sustainable’ life (“Onafhankelijk, betrouwbaar en praktisch”, Milieucentraal, accessed August 18, 2016, <https://www.milieucentraal.nl/over-milieu-centraal/>).

¹⁸ Unilever is a Dutch multinational who owns more than 400 labels in the field of food and external care (“Kennismaking met Unilever, Unilever Nederland, accessed on August 11, 2016, <https://www.unilever.nl/about/who-we-are/kennismaking/>).

[about] (...) the level of aspiration of [Unilever's] requirements?'. Apart from the control, because that is simply good. Well, Unilever is a highly reputable firm. So, it would be foolish if they would take on crummy requirements. (...) But there is something to be said for doing that [designing the requirements] by an independent party as well"¹⁹.

According to Erna, an independent auditing agency is not enough. She says the requirements of a quality label need to be designed on an independent basis as well. In their jobs Erna and Margriet search for objective validated certification systems. They strive for objective knowledge, based on science (see Argyrou 2005). Striving for rationality comes from modern thinking (Argyrou 2005; Stearns 2008). Through rationalization we try to understand the world around us. In this way, the organic quality label belongs to modern thinking, since by “rational, objective scientific knowledge” we believe we can develop a “rational and economical food production system” (Kaltoft 2001, 152).

2.3. Resistance against the neoliberal food system

Back to the neoliberal food system. According to our Bionext employee Margriet, Dutch politics are too much focussed on the productivist paradigm in this neoliberal way of farming. Bionext is the association for Dutch organic farmers. In the small the office of Bionext, Margriet tells me the Netherlands is too much focussed on making more money by farming more efficiently²⁰:

“[a]ll Dutch agricultural policies are focussed on intensification. Focussed on: ‘how can we do it more efficient?’ With less feed, less farmland, breed faster, so that we have less expenses and relatively earn more. That is how our current agricultural system operates and that cannot be changed in an easy way”²¹.

Although Margriet describes Dutch politics as only focused on the efficient way of farming, actually in the 1980s a change in thinking about environmental influence of agriculture occurred (see Bager and Proost 1997, 82). Because of growing demands of society for thinking about the environment, the Dutch government felt they could not close their eyes anymore for the environmental impact of agriculture (Bager and Proost 1997). As a result, the

¹⁹ Semi-structured interview Erna, 20-05-2016.

²⁰ Observations, 21-04-2016.

²¹ Semi-structured interview Margriet, 21-04-2016.

government introduced new legislation for agriculture to diminish “environmental impact” and created farmers “commitment” for her new environmental course (Bager and Proost 1997, 81-82). According to Margriet, this group of farmers who resist the productivist way of farming can be divided into two groups:

“I think two movements exist. We have farmers who say: ‘I produce nearly organic. I do not understand why they [Skal²²] make difficulties about the rules of organic legislation’. And then, when you continue to ask them about what it is they have difficulties with, they say: ‘(...) but when my farmland really consists a lot of weeds, I want to spray chemicals’. Then I think, you do not understand what ‘organic’ means. Because it is not about ‘when [the weeds] are too much, I will spray the chemicals’, but about preventing that you have too much weeds. These farmers are no organic farmers. They say they are (nearly) organic and they indeed do a good job of using little poison, but they are not worth the organic label. (...) We also have farmers who work consciously out of the philosophy of organic farming. (...) They say: ‘I first look at what I think is best. I want to let my animals live as natural as possible, I want to close the organic cycle in the soil, I want to be honest to my clients and I want to be honest to my employees’. (...) They start a farm with this conviction. And then it can happen that they do things in some cases which do not match with the standards of organic legislation. For example with legislation, that in the past resolutions were made, because [at that moment] that [resolution] was the best for [farmers] who do not work out of this view and we have to draw the line somewhere. (...) This [second group of] farmers push farming even further than organic, but [the farmers] do not fit in the legislation system of organic. (...) I think, they can be inspiring people for organic farmers”²³.

Magriet notices that different types of “farmers’ environmental behaviour” exist (see Bager and Proost 1997, 83). Different motivations of farmers to change their farming course. In the next part of this section, I will go more deeply into the details of these types of farmers’ environmental behaviour. First, I will explain ‘reflexive modern motives’ of farmers, farmers who have different values and do not feel happy in the productivist way of farming. Hereafter, I will explain ‘classical modern’ motives of farmers, which are mostly financially in nature.

²² Skal is the Dutch auditing agency of the organic quality label. SKAL inspects all Dutch organic products (“Welkom bij Skal”, Skal, accessed on August 16, 2016, <https://www.skal.nl/>).

²³ Semi-structured interview Margriet, 21-04-2016.

2.3.1. Reflexive modern motives

“Reflexive modern” farmers refuse to farm in the non-organic way, because they do not believe in the “productivist paradigm” of modern industrial agriculture (Kaltoft 2001, 153; Bager and Proost 1997, 83). Pig-farmer Karin is an example of a farmer like this. At the kitchen table, Karin explains me her motivation for farming in the way she does. In the beginning days Karin was a regular pig farmer. Her pigs had small coops, no elbow room, a dark stable and it was dusty. “How sad, that you can’t offer these animals more than that,” Karin thought²⁴. Karin was not able to explain to consumers why she cared for the pigs the way she did:

“I could not explain it. Yes, because of the money. But when you look into your heart, you think ‘is it all about money?’. No. Not for you and neither for these animals. When you want to keep them [the pigs] in a respectful way, they need to have the possibility to exhibit natural behaviour. And that was absolutely not the case”²⁵.

Karin’s motivation can be described as “reflexive modern” (see Kaltoft 2001, 153). Karin wanted to farm in a different way, because she was not happy when farming in the non-organic way. Karin made the choice of farming in a different way, because she had “different values” and “reflected” on these values (see Kaltoft 2001, 153). As reflexive modernity is attended by a process of “individualization”, Karin also made an individual choice (see Kaltoft 2001, 153). She wanted to decide on her “own life”, determining her own way of farming (see Kaltoft 2001, 153). In other words, Karin had “the choice of lifestyle” of determining another agricultural course based on her individual values (see Kaltoft 2001, 153).

Vegetable farmer Giel can be described as a ‘reflexive modern’ farmer as well. On his farming land, Giel cultivates more than 50 types of vegetables. While sitting at the huge wooden table in the cosy kitchen of his farm, Giel and his father Otto tell me the problem in today’s world is not GMO (Genetically Modified Organisms), but the “mono-culture”²⁶. Giel stresses that GMO is only an extension of mono-culture. His 50 types of vegetables are like a march against the mono-culture of vegetables. Otto is convinced that mono-culture can be

²⁴ Semi-structured interview Karin, 04-05-2016.

²⁵ Semi-structured interview Karin, 04-05-2016.

²⁶ GMO stands for Genetically Modified Organism. GMO feed means that the DNA of the plant of which the feed is made up, is modified. Either by means of “non-organic plant breeding” or by means of “genetic engineering”, so that the plant is for example resistant to diseases and pesticides (Counihan and Siniscalchi 2014, 178).

seen everywhere in today's society. For example at shops in Hoog-Catherijne, a shopping mall in Utrecht. Everything in these shops is the same. And consumers all want the same things. They all choose for zucchinis and peppers²⁷.

Giel and Otto absolutely do not agree with the non-organic way of farming, of producing one crop in a highly efficient way. Also Giel and Otto reflected many times on non-organic farming. They did not want to comply with the productivist paradigm in the neoliberal food system.

2.3.2. Classical modern motives

In contrast to reflexive modern farmers, some farmers are more “individual utility maximizers” (Bager and Proost 1997, 85). They make decisions which are more based on economic advantages (Bager and Proost 1997, 85). These farmers have “classical modern” motives of farming and farm in an organic way, because they believe that is more efficient (Kaltoft 2001, 151-152). Cow-farmer Gerrit is an example of a classical modern farmer. While having a cup of Senseo-coffee, I am sitting with Gerrit at his kitchen table, talking about his motivation for farming:

Gerrit: “We have plans for milking 65 cows in the future, with the corresponding dairy cattle. Working in a pleasant way. I want cows with whom I have no trouble. And I want to enjoy my work and try to earn a living. And I think 200 cows are not needed for that. I do not want that”.

Me: “Why not 200 cows?”

Gerrit: “Because it does not fit me”.

Me: “What is it that does not fit you?”

Gerrit: “Some farmers can manage 200 cows quite well and enjoy having more cows than their neighbours have. But that does not appeal to me. I do not like that. When you have 200 cows, 200 cows calve and 200 cows needs to be inseminated”.

Me: “Then farming is too much like a machine?”

Gerrit: “Well, then you have to deal with other things, eh. With 65 cows, we can get all the cow feed ourselves, for our own cows. When I would possess more cows, I need more phosphate rights, I need to buy extra feed, I need to sell my cow dung²⁸. That is a sum. (...)”

²⁷ Informal conversation Giel and Otto after semi-structured interview Giel, 18-03-2016.

²⁸ Phosphate comes into the air because of cow muck. To keep the level of phosphate in the air in check, the Dutch government will introduce ‘phosphate rights’ as of 1 January 2017. According to the amount of cows a

Imagine, you say ‘I need to sell my cow dung for 19 euro a cubic meter’ and you have to buy expensive feed. Well, I do not think that works. Larger does not necessarily mean that you can earn more, I think”.

Me: “So, then 65 cows is perfect?”

Gerrit: “In terms of labour, feed and dung, it matches on our farm. That is a conscious choice”²⁹.

For Gerrit, changing his way of farming is a financial sum. A big farm means that his expenses are too high. According to Gerrit, the non-organic way of farming is not lucrative. That makes Gerrit a classical modern farmer (see Kaltoft 2001, 152). Gerrit keeps his farm small, which corresponds with the standards of organic farming, but for the reason that in this way he can make a better living (see Kaltoft 2001, 152). In this way, Gerrit’s way of (organic) farming becomes “an adaptation to classical modernity” (see Kaltoft 2001, 151).

