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Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences

Faculty of Natural Resources and
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Biodiversity vs. Consumption and Agriculture

– Analysis of discourses from the European Community
on its effort to halt biodiversity loss

Carol Sencebé Condeso

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Carol Sencebé Condeso

Supervisor: Thomas Norrby, Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences,
Department of Urban and Rural Development

Examiner: Örjan Bartholdson, Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences
Department of Urban and Rural Development

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Abstract

Biodiversity has been in public agendas since the Río Conference in 1992, yet measures to improve it do not seem sufficient since it remains in a continuous negative status. Moreover, consumption and agriculture have been targeted as the practices that damage biodiversity the most. Thus, this study aims to analyse official documents from the European Commission and to understand how these could influence consumption and agriculture as an attempt to revert biodiversity loss. The research is framed by the Foucault inspired notion of governmentality and the analysis approached from the theoretical concepts of empowerment and agency. This is a qualitative research inspired by discourse analysis, where the analytical procedure of official documents followed interpretation of statements, approaching it from the perspective of sustainable agriculture, based on the assumption that this practice is beneficial for biodiversity.

Concern regarding biodiversity loss was present in some of the diverse documents analysed. Empowerment is the dominant discourse spread among consumption documents, and sustainability among agriculture documents, where the Commission expects consumption and production to meet in the market, leading this to a sustainable consumption. However, no direct relation from consumption of agriculture products proceeding from sustainable production (i.e. sustainable agriculture) was found besides of organic agriculture, which counts with its own regulation; nor was any type of discourse aiming to reduce consumption as a sustainable strategy. Furthermore, the results point to certain constraints within the Commission for a partial position that could benefit biodiversity above the market.

1. Introduction

The beginning of this study dates back to a couple of years ago, when working on a project¹ that had as one of their aims on-farm diversification in Swedish rural areas. One side of the project worked directly with producers (farmers) by presenting them new options to test, which later could be cultivated in larger scale. The other side of the project worked with the market and the acceptance these new products could have in it.

A personal result from that experience was a questioning. Could promotion of a more diverse diet encourage farmers to diversify, and thus increase biodiversity in agricultural areas? Due to certain hesitations from farmers towards the new products, the wondering started to change, since that reaction showed the important connection between production and consumption; it exposed certain lack of interaction between farmers with the market demands. Furthermore, biodiversity includes a more complex structure than the one in agricultural systems, as it relates to local ecosystems and to its native flora and fauna. All those concerns seemed out of my reach to analyse at that time.

While wondering if promotion of consumption of certain products could generate changes in agricultural systems and biodiversity, the concept of **agency** was introduced to that still immature idea. Agency, defined as the innate capacity humans have to act and generate changes in their context, offered a more grounded basis to analyse that thought. As to any action there is a reaction, which from the perspective of agency would result in social change, it was reasonable to think that if consumption is promoted (action) towards a type of product, changes in production could be expected as a result (reaction). Hence, if consumption would be encouraged towards products proceeding from sustainable agriculture, an improvement on the status of biodiversity in agricultural areas could also be expected. However, more questionings rose up: Who should promote consumption of sustainable products? Should it be an enterprise or should it be the state? What is the role of the citizens in this context? How are products from sustainable production perceived by consumers? The ‘agency reasoning’ seemed more complicated to apply in reality, since people create: consumption, production and discourses on those practices. The wondering started, somehow, to take shape but it still needed to focus on a scenario where those three matters meet in a researchable scope.

¹ <https://innovationlandsbygd.wordpress.com/about/>

A Swedish context would have been complicated to analyse based on language barriers, since official documents are published in Swedish; although Swedish policy programmes are very much defined by the European Union (EU), e.g. the Rural Development Programme for Sweden follows general decisions through the CAP (Common Agriculture Policy), Swedish environmental goals are dependent on the EU Environment Action Programme, and this is also true for consumer policies. Therefore, the European Union looked like an appealing context to focus on, as it includes English as one of its official languages². Also, the EU provides basis for each country to decide how these would cooperate in achieving common goals, such as the improvement of biodiversity, and even though an analysis on production and consumption across the EU could be too complex, the European Commission³ addresses the issues of consumption and production, and regulates them.

1.1 Brief background on the challenges to preserve Biodiversity

Biodiversity has been the focus of environmental agendas since Rio Conference in 1992, being perceived as one of the most important factors in order to preserve life on earth (Edwards and Abivardi, 1998). However, measures to improve the status of biodiversity have not been enough during these years, since biodiversity loss is still in a negative status according to the Convention of Biological Diversity (CBD, 2014).

Biodiversity is considered to be the basis of agriculture, as this enables the production of food in cultivated and wild areas (MA, 2005); performing ecosystem services beyond production of food, fuel or fibre, it also has the capacity to recycle nutrients, act as a pest regulator, support its own soil fertility among others (Altieri, 1999). Yet, agriculture is considered to be one of the main causes of loss of biodiversity (MA, 2005; Belfrage, 2014), while in its attempt to increase the production of an ecosystem service (i.e. food production), modern methods requires the simplification of natural systems replacing diversity to a small cultivated number of plants (MA, 2005; Altieri, 1999). Belfrage (2014) mentions that some attempts to reduce the impacts of agriculture on biodiversity have been done in Europe. However, biodiversity and the heterogeneity of the landscape are still decreasing, mostly due to abandonment of land, intensification of production, and change of cultivation and structure of the landscape (Gustavsson, 2007; Safi and Drake, 2008; Björklund et al., 2009). Nevertheless, sustainable agriculture practices such as agro-ecology, agro-biodiversity, organic farming, small scale farming, among others; are

² http://ec.europa.eu/languages/policy/linguistic-diversity/official-languages-eu_en.htm

³ “The European Commission is the executive of the European Union and promotes its general interest”.
http://ec.europa.eu/index_en.htm

practices considered to help maintain and preserve biodiversity in agriculture areas (Altieri, 1999; Hole et al., 2005; Nicholls and Altieri, 2013; Belfrage, 2014).

Furthermore, Aichi Targets set by the Convention of Biological Diversity (CBD), have recognized that current consumption patterns generate a challenging situation for production, proposing to governments, business and stakeholders to aim for a sustainable production and consumption to keep the use of natural resources within their ecological safe limits. However, in the Global Biodiversity Outlook of 2014 done by the CBD, most of the targets set to be accomplished by 2020 looked far from reaching their objective by that year. One of the main reasons given in the Outlook is due to current consumption patterns; likewise, agriculture practices appear to be the main cause of biodiversity loss in agricultural areas (CBD, 2014).

The European Union, as a member party of the CBD⁴, is expected to contribute to the achievement of sustainability on production and consumption, and has also recognized the damage on biodiversity caused by a “*rapid industrialization and urbanization of Europe*” which expands to ecosystems outside of this continent, increasing the pressure on biodiversity globally (European Commission, 2011. SEC(2011), p.52). However, even though reports from the EU have acknowledged the effects of European “*unsustainable consumption pattern*” (European Commission, 2011. COM(2011), p.8), the European Commission⁵ sees the demanding force of their citizens, as an advantage to be used in the Single Market to enhance economic prosperity within the European community (European Commission, 2012).

The Party members of the CBD are many, but on this study the focus will be made on the European Union and its effort to contribute to the improvement of the status of biodiversity. Since the EU Commission talks about promoting sustainability on production and consumption, but consumption patterns and agricultural production are recognized as some of the reason of loss of biodiversity, this study will explore how the Commission addresses these two issues.

1.2 Problem formulation

As mentioned before, biodiversity has been on public agendas since the early 1990's, yet it remains in a continuous negative status. Conventions, policies, agreements, among others, have been at the

⁴ http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/biodiversity/international/index_en.htm

⁵ In this study this will be referred as the EU Commission and in certain cases as the Commission.

order of the day during all these years without the expected results, dragging a sense of endless discomfort and uncertainty on this topic. So, the purpose of this study is to understand how policies and actions promoted by the EU influence consumption and agriculture (production) as an attempt to revert biodiversity loss.

1.3 Aim and research question(s)

The aim of this study is to analyse how official documents of the European Union, regarding consumption and sustainable agriculture, relate to each other in the attempt to achieve common goals regarding biodiversity.

Main research question:

Does the European Union encourage consumption of products proceeding from sustainable agriculture in a way to stimulate actions that could contribute to the improvement of the status of biodiversity on European farms? If they do, how do they do it?

Sub-questions:

- *How does the EU documents discuss consumption matters and how do these documents connect consumption to sustainability and agriculture?*
- *What strategies does the EU Commission mention as a way to promote sustainability within consumption and agriculture practices?*

2. The framework

This study is framed by the Foucault inspired notion of governmentality; since it is focused on how and with what means the European Commission attempts to shape citizens' conduct in order to achieve 'governmental objectives' (cf. Dean, 2010). The analysis of this study focuses on the measures/technicalities mentioned by the Commission regarding consumption of agriculture products, and how these are expected (direct- or indirectly) to improve biodiversity.

The Commission communicates its objectives and strategies through texts such as policies, press releases, working plans, among others; which are part of discourses. Discourses are considered of influential characteristics, where these have and express agency, i.e. discourses can generate changes through language within a social context (Fairclough, 1989; 2003; Inglis, 2012).

The documents analysed show a persistent presence of empowerment, which according to Dean (2010) is a way for governments to enable their citizens to "*participate in decision-making processes*", to convert them from "*powerless to active citizens*". Dean (2010) shows the connection between empowerment and agency; the use of agency is always a potential act of agency.

The Commission in its attempt to influence its citizens' consumption patterns, seeks to affect people's "*discursive consciousness*" Giddens (1979) by composing and communicating discourses about consumption in official texts; where citizens are expected to reflect in their everyday actions and adopt the suggested posture by the Commission.

