

**Moral Concerns about Food Products and Production Methods among Consumers of Organic Foods:
A Report of some Preliminary Results from an On-Going Qualitative Study**

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The purpose of my oral presentation to members of the ESA network will be to illustrate the use of visual data in an on-going qualitative analysis of a much wider range of data. These data were collected by means of focus groups undertaken among 3 sub-groups of consumers. Those who buy organic foods at supermarkets are compared to those who buy directly from organic farmers and growers. The latter are divided into two sub-groups depending on whether purchases are made by subscribing to a farmer's box scheme or by shopping at a farmer-run market stall. A comparative analysis of differences these 3 sub-groups is being undertaken with particular regard to their conceptions of organic products, producers and production methods.

This paper briefly presents some background information regarding the study, the research design and that part of the theoretical framework, which is being employed in the analysis of drawings made by participants in the focus groups. The character of the preliminary results on this point will also be sketched. Drawings of organic and conventional farmers and farms were used as one of the ways in which to obtain data regarding consumer conceptions that might otherwise tend to remain implicit. This was undertaken as an untried experiment. More precisely, it is not something I have ever tried to do before. For this reason, I am very interested in the prospect of obtaining feedback from colleagues regarding the use of this technique and their views on the framework within which these data are being analysed.

Some background

This project was originally designed to address gaps that had been identified in a critical review of the available social research concerning consumer motives for buying organic foods (O'Doherty Jensen *et al.*, 2001)¹. It was found that most of the available studies are based on the use of quantitative methods, and have the character of market surveys that are heavily influenced by the premises of marketing theory. The focus is upon measurement of 'buyer motives' ('health', the 'environment' and 'animal welfare' are usually included) and the relationship between these motives and 'willingness to pay' premium prices². In contrast to this approach it was planned, first and foremost, to explore consumers' self-understanding and assessments of organic products using qualitative methods.

Secondly, much of the available research is based on a general premise of marketing theory to the effect that consumers are only interested in product advantages and have little or no interest in the processes of production or distribution that lie behind them. This view remains largely unquestioned in market research, although reference is occasionally made to the fact that consumers appear to know very little about the rules of organic production. This fact, it is thought, supports the claim that the perception of product advantages is the factor underlying preferences for organic foods. In contrast to this approach, it was decided to explore the hypothesis that there is a relationship between consumers' conceptions of organic products on the one hand and their conceptions of the processes and people that lie behind them on the other. While this idea is unexplored in market research, it has also received relatively little attention from sociologists engaged in food research.

The sociological research tradition has tended to focus attention somewhat narrowly upon the

¹ The project is financed by the DARCOFII programme (Project nr. VII.13). It is entitled: *The Role of the Distribution Channel in the Establishment and Maintenance of Consumer Trust in Organic Foods: A Qualitative Sociological Investigation*, and will be completed at the end of 2004. I have since had occasion to be involved in undertaking a more recent review of the consumer literature in this field (Torgusen, Sangstad, O'Doherty Jensen & Kjærnes, 2004), which has further convinced me of the need to develop the conceptual frameworks currently employed in understanding consumer preferences for organic foods.

² It would seem likely that this selection of possible motivating factors partly reflect what are thought to be the selling points of organic products insofar as organic farmers and growers are committed in principle to the production of nutritious foods in an environmentally friendly way and are subjected to rules regarding both environmentally friendly production methods and the welfare of farm animals. In interpreting results based on these measures, it is sometimes pointed out that concern with health is an 'egoistic' motive for purchasing organic foods, while concerns with the environment or animal welfare are described as being 'altruistic'.

household. Much attention has been given to the roles and tasks involved in feeding families and to the symbolic significance of doing so one way rather than another. However, some attention has been given to reciprocal interdependence between activities in the household sector and developments in the spheres of production and distribution. This is the case in relation to such topics as consumer views on food quality and safety, consumer boycotts, the character of consumer trust, the phenomena of 'political' consumption on the one hand and demands for 'convenience' foods on the other. The hypothesis pursued in the present study, however, is to the effect that conceptions of products and of producers are not divorced from each other, was directly inspired by Polanyi's economic theory, as applied in research regarding ethical trade (*cf.* Barham, 1999). This approach suggests that consumers' discernment of the trustworthiness of products is dependent upon their discernment of the trustworthiness of the people and processes that lie behind them, and that these assessments tend to be made in moral terms. The present study aims to explore the extent to which this suggestion is borne out. In doing so, it may also be able to throw some light on the character of 'embedded' trust as compared to 'system trust'. The latter is thought to sustain the modern consumer in the supermarket, for whom the people and processes behind the products remain anonymous or obscure (Kjærnes, 1999).

