AGRO-FOOD SYSTEM SCENARIOS IN THE 21ST CENTURY: ORGANIC AND AGRO-ECOLOGIC APPROACH TO SOME TENSIONS AND NEGOTIATIONS

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Abstract

The world Agro-Food System (AFS) suffered some changes, going from the production of commodities aimed at supplying a large proportion of consumers (quantity) to the production of quality products aiming at segmentation. The market of organic products grew during this period. When studying the economic dynamics of quality in the world AFS, we observed that quality is an ancient and permanent concern due to health and nutritional issues. Market saturation, the increase of competition associated to wider industrial transformation and mass consumption, having internationalization (successive adaptations of a market to new domestic markets) and liberalization of exchange as background, stimulates and repositions quality. Ethical issues surrounding food quality are also focused.

In this context, ecologic markets (organic, biologic, biodynamic, natural, regenerative, etc.) derive from the increasing concern, especially in industrialized countries, with environmental degradation and consumption habits. The common point of alternative proposals is the objective of developing an ecologically balanced, socially fair and economically feasible agriculture. The definitions transmit a vision of the productive system ensuring, at the same time: (i) maintenance at long term of natural resources and agricultural productivity; (ii) minimal harmful impact in the environment; (iii) adequate revenues to farmers and farm workers; (iv) production optimization with minimum external inputs; (v) supply of human food and revenue needs, and assistance to families and rural communities (Almeida et al, 1996). In addition, this new of looking at nature and its relationships with men will, directly or indirectly, benefit the urban society and the urban environment (lower migration from the country to the city, lower health expenses due to the access to healthy food, less violence as it generates jobs and revenues, lower expenses on farmers’ and farm workers’ health, as they will no longer be exposed to possible pesticide poisoning, etc.). These new food markets were built by actions of public and private policies in the last decades, with the participation of all actors (Fonseca, 2000).

The approach of the organic and agro-ecologic methods to fair commerce and cooperative economy seems to be a solution to stimulate sustainable development policies in low-income countries. However, this approach is not easy due to, among other things, the complexities involving different territorial, environmental, social, economic, cultural, political and regulatory differences. There must be flexibility, but how? There are tensions and negotiations under way. Challenges must be overcome. Criteria must be built.
1 Introduction

The world Agro-Food System (AFS) suffered some changes, going from the production of commodities aimed at supplying a large proportion of consumers (quantity) to the production of quality products aiming at segmentation. The market of organic products grew during this period. When studying the economic dynamics of quality in the world AFS, we observed that quality is an ancient and permanent concern due to health and nutritional issues. Market saturation, the increase of competition associated to wider industrial transformation and mass consumption, having internationalization (successive adaptations of a market to new domestic markets) and liberalization of exchange as background, stimulates and repositions quality. Ethical issues surrounding food quality are also focused.

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2 Changes, Tensions and Negotiations in AFS

2.1 The new AFS context as background

The central elements of the present AFS dynamics distinguish technical and organizational changes (computer sciences, biotechnology, quality control of food production and circulation, third-party AFS); changes in the international context (operation of the market after the GATT Summit in Uruguay, PAC reform, formation of regional blocks); changes in consumer’s habits (new food patterns, new purchase habits and consumption time); new actors and strategic sectors in AFS (large retail food distribution, logistics as competitive strategy); new expansion dynamics of AFS (dynamics stimulated by demand and offer, increasing concentration and centralization of production and retail); changes in the regulation context in Latin American countries (deregulation of economic activities, new conditions of entrepreneurial competitiveness after economic liberalization). According to the author, three aspects of the present economic and regulatory context are strongly correlated and are essential to obtain competitive capacities in AFS: the technologic changes, the quality of food goods, and the entrepreneurial organization (Gutmann, 1998, in Fonseca 2000a).

The old and classic international labor division in AFS was permanently changed in the last 25 years (classic export commodities were replaced by HVF - fruits, vegetable, poultry and dairy products, fish). There were diet changes, commerce reform, and technical changes in the food industry and agriculture, which contributed to the growth of the HVF (high value food) sector. At the same time, there are inherent features of the HVF sector - shelf life, heterogeneity, seasonality, long periods of externality gestation associated to marketing, which lead analysts to focus the problems related to production
and market risks, information asymmetry, logistic obstacles, high transaction costs, negotiation of conventions/commitments (Watts & Goodmann, 1998).

Another characteristic of our times in the dynamics of world AFS is the change of the center of decision/power/technological orientation to production, initially in the agriculture sector, going to the manufacturing sector, eventually reaching distribution (retail) According to Wilkinson (2000) this would mean that AFS went from a dynamics centered in the dictatorship of offer to a dynamics dictated by the democracy of demand, particularly with the advances in computer sciences, with the possibility of market costumization as opposed to mass production (quantity) at the end of the 19th century. We are recently witnessing a dictatorship of the retail, partially motivated by the concentration of the retail sector in large companies. Nevertheless, in Brazil, the profits of the 5 largest companies in 2001 was 395, which is considered low as compared to the concentration in France (83%), Canada (69%), United Kingdom (68%), Germany (51%), and USA (41%). The solution found by conventional manufactured products suppliers is to escape the excessive dependence to large retail networks (super- and hypermarkets), selling to small and medium retailers (small food retail = 1-9 cash registers; neighborhood supermarkets = 10-19 1-9 cash registers; super-hypermarkets = > 20 1-9 cash registers), which are increasing their participation every year, and represented, in 2001, 58.1% of the Brazilian retail market, whereas the super-and hypermarkets represented 17.9%, and bars and drugstores, 24% (Blecher, 2002). This escape of suppliers from large supermarkets is also happening with organic products processors/distributors, who increasingly seek home delivery, for instance.

As to the consumption of organic products, in the end of the 1980s and beginning of the 1990s, several market survey reports pointed to a strong and fast growth of the demand by organic and "green" products consumers in North America, Europe and Japan. The market of organic products reached estimates of 2-5% in 2000, depending on the product and country (Willer & Yusefi, 2001).

The change in eating habits is also important to create awareness in issues linked to food safety, stimulating regional consumption habits, particularly through programs in public and/or private schools (lunch, organic vegetable gardens). An example from Italy and Denmark, where schools offer organic food to the children, is a reality that must be sought by us all, and it is already present in some cities of the south and southeast of Brazil. In Sweden, the government stimulates the consumption of locally produced organic products, as well as of seasonal products (Fonseca, 2000b). In the south and southeast of Brazil, some cities have school lunch programs based on local supply, often stimulating EOA. However, this advance in the production and marketing of organic, natural, and ecologic products has promoted changes in AFS, and in the relationships among sectors, as well as in the dispute for limited resources (specially financial, but also human) in low income countries for the development of EOA.

