Development for whom: Looking beyond the North-South Divide of Agricultural Development in the German-African Context

A Comparative Discourse Approach

Hannah Pauline Faessle

Development for whom: Looking beyond the North-South Divide of Agricultural Development in the German-African Context - A Comparative Discourse Approach
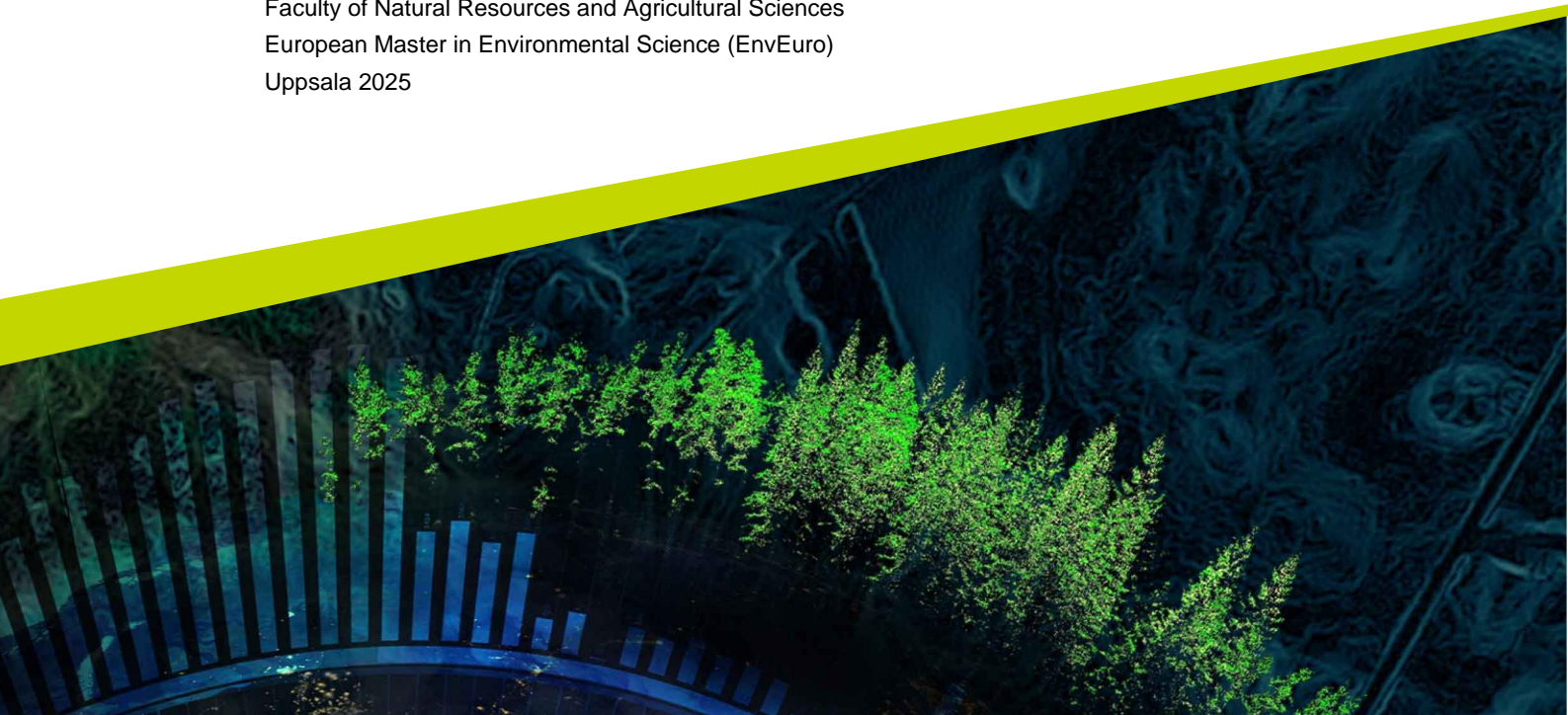
Hannah Pauline Faessle

Supervisor:	Gwendolyn Varley, Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, Department of Urban and Rural Development,
Assistant supervisor:	Stefanie Lemke, University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences Vienna (BOKU), Department of Agricultural Sciences, Institute of Development Research
Examiner:	Cristián Alarcón-Ferrari, Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, Department of Urban and Rural Development

Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences

Faculty of Natural Resources and Agricultural Sciences

Department of Urban and Rural Development

Abstract

Globally, the agricultural sector confronts a wide range of development issues, from mitigating climate change to increasing economic growth and food security. To some extent, assumptions about development seem to differ between the Global North and South, thereby showing a continued divide between the two. This divide not only influences policymaking but also farmers, who are subject to external conceptualisations of agricultural development that subsequently impact their own agency and position.

To investigate this topic, I conducted a comparative discourse analysis based on the approaches of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and Narrative Policy Analysis (NPA) to identify dominant discourses and policy narratives being formulated and applied by the German Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture (BMEL) in the context of sustainable agricultural development strategies both within Germany and in its foreign development projects. Furthermore, using the Discursive Agency Approach (DAA), I identified both the BMEL's discursive agency and how the material assigned discursive agency and subject positions to farmers to further understand possible overlaps and differences.

My findings suggest that the discourses and policy narratives used by the BMEL show some similarities, mainly in the way that they privilege expert knowledge and in the focus on technical solutions for socio-political problems, thereby depoliticising development. This is not surprising, since the BMEL and the analysed material are embedded in the same institutions, namely the European Union (EU) and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). However, there are still differences in conceptualisation, which might be due to the fundamental conundrum at the centre of development efforts. Here, a barrier is constructed between countries at the giving and countries at the receiving end of development, thereby continuously justifying intervention measures. This notion is further compounded by the concept of European Modernity, which creates a hierarchy between countries of the Global North as a pinnacle of development and countries of the Global South in need of the same development. These concepts create an 'other' when looking toward the BMEL's foreign development projects and a homogeneity of knowledge production in the domestic context. Furthermore, the BMEL discursively reduces farmers' agency both domestically and abroad as a means to legitimise their policies. While farmers are conceptualised as heroes in need of financial support in the domestic context, they are imagined as an 'other' in need of empowerment and uplifting in the international context, thereby showing clear differences and indicating continued power imbalances within Germany and in its international development projects.

Keywords: Agricultural development, discourse analysis, farmers' agency, North-South Perspectives

Table of contents

List of figures

Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Description
AES	Agri-environmental Schemes
AU	African Union
BMEL	Bundesministerium für Ernährung und Landwirtschaft (Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture)
CAP	Common Agricultural Policy
CDA	Critical Discourse Analysis
DAA	Discursive Agency Approach
EU	European Union
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation
GHG	Greenhouse Gas (es)
NPA	Narrative Policy Analysis
RAI	Principles for Responsible Investment in Agriculture and Food Systems
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
UN	United Nations

1. Introduction

Language is an irreducible part of social life, dialectically interconnected with other elements of social life, so that social analysis and research always has to take account of language (Fairclough, 2003, p.2)

Worldwide, the agricultural sector sits at the intersection of environmental protection efforts and development projects, viewed as crucial for mitigating climate change and other environmental challenges, while at the same time seen as needing development to ensure continued food security and economic growth (Agovino et al., 2019; Connolly-Boutin and Smit, 2016; Leduc et al., 2021). It is thus subject to opposing assumptions, valuations and opinions, which not only influence the policy-making process but also farmers, who are subjected to said frameworks and development efforts despite not always aligning with them (Brown et al., 2021). This complexity is further compounded by the increasing globalisation of environmental problems, necessitating global solutions and cooperation, manifesting in increased efforts by Global North countries to further agricultural development in the Global South (Feindt and Oels, 2005; Ziai, 2016). Such increased focus on global solutions comes with its own challenges, with numerous assumptions about development, modernity, knowledge and empowerment shaping power relations and cooperation between countries. In addition, such assumptions can create a certain divide between countries in the Global North, conceptualised as leaders of development, and countries of the Global South, imagined as in need of such predefined development (Harding, 2008; Sillitoe, 2009; Williams, 1998; Ziai, 2016).

Such contestations can also be seen when looking towards Germany, where the political landscape is riddled with contradicting notions about the importance of agri-environmental protection and the design of development projects (BMEL, 2024f, 2024g; Schojan et al., 2024; Umwelt Bundesamt, 2024). Though often portrayed as a forerunner in environmental conscientiousness and policy implementation, the country's agricultural sector is arguably lagging behind its ambitious goals (Dryzek, 2022; Lambrecht, 2024). In addition, recurring farmer protests indicate severe discontent within the German farming community (Agrardebatten, 2024). Nonetheless, Germany is an important player in international development efforts, with a focus on global problem-solving, economic growth and sustainable development modelled after the United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (BMEL, 2025g; BMZ, 2012). Thus, there seems to exist a certain duality between ideas of domestic and international development, a topic not often addressed due to continued binary conceptualisation of the Global North as the pinnacle of development and the Global South as the nadir (Arora-Jonsson, 2018). In this context, reversing such established views of

development might uncover important connections, underlying assumptions and values surrounding the topic, thereby increasing sensitivity to as well as challenging and overcoming binary perceptions.

To navigate this playing field, the analysis of language can provide an important tool for understanding such underlying patterns and connections. As Fairclough (2003) suggests, language is an indispensable part of our daily life, giving meaning to our observed reality and shaping our perceptions. Subsequently, this also translates to the political arena, where different discourses and narratives are used to construct and justify various policies and regulations (Fairclough, 2013a; Roe, 1994). Though policies are subject to interpretation and therefore not always uniformly applied, their linguistic analysis can unveil hidden power relations and knowledge construction, indicating "how environmental problems and a related set of subjects and objects are discursively produced and rendered governable" (Feindt & Oels, 2005, p.163). Hence, as Bacchi and Beasley (2002) argue, policies constitute the relationship between political subjects and how they perceive themselves and others, thereby partly constructing political subjectivity and by extension the political agency of different actors (Bacchi and Beasley, 2002; Leipold and Winkel, 2017). Thus, an analysis of the discursive practices of government institutions can reveal not only such underlying assumptions and patterns shaping policies but also how the conceptualisations of important actors might influence their own subjectivity and agency. In this context, the German Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture (BMEL) provides an ideal subject for analysis, as the ministry furthers agricultural development and environmental protection both within Germany and in different countries of the Global South. Therefore, the complexities described above are all represented within a single institution, thereby enabling an in-depth analysis of potential discursive differences and similarities.

1.1 Purpose and Research Questions

The purpose of this thesis is to explore if and how prevailing assumptions in agricultural development and environmental protection influence the BMEL's discursive conceptualisation of policies and projects connected to sustainable agricultural development within Germany, as well as its international cooperations. Furthermore, I am especially interested in how farmers are discursively constructed and portrayed both in the domestic and international context, as they are majorly affected by agricultural development policies and at the same time expected to implement them into practice. Here, the types of discourses and narratives used can construct farmers' subject positions and agency in a way that devalues their actual capabilities and knowledge, thereby adversely affecting farmers' non-discursive agency (Leipold and Winkel, 2017). Furthermore, the types of discursive practices

used influence power dynamics between different actors and are used to maintain or challenge them, thereby emphasising the importance of language and its analysis (Fairclough, 2013b). Lastly, by comparing domestic German agricultural development with its international development efforts, I want to shed light on possible similarities, differences or shortcomings to reduce binary thinking often still prevalent in the context of development (Arora-Jonsson, 2018; Ziai, 2019). To do so, I will aim to answer the following research questions:

1) What discourses and policy narratives are constructed by the BMEL in the contexts of sustainable agricultural development in Germany and African countries, and how do they compare?

2) What subject positions and subsequent agency are discursively assigned to farmers within the policy papers, and how do they differ from each other in different contexts?

3) How does the chosen material support or challenge existing power structures in the context of North-South relations in sustainable development?

1.2   Thesis Outline

To delve deeper into this topic and to answer the research questions outlined above, I will first outline Germany's agricultural development as background information (Chapter 1). Thereafter follows an outline of my theoretical framework (Chapter 2). This is further followed by an introduction to different types and methods of discourse analysis as basis for the subsequent development of my own multiperspectival framework (Chapter 3). This section is followed by the outline of the used research design, data analysis and material (Chapter 4). Based on this methodology, I will present the conducted analysis and results (Chapter 5), finishing with a discussion and conclusion (Chapters 6 and 7).

1.3   Germany's Agricultural Development

This section will outline how environmental protection and sustainability are implemented in German agriculture and how these topics manifest themselves in the country's foreign development projects.

1.3.1   Domestic Agricultural Development

As in many parts of the world, the agricultural sector in Germany finds itself in the middle of contestation and transformation. Agricultural production contributes up to 15% of global greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, thus accounting for a considerable share of climate change-inducing practices (Malhi et al., 2021). In

addition, agriculture and related land transformation are some of the leading drivers of biodiversity loss (Lécuyer et al., 2021). This has not gone unnoticed, as an ever-increasing number of projects and policies aim to combat these effects (Kothe et al., 2019; Leduc et al., 2021). At the same time, the agricultural sector is one of the most vulnerable to climate change, with increasing temperatures and more erratic precipitation events adversely affecting yields and impeding long-term planning and livelihoods (Agovino et al., 2019; Arora, 2019).

To combat these adverse effects, the main strategy used by the German government is the implementation of agri-environmental schemes (AES) and other ecological objectives in accordance with the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) of the European Union (EU). Since the formation of the EU, the CAP has played an important role in agricultural development, providing both financial support and a regulatory framework (European Commission, 2024). Thus, the CAP is also a main actor when it comes to environmental governance in agricultural practices. Here, AES provide financial incentives for farmers to implement various environmentally friendly practices, ranging from improved field margin management to organic agriculture (Kuhfuss et al., 2019). Whereas the participation in such schemes is voluntary for farmers, it has been mandatory for all member states since 1992, each having to allocate a certain amount of their agricultural budget each year to environmental objectives (European Commission, 2024; Tyllianakis and Martin-Ortega, 2021). For Germany, the budget for AES and other environmental objectives for the period of 2023 to 2027 is around 10 billion Euros, all of which is managed by the BMEL (European Commission, 2022; Umwelt Bundesamt, 2024).