Thirdly, since sales channels comprise the interface between consumers and producers, this project was designed to compare differences on these points between consumers who purchase organic foods through supermarkets as compared to direct sales channels. Reasons why some consumers should by-pass 'mainstream' sales channels in favour of 'alternative' channels is a neglected topic in research regarding organic foods. It is a particularly interesting one in a Danish context given the fact that Denmark has some of the highest market shares in the world for organic products and an estimated 70% of all sales are made through supermarkets. In countries in which an organic market is less developed, shares remain low and products are distributed directly to consumers or to specialty stores, not through the mainstream distribution channels serving the 'mass-market'. Nevertheless, some Danish consumers of organic foods do purchase their products directly from farmers and growers, and it is reported that the numbers subscribing to farmers' box schemes are growing. We know very little at present about consumer assessments of the supply chains through which food products are obtained. The issue is not examined by market research, which is largely

designed to supply major mainstream distributors with information regarding consumer willingness to pay premium prices and reasons/motives for doing so. Whether consumers think about global versus local distribution or how they assess the character of one kind of sales channel as compared to another are not examined. Social research in the field of distribution on the other hand abounds with conflicting hypotheses regarding the assumed character of those consumers whose shopping patterns support 'alternative' distribution chains (Odgaard & O'Doherty Jensen, 2003). However, the empirical research in this field in fact stops short when chains of production and distribution reach the point of retail sales to consumers. These studies have not thus far contributed to consumer research as such. In setting out to explore differences between consumers who purchase organic foods through distinct sales channels, this study also sought to address this gap in current research.

Research design and data collection

The following main questions were posed:

- (1) Do consumers who buy organic food through direct sales channels differ from supermarket shoppers with regard to their conceptions of (a) products, and (b) producers and production methods?
- (2) In what ways are the conceptions of (a) and (b) related to each other?
- (3) In what ways are they related to the selected sales channel?
- (4) Do moral concerns play a role in these conceptions and, if so, in what ways?

The primary method of data collection was by focus groups, supplemented by personal interviews with organic farmers and growers and observation studies carried out at a number of retail outlets including farm shops, road stalls in rural areas, box schemes and market stalls in urban areas. Interviews with farmers were undertaken during the initial phase of the study and facilitated the selection of direct channels that would be explored during the main phase of data collection.

All participants in 12 focus groups were screened by telephone interview prior to recruitment. One criterion fulfilled by all participants was that of being responsible or co-responsible for day-to-day shopping in their own household. With the exception of customers at market

stalls³, age between 25-60 years was also adopted as an inclusion criterion. The population was stratified into 3 sub-groups, from each of which 4 focus groups were recruited. These were:

- (1) Supermarket shoppers, among whom 2 groups comprised 'occasional' buyers of organic products, while 2 further groups were 'frequent' buyers,
- (2) Subscribers to one of two 'box schemes' run by one or more farmers and growers who regularly supply households with direct delivery of a box of organic products, two groups of subscribers being recruited from each such scheme, and
- (3) Shoppers who regularly buy organic products at one of two market stalls run by an organic farmer and located in an urban area, two groups being recruited among the shoppers at each stall.

Supermarket shoppers were recruited using randomly selected telephone numbers. Among the questions posed during screening, one regarded the frequency with which organic variants of 14 common foods, belonging to 7 different food groups, were purchased. Answers were registered in one of four categories: 'always', 'almost always', 'sometimes' or 'fairly seldom or never'. 'Frequent' buyers were defined as those who answered 'always' or 'almost always' to one or more food products within a minimum of 4 food groups. 'Occasional' buyers were defined as those answered 'sometimes' or more often to a minimum of 4 food groups, but 'always' or 'almost always' to a maximum of 3 food groups. Two groups were recruited among residents in the Copenhagen area, one comprising 'frequent' and one 'occasional' buyers. Similarly, two groups were recruited in the city of Århus, one in each category.

