KU LEUVEN

Bio-Planet

Towards a more sustainable food system: investigating the farmer-retailer relationship, a case study on Bio-Planet, Belgium

Place management: Seminars (G0V68a)

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1. General introduction

The Anthropocene era is characterised by a capitalist system that goes along with the depletion of natural resources. In Flanders, the most polluting sectors are transport, building and agriculture (Flemish government, 2013). The agricultural sector is a good study framework for finding solutions because it is quite simple to understand what is needed to produce food. This paper will look at this issue by investigating supermarkets which are dominant actors in the food system. In particular, it will look at an alternative Belgian supermarket called Bio-Planet that sells almost exclusively organic products. The aim of the research will be to determine whether this model can help to shift the current food system, which is mainly dominated by supermarkets selling conventional agricultural and industrial products, towards a more resilient system (Timmermans & Van Bellegem, 2019; Statista, 2019). This will be done through the prism of the relationship between the retailer and the farmers they work with. In order to do so, this paper will attempt to answer the question "How does the relationship between Bio-Planet and its Belgian farmers influence organic and local food production?". This question will be subdivided into 3 sub-questions in order to better focus the research.

The following chapter explains the purpose of the research and introduces the 3 sub-questions of the study as well as the methodology and resources used to answer them. Subsequently, Chapter 3 illustrates a conceptual theoretical framework, ranging from organic agriculture to alternative food networks in order to get an overview of the environment in which the relationship between Bio-Planet and farmers evolves. Chapter 4 presents the results of the research where the aspects directly influencing the relationship between the organic supermarket and its farmers will be analyzed. For example, the organic market and related legislation will be investigated at different spatial scales from Europe to Leuven. The history and functioning of Bio-Planet as well as the labels used by the retailer to choose its suppliers will also be analyzed. Then, the three sub-questions will be discussed and answered one by one based on interviews, and the research results. Finally, three recommendations will be presented to improve this farmer-distributor relationship. This research paper ends with five personal reflections on different aspects of the work by comparing it to case studies observed in the places where the people involved in the work come from.

2. Research design

2.1 Research questions and aim of the research

The Bio-Planet supermarket is selling mainly organic products. As this mode of production is fairer, more respectful for the environment than conventional agriculture and offers new economic opportunities, research has begun to emerge on the subject. Much of this research analyses the purchasing behaviour of consumers in supermarkets towards organic products (Magnusson, 2001). As a result, there are many resources on the relationship between retailers and customers. However, there is another type of relationship between retailers and producers, farmers, which has been much less analysed. During preliminary research, it could already be stated that this relationship could be decisive in the construction of a more sustainable food system. From this observation emerged the following question: "How does the relationship between Bio-Planet and its Belgian farmers influence organic and local food production?". The aim of this research is to see how supermarkets could play a role in the transition to a more sustainable food system by focusing on organic food and the case-study of Bio-Planet.

After further preliminary research, 3 sub-questions were defined in order to answer this question. The first one "How does the label/grid of criteria for organic food of Bio-Planet influence its farmers? "aims to investigate the influence of the labels and selection criteria used to choose the products and thus the producers with whom Bio-Planet works. The second question, "Does the partnership between Bio-Planet and its farmers provide a stable financial situation to the producers?" aims to determine whether the relationship between Bio-Planet and the producers it works with is fair and therefore allows them to maintain or provide the incentives to start a farm with sustainable agricultural practices. Finally, the way decisions are made between different actors will be examined by asking the following question: "How are decisions made regarding food production between actors?".

2.2 Methodology

To conduct this research, a literature review was conducted as well as several interviews. The literature review is based on scientific articles, institutional reports, internet sources and other online documents. They represent the basis for the theoretical content on which the research was based. In the literature review, the term "organic agriculture" is explored, an analysis is made of the relationship between organic farmers and supermarkets in terms of equity, and alternatives to the conventional supermarket distribution system are studied. For cooperative supermarkets an analysis is conducted in order to compare them to the case study.

The main data generated in the field comes from interviews. There has been reached out to two target groups: experts from Bio-Planet and the agricultural sector and farmers who collaborate with Bio-Planet. Two different semi-structured questionnaires were prepared, one for the experts and one for the farmers. The questions were based on the main research question and structured according to the sub-questions in order to find targeted answers to the environmental, social and economic topics. The questions were open-ended, the respondent was free to answer or not and some of them were specific according to the person interviewed.

For logistical and Covid regulatory reasons, all meetings were conducted online or by phone. Meetings lasted from 30 minutes to 1.5 hours and at least 3 members of the research group were always present at the meeting. Finding people to interview was more difficult than expected. The initial idea was to find about 20 people to interview, most of them being producers, in order to be able to study the subject in depth from both sides. However, only 5 experts and 2 producers were interviewed out of the almost 40 people contacted (see interview table). On the experts' side, the objective was achieved. On the farmers' side, this study has to take into account that the sample is less representative by relying more on the literature review.

2.3 Materials

2.3.1 Interviews

Regarding the interviews with experts, 30 of them have been contacted by e-mail and in total, 4 meetings could be arranged.

Interview	**Surname, Name**	**Position**	**Date**
1	Caroline Decoster	Biowallonie outspoken	March 23, 2021
2	Erik Mathijs	Professor in Bioeconomics, University of KULeuven in the Department of Earth and Environmental Sciences	April 9, 2021
3	Jeroen Van Belleghem (J), Hendrik Van Dael (H)	Sales Department Chief at Bio-Planet (J), Purchaser at Bio-Planet (H)	April 26, 2021
4	Caroline Huyghe	Responsible of the 13th programmes of Leuven 2030 project, of which one focuses on sustainable and healthy food	April 27, 2021

Table 1: Information about the interviews with experts

For the farmers, only 2 were willing to give an interview while 12 were contacted.

5	Brecht Porreye	Farmer at Pipo working for Bio-Planet (Apple grower and apple juice producer)	April 20, 2021
6	Luc Maertens	Director of personnel and organisation at ‘De lochting’	May 3, 2021

Table 2: Information about the interviews with producers

2.3.2 Case study of Alternatives Supermarket in Belgium

This study takes into account the views of farmers working with Bio-Planet, its managers and experts in the field of organic food systems. In addition, a case study will be examined from the perspective of alternative distribution systems to the conventional supermarket system, namely a cooperative supermarket. This was done on the recommendation of the expert Erik Mathijs who described the ideal sustainable supply chain for organic food production as "a chain in which consumers participate" (Interview 2, Erik Mathijs, 2021). In addition to a theoretical part on these alternative systems, a case study of an alternative in Leuven will be used on the cooperative supermarket Färm.

Färm

Färm is a cooperative network of Belgian organic supermarkets created in 2013 (La Coopérative Färm: Prenez Une Part Du Changement!, n.d.), more specifically it is a commercial company incorporated as a cooperative limited liability company (Färm.Coop, 2018). The different stores are open to everyone and it is not necessary to own shares to shop there (Färm.Coop, n.d.). There are 6 different categories of cooperators, they are respectively the founders, the managers, the collaborators from the staff of Färm, the suppliers or producers and owners of franchised stores. The last category which does not require a contractual relationship is the “sympathizers”, that can be clients or people sharing the values of Färm. The general assembly appoints the leaders of the board of directors, each share being equivalent to a vote. The board of directors is composed of a maximum of 10 persons with at least one representative per category (Färm, 2020) .

One of the specificities of the cooperative is its product charter that the franchised shops must strictly follow. This charter is reviewed annually by all stakeholders, including cooperators, customers and affiliates. In order to avoid having products from multinationals, they do not include

products from companies listed on the stock exchange. With three exceptions, unprocessed food products are labeled organic either with the European label or with private labels whose prerequisites are the European label such as Biogarantie, Eko label, Bio coherence and Demeter. The exceptions to the rule are products from production in conversion, products that cannot be certified because of their nature (such as honey in Belgium) and seafood products.

The Färm network aims to promote products that go beyond the European organic label. They do this by offering products with complementary organic labels such as "Participatory Guarantee System", "Nature & Progrès" as well as the "Presidio Slow food" label. They also use fair trade or fair price labels. They have specific charters for certain types of products such as fruit and vegetables, cheese, butchery, eggs, bulk products and honey.

For fruit, vegetables and bulk products, in order to favor Belgian products, they will be favored when the difference with organic products on the European market is less than 15%. More specifically for fruits and vegetables, products will also be preferred when the producers are located in the region of the stores or when they can deliver their production directly. An exception is made for 9 products whose production is marginal or non-existent in Europe as well as Belgian products requiring to be cultivated in highly heated greenhouses. Their purchase from local producers will only be favored between the months of June and October to minimize their energy footprint. As for the cheeses offered for cutting, seasonality must be respected and 80% of the cheeses must come from Belgium. If a Belgian cheese is equivalent to a European cheese, the Belgian cheese will be chosen. The same applies to meat and charcuterie, where only products not available for sale in Belgium may come from other European countries. As for the eggs, they are exclusively of Belgian origin (Färm, 2019).

In addition to this charter, the Färm network has set up several initiatives in order to develop a more sustainable food network. First, they have implemented a color code for fruits and vegetables. Dark green for local and seasonal products, light green for European seasonal products and yellow for products outside Europe (Färm, 2020). They do the same by highlighting local and sustainable products on the shelves with among other a sustainability indicator based on 11 criteria to help consumers choose their products (Färm, 2021). They are also members of the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements (IFOAM) since 2018 to participate in the reinforcement of the criteria of the European organic label (Färm.coop 1, n.d.).

3. Conceptual framework

3.1 From conventional to organic farming

3.1.1 Conventional farming

Conventional agriculture was born after the First World War in Europe. This new method of farming would have enabled to make up for the lack of manpower and to increase food production due to the increase in population (Ognon, n.d.) that it's expected to reach 11 billion by 2100 (Ghosh, 2020). Conventional agriculture seemed to be the best solution to increase food yield. All this thanks to the use of machines, chemical fertilizers, insecticides, pesticides and herbicides (Clement, n.d.). Subsequently, the negative effects of conventional agriculture were discovered; highlighting the damage to human health, soil depletion, the disappearance of micro-organisms that play an important role in natural soil fertilisation, and soil and water pollution (Mie & Wivstad, 2015).

3.1.2 Organic farming

Faced with the health and environmental hazards of conventional agriculture, organic farming has begun to be seen as a sustainable and relatively easy to implement alternative to conventional agriculture (Howard, 2010). According to the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements, organic agriculture takes into account the health of humans, soils and ecosystems and emits less greenhouse gases than conventional agriculture (Smith, 2019). The use of chemicals is prohibited in organic farming and efforts are being made, for example in the CAP reform (European Commission, n.d.), to combine traditional agriculture with innovation to allow for good yields while respecting the health of farmers and the environment (IFOAM, 2008). An organic food product, from its sowing to its final processing, must follow specific rules methods, such as the use of natural fertilizers, which change depending on the place and the label adopted (USAD, 2011). The values of organic agriculture are based on 4 well established principles (IFOAM, n.d.)