Next to managing the CAP budget, the BMEL's main focal points include the promotion of species protection, climate protection, organic agriculture, as well as the restructuring of the livestock sector by means of policy papers, recommendations and appeals to the public as well as relevant actors (BMEL, 2025h). However, the achievement of these goals, as proposed by current Green Party minister Cem Özdemir[1], has been highly criticised by NGOs like Greenpeace and by agricultural experts, due to a lack of efficiency in realisation. In addition, criticism extends to Cem Özdemir himself, who, though a member of the Green Party, wants to position himself as a minister for all, shying away from conflict with farmers and thus not realising goals such as the ban of glyphosate and stricter environmental regulations (Lambrecht, 2024). Nonetheless, despite his best efforts to be a representative of all, farmers' protests and dissatisfaction have frequented German news in recent years. Here, the main controversies lie around stricter environmental regulations proposed within the European Green Deal, such as

---

[1] Due to new governmental elections, the BMEL will be headed by a different party and minister in the future, not yet determined at the time of writing

carbon taxes and stricter nitrogen limits (Agrardebatten, 2024). Thus, there seems to be a certain disconnect between farmers and the government, possibly resulting from a disregard for the heterogeneity of farmers' positions in the policy-making process (Brown et al., 2021; Tyllianakis and Martin-Ortega, 2021). In combination with the general complexities surrounding the topic of agricultural development, the analysis of discursive practices might reveal underlying dynamics and assumptions constituting these conflicts, underscoring the relevance of this thesis.

1.3.2 Foreign Agricultural Development

In addition to their focus on domestic German agriculture, the BMEL also allocates some of its resources towards international cooperation. Here, the focus lies on countries that are disproportionately affected by climate change, without having contributed significantly to its acceleration, as is the case in many countries of the Global South (Sultana, 2022). The agricultural sector is affected intensely by climate change, where erratic precipitation events, resulting in floods or droughts, can have devastating effects on local food security and livelihoods (Connolly-Boutin and Smit, 2016; Malhi et al., 2021). In this context, the BMEL writes that "the realisation of the right to food requires a social, ecological and economic transformation within global food systems", thus emphasising its focus on eradicating hunger through sustainable transformation (BMEL, 2024f).

To achieve those goals, the ministry not only participates in a variety of global summits about food and development but is also an active partner in a host of different international development projects focusing on agroecological principles, female empowerment, locally adapted food systems, as well as nutrition-based agriculture (BMEL, 2024f). Besides cooperations with New Zealand and Colombia, the ministry is involved in different projects in 28 African countries with special emphasis on Ethiopia, Côte d'Ivoire, Kenya, Morocco, Zambia and South Africa, where different approaches are used, including expert dialogues, education and training as well as promotion of research innovations to foster economic growth and sustainable production (BMEL, 2021). These countries represent so-called 'reform-minded countries', a term dubbed by the German Government, characterised by a focus on reform by means of, e.g. improved governance and financial stability. Thus, a certain selection process might lead to the exclusion of the lowest-income countries due to their lack of reform openness (Schojan et al., 2024). This also indicates a political agenda behind such cooperations, in which democracy as well as Global North values are a prerequisite for cooperation and aid (Williams, 1998).

The above-mentioned aims coincide with Germany's commitment to the Agenda 2030 and its SDGs. The ministry further aims to realise these with a focus on international research cooperations, bilateral trust funds and cooperation

programmes, with the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the UN (FAO) being an important partner (BMEL, 2025b). In this context, as already briefly mentioned, one of the BMEL's strategies to increase food security and further sustainable agricultural production is the increase of overall economic growth. Here, the ministry wants to incentivise private sector stakeholders to invest in sustainable agricultural production methods in different African countries. In addition, the BMEL aims at expanding foreign trade with the inclusion of small- and medium-sized farms (BMEL, 2021). To ensure fair and mutually beneficial trade and investment relations, Germany is committed to the FAO Principles for Responsible Investment in Agriculture and Food Systems (RAI), aiming to ensure that investments predominantly benefit people in the country where the investment is being made as well as providing a safeguard for small and medium sized producers (BMEL, 2019b).

Though the BMEL emphasises aspects of local cooperation and participation in its projects, it also aims its focus at the policy level, with close cooperation with e.g. the African Union (AU) for the implementation of policy reforms, as well as on bilateral cooperation (BMEL, 2021, 2024f). Thus, the question arises whether farmers' positions and agency might be overlooked within this focus on bi- and multilateral cooperations, thereby resulting in a similar simplification as seen within the domestic context. In addition, I investigate whether there are any other discursive similarities or differences in conceptualisation between the two areas of agricultural development and if so, why.

2.   Theoretical Framework

Exploring discursive practices of environmental policies has become an established way of researching how language impacts their structure and outcome, as well as the associated production and distribution of knowledge and power (Feindt and Oels, 2005; Leipold et al., 2019). Policies and the language used within constitute the relationship between government and political subjects, as well as how political subjects view themselves and others. In addition, they outline what and who is to be rendered governable and what and who isn't (Feindt and Oels, 2005; Bacchi and Beasly, 2002). Further, the language in use influences how political subjectivity and agency are discursively assigned to various actors in policies and subsequently impacts their capabilities to act and negotiate (Leipold and Winkel, 2017). With this, policies have a strong influence on our daily lives and meaning-making. Thus, a focus on the discursive practices being used can unveil underlying dynamics of power as well as the ideologies underpinning them. The latter can be understood as the vocalisation of certain assumptions, values and belief systems (Fairclough, 2003). Power and ideology are closely related to hegemony and further to the concept of hegemonic struggle, which can be described as the "maintenance and contestation of the social dominance of particular social groups" (Fairclough, 2003, p.41).

Rooted in structuralist and poststructuralist linguistic philosophy, these discursive practices view reality as constructed by language. Though the existence of reality itself as well as of physical objects is not disputed, their very meaning and value attribution are created by discourse (Jorgensen and Phillips, 2002). Take, for example, the occurrence of crop failure. It cannot be contested that farmers are not able to harvest their fields. However, there are a multitude of discourses that can ascribe meaning to the event, which span from climate change to government failure to divine intervention. This usage of different discourses not only ascribes meaning to the event but also influences resulting actions, thereby changing the outcome and thus constructing the social world (ibid). This construction is ever-changing, with different discourses and rationalities contesting and influencing each other (Feindt and Oels, 2005). Therefore, there is no such thing as an objective truth but rather 'truth is a discursive construction and different regimes of knowledge determine what is true and false' (Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002, p.13). Hence, language is intertwined with knowledge, which in turn constitutes and exerts power (Feindt and Oels, 2005).

For the purpose of this thesis, discursive practices are defined as discourses and narratives, which in turn are embedded in larger non-discursive practices. Discourses describe 'an ensemble of ideas, concepts and categories through which

meaning is given to social and physical phenomena, and which is produced and reproduced through an identifiable set of practices' (Hajer and Versteeg, 2005, p.175). Thus, each discourse has its own set of specific arguments, characteristics and practices which constitute socio-cultural meaning structures and can be analysed accordingly (Leipold et al., 2019). Narratives, on the other hand, are characterised as storylines with a clear beginning, middle and end, which are used to connect objects and subjects with each other, thereby creating meaning (Roe, 1994).

Based on these conceptualisations of discursive practices, another important axis of my theoretical framework encompasses relevant discourses surrounding the topics of agricultural development and sustainability both within Germany and the international context, which will be introduced in the next sections and will aid in contextualising this thesis further.

2.1   Domestic Discourses

According to Dryzek's *The Politics of the Earth* (2022), Germany finds itself amongst the top 10 countries globally in terms of successful environmental policy performance (Dryzek, 2022). He argues that the country follows an *ecological modernisation discourse*, which acknowledges the complex interrelation of production, consumption and environment and aims at limiting adverse effects through policy implementation. One of the main assumptions made is that environmental protection can go hand in hand with economic growth and indeed that they can strengthen each other (*ibid*). Thus, environmental protection can be achieved through technological and procedural innovation, making "the 'ecological deficiency' of industrial society into the driving force for a new round of industrial innovation" (Hajer, 1996, p.249). This places the discourse firmly within a capitalist paradigm with the aim more towards reconfiguring than changing the system, as well as towards an integration of nature into societal conceptualisation. Here, focus is also set on market-related solutions and the consumer, thereby further indicating the underlying capitalist ideology (Dryzek, 2022; Hajer, 1996). The prevalence of this discourse can also be seen within the agricultural sector in Germany, with new technological and procedural innovations, such as precision farming and other CO_2 reduction measures, as well as policies aiming to integrate environmental protection into established production rather than calling for more radical changes, as also outlined in chapter 1.3.1 (BMEL, 2024h, 2025h).

In addition, the agricultural sector, both at EU and member state level, is embedded in a *multifunctionalism discourse*, which is used to justify, explain and legitimise various policies and interventions. This discourse conceputalises the farming sector as a provider of public goods, such as food, biodiversity and climate change

mitigation, thereby entitling it to compensation utilising existing CAP measures (Rac et al., 2024). Furthermore, the discourse "avoids framing agriculture as a polluting sector, while using the environmental argument to substantiate aid" (p.155), further strengthening this line of justification.

Another discursive practice represented in German environmental and agricultural politics is that of *democratic-pragmatism*. This discourse outlines a focus on human problem-solving with emphasis on the inclusion of all citizens. So, rather than viewing the administrative state and experts as solely capable of solving environmental problems, a more democratic process is followed (Dryzek, 2022). In German agricultural development, one prime example is the "Zukunftkommission Landwirtschaft", a committee composed of scientists, representatives from different agricultural and environmental organisations, as well as other stakeholders, focused on finding consensus and giving policy recommendations (BMEL, 2024l; Deutscher Bauernverband, 2021). Additionally, the BMEL has created a "Dialognetzwerk", a network that brings together practitioners and environmentalists with the government to discuss future challenges and develop recommendations for the pending course of action (BMEL, 2024e). Nevertheless, it is unclear how much influence these committees and networks have on agri-environmental decisions, as most agricultural guidelines are set at the EU level, with e.g. AES depicting a strong top-down structure, disregarding the plurality of voices and knowledge, as outlined in chapter 1.3.1. (Tyllianakis and Martin-Ortega, 2021). Subsequently, such a focus on inclusion and participation might only be influential at the country or even county level. Furthermore, when looking at the BMEL website, it becomes apparent that the ministry works together with many different research institutes and experts, which could indicate a certain bias towards scientific knowledge over other types, such as traditional farming knowledge (BMEL, 2019a). This bias towards scientific knowledge is also reflected in how issues are depicted, which are shown as self-evident, "leaving little room for debate or reflection on the value judgements that have been made beforehand, indicating ideological hegemony by masking effects of power and inhibiting critical analysis" (Rac et al., 2024, p.153). These are signs of an *administrative-rationalism discourse,* which aims to solve environmental problems based on expert knowledge and strong administrative hierarchies with centralised decision making at the top, as well as the use of indicators and standards as means for measurement (Dryzek, 2022).

The agricultural sector in Germany is sitting between increasing environmental concerns and increasing environmental protection goals, which include a focus on technological and procedural innovation as well as growth and market solutions, thus representing an *ecological modernisation discourse*. In addition, strong emphasis is placed on ensuring productivity, food security and environmental

protection, indicating *multifunctionalism discourses*, which are used as justification for different policies. Furthermore, Germany deploys a *democratic-pragmatism discourse* to environmental problem solving, which intends to incorporate diverse voices. However, in reality, due to its embeddedness within EU structures, this discourse is not always put into practice and is mixed with an *administrative-rationalism discourse*.

2.2   Foreign Development Discourses

Within international cooperations, the one discourse being used by the BMEL is of *sustainable development*, a frequent discourse in the context of development cooperation in many countries. Today, this discourse is characterised by the promotion of economic growth under consideration of environmental and social guidelines that protect resources for future generations whilst meeting the needs of current generations, thereby essentially combining environmental protection with economic growth and social/ intergenerational justice (Dryzek, 2022). This is in line with the BMEL's focus on projects and cooperations aimed at achieving sustainable production and consumption patterns, economic growth, as well as food security, as outlined in chapter 1.3.2 (BMEL, 2024f). However, when the discourse around *sustainable development* first started, the focus was on environmental protection and renewable resource management, acting as an alternative to popular economic growth discourses. Over the years, the discourse began to change and enter dominant public representation, resulting in a shift in focus towards the incorporation of economic growth and technological solutions (Dryzek, 2022). One prominent manifestation of this discourse are the SDGs developed under the Agenda 2030 which "take the desirability of economic growth for given, and contain no challenges to international institutions, the way national governments are organised or the structure of the international political economy " (p.153), thus emphasising the shift of focus described above.

The outlined discourse development can also be traced in German development policies. Whilst in the 1990s the focus was on poverty alleviation and environmental protection, the discourse changed over the years to focus more on economic growth with a stronger emphasis on the private sector. In addition, a focus on 'reform-minded countries' also indicates that development aid or cooperation is not extended to all countries anymore but rather only to those that promise financial opportunities and stability, underlining the shift toward private sector investment (Schojan et al., 2024). The discourse exhibits similarities to the *ecological modernisation discourse* used within German politics, with a focus on technological development and embeddedness in the current capitalist system (Dryzek, 2022). However, the point of difference is its globalised view, in which green growth can be achieved through the cooperation of local and global

institutions and agents. In addition, where the *ecological modernisation discourse* calls for reconfigurations of the capitalist system, albeit small ones, the *sustainable development discourse* does not, rather viewing sustainability as going hand in hand with economic growth (*ibid*).

When looking at the SDGs as a manifestation of the discourse described above, there seem to be similarities to the discourses within Germany. Here, similarly to the *democratic-pragmatism discourse*, the vision described within the SDGs uses a *pluralist-participatory discourse*, which incorporates all types of local knowledge and fosters local participation. However, when looking toward the actual goal implementation, such plurality is not always achieved, with focus being put more on top-down approaches and a privileging of expert knowledge, technology and economic growth, as also seen within the *sustainable development discourse* (Cummings et al., 2018; Hornidge, 2011). This bias, as well as the notion that economic growth goes hand in hand with poverty alleviation and sustainability, is highly contested, with critics arguing that it is an oversimplification of complex social and environmental systems, whose interconnectedness is not taken into account (Williams, 1998).