In contrast to Gerrit, Ivo’s cow farm is not small at all. Ivo owns around 550 milch cows. At his farm, milk is processed in all kinds of milk products: buttermilk, yoghurt, custard or butter³⁰. However, Ivo has ‘classical modern’ motives of farming in an alternative way as well. On Ivo’s family farm, they try to farm as ‘sustainable’ as possible. During our interview, Ivo argues that efficient farming can be very sustainable as well:

“I find it difficult, because many times contrasts are made between organic and regular [farming]. Of course excrescences exist, but a regular farmer with his own land also tries to care for his land the best he can, because within 10 years, it is the same and [by then], he wants to have the same amount of harvest. The same applies to his cows. Antibiotics are not the easiest and cheapest way to use, for sure”³¹.

According to Ivo, non-organic farmers are more and more convinced that they have to farm in a sustainable way. Not because they believe it’s the right thing to do, but because sustainable farming is more efficient.

Farmers like Ivo (and Gerrit) see organic farming as a “technical solution” to the environmental problems agriculture faces these days (see Kaltoft 2001, 152):

farmer has, a farmer is allowed to produce a particular level of phosphate. This level of phosphate is set down in the phosphate rights of a farmer (“Fosfaatrechten en grondgebondenheid”, Wageningen UR, accessed on August 10, 2016, <http://www.wageningenur.nl/nl/artikel/Fosfaatrechten-en-grondgebondenheid.htm>).

²⁹ Semi-structured interview Gerrit, 26-02-2016.

³⁰ Semi-structured interview Ivo, 02-03-2016.

³¹ Semi-structured interview Ivo, 02-03-2016.

“[w]e have a dung fermenting machine here on the farm (...), which means that dung goes from the stable directly to the [dung fermenting] system and what the system does is in fact quite simple. It extracts the methane gas that escapes from the dung. We store that methane gas and we use it to let the engine run. And that engine winches up a generator and from that we get electric power. (...) For us it is a win-win situation. On the one hand, we have less methane emissions and on the other hand, we produce our own electric power”³².

Ivo’s dung fermenting machine is a technical solution to an environmental problem. Ivo wants to close the organic cycle, tries to make the cow dung useful. This technical solution makes Ivo an organic farmer in a way. Thus, farmers with classical modern motives farm in a kind of organic way. However, they are driven out of ‘the’ modern worldview of farming in a more efficient way, carrying through the highest yield possible.

To summarize this chapter, two groups of farmers exist who do not feel happy (anymore) in the productivist paradigm of non-organic agriculture: classical modern farmers and reflexive modern farmers. These farmers have different motives for changing their way of farming. We may say that both groups of farmers started to produce on a smaller scale. Producing on a small scale is compliant with organic farming (Kahl et al. 2012, 2763). However, none of the farmers in this study joined the organic quality label. The organic quality label can be seen as an example of modern thinking. A logical conclusion would be that these farmers refuse modern thinking. However, both ‘reflexive modern farmers’ as ‘classical modern farmers’ (who are examples of modern thinkers) do not join the organic quality label. Why is that? In the next chapter I will show that both groups of farmers argue it is better to tell their stories directly to consumers. What will turn out in the next chapter is that these stories not always match with the straight rules of organic legislation.

³² Semi-structured interview Ivo, 02-03-2016.

3. The farm

It is around eleven in the morning when I am sitting at the wooden kitchen table of the Reinier's farm. While drinking my third cup of coffee, I am writing in my notebook. Reinier is sitting at the table in the living room, working behind his laptop. It is his morning ritual. After milking the buffaloes around seven and picking up the buffalo yoghurt from his icemaker in Eindhoven, it is time for a coffee 'break' and some administrative tasks to do.

Reinier calls himself an "apartment farmer". He does not live on the farm. Only his mother does. Every day early in the morning he drives from his apartment in Eindhoven to the farm where he grew up and back to Eindhoven after midnight. Reinier works long hours every day.

Besides working as a farmer, Reinier also works as a consultant for an employment agency. Four years ago Reinier made the decision to start a farm. Whereas in the beginning of his farming career Reinier did his farming tasks part-time, nowadays being a farmer costs too much time for Reinier. His time-consuming tasks of milking the buffalos, feeding the bulls and delivering orders, have resulted in Reinier's decision to withdraw from his consultancy job. Within 1,5 months, Reinier will be a "full-time farmer". But as Reinier breaks even with his proceeds and costs, he really wants his consultant salary being paid these last weeks. As his working hours on the office are scarce, office work has to be done at home, in between the daily tasks of farming life. And that's the reason that, during every coffee break, Reinier escapes to his laptop situated at the table in the living room, answering e-mails of consultancy clients.

Mostly Reinier does not answer my questions when he is busy on his laptop, but this morning he winks at me. "Look" he says, while pointing at the screen of his laptop. Today farmers protest against a new law, which obliges farmers to keep calves with their mothers. It's a trending topic at Twitter. Everyone who joins this discussion, uses *#kalboerderij*. Dutch farmers are angry about the new law. Animal lovers are standing opposite to them, advocating more calves with their mothers. Reinier is laughing about it. He keeps the calves with the mothers for 3 months. Therefore, he has a lot of fans who are animal lovers. They say keeping calves with the mother buffaloes is better for animal well-being.

According to Reinier, the farmers demonstrate out of economic interests. Of course the farmers say keeping the calves with their mums results in higher risks of calves getting oppressed by bigger cows in the stable, but Reinier says their economic interest is too high. The farmers need the milk. Keeping a calve with the mother results in substantially less milk production, because the calve drinks it all. The milk is too precious for the farmers.

Keeping calves with the cows costs Reinier a lot of milk as well. Buffalo women only give 9 months of milk. Since Reinier keeps the calves with the mothers for 3 months, only 6 months of milk is left. Moreover, buffalos give very little milk. Whereas cows give around 8000 liters of milk in a year, buffalos only give 2000 liters of milk. By way of comparison: a milch goat gives the same amount of milk as a buffalo³³.

Reinier's choice is an example of the many dilemmas farmers experience. In this chapter I will treat these dilemmas. The negotiations Reinier and his colleagues experience in their farming livelihood. Choosing between calves with the mothers and happy customers on the one hand, or high levels of milk production and easily managing the wages the farmers earn on the other.

In the previous chapter I showed that farmers do not want to farm in the modern non-organic productivist way. As well, I showed that the organic quality label can be seen as an example of modern thinking. Although the way the farmers run their farms matches with organic farming to a high degree, these farmers do not farm according to the official organic label. However, these farmers are not mere anti-modern farmers. They have 'classical modern' or 'reflexive modern' motivations to farm in the way they do. In this chapter I will explain why. I will show that the unambiguous and fixed rules of organic certification does not always match with the 'agricultural realities' farmers face. The farmers want to present consumers a more nuanced story about the choices they make, giving insight perspectives in trending topics like '#kalboerderij'.

In this chapter I will give three examples of dilemmas which the farmers experience: import of animal feed, use of antibiotics and dealing with clients wishes. All these dilemmas show the nuance behind the fixed rules which are intertwined within organic certification policies.

³³ Observations and informal conversation Reinier, 15-03-2016.

3.1. Stories behind the rules of organic products

As being said in the previous chapter, cow farmer Ivo is an example of a “classical modern farmer” (see Kaltoft 2001, 152). During my interview with him, he describes the story of Friesland Campina fusing with the quality label Weidemelk. Weidemelk is milk from cows who are mostly outside, grazing in the pastures³⁴. First Weidemelk was only a Dutch quality label, but nowadays in other countries, cows are grazing according to the rules of Weidemelk as well:

“And then it is possible, that you buy Weidemelk in a Dutch supermarket that originates from Germany, Poland or Austria. (...) Well, is that what you want? Is that what the consumer wants? (...) No, actually not. In the Netherlands, 80% of the milk we produce goes to foreign countries. We produce a lot of milk. We don’t need foreign milk. But for supermarkets it is tactful, because they have a larger [barrel of] milk where they can get milk out”³⁵.

According to Ivo, it is easy to ‘hide yourself’ behind a quality label. The label Weidemelk is monitored on a particular set of requirements, like the ability of cows to usually graze outside in the pastures, but still the label Weidemelk does not tell the whole story. Weidemelk does not tell her consumers the whole story of the milk being imported from countries abroad.

Also pig-farmer Karin who has “reflexive-modern” motives, does not want to join the organic quality label (see Kaltoft 2001, 153). During our lunch she explains to me in what way organic pig farming differs from the pig farming she does. The rules of organic farming tell farmers to let piglets out on the first day of their lives. “But that is not the case in nature,” Karin tells me. She explains that in nature the sow digs a hole from which the piglets cannot escape the first days of their lives. Karin keeps her piglets inside the first days and thereafter they can go outside. Karin does not agree with all the rules of organic farming³⁶.

The clear-cut rules of the organic quality label cannot provide the nuances farmers like Ivo and Karin want to tell consumers. Because quality labels provide consumers quick information about food characteristics, farmers say nuance is lacking in the information providence of food. However, why is it that organic legislation does not always fit with the agricultural realities? Wiebe, who deals with legislation of food and agriculture at the Dutch Ministry of Economic Affairs, explains to me that all organic legislation is decided in

³⁴ Ivo describes the label Weidemelk prescribes that cows have to graze outside in the grasslands 120 days a year and 6 hours a day (semi-structured interview Ivo, 02-03-2016).

³⁵ Semi-structured interview Ivo, 02-03-2016.

³⁶ Informal conversation Karin, 08-02-2016.

Brussels. Whereas agricultural legislation can differ between European member states, the rules of organic legislation are the same for all European countries. This is because Europe wants to have one universal organic label for all European countries³⁷. Inspection of the European rules is done by national agencies³⁸. During my interview with Pieter of the LTO³⁹, Pieter explains to me how the decision-making process of organic legislation in Brussels results in a ‘compromise’ of the rules:

“[a]nd there [at the European Parliament] all countries, but all parties as well, try to lobby. (...) All countries come there independently, with ministries, agricultural organizations. So that is quite a jumble of influence that occurs there. And all of them, they look at the legislation and evaluate if the legislation fits in the country of origin. We [from the Netherlands] evaluate as well, if the legislation is such, that we are able to handle it. But all 28 countries do that, which makes that the legislation always is a compromise of all the interests that are involved. (...) Because you do not want to exclude countries”⁴⁰.