2.2 Tensions and Negotiations in AFS

2.2.1 Biotechnology vs. organic and agro-ecologic approach

At the end of the 21st century, two competing agriculture models are trying to obtain support and commit producers, researchers, extension workers, policy makers and consumers (Marsden, 2001 quoted by Parrot & Marsden, 2002; Fonseca, 2001). One model, guided by biotechnology as an extension of the Green Revolution, promises to feed the world through improved fields, higher resistance to pests, better efficiency via manipulation of the genetic structure of plants and animals, besides instruments used in precision agriculture, and an agribusiness approach (single crops, efficiency) supported by USA and many southern countries, such as Brazil, member of the Cairns Group, which are large exporters of agriculture raw materials. The opposing arguments claim that the risks of the introduction of GMOs in the environment are unknown and unpredictable, and that the adaptation Of the GMO technology implies in a large and unacceptable transference of intellectual property rights (and, therefore, power) from producers to seed companies and laboratories.

The other model, the organic and agro-ecologic production model, is based on the development and maximization of the use of available local natural resources to preserve and build soil fertility and to prevent pests and diseases. This decentralized approach, in order to improve agriculture capacity, counts with, promotes, and celebrates diversity. Critics argue that the reliance on natural and traditional production systems would not ensure food for the world population, neither now, nor in 50 years. In opposition to this criticism, a prospective study showed how OAA could feed an industrial country if
the feeding habits of the population changed (Parrot & Marsden, 2002). According to FAO’s data, the German population obtains 39% of calories from animal products, and 61% from plant products, but since 1960 there has been an annual decrease in the consumption of animal calories of 0.6%, especially among young people. If this linear trend of decrease in animal calorie consumption is maintained, and of linear increase of organically managed areas, and if consumption habits of the German population change to only 21% animal calories (thus ensuring nutritional food safety), Germany would be able to move completely to OA (organic agriculture) in 20 years, with no need of food import increase (Seemuller, 2000).

However, we know that it is not food production per se that determines if the world is fed or not, but rather the political and economic structures that supply, or deny, access to ‘food entitlements’, according to Sen (1993). Different food production models have a role in changing these entitlements: by the use of different combinations of labor and capital (and today, of intellectual property), of locally-produced and imported inputs, and by different marketing orientations. Humans need to develop capacities to exercise/solve/choose a development with freedom of choice (Sen, 2000).

Differences between the biotechnology and the OAA are also reflected on research structures and extension services, which help to inform and develop different development models. Research in conventional agriculture (CA) tend to be based on experimental farms/labs, in general aiming at a universally applicable production, context-breaking solutions, such as hybrid seeds, for examples. On the other hand, OEA tend to be more diffuse, based on farms, are participative and based on local knowledge and traditions. OEA focuses ‘public goods’, resources and techniques that cannot be immediately patented, but that, in general, are freely available. It may significantly contribute to explain why OEA research attracts only a small fraction of private investments, as compared to conventional and biotechnology research. This dualism between the development model based on biotechnology and the OEA approach, with different logics, is present in research programs of federal (EMBRAPA) and state (Pesagro-Rio) public research institutions, leading to a division of resources, and decreasing the possibility of institutionalizing EOA as a public policy of a country, state, or region.

2.2.2 Organic vs. Agro-Ecologic Approaches

Recent years witnessed the emergence of the interest in, and in the rapid development, of OEA in many regions of the South. The convergence of several sets of interests (commercial, developmental, and environmental) around the OEA agenda is stimulating by itself. After a long time placed at the margin, OEA is becoming increasingly accepted by the mainstream. The most significant sign of this is the recognition by FAO (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations) and by UNCTAD (United Nations Conference and Trade Development) on the role OEA in a near future, as well as the export of organic production from low-income countries (Parrot & Marsden, 2002).

The systems and methods used in low-income countries are very variable, going from those which primarily supply family food requirements, which surplus is exchanged by other products, to those that sell to the market (often for export), implying in wide array of rationalities among producers from different regions. The agricultural systems, which exclusively use natural methods based on specific ecologic, agronomic and cultural contexts to build soil fertility, and to fight pests and diseases, can be classified in two categories, according to the priorities of those ‘engaged’ in them: certified organic production, inspected and certified as “organically produced” (efficiency of the certification processes), and de facto organic production, disseminating the existing knowledge through training, participant research, and experimentation.

For certified organic producers, the primary interest in the process of certification is the acquirement of the label, which will give him sale credibility, and will also ensure the consumers that they are buying a product certified according to known rules established by the participant institutions (Rundergren, 1998).

The de facto organic production is prevalent in regions with low resources or marginally agricultural, where local populations have a limited engagement in monetary economy, and are mostly oriented to self-consumption, but also produce some crops for sale. In these situations, producers have little alternative, except for counting with locally available natural resources to maintain soil fertility and to control pests and diseases. In some cases of Latin America, sophisticated systems of crop rotation, soil management and pest and disease control involve only traditional knowledge. Agro-ecology, according to Altieri, is particularly built on the experience of the South (especially in Latin America), and in which the social component is more explicit than in the organic approach, which present focus is on verifiable technical norms (industrial trend, according to Sylvander). Moreover, agro-ecologic research is strongly
oriented to social sciences, incorporating a "human ecologic approach". The agro-ecologic research is culturally more specific, and adopts the "farmer first" philosophy more explicitly, sometimes forgetting the agro-ecology must also involve consumers and other sectors of society.

However, agro-ecologic systems still do not have internationally recognized rules, and thus do not offer the same opportunity to attract market bonus as the certified organic systems. Although there is some tension between the approach guided by the rules of organic production, and the more culturally relativistic approach of agro-ecology, those who practice and support these approaches share a comprehensive philosophy and a common agenda, and often work together. The agro-ecologic proposal arouse (and it is still is) as a general prospect of another form of development. At the same time that new notions emerge and try to assert themselves, agro-ecologic actions and actors aim at putting into practice a new type of collective movement. The present condition of isolation and exclusion of certain social groups and the urgent need to obtain "immediate results" in the setting of social reproduction, are factors that counter the capacity of assertion of these ideas, at least at short and intermediate terms. The wide heterogeneity that still characterizes the agro-ecologic perspective, particularly as to its technologic standard and its social forms, has been a barrier for the advancement of these ideas. On the other hand, this seem to be, paradoxically, the difference that promotes the debate on agriculture and the agrarian issue on Brazil, sometimes highlighting its contribution to the family agriculture matter. From the methodology standpoint, the notion of agro-ecology is not operational yet. It consists of a heterogeneous system of interventions, variables, and elements that have to be often limited, which makes consider that when we interfere in one element or production line, we are interfering in the whole system. A wider theoretical and practical understanding of how these "systems" work is still lacking (Almeida, 2002).

Based on the ITC (2001) report and other information, Yussefi & Willer (2002) for 2001 an area of about 17.2 million hectares under certified organic management, which means an increase of 8.49% in the total area under organic management as compared to estimates for 2000. Argentina is the largest certified producer in the South, with 2.8 million hectares (1.65% of its agricultural areas), representing 16.28% of the total world area under certified organic management. Brazil comes second, with 803,000 hectares (0.23% of its agricultural area), representing 4.67% of the world area under organic management. Although these figures give us a general vision, data on several countries that export organic products for the industrialized world are lacking. It is estimated that the area under de facto organic management is equivalent to 3% of the agricultural and permanently cultivated area in Asia, Africa, and Latin America.