In addition, the *sustainable development discourse*, though depicting new paradigms such as the inclusion of environmental concerns and questions of social justice, still encompasses parallels to the *development discourse* dominant in the second half of the 20th century. These include a Eurocentric outlay of the discourse, with countries of the Global North acting as the pinnacle of development and modernity, which countries of the Global South should follow, e.g. by incorporating technologies and scientific knowledge of the former as well as engaging in the world market. Furthermore, the usage of binary categories conceptualises a divide between countries with phrases such as developed/ developing and modern/ traditional (Ziai, 2016). Here, the very terminology of development brings with it the assumption that some countries are lesser than others. Additionally, a focus on technocratic solutions to social problems and the nature of programme implementation itself are related to depoliticising and authoritarian implications, which more often than not maintain dominant power relations rather than changing them (Ferguson, 1994; Li, 2007; Naylor, 2011; Williams, 1998; Ziai, 2016). Thus, it can be argued that since "the discourse operates according to unequal structural relations of power and relies upon and discursively perpetuates the very poverty and inequality that it seeks to eliminate, it will always fall short of this ultimate aim" (Naylor 2011, p.193). Additionally, the *sustainable development discourse* and the SDGs promote a concept of global governance and a one world paradigm in which all people on the globe face the same challenges and should confront these together, also a focus of the BMEL as seen in chapter 1.3.2. Although a way to strengthen global cooperation, this discourse shifts the responsibility for

environmental degradation to all, rather than acknowledging inherent inequalities between countries. In addition, emphasis is placed more on local communities for safeguarding their environment rather than recognising the role of the capitalist system and economic growth (Williams, 1998; Ziai, 2016).

Interlinked with the discourse of *(sustainable) development* as used by international institutions is the rhetoric of empowerment. In the context of development, the concept was originally coined as a feminist method to increase women's power and to dismantle existing inequality. Hence, the focus was on changing power relations using, e.g. political mobilisation and education as well as structural changes (Calvès, 2009). Thus, empowerment can be conceptualised as the capability to make choices where before there were none. To achieve such empowerment, two important dimensions are the resources a person has access to, which include material and social relationships, as well as the related rules and norms, and individual agency, which is "the ability to define one's goals and act upon them" (p.438) by utilising different strategies such as negotiations (Kabeer, 1999). Therefore, the very nature of empowerment entails that the outcome cannot be controlled (Calvès, 2009; Kabeer, 1999). However, over the years, the term has been integrated into international development institutions, where its meaning has changed, now being used both in the context of female empowerment and poverty alleviation discourses (Calvès, 2009). Though originally met with excitement over the acknowledgement of power in the context of poverty, the phrase is now being used to conceptualise a way in which marginalised groups can contribute to development through economic productivity, which in turn supports the maintenance of the status quo (Chant and Sweetman, 2012; Wong, 2003). In addition, empowerment is measured by a set of indicators, thereby defying the very meaning of empowerment itself (Kabeer, 1999). Overall, the phrase, as it is used today, lacks a definition and is criticised as being a buzzword, more than a means for political change (Cornwall and Brock, 2005). Here, Calvès (2009) writes that the concept "has come to assimilate power with individual and economic decision-making, has de-politicised collective power into something seemingly harmonious, and has been employed to legitimise existing top-down policies and programs" (p.13), thus losing its original meaning.

In summary, the BMEL's focus on sustainability, economic growth and food security, as modelled after the SDGs, places it within a *sustainable development discourse*, which is characterised by a combination of economic growth, environmental protection and social justice. Though having achieved successful changes over the years, the discourse and its assumptions about development are criticised for maintaining power asymmetries as well as for viewing economic growth within a capitalist system as solution rather than as part of the problem, with the usage of the word 'empowerment' falling under the same criticism of

maintaining the status quo rather than changing power relations. This can affect how farmers' agency and environmental position are discursively constituted and how much they can contribute to the discussion, though the existence of *a pluralist-participatory discourse* seems to counteract these notions.

3. Methodological Framework

Within the world of discourse analysis, there are numerous approaches which differ in their ontological, epistemological and methodological background (Feindt and Oels, 2005). Consequently, to build a comprehensive theoretical framework for answering the proposed research questions, it is useful to combine different approaches to create a multiperspectival framework.Here, the object of research is viewed through different lenses to reduce blind spots, as well as give the analyst the tools to take up different perspectives (Jorgensen and Phillips, 2002). Such a multiperspectival framework needs careful curation due to differing or overlapping philosophical and methodological backgrounds and subsequent research goals. Thus, I will first introduce my three chosen approaches individually before combining them and contextualising the curated framework in front of relevant discourses used in the context of this thesis topic.

3.1 Critical Discourse Analysis

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as interpreted by Norman Fairclough is a framework designed to analyse the interrelation between different semiotic elements of the social process, as well as between semiotic and non-semiotic elements (Fairclough, 2013a). With this distinction between the meaning-making elements of the social process and other social practices, he bases his approach ontologically on critical realism rather than on pure social constructivism. He argues that though parts of the social world are socially (and discursively) constructed, other parts, that might have been socially constructed in the beginning, form realities which in turn constrain and influence social construction (Fairclough, 2003). One of the core elements of CDA is therefore, the assumption that discourse is both *constitutive* and *constituted*, meaning that it both shapes the social world and is shaped by it (Jorgensen and Phillips, 2002).

For the purpose of analysis, Fairclough conceptualises this interrelation of semiotic and non-semiotic elements in the context of social reality. Here, he distinguishes between different levels of social reality, calling them structures, practices and events, which interact with each other. Social structures are the most abstract level of social reality, mostly comprised of non-semiotic elements, whereas social events are the most concrete and particular (i.e. a specific text). These two are mediated by social practices, forming a complex network of relations. Since not all parts of these social realities are semiotic, he coins the semiotic dimension of the mediating social practices as 'orders of discourse', conceptualised as underlying conventions and ideologies dictating the use of discourse and the semiotic dimension of social events as 'text', describing language in use (Fairclough, 2013a).

Next to these different levels of social reality and their corresponding semiotic elements, Fairclough argues that there are three different ways in which these elements relate and interact to other social practices and events. Here, the first category is discourses, which are understood as a kind of representation of constructive processes constituting the social or physical world. Multiple discourses connected to different social actors exist side by side and compete with each other, thereby constructing part of reality. The second category is genres, which describe forms of action and interaction, resulting in the enactment of certain discourses (i.e. news reports). Lastly, Fairclough uses the term 'style' to encompass inculcations of social practice in the form of social identities (Fairclough, 2003, 2013a). Thus, an 'order of discourse' can be understood as a certain combination of these three aspects (representation, action, identification), which distinguishes it semiotically from other 'orders of discourse' (Fairclough, 2013a). Perhaps somewhat pedantic, it is this distinct and precise terminology that is thought to enable a thorough analysis of 'texts', the surrounding 'orders of discourse' and their interaction with each other as well as with other social practices. Furthermore, due to the interactive characteristics of the different levels of social reality and their semiotic aspects, this framework tries to encompass the complex and co-constitutive nature of the social process (Fairclough, 2013a, 2013b).

Another core assumption of CDA is that language is connected with power. Due to the belief that semiotic elements of the social process produce meaning and therefore construct the social world, language is viewed as a highly significant factor for the creation and maintenance of power relations, but also as influential in changing these (Fairclough, 2013b). In 'texts', underlying relations of power manifest themselves through ideologies. These, in turn, consist of certain value systems and assumptions, which are then vocalised and thus "contribute to establishing, maintaining and changing social relations of power, domination and exploitation" (Fairclough 2003, p.9). All these concepts are interrelated and influence the different structures of semiosis and social practice. For one, power transcends from the social events to the larger 'order of discourse' as a whole, which not only shapes power relations but is itself influenced by relations of power. Further, according to Fairclough, each 'order of discourse' embodies certain ideologies contributing to or challenging hegemony and thus constituting the social world (Fairclough, 2013b).

Lastly, as the name suggests, CDA is a method to conduct critical research, focused on uncovering these underlying power structures and inequalities connected to semiosis (Fairclough, 2013b). Fairclough calls this 'explanatory critique', which not only describes but also aims to explain perceived realities by, for example, showing their embeddedness in larger societal and political structures (Fairclough, 2013a). Thus, the approach is inherently political with the goal to not only uncover

inequality but to contribute to social change (Jorgensen and Phillips, 2002). On this basis, Fairclough argues that there is no such thing as an objective researcher, as all knowledge is partial. Therefore, the research questions and chosen analytical category reflect the researcher's knowledge and should not assume totality (Fairclough, 2003). Due to the interpretive nature of CDA, the researchers' own background, knowledge and assumptions are also reflected in the results and thus need to be taken into account (Fairclough, 2013b). This underlines CDA's constructivist epistemology (Jorgensen and Phillips, 2002; Leipold et al., 2019).

3.2 Narrative Policy Analysis

Narrative policy analysis (NPA) as applied by Emery Roe is rooted in contemporary literary theory and aims to underscore the relevance of narratives in policy and to use this insight to make complex policy disputes more approachable (Roe, 1994). According to Roe, NPA is especially useful when analysing highly controversial and complex policy matters, as certain narratives exist even in the face of contradictory evidence and act as stabilisers of assumptions for decision making. Here, he argues that "stories […] are a force in themselves" (p.2), that can only be disputed through equally appealing different stories, rather than empirical data (*ibid*). Thus, narratives influence people's actions, equipping them with a certain agency of their own (van Hulst et al., 2024).

Based on similar epistemology and ontology as CDA, NPA situates itself between structuralism and poststructuralism. Though acknowledging that parts of reality are constructed by e.g. storytelling, it views uncertainty and complexity as reality and thus as basis for analysis, rather than as discursive formations. However, NPA claims to be widely applicable and to transcend between different ontologies, reaching from realism to relativism, thus leaving room for interpretation (Roe, 1994). In terms of its analytical roots, NPA is based on Narratology, a part of literary theory, which is focused on studying texts in their capacities as narratives (Fischer and Miller, 2017). In this context, the focus of NPA is to identify policy narratives by the use of storylines within texts. Stories comprise a beginning, middle and end, or if they are in the form of arguments, premise, and conclusion. Narratives that do not share these characteristics are called 'non-stories', whereas narratives that share them but contradict prominent stories are called 'counterstories' (Roe, 1994). The aim then is not only to trace these stories, 'non-stories' and 'counterstories', but to create 'metanarratives', which arise through comparison and can be seen as "narratives about narratives" (Fischer and Miller, 2017, p.56). Therefore, rather than finding a compromise, these 'metanarratives' have the aim to change the narrative altogether and create a new one which might aid in finding policy solutions (Roe, 1994).

It is thus vital for NPA to encompass a multitude of different stories, 'non-stories' and 'counterstories', to create comprehensive 'metanarratives'. Hence, the approach, rather than following a positivist epistemology, encompasses a tolerance for pluralism and different voices. This tolerance confronts the analyst with a high ambiguity, which "means charting a course between choosing sides and thinking these sides can be bridged, if not ignored" (p.148). Hence, Roe views tolerance not as normative but as methodologically important for creating 'metanarratives'. Additionally, as with CDA, this approach does not assume an analyst's objectivity, but rather acknowledges their partial knowledge and effect on the outcome of research (Roe, 1994).

In this context, another key factor related to NPA is the topic of power and politics. Though they are not an explicit topic in NPA, they are still at its centre, manifesting themselves in the access to decision-making resources and in the competition between different narratives, also called narrative asymmetries. These themes are closely related to ideologies, which underwrite and create the different narratives being analysed. At the same time, NPA is a tool to break up dominant power relations, as the creation of 'metanarratives' takes different voices into account and can thus be a tool to change the status quo in the future (Roe, 1994).

3.3 Discursive Agency Approach

Developed as an analytical heuristic for the inclusion of agency in interpretive discourse analysis, the DAA builds on existing poststructuralist and social constructivist interpretive discourse theories and conceptualisations (Leipold and Winkel, 2017). Here, the approach aims to combine discursive approaches with critical rationalist concepts for a more systematic analysis (Leipold et al., 2019). Within the DAA, agency is conceptualised as trialectically constituted between structures, agents and analyst, whereby the heuristic intends to enable an analyst's access to the former two and their interrelations (Leipold and Winkel, 2017).

Leipold and Winkel (2017) established four dimensions within their DAA. The first is policy discourse, which they define "as sets of object definitions and associated subject positions connected through story lines that ascribe meaning to social and physical phenomena considered subject to governance" (Leipold & Winkel, 2017, p.523). Here, a deeper focus on responsibility attribution within policy discourse can give insight into discursive agency. The second dimension of DAA envelops political institutions, conceptualised as formal rules framing practices and structures within a specific area. Viewed as a representation of once, or still, dominant discourse, an analysis of the distinction between this institutionalised discourse and current discourses can outline discursive agency (Leipold and Winkel, 2016, 2017).

As a third and most essential dimension of DAA, agents are viewed as actors identifying or being identified with certain subject positions in policy discourses. However, due to the multitude of different policy discourses, actors do not only subscribe to one subject position, but are constantly in flux depending on the type of policy discourse, as well as its development, and can therefore only be analysed at any one moment in time. This is an essential part of agency, as it is assumed that actors take up subject positions based on their contribution to political relevance, with discursive agency being their "ability to make themselves a relevant agent in a particular discourse by constantly making choices about whether, where, when, and how to identify with a particular subject position in specific story lines within this discourse" (Leipold & Winkel, 2017, p.524). Therefore, an actor can exert agency by choosing to identify with a certain subject position or reinvent it. However, seeing as actors are dialectically constituted by structures such as other policy discourses and political institutions, their choices are not free from external factors but rather co-constituted by them. In addition, the conceptualisation of agents is doubly complex, as a subject position is not only defined by an actor's own agency but also by the perception of others (Leipold and Winkel, 2017).

Within the DAA, a subject position is not a fixed entity, but something created by agents who impart certain characteristics to themselves. Agents ascribe individual skills to themselves and others, as well as positional characteristics (Leipold and Winkel, 2017). Though interrelated, this distinction enables deeper analysis as certain agents might be stronger in the former, whereas others excel in the latter or vice versa, thus influencing their subject position and power (Leipold and Winkel, 2016). In addition, this conceptualisation includes the degree of collectivity of certain actors as a positional characteristic, thus influencing their external perception (Leipold and Winkel, 2017).

As a final dimension, the DAA includes strategic practices, which describe practices that influence subject positions and their capacity to evoke change and create political truths. Thus, a specific agent has at their disposal a certain selection of strategic practices, with which they can influence discourses and institutionalisation. These practices can include discursive, governance or organisational strategies, of which the first might include the production of storylines, rationalisation or scientification, emotionalisation, delegitimisation and the creation of normative power[2]. However, this selection is dialectically interrelated to an actor's individual and positional characteristics as well as discursively co-constituted by political institutions, policy discourse and discursive agency (Leipold and Winkel, 2017). Thus, both the agents as well as their subject

---

[2] The other two might include restructuring of policy-making processes or administrative changes, though I will not further analyse these in this thesis.

positions and strategic practices are co-constituted by policy discourses and political institutions, as well as interrelated with one another, creating a complex web around discursive agency.