Pieter describes how the end result of interests of European countries results in an middle-ground of organic legislation with which all member states have to agree. For this reason, organic rules do not always fit perfectly to the agricultural situation in particular countries.

In the same way as agricultural policy makers find themselves negotiating between different interests and agricultural realities, farmers experience a continuous process of “negotiation” as well (see Lyon 2011 and Leeuwis 2000). These farmers consciously make the choice of not farming according to the rules of the organic label. In the following section, I will show examples of farmers negotiation processes by telling more “stories” behind clear cut rules and for example wishes of clients.

3.1.1. Animal feed

At the mixed farm of Paula and Bas, Paula explains to me part of their animal feed is organic. Partly, because organic ‘beet pulp feed’ is scarce. Of course they can order beet pulp feed from beets in South-America, but Paula and Bas

³⁷ Semi-structured interview Wiebe, 12-05-2016.

³⁸ FAQ on organic agriculture”, IFOAM Organics International, accessed on August 25, 2016, <http://www.ifoam.bio/en/faq-organic-agriculture>.

³⁹ LTO stands for “Land en Tuinbouworganisatie”, the Dutch “Agriculture and Horticulture Organization”. The LTO lobbys for all Dutch farmers at the Dutch parliament in The Hague and at the European Parliament in Brussels. Members of the LTO pay for membership. Farmers are not obliged to become a member of the LTO (informal conversation Karin, 17-02-2016; semi-structured interview Pieter, 22-04-2016).

⁴⁰ Semi-structured interview Pieter, 22-04-2016.

think that is nonsense. Why would they feed their animals forage from far away when their neighbouring farmer has hay of a good quality as well? One day Paula and Bas ordered hay from the Vosges, France. But this hay was very expensive. Moreover the hay was not of a better quality than the hay of their neighbouring farmer. So now Paula and Bas feed their sheep non-organic hay from the grassland nearby⁴¹.

Cow-farmer Ivo tells me a similar story like that of Paula and Bas, about a farmer struggling with organic certified forage:

“that example that I told you, about Douwe, an organic farmer I know⁴². First, he was not organic and then he became organic. A neighboring farmer lived nearby Douwe and Douwe got a high percentage of his feed from this agrarian. And now Douwe has to buy organic feed from South-America, because it is organic. Well, he does not think that is logical. Very intricate. He now gets a taste for organic farming, very much appreciates it and tries to close the circular course on his farm, but like this, you see, with organic farming some things do not fit⁴³”.

Ivo explains that Douwe wants to close ‘the circular course on his farm’ with local feed. However, this local feed is not organically certified and therefore Douwe cannot feed his animals with the local forage.

The reason why organic farmers need to give their animals organic certified feed, is because they are sure then that the animal feed is not GMO (Genetically Modified Organisms). Farmers like pig-farmer Karin prefer organic feed, because then they know the feed is not GMO. Therefore Karin does not feed her pigs soya. She fears the soya is GMO. Her employee Johan does not agree with Karin. He says pigs like soya very much, because soya contains natural sugars. To get healthier pigs, it is important the pigs get another type of feed. However, this other type contains soya, which Karin does not want⁴⁴.

The stories of Paula, Douwe and Karin, show how farmers are moving in the different “structures” in which they find themselves (see Duram 2000). Paula, Douwe and Karin are continuously weighing up the pros and cons of production costs (economic structures), clients

⁴¹ Semi-structured interview Paula and Bas, 21-03-2016.

⁴² The name Douwe is anonymized.

⁴³ Semi-structured interview Ivo, 02-03-2016.

⁴⁴ Informal conversation Karin and Johan, 11-02-2016.

wishes (social structures), influences on the ecosystem (ecological structures) and (governmental or organic certification) policies (political structures) (see Duram 2000, 40-46). These structures influence the choices Paula, Douwe and Karin make (see Duram 2000, 36).

3.1.2. Animal well-being

When moving in the structures of their farming lives, Paula, Douwe and Karin use their agency. They have the ability of acting independently and making their own choices (see Lutrell 2009:14; Ramsbothan 2001:306). Sometimes they adopt to the structures, sometimes they do not. When using their agency, they challenge the structures they are in.

Karin not only deals with her clients wishes with respect to GMO feed. Karin's clients buy her meat as well, because Karin advertises her pig meat does not contain antibiotics. At Karin's pig farm, every morning I help employee Johan feeding the pigs. Every day after we clean the stables, we look if all the pigs are still healthy. When pigs are ill, Karin wants Johan to use homeopathic medicines instead of antibiotics. Karin tells me that because the pigs are always outside, they are very healthy. However, ill pigs are inevitable.

The homeopathic medicine Karin uses is 'pyrogenium', a substance out of snake-poison. When pyrogenium does not work, a pig gets antibiotics. Because Karin made her clients the promise of not having antibiotics in her pig meat, this particular pig receives another ear number, goes out of Karin's own brand and is sold later as 'regular meat' for a lower price to the butcher in town⁴⁵.

Evidently, Johan does not agree on Karin's choice of using pyrogenium. He says homeopathic medicines do not work. He tells me he 'cares for' pigs, not (only) feeds them. He wants to give pigs antibiotics immediately, because he says that is necessary⁴⁶.

After the umpteenth time of Johan and me discussing the case of antibiotics, Johan tells me to read the label of an empty antibiotics jar. The label tells me antibiotics are out of the meat after five days. "Exactly" Johan says. He does not understand why Karin does not want to use antibiotics. In

⁴⁵ Informal conversation Karin, 11-02-2016.

⁴⁶ Informal conversation Johan, 24-02-2016.

Germany and Poland, pigs are slaughtered four days after they received antibiotics⁴⁷.

During our coffee break, I ask Karin why she does not want to use antibiotics, in spite of the fact that they seem to vanish out of the meat after five days. Karin replies antibiotics always leave traces. “The question remains how much and if it’s harmful”, Karin says⁴⁸.

Karin is located in a situation of “governmentality” (see Foucault 1979 in Lyon 2011, 223). Although Karin uses her agency in making her choices, she is influenced by other parties and structures as well. Karin mediates between different options, different actors of power. Governmentality is the mental condition of Karin finding a middle-ground between her client’s wishes of eating meat without antibiotics, aspirations of curing animals as best as possible because of animal well-being and the economic reality of not receiving a fair price in comparison to the energy she has put in a pig which is sold as regular meat at the lowest price possible. Karin’s solution of curing pigs with pyrogenium, till the moment a pig is too ill, is the outcome of Karin’s governmentality while making decisions on her farm.

3.1.3. Clients' wishes

Reinier also tries to find a middle-ground. One night, I am with Reinier in the milking stable. Reinier’s buffalos are very sensitive to stress. When a buffalo woman is stressed, she cannot be milked. To prevent buffalos from getting stressed, Reinier tries all kind of things to keep other people out of the milking stable. He hangs towels in the windows which function as curtains, so that the buffalos do not break down when Reinier’s mum accidentally walks by. Reinier cuddles his buffalo calves, so that they get used to Reinier touching their udders. As well, Reinier tells all trainees they cannot participate in the milking process. Reinier’s milk is too precious. Milking the buffalos is something which Reinier has to do alone.

However, after five weeks of fieldwork, I really want to see how Reinier milks his buffalo women. For that reason I ask Reinier if I can “please observe him”, while milking the buffalos. After making some jokes about me sitting on the ground in the milking stable, observing while camouflaged in a

⁴⁷ Observations, 24-02-2016.

⁴⁸ Informal conversation Karin and Johan, 23-02-2016.

“cow suit”, Reinier agrees. I can observe him when he milks his best buffalo: Doerak.

That night, Reinier and I are in the milking stable. I have to hide myself behind the wooden door, when Doerak walks in. After Reinier hangs up the ‘curtains’, closes the fence, puts beet fragment in the feeder, secures Doerak with a bit of string and connects Doerak to the milking machine, I am allowed to show my face. Reinier lights up a cigarette and takes a seat on the iron stairs. Doerak appears to be relaxed, while pleased eating her chow. Normally she gives around seven liters of milk. However, the indicator on the glass barrel has no mercy: today the level of milk is around 5,5 liters. Reinier also sees the level of milk is less than on normal days. He tells me that it is because Doerak has been outside in the pasture all day long and therefore has spent too much energy. I really hope that is true, and that it is not because of me, being in the stable, Reinier misses 1,5 litres of milk.

Milk is very precious for Reinier. On the one hand because buffalos give little milk, and on the other hand because Reinier keeps buffalo calves with the mothers. Of course Reinier can make the decision to take the calves away from the mothers, so he has more milk to sell. However, if Reinier does that, he will lose his animal lover clients, who are very enthusiastic about Reinier and his farm.

Reinier compromises between different structures. He “negotiates” the different options in which he finds himself (see Lyon 2011). This negotiation process of Reinier making choices is “integrative” (see Leeuwis 2000, 947). Reinier adopts a flexible attitude in which he does not hold on to his “own perceptions and positions”, but creates new ways of dealing with the structures he faces (see Leeuwis 2000, 947). That signifies a continuous process of giving and taking. Reinier tries to find a “middle ground” between the different structures of the “demands of markets” (clients) and the agricultural realities he faces on his farm (see Lyon 2011, 143). Reinier negotiates between the wishes of his clients, his own conviction of caring for his animals and his financial state of being. He remains a farmer, needs to get his salary out of his farming. “I can sell ice cream cups for 15 euros each,” Reinier says, “but nobody buys that”.

In this chapter I illustrated how the day-to-day realities may differ from the straightforward rules of organic legislation. In the previous chapter, I demonstrated that

farmers opposition to the neoliberal food system can be ‘classical modern’ or ‘reflexive modern’ in nature. Although the classic modern farmers comply with modern values, they do not want to join organic legislation. Both classical modern farmers as reflexive modern farmers say organic legislation is too rigid for them. Organic legislation is decided on the European level and therefore it does not always fit to the agricultural realities on the farm. Therefore the farmers do not always agree with the organic rules. The farmers try to find a middle-way between their own values, finances and clients wishes. When negotiating dilemmas, situated in a condition of governmentality, farmers find a compromise between the structures of farming life.