An alternative approach to visualize OEA levels is by the analysis of the members of IFOAM. More than 122 organizations in southern countries are member of the IFOAM (Parrot & Marsden, 2002), comprising about 19% of IFOAM members. Future research is needed on the decision levels of IFOAM to determine which southern countries are in strategic positions, such as in the board of directors or in the Quality Assurance Program of IFOAM, and thus can contribute to the establishment of regulations that will provide a vision directed to the South.

### 2.2.3 Laymen vs. experts (social vs. technical)

The confidence in the sector of foods produced by OA is much higher than of the traditional food sectors, as observed by several studies and surveys carried out to understand the consumers’ reactions to these foods and the reason of this trend in industrialized countries (FAO, 2000). The choice of the consumer is essentially motivated by the healthfulness and the safety of organic food, as well as by ecologic and animal welfare concerns. Is the "organic" trend just another among the present trends in the food market, parallel to the growing demand for ready-to-eat foods, for a wider food variety, and for functional foods?

Food quality in the organic movement always concerned more than an assessment of readily accessible characteristics (appearance) of the food; it should also include the assessment of production means, as well as social and ethical issues. In addition, the organic quality must be more than a marketing tool - the relationship among producers, retailers, and consumers in the context of local and regional development must also be focused. The organic quality is linked to a process, and thus involves the building of knowledge, and mechanisms for building capacities of all involved actors have to be established. Due to its determinant role in this market and the importance it has acquired, certification itself became a business, involving figures of about US$ 200 million per year, corresponding to an
average of 1% of the revenues of the production units charged for the use of the label by the certifying bodies (CBs) of organic products.

According to Ducasse-Cournac & Leclerc (2000), "quality is a set of properties and characteristics, measurable or not, of a product or a service, which confers the ability to satisfy the expressed or understated needs of the user." The idea of quality is related to the user of the involved product or service. The agricultural product chain involves at least three actors: producers, who are especially aware of the agronomic and animal quality (yield potential, resistance to pests and diseases, precocity); processors and distributors, who are particularly linked to the technologic quality of the product (processing, preservation, further processing, transport); consumers, to whom the idea of quality groups several expectations: hedonism (visual and taste quality), nutrition and health (nutritional quality - protein, vitamin levels, etc., health quality - products free from pesticide residues, heavy metals, pathogens, acceptable levels of nitrate, etc, and also holistic quality, determined by the global method of analysis), environmental concerns (ecologic quality - the impact of production on the environment, such as pollution, GMOs), and ethical and social concerns (ethical quality - social and moral conditions, political challenges of production and consumption).

The organic regulations currently enforced in the international market emphasize the agricultural (+) and animal (-), technologic and ecologic (+) qualities, and do not consider the other qualities, which strongly appeal the consumers of organic and "green" products. It must be pointed out that these objections do no advocate renouncing science or neglecting what science teaches in terms of health, environment or risks to food safety. We simply mean that regulations - even those of the health and safety sectors - have regulatory dimensions that cannot be merely decided on scientific basis. There must be a fair procedure to integrate cultural and moral rules into science. The complaint is that scientists and (trade and politic) negotiators have, until now, been insensitive to the natural problems of regulatory decision-making in any of the three dimensions mentioned above. Harmonizing international regulations means, in fact, to negotiate cultures and vision in their most essential sense Michelsen, 2001).

According to Guivant (2000), based on Giddens, there are conditions for the emergence of universal values within an ethics of both individual and collective responsibilities. Each person, each member of the society is, in fact, a participant sociologist; each individual interprets the behavior, the expressions and the motives of his/her partner, and commands his/her reality based on this information and past experiences. Among the issues of the object of reflexivity, in Giddens' terms, which extends to all life stages (how to educate the children, what kind of relationship we seek, etc.) alternative of healthy types of diet are included. A discredit as to knowledge of experts is parallel to this reflexivity. The reflexivity of consumers of high-income countries is expressed in the growth of the organic and/or natural products market, although the concept of natural and organic is subject to different interpretations. There is specificity in the risk dynamics in the less industrialized countries, and not a reflexivity gap as compared to industrialized countries. The non-questioning of the public must be place in the context as to other factor affecting the Brazilian society, such as; a) lack of tradition of the social actors in the defense of their rights as consumers; b) generalized discredit as to public institutions; c) trend to focus body and health concerns in diets to loose weight, which do not have direct link or impact on the type or quality of the fresh products. Particularly in the Brazilian context, the reflexivity of social actors is still incipiently manifested in terms of food safety. The characteristics of this reflexivity, as well as the perspectives of its transformation, still need to further studied by empirical research.

The ethical notion in OA takes into account social and environmental, and perhaps, philosophical considerations. As consumers, we must be aware of the different problems involving agriculture in general, and that may apply to OA in Europe and the rest of the world: environmental quality, energy balance, labor conditions, etc., as well as local consumption aspects (food mileage) and seasonality. All social issues must be considered in OA (social costs of pollution, the potential to generate jobs). As to organic products coming from low-income countries, special attention must be given to social aspects, as fair trade associations (Max Havellar, Solidar’Monde, Artisans du Monde, etc.) do, thus ensuring ethical guarantee of production. In 1992, during the 9th IFOAM Conference in São Paulo, Brazil, discussions for the inclusion of social justice criteria were started, and the criteria were eventually approved in 1998. They still require to be refined and applied in the production and marketing of organic products.

In Brazil, aspects related to social justice were included, despite superficially, in the general principles of regulations of organic products (IN007/99, IN006/2002), as criteria to be observed by CBs in organic production units, but it is not explicit how they are going to be assessed by the CBs inspectors. Another tension relates to the composition of the regulating stages that define regulations...
and accreditation of organic production as state level, as the participation of laymen is vetoed. For instance, only technicians can be members of the State Commission for Organic Production in Paraná. Another tension relates to the veto of the participation of producers in the group of inspectors that make internal control of the production units. The concept that technicians are superior to producers, overestimates scientific knowledge and it is opposed to one of the principles supported by OEA, which is to prize traditional knowledge. We must not forget the tension between laymen and experts as to BSE and GMOs, which became a health trade barrier used by Canada against Brazil in 2001.

The opinion of family and agro-extractive producers in decision-making (CMDR, good exercise) is reluctantly accepted by technicians, representatives of farm owners and of public and private bodies, as a consequence of the view that agriculture was/is retrogressive. We need to consider, in the scope of public policies, that there are different policies for different situations, despite having common general principles. Technical, economic and social recommendations and criteria must be different, adapted to different realities. We must try to build an alternative development model based on OA technical standards and agro-ecologic practices and on values supported by fair trade, on a responsible trade by large companies, and on supportive economy.