- **The principle of health:** Organic agriculture must make sure to preserve and improve the health of people, soils and ecosystems.
- **The principle of ecology:** in which the ecological balance is important for the health of the land and the organisms. Ecological agriculture must be able to reduce the use of all substances that pollute the environment by adopting natural methods.
- **The principle of equity:** all the people who take part within the value chain, from producers to consumers, must be involved and establish relationships between them.
- **The principle of care:** promote sustainability to take care of the well-being of future generations.

3.1.3 Weaknesses of organic farming

Organic farming is characterised by low yields, which are on average 25% lower than conventional farming (Stronybrook, n.d.). This implies that it would be impossible to feed everyone just by converting farmers to organic farming (Kirchmann et al, 2009). Recognising this weakness is a way to find the best possible trajectory for food production and distribution. As Jeroen explained in the interview, it is interesting to go beyond organic food and explore other approaches to sustainability. For example, organic production is environmentally friendly, but sometimes, taking into account the proximity of the product and the direct relationship between the producer and the consumer, local production can be even more sustainable (Jeroen Van Belleghem, Interview 3, 2021). Indeed, favouring local food allows local producers to make a profit, strengthens the local economy and food sovereignty. Favouring local products also reduces the carbon footprint in terms of transport. (Alberta, 2010).

At the same time, one element that could help make organic farming a system that can feed everyone is to address inequalities in food distribution. Indeed, it is estimated that 11% of the population, or 820 million people, are malnourished (D'Odorico, 2019). Yet one third of the world's food, or 1.3 billion tonnes, is wasted (FAO, 2015). A better food distribution system, which goes beyond the power roles between developed and underdeveloped countries, should be put in place to avoid inequality and food waste and ensure food security for all.

3.2 Alternatives to conventional supermarkets

3.2.1 Fairness in farmer-supermarket relations

Farmers can only produce organic food or convert to it when they have enough financial means to support themselves and their production since producing organic food costs more than producing conventional food (Carmona et al., 2020). To preserve the fairness in the collaboration between farmers with supermarkets is thereby essential. A first alternative for the conventional supermarkets to be studied is one where special attention is paid to this fairness, something that is often lacking in the current supermarket system. In the paper ‘Between Ideals and Reality: Development and Implementation of Fairness Standards in the Organic Food Sector’, Melanie Kröger and Martina Schäfer describe this fairness and have listed initiatives that can help to strengthen this fairness. Fairness, they explain, can refer to a fair price for the organic products but also to fairness through the supply chain (Kröger & Schäfer, 2013). In general, two types of fairness can be distinguished: distributional fairness and procedural fairness (Ibid.).

3.2.1.1 Distributional fairness

Distributional fairness is defined as "the perceived fairness of the results of a decision or negotiation, or its outcome". The concept of equity, that the outcome for each member of the agreement is in good relation with the size of the contribution, is very important. In the food sector, distributional fairness refers to fair prices and long-term and reliable contracts (Kröger & Schäfer, 2013).

Seen from a qualitative perception, a fair price could mean that it takes into account all the production as well as sufficient profit to live from and for future growth investments. Translating this into a quantitative amount could be done by determining a minimum price. This is easier for products like meat, milk, potatoes and grain where price fluctuations are less volatile in comparison to fresh vegetables and fruit (Kröger & Schäfer, 2013). The price of food products is decided through negotiations in which the farmers usually fulfil the weak position (Kröger & Schäfer, 2013; Wills, 2019) because the retailers are often large companies that dominate the market. The smaller supplier may not find other buyers if they turn down all the larger companies (Wills, 2019). This is where procedural fairness should be maintained to make sure the result is fair, more on that later.

Long-term and reliable contracts should avoid unfair practices such as late payments or sudden cancelations (Ibid.). Both farmers and supermarkets can benefit from the stability that comes from long-term contracts. Farmers are thereby not dependent on changeable market prices, they are sure of a stable income and they can anticipate future investments. Supermarkets are certain of a stable provision of qualitative products. However, these contracts give stability but often in exchange for potential higher revenues since the price is often fixed in these contracts but market prices change (Kröger & Schäfer, 2013).

3.2.1.2 Procedural fairness

Procedural fairness refers to the decision-making process in which each member should be able to participate in a fair amount. Krüger M. and Schäfer M. offer some solutions to ensure procedural fairness in negotiations between farmers and the supermarkets. One solution could be roundtable negotiations with a whole producer's group and the supermarket. This would enhance the transparency between the stakeholders and a fair agreement should be the outcome. Another (additive) solution can be the installment of a board of complaint that acts as a neutral third party (Kröger & Schäfer, 2013). Participators can file a complaint when they are treated unfairly. This solution is also recommended by the European Commission in 'The Unfair Trading Practices Directive' (Wills, 2019).

There can be concluded that pursuing fairness in the agreements between organic farmers and supermarkets can enhance (conversion to) organic farming. Distributional fairness includes a fair

price, which can be preserved by a minimum price, or long-term and reliable agreements. Both can be enforced through maintaining procedural fairness which, in turn, can be enforced through roundtable negotiations with whole producer groups and neutral complaint boards as a neutral party.

3.2.2 Alternative Food Networks

In order to put the Bio-Planet model into perspective, it is necessary to analyse alternative distribution models to the conventional supermarket system. In this section, the focus will be on a model that supports farmers in their sustainable farming practices which is cooperative supermarkets. An introduction to alternative food networks will be provided to contextualise the framework in which these alternative retailers operate.

The hegemony of the industrial food system has led to the disappearance of important features of traditional agriculture such as the relationship with producers. Food bought from the farmer had an identity and added value that distinguished it from all others. Today, consumers know little about the origin and processing of the products they buy.

In recent years, alternative food networks (AFN) have emerged. These networks aim to revive the characteristics of traditional agriculture. These networks want to 'resocialise', 'relocate' and 'reconnect' food by creating strong and authentic relationships between producers and consumers (Venn et al. 2006). This is done in a short chain system, with a minimum of intermediaries.

The aim is precisely to contribute sustainably to the well-being of the environment, producers and consumers by sustainable agricultural practices, supporting local producers, developing the local economy and selling quality food produced with a focus on social equity (Kessari et al. 2020). AFNs encompasses within it a set of practices such as the community-supported agriculture (CSA) and cooperative models discussed below, farmers' markets, collective farmers' shops (CFS), organic groups and community gardens (Kessari et al. 2020).

3.2.3.1 Cooperative supermarket

A model to be compared to that of Bio-Planet is cooperative supermarkets. They are indeed comparable in terms of size and products offered. Furthermore, cooperative chains such as Färm are developing in Belgium making it even more comparable to the case study of Bio-Planet.

The principle of cooperative supermarkets is to give decision-making power to cooperative members. In order to be able to be defined as such, a minimum of 10% of the supermarket's shares must belong to the cooperative members. Depending on the different cooperatives, decision-making will be taken in different ways. What is important to note is that the co-operators have decision-making power over all the chain from purchase to selling. That is to say the policies and

general functioning of the cooperative, the strategic decisions of the cooperative and operational decisions such as the choice of products offered and therefore of producers.

It is also important to underline that these supermarkets, thanks to the decision-making power of the cooperative members, carry ecological economic and social values which are reflected in these choices. Ecological values are reflected by favoring local products from sustainable agriculture but also by reducing the ecological impact of the supermarket. As for social values, these are found in the desire to maintain good relations with producers by remunerating them fairly as well as between members. These values are also reflected in the main criteria in the choice of products which are price, environmental impact and taste. Depending on the cooperative, one of the values is generally more present than others.

The difficulties encountered by cooperatives lie mainly in the choice of products, for which it is often difficult to combine all the criteria such as organic, ethical and seasonal premises; the difficulty of setting up this kind of initiative and the functioning and organization of this complex structure (Giacchè & Retière, 2019).

4. Research results

In this section, an overview of the state of the art of the current organic food market in Belgium, and its potential growth, will be given, as well as the history of organic production in Belgium with all its challenges. At last, the main actors that take part in the history of Belgium's organic production as well in shaping the future are studied. These actors are the European, Flemish and Leuven policy makers, as well as the representatives and actors of Bio-Planet. The different relationships between these actors will be examined in order to answer our different research sub-questions. For all these actors have an influence on the relationship between Bio-Planet and organic farmers and on its potential evolution.

4.1 State of the art

4.1.1 The organic market in Belgium, Flanders and Leuven

A comprehensive analysis of the national, regional and local organic market will be explored in this research. The following part of the study is to examine the extent to which economic opportunities might influence the relationship between organic supermarkets and farmers. This will be done through an analysis of organic food market shares, retail sales data and challenges in the organic production process (in Flanders specifically).

4.1.1.1 Market shares

Although the market share of organic food in Belgium has doubled in the past ten years (Statista, 2019), the current share of 3.1% remains very little (Statista, 2019; Timmermans & Van Bellegem, 2019; IFOAM, 2019). Especially when it is compared to other neighboring countries such as the Netherlands (4,9%), France (6,1%), Germany (5,7%) and Luxembourg (8,6%) or other European countries such as Denmark (12.1%) or Switzerland (10.4%) as visible on the map below (IFOAM, 2019).

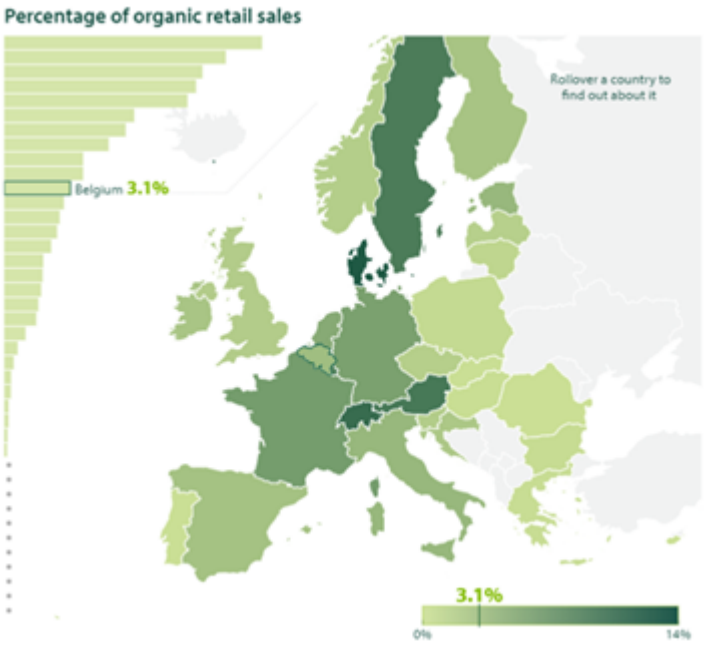

Figure 1: Map of the organic market shares for countries in EU-28 (IFOAM, 2019)

However, within Belgium, a distinct difference in the organic food market can be noticed between Flanders and Wallonia. The organic market share in Flanders in 2019 was 2,6% while in Wallonia the market share was 5,9%. The entry of some new specialized organic stores on the Walloon market in 2018 is given as the reason for this difference (Timmermans & Van Bellegem, 2019).

