



# ESRS Congress 2007

## 20-24 August Wageningen

WG17 Collective Action of Farmers in the Marketing of Food  
Products, Services and Public Goods  
Concluding remarks & points for discussion

Henk Renting

# Link back to main WG topics

- Concepts to understand COFAMIs in relation to wider societal, policy & market changes.
- Insight in the emergence & dynamics of COFAMIs by using sociological approaches to collective action?
- Limiting / enabling factors for the emergence, success and continuity of COFAMIs, incl. differences for life cycle stages or geographical contexts.
- Role of farmers and other categories of (rural, supply chain) actors and network processes amongst these.
- Contribution to sustainable (economic, social, ecological) rural development, food quality, safety and consumer trust.
- Support measures for COFAMIs.

# Concepts, approaches, methods

- No overarching theory
- COFAMIs operate at interface of different (scientific, policy, public) debates: food quality, rural development, sustainability, MFA, governance etc.
- Need to combine different conceptual approaches



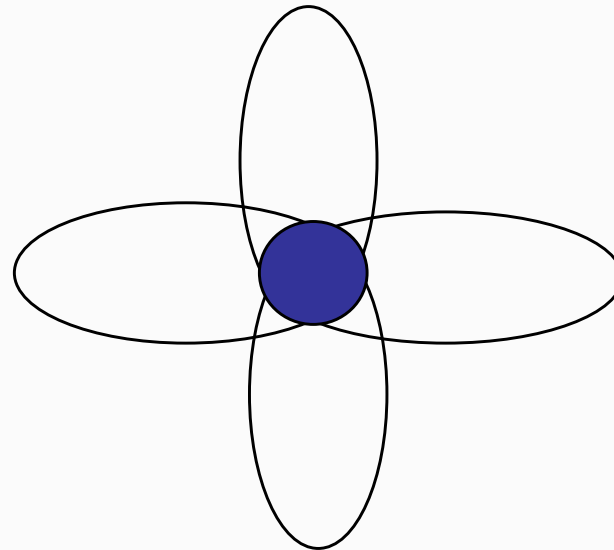
# Concepts, approaches, methods

## Collective action & innovation

Network processes, social capital, co-operative theory, learning, strategic niche management

## FSC dynamics

Food networks, quality differentiation, farm diversification, globalisation vs. relocalisation, value chain analysis



## Multifunctionality

Non-food products & services, public goods, changing role of agriculture in rural and wider society

## Governance structures

Partnerships, territorial / bottom-up approaches, synergies, social exclusion / inclusion, transaction costs



# Concepts, approaches, methods

- Social capital promising, but further need to operationalise
  - Bonding / bridging / linking capital
  - More attention needed for power relations & social in- / exclusion: who benefits?
  - Negative social capital / social traps (Kelemen)
- Network analysis
  - How to link better to construction of capitals / capacities?
  - Structural holes / network closure (Cerutti)
- Multifunctionality, public goods
- Governance structures
  - Market governance – policy governance
  - Transaction costs (Fahlbeck / Lindberg)



# Concepts, approaches, methods

- Synergies & cohesion
  - Economies of scope (Dunne)
  - Culture economy (Hegger)
- Conventions, codes & discourses
  - Science studies (Dupuis)
  - Experimental fields / systems (DuPuis)
  - Boundary work / epistemic objects (DuPuis)
  - Frontstage / backstage (Lostak)
  - Communities of practice
  - Strategic niches / protected spaces



# Emergence & dynamics / limiting & enabling factors

- Wealth of rich empirical studies
  - COFAMI and others
  - New forms of collective action relevant phenomenon throughout Europe (and outside?)
- Also important heterogeneity, need to further differentiate according typology of strategies / forms
- What are specific / general factors limiting / enabling emergence and dynamics of COFAMIs?
  - Strategies / type of collective activities
  - Different geographical contexts (East-West, North-South?)
  - Different development / life-cycle stages (Schermer)
  - Nature of product / markets (Kizos, De Roest)
  - Unarticulated / politically constructed 'markets' (Dunne, Fahlbeck / Lindberg)



# Emergence & dynamics / limiting & enabling factors

- Different historical traditions & legal frameworks (obligatory cooperatives in Greece)
- Different cultures / conventions of alterity
- Factors that can be influenced by collective action versus external contextual changes





# Farmers, actors & networks

- Various studies of network structures and dynamics
- What are relevant networks and type of actors for different COFAMI strategies?
- Role of coalitions of farmers with consumers, other FSC partners, territorial actors
- How do specific network compositions / dynamics translate in collective agency / capacities (Schermer & Renting)
- Need to ensure that market / policy networks are embedded / linked to civic practices (DuPuis)



# Impact

- Several studies indicate improvement of financial / economic performance
  - Value added, premium prices, new markets
- Social capital and improved consumer trust
- Much less clear evidence on environmental and intangible impacts (cultural capital, skills, etc.)
- Methodological challenge: how to measure impacts in comparable ways?



# Support strategies & policy interfaces

- Need to be attuned to (diversity and contextuality) of practices
- Multi-level governance: what is the role of different (policy and other) actors at different scale levels and interrelations between these?
- What is the role of state – market – civic society?
- Importance of building communication structures, exchange of experiences and best practices (Zobena, De Bruin)
- Key role of local and regional governments and sufficient room to manoeuvre for these
- Opportunities offered by EU regulations: PDO/PGI (Zobena), Agri-environment schemes (REPS boutique, Dunne)



# Support strategies & policy interfaces

- Hybrid institutions (Fahlbeck & Lindberg), public-private partnerships
- Territorial strategies / policies to valorise synergies / foster linkages between sectors (Vitterso)
- Possibilities for cooperatives at transnational and EU level (product exchange, European cooperatives) (De Bruin)?
- Role of researchers? Action research / RAP (Kelemen)



Further suggestions? Discussion?