4. The farmer

“All milk is white”

It is a rainy afternoon when I am interviewing cow-farmer Gerrit in his kitchen. We talk about the corporate label of his farm and the importance of having a label. “All milk is white,” he says, “from the outside, you cannot see how the milk is produced”⁴⁹.

In the previous chapter we have seen that farmers do not want to join the organic label, because of the univocal rules the organic label entails. These univocal rules are too straight for the nuanced story the farmers want to tell consumers. The farmers negotiate between different choices of being organic and not being organic.

In this chapter, I will show the result of this farmers negotiation of choices and dilemmas, the ‘social realities’. Farmers present themselves to their clients and set up an own agricultural label. This corporate label enables the farmers to tell their story about which choices they make and why. All milk is white, but by giving their milk an own brand, farmers are in the position of telling the story of their milk, about their choices and dilemmas. By telling their stories, the farmers create consumer confidence, which fundamentally differs from the way trust is built in modern society.

In this chapter, I will show three ways (personal) consumer confidence is created, which differs from the “systemic trust” of modern society (see Thorsøe and Kjeldsen 2015, 161). First, I will show that trust is built because clients get insight in the production process of their food. Second, I will demonstrate that because clients get insight in who made their food, trust is created as well. This because the food is traceable and the farmer presents him/herself as vulnerable. Third, I will describe that consumer confidence is constructed because of personal relations from consumers to producers. Consumers realize producers have the same norms and values as they have. Besides, contact of producers and consumers works out face-to-face, but by means of social media as well.

4.1. Telling the story

Buffalo farmer Reinier and I sit in the car, driving from Eindhoven to his farm.

We just went to his icemaker to deliver buffalo milk. Tomorrow the ice cream will be ready. Reinier has his own label for his yoghurt and ice cream. I ask

⁴⁹ Semi-structured interview Gerrit, 26-02-2016.

him why. Reinier explains to me a label for products is needed to be distinctive. Otherwise all milk will land in the same barrel of cow milk. So how can Reinier be distinctive in that way? How can Reinier tell his story of keeping calves with their mothers, when his neighbour farmer who's not farming organically puts his milk in the same barrel?⁵⁰

Reinier's agricultural label gives him the opportunity to be distinctive. To tell consumers that his milk is produced in another way than the regular farming methods. Using an own corporate label to be distinctive, applies to the unique vegetable farmer Giel as well. During my interview with him, I ask him the importance of having an own corporate label as a farmer:

“[t]he trouble with milk is the same as with electricity. All electricity in sockets, whether it is green or grey [power], it is the same. There is no label on it. That is why it is difficult. With milk it is the same. It all goes into the same barrel and all is processed, but there is no name on it. The name is so important. Of who is doing what. The story. ‘Vegetables of Giel & Otto’ (...), [that] is our proper name of our type of rocket⁵¹. With that you make it eye-catching. You have to name your commodities”⁵².

Giel stresses that it is important to be distinctive too. If a farmer wants to tell his story about the choices he makes, a label provides him the opportunity to achieve that. Giel, like Reinier, wants to tell his consumers that his products are produced in another way than the regular farming methods. In this way, Reinier's and Giel's clients get insight in their production processes. By explaining why farmers do the things they do, farmers create understanding of consumers.

To give clients insight in the production process, farmers not only use face-to-face contact. Most farmers make use of social media (see Renting 2003, 400). They post pictures and explanations on their websites, Instagram accounts and Facebook pages. Cow-farmer Gerrit is an example of a farmer who uses social media:

Me: “Do you make use of social media?”

⁵⁰ Informal conversation Reinier, 15-03-2016.

⁵¹ Otto is Giel's father.

⁵² Semi-structured interview Giel, 18-03-2 A016.

Gerrit: “Yes, especially Facebook. We have a page of our farm and once in a while we put something on it. And we receive response on that”.

Me: “What do you post on Facebook?”

Gerrit: “That can be anything. Once the birth of a calve or a special happening. It is viewed many times and we receive a lot of response”.

(...)

Me: “Do you use Facebook for new clients?”

Gerrit: “Yes and existing [clients]. That they know what is happening here”⁵³.

Gerrit finds it important to explain to his clients the choices he makes. Reinier is another example of a farmer who uses Facebook. Reinier just bought new buffalo bulls. Because these new buffalos come from a regular farm, their fur is very thin⁵⁴. On Facebook Reinier explains why he uses “Cydectin”, a type of medicine:

“[w]ell, the new tough bulls are doing well. Of course it is a big switch from inside to ‘roofless’. The first days they were not grazing at all, they did not understand [it], but this afternoon they all were nibbling on the green blades [of grass]. They get extra feed as well, to be sure they get enough food. And besides that, I treated them with Cydectin. That stuff worms them and works against itch-mites and louses, so that the hairless spots will disappear more quickly. Cydectin is no antibiotic, but just a remedy. I use it for the buffalo women as well, when they get some hairless spots in their fur in winter days as well. And tough buffalos are like hipsters, they should have shaggy hair growth everywhere... :) #cydectin #toworm #toughbuffalos”⁵⁵

Because Reinier explains his clients why he uses Cydectin, he creates trust of his clients. This trust is based on “reflection” (Möllering 2006). Because Reinier communicates openly about his farming decisions of using Cydectin, Reinier creates trust of his clients (see Giddens 1990; Beck et al. 1994 in Thorsøe and Kjeldsen 2015).

Besides farmers being open about the production process, the internet enables clients to ask the farmers questions quickly. Quick questions enable farmers to respond quickly as well. As a consequence, quick responses enable farmers to sustain their image as being

⁵³ Semi-structured interview Gerrit, 26-02-2016.

⁵⁴ In regular farming many buffalos lose their fur. Reinier thinks that is because louses and scab, but high levels of stress can be of influence as well.

⁵⁵ Facebook post of Reinier, 09-04-2016.

trustworthy (Thorsøe and Kjeldsen 2015). An example is the questions on Reinier's Facebook post in which he reports he removed the poisonous plant Ragwort off his land, to prevent his buffalos from getting ill:

Person A: "And that is just growing on your territory? Where the buffalos have to graze".

Reinier: "Yes. But the buffalos do not graze there. That part is now mowed because of making hay. Soon the buffalos will come to graze there again".

Person B: "The photo is a bit vague; you can say it is Tansy (what is actually good for ruminants)... And Ragwort is indeed very dangerous in hay because then it is unrecognizable for the ruminants".

Reinier: "Agreed, but I think it is really Ragwort. I removed it, I would rather be safe than sorry 😊"

Person C: "Do they graze around it by nature? A beautiful plant, beautiful caterpillars and butterflies and pretty poisonous indeed. And stubborn as well, isn't it?"

Person B: "It becomes poisonous indeed when it is amongst hay; then it is not recognizable anymore for ruminants".

Reinier: "Agreed!"

Person D: "I hope you pulled it out by the roots.. otherwise it does not serve a useful purpose. But you know that probably. Anyway, only poisonous when dried (...). While it [Ragwort] is still green, they leave it alone. How well planned is nature, isn't it".

Reinier: "It cracked above the ground I think, so I do not know if I got the roots as well. I do not think so. It does not matter anyway, soon here the land is grazed and then they [the buffalos] leave it behind. Buffalos are not that stupid... 😊"⁵⁶

Besides the fact that Facebook enables Reinier to provide his clients information about the choices he makes, by making use of Facebook, Reinier can answer his clients questions quickly as well (see Renting 2004, 400). In this way, Reinier creates consumer confidence. Facebook enables Reinier to give his clients quick responses, so that he can "sustain his self-presentation" as a trustworthy farmer (Thorsøe and Kjeldsen 2015, 168).

To summarize, having their own agricultural corporate label enables the farmers to tell consumers their story. Why the farmers make the choices they make. Which dilemmas they experience. Giving insight in these dilemmas creates consumer confidence, because they get inside in the production process of how their food is made.

⁵⁶ Responses to Reinier's Facebook post, 15-07-2016.

4.2. Onymous farmers

Besides the fact that the corporate label provides farmers the opportunity to tell consumers about the production process, labelling an agricultural product makes the producer ‘onymous’ (not anonymous). Unlike a quality label, a label is not checked by a particular agency. However, a label has a controlling mechanism in itself as well. When there is something wrong with a particular label, the label risks the fact of damage to its corporate image. On a rainy morning in March while sitting at the kitchen table, pig farmer Joost explains to me how having his own corporate label makes him more vulnerable and responsible for the product he delivers:

Joost: “Last week they picked up 18 pigs, that was for a big batch. (...) The pigs just fitted in the cart. And I called to see if the pigs arrived well, because I found the cart a bit full and I thought ‘I hope all goes well’. You care about it. Because you don’t want something going wrong. When something goes wrong, I am immediately responsible. When the pigs go to the Vion⁵⁷... Over there [at Vion] thousands are slaughtered every week. (...) When there is a wrong one among them, it will be fine in the end”.

Me: “How do you mean ‘a wrong one’? An ill pig?”

Joost: “A pig who is too fat or too thin or not fits in a way, but will be carried off as well. But when a client says [to me]: ‘I received a wrong pig from you’... At Vion, [wrong] pigs are divided [in the big mass] (...). The piglets who are wrong, are sold as *speenbiggen* (teat pigs) and are slaughtered when they are approximately 20 kilos. They are frozen and sold as *speenbig*. But you don’t want to know what is among them, because all piglets who are too weak are slaughtered as well. They are fine, but there is something wrong with them. But that is all eaten [by the people]. The pigs land up in the big mass and never a farmer gets blamed. Or the piglets rejected. But we have to keep up our name. As long as you have your own products, you have to keep up your name”⁵⁸.

Joost’s label makes it possible for him to sell his special pig meat, but makes him vulnerable as well. When Joost delivers strange pig meat to a client, a client knows immediately that the pig is originating from Joost’s farm. Joost’s meat is not anonymous anymore. This vulnerability makes Joost feel a bigger responsibility as well.

⁵⁷ Vion is a big meat producing company who buys regular pigs and cows of Dutch farmers, slaughters them and sells them to the market in the Netherlands and the rest of the world (“Vion Food,” Vion Food, accessed August 4, 2016, <http://www.vionfoodgroup.com/nl/over-vion-food/profiel/>).

