Ethical Values of Organic Food

Susanne Padel
Conceptual framework

- Review concerns/values
  - Ethical traditions
  - Certification

- Analysis communication strategies of >100 companies in five European countries
Values in IFOAM principles

**HEALTH**
- System health
- Soil & plant health
- Animal health
- Integrity
- Resilience
- Food quality
- Non-polluting

**EOCLOGY**
- Ecological systems
- Closing cycles
- Site specific
- Reduced input use
- Self regulation
- Bio- diversity
- Environment protection

**FAIRNESS**
- Equity & Respect
- Justice
- Food sovereignty
- Animal welfare
- Stewardship
- Transparency
- TRANSPARENCY

**CARE**
- Precaution & prevention
- Responsibility
- Excluding GMO
- Future generations
- Tacit knowledge
- NATURALNESS
- SUSTAINABILITY
- SYSTEM THINKING
Stakeholders of organic sector

Farmer/grower → Processors /Trader → Consumer

Regulators
Control bodies
Researchers
Policy makers

CORE Organic
Farmer consumer partnerships
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories and concerns</th>
<th>Coverage by EU regulation 834/2007</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ecological</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sustainable resource use</td>
<td>Limited</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protection of ecosystems/biodiversity</td>
<td>Limited</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Social</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food quality and safety contributing to human health</td>
<td>Largely covered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transparency and trustworthiness</td>
<td>Partly covered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civic responsibility and care</td>
<td>Not covered except in principle of processing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safe and equitable working environment</td>
<td>Not covered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Economic</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fair and equitable financial returns for farmers (and consumers)</td>
<td>Regulation aims for fair competition, but no targets on prices are set</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cultural/Other</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local and regional production</td>
<td>Not covered except compulsory to label of origin of raw materials</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Animal welfare</td>
<td>Covered but no specific targets set</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integrity of supply chains</td>
<td>Limited coverage through control system</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Environmental impact

- Minimise pollution
- Sustainable resource use
- Protection of biodiversity/landscapes

- Mentioned by most stakeholders
- EC 834/2007 set limits for input use
- Few rules about sustainability of resource use or protection of biodiversity

Concern

Organic standards
For example

**Products:** Cereals, milk products, sunflowers,

**Activities:** particularly engaged in nature conservation and realises special projects on their farm as e.g. protection of butterflies, amphibians and frogs.

**Claims:** no slogans

Short texts on packaging, e.g. how to preserve the habitat of the butterfly
Social concerns

- EC Reg does not regulate workplace or skills
- EC national labour regulations apply
- IFOAM and several private standards endorse ILO conventions

Concerns

Organic Standards
For example Placido Rizzotto

*Products:* various

*Activities:* farm Mafia land, offer work to young people, especially disabled and former convicts

*Claims:* Free Earth from Mafia oppression’
Economic impact

- Not addressed directly in any organic standard
- Fair and equitable financial returns for all operators
- Products available and affordable to consumer
  - Mentioned by producers and consumers
  - Fairtrade standards
  - Organic ethical trade pilot schemes

Concern

Organic standards
Uplaender dairy

**Products:** Dairy

**Activities:** A fair price for local farmers, ensuring their existence and future

**Claims:** ’Fair prices for our dairy farmers; 5 cents directly; actively for the domestic organic farmers as fair prices ensure the future.
Impact on animals

- EC 834/2007 has stronger emphasis on principles than before and some rules
- recognised as part of organic

Potential conflicts with other goals
Define animal welfare?
  - Wellbeing in the sense of health and welfare
  - Animals rights

Animal health and welfare is enhanced

Welfare certification protocols
  - e.g. Freedom food
  - Welfare quality project

Concern  Organic standards
For example

**Products:** Meat

**Activities:** Animals are slaughtered on the farm or at the small local abattoir nearby to reduce the transport distance. Slaughter is as quick and painless as possible.

**Claims:** ‘Well Hung Meat company’; Tasty, organic and produced to the highest standards of animal welfare.
Systems and supply chains

- Organic integrity throughout supply chain
- Transparency
- Local/regional supply and markets
- Limited provision in any standard
- New labelling requirements to show country code
- Many initiatives to show provenance
- Difficult to categorise according to impact
- Integrity difficult to audit

Concern

Organic standards
## Different arguments for different product categories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Economy</th>
<th>Ecology/Environment</th>
<th>Social</th>
<th>Culture</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dairy products</td>
<td>Fair price - farmer oriented</td>
<td>Landscape; Resources</td>
<td>Family farms</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vegetables &amp; Fruits</td>
<td></td>
<td>Resources</td>
<td>Social projects</td>
<td>Communicaton &amp; information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meat</td>
<td></td>
<td>Biodiversity; Animal welfare</td>
<td>Care farming</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cereals</td>
<td></td>
<td>Resources; Biodiversity</td>
<td>Social projects</td>
<td>Care farming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Family farms</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Conclusions

- Many companies practise organic agriculture in line with a broad range of values of the core concept of organic
  - Impact on environment/soils, social, economic
  - but also animals and culture
  - provenance, integrity and trust

- Several are not or partly or not covered by organic standards – opportunity for differentiation
Practical steps

- What is the companies philosophy
  - Ethics is not just a marketing tool
  - Consumers can only align their choices if they know

- Where do the practical activities differ from mainstream organic? Can this be verified?

- Who will benefit (other people, animals and environment)? and how?

- Is this important to consumers?
Acknowledgements and further information

- The author(s)/editor(s) gratefully acknowledge the financial support for this report provided by the members of the CORE Organic Funding Body Network [http://www.coreorganic.org/](http://www.coreorganic.org/).

- They were former partners of the FP6 ERA-NET project, CORE Organic (Coordination of European Transnational Research in Organic Food and Farming, EU FP6 Project No. 011716) which was finalised in September 2007.