3.4   Multiperspectival Framework

For this thesis, I have decided to combine the three approaches described above, as each brings unique and valuable insights into the research subject. CDA offers a good starting point, as it relates discourse, power, ideology and their co-constituted nature with other social practices and structures in its analysis (Fairclough, 2003). These are relevant contestations for this thesis, which aims to identify discourses being used by the BMEL and subsequently reveal underlying ideologies and power dynamics being maintained or contested in the process. Furthermore, said focus can unveil important understandings of if and how the BMEL, as a governmental institution, imposes hegemony surrounding the topics of agricultural sustainability and development. In line with CDA, it is also the ontology of critical realism, which I will follow, distinguishing between discursive and non-discursive elements. In the context of this thesis, a deeper understanding of the structures surrounding and thus co-constituting the BMEL's discursive practice sheds light on the larger power dynamics in which the BMEL is embedded. Thereby, another dimension will be added to the analysis that surpasses pure discourse. In contrast to this focus on the interrelation of semiotic and non-semiotic elements of the social process, NPA focuses on identifying narratives being told in the context of complex and uncertain policy issues (Roe, 1994). Thus, it is relevant for this thesis, as the topic of agricultural development in the face of socio-economic and environmental challenges is highly contested and uncertain due to the various actors involved and the complexity of predicting different outcomes. Additionally, seeing as such narratives provide powerful tools for connecting certain political issues with certain outcomes, benefits and costs, they reflect underlying ideologies. Therefore, identifying storylines being used by the BMEL to justify and explain their different policies and projects provides a different entry point to understanding the maintenance and possible contestations of hegemony and related ideologies and power dynamics. Important to note here is that since I will be focusing on material issued by the government, I will use NPA only for identifying dominant policy narratives rather than for aiding in creating new narratives as the original purpose intends.

As a final axis of this framework, the DAA can bring valuable insight into the discursive agency of actors as well as how an actor's position and agency are discursively created (Leipold and Winkel, 2017). This is especially relevant, seeing as both CDA and NPA do not include such a focus. Based on similar ontology and epistemology as the other two, the DAA views discursive agency as co-constituted,

where an actor's subject position and strategic practices are influenced by and are simultaneously constituting discourses, their institutionalisation and larger social structures. With this, the DAA not only sheds light on the agency behind a certain text but also on how agency is discursively assigned to various actors, thereby providing insight into underlying power dynamics between actors and how these are reflected in discursive practices.

By combining CDA, NPA and DAA, the resulting multiperspectival framework encompasses various discursive practices and thereby enables the analysis of different facets and connections between them, as well as the central themes of power, ideology and agency relevant for this thesis. The interrelation between CDA, NPA and DAA as used within this thesis is illustrated in Figure 1. Here, the last important variable is the analyst themselves. All three approaches conceptualise them as also embedded in the same structures and practices as the topic of research itself, thus holding only partial knowledge, which is reflected in their interpretation. Therefore, the analyst should be included in the same framework to further emphasise their embeddedness, as well as the trialectically constituted agency as described within the DAA.
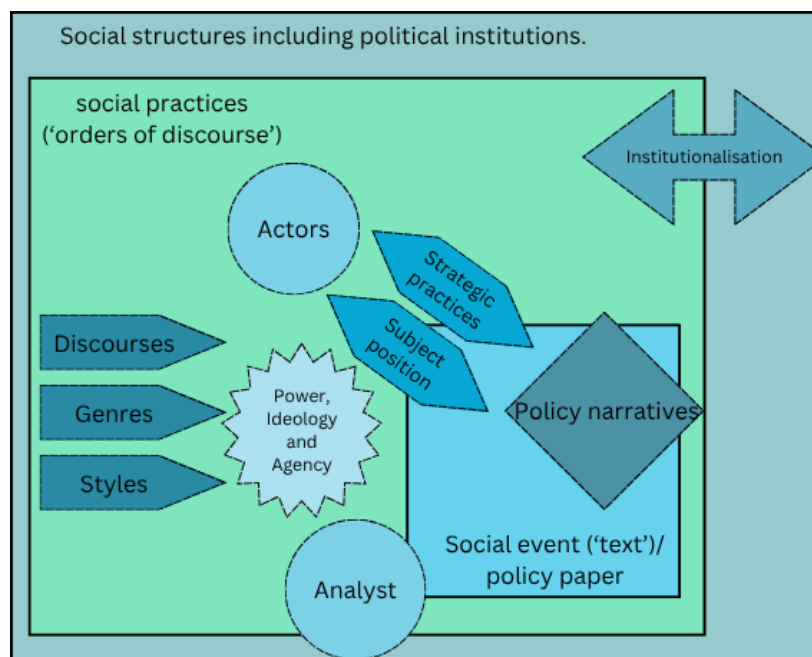

Figure 1: Multiperspectival Framework

4. Methods and Material

Based on the multiperspectival framework developed in Chapter 2, this section is aimed at further explaining the chosen material and research design used within this thesis. Thereafter, I have included a brief reflection on research limitations as well as my own position to underscore possible biases and shortcomings in the following analysis and discussion.

4.1 Material

The starting point for the acquisition of relevant material was the BMEL and its recently released publications, statements, and press releases. I chose the BMEL specifically since it is a dominant governmental institution and can therefore provide insight into the political discourses surrounding the topic of sustainable agricultural development in Germany. Here, in order to highlight potential dualities within the same ministry and topic, I chose to analyse the two policy papers "Concept for our Cooperation with African Countries and Regions" (Konzept für unsere Zusammenarbeit mit afrikanischen Ländern und Regionen) and "Sustainable Agri-Food Systems: Challenges and Pathways of Transformation" (Nachhaltige Agrar- und Ernährungssysteme: Herausforderungen und Wege der Transformation). Both were released within the last year, with the former being released in January of 2025 and the latter in May 2024, and are the only recent publications released by the BMEL that are fully related to the topic of research as outlined above (BMEL, 2024j, 2025g). Furthermore, they were formulated by the same government and in a similar political climate, thereby making them more comparable and ideal for further inspection.

In addition, I scanned the BMEL's website for relevant press releases and publications related to the two areas of research to not only increase the number of texts for analysis but also to glean further insight into the BMEL's discursive practice. In the context of international cooperation, my search yielded several important press releases and statements, concerning not only the publication of the concept itself but also related to a prior trip of the Minister for Agriculture to Ethiopia and Zambia, as well as to an event named the 'Green Week' in which different country' cooperations were discussed (BMEL, 2024a, 2024b, 2024c, 2024k, 2025d). In addition, I included the BMEL's websites and statements concerning their international projects and cooperations (BMEL, 2021, 2024d, 2024f). When looking at domestic agricultural development, the BMEL has published a significantly higher amount of material. Thus, to ensure a somewhat even number of sources, I only included press releases and statements concerning environmental issues and the transformation of agri-food systems published within

the last year, thereby limiting the scope of research (BMEL, 2024h, 2024i, 2024l, 2025a, 2025c, 2025e, 2025f). Additionally, I analysed relevant parts of the publication "Strengthening Agriculture and Forestry - Protecting the Climate: Measures in Agriculture and Forestry for Climate Protection" (Land- und Forstwirtschaft stärken –Klima schützen: Maßnahmen der Land- und Forstwirtschaft für den Klimaschutz) as well as from the "Agricultural Policy Report of the Federal Government 2023" (Agrarpolitischer Bericht der Bundesregierung 2023) to incorporate a wider variety of texts (BMEL, 2023, 2024g). Since all of these sources are in German, I translated all relevant quotes into English for this analysis. The original statements can be found in Appendix 1. Important to note here is that the act of translation itself brings with it a certain bias, as the process is conducted by the analyst themselves and is therefore a reflection of their own subjectivity and knowledge, which needs to be taken into account when analysing and interpreting the results (Chesterman, 1997).

4.2 Research Design

The research conducted in this thesis was based on the framework designed in Chapter 3 and was of a qualitative nature. As such, I approached the analysis from interpretive epistemology and critical realism ontology, arguing that discourse has a co-constitutive relationship with other parts of the social world and should thus only be seen as one of many social practices (Jorgensen and Phillips, 2002). In addition, the analyst themselves is deeply embedded in the same structures and discourses as their chosen research material, and therefore only privy to partial knowledge. To counteract this bias, an awareness of this fact, as well as a strong methodology, can aid the researcher in formulating transparent results (Fairclough, 2013a). To achieve this, I drew on relevant methods from CDA, NPA and DAA and combined them to include an analysis from different perspectives. In addition, the discourses identified within my theoretical framework in chapter 2, as well as an extensive literature review before the start of the analysis presented in chapter 1, aided in contextualising the material and the identification of relevant discourses within. Important to note here is that all material was produced during the leadership of the Green Party in Germany and is therefore situated in a specific time and place, with similar research during other time periods potentially yielding different results.

4.2.1 Data Analysis

Linguistic text analysis and discourses
For this analysis, I emphasised the CDA's methodology, as it is based on linguistic analysis, which can ground any results in text-based examples and aids with transparency, which is especially relevant in interpretive studies (Fairclough, 1992).

Thus, after a first read-through of the material, I conducted a linguistic text analysis. Due to my lack of background in linguistics, I focused on key components as suggested by Fairclough. These include the types of words used and the meanings and values they entail (Fairclough, 2003). To this end, I analysed the occurrence of key words and elements of the discourses underpinning my theoretical framework in chapter 2, which can be found in Appendix 3, tables 1 and 2. Here, I used the 'search document' function to count their occurrence. In addition, I followed the same course of action with other recurring words as well as words that were relevant to the different discourses but near absent from the examined material. Important to note here is that I used this tool in a qualitative manner, meaning I did not set a threshold number for the occurrence of different words or use any specific calculation, but rather used it in relative terms to aid the illustration of different arguments. The word counts can be found in Appendix 4.

Following this, my analysis was concerned with a deeper look at transitivity, modality and evaluations (Fairclough, 2003, 2013b). The former describes the connection, or lack thereof, between event and subject or object, which can indicate certain ideologies and power dynamics (Jorgensen and Phillips, 2002). Here, there are two main forms relevant to CDA. The first is the usage of passive sentences, which bypass the agent, subsequently also bypassing their responsibility. The second is nominalisation, where agency is reduced through the usage of nouns instead of verbs (Fairclough, 2003). Modality describes the commitment and identification of people to their statements. The degree of commitment has consequences both for social relations and meaning-making. Here, one important modality is 'truth', in which the person uttering the statement fully commits to it, declaring it as indisputable. Other types of modality include categorial and objective, both used to reinforce authority (Fairclough, 2003; Jorgensen and Phillips, 2002). In contrast to this, evaluation indicates the values that people have and commit themselves to, which can be both explicit and implicit (Fairclough, 2003).

The combination of these linguistic approaches with the identification of key words and elements of the various discourses enabled a deeper analysis of the meaning-making processes behind the text as well as the underlying assumptions and beliefs constructing the various discourses. In this context, I chose representative quotations from the material to illustrate these connections (for increased transparency and understanding) and to act as empirical evidence for the identification of different discourses.

Discursive practice and orders of discourse
As a next step, I focused on identifying interdiscursivity and intertextuality, which provide tools for analysing the larger discursive practices surrounding the material

(Fairclough, 2003). To this end, the concept of interdiscursivity can be used to analyse how a text uses a combination of different discourses, genres and styles. Here, a high level of interdiscursivity, i.e. a high number of contesting discourses, is connected to a change in ideology, whereas a lower level signals a reproduction of the status quo (Fairclough, 2003; Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002). Intertextuality, on the other hand, can be used to analyse how a certain text uses and reconfigures other texts and their meaning, as well as to deepen the understanding of the producers' underlying assumptions when writing the text. A possible question to ask is: "Which texts and voices are included, which are excluded, and what significant absences are there?" (Fairclough, 2003, p.47). Therefore, to further analyse the intertextuality of the chosen material, the origin of different discourses provided an important starting point (Appendix 3, Tables 1 and 2). In addition, a deeper analysis of the voices and types of texts included within the material gave valuable insight.
 Lastly, based on the previous steps, I identified different genres and styles used within the material and identified the orders of discourse, which represent the linguistic aspect of a network of social practices (*ibid*). In line with this, I grouped and named the discourses, styles and genres according to common social structurings and practices surrounding them.

Identification of prominent policy narratives

I used the NPA framework to identify prominent storylines within the material. These stories need to be coherent and conform to having a beginning, middle and end, which are connected to each other to create certain meanings. (Fischer and Miller, 2017; Roe, 1994). Here, I scanned the material to see whether they were following similar trains of argumentation and were connecting statements in similar sequences. A starting point for this were the political problem statements and identification of various issues and challenges found mostly at the beginning of the texts. From there, I analysed how these challenges were connected to various actors and actions and by what means these were to be overcome. In addition, I identified the types of outcomes, benefits and costs these were discursively connected to (see Appendix 3, table 3). With this, I was able to identify storylines, whose prevalence I further determined by not only analysing their occurrence within one text but also throughout various materials. Whenever they occurred multiple times, I named them in a way to represent the core statement of these identified narratives.

Analysis of discursive agency

Next, I aimed to analyse the discursive agency of relevant actors within the material by using the DAA. In accordance with this approach, the first steps of my analysis acted as basis for interpretation (Leipold and Winkel, 2017). My main focus was to identify how agency and subject positions were discursively assigned, as well as what strategic practices were being used. For this, key elements from the various

discourses as seen in Appendix 3 acted as starting point and were combined with the analysis of transitivity, modality and evaluations as described above to further disentangle how agency was discursively assigned to farmers. In addition, I focused on how and if farmers were being included, addressed and depicted within the material. Further, the combination of narratives and discourses aided in unveiling the discursive distribution of subject positions as well as the motivation behind the production of the material.

Analysis of surrounding social structures and policy institutions

Lastly, I turned my analytical focus to the interrelation of the previously identified discursive practices, narratives and agencies and the larger 'orders of discourse' and social structures. Thus, rather than looking at what discourses were being used, I was concerned with the reproduction of discourses and subsequent ideologies and their consequences for power structures and social construction (Fairclough, 2013b). The aim of this deeper analysis of the consequences of the used discourses and genres was to constitute a better understanding of action, representation and identification being reproduced or challenged within the material (Fairclough, 2003). Furthermore, I contextualised the material by including other non-semiotic structures and policy institutions related to both policy papers (Jorgensen and Phillips, 2002).