2.1. Governmentality and empowerment

Foucault, (cited in Dean, 2010), refers to governmentality as the analysis of government and the practices involved to deliberately shape the conduct (i.e. behaviour, actions, comportment) of individuals and groups, based on specific norms to accomplish diverse objectives. Thus, it also implies relations between government to power (Dean, 2010). Dean (2010) states that governmentality deals with what is thought about governing, and how these thoughts are put into practice. He also gives a priority to 'how' questions when analysing government, since this would open to understanding how governing has been thought. According to Dean (2010), government, as the 'shaper' of conduct necessitate individuals and/or groups to act so that the government becomes effective in accomplishing its objectives; therefore are the 'governed' in need to be empowered.

Empowerment is a rather complex concept since it can be taken as an analytical and/or ideological term by some authors (Sadan, 2004), or as a political concept (cf. Dean, 2010).

Taken as an ideological term, different authors interpret empowerment as the awareness of inner power that would lead an individual to develop in a personal level and within its community (McGregor, 2005; Sadan, 2004; Perkins and Zimmerman, 1995; Speer and Hughey, 1995; Rappaport, 1987). Empowerment is considered as a process of external and internal change, where an internal change is seen as individual empowerment (or psychological empowerment) and the external change as social, political and economic empowerment (Sadan, 2004; Rappaport, 1987). Therefore empowerment will look, and manifest differently, according to the context this is applied (Wilkinson, 1998).

2.2. Agency

Agency is defined by Giddens (1979) as a conscious action of the individual, obtained by a reflexive moment, conducing to break its day-to-day activity, i.e. a person changes its usual conduct because its previous behaviour is no longer in accordance with its posture. This reflexivity is interpreted as a character of human behaviour where the individual reflects on previous actions, being those actions not individual acts, but a “*continuous flow of conduct*” (Ibis, p.55). Agency is also considered as the capacity an individual has to act different from the rest in a situation where a specific conduct is expected, so agency is also seen as “*the capacity to make a difference*” (Inglis, 2012, p.227).

‘Day-to-day activity’ is referred by Giddens (1979) as “*practical consciousness*”, meaning that an individual act in a semi-conscious state to exercise its everyday routines without giving too many thoughts about it. However, when the agent reflects about a specific situation to give reason to its behaviour getting out from its practical consciousness it passes to a “*discursive consciousness*” (Giddens, 1979; Inglis, 2012. p.87). The reflexivity on their conduct will depend on the degree of reasoning the individual has about its environment and how to explain its own behaviour (Giddens, 1979; Inglis, 2012).

2.3. Power and discourses

Giddens (1979) refers to power from two main perspectives, where the first is seen as the capacity an individual has to act (i.e. agency as/or the result of individual empowerment) in a different way from the rest, and the second is seen as a property of collective action of individuals (i.e. the result of community empowerment). These ways of seeing power however, are not possible to happen in isolation, this is only possible within the dualistic characteristics of a structure (i.e. social context). Power is represented by actions (i.e. agency), it forms part of individuals, and it manifests in our

daily routines; power is exerted when an individual agent uses the available resources to act and reach its objectives (Inglis, 2012).

Foucault (paraphrased in Barker, 1998, p.27) refers to power as the interaction of forces through the used of strategies to deal with a situation in a particular context, where power adopts a ‘net-like’ figure instead of a hierarchical one, where power is everywhere and comes from everywhere. Foucault relates power to discourses where a discourse has the capacity to create its own truth and live by it within a social context, consciously (or unconsciously) spreading a position regarding morals, behaviours, conduct, etc., into that context (Barker, 1998; Dean, 2010), suggesting that discourses have the power to create a “new category of people” (Inglis, 2012, p.181). According to Speer and Hughey (1995), social actors, such as governments are empowered when these are capable of practicing “*instruments of social power*”, being among those, the capacity to influence shared consciousness (i.e. discursive consciousness).

2.4. Reflections on the analytical concepts

An individual will be empowered depending on the context this develops as a person, and the degree of empowerment this gives to that individual, where the more empowered individuals exist in a community, the more empowered a community becomes (Perkins and Zimmerman, 1995; Rappaport, 1987). So the degree of agency an individual has would be influenced by the degree of empowerment its contexts provides to it. This can also relate to the ‘duality of a structure’, where a structure creates social practices and vice versa (Giddens, 1979). Thus, empowerment can be understood as the awareness of “*inner power*” that would motivate us to take action (McGregor, 2005), which leads to agency (see Image 1).

Agency and discourse share similarities as both are said to influence social practices and environments. The first is an action resulting from a reflective moment expressed on a change of behaviour within a social context, able to modify its social system and thus its structure (Giddens, 1979); the latter, is interpreted as a reflexion on the understanding of someone’s environment but expressed by language, being this also capable of generating changes within a social context (Fairclough, 1989; 2003; Inglis, 2012).

Considering that texts as part of discourses have and express agency (Fairclough, 1989; 2003; Inglis, 2012), and these are thought to influence people’s practical consciousness through the modification of the discursive consciousness; by analysing discourses approached from the concepts of: empowerment (as an ideological term), power, agency, practical and discursive

consciousness; framed by the concept of governmentality, will open up to understanding how the EU Commission is working and what kind of strategies are said to be applied in its fight against biodiversity loss, through discourses made on consumption and agriculture.

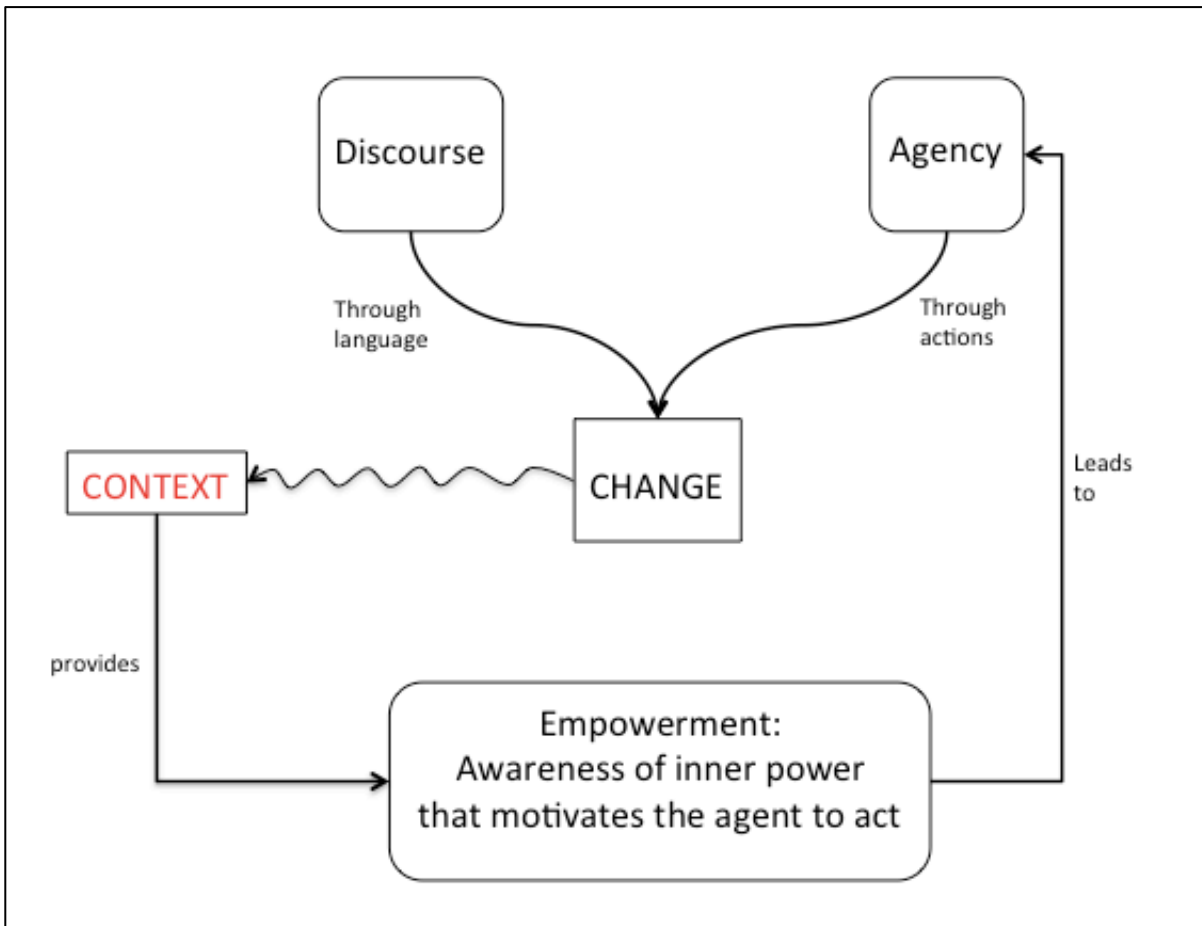


Image 1. Graphic interpretation of theoretical concepts with discourse

3. Methodology

This chapter introduces the procedure used to develop data selection and the research to accomplish the aim of the study and attempt to answer the research question(s).

The analysis is inspired by discourse analysis, so an introduction is presented to highlight the basic concepts used for the study. The selection of this method was based on its allowance to identify patterns “*in and across*” the documents under analysis and discover social consequences a discourse can create in reality (Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002). In this study, the delay on achieving the agreed objective of improving the status of biodiversity in the European Union is seen as such social consequence. Since the study started with an interrogation on how the European Union addresses the issues under study, an exploratory data selection was made to gather the information to be analysed.

The final section of this chapter presents the procedure followed to analyse the data selected, and the limitations of the method.