The earlier phase of data collection had shown that at least 30 box schemes are currently operating in Denmark. The smallest of these supplies as few as 10 customers per week, while the largest is a national operation supplying 25,000 boxes per week. Three criteria were used in selecting the schemes from which subscribers would be recruited: size should preferably be in the mid-range (at least 50 boxes per week or fortnight within a limited geographical area)⁴,

³ The population of customers at market stalls was identified as people who were observed shopping at particular stalls. Those in their 70's and 80's were excluded, but some few customers in their 60's were in fact recruited to the study.

⁴ Several studies have now been made of the larger operators in this field, such that some information about their customers can be gleaned from published and unpublished sources. At the other end of the scale among the smaller

location (two of the three main geographical regions of Denmark – Zealand, Funen and Jutland – should be represented) and, most importantly, the operator should be willing to supply a complete subscription list for all customers within a limited geographical area. One consideration in regard to the latter criterion was that recruitment of customers to a focus group should be feasible. Equally important was the desire to avoid the bias introduced by the farmer’s selection of “suitable” customers or by self-selection as a voluntary response to a letter or e-mail sent to all subscribers. Of the two schemes selected, one was run by a farmer on Zealand while the other was run by a distributor for a group of farmers on Funen.

The most difficult task of recruitment was that of identifying customers at market stalls. One such stall was selected in the city of Århus, Jutland, and one in a provincial city on Funen. Both fulfilled the criterion of being run by a farmer or grower, who sold his or her own produce on a regular basis at a fixed location in an urban area. Earlier fieldwork had revealed that many such market stalls, while purporting to be farmer-run, are in fact outdoor retail outlets in which products are supplied from the same packers and distributors who supply mainstream outlets. Customers were interviewed on site when they had completed their shopping, using a brief questionnaire, covering such aspects as age, area of residence as identified by postal code, regularity with which he or she shopped at this particular stall, and willingness to supply a telephone number at which he or she could be reached for further questioning. Customers over the age of 25 who shopped at the selected stall at least once a month were included in this sub-population, and subsequently screened by telephone interview.

A recruitment team at Gad’s Research and Reflections, Copenhagen, undertook all telephone screening of participants⁵. Unusually high response rates for all three sub-groups were reported. Interest in participating in a focus group was found to be somewhat lower among ‘occasional’ buyers at supermarkets, but since very many more supermarket shoppers fell into this category as compared to ‘frequent buyers’ this did not pose any particular difficulty. It was found that a very large majority of people in other sub-groups were very interested indeed

schemes, the present study demanded a customer base large enough to recruit at least 2X10 subscribers who would be not only interested in participating in a focus group, but free to do so on the same evening.

⁵ I am very grateful indeed to the members of the recruiting team at Gad’s Research and Reflections for the extensive work they undertook and performed so conscientiously under the leadership of Lotte Welløw Borch, Head of Research.

in the topic of the study and more that willing to participate. This estimation is also indicated by the fact that professional people such as doctors, lawyers and priests, who are notoriously difficult to recruit to focus groups, were represented in several groups. Some few people cancelled their participation at the last moment for a variety of reasons, but participants were indeed highly motivated to contribute. A total of 108 persons participated, 39 of whom were supermarket shoppers, 33 subscribers to a box scheme and 36 were customers at a market stall. The largest number participating in any one group was 12, while the smallest number was 7. Sixteen of the participants were men who were responsible for the daily provision of food in their households, some of whom were single.

An interview schedule was developed, and the same schedule used in all 12 focus groups. The planned duration was 2½ hours (minimum) and it comprised the following 5 tasks:

- 1) Presentation of self, including each participant's account of two or three points he or she considers personally important when shopping for food. This task was designed to facilitate personal introductions within the group and to obtain some data regarding any explicit criteria by which products, assortment, suppliers or sales outlets are assessed.
- 2) Sorting and ranking of food products. Participants were presented in four rounds with a number of conventional and/or organic products representing a range of food groups (cereal, vegetables and fruit, dairy and meat), different degrees of processing and kinds of packaging. These tasks were designed to reveal implicit categories and criteria of product assessment.
- 3) Exchange of stories about "good" and "bad" experiences when shopping for food. "Good" and "bad" stories were elicited with respect to the sales channel under particular consideration in the respective groups as compared to shopping experiences in other kinds of sales outlets. This task was designed to provide a range of data regarding such experiences, including aspects that were particularly appreciated and those that gave rise to feelings of moral outrage, i.e. a feeling or impression that the norms governing a shopping situation had been departed from positively or negatively. (For example, the question was posed: *Have you ever run into a situation when buying food that left you with a feeling that you certainly don't want to come back here again? What happened exactly?*)
- 4) Drawings of conventional and organic farms. Each participant was given a set of coloured felt pens and an A3 sheet of art paper divided down the middle. One half had the heading

‘Organic farmer/farming’, the other ‘Conventional farmer/farming’. Approximately 5-8 minutes were set aside in which each participant was asked to make two drawings⁶. When they were finished, each showed his or her drawing to the group one at a time, and its features or thoughts behind it were explained. This task was designed to elicit data regarding images and conceptions of farmers and farming that may not be easy to verbalise.