4.2.2 Research Limitations and Reflection

Though the combination of these three approaches enables an analysis from different perspectives, this thesis still has some limitations. As mentioned above, the analyst is entrenched in the same social structures and discursive practices as the research subject and other relevant actors. Thus, the combination of different approaches and theories does not absolve the analyst from their subjectivity and belief systems. Though it can aid in stepping outside one's own view of the world, the very choice of approaches and their combination reflects a certain bias towards what is deemed important and what is not, thus resulting in a certain reflection of the analyst's own background and values, further compounded by the translation aspects of this thesis. It can be argued that this is not necessarily a weakness of the approach but rather inevitable, seeing that "the scientific investigation of social matters is perfectly compatible with committed and 'opinionated' investigators […], and being committed does not excuse you from arguing rationally or producing evidence for your statements" (Fairclough, 2013, p.5).

However, rather than just being a committed or opinionated researcher, an analyst's own bias and background shape the research results and should thus be considered. In line with feminist standpoint theory, I argue that all knowledge is socially situated and embodied, thus challenging scientific claims of "objectivity" and

relativism (Haraway, 2013). Therefore, I would like to introduce my background and position as a disclaimer to the following analysis and discussion. I am a female master's student currently studying in Sweden, with a background in environmental science and agricultural science. I am a German citizen, thus also familiar with the context of these two policy papers. However, my position is that of an academic and not that of a farmer, neither in Germany nor in any African country; thus, my conclusions are limited to my situated knowledge.

This leads me to another limitation of this thesis: the material used. Since the focus of this thesis is on how the BMEL explains and justifies its policies and political actions by employing different discourses and policy narratives, as well as how it discursively constructs farmers' subject positions and agency, the material mostly consists of policy-related material. Although this reveals important insights into governmental agency and discursive constitution of reality, it omits the interpretation of relevant actors, both of people implementing said policies and those being targeted by them. Thus, my conclusions are limited to my explanatory capacities. Nevertheless, this framework can provide a relevant first step into the analysis of political discourses surrounding environmental protection and agricultural development within the German government. In addition, it provides a novel comparison of two policy papers concerned with comparable topics and actors, but targeting different countries within the Global North and South.

5. Analysis

Based on the methodology and material described on the previous pages, I conducted a discourse analysis, whose results will be shared in this section. Under consideration of the political institutions and context outlined before, the analysis was undertaken in multiple stages. Though separately explained above, these are intertwined with one another, thus resulting in me, as an analyst, going back and forth between the different steps, rather than following a strictly linear path. Thus, for a clearer understanding, I have chosen to convey my results based on the three discourse analytical approaches used, as well as a brief contextualisation.

5.1 Concept for Germany's Cooperation with African Countries and Regions

Released in January 2025, the policy paper outlines the BMEL's main goals of eradicating hunger and realising the human right to adequate food and nutrition in Africa and how they aim to achieve this. It addresses two main focus points, with one being the transformation of agri-food systems by employing agroecology, organic agriculture and sustainable use of forests and trees. The other focal point is directed towards strengthening cooperation, knowledge sharing, innovation and trade (BMEL, 2025g). Within this concept, as well as within the surrounding press releases and speeches, the ministry uses different discourses to justify, explain and construct its foreign development cooperations and policies, also resulting in a discursive construction of farmers' agency and subject position, as presented below.

5.1.1 Discourses

Sustainable development discourse

One recurring discourse used within the material is that of *sustainable development*. Characterised by a union of environmental protection, intergenerational justice and economic growth, this discourse emphasises the importance of global cooperation and the integration of the private sector into development projects and manifests itself in the Agenda 2030 and its SDGs (Dryzek, 2022; Williams, 1998; Ziai, 2016). The prevalence of this discourse is made clear in the very beginning of the paper, which states:

> Our common goal is clear: we want to create an agriculture that is productive, sustainable and adapted to local conditions - and contributes to realising the right to food for all people. In this way, we not only create food security, but also promote economic development, stability and peace worldwide (BMEL, 2025g, p.3).

This quote not only shows the intricate link between economic growth and sustainability but also the focus on global solutions prevalent within this discourse. This is further underlined by the usage of a positive evaluation to show their commitment to the cause. Such a focus on global solutions can further be seen throughout the material, which frequently uses words such as "global", "worldwide" and "world". Furthermore, such globalised thinking elicits a certain feeling of community and togetherness, emphasised by the words "together" and "cooperation", also prevalent within the material. In addition, Cem Özdemir frequently uses this terminology in his speeches surrounding the topic with sentences like:

> The most important players in realising the right to food are all of us. If we want to change our globally interconnected agricultural and food system, we have to do it together or not at all (Özdemir, 2024).

> We can only solve the major crises of our time - climate change, hunger and conflicts, but increasingly also animal diseases - by working together (BMEL, 2025d).

> The climate crisis, hunger and conflicts are mutually reinforcing and have long had a huge global impact beyond their local settings. These challenges, therefore, affect us all, and we can only solve them by working together (BMEL, 2024c).

With this, the material discursively connects the reader with the subject, thereby not only creating a global community feeling but also increasing legitimisation of its various policies and projects. These statements, as well as most other statements throughout the material, use the modalities of truth and objectivity, which leave no doubt about the cause of action and the connections the BMEL draws, thereby further underlining legitimisation as well as their competence, expertise and authority.

This globalised thinking also manifests itself in the materials' focus on bi- and multilateral cooperations with phrases such as:

> We are committed to decoupling expansion and productivity increases in agriculture from deforestation and forest degradation in bilateral exchanges and in international cooperation formats such as FAO, UNFF, ITTO, G7 and G20, as well as the GFFA (BMEL, 2025g, p.29).

The prioritisation of cooperation with multilateral institutions such as the FAO can be viewed as the institutionalisation of such a globalised view of environmental protection following the DAA framework (Leipold and Winkel, 2017). This further suggests that the discourse has a strong influence on the BMEL and their actions. Next to emphasising its membership in and accordance with different committees and global guidelines, the concept as well as the surrounding material relies heavily on the SDGs, with each chapter beginning with a different number of SDGs being

aimed at (BMEL, 2025g). This indicates an intertextuality being employed by the ministry with the use of meaning-making elements from the Agenda 2030 and the SDGs. In addition, the SDGs are used to explain different kinds of action, such as:

> In our Bilateral Cooperation Programme (BKP), we support projects that provide an innovation and transformation platform in line with SDG 17, in addition to consulting expertise for legal frameworks and institution building (BMEL, 2025g, p.9).

Thus, the SDGs are not only used as guidelines and justification for certain actions, but also as a kind of globally accepted institutionalised measurement tool for successful development, thereby emphasising their influence both on the semiotic and non-semiotic elements of the BMEL's social practices.

Though this discourse aims to further community thinking as depicted above, it can also lead to countries of the Global North pushing their responsibilities for mitigation towards countries of the Global South (Williams, 1998). In this context, throughout all texts, the word "responsibility" is only used once within the sentence:

> Although African countries are responsible for less than four percent of global greenhouse gas emissions, the impact of the climate crisis on parts of the African continent is above average (BMEL, 2025g, p.14).

However, this acknowledgement is placed in one of the fact boxes frequenting the text, to which the actual strategy does not refer, thereby limiting its importance. On the other side, the material encompasses different statements ranging from overt to obvious, which assign environmental responsibility either to an unknown third party or link it to everyone. The former can, for example, be achieved through the usage of nominalisation in which "processes of change are divorced from social actors, history, time and place" (Cummings et al., 2020, p.102), and are thus depicted as non-changing (Cummings et al., 2020; Jorgensen and Phillips, 2002). One example here is:

> The climate crisis, loss of biodiversity, wars and conflicts, as well as changing geopolitical conditions, are having a massive impact on our agricultural and food systems. (BMEL, 2025g, p.6).

This is one of the opening sentences of the concept, which constitutes climate change, biodiversity loss, wars, and conflicts as nouns rather than processes, which decouples them from their human-induced nature. Though I know that words such as "climate crisis" are frequently used and well-established nouns, I would still argue that this can influence how responsibility or lack thereof is being constituted. However, even more prominent than nominalisation is the conceptualisation of a global climate responsibility with phrases such as:

> A long-term goal is to build the supply of fertilisers on a sustainable, cycle-based system. Consequently, countries in the Global South must also be supported in reducing their import-dependent requirements, the corresponding dependencies and the sustainable production of fertilisers. (BMEL, 2025g, p.18).

> One problem, for example, is that monotony often prevails in our fields, meadows and stables - not only here, but in many countries around the world (Özdemir, 2024).

I argue that such phrasing in combination with the above-mentioned focus on multilateral cooperation subtly constitutes all countries as equal in the fight against climate change, a discourse aligned with that of sustainable development and the concept of global governance as seen in chapter 2.2 (Ziai, 2016).

Another major theme within the concept, which is in accordance with the *sustainable development discourse,* is the inclusion of economic growth (Schojan et al., 2024; Williams, 1998). As some of the quotes above already indicate, the BMEL promotes increased productivity, trade, and economic growth as a pathway to eradicating hunger and increasing peace. In this context, the material frequently uses terms such as "economy", "trade" and "productivity. An additional focus lies on the inclusion of the private sector, emphasised by sentences such as:

> This requires investment, especially from private sector players, in order to promote innovation, strengthen entrepreneurship and enable more value creation in the regions (BMEL, 2025g, p.35).

This goes hand in hand with the prioritisation of 'innovation' as a means to increase productivity and growth. Notably, innovation ranges from agroecological to technological to business-related, thus encompassing a wide range of topics. Nevertheless, a guiding principle throughout the material is that innovation, regardless of what kind, leads to increased productivity and economic growth, which should then result in increased well-being and peace:

> In light of the challenges outlined above, we are convinced that the principles of agroecology are an innovative approach to finding viable long-term solutions that contribute to increasing productivity in line with the FAO's Voluntary Guidelines on the Right to Adequate Food (BMEL, 2025g, p.16).

> On the African continent and around the world, a strong, self-determined, resilient agriculture and food sector is the foundation for social cohesion and political stability. It nurtures peace, security and development (BMEL, 2025g, p.3).

Though there is merit in these statements, they nevertheless conceptualise a straightforward correlation between agricultural productivity through innovation and increased security and peace. However, I would argue that the material not only omits the complexity of peace and security but also the very reason for the lack thereof, finding technological solutions for socio-political challenges, thereby

depoliticising the topic (Ferguson, 1994; Li, 2007). This indicates a strong prevalence of an underlying capitalist ideology guiding the discursive practice of the BMEL. Here, it is important to note that the material includes the terminology of good governance in its conceptualisation of the matter, which is often used to describe the implementation of liberal democratic institutions to achieve capitalist growth (Cornwall and Brock, 2005). This is in line with the concept of 'reform-minded countries' as described in chapter 1.3.2. However, though one could argue that the inclusion of this terminology might indicate a connection to a political level, the material does not specify how to achieve this, thereby reducing the term to a buzzword with a certain lack of meaning (BMEL, 2025g; Cornwall and Brock, 2005).

Another aspect prevalent within the material that is related to this focus on innovation and technology is a certain privileging of expert knowledge. Here, the material is frequented by words such as "research", "technology", "experts/expertise" and "scientists". This focus is further used to legitimise the BMEL's own competence and relevance, further underlined by phrases such as:

> The technical expertise of the BMEL and our subordinate authorities and departmental research institutions is a unique selling point; it is what characterises our international cooperation (BMEL, 2025g, p.7).

> We want to accelerate the necessary measures by contributing our expertise in agriculture and nutrition to our bilateral and multilateral cooperation (BMEL, 2025g, p.6).

These statements demonstrate that science and research are considered core components of the BMEL. In addition to certain phrasings and words, the very outline of the concept reflects these notions. Each topic starts with informational graphs about the "status quo" of a certain topic, which could be the average costs of export and import on the African continent, the percentage of agriculture in the gross domestic product (GDP) or graphs on how much land is being used for agriculture and forestry and how much potential land is waiting for the right tools to be usable (as illustrated in Appendix 2). Next to this, the text is supplemented by informational boxes on different topics like land use, organic agriculture and trade, as well as on current discussions (BMEL, 2025g). All of these are based on the contemporary state of science in Germany and aim at contributing "to the ongoing search for viable and sustainable solutions" (p.10).

This indicates an intertextuality between the government texts and science, further underlined by the different genre depicted within these text boxes. Where the rest of the text uses a government genre concerned with projects and policy suggestions, the informational graphs and fact boxes show a science genre with references to

current studies. In addition, this usage of the dominant scientific consensus is depicted mostly in an objective and categorial modality, furthering the reader's trust in the solutions of the paper as well as its legitimacy. Furthermore, current discussions in the field are mentioned, though with a focus on the justification of chosen methods, thus creating a feeling of transparency and at the same time strengthening the appearance of legitimacy. Thus, I would argue that this focus on science, compounded with the prioritisation of innovation and economic growth as described above, upholds a bias towards a certain type of scientific knowledge and reflects an underlying ideological hegemony toward technological and scientific solutions.

On the other hand, such discursive prioritisation of technological innovations and scientific knowledge can maintain or even increase power asymmetries and inequality between countries. Such conceptualisation is especially prevalent within the press releases and speeches surrounding the concept, which use phrases such as:

> Sharing know-how supports the development of civil society, strengthens structures and improves the level of organisation of stakeholders (BMEL, 2025d).

> Because we rely a lot on knowledge transfer, on science, on exchange (BMEL, 2024b).

> The focus is on the exchange of experience and concrete knowledge transfer - for productive, sustainable and site-adapted agriculture (BMEL, 2024c).

> A decisive key to success lies in knowledge transfer and training (Özdemir, 2024).

These statements reveal a strong bias toward expert knowledge and subsequent knowledge transfer. With this, the BMEL aims not only to legitimise their presence and underline their importance, but it also conceptualises a one-way street of development, which delegitimises local practices and can maintain power imbalances. In addition, the term "modern" is used in the context of technological, agricultural and educational projects, thus insinuating that what already exists is of less value and emphasising a "need" for knowledge transfer from Global North to Global South to enhance mechanisation, digitalisation and technology, subsequently furthering the perception described above (BMEL, 2024d, 2024k, 2025g; Özdemir, 2024).