3.1 Discourse analysis

According to Jørgensen and Phillips (2002) the concept of discourse analysis (DA) can be vague or more precise according to its context, where discourses can be seen as patterns created from the expressions (language) people use to describe their understanding of the world. Fairclough (1989; 2003) claims that language cannot be excluded from social life, because language is a form of social practice, language is what people use to give sense to their world. So, Jørgensen and Phillips (2002) argue that discourse analysis would be the study of the previously mentioned patterns, where the approach to analyse them would consist on a series of interdisciplinary approaches, allowing diverse ways to study different social contexts

Lyons and Coyle (2007) suggest that to analyse a discourse one has to develop an analytic approach and to be critical towards the way language is used, emphasising on doing a careful reading and interpretation of the texts, supported by quotes found in the texts under analyse. Fairclough (2003) considers that an interpretation can identify immediate social causes, being this method highly reflexive in some cases, as this creates conscious thoughts about what is meant, and why something is written or said as it is. Fairclough (2003) also argues that the interpretations made from the texts will depend on the perspective used to approach it, including the social issues on focus and social theories.

So, considering that discourse analysis is the study of texts and/or talks as social practices (Potter, 1996), to study them would make possible the understanding of its effect in a social context (Fairclough, 1989). This study focuses on an analysis of texts, (Fairclough, 2003), by doing so, it allow us to understand how the EU Commission addresses the issues of sustainable agriculture and consumption, and it makes possible to observe if and how those discourses interact with each other, facilitating the improvement of biodiversity within the EU community.

3.2 Data selection

As the study started with questioning how the European Commission address issues of consumption and agriculture, an exploratory data selection was made. The starting point to gather information was on the Policies and Law section of the EU Commission website: http://ec.europa.eu/index_en.htm.

The two Directorate areas selected for analyse, were: (1) Directorate-General of Justice and Consumers, and (2) Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development.

Each of the two Directorate provided information regarding their objectives, work and tasks, followed (in some cases) by official documents such as: Policies, regulations, reports, working plans and press releases, among other types of documents.

Since the main research question relates to encouragement of consumption, the first search started on the Directorate of Consumers (1). When the reading and selection on that Directorate concluded, the search on the Directorate of Agriculture (2) started.

Selection criteria:

The 1st Selection criterion was basically to search documents in force on each Directorate regarding the topics of interest. The criteria of selection for the *1st data analysis* were:

- Text documents in force during the search frame time.
- In case that the regulations, reports, press release, working plans, etc., suggested revision of previous documents, these should not be older than 10 years (before year 2005).
- Text documents from the Directorate of Consumers (1) should include the following keywords: Sustainability, Sustainable consumption or agriculture, and biodiversity.

- Text documents from the Directorate of Agriculture (2) should include the same keywords previously mentioned, plus the relevant ones found on the documents from the Directorate (1), which were Empowerment and Single market.
- Time frame for search, selection and analysis: June 2015 to September 2015.

The keywords used for the 1st selection of documents were chosen based on the aim of the study. Since this is related to consumption, sustainability, agriculture and biodiversity, those were the main keywords to start the selection of texts to analyse.

It is also relevant to mention that since a pre-evaluation and selection was done on the documents proceeding from the Directorate of Consumers (1), a pattern of words were found and used to search and select the documents proceeding from the Directorate of Agriculture (2). The reason behind this was to be more efficient on the search of agriculture documents related to consumption and its encouragement. The expected here was to do a cross match of terms on the documents from both Directorates and see how do these two areas interact with each other, which had as result a 2nd selection and analysis. (See Table 1 in the following Chapter)

A 2nd Selection was decided to broaden the understanding of the analysis after the *1st data analysis*, since some questions on how the documents related to each other came up. This resulted in a reduction of documents from the 1st Selection, but it also added new selected documents for analyse. So the selected documents (including the remaining ones from the *1st data analysis*) went through a *2nd data analysis* using the relevant keywords from the *1st data analysis*. The criteria followed was:

- Text documents from the Directorate of Consumers (1) should include keywords such as: Organic farming, single market, food products, labelling and promotion (of sustainable choice).
- Text documents from Directorate of Agriculture (2) should include keywords such as: Organic farming, labelling and promotion (of food products).
- A new document would be included to the final analysis only if it would provide new information to the previously found.
- Time frame for selection: September 2015 to November 2015.

A list of the total number of documents read previous to the final selection and analyse, can be found in the Appendix 1 - Table 2.

3.3 Data Analysis procedures

Biodiversity and sustainable agriculture

In this study sustainable agriculture, in its diverse expressions, is presumed to favour biodiversity (Altieri, 1999, 2004; Hole et al., 2005; Nicholls and Altieri, 2013; Belfrage, 2014), therefore the focus on this practice and its connection to consumption policies and viceversa. The analysis has been approached from the perspective of sustainable agriculture in cases where sustainable production were mentioned in EU documents. Although sustainable production not only referred to agriculture matters, biodiversity and its improvement was mostly connected to agriculture practices (see Chapter 4).

1st Data analysis

The group of documents resulting from the 1st selection went through a *1st Data analysis* based on interpretation of statements approached from the perspective of *sustainable agriculture*, which in this study is defined as the practice of agriculture based on sustainable methods, such as: Agroecology, organic farming, low-input agriculture, on-farm diversification, crop rotation, agrobiodiversity, permaculture, small-scale agriculture, etc. (Altieri, 1999, 2004; Hansen, 1996; Hole et al., 2005; Nicholls and Altieri, 2013; Belfrage, 2014). This was decided mainly to understand how does the EU Commission address sustainable agriculture and consumption of products proceeding from this practice, considering that these were the issues under study.

2nd Data analysis

While the reading procedure went through, a new pattern of words came to light, and so arrived the decision of doing a *2nd selection* and *2nd data analysis*, since the new keywords could lead to a wider explanation on the discourses on consumption related to the ones of agriculture, and vice versa. The analysis was made on the already selected documents, although as a new group of keywords was introduced, some documents were added and/or deleted for the final data analysis (See Appendix 1, Table 3).

Empowerment

After the *1st data analysis* the concept of consumers' **empowerment** was predominant in the documents proceeding from the Directorate of Consumers, lightly influencing the approach of the *2nd data analysis* into this perspective.

At this stage of the study empowerment is an outcome of the data analysis, which, even though has been mentioned several times by the Commission, it did not explicitly explain what is meant by this term.

3.4 Limitations of the method

Discourse analysis is considered to be in some cases ambiguous and not necessarily systematic in its condition of method (Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002), creating in this sense diverse settings to accomplish the goals set by a researcher. Additionally, the researcher should aim for objectivity, avoiding involvement of personal feelings or beliefs during the study, as discourse analysis depends to certain degree on the criteria of the analyst and on how this sees and/or interprets the world (Potter, 1996; Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002; Inglis, 2012). So, even though a neutral view has been aimed at the analysis and development of the research, since this study has followed specific perspectives and theoretical approaches, and is influenced by the researcher's own background and preconceptions, there is a possibility to obtain different results on attempting to answer a similar research question. Moreover, discourses are under continuous change since new enunciations are added to them over time (Fairclough, 1989), therefore new discourses can and will be found following the same searching footsteps and sources to collect the data, yet to provide validity to the research, a list of the documents analysed is attached (see Appendix 1) for the reader's evaluation (Potter, 1996). Nevertheless, discourse analysis is, within its limitations, a trustable qualitative method that can help to understand thoroughly how the EU addresses the issues under study and to identify the possible factors limiting (or facilitating) the improvement of biodiversity within the EU (Fairclough, 1989, 2003; Potter, 1996; Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002).

4. Data analysis

The results of the final data analysis are presented in this Chapter. As suggested by Lyons and Coyle (2007), the analysis has followed interpretation of statements as an analytical procedure. Additionally, even though this study is inspired on DA, the interpretation of a discourse will depend on the perspective used to approach it (Fairclough, 2003), thus the concepts used in this analysis are **sustainable agriculture** and **empowerment** (described in Chapter 3), which emerged from the first readings of the documents.

4.1 Data analysis on texts from the Consumers Directorate

This sub-chapter includes a few references and interpretations made from documents of the Directorates of Environment, and Health and Food Safety, since some of the documents read, included connections to these areas.

4.1.1 Empowerment of consumers and sustainability:

The EU Consumers Agenda (CoAg1) talks about an on-going economic crisis that could be solved thanks to the demanding force of European consumers within the Single Market⁶. This Agenda, however, has to follow the objectives of the General Union 7th Environment Action Programme to 2020 (EnvP1), as this Programme has as target the integration of the Environmental objectives into other policies areas: *The Commission has further integrated environmental concerns and objectives in recent initiatives taken in other key policy areas (...) to enhance the delivery of environmental benefits through reforms of Union policies for agriculture and rural development (...) particularly important in contributing to the sustainability of agriculture (Ibid, p.21).*

The mentioned integration can be reflected on the Consumers Agenda, as besides of having as objective to empower consumers, the empowerment would be reinforced by increasing the availability of sustainable products in the Single Market, enabling consumers to make ‘the sustainable choice’: *“Consumers should be empowered, assisted and encouraged to make sustainable and healthy choices (...) Consumers should be supported in easily identifying the truly sustainable choice (CoAg1, p.5)”*.

⁶ http://ec.europa.eu/growth/single-market/goods/index_en.htm

In the eyes of the EU Commission, the awareness consumers have about the impact of consumption on the environment, is a factor that can be used to address issues like climate change or biodiversity loss, if the Commission encourages the adoption of a sustainable behaviour among a wider group of consumers (CoAg1). The European Commission, refers to an empowered consumer as the one aware of its rights, have knowledge about the sustainable choice, and knows how to use the market in its favour. This consumer is considered to be capable of making a boost on the European economy, and to shift consumption towards sustainable patterns (CoAg1, CoPo2, CoPr7). Therefore, the EU Commission suggests that if the public sector provides regulations, policies, improvement of control, among others, to give a framework for enterprises to adopt a sustainable position to produce goods, then consumers will have more reliable options to choose within the Single Market (FoPr7). The more availability of sustainable goods, boosted by the demand of empowered consumers is expected to increase competitiveness in the market, making sustainable products affordable to more consumers. In other words, the way of encouraging consumers to make a sustainable choice is through raising trust on the control the European Commission uses among producers.