- 5) Discussion of the extent to which participants agreed with 15 prepared statements. One participant read these somewhat provocative statements aloud in turn. Each participant registered his or her level of agreement on a 5-point scale, and this was followed by a discussion of the level of agreement in the group as a whole. This task was designed to obtain data regarding explicit conceptions and assessments of producers, processors, distributors and production methods.

All sessions were audio- and videotaped, with the exception of two groups at one venue in which audio recordings only were obtained. Digital photographs were taken of the results of task (2), in which foods were grouped and ranked in a series of exercises. Drawings obtained in task (4) were subsequently scanned. The on-going analysis is based upon complete transcripts of audio-recordings, supplemented by video film, photographs and drawings. These drawings will be the main topic of my oral presentation. What follows is a brief account of the theoretical framework employed in their analysis.

Theoretical framework

The theory at issue is drawn from the work of Thevenot and Boltanski (Boltanski & Thévenot, 1999; Lamont & Thévenot (eds.), 2000), regarding ‘orders of worth’. The idea on which their theory is based is that the ‘good’ in everyday life is always conceived and assessed from the standpoint of a given ‘order of worth’, and that a limited number of such orders (sometimes referred to as ‘conventions’) can be identified as operative in a variety of different cultures.

Their work might be described as offering a descriptive classification of the normative criteria

⁶ The instruction was: “Take a few minutes to go back to kindergarten and draw 2 pictures. They can show a farmer at work on the farm or, if that’s too hard, they can show any thing or symbol you happen to think of in relation to organic and conventional farming. First thoughts are fine. And it doesn’t matter a bit if you can’t draw!”

according to which things, organisms, events or processes of any kind are assessed as being 'good', 'better' or 'worse'. Since the classification at issue is relatively abstract and since any given order of worth may be expressed in a variety of ways, their approach has been fruitfully employed in comparative cross-cultural research (Lamont & Thévenot (eds.), 2000). It has been found particularly useful in identifying and characterising lines of thought and argument and the conditions of communication under which mutual understanding of normative issues breaks down. It also usefully identifies some of the conditions that need to be fulfilled if understanding is to be re-established between two or more discussants in a normative debate. My expectation is that this approach can be fruitfully employed in the task of explicating differences between consumers' conceptions and assessments of food products and of the processes and people behind them.

The orders of worth shown in Figure 1 below refer to 'market', 'industrial', 'civic', 'domestic' and 'environmental' orders. The latter is a relatively new addition that does not appear in the earlier work of these authors. My expectation is that this will be supplemented by an 'organic' order of worth in the course of analysing the data from the present study. Not all orders of worth identified by Thévenot and Boltanski have been included in the brief version presented here. What follows are some examples, designed to illustrate differences between these orders of worth.

According to the authors, it is important to distinguish a 'market' order of worth from an 'industrial' one. The former is focussed on competition in the commodity market and the immediate prospect of profit in the short term (see Fig. 1). Seen from this point of view, for example, it would be an excellent idea to include organic variants in the product range offered by a retail outlet if demand and prices are relatively high. It would be an equally good idea to abandon that project if competition led to lower prices or demand fell. The 'industrial' order in contrast is focussed on long term planning and efficient means of obtaining returns on investment. Whether market opportunities will be followed is likely to depend upon the forecasts of marketing experts and, if followed,

Some elements of Thévenot & Boltanski's 'Orders of worth'

Orders of worth:	Market:	Industrial:	Civic:	Domestic:	Environmental:
Mode of evaluation:	Profits	Efficiency	Welfare	Esteem	Environmental friendliness
Test:	Competitiveness	Planning	Solidarity, equality	Trustworthiness	Sustainability
Proof:	Profit	Measured progress	Formal rights	Personal warranty	Eco-system effects
Objects:	Commodities	Methods, machinery	Policies	Local patrimony	Habitats
Human Beings:	Producers, distributors, consumers	Experts	Citizens	Authority, family community	Concerned citizens
Time/Space:	Short term/global	Long term	Perennial/universal	Customary/local	Future generations/planet