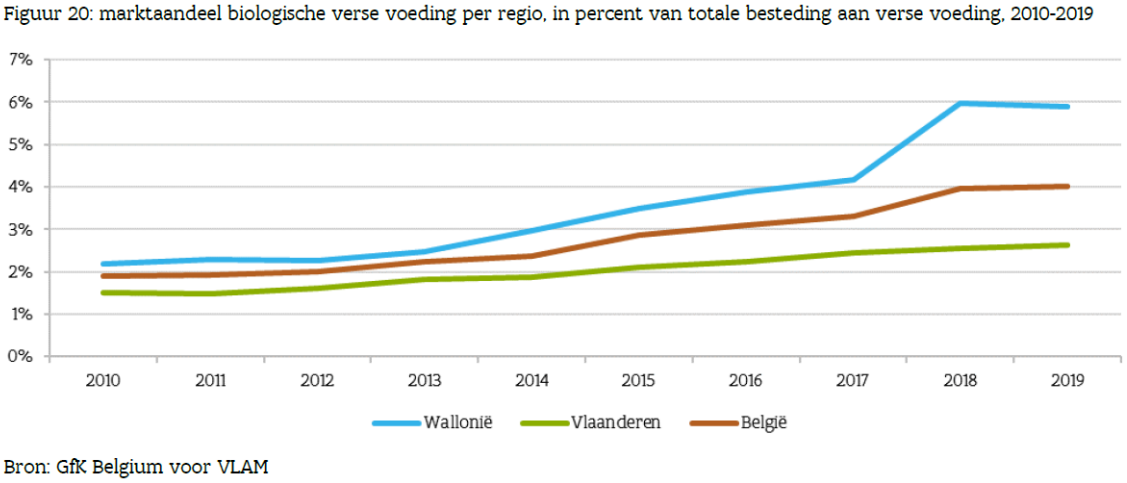

Figure: The market share of organic food in Belgium by region 2010-2019 (Timmermans & Van Bellegem, 2019)

Nonetheless, there can be said that the organic market is already growing but there still is a lot of room for growth. Therefore it is relevant to look how this growth is already stimulated nowadays and how it can be stimulated in the future. This can enable Belgium and specifically Flanders to not only catch up with the current backlog but also to anticipate a more sustainable future.

4.1.1.2 Retail

In Flanders as well as on the national level, most organic food is sold through larger supermarkets (39%) and specialized stores (including Bio-Planet) and mini-markets (32%) (Timmermans & Van Bellegem, 2019; Statista, 2019). Both categories are mainly dominated by Delhaize, Carrefour and Colruyt representing 70% of the total food market in Belgium (Avermaete et al, 2015; Datamonitor 2004).

Consequently, they have a great potential in distributing and promoting organic food by using their already established marketing platform (Datamonitor, 2004). This has to be taken into account in the transition or as Erik Mathijs told "If you ignore the supermarkets then you can not make the food system more sustainable" (Erik Mathijs, Interview 2, 2021). This research focuses on how the supermarkets could fulfill this potential and the case of Bio-Planet serves as an example of a possible pathway.

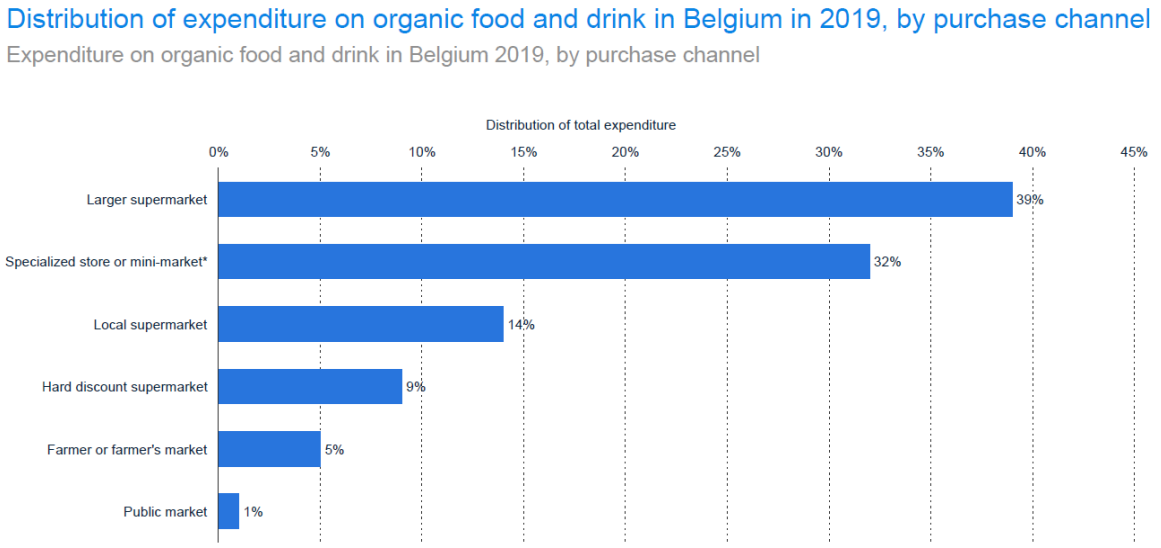

Figure 2: Distribution of expenditure on organic food and drink by purchase channel in Belgium in 2019 (Statista, 2019)

4.1.2 Challenges of organic production in Flanders

As mentioned in the previous chapter about the organic market, the share of organic products varies between the different countries of the European Union. In Belgium, this is also the case between the Flemish and Walloon regions, where the market share of organic products were 2.6% and 5.9% respectively in 2019 (IFOAM, 2019).

There are many reasons why organic food production is so low in Belgium and more specifically in Flanders. Among them are economic reasons such as the view that organic farming is not very profitable. Indeed, conventional agriculture is characterised by its high profitability in terms of yield per hectare. Conventional farmers tend to associate this profitability with higher profits (Home et al.,

2018). In contrast, organic farming is seen as unprofitable and even amateurish (De Cock et al., 2016). However, following environmental and food safety scandals in Belgium in the middle of the 90's, the demand for organic products has increased and farmers have started to question their production methods resulting in an increasing number of conversions to organic farming. This shows that in addition to an environmental interest, the economic factor is also present. Because of free trade, this interest is diminished because of the competition that European organic products represent on the market (Brzezina et al., 2017; De Cock et al., 2016). In 2002, there was also a scandal in Germany where traces of nitrofen, a herbicide that can be carcinogenic, were found in poultry products. This coincided with the closure of the organic shop branch of Delhaize, a Belgian supermarket chain, and a decrease in the number of people converting to organic farming (Dendooven, 2003; De Cock et al., 2016; Hooper, 2002).

The lack of information on organic conversion is also a hindrance for farmers to convert to organic farming. When farmers do not have access to information, it is as if the option does not even exist (Coremans, 2016). Farmers are sometimes only informed in the same way as consumers, namely through the products in the shop (De Cock et al., 2016). A final constraint is access to land, especially for nimaculturists, i.e. farmers who have not inherited from ancestors or family farmers. Especially since organic farming requires land with specific criteria and that farmers are sometimes unwilling to give up their land because they have a bad image of organic farming. (Coremans, 2016).

4.1.3. Evolution of policies for organic production, distribution and consumption

This section will investigate how the different policies and legislation are influencing the production, distribution and consumption of organic food processes. To start with a general overview, a broad picture will be described on the European Union level. Then, the research is narrowed down to the Flanders level, and afterwards a more precise example will be explained through the case of Leuven 2030. By finding which impacts and consequences the policies and reglementations have on the organic food system, this analysis will allow us to go further in the response of the research question.

4.1.3.1 Policy organic production in the European union

Legislation 2018/848

Organic agricultural production in European Union countries has been regulated since 2007 by the legislation 834/2007. This legislation consists of general rules regarding the organic production and labelling system (European Commission, n.d.). A new legislation 2018/848 will come into force in 2022. This will be supported by the organic "action plan" for organic production in the EU proposed in 2021 by the European Commission. This legislation aims to further strengthen the control system through stricter rules and has more consistent controls along the production chain like for example introducing additional rules to make it easier for small producers to convert to organic with a group certification system. With regard to the high costs and bureaucracy involved in organic certification,

the idea is to create 'group certifications' where producers who meet certain criteria can associate with other companies in order to reduce costs and access the organic market more easily (European Commission[2], n.d.; European Commission, 2021).

The tendency of Europe is to add or strengthen the organic production rules. This is to protect organic production but the accompanying administrative work to these rules is not appreciated by some farms. Pipo said that 'They shouldn't make lots and lots of rules and make it endlessly difficult, because then you don't promote it either'. The rules are more felt as a burden than as a help by them (Pipo, Interview 5, 2021).

Green Deal - Farm to fork

With the European Green Deal, which aims to achieve climate neutrality by 2050, a strategy called "Farm to fork" was promoted (European Commission, 2021). According to this strategy by 2030 there will be an increase of 25% in land under organic farming. In order to achieve the latter two objectives, a new 2021-2027 action plan for organic production has been set up by the European Commission (European Commission, n.d; European Commission[3], n.d.). This new action plan is receiving the support of the agricultural policy (CAP), as well as the policy on subsidies to farmers in the European Union. Thanks to the CAP's rural development programmes; organic farmers are receiving economic support in their transition, production and maintenance and the commission will provide technical support to farmers around Europe. These should increase the uptaking of organic farming and in the expansion of organic areas (European Commission, 2021; European Commission, 2014)

In recent years, consumer interest in organic products has increased significantly. In order to better manage this organic "boom" the EU has implemented the legislation 2018/848, the Green Deal and the action plan 2021-2027. The EU has a key role in the raising of organic production and consumption and new laws and funds are essential to encourage more farmers to convert to organic agriculture. At the moment it is too early to judge whether these policies are effective.

4.1.3.2 Flanders

The Flemish government focuses on four themes in which they financially support the organic sector. The first theme is 'supply chain development' (10% of the governmental expenditures in the organic sector) (Timmermans & Van Bellegem, 2019). This includes subsidies for sectoral organizations that try to connect all the stakeholders in the supply chain. Examples in Flanders are Bioforum and Bio zoekt keten. The second theme is 'organic production' (49%). In this theme, subsidies are given to organic farmers as support for the organic character of their production but also financing specialized business advice for the farmers and inspection bodies fall under this theme. 'Research and knowledge development' (38%) is the third theme to be invested in. At last, a

small part (3%) of the governmental spending for the organic sector goes to 'promotion and broadening of public support'. In total, 4,7 million euro were invested in 2019 in the organic sector. However, this number is a combination of Flemish and European spending. Separated numbers are not found.