4.1.2 Empowerment of Consumers and Behavioural Studies:

In the consumers' area, behavioural studies were mentioned to be used as a framework to develop further policies (CoAg1). However some differences, coming from different documents regarding consumption, also came up. Statements such as: *“If behaviour is primarily due to lack of knowledge or information, then conventional education or information campaigns may constitute an appropriate remedy. But if, on the contrary, people’s behaviour reflects fundamental aspects of human nature (...), these biases need to be taken into account when designing policy”* (CoW3, p.7); suggesting that if policy makers, or any study conducted by the EU Commission, decide that behaviour is primarily driven by a lack of information or knowledge, there would be no greater effort to include more complex studies regarding consumers' behaviour in the design of new policies, possibly including those designed to empower consumers. On the other hand, the Consumer Policy Report for that same year (CoPR8) mentions the importance of behavioural studies to be implemented in the development of future polices, mentioning also a study done by the European Commission to apply such studies into EU policy making⁷.

⁷ <http://ftp.jrc.es/EURdoc/JRC83284.pdf>

Suggestions to make information more available on the EU website about consumers' rights, forms part of a strategy to raise awareness (CoAg1). However, in contradiction to this strategy a working plan by the Commission mentioned that a study done in the Netherlands, where consumers are considered to have high empowerment, showed that these would not read about their rights unless it is needed e.g. when purchasing high cost goods (CoW3). More active strategies were also mentioned in the working plan, such as awareness-raising campaigns and the use of traditional media, such as TV and Radio programmes to offer consumers a "high quality information and analysis" about consumer issues.

The importance of the inclusion of behavioural studies into policy making, has been stated in diverse documents from the Directorate of Consumer, usually relating these studies to the one of consumer empowerment by the Commission. The reasons are mostly to influence consumers to do the 'right choice' (i.e. sustainable choice). Yet, due to some contradicting discourses found on the documents analysed, a final position from the Commission towards the use of these types of studies in the policy making process was not completely clear.

4.1.3 Biodiversity and Consumption

Even though documents from the Environment Department mentioned the inclusion of environmental objectives into other Departments and their policies, the mentioning of biodiversity goals were not found in any of the documents analysed from the Consumers Department. However, in diverse cases biodiversity and strategies to improve it have been connected to sustainable consumption and production (see Image 2).

To conclude this sub-chapter, it is important to mention, that after reading different documents regarding consumption, it was found that the awareness raising campaigns and distribution of information was mainly suggested as means to increase the growth of the Single Market, and this market refers mostly to non-food products such as long-term goods and services⁸. Although a relation between food and consumption was found in one document (CoW3), food goods or agriculture products were not addressed in the documents selected from the Consumers area of the Department for Justice and Consumers. Although some mentions were found, these did not provide relevant information for the interests of this study.

⁸ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52008DC0397>

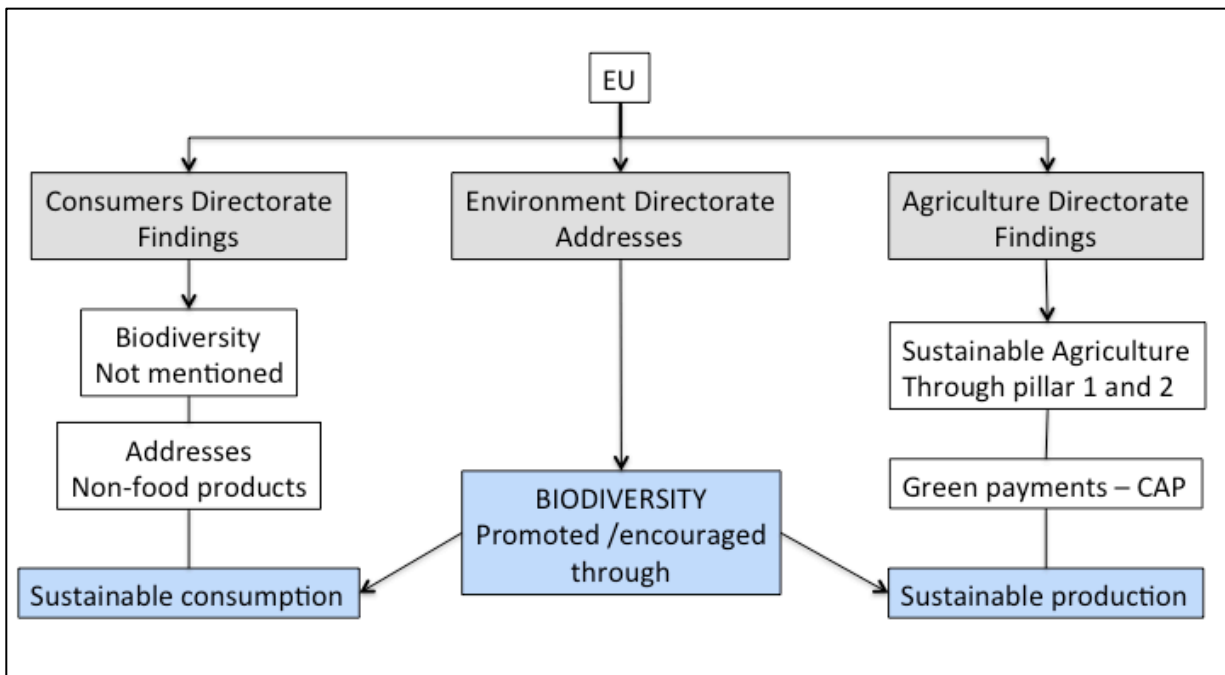


Image 2. Graphic findings of how biodiversity is addressed on the related Directorates

Main concepts found (see Table 1):

- Empowerment
- Promotion of consumption
- Sustainable choice
- Consumers behaviour

4.2 Data analysis on texts from the Agriculture Directorate

4.2.1 The CAP and sustainability

In the overview of the CAP reform 2014-2020, a greener rural development is mentioned in a way to get as result a more sustainable EU agriculture. *“The new CAP maintains the two pillars (...) it introduces a new architecture of direct payments (...) more equitable and greener (...) and strengthened rural development (...) contributing to a more competitive and sustainable EU agriculture (AgCAP4, p. 1)”*.

The CAP's glossary⁹ defines greening as any practice that is beneficial for the environment and climate change: *“The 2013 reform of the Common Agricultural Policy introduced several instruments to promote environmental sustainability and combat climate change. These instruments comprise a green direct payment (...) measures that are beneficial for the environment and climate change”*. However, this definition is given in a broad sense, and what is considered to be beneficial (or not) for the environment is not necessarily defined. Sustainable agriculture is not defined in the glossary either, but Sustainable Development is and it follows the definition given by the World Commission on Environment and Development: Our common future, from 1987¹⁰: *“Sustainable development is to meet the needs of present generations without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”* (UN, 1987. p.41).

The new CAP reform 2014-2020 mentions subsidies as a strategy to encourage farmers to adopt more sustainable agriculture practices, being this based on their 1st pillar of ‘Green Direct Payments’. *“Farmers should be rewarded for the services they deliver to the wider public, such as landscapes, farmland biodiversity, climate stability even though they have no market value. Therefore, a new policy instrument of the first pillar (greening) is directed to the provision of environmental public goods”* (AgCAP4, p.5). The rewards take the form of green payments, given to farmers only if these adopt the practices of ‘crop diversification, maintenance of permanent grassland and ecological focus areas’. These three practices are considered to be more beneficial for the environment and climate by the CAP: *“As the green direct payment is compulsory it has the advantage of introducing practices that are beneficial for the environment and climate on most of the utilised agricultural area (AgCAP4, p.7)”*. Other practices, such as organic production, are also being promoted among farmers through the green payments, except these ones follow the 2nd pillar of the CAP, where the adoption of ‘environment beneficial’ measures, is voluntary.

In this CAP any small change towards sustainability is being encouraged among farmers within the EU, specially the three compulsory ones to receive the green direct payments.

4.2.2 The CAP and the market

The CAP is looking to become ‘greener’ through the strategies mentioned in the previous sub-chapter, however this CAP also mentions that this will follow the objectives from past reforms “to

⁹ http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/glossary_en

¹⁰ <http://ec.europa.eu/environment/eussd/>

encourage farmers to base their production decision on market signal” (AgCAP4, p.5). This suggests that the encouragement of a specific type of production, besides of fulfilling the environmental objectives, should also have certain demand in the market. In documents previous to the current CAP, statements such as: *“farming requirements are continually evolving as a function of the demands of society (...) these should be an important part of the quality of food (...) that farmers can promote” (AgGp2, p.6),* also shows that the market demand do play an important role in food production and quality.

Issues such as certification schemes are mentioned to be driven by an existing demand in the market where the development of certification labelling are needed as a marketing approach to inform consumers about specific qualifications, such as production method or place of precedence (AgGp2). Along with certification schemes, the promotion of quality production that EU farming has, is recognized as a potential marketing advantage that should be communicated to consumers more efficiently. However, *“these concerns have to be met without creating barriers to the functioning of the single market” (AgGp2, p.6),* corroborate that the market is of high value for the EU Commission, since it can be used to accomplish objectives such as the one of sustainable consumption; furthermore, it also shows the importance of economic matters above others.