2.2.4 Northern ideas (northern (Anglo-Saxon) Europe/USA) vs. northern ideas (southern (Latin) Europe) in the establishment of rules and labeling of food in international trade

According to Simmeon (1999), there are large differences in the policies of regulations among similar countries (disputes on hormones, cheese raw materials, animal welfare, child labor) in addition to differences among regulations/standards based on consumer value versus those based on scientific, technical values. Culture directed regulation policies, and framed the problem: a) the selective vision of culture-derived problems; b) the example of GMOs: the US focus in the products, whereas the United Kingdom is concerned with the process, and Germany with both; c) regulation styles: differences in the public participation and in the resolution of conflicts (political versus legal); d) acceptable evidence (formally quantitative versus qualitative estimates; measurable risks versus precaution); e) forms of expert/(technical/neutral) authority versus affiliation.

Before the European community created, in 1992, a legal framework regulating origin designations, French provisions were considered as incompatible with he establishment of a "single European market". The debate focused on the issue of product labeling. Some countries, such as France, and to a lesser degree, Spain and Italy, refused to limit the harmonization of regulations to the consumer safety, and to certain mandatory information on the label of the product (Anglo-Saxon vision). They thought it was necessary to establish a community regulation preserving, through official certifications, the exclusive use of names of places to qualify products as having "special characteristics", as well as the recognition of the know-how.

Two types of arguments were supported by the Latin (southern) countries: on one hand, the loyal information to the consumers will demand more than minimal information labeling, requiring, in certain cases, a valued reference ensuring an official designation explicitly indication a specific or superior quality; on the other hand, there is the threat of disloyal competition with domestic products "as to particular qualitative characteristics", running the risk of disappearing from the market.

In contrast, more liberal countries, such as UK, Holland and Belgium, thought the regulation of certificates of origin was illegitimate and inefficient (instrument of protectionism), and harmful (obstacle to innovation). For these countries, free competition ensured by itself the maintenance of quality levels, if the consumers were dully informed about the products (through adequate labeling).

According to Valceschini & Mazé (2000), this debate can be interpreted in terms of culture. On one hand, the countries of northern Europe are concerned with health quality, which only industrial methods and regulations can ensure. On the other hand, southern European nation, are concerned with the gastronomic dimension of food, taking into consideration traditional cultures and territorial development goals. This vision is no incorrect, but these differences in opinions are founded on disagreements as to economic domination, concerning consumer information issues and agro-food market structures.

The quality policy at regulation level associates both trends: a policy founded on the "free circulation of goods", which motivated the debate between the "Latin view" that believes that the mercantile logics does not take into account underlying qualities, and the "Anglo-Saxon view", which refuses
any "quality" policy interpreted as a disguised protectionism and rather let the market choose between quality products or others (value of information).

According to Valceschini (1999), the reports of French experts had an important role in defining quality policies at national and European levels. The Mainguy Report of 1989 attempted to reduce the opposition between the northern (traditional guarantee of product quality by brand) and the southern countries (quality guarantee by official distinctive symbols). The typology is articulated around the two types of product identification instruments: one relative to individual brands, with retail and manufacture brands, and another relative to collective brands. This proposal allows dissociating three apparently confusing components: definition of the technical reference, control and certification, and eventually synthetic identification provided by the quality sign. This dissociation is crucial, as it allows proposing a move towards quality management tools, which are largely absent in the agro-food sector - normalization and certification.

As to European agriculture policy and communitarian protection of specific quality production, the relationships are characterized as a conventional compromise between the Latin and Anglo-Saxon views of quality. Within the OA sector and European directives, certification looses its voluntary feature, and becomes mandatory. Certification consists in designating a license to the operator and certifications for his/her products. Certification ensures that the product was produced according to the references proposed for organic production. The CB must comply with four criteria, which confirm that he/she is a good third party expert: independence vis-à-vis the profession, competence, efficiency, and reliability.

The French model of the quality system for each quality sign/label is based on: traceability, defined as the possibility to identify the manufacturing process, history, and location of the food by indicators (ISO8402); reliability of the system by third party control; organization of the producers, resulting in professional proposals and a set of laws (inter-professional agreements); added value directed to producers. The public power approves the origin, the manufacturing process or the specificity of the products as a function of commitments (mainly technical). The identification through transparent and informative labeling, also approved by the public power, is obtained by audited certification, which philosophy is: I write what I do; I do what I write; I ask for control on what I do.

2.2.5 Manufacturing and services quality control vs. environmental and organic quality control

There are two basic models of quality control used in the manufacturing and services sector. The old model, with inspection of each product at the end of the production chain and zero tolerance; and the new model, which advocates the quality management of the whole chain and which rules are base on risk acceptance/levying. The Total Quality Control systems use quality control (ISO 9000 series) and hazard analysis and critical control points (HACCP), in which the control is transferred from the final products to a series of production control points along the food chain (“testing failures” is replaced by “preventing failures”). One of the key features of HACCP is to provide a more structured approach as compared to traditional procedures. It is part of the Codex Alimentarius, and it is required for all food businesses in Europe (Siméon, 1999).

According to Souza & Bulhões (2002), the characteristics of environmental certification in agriculture are different from the model applied to other sectors (manufacturing and services). First, as the ‘ecologization’ of agriculture production derived from NOGs and associations of producers and consumers identified with the environmentalist movement, the initial aim was not to obtain comparative/competitive advantages in the agriculture market, but rather promoting a new agricultural model and new consumption habits. Therefore, in the social-environmental approach of the issue sustainable development of agriculture, environmental issues cannot be separated from political and social issues, whereas in manufacturing, the input-product efficiency and comparative/competitive advantage approach is predominant. Second, agricultural environmental certification is paradigmatic, as it attempts to oppose OA to CA, with deep changes in the production system. The transition from conventional to organic practices is not seen as a continuum that can be certified in several stages (management system, environmental performance, etc.), such as in the ISO 14000 and other manufacturing certification systems. Third, the merit of agricultural certification is not a consensus, as some consider that it excludes small farmers (high costs, bureaucracy, standardization of procedures, ignoring regional differences).
The IFOAM Guaranty Program, approved in 1998, is based on: a) Basic Norms of IFOAM-IBS (general principles, recommendations and minimal criteria for production, processing, storage, labeling of organic products) and b) evaluation criteria of CB-ICPP operations, based on the ISO/IEC 65 Guide. However, IFOAM identified the need to improve the ISO document, as OA certification is the certification of the production process of more than one final product, and also due to the generic nature of the ISO Guide, which should be used in all sectors, but it is mostly oriented to the manufacturing sector. The need to expand the Guide was also identified in the UE, where the reference to compliance to EN45011 (European version of the ISO Guide) is supplemented by "Minimum Requirements of Inspection and Rogatory Measures of Annex II of EC 2092/91 Regulation" (Commins, 2002 pg.32).