Another point of critique related to this discourse is the term "development" itself, as already mentioned in Chapter 2.2. This term suggests a certain inequality between the countries with a need for development and those which are already developed (Williams, 1998; Ziai, 2016). Here, the BMEL aims to reduce this binary thinking by using terms such as "transformation" and "partner". And indeed, the term "developing countries" only appears twice within the material, whereas the

term "development" appears throughout, though with varying contexts which don't always relate to the topic of development as described above (BMEL, 2025g). This aim can also be seen in different parts of the texts with phrases such as:

> But, what is very important to me, we do not come as teachers but as partners (BMEL, 2024b).

> A central goal for us is therefore the context-adapted mechanisation of agriculture. This does not have to follow the logic of European agricultural development in recent decades. Rather, the requirements on the ground set the direction (BMEL, 2025g, p.35).

Thus, the BMEL sets a strong focus on equality between countries and on reducing the development bias, further emphasised by the personal evaluation by Cem Özdemir in the first quote. However, I argue that this is not quite achieved due to the types of knowledge being presented as well as the very nature of this concept, which aims to support other countries in achieving something which, though not explicitly mentioned, but indicated, Germany already has, thereby revealing underlying power disbalances.

Pluralist- participatory discourse

Characterised by an inclusion of different voices and types of knowledge as well as participatory project designs, the *pluralist-participatory discourse* symbolises a discursive change toward more inclusion of various voices(Cummings et al., 2018; Hornidge, 2011). Here, terms such as "local knowledge", "traditional", "participation" and "knowledge exchange" indicate the discourse's prevalence (BMEL, 2025g). Though not that frequent, I argue that combined with the above-mentioned use of "partner" and the focus on agricultural dialogue, the discourse seems to function as guidance for the BMEL's work. This is further compounded by phrases such as:

> For us, this offers an opportunity to learn from each other and jointly develop innovative forms of agriculture that can also build on local knowledge and existing farming methods (BMEL, 2025g, p.17).

> Another focus of the project is the integration of traditional knowledge in conjunction with scientific findings (BMEL, 2025g, p.23).

These emphasise the importance of local farming knowledge and learning from each other, which provides a pivotal change to the abovementioned focus on expert knowledge and subsequent knowledge transfer. Another key feature of the concept, where the discourse has strong influence, is the process of developing the concept itself, which was made in cooperation between the BMEL, the AU, as well as representatives from economy, science, and society, both from Germany and different African countries. This, as well as different project designs, which

cooperate with local communities and institutions and aim to include marginalised voices, demonstrates the will to include a higher plurality of voices and types of knowledge (BMEL, 2025g). It is, however, difficult to assess how and if this is put into practice. Nevertheless, the very existence of this discourse shows that there might be a change in discourse in German development cooperations according to Fairclough's theory of interdiscursivity (Jorgensen and Phillips, 2002). However, it might also be in line with the aforementioned conceptualisation of knowledge within the SDGs, thereby differentiating between intent and action (see chapter 2.2). Nevertheless, its existence might indicate underlying changes in ideology surrounding knowledge and the very implications of development.

Empowerment for increased productivity discourse

Though the rhetoric of empowerment is often used as part of other discourses, I would argue that it also entails its own discourse, which I have named *empowerment for increased productivity discourse*, as it conceptualises empowerment as a means to an end, in which it leads to increased economic participation and productivity rather than changes in power dynamics. This conceptualisation of empowerment is often used within international development institutions to legitimise different programmes and to maintain the status quo of capitalist growth (Calvès, 2009; Chant and Sweetman, 2012; Wong, 2003). When looking at the material, the discourse shows its prevalence. The ministry aims to empower marginalised groups, with a specific focus on women, young people and local communities (BMEL, 2025g). However, empowerment is not understood as intrinsic but rather as a means to an end, with phrases like:

> In our project work, we focus in particular on involving young people and women: If this is successful, we believe that there is potential for economic power here, from which increasing demand and an intensive urban agriculture and food industry can develop (BMEL, 2025g, p.30).

In addition, words such as "women" and "empowerment" can be found throughout the material, indicating the importance of this topic. Interestingly, in combination with a clear economic objective behind its empowerment efforts, the BMEL uses passive sentences when talking or writing about it, such as:

> Women and young professionals are specifically supported in realising the right to food, and indigenous groups are actively involved (Özdemir, 2024).

> The key lies in activating and empowering young people and women (BMEL, 2025g, p.30).

These conceptualise women and young people as entities without their own individual agency, whilst at the same time omitting the actual process of

empowerment itself. However, as Kabeer (1999) points out, agency is central to empowerment, as it "encompasses the meaning, motivation and purpose, which individuals bring to their activity, their sense of agency, or `the power within'" (p.438). Thus, if not addressed, true empowerment cannot happen. Overall, this conceptualisation of empowerment is in line with that of international development institutions, where the word is linked with economic productivity instead of political considerations (Calvès, 2009; Chant and Sweetman, 2012).

In conclusion, the policy paper makes use of multiple discourses, of which some overlap and others contest each other. I would argue that the genre used by the BMEL can be named government genre as it relates to an official type of communication, as reflected in policy papers or official speeches. When looking at the used style, similar contestations can be applied, therefore conceptualising the BMEL as using a governing style, in which it identifies as a governing body whose responsibility it is to guide and coordinate policy formulation and enactment. With this combination, I argue that both the BMEL as producer of the text and the consumers are embedded within the order of discourse of international development institutions. This becomes evident with the occurrence of prevalent discourses surrounding the topic of development as described in Chapter 2.2. Thus, the analysed material showcases a high intertextuality, not only by discursively leaning on the SDGs and scientific findings but also by using and reconfiguring discourses being used in multilateral institutions such as the UN.. At the same time, the material encompasses some interdiscursivity, which can be seen through the contestations between the different discourses as well as genres, which indicates a potential change in discursive practice and ideology (Fairclough, 2003).

5.1.2 Policy Narratives

Where the analysis of discourses as outlined above can elicit clearer insights into the material and its underlying assumptions and meanings, I argue that an additional analysis of policy narratives can add further depth to the analysis, since they show clear patterns, structure a text and create meaning. Thus, NPA offers a different entry point to the analysis, which can unveil previously missed connections between different topics, thereby adding value. Within the policy paper, as well as the surrounding material, I have identified 2 main narratives being used by the BMEL to explain, justify and conceptualise their position and actions.

Out of great challenges come great opportunities
The first policy narrative, which can be found within the material and shows a clear beginning, middle and end, is one I have named *out of great challenges come great opportunities*. This narrative is introduced in the very beginning of the policy paper, which starts with:

> The African continent is full of opportunities - especially in agriculture, which is currently being strategically rethought in many areas. At the same time, the African countries are facing major challenges (BMEL, 2025g, p.3).

With this, the BMEL outlines its main problem statement. However, rather than sticking to a focus on possible challenges and issues, the statement is framed in a positive way, which highlights possible opportunities, a discursive practice frequently found throughout the material. In line with this, the text then continues with the outline of major challenges in African countries in the context of food security, agriculture and climate change. However, these challenges can quickly be turned into opportunities, as demonstrated by statements and personal evaluations such as:

> Seeing challenges as an opportunity and starting together where you are right now (Özdemir, 2024).

> And here I have some good news: around a third of greenhouse gas emissions worldwide are caused by our agricultural and food system. Now you are right to ask what is supposed to be good news about this. Well, it all depends on your perspective (Özdemir, 2024).

After outlining the main challenges the African continent is facing in an agricultural context, the storyline continues with introducing the BMEL's main goals to combat the described challenges. In line with the aforementioned positive framing surrounding the material, these goals are viewed as opportunities for transforming the agricultural domain, with frequent words including "potential" and "opportunity". I argue that this impression is further underlined by the already mentioned informational graphs, which mark the beginning of each new chapter (Appendix 2). These outline certain information connected to the goals, which highlights the reasoning behind the chosen aims as well as the potential they may promise, with a bias towards agricultural productivity and economic growth. With this, it can be argued that according to the table in Appendix 3, these graphs encompass the beginning and end of the storyline, as they outline challenges but also potential benefits and costs. Some examples include a graph showing the percentage of women and young people working in agriculture, underlining the importance of strengthening these groups to increase agricultural production, as mentioned within the empowerment to increase productivity discourse (BMEL, 2025g). Another includes a graph showing the use of agricultural land, which distinguishes between potential agricultural land and actual usage, thereby suggesting that with the right tools as introduced within the policy paper, the entire potential can be unlocked, as further explained within the text:

> Of the 1.08 billion hectares of agricultural land, only just under a quarter is being used. While some of the potential of this land cannot be used because it is inaccessible due to

a lack of infrastructure, crises and conflicts, for example, other areas lack the necessary conditions for cultivation. A central goal for us is therefore the context-adapted mechanisation of agriculture (BMEL, 2025g, p.35).

Thus, these graphs seem to act as a summary of each problem statement and its related potential gains, with each chapter in turn explaining the way to achieve them, thereby comprising the middle of the storyline. In said middle part of the narrative, the main focal point is on the BMEL's aims and projects for realising their aforementioned goals. Here, the policy paper describes the BMEL's efforts to realise the goals so far, which range from international cooperation to policy recommendations to furthering different initiatives. Additionally, it outlines their more concrete work towards the different goals by describing various projects they are a part of and the successes they have achieved so far. In both instances, emphasis is put on the sustainable transformation of agricultural practices by employing agroecology and organic agriculture and the increase of agricultural productivity and economic growth through knowledge transfer, mechanisation, empowerment and trade (BMEL, 2025g).

Therefore, though the middle and ending of this narrative can be discursively disentangled, the BMEL seems to highlight various potential opportunities and benefits earlier on in the material, thereby discursively skipping over the actual ways of achieving this ending. In combination with the general optimistic framing utilised by the ministry, this might result in an oversimplification of complex connections between these challenges and opportunities and at the same time increase various stakeholders' motivation to get involved and take action. Nevertheless, the *out of great challenges come great opportunities* narrative can be summarised as starting with challenges faced by the agricultural sector on the African continent, continuing with the BMEL's aims and goals to overcome them and ending with potential opportunities and benefits resulting from these various actions. Thus, the BMEL seems to draw a direct line between challenges and opportunities to explain and justify its goals and actions.

Together we can

A second narrative, which can be found within the material, goes back to the already mentioned focus on togetherness and the global community. I have called this narrative *together we can*, as it emphasises that challenges can only be overcome together. Thus, this narrative is closely related to the *out of great challenges come great opportunities* narrative, as it also aims at overcoming challenges and turning them into opportunities. However, this narrative unfolds differently. It begins with highlighting the global connectedness of challenges and opportunities:

These opportunities and challenges affect us all. We can only overcome challenges together, and we want to seize opportunities together - both in a spirit of partnership and respect (BMEL, 2025g, p.3).

Here, the narrative makes clear that such challenges and opportunities can only be overcome together, thereby affirming and explaining the contribution the BMEL can make in this context. Thus, rather than focusing on any specific challenge or issue, the narrative is focused on community thinking and strengthening global connections. To further their point of globalised challenges, the BMEL underscores the role they play in the German context with phrases such as:

It is not a patronising boon from the industrialised nations to defeat hunger in the world. Rather, it is in our own interest to change agricultural and food systems in such a way that all people have access to sufficient, safe and healthy food - sustainably and permanently! After all, it is not a law of nature that we will still be reaping rich harvests in this country in 10, 20 or 50 years' time. In this sense, transforming agricultural and food systems always means protecting the soil, water, air, climate and biodiversity from a global perspective. We really are all in the same boat here (Özdemir, 2024).

With this, the BMEL not only shows the effect these identified challenges can have on Germany, but at the same time emphasises the positive outcome the realisation of the ministry's actions and projects can have on the country as well. Thus, by drawing such connections, the narrative unfolds similarly to the *out of great challenges come great opportunities* narrative, in which the ending and its related benefits, outcomes and costs are highlighted more than the middle of the narrative. Nevertheless, when looking toward said middle, the narrative outlines a focus on multi- and bilateral cooperation. In line with my analysis of the *sustainable development discourse*, emphasis is put on partnership and working together.

This highlighting of overcoming challenges together and working together to realise different aims builds the basis for the last part of the narrative, which outlines the opportunities that are beneficial for all involved entities. For Germany, these include the implementation of certain practices to learn from them, increased private-sector investments and trade cooperations, as well as geopolitical contestations. Thus, more than underscoring the positive effects policy implementation can have on the countries in question, this narrative highlights potential gains of international cooperation and globalised thinking for Germany as an argument for implementing their concept. This, in turn, might be viewed as honest or as a sign of their focus on cooperation and exchange rather than passively received aid. Other aspects of potential gain include geopolitical considerations as well as the topic of migration, which are mentioned throughout the material with statements such as:

Cooperation with African countries and regions, to which we offer ourselves as a reliable partner, also against the backdrop of geopolitical shifts (BMEL, 2025g, p.6).

Only together can we find solutions to global challenges such as the fight against hunger and the climate crisis, which are major causes of flight. Our aim must be to ensure that people in their countries have a long-term perspective (BMEL, 2024a).

Such statements might indicate underlying motivations in terms of strengthening Germany's geopolitical position against the backdrop of US politics, as well as migration politics within Germany and the EU (Pinyol Puig, 2025). Against this backdrop, I argue that this narrative conceptualises strong relations between facing challenges together and realising opportunities together, as the first quote in this section highlights.

Concluding, the *together we can* narrative emphasises how challenges faced by the African continent affect the entire world and therefore have to and can only be addressed by working together. Since this narrative coincides with the *out of great challenges come great opportunities* narrative, it views challenges as potential opportunities, which, due to the bi- and multilateral approach to addressing different goals mentioned within the policy paper, include benefits and potential gains for all countries involved.

5.1.3 Discursive Agency

Based on the discourses and narratives already identified, I took a closer look at how agency and subject position were discursively assigned to farmers within the policy paper and surrounding material, as well as the agency behind the policy paper itself. A first indicator can be found when looking at the usage of different words. Within the material, the words "farmers" and "smallholder farmers" are used 11 and 27 times, respectively, whereas the words "agriculture" and "agri-food systems" are used 70 and 48 times, respectively. This imbalance shows a tendency to take up a system-focused view, in which farmers play a role but only one of many. This notion can further be deduced from the fact that the policy paper is not addressed to farmers but rather to "the German and African specialist public and all interested parties" (BMEL, 2025c, p.10). However, this might also be due to the nature of the material, which is focused more on international cooperation and overarching goals, thus showing the BMEL's motivation to present itself in a certain light by underscoring its competence and the urgency of different aims. Furthermore, the material also conceptualises the terms "research" and "economy" as entities of the system without agency, indicating that the nature of the material and the used genres do not allow for it.