In the regulation N° 1144/2014¹¹, which entered in force in December 2015, it is mentioned the ‘principal of non-discrimination’ in regard of the origin of a product, where a product could not be promoted based on the sole ground of its origin (regarding their country of origin), suggesting impartiality from the EU towards diverse products in the market by not favouring any of them. This principal leaves a gap to wonder if the Commission could adopt a similar position regarding marketing parameters of agriculture products, where even though it supports sustainable consumption and agriculture, promotional measures should not favour any specific product by the Commission, beyond certificated labelling.

4.2.3 Agriculture, labels and consumption

Based on previous documents regarding food quality and agriculture (AgGp2, AgCAP5), it seemed that some regulations and measures adopted by the EU commission also depend on market signals, making foodstuff coming from a sustainable production, i.e. organic farming, to not be specially

¹¹ REGULATION (EU) No 1144/2014 OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL, on information provision and promotion measures concerning agricultural products implemented in the internal market and in third countries. **(This regulation entered in force on the 1st of December of 2015, leaving it out of the time framed to select data. However, it provided information on the basis for promotion of agricultural products, which was considered of value for the purpose of this study).**

promoted in the market besides of the use of labels. Likewise, on the previous CAP and other documents related to foodstuff and agriculture (CoW3, FoFI5, AgrBio1, AgCAP3, AgQR11), labelling is mentioned as a promotional method capable of influencing consumers in their purchase choice. Hence, the use of labels is a way to communicate consumers about specific characteristics of the offered product, where this label (if recognized by the consumer) should transmit reliance and trust at first sight, and should not confuse the consumer. *“In order that consumers can be confident that the label claims are justified, compliance with the specification is monitored by public authorities or by a private certifying body. Farmers producing the genuine products are protected against being undercut by imitation products sold under the protected names”* (AgGp2, p. 11). This statement also shows a control offer from the EU to products in the market proceeding from production with special characteristics, such as traditional farming methods, protected geographic indication, and even organic farming, to try to protect consumers and producers.

Labelling of agriculture products seems to play an important role for the EU Commission, where agricultural products, including the ones precedent from a special production method, such as organic farming, can use these labels for promotional objective if some certification schemes are followed. In this way producers (farmers) would go through a production control, based on specific regulations, to obtain the right to use a designated label that offers reliability to consumers (these labels also follow the rules set on the Legislation of Food Information to Consumers¹²).

4.2.4 Organic farming and consumption

Organic farming, defined by the EU Commission as: *“An overall system of farm management and food production that combines best environmental practices, a high level of biodiversity, the preservation of natural resources, the application of high animal welfare standards and a production method in line with the preference of certain consumers for products produced using natural substances and processes”* (OrgPLI, p.1); forms part of the products with specific characteristics and, so far, is the only agricultural method covered by a regulation¹³ that follows in certain degree the line of sustainable agriculture defined for this study, and the Sustainability and Environmental objectives established by the EU Commission. This regulation mentions: *“The organic production method plays a dual societal role, where it on the one hand provides for a*

¹² REGULATION (EU) No 1169/2011 on the provision of food information to consumers, [http://ec.europa.eu/food/safety/labelling_nutrition/labelling_legislation/index_en.htm, <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/en/ALL/?uri=CELEX:32011R1169>]

¹³ Council Regulation (EC) No 834/2007 on organic production and labelling of organic products. [<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex:32007R0834>]

specific market responding to a consumer demand for organic products, and on the other hand delivers public goods contributing to the protection of the environment” (OrgPL1, p.1). So, organic farming is considered, besides of contributing to diminish the impact of agriculture on the environment, as an agricultural method that deserves to be certified to offer reliance to an already existing demand in the market.

The last CAP overview (AgCAP4) and the Regulation on Organic Production (OrgPL1), talk about organic farming as a way to be sustainable. Farmers are being encouraged to embrace organic farming techniques, where these would get more benefits following this method that besides of satisfying the market demand, provides public goods. These benefits could be understood as the green payments mentioned by the CAP for farmers that choose to follow the 2nd pillar, since the products resulting from the adoption of the 1st pillar would follow the general regulation for promotion of agriculture products. So far, no specific label or marketing logo to the products resulting from adopting the 1st pillar have been mentioned, although a more efficient communication to consumers about the farming quality within the EU has been recognized in previously mentioned documents (AgGp2).

Similar to the findings from the Directorate of Consumers (sub-chapter 3.1), consumers are expected to recognise and choose a specific agriculture label (i.e. organic label), where this would be achieved through an empowered consumer. Furthermore, organic products can be eligible for promotional measures and provision of information, which seems to depend on the determination of the producer, since the EU Commission provides no restriction of provision of information and/or promotion measures of these products (see footnote n°12).

Main concepts found (See Table 1):

- Labels (as a promotional method)
- Market demand
- Organic farming

4.3 Connections between consumption and agriculture texts:

The selection of data started at the Directorate of consumers, but even though the search was directed in two different Directorates, it was expected that these two, and the underlying discourses,

would meet with each other in both areas, i.e. where the consumption area will deal with sustainable agriculture issues (or agriculture ones), and vice versa.

Table 1. List of keywords used to select data (underlined), and keywords found on the 1st and 2nd data analysis.

	Keywords used for selection of texts	Keywords found
1st Data Analysis Consumers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <u>Agriculture</u> - <u>Sustainability</u> - <u>Sustainable consumption</u> - <u>Sustainable agriculture</u> - <u>Biodiversity</u> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Empowerment - Single market - Consumers behaviour - Promotion of sustainable choice
1st Data Analysis Agriculture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <u>Sustainability</u> - <u>Sustainable agriculture</u> - <u>Sustainable consumption</u> - <u>Biodiversity</u> - Empowerment - Single Market 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Organic farming - Labelling (labels) - Promotion (of food products) - More sustainable agriculture - Non-food products
2nd Data Analysis Consumers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Organic farming - Single market - Food products - Labelling - Promotion of sustainable choice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Non-food products
2nd Data Analysis Agriculture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Organic farming - Labelling (labels) - Promotion (of food products) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Market demand - Certification - Label

The spread of the importance of a ‘sustainable choice’ among consumers is a priority in the Consumer Agenda and Consumer Programme, but food products are not necessarily included in it. In some documents related to Consumption, the use of labels are mentioned as a way to inform consumers about food products such as organic production or geographic precedence (CoW3), yet a direct relation between consumption policies and agricultural policies, where one influences the other or suggest which trends to follows, was not found among the consumption documents revised

for this study. It was found, however, the existence of an executive agency in charge to connect consumers with food issues and/or agriculture: The Consumer, Health, Agriculture and Food Executive Agency (CHAFEA)¹⁴. CHAFEA is in charge of the implementation of the Consumer Programme (among others) and belongs to the Directorate of Health and Food Safety (3). Although, on the EU Commission website, a relation of consumption and agriculture policies were not directly linked in the CHAFEA area, as its role is mostly of implementation. The understood from the information given in CHAFEA, is that this is an executive agency that works with implementation of the Consumer Programme that belongs to the Consumer area of the Directorate for Justice and Consumers (1), and separately it also works with the Food Law that belongs to the Health and Food Safety Directorate (3), hence the in-existent relation between agriculture policies with the one of consumers. However, the Directorate of Agriculture and Rural Development works and follows 'Food and Feed Safety' policies, which follows the Food Law objectives and principles (see Image 3).

Even though some relations between consumption and agriculture were identified in the documents, such as empowered consumers recognizing an agriculture label; a direct relation between these two issues could not be found. The agency in charge to connect these two issues, CHAFEA, despite of mentioning the word agriculture in the website chart, did not display any information or on-going work relating it to consumption and/or promotion of these goods¹⁵.

¹⁴ http://europa.eu/about-eu/agencies/executive_agencies/chafea/index_en.htm (*The promotion of agriculture products is not mentioned among the programs to be 'run' by CHAFEA in this website. Accessed in May 2016*), <http://ec.europa.eu/chafea/about/about.html>, http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/health_food-safety/chart.pdf

¹⁵ By February of 2016, an open call for the promotion of agriculture products was shown in the CHAFEA website. http://ec.europa.eu/chafea/agri/2016-calls-simple-multiple-programmes_en.html