The ISO 65 Guide and IFOAM Criteria deal with several common issues: CB structure, independence and objectivity, including the regulation of conflicting interests; confidentiality clauses; the competence of CB personnel and sub-contracted personnel; quality management; document control and data storage; certification procedures; brand control and certificates; transparency. In some of the areas, the IFOAM criteria established requirements in addition to those in the ISO 65 Guide. However, the more significant contributions are in special sections covering special situations for OA inspection and certification: detailed criteria of the inspection process; how to perform unannounced inspections; factors to determine the frequency of inspections; inspection for partial conversion and parallel production; inspection of GMOs; inspection and certification of "custody chain"; inspection of subcontracted production; inspection and certification of groups of producers; inspection and certification of wild/extractive (?) products; certification transference. The recent initiative of allowing regional variations in IBS and ICPP for IFOAM approval aim at satisfying the demands for a norm reflecting the environmental reality of where it will be applied, while complying to OA principles. Regulating authorities face the same challenge when determining the equivalence of imports of very different areas.

2.2.6 Network trend (negotiations based on domestic-civic conventions, local market, direct sales) vs. industrial trend (negotiations based on industrial-mercantile conventions, international market, supermarkets)

During the first stages of the organic movement, the OA actors worked well as a network, according to Mark Granovetter (1995) and L.Karpik (1989), but not according Callon (1991). The coordination among the actors relied on a convention qualified as "of domestic inspiration, allowing the market to function, meaning to allow exchanges with no doubt on the identify of the product." The actors are united by a strong inter-personal knowledge, and their actions are founded on confidence. Consumer purchase is directly and faithfully made from producers, on the farm, local market, or by consumers' cooperatives. The existence of these commercial and institutional direct lines and the sharing of the same vision of quality are elements, which provide protection against frauds (Sylvander, 1997).

Twenty years ago, the public power and agricultural professional organizations started to recognize OA. The institutional definition becomes a priority, and it evolves with the establishment of production norms. Thus, the definition of quality becomes less centered on strict traditional rules and strong interpersonal links, and relies more on specific technical requirements - we can mention here the logics of endorsement, term used by Sylvander. In the current OA market, conventions, commitments, and modes of coordination are in a transitional state from the domestic-civic conventions to industrial-mercantile conventions. Conflicts, adjustment mechanisms and agreements are in a state of effervescence. The landmark was the establishment, in Europe, of rules for Specific Quality Products (SQP), destabilizing a "domestic inspired" convention - which allowed the market to function (exchanges to be made) - and making it evolve under the influence of the industrial convention.

Within the pre-existing model of official certification, the idea of network was dominant. There was a reference defining the ideal practice of its members, although the control was not made by legal instruments due to fundamental reasons. The essentials were always limited to a feeling of belonging to a social-political movement and on strong interpersonal relationships, and the assurance of compliance was stronger than the technical control (at this level, the nature of evidence is a determinant criterion, precision is sought).

In OA, the mandatory certification is where the transition from domestic to industrial convention occurs. The definition of rules and norms, which are inherent of the process of certification, is essential for the actors. We can also determine that actors coordinated by industrial conventions can
be represented in each organ within a Certifying Committee, and that they have power to establish and change procedures, to define different types of non-compliance, to organize controls and sanctions (as a function of non-compliance), etc.

When the single definition of organic quality was based on domestic coordination, the regulating texts had little importance, as few had instruments for its application. The definition of OA was, in fact, founded on the nature of the relationship between the actors. The inputs of the operators had problems in interpretation of the rules systematically treated by the Certification Committee. The progressive penetration of the mode of industrial coordination is presently translated in the coexistence of two trends in the sector: a network trend, and an industrial trend.

In France, networks are characterized by small artisan structures in all levels of the chain, absence of scale economy, high costs per unit, and important price differences in benefit of non-organic products. Consumers accept these price levels due to their engagement in the "domestic inspired" convention, and relatively high income. Market analysis showed the emergence, after a few years, of a new market segment, comprising new, younger, lower income, and socially diverse consumers. Despite buying less frequently, the demand products with similar quality as standard products, and accept only limited price deviations.

In the present economic situation, not all actors have the same strategies. Some follow the network trend - they are cautious as to development conditions and resist the industrial trend. This group comprises farmers that directly sell their products in short circuits (local markets, direct sales), and fear the competition of the long circuits. Small processors also have this position. These operators do not place themselves in market development, which is seen as the cause to OA deviation. Industrial trend enterprises also comprehend both old and new actors. There are old processors, who invested in technical and commercial infrastructure and communications. There are also industrial agro-food groups and large distributors that entered the organic sector. These enterprises already have market power, as they are in contact with demand. The first group sees this as a hazard, because it represents the same type of conventional agro-food development (loss of purchase power, high added value on assurance, and increased competition), threatening artisanal structures. They justify their negative position as to certification on the fact that they consider themselves as victims of an increased competition by the industrial trend.

2.2.7 Certification process by audit (inspection/control) vs. certification by training (participant, educational) in Brazil

In Brazil, the certification processes until IN-007/99, which established production, typification, processing, packaging, distribution, identification, and certification regulations for animal and plant organic products, was based on: a) participant certification, operated by the so-called reliability networks, based on the work made by NGOs and associations with rural and urban communities. They usually act in local and regional markets, aiding in production, organizing producers and marketing; and b) certification by audit, usually made by companies that are nor directly involved with training, organization or provide technical services to the producers. They usually act in export markets, and with large enterprises. At the margin of this process, there are the public organizations, which only recently started to be involved with the OA sector (Souza & Bulhões, 2002).

During the process of discussion and elaboration of IN-007/99, these two models were debated. There were agreements as to OA techniques, and consensus as to the concept of organic product. The tensions among NOGs (as government representatives had no opinion about, experience in) concerned (i) the merits of certification - it was needed or even convenient to have any regulations on the certification of organic products, and (ii) the model of certification, which included the definition of who should be the CBs and which certification model should be adopted.

As to the merits of certification, the main argument of its supporters was the reliability obtained by the products in the market, allowing the access of domestic product in the increasingly demanding markets. Thus, certification would be a marketing tool that would accredit organic products in foreign markets. The NGOs against certification proposed that the conventional market should be certified instead, with indication of contamination potentials, arguing that: the cost of certification was expensive to producers and consumers, the was a risk of oligopoly in CBs, as small CBs would not be able to pay for the costs of certification at international level. Therefore, certification would be exclusionist, and hinder the process of expansion of OA, causing losses to producers and consumers.
Other reasons for disagreement were; a) market levels (local, regional, fair, institutional vs. international, supermarkets, commodities); b) producer-consumer relationship (reliability networks are more concerned with the producers, whereas CBs, with the final consumer); c) previous ethical and ideological aspects (labeling products with pesticides, participant certification with the collaboration of producers and consumers organized in groups, highly priced organic product for the poor in southern countries vs. autonomy of CBs, stronger link with rural entrepreneurs and large farm owners, organization and revenue, external market, professionals are more reliable internationally than producers, authoritarian and interventionist process).