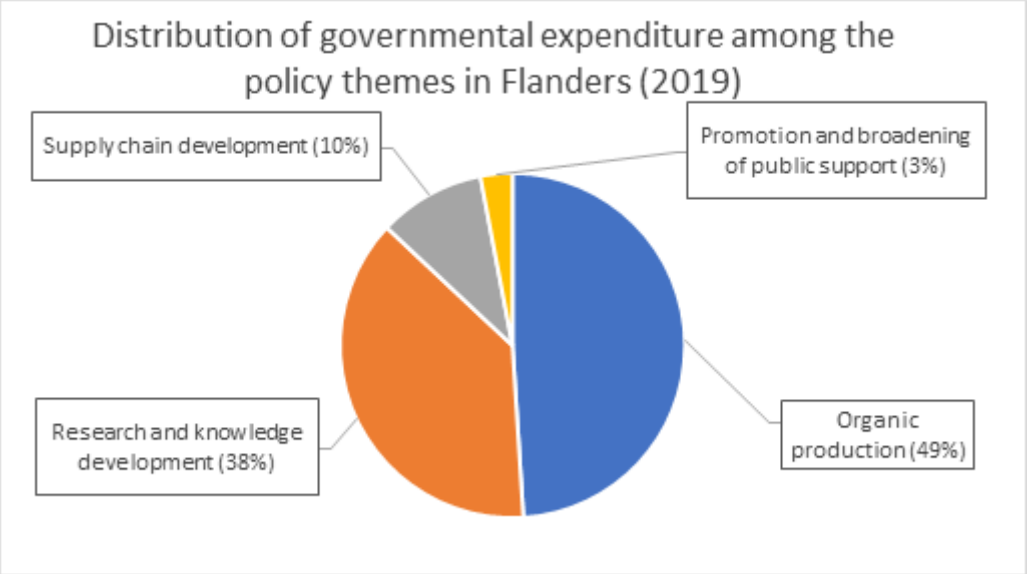

Figure 3: Distribution of governmental expenditure for the organic sector among the policy themes, in percentage in Flanders in 2019 (Timmermans & Van Bellegem, 2019)

Regarding fair trade relations, the Flemish government does not mention this in any of its policies. However, the financial support of organizations such as Bioforum can have an indirect impact on the trade relations. Bioforum, for example, mentions fair trade relations in its five-year plan as one of its five pillars to focus on (Bioforum, 2019). One of the proposed actions to realize this aim is organizing consultations and collaboration with actors in the whole chain (Bioforum, 2019). This corresponds to the idea of roundtable conversations with whole producer groups and the retailers.

4.1.3.3 Leuven

On the local level, it can be seen that a sustainable food system is one of the central themes in the policy of Leuven. Local and seasonal food is thereby the main focus (De Paep et al., 2019; Stad Leuven, 2019; Leuven 2030, n.d.) and prefered above organic. Although being organic is also valued as sustainable so promoting sustainable food in general will also benefit organic farmers.

A clear, detailed vision with many concrete actions is developed together with Leuven 2030. Many of these actions want to contribute to more sustainable agriculture methods such as a tight collaboration with the university and more shared knowledge between the farmers. This should also happen between conventional and organic farmers or as Caroline Huyghe said “it's not enough to only work with the ones that have already converted to organic for example. so we really want to have an open dialogue where there's a place for everyone to participate” (Interview 4, Caroline Huyghe, 2021). At an economic level, the city tries to give farmers more stability through supporting

participatory agriculture, short-chain distribution and cooperative initiatives. All of which could add to more distributional fairness. They also actively promote sustainable food through markets and other events and protect good agricultural land against new buildings (De Paep et al., 2019; Klimaatactieplan, 2019; voeding verbindt, n.d.). Also, implicitly, attention is paid to procedural fairness by giving farmers a voice through Leuven 2030 which is part of the social level. Remarkable is that the relationship between farmers and larger supermarkets is not mentioned as a solution for a more sustainable food system. Caroline Huyghe, interviewee for Leuven 2030, said about this topic 'there have been talks with retailers but more like local supermarkets ...there are no specific actions with retailers at the moment' (Caroline Huyghe, Interview 4, 2021).

At all levels of policy making, organic farming is not only mentioned but also promoted so the policies could also be called 'conscious' to a certain level. Altogether, the legislation of Europe focuses most on making and controlling the rules of production methods of organic farming which take into account the organic agriculture principles of health, care and ecology (3.1.2). Another focus of Europe but also of Flanders and Leuven, is provision of land as well as economic support. However, economic support is limited to subsidies and promotion but rules for fairness in trading practices are not mentioned (Padel, 2010) nor is there the intention to put up a neutral complaint board that could preserve the fairness as mentioned in part 3.2.1.

4.2 Bio-Planet

The purpose of this section is to present the case study, which is the Bio-Planet supermarket. In order to answer the research questions, an analysis will be made of the specificities of the chain that may have an influence on the relationship between farmers and the Belgian supermarket chain. This will be done by addressing the history of the chain and its parent company as well as the labels and criteria used to select the different producers.

4.2.1 Colruyt group

The Colruyt group is a Belgian family-owned company which operates a number of subsidiaries such as; Colruyt, Bio-Planet, Okay, DATS 24, Cru, etc. The group was founded in 1928 by Franz Colruyt and today operates in Belgium, France and Luxembourg. On 31 March 2021, it had a total of 30,631 employees.

The Colruyt group has a very different way of working with farmers than other big companies like Carrefour. As a relatively small company, they have chosen to work as directly as possible with their producers and farmers to avoid intermediaries and unnecessary extra costs. They also want to support local Belgian farmers, as Erik said: " They try to establish long-term relationships with their

farmers, especially the organic ones, but also the non-organic ones ” (Erik Mathijs, Interview 2, 2021).

4.2.2 Bio-Planet: the concept

The Colruyt Group also tries to promote organic farming in different ways (Colruytgroup, 2020); by increasing the supply of organic products, by investing in some farmers to convert to organic (Colruytgroup, 2019) and with the creation of Bio-Planet. Bio-Planet is a supermarket chain that mainly sells organic products (95%). It offers food and non-food products, processed and raw, and is only located in Belgium. They currently have a total of 31 shops nationwide and one online shop. They are present in all major cities in the regions except Luxembourg (Jeroen Van Belleghem, Interview 3, 2021).

4.2.3 History

Jeroen Van Belleghem, the head of Bio-Planet's sales department, explained in the interview that Bio-Planet emerged in the late 1990s. At that time, there were many food crises and scandals. These included the Coca-Cola sugar crisis in Belgium, where people became ill and 30 million bottles had to be withdrawn from the market (Johnson, V. and Peppas, S.C. 2003) the problems with the dioxin pollutant and mad cow disease.

As a result of these scandals, people started looking for a more balanced life, as Jeroen said during the interview. This collective awareness created an opportunity in the market and a demand for healthy products, including organic products. It was in this context that Bio-Planet was created with the aim of taking the lead in this new lifestyle by investing in knowledge and expertise in the consumption of organic products (Jeroen Van Belleghem, Interview 3, 2021). This almost philanthropic behaviour is also reflected in Bio-Planet's annual accounts. In the profit and loss account published in the Central Balance Sheet Office for the financial year from April 2019 to April 2020, an annual loss of EUR 5 million was reported. The organic supermarket chain has been reporting net losses since 2016 and before that results fluctuated between loss and profit without exceeding 900,000 euros. In comparison, the shop subsidiary of the Colruyt chain Okay, whose shops are comparable in size (the main difference being that Bio-Planet offers organic products), reported a profit of almost 50 million euros for the period from April 2019 to April 2020 (Bio-Planet, 2002–2020; Okay, 2020). This confirms that the initial motivation has changed from seizing a market opportunity to “be collaborative and work together with farmers and help them improve their situation” (Erik Mathijs, Interview 2, 2021).

Bio-Planet also states that they want to help customers make a transition to “conscious consumption” (Jeroen Van Belleghem, Interview 3, 2021). This means that they have the willingness to take the role of exemplarity and guidance by raising awareness among their customers to make the right

choices. Eating three times a day also means going to the supermarket regularly and making a difference by opting for products that have been made without destroying the planet. This is a political act that has an environmental impact and for which Bio-Planet wants to be a positive influence.

4.2.4 Labels and criterias

The supermarket of Bio-Planet has to comply with labels and criterias in order to respect the reglementation under the organic food systems. This section will help to answer the sub-question: "How does the label/grid of criteria for organic food of Bio-Planet influence its farmers?". In order to answer this, the following part of the research will try to understand and describe how the labels and criterias are built and therefore, if they represent an incentive either for the farmers or for the retailers, or both.

The EU organic logo

This logo allows, since 2010, the identification of agricultural materials produced according to European organic farming regulations. For processed products, the rule is that at least 95% of the materials must be of organic origin. Next to the logo, a number code of the inspection body and the place where the agricultural materials were grown must be inserted (European Commission, n.d.). Bio-Planet has a deep trust in this logo and, in fact, 95% of their products have the European leaf on it (Jeroen Van Belleghem, Interview 3, 2021). This label, as said by Jeroen Van Belleghem during the interview, ensures that the rules are the same in all EU countries, making it easier to export and import organic products.

In Belgium, the control and certification of organic products is delegated by three private bodies. They are authorised by ISO 17065 and approved by the Minister of Agriculture on the basis of European and Belgian laws. In the three regions the following 3 bodies have been delegated (Wallonaise agriculture SPW, 2019).

Boni Selection Bio

Boni selection Bio is Colruyt Group's private label that comprises 400 products at an affordable price and high quality. These products are labeled with the EU label but sold at a minor price (Colruytgroup, n.d.)

Biogarantie

Biogarantie is a label created in 1987 in Belgium for organic farming. This label can be found on food labels and cosmetics. The label is based on European legislation and is managed by organisations with an active role in organic farming in Flanders, such as Bioforum Vlaanderen, and Wallonia. Checks are carried out by independent bodies approved by the Belgian authorities. (Biogarantie, n.d.)

Fairtrade

Fairtrade is a system for ethically guaranteeing the exchange of products from poorer countries. When a product has the Fairtrade certification mark, it means that the producers and traders have respected social, environmental and economic criteria. They are designed to support the development of small producers in developing countries and to empower farmers within the fairtrade community (Fairtrade, n.d.)

Regional product

In addition to organic products, Bio-Planet wants to sell local products. To do so, there is a label called "Regional Products" which guarantees that these have been produced close to the place of sale. This means that the products sold are different from one supermarket to another. These labets, marked by a carrot, help to establish a solid relationship with the local farmers and valorize it. Some producers just choose to put a belgium flag in their products (Bio-Planet, n.d.)

"Vegetables in transition"

For a farmer, the transition to organic production can be very long, expensive and not very attractive: "In the transition phase of 2-3 years a farmer is not allowed to sell his products as organic. In between he can just sell conventionals" (Erik Mathijs, Interview 2, 2021), even if you are already producing with organic methods, which are way more expensive. This can be an obstacle for many producers to become organic.

In order to help 'De Lochting' during this transition to sell its products at a higher price to meet the financial cost, under the brand name Boni Selection, Colruyt invented a special label for organic transition in 2016. The name of the label was "vegetable in transition" (Erik Mathijs, Interview 2, 2021). Indeed, they sold a lot of vegetables in transition such as: parsley, red beets, pumpkins, etc. This collaboration between Colruyt and 'De Lochting' has been a useful way to promote the sale of these products at a higher price so as to enable the expansion of their area 'under the organic label' by a further 20 hectares of land (Colruytgroup, 2018)

Eco-score

Eco-score is a new solution recently adopted by Colruyt to help customers make more conscious and sustainable choices by providing information on the ecological footprint of a product. This system has been developed in France by a group of independent professionals. The score is composed of the life cycle analysis of a product (LCA) and extra indicators. It works through a design and classification system with letters and colours like the Nutri-score and Colruyt has currently adopted this system for 2500 Boni selection products (Colruytgroup, 2021). This system allows customers to quickly and effectively assess the environmental impact of their product.

5. Discussion

This section discusses and attempts to answer the main question and the 3 different sub-questions established at the beginning of this report. To do so, the discussion will be based primarily on the research findings as well as on the various interviews conducted for this project.