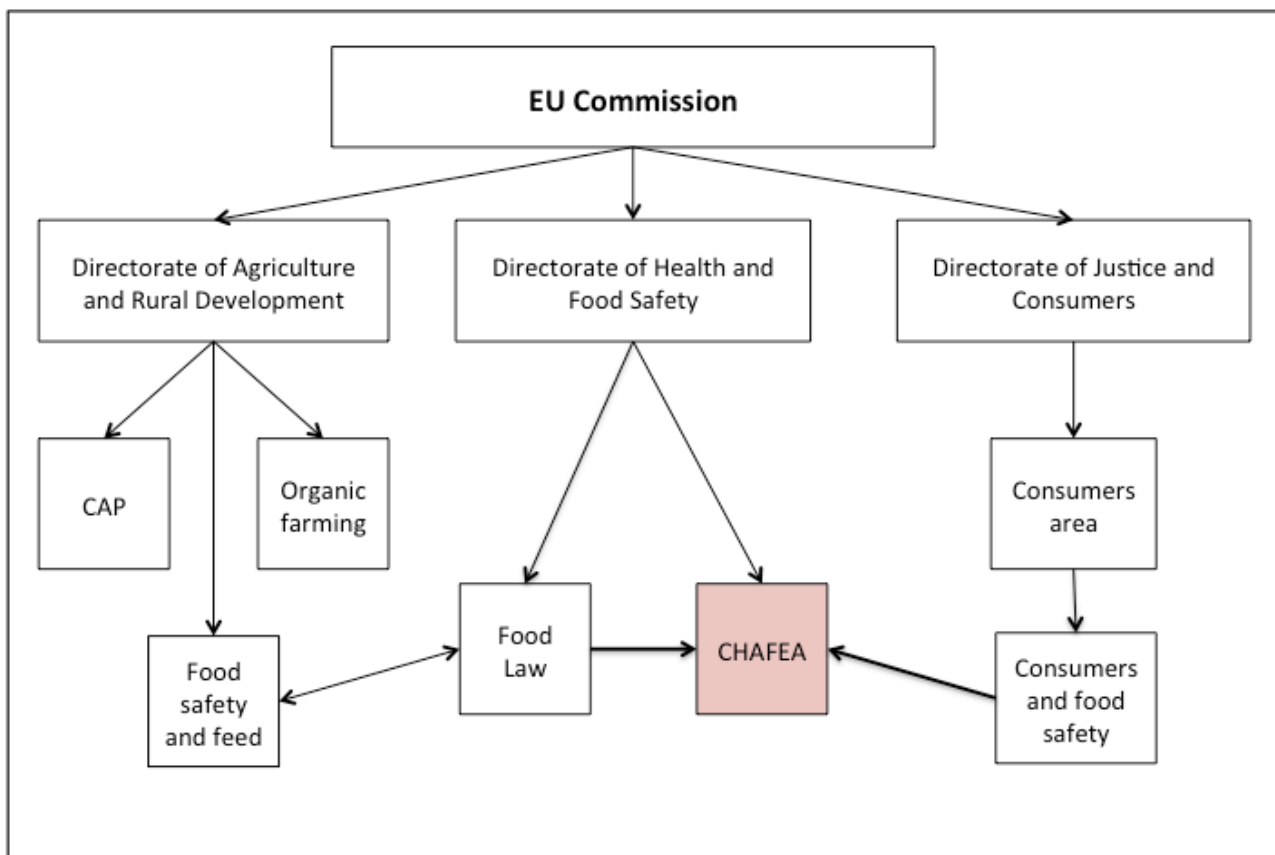


Image 3. Interpretation based on the findings from the EU documents connecting the Directorate of Agriculture and the Directorate of Consumers with CHAFEA

5. Discussion

As mentioned in Chapter 2, the analysis is framed by the concept of governmentality, involving the analytical concepts of empowerment, used as an ideological term in this study; and agency, through the analysis of discursive and practical consciousness.

Agency and empowerment relate to each other since one might not be possible to happen without the other; without that moment of reflexion about a social situation, and the discovery of inner power that impulses an individual to act and pursue change (Giddens, 1979; McGregor, 2005; Inglis, 2012). The analysis is also influenced by the relation that discourse has with agency, as both have been understood as capable of producing changes in a context.

Since the study does not analyse actions per se, yet it seeks to understand how the Commission is working on consumption and agriculture to halt biodiversity loss, the analysis focuses on how the actors involved are said to be empowered on the measures adopted by the EU to achieve that empowering role, and the expectations the Commission has as a response.

5.1 The actors

Three actors have been identified, the one most discussed is the EU Commission, the other two involved, are consumers and producers (farmers).

Actions of consumers and producer have not been of main focus to analyse, but actions expected, as expressed in the written statements from the EU. Since the EU Commission talks about actions and actors jointly, i.e. production and producers, consumption and consumers, and about the EU itself and its attempts of improvement in many different aspects; the theoretical approach addresses the discourses made on both (actions and actors) as an attempt to understand their dynamic, as suggested by Rappaport (1987), and understand how empowerment and agency interact in that dynamic.

5.2 Behavioural studies and empowerment

The mention of behavioural studies in the analysed data relates to the perspective of business empowerment, where this mentions the use of downward communication as a way to empower employees, using as key factor informative newsletters to communicate the goals of the organization; the logic behind this strategy is for the employees to reason on '*why they will do what they do*' instead of a '*this is what you should do*' (Wilkinson, 1998). The EU Commission talks about provision of information for consumers to guide them to choose a sustainable option in the

market, mentioning that the inclusion of more complex behavioural studies in this case, were depending on the decision on whether actions from consumers depend or not on the knowledge these have regarding a specific matter. Foucault (1972, p.219) states that “*the will of knowledge*” has a constraining power above other discourses, suggesting that to seek information on a matter gives you power; the knowledge acquired will provide the means to pursue a type of truth on that specific matter. However, according to the concept of agency and individual empowerment, more complex factors, such as the psychological one¹⁶, are implied to impulse an individual to take action on a matter, including seeking for knowledge. McGregor (2005) argues that the mere provision of information is not empowering, claiming that the individual needs to feel empowered (in any of the many diverse types of empowerment); it needs to have a sense of authority to act regarding the situation. So, even though an action may suggest sustainability or protection of biodiversity, it does not imply an instant reaction from consumers towards a ‘sustainable choice’. Additionally, Asah et al. (2014) says that to manage ecosystem services, such as biodiversity, it is important to understand how people perceive the benefits gained from ecosystems to create effective policies that promote sustainable livelihoods.

So, in spite of the importance of behavioural studies by the EU Commission have been stated and recognized as relevant on the process of policy making, the strategy of provision of information by itself could be arguable in the way the Commission is seeking to influence consumers to choose sustainability. Since, to influence the practical consciousness of people requires more committed acts than the mere delivery of information; the understanding of people’s insight on the benefits of biodiversity and their behaviour should be taken into account to create more effective policies, i.e. discourses.

5.3 Sustainability and consumers empowerment

The integration of environmental policies into the consumers’ policy to promote sustainability shows an effort by the EU Commission to commit the different Directorates with the environmental objectives. The EU Commission follows what business empowerment (mentioned in the previous sub-chapter) suggest into some extent, where an empowered consumer is expected to act and use the market in its advantage, making it more competitive and thus increasing the demand of sustainable products (Shankar et al., 2006). The Commission relates directly empowerment with consumption, i.e. the more empowered consumers with the knowledge of sustainability exists, the

¹⁶ The basic essence of individual empowerment comes from a psychological perspective, where this means to have a sense of personal control, determination over your own life, and to be capable of acting on yourself (Sadan, 2004; Rappaport, 1987).

more demand of sustainable products in the market, and thus the more accessibility of these products in the market.

Shankar et al., (2006, p.1020) discusses that when the consumers exert its power to choose, these are empowered, as these have acquired the capability to control and influence the market to decide what to consume, shifting in this way the power decision from producers to consumers. However, to offer more choices in the market does not necessarily empower a consumer, as this action continues identifying individuals as consumers, and the market uses manipulative and dominative forces (Ibis, p.1018). Furthermore, Shankar et al. (2006, p1025) argues that the need to empower consumers is seen as the purpose of an organization with marketing and economic orientations. Likewise, strategies such as consumers' empowerment are also recognized as business marketing strategies, as a manner to make consumers feel more secured and confident when purchasing a good (Pires et al., 2006). So, **if** we see the EU Commission as an economic oriented organization, the role given to citizens could be as the ones of employees, where analogically, the EU organization would be communicating their business objectives to their employees (consumers), in an attempt to empower these and make them co-work with the organization to reach the set economic goals, which in this case would be to consume the sustainable choice in the market to achieve environmental goals.

Since the EU Commission have mentioned to use the demanding force of EU consumers as an advantage to help to overcome an on-going economic crisis (CoAg1), it suggests that the Commission does see EU citizens as manipulable consumers, able to be oriented to embrace the sustainable consumption trend to achieve economic objectives first and secondly the environmental ones. However, as argued by Giddens (1979) and Foucault (cited in Inglis, 2012), power should not be seen as something completely negative, since it could be beneficial when looking for positive changes. Thus, if the discourse of sustainability is being promoted among consumers, i.e. attempting to shift the discursive consciousness, it could be beneficial to achieve environmental goals and thus improve the status to biodiversity within the EU through the mentioned 'sustainable consumption'. Although, if that discourse is not applied to consumption patterns, taking into account that growing demands have been identified as a cause that damages biodiversity, the efforts suggested to achieve environment objectives might not be sufficient, since consumption is still promoted and encouraged among citizens.

The above discussed, implies that environmental matters addressed by the EU Commission might not be detached from the economic ones, where a certain sense of constrain is applied on environmental matters by the economic ones. Furthermore, consumption patterns do not seem to be encouraged to be lowered but to be shifted towards the sustainable option in the market, calling to this a sustainable consumption. Even though it has been said that environmental objectives should be integrated in the policy making process of the diverse Directorates, it also appears to say: Integrate them as long as the (single) market is not disturbed.

The single market has not been related to agriculture food products so far, and sustainability to this point, are addressed to non-food products and to the production style behind the final product, which is promoted as sustainable consumption. However, in the context of consumption where a discourse of sustainability is present, an influence of that discourse could be possible to happen into the food market (Fairclough, 2003; Jørgensen, 2002; Fairclough, 1989). Perhaps by aiming to ‘sustainable consumption’, the choices made by consumers when purchasing food products, could also tend towards the ones that suggest sustainability. Although, from a behavioural perspective, habits are said to be challenging to shape, especially when these relate to foodstuff, so until an empowering discourse encouraging sustainable behaviour is predominant in a whole context (not only within the market), change could face some obstacles (Ram & Sheth, 1989).

5.4 Differences of empowerment

As mentioned in the data analysis, the ‘green payments’ is the approach used by the EU Commission to incentive farmers to choose more sustainable agriculture methods, but this decision could be arguable regarding the degree of empowerment the Commission provides to farmers, compared with the one given to consumers.

On the one hand, the provision of information about environmental benefits of choosing the sustainable choice available in the market is expected to increase the demand of sustainable products, which would result in more availability of these products in the market, making them more affordable to the public by lowering the prices. On the other hand, the plan to empower consumers could be seen as an attempt to regulate the producers, as it has been mentioned on EU reports, production should be oriented to follow consumption trends in the market. Thus, by empowering consumers to adopt a sustainable consumption would force producers to adopt the suggested production styles in order to be competent in the market.