Source: Lamont & Thévenot (2000)

Figure 1: Some Elements of Thévenot's & Boltanski's 'Orders of Worth'

investors and others with an interest in long-term returns are likely to demand that results should be monitored regularly. Seen from the point of view of an 'environmental' order, however, these standpoints are likely to be dismissed as examples of opportunistic 'greenwashing' (Lyons, 1999). A distinction would be made between a firm that has a genuine environmental policy and one that merely wants to be seen as being environmentally friendly just so long as it pays to do so. In the former case, a policy concerning the firm's contribution to environmental sustainability would constitute an intrinsic part of its business platform, and such a policy would not be constantly adjusted in the light of market reports.

Arguments from the standpoint of a 'civic' order on the other hand would include reference to the rights and welfare of citizens. Advocacy projects, for example, have advanced the view that food insecurity among the poor could be offset by the provision of a free subscription to a farmer's box scheme rather than food stamps to be exchanged in a grocery store. On this view, it might also be argued that a free weekly supply of fresh vegetables and fruit from an organic farmer would make a positive contribution to health. A 'domestic' order of worth might be invoked, referring for example to the needs of children or the practical difficulties of the elderly and infirm in regard to shopping. It might further be argued that a project of this kind should support family farms running local schemes, rather than the schemes of corporate

enterprises. Arguments focussing on the contribution of family farms to local communities appeal to a 'domestic' order of worth, while the need to reduce 'food miles' might equally well be argued from an 'environmental' standpoint. Perhaps these examples can serve to illustrate the claim that quite different orders of worth can be at issue in advancing normative arguments.

Some preliminary results

As a background for understanding differences between these 3 sub-groups with regard to the themes presented in their drawings of conventional and organic farms, some general differences between the sub-groups are presented first. One of the dominant themes that is emerging in the analysis of "good" and "bad" stories is also noted.

Some differences between customers of 3 sales channels

'Occasional' buyers of organic food at supermarkets differ from 'frequent' buyers and from both sub-groups of 'direct' buyers with regard to their employment pattern and educational level. Among the 'occasional' buyers, many are employed in the private sector and have relatively lower levels of education. Fewer of them have several explicit criteria when shopping for food, and among the criteria that distinguish this group are an emphasis on 'price' and 'convenience'. Few of them regularly shop elsewhere than at supermarkets.

Most people in all 3 sub-groups regularly do at least some of their shopping at supermarkets, but many more 'direct' buyers also shop regularly at specialty stores, including health food stores and other small stores that stock organic products. With regard to their shopping pattern, the frequency with which organic products are bought and the number of explicit criteria they claim to use when choosing food products, 'frequent' buyers at supermarkets resemble 'direct' buyers much more closely than they resemble 'occasional' buyers.

Both 'occasional' and 'frequent' supermarket shoppers are inclined to present themselves as demanding 'good', 'quality' or even 'high quality' products when shopping. 'Direct' customers on the other hand are just as likely to say they want to find and they do look for 'decent' or 'proper' food. Almost by definition, 'occasional' buyers substitute organic

products with conventional variants often and at ease. Many 'frequent' buyers at supermarkets and many subscribers to box schemes, however, are also quite willing to make such substitutions. They do so especially when the available organic products do not live up to their relatively high and specific demands. (For example, several are dissatisfied with the quality of fresh organic pasta and would prefer to buy an Italian dried pasta made from 'proper' ingredients, even if it is not organic.) Some are also prepared to substitute organic variants when they are thought to be too expensive. Customers at market stalls are much less willing to make such substitutions. They tend to revise their shopping lists or menu plans, while sticking to the range of organic or biodynamic products that are available. With regard to their demands, frequency of purchase and willingness to substitute organic foods, these sub-groups could be ranged on scale in which 'occasional' buyers are at one end, 'frequent' buyers and subscribers to box schemes are in the middle and closely resemble each other, while market stall customers are at the far end of the scale.

"Good" and "bad" stories

One of the dominant themes that is emerging in stories about good and bad experiences while shopping concern encounters with sales people who do or do not care. In some cases these stories concern involvement in or indifference towards the products being sold. In other cases they concern careful attention or lack of attention given to the customer. In many stories, both of these aspects are at issue.