How does the label/ grid of criteria for organic food of Bio-Planet influence its farmers?
The objective of this sub-question is to investigate how the labels/criteria adopted by bio-planet to select products influence farmers and their production.

Bio-planet selects its products on the basis of their organic character and has full confidence in the EU organic label. Indeed, 95% of the products on the shelves are marked with the EU leaf (Jeroen Van Belleghem, Interview 3, 2021). Farmers have to comply with the required criteria without having any power to decide on this. But in recent years Bio-Planet has tried to remain innovative and to offer other sustainable foods that are not specifically related to organic farming. Indeed, Bio-Planet is increasing its offer of "local products", marked with the label "Regional products"(Bio-Planet, n.d.). "Organic honey from Belgium is impossible to find because of many rules, and we have to import it from Italy, China or Argentina. That is why we sell a lot of local honey" (Jeroen Van Belleghem, Interview 3, 2021). They have also developed their own vertical cultivation in which they produce their own basil, which cannot be considered organic because, so far, there are no organic regulations for vertical cultivation (Jeroen Van Belleghem, Interview 3, 2021). The introduction of these innovative ideas creates a demand and helps to create a market for these alternative products.

As just mentioned, there are many benefits to selling organic products or going beyond this label and favouring for example local products. As the Sales Department Chief of Bio-Planet said, “at the moment, the first thing we want to buy is Belgian products” (Jeroen Van Belleghem, interview 3, 2021). However, this is not always possible. As a supermarket, Bio-Planet wants to be able to guarantee a range of products that are accessible in all seasons. When there are products like tomatoes, that you cannot find in winter in Belgium, they import them from other countries (Jeroen Van Belleghem, interview 3, 2021). The Färm cooperative did the same by choosing to sell Belgian tomatoes, in their shops only between June and October, as the energy cost of heating the greenhouses could sometimes exceed the cost of transport (Färm, 2019).

There are two other reasons that push distributors to search for organic food outside Belgium. The first one is due to the more competitive price of the goods outside Belgium (Brzezina, 2017) while the second one is for the limited supply of organic products produced in the country. Bio-planet, while making the most of the existing organic market, is forced to import many products from other

countries. This was the case with pork. A few years ago, only 30% of this meat was of Belgian origin and with this they already exploited the entire existing organic market. The remaining 70% came from Spain and Germany (Hendrik Van Dael, interview 3, 2021). Thanks to the collaboration between Biovar.be, Delavi and Colruyt group creating the “100% Belgian organic pork chain” at the bio-planet store, all the pork meat is organic (colruytgroup, 2018). It can be affirmed that Bio-planet helped farmers to convert to organic farming or increase their organic lands. However, it is not possible to help everyone and choosing where to invest becomes a strategic choice, "we want to see where there is a problem in the market to see which Belgian products are not organic or there are few of them. So, if we talk about milk, we will not support farmers who convert their milk to organic because there is already a large supply" (Hendrik Van Dael, interview 3, 2021). Another example is the 'vegetable in transition' label created to help De Lochting during the conversion period of some land to organic farming. Vegetables sold at the same price as organic ones provided financial support to the company during the 2-3 years of transition (Erik Mathijs, interview 2, 2021; Colruytgroup, 2018). When it comes to price competitiveness on the European market with Belgian products, it is difficult to make a choice between profit and sustainability or relocation. In order to help consumers make the best choice and to promote local organic farming it is necessary to keep the price affordable but fair for the farmers. One way to do this would be like the Färm cooperative which tries to favour Belgian organic products in season when their price does not exceed the price of organic products on the European market by 15% (Färm, 2019).

Does the partnership between Bio-Planet and its farmers provide a stable financial situation to the producers?

The second sub-research question deals with the economic relationship Bioplanet has with its farmers. Moreover an answer was searched on the question if Bioplanet could provide a stable financial situation to its producers because it is believed that this could help farmers to convert to organic farming or support organic farmers to stay organic. As seen in the theoretical part about fairness in the farmer-retailer relations, stability could be secured by a fair price and long-term agreements.

Both the producer interviewees said that they certainly felt more stability was given by the collaboration with Bioplanet (Pipo, Interview 5, 2021; De Lochting, Interview 6, 2021). This stability is mainly explained by the long-term agreements between Bioplanet and its farmers that results in a constant demand for the producer. Also the experts endorse that bioplanet is known for having long-term agreements (Erik Mathijs, Interview 2, 2021).

In terms of pricing, there is less clarity. The farmers say that they decide their price themselves which is why they see it as fair. They also feel that they can talk about the price because they are in a long-term relationship (Pipo, Interview 5, 2021 ; De Lochting, Interview 6, 2021) or as bioplanet

said "...not purchases but partners. They are persons who we can talk with, we can find solutions" (Bio-Planet, Interview 3, 2021). However, they don't know for how much their product is sold in the shop nor do they talk with other producers from the same sector about the price. This lack of transparency can make it so that the producer can cover all its costs and have stability but maybe they do not get the fair share. However, there is a presumption that distributional fairness is preserved in the case of pricing since Bioplanet breaks even for the moment (Bio-Planet Interview 3, 2021) and therefore probably does not earn any (unfair) profit although without full transparency there is no certainty. Also, the price of organic food is less volatile than the price of conventional food which is an advantage for the organic producers (Bio-Planet, Interview 3, 2021). Also no policies cover this problem of fairness. This could be done by forcing transparency through laws or by installing a neutral complaint board.

Another stimulans for conversion in which Bioplanet plays an important role, is the creation of demand for organic food which is an economic incentive for conventional farmers to convert regardless of whether they also support the idea in principle or not.

Besides the financial stability that bioplanet provides, Pipo said that logistics are also easier when working with a big buyer such as bioplanet. An example given is that the product has to be brought to only one depot instead of to many different little shops (Pipo, Interview 5, 2021).

A last topic to tackle is the problem of availability of land and the expensiveness of these lands. A few years ago, Bioplanet bought the farm 'Het Zilverleen' to prevent it from being taken over by other sectors. Both the farmers interviewed as well as Erik Mathijs agreed that this was a good evolution. It is good that people or companies with the means for it protect these lands. This task could also be seen as a responsibility of governments in making conscious regulations. As described in part 1.3.3, the city of Leuven is already working on the protection of these lands (Caroline Huyghe, interview 4, 2021).

There can be concluded that bioplanet is indeed giving its farmers more stability and in other areas too (provision of land, helping to convert,..), they use their economic resources to help the organic market to grow. However, there is not enough information to be sure about the fairness of the price.

How are decisions made regarding food production between actors? (Bio-Planet, farmers, producers, consumers, Food Networks)

The third sub-questions related to our main research question emphasizes the social dimension. It questions the decision-making process between the actors involved in the supply chain regarding organic food production.

Depending on the products sold - raw or transformed products -, the relation between farmers and retailers are not established in the same way. Indeed, this is what the Sales Department Chief of

Bio-Planet explained: « There is a big difference depending on what kind of product rates. Like, what we see is that milk activities like yogurt/cheese, we don't have a direct link with the farmers because we sell products of the fabrics not of the first made production. For vegetables, for example, it is more directly with the farmer » (Jeroen Van Belleghem, Interview 3, 2021).

Sometimes, trust is already implemented, Pipo for example explained the way they are interacting with Bio-Planet « it is all about mutual respect for each other (...) If there is a problem, it is discussed. » (Brecht Porreye, Interview 5, 2021). It is reflecting a strong link between both actors, where trust is a solid foundation thanks to which they can relate to each other. In order to build this, Bio-Planet has the willingness to establish long-term relationships (Erik Mathijs, Interview 2, 2021). By doing so, Bio-Planet guarantees collaborative work hand in hand with their organic producers. For example, De Lochting explained that « we agree on a cultivation plan in which we determine the type of vegetables, the sequence and the length of the period » (Luc Maertens, Interview 6, 2021). This relation of trust enables the empowerment and the help coming from the organic supermarket to the farmers as Erik said. This results in a real improvement of the producers' situation in general, as they feel accompanied. De Lochting seemed very satisfied with their collaboration with Bio-Planet: « We are each other's ambassadors. » they said.

However, both parties are keeping some kind of privacy about the details of their relationship. Erik explained that the secret of trading is always present and doesn’t allow him to know the precision of the contract established between the retailers and the farmers. Both the type of the contract and the interdiction to go in depth into this subject, emphasize a lack of transparency. Regarding this issue, Erik sees it as an example of flaw, even though they would like to improve this current situation.

The mismatch between producers and supermarkets is mainly due to the number of intermediaries or organisations that are involved within the supply chain. Indeed, the bigger the supermarket is, the more it will not have direct contacts with their suppliers. This is not the case for supermarkets such as Colruyt Group (compared to bigger ones such as Carrefour, for instance) that try to avoid as much as they can the multiplication of intermediaries, as Erik said.

6. Conclusion

Overall, it can be concluded that the relationship between Bio-planet and its Belgian farmers has a rather positive impact on Belgian agriculture in general. Indeed, the different actors seem to have the same vision of agriculture and try to move forward together with the common goal of making agriculture more sustainable and communicating its importance. However, Bio-Planet, as Jeroen explained during the interview, may not exist anymore in twenty years. Indeed, conventional supermarkets could gradually offer products similar to those of Bio-Planet and this competition could be detrimental to the maintenance of the chain, which is already not making a net profit. One way to remain competitive would be for Bio-Planet to anticipate market developments by offering innovative products and practices.

Reflection on our own research

One of the most critical aspects encountered during this work concerns the interviews. It was not easy to find experts and farmers to interview, and only a small number were interviewed compared to the initial planned number. A larger number of interviewees, especially producers, would have made it possible to answer our research question more objectively. In order to collect more testimonies, both more time for the research and expanding the research area outside Leuven would have been needed. Moreover, it would have been interesting to be able to meet the interviewees face to face and visit the farms to better understand their reality. This may have been the most important limitation due to Covid's restrictions. However, the discovery of the food reality of Belgium and more precisely of Leuven has been really interesting to work on. Finally, working in a group gave the opportunity to meet and discuss, drawing on the different educational and cultural backgrounds of the members of the group.

7. Recommendations

In order to improve the relationship between Belgian organic farmers and Bio-Planet towards a more sustainable food system, 3 main recommendations have been developed.

The first one is to involve farmers more in the communication and education of consumers. Organic food is more expensive than conventional food and it should be well explained to the consumers what the reasons are for this. Especially, the negative externalities of conventional food that are not included in the price should be emphasized. Making this a teamwork will achieve better results.

The second recommendation for Bio-planet would be to promote products that go beyond organic and moreover they should play an active role in developing these products. They say that they want to be a guide to "conscious consumption" and therefore also to "conscious production". The road to achieving both is still ongoing and they can and should keep fulfilling their role of exemplary guides by moving on to the next step not only to implement their mission but also to survive in the market.

And finally, there should be more transparency about the prices at which products are bought from farmers and the profits made by the supermarkets. Also here, Bioplanet could be exemplary for other supermarkets since sustainability also involves equity and in this case equity through the supply chain. Fairness is not about getting enough money in absolute terms but getting a fair share of the total. This cannot be checked without transparency. An example on how this transparency could be implemented can be found in the shop 'the food hub'. They tag every product with a visualization of who gets which share of the price. A well-organized company such as Bioplanet should be able to arrange this. A bonus would be the good publicity that Bioplanet can receive for this. A help in the switch to more transparency in supermarket-farmers collaborations could be given by the Flemish or European government when they would make this mandatory.