That apparent double targeting by the Commission insinuates, empowerment and exertion of power, since the Commission works as a regulator of the actions of these two actors (consumers and producers) with the purpose to achieve general objectives. In the case of consumers, as it has been previously discussed, would be that efforts to empower this actor are being done in order to generate changes in the market, and thus achieve environmental objectives (not directly linked to food goods). However, the actions taken from the Commission towards the producers seemed more regulating than empowering, despite of the monetary incentives, which could be recognized as a resource (Giddens, 1979) but not necessarily as empowering. In case farmers decide to accept the green payments, that resource would most probably cover the expenses that a change of agriculture method could imply. For example, the green payments are to be given according to the 1st pillar by following the three compulsory measures of: crop diversification, maintenance of permanent grassland and ecological focus areas; meaning that an area that used to be designated for production, will remain untouched or will have a different use. Involving a misbalance on the farmers' production and thus income, although by receiving the green payment, that should be balanced. Also, the provision of this resource will be given under certain commitments, restraining the uses and acquisition of that resource. In the case farmers decide to refuse the green payments, since the Commission is already working on the market demand, aiming to influence ideals towards a sustainable consumption, which could eventually drive producers to convert into the suggested agriculture approach by reducing their choices in the market.

So far, it seems that the EU Commission is trying to influence the actors, one through monetary compensations and the other one through provision of information to generate changes in the market. Whether the Commission is empowering the actors in those matters is unclear, since in both cases the measures adopted do not completely agree with the diverse types of empowerment, except of the one with a business perspective. Although, the existence of a regulation and certification schemes for organic farming and its products shows that both actors (farmers and consumers) do count with empowerment and agency, since these have been able to demand regulations from the EU Commission to safeguard this practice and its products in the market.

5.5 Organic farming

On the documents analysed the concept of organic farming was presented as an exception to conventional farming. However, this involves more and diverse sustainable agricultural practices

than the ones suggested on the 1st pillar of the CAP. Organic farming under this matter, is recognised as having a demand in the market, it is also covered by a specific regulation that protect consumers and supervises that the products offered accomplish the requirements of quality.

According to Rappaport (1987), the empowerment an individual gets from living in a democratic environment, generates that individuals can act together using common resources to take action and achieve collective good, empowering in this way their community. While, community empowerment is linked to the political one, since it can provide wider horizons to individuals, encouraging them to engage into politics, allowing the individual to reach a better understanding of their context, promoting in this way social change (Sadan, 2004). So, the creation of a specific regulation for organic farming suggests community empowerment provided by a democratic context, which in this case would be given by the European Union¹⁷. It could be said that the EU do empower their citizens to achieve social changes, such as it is reflected by the creation of organic farming regulations, which is considered as sustainable agriculture and thus less harmful with the environment and biodiversity.

In the CAP time line it was mentioned that the focus would be shifted from producers to consumers, where the EU relies on consumption within the single market to regulate the it, by giving (or attempting to provide) empowerment to this actor to be the one generating the expected changes towards sustainability in the market. However, as discussed previously, the EU Commission might need to consider different strategies to provide empowerment to a wider group, since the already mentioned provision of information needs more active strategies to deliver empowerment (McGregor, 2005). Additionally, the statement made about limitations on the promotion of certain agriculture qualities that interfere with the well functioning of the single market (AgGp2, p.6), insinuates restrictions on how the promotion of sustainable products can be approached within the market. It could be argued by the Commission that the ‘non-discrimination principal’ should be taken into account when applying promotional measures, but the years of publication on those two documents seem far from each to be related to that statement (see footnote 11). Although, it could have been mentioned based on similar principals or rules that fell out of the data analysis scope.

5.6 EU’s impartiality

¹⁷ http://ec.europa.eu/priorities/democratic-change_en , http://europa.eu/about-eu/basic-information/about/index_en.htm

It has been previously discussed that the EU Commission seems to favour economic matters among others, however the EU Commission looks keen on empowering consumers to spread the already existence environmental concern and spread it to wider groups, encouraging them to choose sustainability among other options in the market. This strategy pretends to impulse consumers to be the ones in charge of the ‘sustainable shift’ in the market, leaving the EU as an impartial actor reluctant on taking a side regarding the choices available in the market.

The Commission does not promote in an active way the consumption of food-goods from sustainable sources, but it certifies them into certain extent and provides them with labels consumers are suppose to recognise and feel trusted to choose them among the other products offered. It encourages farmers to adopt some alternative production styles, but it does not promote its resulting products, as it does not provide them with a different regulation than the current general regulation of promotion of agricultural products, which suggests that those products might go unnoticed in the market. Also, since each member state is entitled to decide on their rural development programmes¹⁸, the decision of a promotional approach to each member state implies independency to address that issue, where the encouragement of consumption of sustainable agriculture products could or not be done within a member state.

5.7 Biodiversity

Biodiversity is a topic of concern for the EU Commission, it recognizes its responsibility on the loss of biodiversity inside and outside Europe, and it seems eager to make a changed on its previous behaviours. The strategies presented to achieve it, are sustainable consumption and sustainable production, so it is targeting the both extremes of the chain, in order to become more sustainable and help biodiversity to recover from years of pressure. So, the role of consumers and producers are essential on the achievement of that goal.

Nevertheless, based on the findings of this research, it can be argued that the actions adopted by the Commission seem somehow restrained by the market, where the Commission is aiming for a more sustainable production, and expects as result sustainable consumption¹⁹, yet it keeps encouraging consumers to consume. The Commission focuses mainly on shaping production, taking away responsibility from consumers, as it can be reflected in its concern regarding food waste²⁰, where

¹⁸ http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/rural-development-2014-2020/index_en.htm

¹⁹ Sustainable consumption described by the Commission as consuming products resulting from sustainable production.

²⁰ http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/health_food-safety/dyna/enews/enews.cfm?al_id=1686

production has to change, but not necessarily consumption patterns, even though a growing consumption has been identified as harmful for biodiversity.

To conclude this Chapter, I will try to answer the overall research question of the study: *Does the European Union encourage consumption of products proceeding from sustainable agriculture in a way to stimulate actions that could lead to improve the status of biodiversity? If it does, how does it do it?*

The EU is attempting to encourage consumers to choose the sustainable option in the market and it is also encouraging producers (farmers), through incentives, to adopt more sustainable agricultural practices; being that the main strategy found to improve the status of biodiversity (sustainable consumption and production). However, direct relations encouraging consumption of products proceeding from sustainable agriculture, have not been found. Expectations on consumers picking the ‘sustainable choice’ through the mentioned awareness raising campaigns have been stated as part of the strategy to influence people to make more sustainable oriented choices, leading to think that food goods will be embraced by the discourse of sustainable consumption. So, assuming that discourses can shape and/or influence practices and these generate change in a structure and its context (Fairclough, 1989; 2003; Inglis, 2012), that expectation seem valid. On the other hand, if the EU Commission is expecting actions to improve the status of biodiversity with the strategies presented, such as empowering consumers by providing them more information about their rights as consumers or about the sustainable choice, based on the perspective of empowerment, more active strategies might be needed to achieve that purpose, and those strategies might need to include behavioural studies in the decision process (in case these have not been already included). However, IF discourses are empowered to modify peoples’ practical consciousness, and the EU is pointing on that direction when developing strategies, working plans, or any other sort of action programmes to empower consumers, then the type of discourse made on consumption should be in line with the main goal, which is to protect biodiversity. Therefore, a modification on the discourse from ‘sustainable consumption’ (outlined by the EU as choosing the sustainable option in the market) to ‘reduction of consumption patterns’ should be considered, since the latter is identified as the one harming biodiversity the most (along with agriculture).

I would like to finish this section with a short quote that reflects the conflicting situation between the EU, consumption, agriculture and biodiversity: *“Politics is about choices, and within those choices, politics is about priorities. It is about reconciling conflicting preferences wherever and whenever, possibly based on facts” (David Puttnam, 2016).*

6. Conclusion

This study aimed to understand how does the European Commission addresses issues of consumption and sustainable agriculture in a way to improve the status of biodiversity.

Direct connections to encourage consumption of products proceeding from sustainable agriculture were not found, besides of the use of labels to promote special characteristics of production, such as organic farming. The existence of the executive agency CHAFEA shows concern for the relation between those two matters, however the execution seems rather inactive, leading to certain wonderings about the priorities of agriculture matters addressed by the agency.

Empowerment of consumers is a prominent discourse regarding consumption, where empowered consumers are expected to create changes that lead towards sustainability in the market. The EU Commission talks about a shift towards 'sustainable consumption', encouraging the consumption of non-food goods proceeding from a sustainable production. However this type of consumption does not necessarily involves a decrease on current consumption patterns (i.e. growing consumption), which are seen as some of the principal causes that damages biodiversity, besides of agriculture, according to the CBD. Meaning that, if empowerment of consumers is not necessarily seeking to lower current consumption patterns, is because consumption is needed in order to keep the single market functioning, as the European economy relies on it.

Sustainable agriculture practices are being encouraged as a starting point for farmers to become 'greener'. However, the products proceeding from these practices are not labelled as something extraordinary in the market, as these do not fulfil the requirement to be organic.

The findings pointed to certain constrains in the achievement of sustainability where the market and economic matters indicates certain priority. So, if the improvement of the status of biodiversity is a serious concern for the European Union, a more partial position, where environmental matters step above the economic ones, might be needed to accomplish that goal.