When IN007/99 was issued, both certification models could be used. However, when IN006/02, which deals with the requirements for CB accreditation by the Ministry of Agriculture and for continuing the certification of process and products, the audit method, was recommended. Thus, participant certification became more difficult, as it will have to be adapted to costly and bureaucratic processes involving the task of inspection, which is not performed in reliability generation networks. This tension is now present, with the establishment of the reciprocity among CBs required by marketing channels (mainly by processors and distributors), by producers who deliver to several marketing channels, and also de accreditation organs of the CBs.

2.2.8 Organic products vs. fair trade markets

More than 75 years ago, alternative practices in agriculture started to be used in Europe by the biodynamic movement (Demeter brand). The aim of OA is to serve human population by developing a more sustainable agriculture. The starting point is a healthy and living soil, the foundation for healthy animals and plant, aiming at producing quality food and simultaneously taking care of the environment. Processing and labeling also require the exclusion of GMOs, and more recently, the regard to social justice in agriculture (not violating rights of rural workers, small farmers, or exploring producers with deceitful trading practices).

The Fair Trade movement started 25 years ago as an educational concept, using alternative methods to show social injustice and unbalance caused by international trade to Europeans. Trade agreements (relationship between the price of raw materials and processed/technical merchandise) usually favor develop countries.

Human welfare is a priority in both concepts: to allow sustainable development of all parties involved in the process, including this holistic approach in its norms and criteria. From the producers' perspective, both concepts are connected, as they use similar questionnaires for inspection and could save human resources when working in partnership. The perception of consumers of supermarkets, organic and natural products stores, and fair trade stores is that, when they buy a product certified/labeled by one of the concepts, it automatically includes the other label/concept. Indeed, all organic products should comply with Fair Trade criteria. On the other hand, less than half of fair trade products are currently certified as organic (Dalvai, 1999).

Fair Trade established criteria for sustainable trade with (especially) small suppliers, starting with "colonialist" products, such as coffee, tea, and cocoa. The most important criteria are: 1) a defined part of the price (surplus) is paid by communitarian tasks/social issues of the cooperative of community of rural workers or producers; 2) the commercial relationship must have a long term perspective; 3) part of the price is paid in advance, in order promote the independence of the producers from local credit (which is often nonexistent, or with high interest rates). In the case of employer's agriculture, the most relevant concept is ethical trade: indispensable labor conditions within the production chain, eliminating several forms of labor exploitation. As agreed at the IFAT (International Federation of Alternative Trade) conference, held in Maryland, USA, in 1995, the code of ethics is based on 10 general principles (referring to the fundamental principles IOL), aiming at enhancing the economic position, social and environmental welfare or marginalized producers of production chains of the southern countries.

The concept of these norms/criteria has different foundations: fair trade is more oriented than organic process. It starts with cooperatives, associations/organizations of small farmers with a low social justice profile, giving opportunities for these cooperatives and organizations to develop. IFOAM norms are developed by more than 600 members in more than 100 countries, and despite being oriented by high-income countries criteria, they can be applied anywhere. Fair Trade criteria are developed for North-South relationships, but (still) are no applicable to the North-North trade sector. IFOAM Guarantee Program is a well-established concept, offering a set of internationally accepted basic norms
for inspection, certification and accreditation, despite some equivalence problems among affiliated CBs. Fair Trade sector developed several different sets of criteria, and rarely practices third party certification.

According to Mallet (2002), the organizations that presently are member of Fair Trade (IFAT, FLO; NEWS; EFTA) started with an initiative to find a common platform for coordination and cooperation. Another partnership to harmonize procedures, involving most organizations that establish norms and accreditation bodies related to social and environmental criteria, was established in 1999 and designated as ISABEL Alliance (International Alliance for Social and Environmental Accreditation and Labeling). Beneath the wish to collaborate there is a wish to obtain international recognition and credibility for their respective programs; to improve the quality and professionalism of their organizations; and to promote the common interests of the private sector that establishes norms (ISO) and accreditation organizations (ILAC/IAF). The members of this alliance are: SAI, which accredits CBs for SA8000, a regulation focusing social practices in the workplace; FSC, which accredits CBs for principles for well-managed forests; MSC, which accredits CBs for sustainable fishery; CAN, network for the preservation of nature; IFOAM, which accredits CBs for norms of production, processing, transport, storage, and marketing of organic products, FLO, which certifies fair trade; MAC.

Several studies suggest that, due to the substantial costs and technical risks of organic production, large and average-size companies, challenging the assumption that small farms benefit from the growth of the organic market, control the largest part of international trade. It seems that, without strict social norms and the restriction to producers found in fair trade, organic production runs the risk of becoming a mere variety of alternative agriculture, and dominated by the agro-exporter global trade (Reynolds, 2000).

3 Challenges

Internationally, communitarian regulation of designations of origin (such as organic products, linked to a know-how) may be challenged in the new cycle of multi-lateral negotiations within the framework of Codex Alimentarius and WTO, aiming at overcoming non-tariff trade barriers, such as "technical regulations" and "sale regulations", and also restrictive regulations concerning health, quality, environment and ethics (Bureau & Bureau, 1999 in Valceschini, 2000). The main agreements to be discussed are the Agreement on Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT) and the Agreement on Sanitary and Phyto-Sanitary Barriers (SPS), and more specifically, the Agreement on Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPs), which concerns geographic indications.

Prospectively, the debate between the Latin and the Anglo-Saxon approaches as to norms and labels will re-emerge in the next few years. At EU level, the right to compete may indeed become a major obstacle to the use of designation of origin by producers. In this sense, the debate will focus two issues. The first will be on legitimacy, aiming at liberalization of trade and market competition, and discussing the allocation of exclusive property rights to designations of origin. The second debate will be on legality, vis-à-vis the ambiguity of words, as to forms of collective organizations of producers in the agro-food chain to explore designations of origin.

As to low-income countries, B. Van Elzakker discussed in 1989 the problems these nations have to follow the regulations on organic farms, as these regulations were not clear for all. In addition, the vision of exporters and importers was different from that of inspectors. There was also the issue of a moral obligation concerning countries to which little was brought and from which a lot was taken. Exporters believed that a way to alleviate this was to adapt OA techniques for these countries. Another action would be to incorporate code of good production and marketing practices, based on IFAT and fair trade (FLO) norms. The challenge is still present, and a social agenda for the whole organic movement, with all its complexities, means much more than only taking into account its place in commercial partnership relations. Some areas in which the social and the organic agenda are linked include the development of rural areas and communities, where OA could have a significant impact - creating jobs, stimulating the local market, on gender issues (equal rights), transparency of profits, among others.