Nevertheless, even when describing more specific projects and goals, farmers are not often mentioned, and when they are, it is often in the context of capacity building and empowerment, with phrases such as:

> Smallholder farmers play a special role in this. The aim is to strengthen them and enable them to make independent decisions about their farming methods, implement knowledge about sustainable soil fertility, have access to seeds and independent advice and participate in economic cycles (BMEL, 2025g, p.20).

> The focus is on small producers in order to develop and stabilise the local food system (BMEL, 2025g, p.23).

> We follow the FAO Voluntary Guidelines on the Right to Food, which promote the active participation of civil society organisations and other relevant social groups at national and regional levels, including smallholder and traditional farmers, the private sector, women and girls, and youth organisations in all aspects of agricultural and food production (BMEL, 2025g, p.31).

This can easily leave the impression that local farmers do not have their own agency but rather need to be uplifted by an external source. Notably, the material seems to distinguish between different types of farmers, thereby conceptualising farmers as a heterogeneous group, indicating a more differentiated understanding of the sector. However, the focus seems to only be on young people, women and smallholder farmers, which, in line with the *empowerment to increase productivity discourse,* are viewed as key to increasing productivity and food security. But, as already mentioned, when looking at this type of empowerment, there might also be the question of whether the people being empowered actually want to work in the agricultural sector or if true empowerment would lead them down new paths entirely (Kabeer, 1999).

Next to this, the question of what constitutes as knowledge is also pressing when looking at discursive agency. As already described, there seem to exist opposite discourses on knowledge within the material, with the *pluralist-participatory discourse* and *sustainable development discourse.* I argue that these differing conceptions of knowledge also affect farmers' positions, seeing as where local knowledge is included, farmers are in a much stronger position than when they are entirely at the receiving end of knowledge transfer. Furthermore, the acknowledgement of local knowledge also acknowledges the existence of previous structures and know-how as well as the agency connected to them, thereby constituting farmers differently in comparison to when scientific knowledge is being conceptualised as largely superior.

The BMEL uses different strategic practices to conceptualise farmers' agency and subject positions as well as their own relevance, with the main ones being the usage of rationalisation and scientification to explain their projects and aims, as

demonstrated by the genres and modalities used. In addition, it delegitimises current local practices to a certain extent, to emphasise the importance of knowledge transfer and capacity building (Leipold and Winkel, 2017). Nevertheless, the material aims to include local knowledge in the transformation of the agri-food systems. Also, it acknowledges some form of heterogeneity within the farming community. However, this does not seem to lead to a heterogeneity of different beliefs and values, as these are conceptualised as a unified need for higher productivity, climate resilience and food security. Therefore, I would argue that, since farmers are also not mentioned often throughout the paper, farmers' discursive agency and subject positions are conceptualised in a way that reflects the goals and ambitions of the BMEL itself.

5.1.4   Contextualisation

As a last step, the contextualising of the findings against the backdrop of the surrounding structures and social practices, rounds out the analysis by combining semiotic and non-semiotic practices as well as diving deeper into potential power dynamics at play (Fairclough, 2003, 2013a). As already mentioned, the material follows the order of discourse of international development institutions, with some interdiscursivity indicating potential changes in discursive practice. This might very well be related to a heightened awareness of colonial structures and dependencies still relevant in the development context today, which the German government is trying to address (BMZ, 2024). Another reason for this interdiscursivity might be the participatory process in which the policy paper was developed, which took in different opinions and voices, which might in turn be reflected in the differing discourses and intertextuality.

Nevertheless, the material reflects still prevalent power structures between the Global North and South through the one-sided conceptualisation of knowledge as well as problem depiction. Though other discourses are gaining strength, this type of depiction continues to enforce unequal cooperations (Cummings et al., 2018; Ziai, 2016). Such reinforcement of unequal power dynamics is further related to the materials depoliticising elements, in which a capitalist hegemony is created and socio-political implications are overlooked. These discursive practices in turn influence non-semiotic aspects of the social practice and might manifest themselves in the type of cooperations and projects the BMEL participates in. Furthermore, these contestations are underlined by the fact that the material relies heavily on the SDGs, which in themselves can be viewed as an institutionalised discourse that maintains unequal power structures and depoliticises development, now acting as a non-semiotic social practice which constitutes and is further being constituted by policy papers such as this. Thus, the social practice of the SDGs is also a guiding

principle of the discursive agencies being represented within the material and constitutes the social identity of the BMEL.

To exemplify how the discourses used within the material manifest themselves in other social practices and structures, I examined a project named the Zambian-German Agricultural Knowledge and Training Centre (AKTC). This project aims to transfer agricultural knowledge on mechanisation and production, as well as agroecological principles, to establish a more climate-resilient agriculture in Zambia. In recent years, the centre has worked closely with German and Zambian researchers as well as the Zambian farmers' union and has trained 18,000 people (BMEL, 2024d). I argue that this project is a reflection of the interdiscursivity within the policy paper, as there is a focus on scientific knowledge transfer, but also an awareness of including other practices such as agroecology, as well as working together with local farmer unions. At the same time, the BMEL calls this its flagship project, which in turn might constitute the discourses within the material, seeing as project experience can influence opinions and social practices. In addition, the project could also influence local discourses and farmers' identities, thereby constituting social practices and structures on site, though this is impossible to evaluate from afar.

This brief contextualisation shows that the policy paper is embedded in the larger order of discourse of international development institutions, where it finds itself aligned with other governmental and intergovernmental institutions, as illustrated in Figure 2. It is also permeated by social practices such as the SDGs, which maintain unequal power structures and contribute to a certain depoliticisation. Along with this, the policy paper might very well be co-constituted with the project work mentioned within it, as it not only constitutes the social structures surrounding them but is also constituted in turn by the experiences made in these projects, thereby also influencing discursive agency.

5.2   Sustainable Agri-Food Systems: Challenges and Pathways of Transformation

In May 2024, the BMEL released a transformation report in cooperation with the Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Nuclear Safety and Consumer Protection (BMUV), in which it outlines how the national sustainability strategy will be implemented in the context of agri-food systems in Germany. The policy paper highlights challenges and possible solutions in different areas of the agricultural sector, including agricultural production, processing, trade, rural areas, sustainable consumption and international cooperation. It is based on the Agenda 2030 and its SDGs and includes different policies, laws, financial incentives and other plans of action to tackle different challenges, such as the implementation of a

mandatory livestock labelling or the protein plant strategy (BMEL, 2024i). Throughout the policy paper as well as surrounding press material and other strategy papers such as the climate change mitigation strategy for agriculture and forestry, different discourses can be found, which explain, justify and construct the BMEL's actions and measures and conceptualise farmers and their agency in a certain way.

5.2.1 Discourses

Ecological modernisation discourse

A first discourse found throughout the material is one of *ecological modernisation*. Characterised by a focus on innovation and sustainable growth as a means to solve environmental problems, this discourse emphasises the potential opportunities for economic growth and well-being when economy, science and government work together, thus conceptualising ecology and economy as mutually reinforcing. Here, the concept of bioeconomy plays an important role as a means to maintain economic growth in a more sustainable way (Dryzek, 2022; Hajer, 1996; Rac et al., 2024). Within the material, the word 'bioeconomy' is frequently used and further emphasised with phrases such as:

> The material and energetic utilisation of biological raw materials, by-products and residues is the central resource base of the German bioeconomy. The material utilisation of biomass will become increasingly important in the future, as biomass will be a key source of carbon for the transformation of the economy (BMEL, 2024i, p.40).

> The decoupling of resource usage from economic growth should go hand in hand with the protection of ecosystem services (BMEL, 2024i, p.15).

Additionally, the topic is targeted with 180 million euros worth of research, innovation and development funding, thereby showing the increased prioritisation of bioeconomy in Germany as a way to decouple economic growth from environmental degradation. Wanner (2015) argues that this is a common way to maintain a capitalist hegemony, which commodifies nature into natural capital, thereby enforcing the myth of limitless growth and disregarding ecological limits (Wanner, 2015). Thus, I would argue that the focus on bioeconomy as depicted throughout the material continues to reinforce a capitalist hegemony, rather than aiding in transformation, as the name of the report would suggest.

Furthermore, the discourse is illuminated by the material's emphasis on innovation. Not only is the terminology prevalent within, but it is also constructed as the base for the realisation of all the BMEL's different goals, e.g.:

> The research projects are intended to enable innovations and provide impetus for the economically successful cultivation of legumes and their utilisation (BMEL, 2024i, p.29).

> As Minister of Agriculture and Research, I hope that the Advisory Board will continue to provide critical support for policy and develop innovative ideas and concepts with foresight (BMEL, 2025a).

> Bio-based innovations are a real game changer that are overtaking fossil raw materials. They combine sustainability with economic progress and create new opportunities (BMEL, 2025c).

Such a focus on innovation, as depicted above, which encompasses different areas from technology to organic agriculture, goes hand in hand with scientific research, which is primarily used as legitimisation for different environmentally oriented policies, laws and strategies, underlined by phrases such as:

> Research that is open to all methods and technologies is an important prerequisite for development and innovation. This is an important basis for the knowledge-based conception and successful establishment of sustainable agri-food systems (BMEL, 2024i, p.11).

Thus, I would argue that the BMEL makes use of the *ecological modernisation discourse* by conceptualising research-based innovation and development as a basis for increased sustainability and environmental protection as well as for the maintenance of economic growth, now transformed into bioeconomy, thereby also unveiling an underlying continuation of capitalist ideology.

Another component of the *ecological modernisation discourse* is a focus on consumer and market. Though not completely aligned with a pure neoliberal standpoint due to emphasis on cooperation between economy and government, the discourse incorporates consumer demands, thus conceptualising environmental conservation as partly market-based (Rac et al., 2024). This can be seen within the material, which underscores the importance of sustainable consumption and consumer awareness as means to ensure environmental protection, with phrases such as:

> It would therefore be desirable if hidden costs for the environment, health and society were internalised in prices in order to set the right incentives for action (BMEL, 2024i, p.18).

> Our own consumer behaviour also influences the level of greenhouse gas emissions from agriculture and food (BMEL, 2024g, p.18).

As observable in the latter example, consumers are often addressed in a way that indicates togetherness and highlights individual responsibility, thereby shifting

environmental protection towards the consumer, a term used frequently throughout the material. Therefore, the BMEL seems to use the *ecological modernisation discourse* to not only highlight the importance of technology, innovation and bioeconomy as shown above, but also to emphasise individual responsibility and market behaviour. Next to this focus on consumers, the material also highlights the importance of fair market conditions for the continued provision of food-related goods. Here, examples include

> Successful agriculture is the basis for a competitive food industry that secures jobs, especially in our rural areas (BMEL, 2023).

> Food security, competitiveness and climate protection are not an either-or proposition (BMEL, 2025e).

> Sustainable agriculture starts with fair pay and good market conditions (BMEL, 2025e).

These highlight an emphasis on market-related solutions and further conceptualise these as a basis for environmental protection, which provides a different reasoning for the BMEL's policies and actions. With this, it effectively circumvents the importance of system-level change, rather maintaining capitalistic notions of economic growth and commodification as described by Wanner (2015). Furthermore, this conceptualisation seems to disregard the incorporation of socio-political aspects into sustainability, thereby leading to a certain depoliticisation of the subject through the maintenance of the current status quo (Wanner, 2015; Ferguson, 1994).

Multifunctionalism discourse

Another discourse being used by the BMEL is the *multifunctionalism discourse*, which conceptualises farmers as providers of public goods in need of compensation rather than as polluters. The discourse portrays the responsibilities of agriculture not only in providing food but also in various other functions such as environmental protection and biodiversity conservation. In addition, it is viewed as an important component of rural communities, thereby justifying policy intervention and financial compensation (Leduc et al., 2021; Rac et al., 2024). The discourse's prevalence can be observed throughout the material, with phrases such as:

> Farmers [should] also be appropriately and differentially remunerated for the provision of socially desirable non-marketable goods (BMEL, 2024i, p.19).

> However, the prerequisite for the successful implementation of this principle is that services for the common good are economically attractive for agriculture, i.e. that they generate income (BMEL, 2024i, p.42).

> In order for farmers to be able to do their work for the benefit of the population, they need planning security (BMEL, 2023).

With such statements, agriculture and farmers are portrayed as integral to society and well-being, thereby justifying compensation and support. To further justify the need for compensation, the material discursively disentangles agriculture as a source of pollution from farmers as providers of public goods and food. One example to showcase this is the beginning sentence of 'The Strategy for Climate Change Mitigation', which reads:

> As producers of food, feed and energy, farmers make an immensely important contribution to food security and rural development. At the same time, agriculture is a source of greenhouse gas emissions due to the intensive cultivation of soils, animal husbandry and the use of fertilisers (BMEL, 2024g, p.2).

This usage of positive evaluation in the beginning and nominalisation in the second half removes farmers from the responsibility of pollution and rather portrays them as in need of public support. Even though there are also phrases which use the noun agriculture when talking about sustainability and climate change mitigation, I would argue that whenever the terms 'farmer' or 'practitioner' are used, they are applied in a context that furthers the need for support and public acceptance, such as:

In this environment, farmers should be able to operate in an economically viable manner, and young people in particular should be able to recognise and make use of prospects (BMEL, 2024i, p.7).

Animal husbandry is future-proof if it is animal, environmentally and climate-friendly and offers farmers prospects for the economic production and marketing of their products (BMEL, 2024i, p.22).

Our European farmers set the table for us every day with high-quality food, an achievement that is the result of hard work and a lot of passion (BMEL, 2025e).

Within the last example, the usage of the phrase 'our farmers' is another way to increase public support and is therefore used multiple times throughout the material (BMEL, 2023, 2024i, 2025e). Thus, the BMEL conceptualises farmers as providers of public goods and services in need of support, both financially and politically, thereby justifying the ministry's actions and financial allocations. With this conceptualisation of both farmers and the agricultural sector as a whole, the *multifunctionalism discourse* seems to differ from the discourse of *ecological modernisation*, where more focus is put on the market and consumer, as well as economic growth. Thus, I argue that there is an interdiscursivity between the two discourses, indicating a potential change of the dominant ideology surrounding the agricultural sector and the justification for continued financial support.