Further studies

Relevant questions emerged while the development of this study that could inspire future research:

- Empowering discourses and the possibilities to influence consumption patterns through them.
- Indicators of probabilities that the EU Commission would adopt a discourse encouraging reduction of consumption among its residents.
- How effective are discourses within the EU on the prevention of biodiversity loss outside the EU?
- Analysis focused on the application of behavioural studies when developing consumption policies (of non-food or food products).

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Appendix

<i>Table 2. Complete list of documents</i>
- COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS. A European Consumer Agenda - Boosting confidence and growth. COM(2012) 225 final. Brussels, 22.5.2012.
- COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE. EU Consumer Policy strategy, 2007-2013. Empowering consumers, enhancing their welfare, effectively protecting them. COM(2007) 99 final. Luxembourg, Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, 2007.
- COMMISSION STAFF WORKING DOCUMENT ON KNOWLEDGE-ENHANCING ASPECTS OF CONSUMER EMPOWERMENT 2012 – 2014. SWD(2012) 235 final. Brussels, 19.7.2012
- REGULATION (EU) No 254/2014 OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL of 26 February 2014 on a multiannual consumer programme for the years 2014-20 and repealing Decision No 1926/2006/EC
- COMMISSION IMPLEMENTING DECISION of 19.2.2014 concerning the adoption of the work programme for 2014 and the financing for the implementation of the multiannual consumer programme for the years 2014-2020. C(2014) 961 final. Brussels, 19.2.2014
- COMMISSION IMPLEMENTING DECISION of 11.12.2014 concerning the adoption of the work programme for 2015 and the financing for the implementation of the multiannual consumer programme for the years 2014-2020. C(2014) 9323 final. Brussels, 11.12.2014
- EUROPEAN COMMISSION - PRESS RELEASE. A new European Consumer Agenda – Boosting confidence and growth by putting consumers at the heart of the Single Market. Brussels, 22 May 2012.
- REPORT ON CONSUMER POLICY, JANUARY 2012 – DECEMBER 2013 (2014)
- COMMISSION STAFF WORKING PAPER. Consumer Empowerment in the EU. SEC(2011) 469 final. Brussels, 07.04.2011.
- DECISION No 1926/2006/EC OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL of 18 December 2006 establishing a programme of Community action in the field of consumer policy (2007-2013). OJ L 404/39, 30.12.2006
- Applying Behavioural Sciences to EU Policy-making. JRC83284. EUR 26033 EN. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2013
- Proposal for a REGULATION OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL on official controls and other official activities performed to ensure the application of food and feed law, rules on animal health and welfare, plant health, plant reproductive material, plant protection products and amending Regulations (EC) No 999/2001, 1829/2003, 1831/2003, 1/2005, 396/2005, 834/2007, 1099/2009, 1069/2009, 1107/2009, Regulations (EU) No 1151/2012, [...]/2013, and Directives 98/58/EC,

1999/74/EC, 2007/43/EC, 2008/119/EC, 2008/120/EC and 2009/128/EC. COM(2013) 265 final. 2013/0140 (COD). Brussels, 6.5.2013
- MEMO - Smarter rules for safer food: Commission proposes landmark package to modernise, simplify and strengthen the agri-food chain in Europe Brussels, 6 May 2013
- PRESS RELEASE - Smarter rules for safer food: Commission proposes landmark package to modernise, simplify and strengthen the agri-food chain in Europe. Brussels, 6 May 2013
- From farm to fork - Safe food for Europe's consumers. Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, 2004. ISBN 92-894-7772-5.
- European Commission Directorate General for Health and Consumers. Scoping study Delivering on EU food safety and nutrition in 2050 - Scenarios of future change and policy responses. Final Report. Brussels, 20.12.2013.
- REGULATION (EC) No 178/2002 OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL of 28 January 2002 laying down the general principles and requirements of food law, establishing the European Food Safety Authority and laying down procedures in matters of food safety. OJ L 31/1, 1.2.2002.
- WHITE PAPER ON FOOD SAFETY. COM (1999) 719 final. Brussels, 12 January 2000.
- OJ C 67/166, 6.3.2014.
- General Union Environment Action Programme to 2020 Living well, within the limits of our planet. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2014.
- COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS Our life insurance, our natural capital: an EU biodiversity strategy to 2020. COM(2011) 244 final. Brussels, 3.5.2011.
- EU Biodiversity Strategy to 2020: towards implementation - Council conclusions. 18862/11. Brussels, 19 December 2011.
- European Parliament resolution of 20 April 2012 on our life insurance, our natural capital: an EU biodiversity strategy to 2020 (2011/2307(INI))
- COUNCIL REGULATION (EC) No 3/2008 of 17 December 2007 on information provision and promotion measures for agricultural products on the internal market and in third countries. OJ L 3/1, 5.1.2008.
- GREEN PAPER on agricultural product quality: product standards, farming requirements and quality schemes COM(2008) 641 final. Brussels, 15.10.2008.
- The Common Agricultural Policy: A partnership between Europe and Farmers. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2012.
- Overview of CAP Reform 2014-2020. Agricultural Policy Perspectives Brief N°5* / December 2013.
- REGULATION (EU) No 1308/2013 OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL of 17 December 2013 establishing a common organisation of the markets in agricultural products and repealing Council Regulations (EEC) No 922/72, (EEC) No 234/79, (EC) No 1037/2001 and (EC) No 1234/2007. OJ L 347/671,

20.12.2013
- COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS The CAP towards 2020: Meeting the food, natural resources and territorial challenges of the future. COM(2010) 672 final. Brussels, 18.11.2010.
- Proposal for a REGULATION OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL on information provision and promotion measures for agricultural products on the internal market and in third countries COM(2013) 812 final. 2013/0398 (COD). Brussels, 21.11.2013
- REGULATION (EU) No 1144/2014 OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL of 22 October 2014 on information provision and promotion measures concerning agricultural products implemented in the internal market and in third countries and repealing Council Regulation (EC) No 3/2008. OJ L 317/56, 4.11.2014.
- COUNCIL REGULATION (EC) No 3/2008 of 17 December 2007 on information provision and promotion measures for agricultural products on the internal market and in third countries. OJ L 3/1, 5.1.2008.
- REGULATION (EU) No 1151/2012 OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL of 21 November 2012 on quality schemes for agricultural products and foodstuffs. OJ L 343/1, 14.12.2012.
- Council Regulation (EC) No 834/2007 of 28 June 2007 on organic production and labelling of organic products and repealing Regulation (EEC) No 2092/91. OJ L 189/1, 20.7.2007
- COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS. Action Plan for the future of Organic Production in the European Union. COM(2014) 179 final. Brussels, 24.3.2014
- COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND THE COUNCIL Building the Single Market for Green Products Facilitating better information on the environmental performance of products and organisations. COM(2013) 196 final. Brussels, 9.4.2013.

<i>Table 3. List of documents selected for the final analysis</i>	
Title of Document	Code
Directorate of Justice and Consumers (1)	
COM(2012) 225 final. A European Consumers Agenda - Boosting confidence and growth (2012)	CoAg1
COM(2007) 99 final. Consumer policy strategy 2007-2013 (2007) http://ec.europa.eu/consumers/eu_consumer_policy/our-strategy/background-documents/index_en.htm	CoPo2
SWD(2012) 235 final. Commission staff working document 2012-2014 (2012) http://ec.europa.eu/consumers/eu_consumer_policy/policy-strategy/background-documents/index_en.htm	CoW3
IP/12/491. A new European Consumer Agenda – Boosting confidence and growth by putting consumers at the heart of the Single Market http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-12-491_en.htm	CoPr7
REPORT ON CONSUMER POLICY (2014) http://ec.europa.eu/consumers/strategy-programme/policy-strategy/documents/consumer_policy_report_2014_en.pdf	CoPR8
EUR 26033 EN. Applying Behavioural Sciences to EU Policy-making http://ftp.jrc.es/EURdoc/JRC83284.pdf	CoBS8
Directorate of Agriculture and Rural Development (2)	
COM(2001)162 final. BIODIVERSITY ACTION PLAN FOR AGRICULTURE (2001) http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/genetic-resources/com-2001-162-iii_en.pdf	AgBio1
COM(2008) 641 final. GREEN PAPER on agricultural product quality: product standards, farming requirements and quality schemes (2008) http://ec.europa.eu/transparency/regdoc/rep/1/2008/EN/1-2008-641-EN-F1-1.Pdf	AgGp2
CAP: A partnership between Europe and Farmers (2012) http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/cap-overview/2012_en.pdf	AgCAP3
Overview of CAP Reform 2014-2020 (2013) http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/policy-perspectives/policy-briefs/05_en.pdf	AgCAP4
COM(2010) 672 final. The CAP towards 2020 (2010) http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/cap-post-2013/communication/com2010-672_en.pdf	AgCAP5
REGULATION (EU) No 1151/2012. Regulation on quality schemes for agricultural products and foodstuffs (2012) http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/en/TXT/?uri=CELEX:32012R1151	AgQR11
Council Regulation (EC) No 834/2007. On organic production and labelling of organic	OrgPL1

products (2007) http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex:32007R0834	
Directorate of Health and Food Safety and Environment	
COM(2013) 265 final. Proposal for a REGULATION OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL, on official controls and other official activities performed to ensure the application of food and feed law, health, plant reproductive rules on animal health and welfare, plant material, plant protection products (2013) http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52013PC0265&qid=1452508133117&from=EN	FoPr7
REGULATION (EU) No 1169/2011. Regulation on the provision of food information to consumers (2011) http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32011R1169&from=EN	FoFI5
General Union Environment Action Programme to 2020 Living well, within the limits of our planet (2014) http://bookshop.europa.eu/en/general-union-environment-action-programme-to-2020-pbKH0113833/?CatalogCategoryID=h2YKABstrXcAAAEjXJEY4e5L	EnvP1