⁵⁸ Semi-structured interview Joost, 31-03-2016.

In the same way, pig-farmer Karin experiences feeling a bigger responsibility too. While washing the dishes, Karin tells me she made an agreement with a small slaughterhouse some years ago. This slaughterhouse sells meat to restaurants and bars in Amsterdam and does not ask a quality label of Karin's pigs. The slaughterhouse knows the meat originates from Karin and that fact provides enough trust to sell her meat. Karin says that how shorter the food chain is, the less the risk is on meat which cannot be trusted. In the case of these restaurants and bars in Amsterdam, the food chain is short⁵⁹. A 'short food chain' here does not refer to the physical distance between Karin's farm and her consumers, but that Karin's meat is "embedded with value-laden information" (see Renting 2003, 400). Karin's corporate label tells consumers where the meat is produced. It is the value-laden information that tells the restaurants Karin produced the meat. This information makes Karin's meat traceable and onymous.

The stories of Joost and Karin show that consumer confidence is created because of "reason" (see Möllering 2006, 13). The traceability of the meat that a corporate label offers, makes that trust is created because of the farmers "balancing" between the "risks and costs of trust being broken" (Thorsøe and Kjeldsen 2015, 162). Joost and Karin are aware their trust relation with consumers is brittle (see Thorsøe and Kjeldsen 2015). They feel that they are vulnerable and responsible for their meat. That is why Joost and Karin will think it over many times, if they want to abuse consumers' trust posed in them. The interests of Karin and Joost are too high to mess things up.

As can be expected, the traceability of a corporate label is the most important factor of consumer confidence. Bionext employee Margriet adds the fact that a corporate label only cannot provide the necessary trust for consumers to buy a particular product. To her, a quality label is more trustworthy:

Margriet: "In England the first 'fake farms' are discovered. The Tesco had products in their shelves with 'voila, this is from Pet's farm'. A nice picture with a farmer, but this farm [of Pet] did not exist. It was a bulk product and [they] thought: 'yes, now we can earn more money'. Because it is not protected. [For example] a picture of 'farmer Bert' [on the product], everyone is allowed to name his product like that. So you see, when this [names of farmers on products] becomes interesting in marketing terms, other people will break into that. (...) So if I know farmer Bert, it will be fine, because

⁵⁹ Informal conversation Karin, 15-02-2016.

I know the real farmer Bert is the one standing on the package. But when I am in the supermarket and I see farmer Bert standing [on the package], I will think: ‘is this farmer Bert or Friesland Campina who is trying to sell more [products]? (...)’.

Me: “So these farmers with an own label will always be small and focused on the local market?”

Margriet: “Or they have to sell it very very well”.

Me: “How?”

Margriet tells about a farm in the polder, with a lot of hectares of beetroots. The farmer delivers his beetroots at Albert Heijn, joins view days of Albert Heijn and was also actively standing at the Christmas Market of Albert Heijn.

Margriet: “Then you sell your products on a large scale, but [the farmer] can be visited [as well]. He is standing everywhere, he spends a lot of time on it, so he keeps this trust [which people pose in him]. And then it is possible. But he chooses to go along with Albert Heijn’s marketing too. He has tried to sell his products himself, but he is located in the polder where not so many people live who eat red beets. Where not so many people live anyway. So, that [selling by himself] did not work”⁶⁰.

Margriet points out that an anonymous label of a picture with a farmer is still anonymous. Because a corporate label is not protected, it cannot provide Margriet enough trust so that she will buy the product. Only when Margriet knows the farmer on the label, she has enough trust to buy it.

Briefly, a farmers’ own label is onymous, farmers become vulnerable, traceable and in this way consumer confidence is created. In the next section, I will go more deeply into this process of the establishment of consumer confidence, by looking at the personal relations which are created between producers and consumers.

4.3. Clients should be a farmer’s fans

It is a cold winter morning in February, when I am standing with fruit-farmer Lisa in her farm shop. We just made the farm shop ready and Lisa gives me the last instructions for helping in the shop on this first day of fieldwork on Lisa’s farm. If there is just one client in the shop, Lisa instructs me to make pretend I am busy with a task in the shop. Clients do not have to feel hurried, because of

⁶⁰ Semi-structured interview Margriet, 21-04-2016.

me looking at them if they are ready to order. I have to give them time to watch all the products in the shop at their own pace. It is for this reason that every time when only one client enters the shop, I start walking around in the shop, adjusting all the bottles of apple juice (which are already standing fine) and dusting jars of organic dip (which are already dusted off).

On the stroke of nine o'clock, the first two clients enter the shop. They are two elderly ladies. "Good morning!" they call cheerfully. As one of them walks into the shop, the other grabs a white jar out of her bag. There are 'cat sweets' in it. "Come on!" the second lady calls to the cats, who are spurring to her. Lisa prefers the cats not to be in the shop, but for these old ladies Lisa makes an exception. The ladies are regular customers on Lisa's farm. And as the customer is always right in Lisa's shop, all employees are told to please the clients the best they can. Pleasing them with giving them time while shopping and pleasing them by always being friendly to them.

When the jar of cat sweets is empty and the ladies have collected their shoppings, they stay in the farm shop, talking with Lisa. Like every week, the conversation is about Lisa's former buttermilk which was very tasty. The farmer who made this buttermilk stopped farming some years ago. Every week again the ladies tell Lisa it is a pity that this delicious buttermilk is not produced anymore. And every week again Lisa cannot do anything else than supporting their opinions⁶¹.

On Lisa's farm, "face-to-face interaction" is used to bring the producer (Lisa) and consumers together (see Renting 2003, 399-400). Through this "personal interaction", Lisa creates consumer confidence (see Renting 2003, 399-400). Because clients know Lisa personally, it is expected that they meet Lisa in the near future as well. Therefore, an abuse of trust will result in an injury of Lisa's reputation (see Putnam 2000 in Thorsøe and Kjeldsen 2015).

Vegetable farmer Giel too shares the opinion of having personal relations with his clients: "[t]he regular farming classes is not used to listen to her clients," he says, "They are too much on their lands. That is very romantically indeed, but... Also when [the agricultural products] go to the factory, it is important to listen to who your client is and who is it you are doing it for". Giel stresses the fact of listening to his clients, building a relationship with them.

⁶¹ Observations in field notes, 13-02-2016.

He explains me how he started his farm, not looking too much to municipal permissions, but just starting managing a business:

“[y]ou start with a product or service and you have to create support. This [support] are your clients. Your clients have to be your fans. And these fans create trust”⁶².

The fact that Lisa treats her clients as her ‘fans’, results in trust on her farm. In Lisa’s farming shop, a man tells me he prefers supporting farmers directly rather than paying farmers through supermarkets. Another woman shares his opinion. She blurts out that farmers are paid too little nowadays. Supermarkets gain too much money from farmers. According to her, farmers are squeezed dry⁶³. If Lisa’s clients did not trust her farm, these clients would not want to support her either.

The consumer confidence which is created by Lisa and Giel, is trust based on “routine” (see Möllering 2006, 51). Trust based on routine means that although there is no “good argument” for clients to trust their farms, clients trust Lisa and Giel’s way of farming (see Misztal 1996 in Thorsøe and Kjeldsen 2015, 162). For consumers, the farmer is “personified” (Thorsøe and Kjeldsen 2015, 167). Lisa and Giel become “human beings” instead of just “suppliers” (see Thorsøe and Kjeldsen 2015, 167). Lisa, Giel and their clients have “a common normative basis” (Thorsøe and Kjeldsen 2015, 167; Renting 2003). Because clients know Lisa and Giel, know about their “rules”, “roles” and “norms”, their clients trust them (see Thorsøe and Kjeldsen 2015, 162).

Being focussed on his clients, Giel calls having a ‘vertical focus’:

“[t]hey [regular farmers] look at one another too much. I always say: ‘you do not have to look horizontal, but you have to look vertical’. ‘Vertical’ means that your client is at the top and your supplier is at the bottom. I always look at the suppliers of my seed, my plants, they have to be the best as well. Or the most unusual. And the client has to be very best as well. You have to work together”⁶⁴.

⁶² Semi-structured interview Giel, 18-03-2016.

⁶³ Informal conversations with clients, 12-03-2016.

⁶⁴ Semi-structured interview Giel, 18-03-2016.

Giel stresses the importance of focussing on his clients, instead of co-farmers. According to Giel, regular farmers look at each other too much⁶⁵. Pig-farmer Karin and buffalo farmer Reinier share the same opinion as Giel. Previously they were in close touch with co-farmers, but nowadays they spend less time on co-farmers. Karin says she has no time anymore to inform co-farmers about her way of farming. She wants to put all her time in consumers, her clients. Moreover, sharing her knowledge with co-farmers means sharing knowledge with competitors as well⁶⁶.

To conclude, it is important for consumers to know the producer, so a consumer can trust him/her. Consumer confidence is created by personal interaction with the producer, instead of the ‘systemic’ way of trust building in modern society (see Giddens 1990). Farmers say quality labels are ‘passed’. An example is Karin, who is convinced that more and more products are bought on the basis of (personal) “trust”⁶⁷. Farmers try to find an alternative for the food system which is based on “systemic trust” (see Thorsøe and Kjeldsen 2015, 161). Instead of making use of “access points” as in organic auditing schemes who work as intermediary actors in the process of trust building, farmers try to build trust from producer to consumer (see Thorsøe and Kjeldsen 2015, 161). Where auditing schemes are anonymous, they try to build a personal relationship with their clients (see Thorsøe and Kjeldsen 2015, 161). It is this personal trusting relationship, which differs from building trust in modern society. Cow-farmer Gerrit is another example of a farmer who created consciously personal trust of consumers:

Gerrit: “When you produce behind a thick wall, you will always have a barrier. Then you can say you treat your cows in a respectful way, but people cannot see it. Seeing is experiencing, isn’t it? Then they see it and they will understand it. But when a farmer is behind a thick wall, consumers cannot see anymore what happens [at the farm]. Well, in situations like that I am suspicious as well. And I think everyone feels like that. That is what I expect”.

Me: “Why do you do it in this way, that people can control you?”