This research focused on the relationship between farmers and retailers because supermarkets are important in the current Belgian food system. It does not question if distributing organic food by the supermarkets is the most sustainable. Of course, other distribution channels for organic food do also exist such as cooperatives, CSA, etcetera… Further research could dive into those systems and questions could be asked such as 'What are the influences of alternative distribution systems on farmers?', 'How do they tackle sustainability problems?' and 'Which system could be considered as the most sustainable?' Also, the organic part of this research could be questioned. 'Should we really be focused on organic agriculture or do other production methods exist that are more sustainable?' and 'Which solutions can be found for the weaknesses of organic farming?' (3.1.3), could be examples of research ideas.

8. Individual reflections

8.1 The distribution of organic food in Leuven:The preservation of fairness from the point of view of the different channels - Emma Van Acker

Organic food production is based on four core principles: care (for the general well-being of not only the current generation and environment but also those in the future), health (a food system that is sustainable for humans, animals, soils and plant), ecology (working together with the ecological systems on this planet), fairness (fair relationships between all stakeholders in the food system) (IFOAM,n.d.).

Compared to the other three principles, relatively little is written about fairness (Padel, Zander & Gössinger, 2010; Carmona, Griffith & Aguirre, 2020). Research is hindered due to limited available data about trading practices such as price setting, product availability, etcetera. However, this data and the research that can be carried out with it is very important in understanding and solving the bottlenecks facing the organic food system (Carmona et al., 2020). One of these bottlenecks is the availability of organic food (Carmona et al., 2020; Erik Mathijs, interview 2, 2021). A push for more availability could be getting fair prices for the products and financial stability for the organic farm (Carmona et al., 2020).

In the case of Bioplanet, having a good relationship with the farmer is central in their working. Financial stability should be provided by the engagement of Bioplanet to long-term agreements with its farmers. However, providing a fair price is nowhere mentioned in its mission nor anywhere else on their website. The principle of fairness seemed to be forgotten here or it is not well communicated. In this individual part, a comparison will be made of the communication of fair prices for organic products of different distribution channels for organic food around Leuven and additionally, their practices to provide fair prices and financial stability for the farmers will be weighed against each other.

The distributional channels taken into account are specialized stores with the cases Bioplanet and Origin'O, cooperative shops with the cases Färm, Biotoop and the Food Hub, Box schemes with as cases voedselteams and Boeren en Buren and, at last, CSA with as case Boer en Compagnie. Only information that was accessible on their websites was included in the research. It is assumed that the core values and practices should be found there or otherwise, they are not well communicated or the subject is of lesser importance to them.

Specialized stores

Both **Bioplanet** and **Origin'O** don't mention fair trading practices on their websites (Colruyt Group, 2021, Origin'O, n.d). Only health and ecology are mentioned in the mission of Origin'O.

Cooperative shops

Leuven hosts quite some cooperative initiatives with organic values. The latest in line is **Färm**. Färm puts organic food (with a bio label) central but also, additional, ecological, economic and social commitments are made. The first economic commitment is described as fair prices, as a way to enable an income to live from and to invest with for the farmers and as a way to make organic food more available to more people. The second economic commitment is described as being transparent about money flows to provide an economic alternative on a human scale against a speculative economy. With a comprehensive, public charter, Färm tries to put this transparency into reality (Färm, n.d.). There can be concluded that Färm not only finds fair prices and transparency in money flows important but they also communicate in detail about it.

The **biotoop** mentions the concepts of fair trade and fair price explicitly in its mission. However, transparency is confined to communicating the origin of the products (Biotoop, n.d.).

The **Food Hub** states in its mission that it wants to build a 'new economy on the basis of trust and cooperation, which can only be achieved by working in a transparent way'. Transparency is put into practice by giving information about the origin, production methods and division of the price for each product visualized by a pie chart (Food Hub, 2021).

Box schemes

Box schemes is a distribution system of food in which consumers can buy directly from the farmer. At a set time, often once a week, you can pick up your box with the ordered products.

One of the box schemes organizations in Leuven is **voedselteams**. They want to obtain a fair price by leaving all the control over production methods, supply and price setting by the farmer. An annual membership fee and a contribution from producers, which is 6% of their turnover, is asked for the distribution costs (voedselteams, n.d.).

Also **Boeren en buren**, another box scheme organization at work in Leuven, lets the farmers be fully autonomous in deciding the price. In their working methods, they mention: 'There must be a fair distribution of the added value between the various actors' (Boeren en buren, n.d.).

CSA

The CSA working of **Boer en Compagnie** works with a constant annual fee. The harvest will be shared with the members. This method spreads the risk of a bad crop year but also the gains of a good year. The farmers get a steady income for the work they do and are not dependent on the market prices or on the success of the harvest (BoerEnCompagnie, n.d.).

For the examples of Leuven, a generalized conclusion could be drawn. It seems that the closer the customer is to the farmer, the higher the fairness of the price is and the more stability the farmer has.

Going from specialized stores to cooperative shops, to box schemes and finally to CSA, the customer gets more and more involved in the distribution process and the farmer gets more and more autonomy over the price setting. However, the communication on the websites is most elaborate for the cooperatives. A blind spot in this research is that it relies only on the communication about fair trading practices while the real actions should be examined. On the other hand, good communication leads to transparency and transparency is seen as a first step into enhancing fairness (Padel et al., 2010) so a lack of good communication could be seen as a sign that improvement in fairness is possible.

At the same time, every distribution channel has other advantages and disadvantages. For example, cooperatives may be more focused on fairness but specialized stores like Bioplanet have the advantage of simplified logistics as well as the possibility to expand the farm (Pipo, Interview 5, 2021). So fairness is important but so is the practicability of the distribution channel in making the food system more sustainable.

At last, besides the low availability of organic food, the high price is also named as a bottleneck of the organic food system. Raising consumer awareness around food could be one way to improve the motivation of consumers to buy organic (Carmona et al., 2020). However, some people cannot afford to buy organic even when they are convinced of it. Research on this second bottleneck is very important in improving the food system. There has not only to be a look at how to convince consumers but also on how to make it more affordable for example by spreading the price over the consumers like the local shop ‘Het perron’ is trying to establish in Leuven (REUSED,2021).

8.2 Organic farming in Togo - Larba Rosalie Mombidja

In order to compare the Togolese realities with the Belgian realities in terms of organic farming, a projection will be made on the production, the market and the labels. Then a case study on a shop selling organic food "Bio Togo" will be presented and a conclusion will be drawn.

Organic production and market in Togo

Located in West Africa, Togo covers an area of 56,785 km² with a population of more than 8.6 million in 2020. Agriculture is Togo's main economic activity, employing nearly 65% of the active population and contributing 40% of the GDP. There are 3.6 million hectares of cultivable land in Togo, but 1.4 million are exploited (Africa Agriculture, 2020). 39,390 hectares or 1% of the cultivated land in Togo is dedicated to organic farming and occupied by 36,645 farmers, (Agence Bio, 2019).

From 2011 to 2019, the area of cultivable organic land increased from 1336 hectares to 39390 hectares and the number of organic producers increased from 2057 to 36645, (Agence Bio, 2019; Togo First, 2019). This evolution is due to the fact that the export demand for organic soy and pineapple from Togo has increased considerably and several farmers have started producing organic soy and pineapple, which is exported to Europe. Between 2018 and 2019 the export doubled, Togo went from 22,000 (2018) to 45,000 (2019) tons of exported products (Afrique agriculture, 2020). This net evolution, which is estimated at 102%, has allowed Togo to occupy the first place of suppliers of organic products from the European Economic Area in the ECOWAS zone, the 5th place in Africa and the 31st place in the world, (Manationtogo, 2020).

Agriculture in Togo has long been subsistence and traditional, i.e. people farmed just to feed their families, at times selling a small amount to buy other goods. Large-scale farming was not really adopted, because there was a lack of means to buy machinery and inputs.

But today, with the availability of chemical inputs on the Togolese market, agriculture has changed its face, especially for cereals. Vegetables have not been much affected. Even today, the majority of vegetables are organic in Togo.

Unlike bioplanet, Togo has not really developed the culture of selling organic agricultural products in supermarkets, but sales are made directly on the local market after the harvest. For export, there are several trucks that go to the local markets or to the farmers to buy the products and then transport them to the export sites. There are some shops like "Togossimé" and "Bio TOGO", which try to sell organic products like Bioplanet, but this system is not yet very developed.

Togo's organic label

The labelling of organic products in Togo still needs to be considered (Agri Digital, 2020), there are not enough labels for organic products in Togo, there are just a few shops that market organic products without necessarily having a label, for example: the online shop "Bio Togo". In recent years, the high demand for Togolese organic pineapples and soybeans has led to the creation of a label for these two products, the "golden label" (label d'or, 2021). But there is a "made in Togo" label that promotes entrepreneurship by marketing Togolese products (made in Togo, 2018). This delay does not allow Togo to better market its organic products.

Case study: Bio TOGO

In Togo there is no supermarket like Bioplanet, which focuses on the marketing of organic products in Togo, but there are shops such as "Bio TOGO" which will be presented in this part of the document. Bio TOGO is an online shop selling organic products. It also has a market place located

in the capital of Togo, Lomé, in the Adidogomé district, 60m from the post office, Boulevard du 30 Août. It markets ecological products, food, spices, cosmetics and food supplements. It aims to promote the consumption of organic products by reassuring consumers of the quality of their products. It is supplied by Togolese producers, therefore by a system of supply courses. This shop delivers an average of ten orders per day, which shows that it is still to be developed. As mentioned earlier, this is due to the fact that organic products are available on the local markets at very low prices. Bio TOGO, like most of the organic shops in Togo, needs to work on their sales and communication techniques in order to better attract customers to them (Bio TOGO, 2021).

Conclusion

Although Togo has improved its ranking in recent years in terms of organic production, there is still work to be done in terms of domestic marketing and processing. If Togo imports manufactured products (about 56% in 2015) (Prospective Monde, n.d), it is because of the lack of locally processed products. The problem of labelling and certification is another area that needs a lot of work. Small farmers should be given subsidies to expand their cultivable areas to occupy more than 1% of the land under cultivation and make organic farming flourish in Togo. In addition, the soy and pineapple sector, which is currently well developed, should try to improve. Among the different actors, who support organic production in Togo, there are the NGOs, who also play an important role, by raising awareness on the importance of consuming organic food and accompanying organic farmers by bringing them sometimes the best techniques or enhancing their endogenous knowledge. With all these actors, if Togo manages to develop a good strategic plan for the promotion of organic consumption, and implement it, perhaps Togo will be able to aspire to the bioplanet model over time.