The new political and commercial agenda has made aggressive attempts to remove technical and regulatory barriers to trade, and norms need to be harmonized and countries must agree to comply. The most evident model to reduce compliance barriers is the Mutual Recognition Agreement (MRA) used in bilateral and regional trade negotiations. Europe and the USA are negotiating formal MRAs in several sectors. These negotiations partially occurred as a response to the current norm harmonization in Europe. However, there are several obstacles for negotiations on MRAs. The American and the
European systems have different structures and operations, hindering the creation of conditions of reciprocal access to all compliance procedures. Some production sectors in the USA primarily rely on voluntary and self-certification procedures, taking the compliance acceptance to the governments. Others, such as safety requirements for information technology and telecommunications equipment, are attached to networks that require third party certification. The European system primarily focuses on an independent third party certification.

The emphasis recently changed from specific equivalence of the product towards CB equivalence. This will improve the competitive situation of private accreditation bodies, as the experience of repeated transactions will reduce the need of a strict assessment, thus reducing costs. In countries such as Australia, USA (proposal), and Canada (proposal), the approval of equivalence to CBs or their norms, with no requirement of replace the national norms by the exporter country norms, will improve harmonization at domestic level and widen the participation of privately certified producers in the international market. Even in IFOAM Guarantee Program, there are some problems of equivalence among CBs (Simmons, 2002).

The harmonization of multiple norms, operating between and within governmental jurisdictions, is difficult. Accreditation programs improve trade flow as they recognize the equivalence of programs of foreign certification and accreditation, reducing the costs of checking the information for importers and domestic consumers. At the WTO, in disputes related to trade barriers, disagreements on equivalence must be settled with reference to the Codex Alimentarius and the International Organization of Standardization (ISO). Since the beginning of the process of OA institutionalization, there was a concern that domestic organic norms would be weakened if the WTO did not approve social and animal welfare criteria, by a strictly technical interpretation of the organic production rules.

A study by FAO (1999 in Raynolds, 2000) on OA identified a series of barriers for producers: (i) lack of available information on the processes of organic production, certification procedures, and markets; (ii) lack of financing for the conversion for organic status in the southern countries; (iii) excessively high certification costs, with producer often paying more than 5% of their sales value. As most organic products are traded side by side with conventional products in highly volatile world markets, producers are not assured that their investments will be returned if they are certified.

EU requires, since July, 2002, a traceability system for beef imports, with information of the history of the animal that originated the product, such as place of birth, production system, slaughter age and place. As a result of discussions with the Permanent National Forum of Livestock Production of the National Confederation of Agriculture (CAN), the Brazilian Ministry of Agriculture issued the Directive IN-001/2002, in January 2002, establishing the Brazilian System of Identification and Certification of Bovine and Buffalo Origin (SISBOV) in order to promote traceability of Brazilian herds from birth to slaughter. In the beginning, identification will be voluntary, but those who want to export to the EU will have to implement traceability until July 2002. The other deadlines are: December, 2003 for systems that export to other importer markets; December, 2005 for all farms in foot and mouth disease free areas; and December, 2007, for all Brazilian farms. Animals will be identified by electronic chips implants, code bars or hot iron branding. The Ministry is currently in the process of accreditation of CBs in charge of cattle traceability. Once more, producers will pay the costs, and this is significant in a low-income country, particularly for small family production, which is not supported by any kind of subsidy.

### 3.1 Challenges for low-income countries

OA is frequently perceived as system of production and consumption by and for people with environmental and health concerns in high-income countries. The main trend of many low-income countries (Argentina) is to produce organic food and fibers to obtain market opportunities in developed nations. OA policies do not necessarily have a strategy for environmental protection. Although the positive impacts on the environment are a side effect of organic management, the points of entrance for this system may be: (i) promotion of rural communities (e.g., dry lands in India); (ii) alleviating poverty (e.g., mountain regions of Chile); (iii) self-supply (e.g., Cuba); (iv) added-value commodities (e.g., Iran, Uganda). Other policies focus social and cultural concerns, such as: (v) fair trade commodities, which can often be organically produced (e.g., organic and fair trade bananas in Caribbean islands; coffee in LA); (iv) typical regional commodities, produced by traditional practices, which are inherently organic (Parrot & Marsden, 2002).
In low-income countries, especially in traditional systems with low use of inputs, properly managed organic systems increase productivity and recover natural resources. The aims of developing policies for this sector, both in rich and poor countries, are closely linked to the differential impact of OA on the environment and human health. Ethical issues referring the transparency of the profit margins practiced throughout the production chain must continue to direct this type of agriculture. Financial aid is needed for exports due to problems with the cost of certification and with technical issues (such as losses in classification), with financing of storage and packaging structures for export.

In order to have an institutional dynamics parallel to market growth while keeping to OA guidelines, it is important to allow the organic community - including consumers - to participate in all aspects of the definition of norms, in order to maintain the legitimacy of the final rules. This can be achieved by a process of consensus of defining private norms, a process that can be referred in regulations and statutes. This can be a governmental process in which the organic community takes responsibility over the norms, and includes: the selection of representatives in the process of establishment of norms - indicating representatives of the organic community; development of a consensus in the norms (use Codex, IFOAM, EU and USA); national groups can also influence the development of international organic norms by participating in IFOAM and Codex process; writing of norms and use of recommendations allowing the flexibility of these norms according to cultural, social, environmental, and economic aspects; revision of final norms; keeping the authority to periodically rectify the norms.

There are many common obstacles for the agriculture exports of low-income countries. In the access to high-income country markets, agriculture subsidies may distort the market, particularly if there are subsidies for export. The access to information (on regulatory requirements, quality factors, price, demand, marketing practices, and logistics in foreign markets) by small suppliers may be a non-tariff barrier to the liberalization of international trade. Besides these obstacles, the decrease in resources for research and extension in low-income countries, as well as deficiencies and high costs of transport and logistics, also hinder the expansion of organic agricultural exports of low-income countries. Producers and exporters of organic products in these countries also face specific problems related to production, government policies, and infrastructure, transport and freight, market information and certification. As to production, technological knowledge on OA practices is lacking; traditional knowledge must be recovered to be combined with known technologies; and available alternative inputs for routine use are also lacking.

OA in low-income countries usually developed without government support because: (i) they did not know all economic, environmental, social and cultural benefits offered by OA; (ii) they were concerned with food safety, with emphasis on food quantity, and not quality; and (iii) they believed that OA would remain as a market niche, and the demand would not be higher than the offer. In addition, governments had (iv) budget limitations, and perceived (v) OA regulations of high-income countries as technical barriers to trade.

3.2 Main challenges of certification

Finally, the last key challenge for producer, processors, and exporters of organic products in low-income countries is certification. Most regulations of importing countries were based on local conditions, leaving some, if any, space for contributions from low-income countries, which have completely different weather, social, economic, and cultural conditions. Moreover, wholesalers require certification of one among hundreds of different private norms/standards. The processes (infrastructure, training) of certification and accreditation are absent in most low-income countries. A large part of organic exports of low-income countries is certified by international CBs, increasing the costs. IFOAM system is only feasible for members, differently from ISO system, which is open, but the cost of becoming a member is high for small southern producers, thus making IFOAM more influenced by northern countries.