⁶⁵ The fact that all the farmers to whom I spoke were very much focussed on their clients, did not mean necessarily that all the farmers in my research were not interested in co-farmers. Half of the farmers to whom I spoke told me they were not interested in co-farmers. They did their own thing and saw co-farmers as their competitors. The other half of the farmers were focussed on their clients as well, but were also interested in co-farmers. They shared knowledge with co-farmers in ‘study groups’ or went to lectures about farming.

⁶⁶ Informal conversation Karin, 15-02-2016.

⁶⁷ Informal conversation Karin, 15-02-2016.

Gerrit: “Because we want to be open. We want to show what we do on the farm. Sometimes they say appropriately that it is ‘a license to produce’ and in fact it is like that. The agricultural sector has to explain a lot. When people know what takes place in the sector, you create support”⁶⁸.

The Dutch farmers try to survive. Finding a middle way between their motivation for farming in a different way and the practical realities on the farm, they find a solution to their daily struggles. They want to refuse the industrial modern way of farming, but do not have anti-modern grounds. However, the outcome of the farmers’ behaviour is very different than modern thinking. Although the farmers are not mere anti-modern farmers, organic legislation makes them finding an alternative to modern society and modern trust building processes in particular. The farmers serve and listen to their clients, and by this create a ‘license to produce’. It is this license that makes their farms long-lasting farms for future generations.

⁶⁸ Semi-structured interview Gerrit, 26-02-2016.

5. Conclusion: Finding an alternative for the organic quality label

In this final chapter, the conclusions that can be drawn from this research are treated. In this thesis, I contributed to a better understanding of farmers' practices. Agriculture influences whole society (Duram 2000). I studied farmers who search for an alternative to the organic quality label. By explaining their difficulties, the farmers created consumers confidence.

In this research, I only studied the farmers. In order to get a better understanding of the working of trust building between producers and consumers, more research needs to be done in which both producers and consumers are studied. This to get a better understanding of how the process of trust building exactly works.

As well, I only studied farmers who refused organic legislation policies. To get an fully understanding of the pros and cons of organic farming, more research has to be done to organic farmers as well. Besides, the fact that I did not study organic certified farmers, made that I could not study in great detail the way organic farming creates (systemic) consumers trust. In order to give a better comparison between systemic and personal trust relations, more research has to be done to the way the organic certified farmers create consumers trust.

In this chapter I will give an answer to the central research question of this research: "how do Dutch farmers understand, experience and negotiate the demands of (organic) certification systems and the neo-liberal food system in relation to local agricultural, economic and social realities?". First I will give a short summary of the arguments being made in the three main chapters. Hereafter, I will answer the central research question by tying the arguments into the main argument of this thesis, that organic legislation makes farmers searching for an alternative on the systemic way of trust building of modern society.

In chapter two, the context of Dutch farming was provided. I sketched the economic realities which Dutch farmers have to deal with.

First, I illustrated the non-organic neoliberal food system of modern society. I described the pig farm of Gijs, which is an example of intensive agriculture and Karin's farm which is the opposite (see Bager and Proost 1997). In contrast to Gijs, pig-farmer Karin did not want to run a farm like a 'factory'. I gave the example of artificial insemination of pigs. Intensive agriculture arose with the "industrialization of agriculture" at the end of the

nineteenth century and the emerging of the “neoliberal food regime” in 1989 (Wetenschappelijke Raad voor het Regeringsbeleid 2014, 24; Fitting 2014, 179).

Hereafter, I showed that organic legislation can be seen as an example of modernity. Quality labels offer “clearness” and “accountability” (Shore and Wright 2004, 100). With auditing processes, society strives for “scientific validated knowledge” and is therefore connected to modern thinking (Lyon 2011, 244; Argyrou 2005). I quoted Bionext employee Margriet and Milieucentraal employee Erna, who have great confidence in the organic quality label, because of its objective character.

After this I addressed farmers motivations for not farming according to the “productivist paradigm” of intensive agriculture, which is concentrated on efficiency and producing according to the lowest cost price possible (see Bager and Proost 1997, 83). I described the “reflexive modern” motives of Karin and Giel (see Kaltoft 2001, 153). Karin and Giel were not happy (anymore) when farming in the non-organic way. They had “different values” than non-organic farmers and “reflected” on these values, which resulted in changing their “choice of lifestyle” (see Kaltoft 2001, 153). Karin wanted to pay more attention to animal well-being and Giel described his aversion against the mono-culture of vegetables. Next, I described the motivations of cow-farmers Gerrit and Ivo, who have “classical modern” motives of changing their way of farming (see Kaltoft 2001, 151-152). Gerrit and Ivo explained that they changed their way of farming, because they believed it would be more efficient. Gerrit and Ivo saw their way of farming as a “technical solution” to environmental problems agriculture faces nowadays, like Ivo’s ‘dung fermenting machine’ (see Kaltoft 2001, 152). Thus, the farmers who refused organic legislation policies were not all anti-modern farmers. They were not all against modern-thinking in itself.

In chapter 3, I described the actual reasons for both classical modern farmers as reflexive modern farmers to oppose organic legislation. What turned out is that the fixed nature of organic rules did not always match with the agricultural realities farmers experience on their farms.

Cow-farmer Ivo proclaimed that consumers do not know exactly where a particular quality label stands for. Ivo illustrated his statement with the case of Weidemelk, a quality label which makes consumers think it is Dutch milk, but in fact the milk can come from anywhere. Also pig-farmer Karin pleaded against joining the organic quality label, with her example about allowing piglets to go outside on their day of birth. Wiebe (who works at the Ministry of Economic Affairs) and Pieter (who works at the LTO) explained that because

organic legislation is a compromise of the interests of different European member states, legislation cannot possibly include the agricultural realities of individual farmers.

Hereafter, I described three situations in which farmers' choices differed from organic legislation or clients' wishes. First, I sketched farmers' choices for importing non-organic animal feed. I quoted mixed-farmer Paula, as mixed-farmer Bas and cow-farmer Ivo (who told about his friend Douwe), who explained why they thought it was better to get animal feed from a neighbouring farmer instead of organic certified feed originating from South-America. I explained that the organic quality label wants to ensure that animal feed is not GMO and that results in the fact that pig-farmer Karin does not want to feed her pigs soya, although pigs like soya very much. Farmers like Paula, Bas, Douwe and Karin, are continuously finding a middle-ground between economic structures (production costs), social structures (clients' wishes), ecological structures (influences on the environment) and political structures (governmental or organic policies) (see Duram 2000). Second, I described farmers' choice for using antibiotics. I described Karin's dilemmas of using antibiotics when curing her ill pigs, although her clients do not want antibiotics in their meat. Karin used her agency and found a solution (see Lutrell 2009, 14; Ramsbothan 2001, 306). Within the social structures of her clients' wishes and her values of taking care of her pigs the best she can, Karin was placed in a situation of "governmentality" in which she found a middle-ground between the structures in which she was located (see Foucault in Lyon 2011, 223). Karin decided to cure the ill pigs and sell them as non-organic (cheap) meat. Third, I illustrated buffalo-farmer Reinier's case of letting calves with the mother buffalos. I described that Reinier's "negotiating" process is "integrative", because Reinier is adopting a flexible attitude while solving his dilemma (see Lyon 2011; Leeuwis 2000, 947). Reinier does not stick to his "own perceptions and positions" (see Leeuwis 2000, 947). Keeping the calves away from their mothers, was inevitable for Reinier.

In chapter 4 it was shown that the farmers invented an own corporate label for their farms. This label facilitated the farmers to tell their dilemmas and negotiations to consumers about why they made the choices they made. Because farmers tell their stories, consumer confidence is created in three different ways. Trust is created because of reflection, reason and routine (Möllering 2006).

First, I showed that trust is built because farmers give insight in the production process of their agricultural products, by making use of social media (see Renting 2003, 400). This was illustrated by cow-farmer Gerrit's story about willing to explain his agricultural choices

to his clients. I described how buffalo-farmer Reinier uses Facebook to answer the questions of his customers about using Cydectin and the appearance of Ragwort on his farming land. Consumer confidence is created, because farmers like Gerrit and Reinier are “reflective” and communicate in an open way to consumers (see Möllering 2006). As well, by making use of the internet, Gerrit’s and Reinier’s customers were able to get responses to their answers in a quick way, which enabled the farmers to sustain their image as trustworthy (see Thorsøe and Kjeldsen 2015).

Second, I argued that because farmers made their farms ‘traceable’, consumer confidence was built. I showed the cases of pig-farmers Joost and Karin, which explained how the traceability of their farms made them vulnerable. Joost’s and Karin’s pig meat contains “value-laden information” about who produced the meat (see Renting 2003, 400). However, the vulnerability of Joost and Karin creates trust. Farmers like them are aware they are vulnerable and therefore “balance” between “the risks and costs of trust being broken” (see Thorsøe and Kjeldsen 2015, 162). In other words, trust is built because of “reason” (Möllering 2006, 13). Bionext employee Margriet added that a corporate agricultural label only cannot provide the trust necessary for consumers to buy a particular product. When a farmer is still anonymous, trust because of reason is not created.

Third, I illustrated that the farmers create consumer confidence by constructing personal relationships with their clients. I described fruit-farmer Lisa’s farm shop with the two elderly ‘cat ladies’. In Lisa’s shop consumers and producers are coming together. I quoted vegetable-farmer Giel who has personal relationships with his clients as well and views his clients as his ‘fans’. Because of this “personal interaction”, consumer confidence is built (see Renting 2003, 399-400). This trust is a trust based on “routine” (see Möllering 2006, 51). Although there is no “good argument” for customers to trust farmers like Lisa and Giel, by having personal relations with Lisa and Giel, by seeing Lisa and Giel have the same norms and values and because Giel and Lisa are “personified”, customers place trust in Lisa and Giel (see Misztal 1996 in Thorsøe and Kjeldsen 2015, 162; Thorsøe and Kjeldsen 2015, 162; Thorsøe and Kjeldsen 2015, 167).

I concluded that the way the farmers created ‘personal trust’, differs from the ‘systemic trust’ of modern society. The way the farmers created consumer confidence is very different from the “systemic trust” of organic auditing schemes in which trust is created by making use of “access points” (see Thorsøe and Kjeldsen 2015, 161).