8.3 Comparison of food strategies in the context of farmer-distributor relations: Leuven 2030 and GoodFood Brussels - Elisabeth Lerchs

Leuven has implemented a food strategy as part of its "Leuven 2030" program that started in 2018. It has been inspired by similar programs in other cities, notably through its participation in the European program Urbact. That aims to exchange sustainable development practices in cities (*URBACT at Glance*, 2021). Among the participants is also the city of Brussels, which after its participation developed its GoodFood program in 2015 (Bruxelles Environnement et al., 2015). The objective of this analysis is to compare the two food strategies in terms of their influence on the farmer-distributor relationship. This will allow the identification of good practices and possibly their application to the farmer-supermarket relationship for distributors such as Bio-Planet, which are present in both cities. First, elements for improving the relationship between distributors and farmers will be presented for the two different cities. Then, a comparison will be made between their different practices to discuss what could be implemented in the different cities.

Leuven 2030:

Leuven's food strategy is part of the Leuven 2030 program, which seeks to make Leuven a carbon neutral city by 2030. It aims to make the agricultural and food system more sustainable. That is, a system where everyone has access to healthy food, where prices are fair and reflect the environmental and social cost while respecting the regeneration limits of the natural resources involved in production (Leuven 2030, n.d.). In line with the objective of the analysis, this section will present the elements of the strategy that impact the relationship between producers and distributors in Leuven.

The first thing to note is that the strategy was thought through by all actors in the Leuven food system, not by a group of experts. The simple fact of bringing these different actors together has led to collaborations such as the creation of a "local" section at the Carrefour in Herent (Leuven 2030, n.d.). In terms of concrete actions, a notable tool that has been created within the program is the EcoFood Map . This map lists the different expert actors and initiatives of the sustainable food system. Events and campaigns have also been set up to promote sustainable food, which are also included in the map (Eco Food Map Leuven, n.d.). This allows to create collaborations between the different actors and more particularly the distributors and the local producers. Indeed, to promote the short chain, an online platform and a physical meeting place are the two key elements (Leuven 2030, n.d.).

Good Food Brussels:

The Good Food strategy is aimed at developing “sustainable” food in Brussels, which means local/Belgian, seasonal, with vegetable proteins, organic and fair trade. In order to describe it, this section is mainly based on two documents. The first one is the objectives of the strategy written in 2015 by Brussels Environment when it was set up (Bruxelles Environnement et al., 2015). The second is the evaluation of the strategy at the end of the 5 years first trial of the program also written by the organization responsible for the creation and implementation of the strategy (Bruxelles Environnement et al., 2020). In the establishment plan, the strategy is developed around 6 axes. This analysis will focus on the ones that have the most influence on the distributor-producer relationship.

The first axis aims to support “relocation for a more sustainable supply”. To do this, the region has set itself the objective of promoting the actors of sustainable food. This includes promoting them, creating a network between actors and offering them tools to go further. To do this, a "Good Food" label has been created not only for restaurants and canteens but also for shops and producers (Bruxelles Environnement et al., 2020). The labeled actors are listed on the Good Food website and benefit from awareness campaigns around the strategy. In addition to attracting consumers, this also connects businesses and producers in Brussels (Good Food, n.d.). Another action that has helped bring together different actors is an annual "Speed-dating" day that brings together actors aiming for

a more sustainable food system. As for tools to help the various actors, training and coaching for sustainable food is financed by the region. To encourage supermarkets to go further in their approach, a declaration of commitment signed by representatives of the food trade sector and by the Minister for the Environment of the Brussels Capital Region, was signed. This agreement gathers the commitments of the signatories in order to promote products respecting the "Good Food" principles in the signatories' member shops. In order to simulate the new businesses to enter the dynamic, Good Food criteria were integrated in 2020 in the annual call for projects "Open Soon" of Brussels Economy Employment aiming to encourage the opening of sustainable and innovative new businesses in the Brussels region .The projects involved in a Good Food approach will also be able to receive an increase in their subsidies if they respect the Good Food criteria (Bruxelles Environnement et al., 2020).

To "accompany the transition of demand for all", the strategy has two main objectives. The first is to change the consumption habits of households towards a more sustainable diet and the second is to raise awareness among future generations. To do this, multiple events, training and awareness campaigns have been co-piloted by Brussels Environment in the framework of the Good Food project. This objective goes together with the one of creating a sustainable and desirable "Good Food" culture aiming at promoting a better image of sustainable eating than a boring and expensive one (Bruxelles Environnement et al., 2015). This removes the burden from distributors and producers to inform producers about the quality of sustainable food.

Comparison and discussion:

Both cities have very interesting strategies and are similar in their definition of sustainable food. They both emphasize the importance of communication and promotion of sustainable food. In addition, they have a website that lists the different actors in the sustainable food system, which allows for networking and collaboration between the different actors. Leuven's strategy emphasizes the active participation of all stakeholders. Nevertheless, it seems to have implemented fewer concrete actions than the city of Brussels. Indeed, it does not directly subsidize any project. This could be an incentive for the different actors to innovate or adopt sustainable alternatives. There is also no explicit access to training in sustainable food. A collaboration could be set up in the city between different actors to train distributors to promote and purchase local and organic food, for example. Another element that could help promote local and organic food in supermarkets would be a contract similar to the one in Brussels between food trade representatives and city representatives to promote local and organic products in supermarkets and monitor the share of these products in sales. It is interesting to see these types of programs emerging in more and more cities around the

world. In addition to helping to develop sustainable practices in one's own territory, these strategies can inspire good practices in other cities.

8.4 Organic food in Switzerland - Cristiana Pedrazzini

The aim of this text is to reflect on and compare the Belgian and Swiss realities from the point of view of some of the topics discussed during our research.

The first part of the text describes the situation of organic farming in Switzerland in terms of production and the market, and then explains which labels are most commonly used. Then the ComProBio cooperative is described and the conclusion is a reflection on Switzerland and the results of the research.

Organic farming in Switzerland

Switzerland has an area of 41,285km^2 in which 8,500 million people live, 73.7% of whom live in cities. The land available for food production is 14,817km2 and most farms in Switzerland, i.e. 69%, are small (under 10 ha) (European CSA Research Group, 2016).

Since the 1990s until today, organic farming and the supply of organic products has increased significantly in Switzerland. Between 1990 and 2017, the number of farms decreased from 92815 to 51620. However, organic farms increased from 896 to 6638, accounting for 13% of all farms in 2017.

In 1990, most organic farms were located in the lowlands. In the following years, farms in mountainous regions increased to such an extent that there were 3262 farms in 2017, increasing from 1 to 27% organic area. Holdings in lowland regions number 1746, increasing from 1% to 9%, and those in hill regions 1630 . Today, 16% of Switzerland's agricultural area is farmed organically (FSO, 2019).

The Swiss organic market

At the economic level, the value of organic agricultural production increased from 5.3 % to 11.7 %. In 2017, the value of conventional agricultural production was CHF 9.1 billion while that of organic farming was CHF 1.2 billion. For organic farming, the products with the highest economic value are milk production and cattle breeding, while for conventional farming they are horticulture, vegetable growing and vineyards.

Swiss citizens are devoting an increasing proportion of their money to buying organic products. In 2014, the average expenditure on organic food was 269 Swiss francs per capita (European CSA Research Group, 2016). While in 2016, 9% of households were on organic food and drink. (FSO, 2019)

Until the 1990s, the organic market was mainly in the hands of organic specialist shops, weekly markets and direct sales from farmers. In the years that followed, sales of the latter stagnated and the

two largest Swiss supermarkets, Coop and Migros, took over (Kilcher, 2004). In the 1990s, Coop and Migros started to introduce organic products in their assortment and played a very important, if not fundamental, role in the implementation of organic products in Switzerland. Indeed, the percentage of organic products sold through department stores in Switzerland, about 3-4%, is among the highest in Europe, surpassing Belgium with 2.2% (Kilcher, 2004; FSO, 2019). Today, Coop offers 7500 organic products owning 50 % of the total organic products and Migros 25 % (Kilcher, 2004; Coop, n.d.).

In Switzerland there is not such a large reality as Bio-planet. As we have seen, many organic products are sold directly by the large supermarkets, although in recent years there has been an increasing number of independent organic, zero-waste, local, etc. shops.
In the Italian part of Switzerland there is a chain of shops called "Biocasa". Biocasa has 5 locations in Ticino. Compared to bio-planet it is a very different reality. The size of the shops is much smaller and therefore also the offer of products is limited, the costs are very high and only wealthy people can afford it, the term local is not taken much into consideration and the offer of vegetables is very poor.

Bio Suisse

One of the most common organic labels in Switzerland is the Bio Suisse bud label. Products marked with the gem means that they comply with the Bio Suisse guidelines. It is the most widespread in Switzerland and is adopted by 7,450 farms and horticultural businesses (Bio-Suisse, n.d.). These guidelines apply to both Swiss and imported products. In Coop's range, we find many products with the Bio Suisse bud, but sold under the "naturaplan" brand. It holds 50% of the Bio Suisse market (ACSI, n.d.). Even at Migros, organic products comply with the Bio Suisse guidelines. For imports, however, it follows the less stringent requirements of the EU organic regulations (ACSI, n.d.)

Conclusion

The organic farming sector in Switzerland is highly developed and competent. Since the 1990s, there has been an increase; in the number of organic farms, in the area under organic cultivation, in market value, in demand from the population and in the supply of products. There is a big difference between organic agricultural production in Switzerland and Belgium. The latter has a very low organic production based on the consumption of organic products. Only 0.8 % of the Flanders area is certified organic while in Wallonia it is 8% (European CSA Research Group, 2016). A considerable difference with the 16 % organic area in Switzerland. This difference is also observable by the share of organic food in the whole food market which in 2019 in Belgium was 3.1% while in Switzerland it was 10%.

However, for both countries, supermarkets are increasingly taking over the organic market at the expense of small specialised shops and direct sales with farmers. In Switzerland this phenomenon is even more evident with 3-4% of the products offered compared to Belgium with 2.2%.
Another difference concerns brands. In Switzerland, products labelled with the EU organic label are also sold. However, although bio-planet has this label on 95% of its products, it is considered to be of a lower level than gemma bio suisse, which is also the most widespread in Switzerland, as it has stricter laws (Kilcher, 2004; FSO, 2019). According to WWF Switzerland, the EU label lacks pretense in the areas of biodiversity, irrigation, climate and social standards (WWF, n.d.).
Who knows if in a few years time we will have the opportunity to have a model like Bio-planet in Switzerland.

8.5 From the shortcomings of organic supermarkets to the sustainable solutions that are in place in Waterloo: an analysis of existing alternatives - Lucie Roba

First of all, 91% of Belgian organic hectares are located in Wallonia (Timmermans I. & Van Bellegem L. (2020); SPW (2020)) and its average agricultural area per organic farm is 46.5 ha (ibid). Of the total number of farms in Belgium, whether organic or conventional, 14.3% are Walloon farms, representing a total of 1,816 in number (Biowallonie asbl, 2019). More specifically, 7% of Walloon organic farms are located in Walloon Brabant (BW) (ibid).

