**A Path of Actions to Develop Organics in the Finnish Food Chain**

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**Implications**

The Finnish Government has set development goals for organic food chain (MMM 2014). Following the actions presented in this paper, it is possible to develop the organics in the Finnish food chain holistically and comprehensively to reach the goals. The increase in production and consumption will have proven positive impact to the wellbeing of people, nature and animals (Rahmann 2016). Arctic and safety features of Finnish food will enhance the export possibilities of organic food to partly correct the current negative trade balance. The development is possible when organic values are incorporated to the Finnish food chain supported by the Nordic welfare model (Nuutila 2016).

**Background and objectives**

Organic production and consumption in Finland is lagging behind the neighbouring countries like Sweden and Denmark although the Finnish stakeholders and consumers find organic food healthy and safe and its production ethical and ecological (Nuutila 2015). The Finns find conventional equal to organic because of the lack of objective official information of the negative externalities of the conventional system (Nuutila 2016). Information plays important role in decision making (Aertsens et a. 2011). The communication between the stakeholders is not efficient and the centralized retail and food industry cause the uneven division of power and that partly prevents the collaboration (Nuutila & Kurppa 2016). It is important to analyse organics as part of the Finnish food system, recognize the obstacles that prevent its development and find solutions crossing the stakeholder, disciplinary and political boundaries.

**Key results and discussion**

According to Nuutila (2016) the Finnish food chain can be developed to accept organic growth by following a path of actions: 1) to include organics as part of studies in all school levels, 2) to ensure high quality internationally active organic research, 3) to provide objective information to the Finnish society about the food chain, 4) to set taxes on synthetic pesticides and nitrogen fertilizers, 5) to execute a national organic school meal project, 6) to reduce VAT on certified organic products, 7) to strengthen the activities of the Organic Food Association to unite the stakeholders, and 8) to support organic entrepreneurship and to promote Finnish organic produce abroad.

Education and knowledge form the foundation of a Nordic welfare society and Finns have succeeded well when comparing the learning leading to good results on innovation and entrepreneurial activity (Miettinen 2013) therefore it is well argued that education has a great importance in organic acceptance. The negative impacts of pesticides and unsustainable fertilizers have been proven scientifically and there is environmental taxation for those in several countries (Pearce & Koundouri 2003). It is often a practice to target the money collected into a contradictory action (OECD 2011), in this case for school meals and lower VAT. The strategic 2016 goals of the Finnish government (TEM 2015) supports the presented actions: 1) to improve health and wellbeing, 2) to improve competence, 3) to renew education and knowledge system, 4) to enhance the bioeconomy, and 5) to change procedures e.g. by reducing bureaucracy and regulation.

There are several good examples of a fruitful collaboration between national authorities and organic food chain actors. E.g. in Italy the government strongly promotes Italian produce (Santucci & Antonelli 2004) and in Denmark, after some environmental scandals, the politicians and government made organic food chain one of the best examples in the world (Holm & Ingeman 2006). The globalized food markets have increased the price margin and it is crucial to find alternative marketing channels. Organic food produced, processed and sold most often in unconventional channels provides an alternative to maintain a fairer and local food chain. (Nuutila & Kurppa 2016b) It is important to further analyze the contradictions in and between the different parts of the food chain to better enable the realization of the aforementioned actions. Organic food system is an innovation itself and it earns to get a better legitimacy in the Finnish society.

**How work was carried out?**

This study is a result of a Survey of the Finnish food chain actors’ opinions on organic food and its production, a focus group study about the collaboration and power relations in the Finnish food chain, and an extensive analysis of the Finnish food chain and the status of organics in it. The analysis was done using the cultural historical Activity Theory as the frame work for the food chain, Co-creation theory as a guiding agent for the collaboration and Economy of Common Good to support and fortify the organic values. The resulting modified Finnish food chain model was discussed with the Nordic welfare model and the Finnish innovation politics. The work was carried out during years 2013 and 2016 resulting to a dissertation with three peer-reviewed papers and one conference paper.

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