In this thesis I aimed to give an analysis of the Dutch farmer in the year 2016. Dutch farmers search for an alternative between the industrial and modern character of non-organic agriculture and the fixed rules of organic legislation. While negotiating economic structures, social structures, ecological structures and political structures, farmers search for an imaginary ‘license to produce’, so that their farms will survive and their children can take over their farms in the future.

What happens is that the farmers get a different mindset by seeing consumers as the party which provides them their imaginary licenses. However, by being submissive to consumers, by answering consumers questions, farmers create consumer confidence. What turns out is that by focussing on clients, farmers create in fact a ‘license to produce’ which makes their farms ‘made to last’ to keep on farming at the moment and in the future. This new license is based on a personal way of trust and fundamentally differs from the systemic way of trust of auditing schemes in modern society. The farmers want to refuse the industrial modern way of farming and organic legislation - which is based on modern thinking as well, but do not have anti-modern grounds. However, the outcome of the farmers’ behaviour in fact is very different than modern thinking. Although the farmers are not mere anti-modern farmers, organic legislation makes them finding an alternative to modern society and modern trust building processes in particular: a personal way of trust building, an own agricultural corporate label.

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Appendix I: The organic label



Figure 1: Logo of the European organic quality label.

Appendix II: Research summary in Dutch – “Een licentie om te boeren”

Dit is een samenvatting van de masterscriptie “A license to produce”, uitgevoerd voor de master “Cultural Anthropology: Sustainable Citizenship” aan de Universiteit Utrecht. In onderstaande samenvatting wordt een korte schets gegeven van de belangrijkste bevindingen uit het onderzoek. De namen van informanten in deze samenvatting zijn geanonimiseerd (net als in de masterscriptie zelf).

Aanleiding voor het onderzoek is het groeiende gevoel van voedselonzeekerheid onder consumenten. Nederlandse consumenten komen steeds verder van de voedselproductie af te staan en weten niet meer precies wat ze binnen krijgen bij het consumeren van voedsel. Onder consumenten bestaat een groeiende bezorgdheid over wat er zich in de landbouw afspeelt.

Ook Nederlandse boeren merken dat consumenten wantrouwer worden tegenover voedsel. In de samenleving groeit de weerstand tegen de gangbare intensieve landbouw. Boeren zien dat de afstand tussen hen en consumenten steeds groter wordt. Om ook in de toekomst te kunnen blijven “boeren”, zoekt een groeiende groep boeren naar alternatieven om tegemoet te komen aan dit groeiende gevoel van voedselonzeekerheid. Boeren zijn zich ervan bewust dat hun toekomst op het spel staat.

Biologische landbouw kan een manier zijn voor de boeren om consumentenvertrouwen terug te krijgen. Echter, biologisch boeren is niet altijd even gemakkelijk. Biologische regelgeving is streng, inspectiekosten zijn hoog en boeren zijn bovenal kritisch op de vaak rechtlijnige regelgeving. Dit omdat biologische regelgeving Europees bepaald is en ook weer een compromis is van de verschillende belangen van lidstaten.

Het neoliberale voedselsysteem

Nederland wordt gekenmerkt door een vrij intensieve gangbare landbouw. De intensieve landbouw is onder andere tot stand gekomen door een “industrialisering van de landbouw” aan het einde van de negentiende eeuw. Door de komst van mechanisatie, pesticiden en kunstmest, kwam er meer focus op de grootschalige manier van boeren, gericht op zoveel mogelijk productie en efficiëntie.

Toch is er een groeiende groep boeren die niet (meer) volgens dit “productie paradigma” wil produceren. Deze boeren voelen zich niet (meer) thuis in het credo dat gericht is op hoge productie en het produceren voor een zo laag mogelijke kostprijs. Er zijn twee

verschillende motieven te noemen van boeren om te stoppen met de gangbare landbouw: “klassiek moderne motieven” en “reflexief moderne motieven”.

Boeren met “klassiek moderne” motieven stoppen met gangbaar boeren, omdat ze geloven dat een vorm van biologische landbouw efficiënter is. Zij zien biologische landbouw als een “technische oplossing” voor het groeiende probleem dat de landbouw vormt voor het milieu.

Boeren met “reflexief moderne” motieven, stoppen met gangbaar boeren omdat zij zich niet (meer) gelukkig voelen in de gangbare manier van boeren. Deze boeren hebben “andere waarden” dan gangbare boeren en “reflecteren” op deze waarden, wat resulteert in het veranderen van hun “keuze van levenswijze”. Zij willen meer aandacht besteden aan dierenwelzijn of zijn het bijvoorbeeld niet eens met het idee dat zij één soort groente moeten telen. Zij zetten zich juist af tegen de efficiëntie in de landbouw.

Het biologische keurmerk als voorbeeld van de moderne samenleving

Het keurmerk is gebaseerd op “objectiviteit”. Producten die aangesloten zijn bij een keurmerk worden op een onafhankelijke manier gecontroleerd, gebaseerd op van te voren opgestelde objectieve criteria. Het streven naar objectiviteit is een voorbeeld van de hedendaagse moderne manier van denken, in de hedendaagse moderne maatschappij⁶⁹. De biologische wetgeving kan op deze manier dan ook gezien worden als een voorbeeld van de hedendaagse moderne manier van denken.

Hoewel biologische certificering dus gezien kan worden als een voorbeeld van de hedendaagse moderne samenleving, geven zowel de klassiek moderne boeren – die een voorbeeld zijn van moderne denkers, als de reflexief moderne boeren in dit onderzoek aan dat ze zich niet wilden aansluiten bij het biologische keurmerk. Met andere woorden, dat boeren zich niet willen aansluiten bij biologische landbouw gebeurt niet simpelweg omdat boeren zich afzetten tegen de hedendaagse moderne maatschappij. Wat is de reden dan wel?

Dilemma’s op het boeren bedrijf

Koerienboer Ivo, die een voorbeeld is van een klassiek moderne boer, zegt dat consumenten niet altijd weten waar een keurmerk voor staat. Varkensboerin Karin, een voorbeeld van een reflexief moderne boerin, is van mening dat de biologische regels op sommige punten

⁶⁹ Het moderne tijdperk is een periode in de geschiedenis, die begon rond de 16^e eeuw. In deze periode werd wetenschap, ratio en objectiviteit belangrijk.

achterhaald zijn. De strakke regels van biologisch boeren passen met andere woorden niet altijd bij de agrarische realiteit op het boeren bedrijf.

De masterscriptie beschrijft drie situaties waarin de keuzes van boeren niet helemaal overeenkomen met biologische regels of wensen van klanten. Ten eerste is er de casus van veevoer. De boeren uit het onderzoek bevinden zich in het dilemma of ze lokaal geproduceerd voer kopen, wat niet biologisch is, of biologisch gecertificeerd voer wat van ver weg moet komen. Ten tweede de casus van antibiotica. De boeren zoeken een middenweg tussen het niet gebruiken van antibiotica (omdat klanten dat liever niet willen), maar tegelijkertijd wel denken aan dierenwelzijn en dieren niet onnodig laten lijden. Ten derde de casus van “kalfjes bij de koe”. De boeren moeten kiezen tussen het houden van kalfjes bij de koe, wat een lagere melkproductie, maar wel tevreden klanten betekent. Of boeren kiezen ervoor om hun kalfjes niet bij de koe te laten, waardoor boeren weer sommige klanten mislopen.

De boeren uit het onderzoek zoeken voortdurend een middenweg tussen de economische structuren (productiekosten), sociale structuren (klanttevredenheid), ecologische structuren (invloed op het milieu) en politieke structuren (nationale en biologische regelgeving). De boeren stellen zich flexibel op in deze dilemma's, waarbij ze vaak kiezen voor een tussenweg van verschillende opties.

Het creëren van consumentenvertrouwen

Bijna alle boeren uit het onderzoek richtten een eigen merk op. Dit maakt het mogelijk om hun eigen verhaal te vertellen aan de consument. Waarom de boeren de keuzes maken die zij maken, welke worstelingen en dilemma's zij ervaren. Door het vertellen van hun verhaal, creëren ze consumentenvertrouwen op basis van drie verschillende manieren: “reflectie”, “rede” en “routine”.

Op de eerste plaats geven de boeren consumenten inzicht in het productieproces. Boeren leggen consumenten uit hoe het voedsel wordt gemaakt. Hier wordt er consumentenvertrouwen gecreëerd op basis van “reflectie”. Via sociale media leggen boeren uit waarom ze een bepaald medicijn gebruiken of welke andere agrarische keuzes ze maken. Consumentenvertrouwen wordt gecreëerd, doordat boeren op een open manier communiceren naar consumenten. Tevens zorgt het gebruik van internet ervoor, dat boeren snel vragen van klanten kunnen beantwoorden. Door snel te reageren op vragen van klanten, creëren de boeren een vertrouwensrelatie met hun klanten.

Op de tweede plaats zorgen boeren ervoor dat hun boerderijen “traceerbaar” zijn. Consumentenvertrouwen wordt gecreëerd op basis van “rede”. Boeren geven hun agrarische

producten een merk, wat maakt dat consumenten weten wie het geproduceerd heeft. Deze informatie voor de consument maakt de boer kwetsbaar, maar creëert daardoor ook consumentenvertrouwen. Doordat boeren traceerbaar zijn, zijn zij er zich extra van bewust dat zij een goed product moeten leveren.

Op de derde plaats onderhouden boeren persoonlijke relaties met klanten. Door persoonlijke interactie, wordt consumentenvertrouwen gecreëerd. Dit is vertrouwen op basis van “routine”. Doordat klanten de boer kennen, doordat zij zien dat de boer dezelfde normen en waarden heeft als hij, wordt consumentenvertrouwen gecreëerd.