Some extracts from "good" stories illustrate the 'care' theme:

"I'd rather go somewhere where they can be bothered to treat me properly, where I can get a bit of real advice, where I almost feel like giving them a hug on the way out – because I'm thinking: 'Yes, this is good.' Know what I mean?"

Another participant telling of her experiences while shopping at market stalls in France put it this way:

"... You're never in any doubt about it when they're enthusiastic and proud of their products... They want to tell you the best way of cooking it. It's almost like you're not allowed to take it home, unless you promise to treat it the right way..."

These extracts can be compared to "bad" stories illustrating the impression that the seller is indifferent to the customer and to the products, respectively:

"... Oh yes, like those girls in the bakery on a Sunday morning. Talking away about last night's party right over your head. You feel like you're interrupting when you want to buy something. 'Excuse me for asking'. I mean, I feel like I have to beg - just to be allowed to spend my money! ..."

"... He just stood there, letting his cigarette ash spill all over the vegetables. It wasn't the fact that he was smoking... It was his attitude, you know? Total indifference. I couldn't bear it, and I haven't been back there since."

Drawings of organic and conventional farms/farmers

Almost all participants opted to depict a point of contrast between organic and conventional farming. Only one picture out of a total 108 drawings shows farmhouses, outhouses, fields and tractors that are virtually the same for both kinds of farming. The participant's own comment on her drawing was:

"Well, I don't think there are any real differences. None you can see anyway. But then I don't know much about it."

Some point of contrast is clear in all other cases, and most are assessments – not just descriptions. Unsurprisingly, these assessments positively favour organic farming. There are marked differences between the sub-groups of consumers with regard to the standpoints – orders of worth – from which the two kinds of farming are assessed. There are also marked differences between the sub-groups with regard to the number of cases in which the point of contrast at issue makes some reference to the principles, regulations, practices or consequences of organic farming as such. Conventional farming is most often depicted as an 'industry', while organic farming is depicted and assessed from a wider range of standpoints - that is to say, 'orders of worth'.

Three major themes are depicted in characterising conventional farming as an 'industry'. Many drawings refer to the infrastructure, mainly buildings and machines. These buildings are large and imposing, some carry the label 'factory', some have high, smoking chimney stacks. Animal housing tends to be large-scale, barred, carry the label 'PRISON' or a 'NO ENTRY' notice. The negative assessment of industrialised agriculture is occasionally portrayed humorously and occasionally as being horrific. For example, the chickens in one drawing

appear to have wheels (*"So many of them have broken legs here, they've had to provide wheelchairs..."*). Another includes a series of signposts: 'CONCENTRATION CAMP FOR HENS' and 'CONCENTRATION CAMP FOR PIGS', etc. Machines are also depicted as being large and imposing, and are mainly engaged in the task of spreading pesticides, polluting ground water, etc. A second partly overlapping major theme, regards methods of production as such, focusing on quantity, specialisation, mechanisation, indoor animal production, indoor vegetable production, indoor work (the farmer at his computer), and the use of chemicals.

A less dominating theme regards the relationship between industrial farming and the market it serves or the profits it yields. This theme is depicted by means of the relatively imposing size of domestic housing, private cars, gigantic delivery trucks from major players in the food industry (*Danish Crown, Arla*), dollar signs, the farmer counting his money, etc.

By no means all drawings of conventional farming depict large scale or market-oriented industry. In some cases the idea behind the drawing clearly takes its point of departure in thinking about the point to be made in regard to organic farming, and then seeking to depict the point of contrast at issue. For example, one drawing depicts two slightly different large sunflowers and lots of other minor detail that does not immediately meet the eye. These were afterwards explained as features that regard differences in soil quality, and the effects of the respective production methods on plants as well as wild habitats.

Among the more general characteristics of drawings of conventional farming are the use of relatively few and relatively dark colours and the absence of people. For example, when sky is depicted, black clouds tended to mass over the 'conventional farmer/farming' side of the page and relatively often no people are in sight. The use of irony was made quite explicit in participants' comments on their drawings.

"Well, you see, the sun only shines on the organic side of the page. And only organic pigs have curly tails, of course."

Many comments of this kind were made and usually raised a laugh in the group.

In depicting one or more points of contrast to industrialised conventional farming, some reference to the principles, regulations, practices or consequences of organic farming are made by half of the 'occasional' buyers (supermarkets), by two-thirds of the 'frequent' buyers (supermarkets) and by the same proportion of subscribers to box schemes. Almost all of the market stall buyers include such reference in their drawings and in their comments.