Being the smallest province in terms of area in the Walloon region, B.W. has the smallest organic area with only 2,766 ha of organic land (ibid). It has the particularity of having "mixed" farms, i.e. one out of two farms in the B.W. has only one part working organically (ibid), the other part conventionally. Nevertheless, the switch to organic is taking place in the B.W as it has a quarter of the land under organic control currently in conversion (Biowallonie asbl, 2019). Moreover, it is the province with proportionally the most land in conversion in 2019, with the highest proportional increase in organic area of 9% (ibid). This figure can be explained in particular by the success of organic products among consumers in the B.W (including Brussels). In Wallonia, 46% of expenditures are going for organic food products, which means that its organic market share amounts to 4.9% (GfK Belgium, 2020). As Caroline Decoster explained during the first interview: « in Wallonia, the consumer has confidence in the organic label » (Biowallonie, Interview 1, 2021).

Made in BW

In order to support the development of local producers in the B.W, the project of *Made in BW* was born in 2015 from the common will of the Province of Walloon Brabant and the LAG Culturalité en Hesbaye brabançonne (Made in BW, n.d). It is a platform that functions as an intermediary between “consumers’actors” and producers in the province. They facilitate the logistics of short food supply by making known the local products which are sold through their web-shop. Moreover, thanks to a dynamic map listing organic shops, farms and cooperatives, *Made in BW* gives visibility to

sustainable initiatives in BW. Going beyond organic farming, they have prioritised eco-responsible consumption by promoting the local economy. “By the end of 2016, *Made in BW* was working with 28 producers and regularly delivering to 50 outlets” (Made in BW, n.d).

Waterloo has three exclusively organic supermarkets. *Sequoia* is one of them and has fifteen different shops located only in Belgium. In addition to being 100% organic, it works in collaboration with local associations that allow them to go further in their ecological transition (Sequoia, 2021). Among these, there is "Safe Food Advocacy Europe" which transports surplus food to associations that help people in need; "Les Glaneuses" which reuses unsold goods from supermarkets to transform them into dry goods; "Too Good to Go" which is an online organic basket ordering system that allows unsold goods to be sold and thus fights against food waste (Sequoia, 2021). *Hello Bio* is another smaller scale organic supermarket in Waterloo (not a chain shop like Sequoia), set up by a former conventional retailer who has moved into a more responsible and environmentally friendly sector.

However, neither *Sequoia* nor *Hello Bio* explain who they work with as producers of their food supply. When it comes to highlighting the partnership between organic supermarkets and their producers, there is a real lack of transparency. *Bio Story*, in contrast to the non-transparency of these two other organic supermarkets, communicates very clearly the list of the twenty local producers they work with.

One must be careful, as organic does not mean seasonal or local products. Thus, the organic supermarkets in Waterloo all go beyond organic products: *Hello Bio* offers 70% to 85% local products depending on the season (Hello Bio, n.d); depending on the supply and if the products minimise the CO2 impact (Sequoia, 2021), *Sequoia* is also prepared to widen its variety of products by opting for local and/or seasonal products; and the same goes for *Bio Story*.

Many initiatives have been developed in the heart of Waterloo to reconnect citizens with nature and to raise awareness of their actions and involvement in these projects. *Les Incroyables comestibles* (LIC) focus on setting up small infrastructure for Waterloo residents to have vegetable gardens in wooden bins in front of their houses (Waterloo En transition, n.d). *PermaWET* (Permaculture in Waterloo En Transition) is a similar initiative that is behind the shared vegetable gardens in Waterloo (PermaWET, 2021). Both the *LIC* and *PermaWET* are ways of demonstrating to citizens that growing fruit and vegetables on a small scale is an activity accessible to all. An alternative method of farming also exists in Waterloo and is done in a way that respects nature through permaculture. *Permaprojects* is a permaculture micro-farm located on the edge of the Waterloo battlefield. In the same place, several projects are brought together, such as the sale of the farm's products, the supply of local restaurants and the nearby Färm supermarket (La papelotte, n.d.).

Case study: WooCoop

WooCoop is a non-profit citizen's cooperative grocery shop selling local products from the surrounding farms of the city. “Each member-operator works 3 consecutive hours in the shop every 4 weeks” (WooCoop, 2021), meaning that only the cooperative members can come buy the products. Cooperatives like this one allow and encourage citizens to participate in the ecological transition. If the cooperative is running, it is thanks to the personal efforts of each individual. This citizen commitment reflects the growing desire to turn to local and sustainable food.

Conclusion

The relationship between retailers and supermarkets is still unclear in some respects. To be aware of what happens along the supply chain, from the non-existent product to the final product, everyone must be respected in this process. “Everyone” means all human beings, animals, but also the environment. Thus, the whole process of a product, whether organic or local/seasonal, must be carried out under good working conditions, and the social dimension would thus be respected. All the people involved in the chain process must get a fair price, so that the work reflects the price that is derived from it, thus justifying and regulating the economic dimension. Finally, the environmental dimension can only be respected if the producers are willing to observe, learn and be sensitive to nature. while managing their activity. Ultimately, if these three dimensions are met, sustainability within food systems can be achieved. Organic supermarkets keep a foot in the conventional system by not being 100% transparent, which does not fulfil the sustainability goals mentioned above. The search for alternatives that go further in the ecological transition such as cooperatives seems to be a clear solution, with transparency at every stage of the food system (from production to distribution). To address the shortcomings of organic supermarkets, it might be interesting to reverse the system. It would no longer be a question of retailer-farmer relations, but of citizen-farmer relations, which has proven to be possible in cooperatives.

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10. Appendix

Annex 1: Interview questions for producers

General

1. What products do you produce and which of these do you sell to Bio-Planet?
2. How long have you been producing organically?
3. What was your motivation for starting using organic production methods?
4. Since when do you work together with Bio-Planet?
5. What percentage of your production do you sell to Bio-Planet?
6. What are your other sales points?
7. Was your choice to grow organically made to work with Bio-Planet or not?
8. What labels are on your products?
9. What are the biggest production changes since you started producing organically? Or what are the biggest differences with conventional farming in your sector?
10. Has your production increased or decreased since working with Bio-Planet (or since you produce organically)?
11. Do you agree with the criteria that Bio-Planet imposes on its producers to qualify as organic?
12. Are you satisfied with the decision-making process regarding the criteria of Bio-Planet?
13. As an individual producer, do you have any influence on this?
14. Is there an association of organic farmers? If so, do they have any influence on the decision-making process of the Bio-Planet criteria?
15. Has your economic situation (or that of the company) changed since the cooperation with Bio-Planet? If so, has it improved or worsened? What do you think is the reason for that?
16. What percentage of the price of your product is sold in the supermarket?
17. Do you feel you have an influence on the pricing of your product?
18. Do you think that you get a fair price for your product?
19. Do you qualify for subsidies? If so, how important are they for you (your company)?
20. Is your contract with Bio-Planet a long-term one?
21. Does the cooperation with Bio-Planet give you more stability?
22. Are you in contact with other suppliers to Bio-Planet? Do you talk to each other about the price of your products?
23. Are you generally satisfied with the cooperation with Bio-Planet?
24. What are the strong aspects of Bio-Planet in supporting organic food (especially in comparison to other supermarkets)? Where can Bio-Planet still improve?
25. Do you have an opinion about the buying up of farms and land in Flanders by Colruyt? Is this a positive or negative development?
26. How do you see the organic food market evolving in the coming years?
27. What role do supermarkets and governments play in the conversion to organic production? What are the working points?
28. Do you have anything else to mention about this topic?

Annex 2: Interview questions for experts

General

1. What is your background in the topic of organic agriculture?
2. How do you see the organic food production and market evolving next decade?
3. What will be the challenges and how to respond to these challenges?
4. What actions/steps need to be made and by who towards a more organic food market.
    a. What is the role of the governments
    b. What is the role of the big distributors
5. How can we overcome the problem of organic food that is seen as an expensive food to buy and to grow?
6. What do you think of colruyt buying farms and land for organic production? Is this the way forward or not?

Erik Mathijs:

7. Can you introduce yourself, and your research area?
8. How important is it to expand the sale of local/organic products?
9. What role do you think supermarkets have to play in selling local and organic products? Do you think it is essential to take them into account in the creation of a sustainable food system?
10. How are decisions made regarding the production of organic food other than on the European level? Are there special food networks we should be made aware of in Leuven, Flanders?
11. What is the difference between Colruyt/ Bio-planet and other conventional supermarkets? In which way is the relationship between Bio-planet and its producers good and innovative? What are the flaws? (Less of squeezing the producers out? Why bioplanet less?) How strong does it contrast with conventional supermarkets?
12. Are you aware of any agreements between Bio-planet/Colruyt and farmers in the Leuven region or at a bigger scale ?
13. How did the agreements between producers and distributors (in this case bioplanet) start and evolve? Were there constraints/tensions?
14. Do you have examples where the relationship between Bio-planet and a farmer has influenced the farmer's way of producing? For example, a farmer working with Colruyt who converted to organic farming thanks to the existence of Bio-planet.
15. Do you think that local products (shorter supply chain) can make the retail process more fair=fairer prices+ less changeable agreements
16. What do you think of Colruyt buying farms and land for organic production and controlling every step of the supply chain? Is this the way forward or not?
17. What do you see as the food system of the future? Is it organic and on a national, regional or European scale?
18. How do you see the organic food production and market evolving next decade?
19. What will be the challenges and how to respond to these challenges?

Bio-Planet expert:

20. Can you introduce yourself and your link with Bio-planet?
21. Why has bioplanet been created? With which purposes/aims? Have these purposes been achieved?
22. Which are the main differences between Bio-Planet and other classical supermarkets?
23. How important is it for you to buy organic products?
24. How important is it for you to buy local products?
25. Are you planning to offer more belgian products for sale? Why or why not?
26. How could you buy more organic belgian products?
27. How do you choose the farmers you're working with?
28. How many farmers are you working with? More or less ?
29. How do you agree on the price of products? (Directly with the producer, via a producer representative,...) (What happens when you don't agree?)
30. Do you value producers that go beyond organic farming? On the basis of which criteria do you remunerate the farmers?
31. Do you work with farmer associations? Why/ why not
32. What does it bring to farmers to work with Bio-planet? //What are the differences for a farmer to work for Bio-Planet or with other supermarkets?
33. To what extent does Bio-Planet help farmers to convert to organic farming ?
34. Do you rely on other labels than the European organic label to buy belgian products?
35. Which are the positives and negative aspects of bioplanet? (what is working well and what is not)
36. Do you think it would be possible to replace supermarkets with the Bio-planet model? to expand it to a global level?
37. Bioplanet is known to sell more affordable organic food. How can we overcome the problem of organic food that is seen as an expensive food to buy and to grow?
38. How do you see the organic food production and market evolving next decade?
39. What will be the challenges and how to respond to these challenges?
40. What actions/steps need to be made and by who towards a more organic food market?
41. To what extent does Bio-Planet help to promote organic farming (to consumers)? (for example the biofestival and tastings pipo was talking about)
42. What could be the next steps of Bio-planet towards more sustainability?
43. What do you think of CSA, would you ever consider selling shares to consumers ?
44. How do policies from regional, national and european level influence you?
45. What role do governments have in the switch to more organic production and consumption? (What do you expect from them?)

Caroline Huyghe:

46. Does this program involve cooperation with farmers in the region?
47. Are there specific subsidies or policies regarding organic or other types of sustainable farming in Leuven?
48. Have you already worked with supermarkets like organic supermarkets such as Bioplanet, Colruyt?
49. Could you give a concrete example of what you're doing to promote sustainability for example with supermarkets or farmers.