Een licentie om te boeren

De boeren uit dit onderzoek bevinden zich in een voortdurende onderhandeling van economische, sociale, ecologische en politieke structuren. Om toch te kunnen blijven produceren in de toekomst, blijkt uit het onderzoek dat boeren een andere manier van denken ontwikkelen. Deze manier van denken houdt in dat de boeren zich focussen op de consument. Door te luisteren naar de consument, door consumentenvragen te beantwoorden, door consumenten aandacht te geven, creëren de boeren consumentenvertrouwen. Dit consumentenvertrouwen is gebaseerd op een persoonlijke manier van vertrouwen. Deze persoonlijke manier verschilt van de systematische manier van vertrouwen dat zo kenmerkend is voor (biologische) certificering in de moderne tijd waarin wij nu leven. Met deze persoonlijke manier van het creëren van vertrouwen, creëren boeren hun licentie om te blijven boeren in de toekomst.

Appendix III: Interview questions

Topic list for the farmers

	Topics
1. Which actors are operating in the field of organic certification policies, demands and legislation?	
1.a. Which are characteristics of farms involved in the field of organic and sustainable farming?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Type of farm - History of farm - Motivation for farming - Vision on farming - Employees on farm - Clients of farm
1.b. Which initiatives are operating in the field of sustainable farming?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Movement of fellow-farmers in sustainable farming - Organizations concerning organic farming - Organization of fellow-farmers in sustainable farming - Ways of selling products in sustainable farming - Other initiatives concerning sustainable farming - Experiences with these initiatives - Opinion about these initiatives
1.c. Which policies are influential in the field of organic and sustainable farming?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - (Local and national) laws which are influential in organic and sustainable farming - Other (local and national) policies concerning organic and sustainable farming - (Local and national) political actors who influence organic and sustainable farming
1.d. Which farmers are operating in the field of organic and sustainable farming?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Fellow-farmers in organic farming - Fellow-farmers in sustainable farming - Activities with these fellow-farmers - Experiences with these fellow-farmers - Opinion about these fellow-farmers
2. Why do Dutch farmers contest organic certification policies?	
2.a. Which experiences do Dutch farmers have with non-organic regular farming and accompanying certification?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Experiences with regular farming - Experiences with fellow-farmers in regular farming - Vision on regular farming - Experiences with certification in regular farming - Vision on certification in regular farming
2.b. Which background do Dutch farmers have in farming?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Experience in farming - Previous education (in farming)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Youth of farmer
2.c. What experiences do Dutch farmers have with organic certification policies?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Own experiences with organic certification policies - Experiences with SKAL - Stories of fellow-farmers about organic certification policies - Opinion about these organic certification policies - Reasons to contest organic certification policies
2.d. Which vision do Dutch farmers have on organic certification policies?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Vision on organic farming - Amount of rules in organic farming - Acceptability of sustainable farming - Whether sustainable farming works in saving the environment - Improving animal welfare in sustainable farming - Vision on sustainable farming - Future of sustainable farming
3. How do Dutch Farmers contest these organic certification policies?	
3.a. Which choices do Dutch farmers make when contesting organic certification policies?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Production costs of organic/sustainable farming - Marketing plans of farm - Family - Human health issues
3.b. Which obstacles do Dutch farmers experience when contesting organic certification policies?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Practices: daily decisions on sustainable farming - Daily decisions which indicate sustainable farming - Daily practices in which dilemmas on sustainable farming are involved
4. What are the outcomes of contesting these organic certification policies?	
4.a. How do farmers make their voices heard in contesting these organic certification policies?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Membership of organization/association of sustainable farming - Help of Bionext - Spreading the message of sustainable farming - Lectures about sustainable farming
4.b. Which alternative certification systems do farmers invent when contesting organic certification policies?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Own invented label/certification system - Own (web)shop - Using of social media - Using of website
4.c. How do these alternative certification systems work?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Working of clients controlling the farm products - Feedback of clients - Social control of clients - Clients trusting the farm - Reasons to invent new certification systems

	(make it scientifically validated?)
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Semi-structured interview questions with farmers

	Topics
1. Which actors are operating in the field of organic certification policies, demands and legislation?	
1.a. Which are characteristics of farms involved in the field of organic and sustainable farming?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What is your name? - What is your age? - What is your name? - What is your age? - Can you tell me more about your farm? - What type of farm do you have? - Did the farm always belonged to your family? Yes: what type of farm was it in the past? No: who owned the farm in the past? What type of farm was it? - Why did you choose to farming? - What is your vision on farming? - Do you have employees? Yes: why? No: why not? - Who are your clients? - Why do your clients come to your farm?
1.b. Which initiatives are operating in the field of sustainable farming?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Are you part of a movement with other farmers in sustainable farming? Yes: can you tell me more about that? No: why not? - With which organizations of organic farming do you have to do? - With which organizations of sustainable farming do you have to do? - How do you try to sell your products in sustainable farming? - Do you know more initiatives of sustainable farming? - What are your experiences with these initiatives? - What do you think of these initiatives?
1.c. Which policies are influential in the field of organic and sustainable farming?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - With which (local and national) laws did you have to do with organic farming? - With which (local and national) laws do you have to do in sustainable farming? - Which (local and national) political actors have influence on organic and sustainable farming (Ministries, political parties)?

<p>1.d. Which farmers are operating in the field of organic and sustainable farming?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Do you know fellow-farmers in organic farming? Yes: whom? Which activities do you do together? Why did they choose to do organic farming? No: why not? - Do you know fellow-farmers in sustainable farming? Yes: whom? Which activities do you do together? Why did they choose to do sustainable farming? No: why not?
<p>2. Why do Dutch farmers contest organic certification policies?</p>	
<p>2.a. Which experiences do Dutch farmers have with non-organic regular farming and accompanying certification?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Have you been a regular farmer before? Yes: how did you experience regular farming? No: why not? - Do you know fellow-farmers in regular farming? Yes: whom? Which activities do you do together? Why did they choose to do regular farming? No: why not? - What do you think of regular farming? - How do you think regular farming can be improved? - What do you think of certification systems in regular farming? - How do you think these certification systems can be improved?
<p>2.b. Which background do Dutch farmers have in farming?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How long do you have been a farmer? - Where did you grow up? - Where did you learn farming? - Where have you been educated? - Did you have education in farming?
<p>2.c. What experiences do Dutch farmers have with organic certification policies?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What are your experiences with organic certification policies? - What are your experiences with SKAL? - What do your fellow-farmers think about organic certification policies? - What is your opinion about these organic certification policies? - Why did you choose to do sustainable farming?
<p>2.d. Which vision do Dutch farmers have on organic certification policies?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What is your vision on organic farming? - What do you think of the amount of rules in organic farming? - Is sustainable farming “widely accepted” in the

	<p>Netherlands? Yes: why do you think that? No: why not?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What is the added value of sustainable farming? - Does sustainable farming works saving the environment? Yes: how? No: why not? - Does sustainable farming improve animal welfare? Yes: how? No: why not? - What do you think is the future of organic and sustainable farming? - How does your perfect future of organic and sustainable farming look like?
3. How do Dutch Farmers contest these organic certification policies?	
3.a. Which choices do Dutch farmers make when contesting organic certification policies?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What are the production costs when farming organic? - What are the production costs when farming sustainable? - What is the marketing plan of your farm? - Is it financially beneficial to do sustainable farming? - Is your family of influence on your decisions when farming? Yes: how? No: why not? - Are human health issues of influence on your decisions when farming? Yes: why? No: why not?
3.b. Which obstacles do Dutch farmers experience when contesting organic certification policies?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Do you experience problems when doing sustainable farming? Yes: how? No: why not?
4. What are the outcomes of contesting these organic certification policies?	
4.a. How do farmers make their voices heard in contesting these organic certification policies?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Are you member of an organization/association of sustainable farming? Yes: why? What activities do you do with this organization? No: why not? - Do you get help of Bionext in farming? Yes: how? No: why not? - Do you get help of another organization in farming? Yes: how? No: why not? - How do you try to spread the message of sustainable farming? - Do you participate in activities about the vision of organic farming? Yes: which activities? What do you do? No: why not? - Do you go to lectures on sustainable farming? - Do you participate in other activities of

	sustainable farming, outside your farm?
4.b. Which alternative certification systems do farmers invent when contesting organic certification policies?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Can you tell me more about your own label/certification system? - Can you tell me more about your (web)shop? - Do you make use of social media when selling your products? Yes: how? No: why not? - Do you make use of a website when selling your products? Yes: how? No: why not?
4.c. How do these alternative certification systems work?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Do you receive feedback of clients? Yes: what kind of feedback is that? What do they say? No: why not? - Why do clients buy your products instead of organic labelled products? - Do clients trust the products of your farm? - How can clients control your decisions of farming? - Is there any social control of clients in your farm? - Why did you choose to invent a new label/certification system? - Do you think you need that label/certification system? Yes: why? No: why not?

Semi-structured interview questions with “experts”

	Interview questions
1. Which actors are operating in the field of organic certification policies, demands and legislation?	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What is your name? - What is your age? - What is your function in this organization?
1.b. Which initiatives are operating in the field of sustainable farming?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Which organizations do exist concerning organic farming? - Which organizations do exist concerning sustainable farming? - What is your vision on regular farming? - What is your vision on organic farming? - What’s your opinion about sustainable farming? - Is there a movement of fellow-farmers in sustainable farming? Yes: which one? No: why not?
1.c. Which policies are influential in the field of organic and sustainable farming?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Which (local and national) laws are influential in organic and sustainable farming? - Which (local and national) political parties influence organic and sustainable farming?
1.a. Which are characteristics of farms involved in the field of organic and sustainable farming?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What do you think is the vision of farmers who go on farming in a sustainable way?
2. Why do Dutch farmers contest organic certification policies?	
2.a. Which experiences do Dutch farmers have with non-organic regular farming and accompanying certification?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What are the experiences of Dutch farmers in regular farming?
2.c. What experiences do Dutch farmers have with organic certification policies?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What do organic farmers think of organic certification policies? - What do you think of organic certification policies? - Why do you think farmers contest organic certification policies?
2.d. Which vision do Dutch farmers have on organic certification policies?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What do you think of the amount of rules in organic farming? - Is sustainable farming “widely accepted” in the Netherlands? Yes: why? No: why not? - Does organic farming contribute to saving the environment? Yes: how? No: why not? - Does organic farming improve animal welfare? Yes: how? No: why not? - What do you think is the future of Dutch farming? - What do you think is the future of organic and sustainable farming?

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