The main obstacles for the adoption of certification are related to technical and bureaucratic complexity (for producers outside EU, the organic legislation is too complex), to the lack of financing during the conversion period, to AFS logistics, to the concentration of competence in the northern countries, the lack of sensitivity to local practices, to low consideration of social criteria, and to issues linked to food mileage (debates in the North) and to seasonality, as well as to transparency of margins in different segments of the chain (debated in the South). In addition, there are in Brazil two certification processes, which follow different logics. The funds of PRONAF (National Program of Family Agriculture)
The inclusion of this register is made by the CB, which concedes the acceptance, or by third parties, have a formal register of accredited or recognized CBs that are accepted for transference of certification. Equivalence of criteria and procedures used in the country of origin will be made. CNPOrg commits to only those from CBs accredited by CNPOrg will be accepted. For imported products, an analysis of the equivalence among certification processes and product certificates (transference of certification), therefore allowing the activity of NGOs that were already having this role. According to IN007/99, as in Brazil, and the acceptance of the participant certification method (certification by training logics), in the structure of IN007/99, imposing that the CB must be a NGO established in the domestic market and another for the external market may be needed, as it happens in Australia. The role of the NGOs was crucial in the period for total conversion in the tropics (Harkalay, 2000).

Another problem is related to reciprocity among CBs, creating obstacles for trading both in the domestic and foreign market. Procedures adopted in participant certification, due to its complexity and foundation on strong, heterogeneous social relationships, need to be better formalized (step-by-step records, adaptation of records, contracts) as they obstruct reciprocity among CBs. Technical production norms are commonly very similar among CBs; the larger differences lie on general principles and in certification procedures. CBs using participant certification assume that institutions are reliable, and therefore, there is no need of external audits, which are expensive and usually do not know the sites to be inspected.

Certifications by an external consultant, who makes few or even a single visit to producers, will make the process more expensive, as they would surely be less efficient in keeping to the general principles, recommendations and criteria of OA, as compared to a serious entity constantly working in the region. Moreover, certification by audit is also based on reliability, as it is basically founded on several annual visits, when production procedures are checked. Most of the procedures are reported by the producers, and therefore this type of certification is not more reliable or efficient than that conducted by certification networks that have stronger local actions. However, as IN006/02 prevents inspectors from providing consultancy to production units where there are conflicts of interests, what is going to happen to the technical services provided by technicians and producers of the Ecovida Association of Participant Certification? Today, an external auditor is needed, even though he is a member of the associations, besides the gigantic bureaucracy to provide records, collection costs and information processing. The legal separation of the Certification Council in the Association is a way to minimize liabilities for fraud and conflicts of interests.

In Brazil, the process of certification by training, treating different as different, accepting that different people must benefit from different policies, must be recognized. Therefore, one legislation for the domestic market and another for the external market may be needed, as it happens in Australia. The role of the NGOs was crucial in the structure of IN007/99, imposing that the CB must be a NGO established in Brazil, and the acceptance of the participant certification method (certification by training logics), therefore allowing the activity of NGOs that were already having this role. According to IN007/99, as to the equivalence among certification processes and product certificates (transference of certification), only those from CBs accredited by CNPOrg will be accepted. For imported products, an analysis of equivalence of criteria and procedures used in the country of origin will be made. CNPOrg commits to have a formal register of accredited or recognized CBs that are accepted for transference of certification. The inclusion of this register is made by the CB, which concedes the acceptance, or by third parties,
when accredited and recognized by CNPOrg, of the equivalence of the accreditation system used by foreign CBs registered in Brazil or dealing with imports, to the national system.

Aiming at lowering the costs of certification, some actions must be carried out: a) assistance to donor of resources and sharing costs with partners in high-income countries; b) training of local inspectors and other professionals who work for a national or international CB operating in the country, which may involve some kind of co-certification; c) development of an international system for harmonization and equivalence; d) development of regional/national CBs. In low-income countries with large organic sectors, there are also opportunities to: e) the development of national norms and a national system of certification and accreditation; f) the international accreditation of national CBs; g) the negotiation of bi-lateral agreements on equivalence (Twarog & Vessnar, 2002). Northern countries and multi-national companies must finance training in southern countries, aiming at allowing their participation in a model of development with freedom of choice.

The obstacles to the harmonization of norms and processes of certifications among organic and fair trade movements has always been a concern of leaders and producers involved in these alternative forms of consumption habits and trade. According to Courville (2000, p. 103-107), there are conditions to establish synergies as we identify the strengths of each system and their equivalences, helping to understand where the opportunities to improve the inspection processes and to reduce costs are. This means sharing information among CBs, which may be a problem as it involves reliability. A distinction between primary data and those created to be interpreted and assessed by the inspector must be made. Another issue is to share costs when obtaining information. If one of the major goals of harmonizing is to reduce costs, agreements should be made as to how to share costs in an equitable way when obtaining information.

Simplifying information sharing by harmonization of formats is a mechanism that can increase the usefulness of shared data and reduce the total time and costs of data collection and analysis. Democratization of information through joint training of inspectors, producers and consumers, where several topics could be treated, aims at avoiding the duplication of procedures and to improve inspection. Examples of such issues are: institutional issues in producers’ organizations (information flow); management of water basins, measuring the impacts on natural resources (coffee, for instance, demands wood and basin protection; how to assess the organization’s financial health; the relationship between biodiversity and coffee and sugarcane production, etc. Other topics to be discussed on these meetings are: added value, profit margins, diversification, which are almost not approached and specified in the norms. Producers perceive these as central, essential issues for the development of their long-term strategies (Courneville, 2000 p.106). In addition, another topic is how certification processes can encourage conversion initiatives for EOA production more clearly and explicitly, founded on the principles of certification by training. Another important contribution is the scientific bases for technical norms of production.

Producers often do not have the information that is required by the inspectors, and this may be due to the information problems between producers’ organizations and CBs, or to a lack of transparency or communication noise as to what is asked by the CBs. A Guide to Inspections, including the norms of the CBs, needs to be written in an understandable way, and the use of diagrams.

In order to harmonize knowledge on norms and processes of certification and accreditation of organic products in Brazil, a group of public and private institutions designed a research project, financed by CNPq, aiming at discussing and establishing a dense and homogenous body of knowledge. One of the objectives, in addition to the democratic and transparent dissemination of information on norms and processes of certification and accreditation of the CBs among all actors interested in production, trading and consumption of organic products, is to support future negotiations on this issue in the public and private spheres at domestic and international level.

We must bear in mind that the future lays in informing/training young people on this new perspective of the world. Another ethics must be sought, different from the presently practiced in the scientific and academic milieu, in commercial and social relationships. EOA cannot divide its efforts, despite some natural tensions related to social movements. Now is the time to add, not to divide, as the hazards of the development model established last century are bigger than divergences within the EOA for small farmers, small family farms, small agro-industries, and consumers of low-income countries. The concern of EOA opponents in criticizing this approaches shows that we have been able to fulfill part of our goal of building together a better, more sustainable, and fair world for all.
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