Among those whose drawings do not include any such reference, the point of contrast is to traditional farming, and among these the dominant theme regards the family farm. It is clear that for this minority of participants organic farming is associated with somewhat romantic and nostalgic images of methods of farming that are remembered from childhood or gleaned from picture books, films or other media. In presenting drawings of this kind, an apologetic comment such as the following was sometimes made:

"Well this is what I made. I honestly don't know whether it really is like this. But this is the way I certainly like to think it is, anyway..."

The main themes in these drawings were drawn from a 'domestic' order of worth, the point of contrast referring to happier farmers, families working together, happier animals, cosier work conditions, small rustic buildings, children playing, winding paths, ducks in the pond, flowers in the garden, etc.

More surprisingly, the 'domestic' order of worth is also the dominant standpoint from which points of contrast are made by the larger group of participants whose drawings include reference to organic principles and practices. Many of these also include some reference to a happier atmosphere, particularly with regard to the treatment of animals, as one aspect of their drawing. But here the point is that the organic farmer is committed to the principle of animal welfare or to the fact that regulations demand access to outdoor spaces, etc. The fact that organic farming is 'mixed' rather than specialised is another example of a theme pursued in several drawings. However, the dominant theme in this set of drawings regards the variety of ways in which the organic farmer is in touch with, caring for and caring about soil, plants, animals or people.

'Domestic care' as the point of contrast between organic and conventional farmers is the central theme of 27 of these drawings, that is one quarter of all 108 sets of drawings. Five of

these are made by supermarket customers and four by subscribers to a box scheme, corresponding to 1 in 8 of the participants in each of these sub-groups. Eighteen are made by customers at market stalls, corresponding to half of all participants in this sub-group.

It seems that for many participants images associated with organic farming regard 'domestic care' of one kind or another, and this theme is often depicted quite literally:

"There he is out there in his wellies with his feet on the ground, looking to see how his carrots are getting on... Whereas the other fellow [the conventional farmer], well you cant see him. But he's inside that big tractor there with its 17 computers and he probably doesn't even know what it is he's pouring those chemicals on to..."

"This guy [the organic farmer] has got dirt under his nails..."

"... Then the [organic] farmer is outside looking after his cows..."

In this last example, the organic farmer is standing with one hand resting on the back of a cow. The point of contrast is to a drawing of 'conventional' cows, lined up in separated, highly confined indoor spaces. Each of them has a number on its back, and no person appears in the scene. The theme of being "in touch" and "caring" also includes reference to the organic farmer's relationship to customers:

"The organic farmer has put up a road stand, you see, because he wants to be in touch with the people who eat his products."

'Environmental' and 'civic' orders of worth are also standpoints from which points of contrast are made. The main themes depicted in the former set of drawings regard the value of biodiversity as contrasted with the destruction of wild habitats and the need for a sustainable agriculture as contrasted with practices that contribute to chemical pollution. Relatively few drawings depict health, human welfare or other 'civic' values as the central theme as such.

I will present some sets of these drawings as part of my (electronically facilitated) oral presentation to the ESA meeting, and will include participants' comments on their own

drawings. Meanwhile, some preliminary conclusions based on this part of my on-going analysis are:

- These findings do not support the assumption of market researchers to the effect that consumers of organic food are unconcerned about the ways in which food is produced, i.e. the people and processes behind food products
- There are different standpoints from which food production is assessed as being better or worse
- These standpoints can be usefully described as moral conventions or orders of worth, referring to distinct modes of evaluation
- Conventional agriculture is generally seen as having espoused the values and methods of 'industrial' production and for the most part this is negatively assessed by consumers of organic food
- Consumers of organic food tend to positive assessments of organic agricultural production on the grounds that: (a) it does not espouse the values and methods of 'industrial' production, (b) it hopefully does not do so, or (c) it espouses a set of principles or accepts rules that distinguish it from conventional agriculture
- Apart from aspects that distinguish organic production as such, it is also positively assessed from the standpoints of 'domestic', 'environmental' and/or 'civic' orders of worth
- Relatively many consumers of organic food make positive assessments of organic production from the standpoint of a 'domestic' order of worth, the value of 'care' and its expression in caring for, caring about and being in touch with soil, plants, animals and/or other human beings are central to these assessments.
- There is a marked difference on the latter point between consumers who buy organic products directly from farmers at market stalls in urban areas and other consumers.

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