Administrative-rationalism discourse

Another discourse used in the context of agriculture in Germany is the *administrative-rationalism discourse*. Characterised by a preference for hierarchical structures and expert knowledge, this discourse is often used to legitimise decision-making at higher levels as well as to maintain ideological hegemony (Dryzek, 2022; Rac et al., 2024). When looking at the analysed material, this bias towards scientific research and expert knowledge is evident with the word 'science' being used frequently throughout the material. In addition, as already mentioned in the context of the *ecological modernisation discourse*, it is used as basis for different innovations and funding, thereby highlighting its importance for policy actions and financial support. Furthermore, I would argue that this bias manifests itself in the structure of the report's argumentation. Each section begins with a statement justifying a certain strategic goal by either highlighting a challenge to be overcome or explaining why the defined goal is important to achieve. Here, examples include:

> The conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity are essential building blocks for supplying a growing world population with healthy food under changing climate conditions (BMEL, 2024i, p.16).

> The frequency, duration and intensity of extreme weather events such as heatwaves, droughts and heavy rainfall will increase as a result of climate change. The more greenhouse gases are emitted and heat up the climate, the more severe they will become. Effective climate protection, i.e. the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, is therefore crucial. (BMEL,2024i, p.13).

> Needs-based and therefore sustainable fertilisation is a prerequisite for healthy soils, clean groundwater and great biodiversity (BMEL, 2024i, p.27).

These statements are clearly informed by scientific research and presented with objective and categorical modalities, thereby leaving no room for doubt or critical discussion, as well as conceptualising each goal as without alternatives. Next to this, the report uses indicators as a way to measure different sustainability achievements, which were derived from the national sustainability strategy, showcasing an intertextuality with other policy papers and strategies (BMEL, 2024i). However, the report does not explain the reasons for choosing these specific indicators, choosing instead to just name them as relevant. Here, Rac et al. (2024) argue that references to such indicators or standards are common within the *administrative-rationalism discourse* to further underline claimed objectivity and divert from previous value judgments, thereby further constituting ideological hegemony. However, I would also argue that the very nature of the report and its surrounding material place it in a government genre as well as governing style, thus calling for this type of modality and depiction of solutions, in order for the government to maintain authority.

Another facet of the discourse is its focus on administration and hierarchical decision making, which goes hand in hand with the privileging of expert knowledge and subsequent reduction of other types of knowledge and voices (Dryzek, 2022). Here, the material indicates different hierarchical relations. For one, Germany is subject to the EU, which can be seen throughout the material, where EU policies and regulations are named and incorporated at the national level, leaving little space for participation, with examples including:

> Some will be regulated by the Data Act, which will soon be published at EU level and will come into force from mid-2025 (BMEL, 2024i, p.20).

> An additional amendment to the DüngG concerns the implementation of the EU Fertiliser Products Regulation. […] In addition, provisions on fines to penalise infringements of the EU Fertiliser Products Regulation must be included (BMEL, 2024i, p.28).

> In 2021, the EU Commission initiated so-called pilot proceedings against Germany on mandatory grazing for all herbivores on organic farms.[...] Legally, it remains clear that the grazing obligation for organic herbivores arises directly from EU Organic Regulation 2018/848 - the requirements remain unchanged (BMEL, 2025f).

Though it is unclear how these regulations were formed, I would argue that their implementation itself enforces a hierarchy between the EU and different member states, as well as in turn between the government within the member states and its subjects, since each member state is obliged by law to incorporate different regulations, thereby disregarding the voices of those affected, constituting a top-down implementation structure. Therefore, though EU regulations take into consideration the interests of the various member states, their inherent generalisation and adverse consequences in case of non-compliance limit the scope for participation, especially by lay people. Further, the existence of this discourse within the material indicates underlying assumptions of the superiority of scientific knowledge and experts, thereby revealing a certain ideology surrounding knowledge production and participation.

Democratic-pragmatism discourse

Nevertheless, when looking at policy making at the national level, the material is strongly shaped by a *democratic-pragmatism discourse*, which is defined by a focus on societal participation and the inclusion of different voices into the problem-solving process, to design successful policies (Dryzek, 2022). Throughout the material, but especially within the transformation report, this focus is highly dominant. Firstly, the report underlines the multistakeholder consultation process on which it is based:

> This transformation report is so valuable because a large number of stakeholders were involved in its creation: Citizens, politicians, associations, academia, business, churches and - what is especially important to us as the lead federal ministry - young people in particular. [...] We have also closely involved those who are implementing concrete measures on the ground: The practitioners from agriculture and nature conservation (BMEL, 2024i, p.3).

Next to this, the consultation process is further referenced throughout the entire report, which is sprinkled with statements of different dialogue groups and advisory councils, with some examples being:

> 'For sustainability, there is no alternative to closely linking ecological change with social justice. It needs many people and decentralised structures in the food system' (Working group for peasant agriculture) (BMEL, 2024i, p.12).

> 'Change means rethinking, recognising conflicting goals and reviewing what is tried and tested. And we need to do this with the farmers who have to be able to make a living from their work and without any conflict between consumers and producers, between organic and conventional' (Theresa Schmidt, Federal Chairwoman of the Federation of German Rural Youth) (BMEL, 2024i, p.22).

I argue that the resulting intertextuality due to the integration of these statements underlines the participatory process preceding the document and legitimises the document and its goals. Another reason for their inclusion could be to increase broader societal acceptance of the document. Both are underlined by the usage of an interview genre as compared to the government genre used throughout the rest of the text, as the statements are depicted in quotations and have a more casual phrasing.

I would also like to highlight the materials' focus on including youth, practitioners and women. Regarding the latter, the transformation report entails a section labelled 'gender equality' in which it outlines the interlinkages between gender equality and agriculture as well as different approaches to achieving more equality. Interestingly, the section also mentions:

> As part of the further development of the CAP after 2027, the BMEL is examining the extent to which specific opportunities to promote women can be more firmly anchored and whether and, if so, how improved visibility of the current position and achievements of women in agriculture could be achieved with regard to the identified need for action. However, it is important to keep an eye on the bureaucratic burden here (BMEL, 2024i, p.41).

which indicates the top-down structure between the EU and its member states, further compounded by the usage of a more uncertain modality. Thus, gender equality seems to be an important component at the national level, but not at the EU level, at least in the context of the CAP. When comparing this portrayal with

how young people and practitioners are conceptualised, there is a discrepancy between female empowerment, which is connected to the practice of agriculture itself with a focus on farm successors and business founders and the empowerment of young people and practitioners who are meant to be included into political processes (BMEL, 2024i). This, in turn, might indicate that though the BMEL acknowledges a lack of gender equality at the farm level, it does not see it at the level of political participation, thus not feeling the need to explicitly integrate female empowerment into the report, thereby discursively reducing the subjects' importance.

Nonetheless, the transformation report prioritises democratic participation, thus depicting an interdiscursivity between the *administration-rationalism discourse* and the *democratic-pragmatism discourse.* Both act at different levels, contesting each other, indicating a level of change in what is viewed as valid opinion and knowledge, thereby challenging current power structures and ideological hegemony to a certain extent. All in all, the material shows signs of various discourses, some of which overlap and others contest each other. Combined with the usage of a government genre and governing style, this places the material within the order of discourse of the CAP. This is further underlined by the usage of important discourses surrounding the topic of agricultural development within Germany and the EU, as outlined in Chapter 2.1. Thereby, the material indicates a high intertextuality, as it not only includes and interprets EU-related topics as well as the voices of multiple working groups, but also leans on various discourses being used by other German Governmental institutions and by the EU. Additionally, there seems to be some interdiscursivity, especially in the context of participation and knowledge, thereby indicating a possible change in discursive practice and ideology (Fairclough, 2003).

5.2.2 Policy Narratives

As mentioned above, the analysis of policy narratives provides a different entry point into the analysis, thereby drawing connections otherwise missed as well as deepening the understanding of the material. In this part of the analysis, I have identified two main narratives used by the BMEL to explain, justify and conceptualise its position and actions.

Agriculture to the rescue

I have named the first narrative *agriculture to the rescue*, as it conceptualises the agricultural sector and, by extension, farmers as saviours and key components of combating climate change and other environmental problems. The narrative begins with outlining different environmental problems and challenges, with phrases such as:

Man-made climate change is one of the greatest challenges of our time. Heatwaves, droughts and forest fires emphasise once again that the effects of the climate crisis are being felt, including in agriculture and forestry (BMEL, 2024g, p.4).

As the example shows, the outlining of these environmental challenges is connected to their effects on agriculture and forestry, thereby further underlining the sectors' key position in the topic. In addition, the narrative draws a connection to society as a whole by linking these challenges to well-being, food security and livelihoods, thereby addressing the readers' own urgency to act and identify with the material. Based on this introduction, the narrative continues with the call for change and transformation of agri-food systems, with phrases such as:

A sustainable and socially just global transformation of agricultural and food systems is urgently needed to overcome these challenges in the long term (BMEL, 2024i, p.10).

One of the greatest challenges of our time is to make agriculture, food and forestry future-proof and crisis-proof. This is the only way to create the conditions for sufficient and healthy nutrition in the long term while protecting our livelihoods (BMEL, 2024i, p.3).

However, agriculture and forestry are not only affected by the impact of the climate crisis - they are also part of the solution. […] However, in order to counter the climate crisis and better adapt to its consequences, agriculture must become even more sustainable, innovative and resilient (BMEL, 2024g, p.2).

Thus, further urgency for change is created, and transformation itself is conceptualised as indisputable. In addition, the middle part of this narrative is comprised of the various proposed policies and actions explained within the material, ranging from financial compensations for the provision of public goods to rural development and an energy transition. With this, the narrative continues to its final part in which transformed agri-food systems play a crucial role in the mitigation and protection of the environment, stressed by phrases such as:

The vision on which this report is based is of future-proof agricultural and food systems that create the basis for sufficient and healthy nutrition, develop and shape rural areas in a sustainable manner and protect the health of humans, animals and ecosystems as well as the climate, taking into account the One Health approach (BMEL, 2024i, p.7).

At the same time, it can and must be part of the solution, as sustainable land use can remove carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and store it as organic carbon in agricultural soils and landscape elements such as hedges. Agriculture also contributes to climate adaptation (BMEL, 2024i, p.13).

These statements further conceptualise agriculture as invaluable for achieving various climate-related goals and attaining a sustainable future. This notion is further compounded by the conceptualisation of farmers as providers of public

goods, as discussed within the *multifunctionalism discourse*. Therefore, the narrative both underscores the already existing contribution agriculture makes to society and its future potential waiting to be unlocked. Thus, even though the material acknowledges the adverse effects the sector has on the environment, I argue that the narrative steers the attention to the positive sides of the agricultural sector and farmers, conceptualising them as rescuers and environmental heroes that bring benefits to all, thereby justifying the BMEL's political decisions and continued financial support.

We are all in this together

In a second narrative, the BMEL conceptualises the creation of sustainable agri-food systems as affecting everyone but also as influenced by everyone. Thus, I have named this narrative *we are all in this together*, as special emphasis is put on societal togetherness and collective action. Here, the narrative begins by drawing the connection between environmental concerns and their effect on all of us. In this, the narrative somewhat overlaps with the *agriculture to the rescue* narrative, highlighting the maintenance of food security and livelihoods, but is further compounded by the usage of phrases such as:

> Therefore, today more than ever, we must protect what sustains us (BMEL, 2024i, p.48).

> However, the protection of soil and water, good animal husbandry conditions and the path to climate neutrality require enormous efforts. We will not be able to achieve this by continuing as before (Helmut Kleebank) (BMEL, 2024i, p.7).

> Their future - and therefore the future of us all - will depend on whether we manage to better protect soil, water, climate and biodiversity (BMEL, 2024g, p.2).

Thus, similarly to the *agriculture to the rescue* narrative, this narrative creates a certain kind of urgency, though much more targeted at the readers' own agency, by directly addressing and including them with the additional usage of active transitivity, evaluations and the modality of truth.

This construction of the readers' agency as being able to create an impact is further highlighted in the middle part of the narrative, where not only the role of farmers but also of society is addressed with phrases such as:

> The development of sustainable, i.e. future-proof and crisis-proof agricultural and food systems, can only succeed if all stakeholders work together. These are politics, business and science and, in particular, the citizens (BMEL, 2024i, p.22).

> With a sustainable diet, each and every individual can make a contribution to reducing greenhouse gas emissions (BMEL, 2024g, p.18).

> But the good news is that we have the power to change this (BMEL, 2024j).

As in the introduction, the phrasing as well as the usage of 'us' and 'our' discursively create a community feeling and call for collective action. In addition, as mentioned in the *ecological modernisation discourse*, this conceptualisation shifts environmental responsibility towards consumers and individuals.

Lastly, the narrative concludes by emphasising the benefits of working together will have for all, with phrases such as

> Let us therefore continue to work together to make our agricultural and food system fit for the future. Because only then will a good life be possible for everyone. (BMEL, 2024i, p.3)

> The goal of the transformation is and remains: a good life for all - not only today, but also in the future (BMEL, 2024i, p.48)

Therefore, challenges can only be overcome together, but benefits will also be reaped by everyone, thus creating an incentive for taking action. Hence, I would argue that this narrative is used to engage citizens and to create a sense of community between different societal groups as well as between the government and lay people, which in turn might increase policy acceptance. In addition, it stretches the responsibility for both environmental problems and their mitigation onto every single person, thereby discursively expanding capacities and individual agency.

5.2.3 Discursive Agency

Next to discursively assigning agency to the reader of the material, certain subject positions and farmer agency are also created, which, based on the already identified discourses and policy narratives, I will further explore in this section. A first step is to look at how often farmers are addressed. The term is used 21 times, whereas the terms 'agriculture' and 'agri-food systems' are used 71 and 41 times, respectively. This indicates a system view in which farmers play one of many roles, though this might be related to the nature of the material itself and the subsequent use of a government genre. This system view stands in contrast with the specific inclusion of farmers when it comes to policy development, as mentioned in the context of the *democratic-pragmatism discourse*. Furthermore, in accordance with the *multifunctionalism discourse*, farmers are conceptualised as providers of public goods and services, possibly contributing to this distribution of terms as discussed above, where the term 'farmer' is only used when relating to certain positively connotated actions and expectations, thereby contributing to the aforementioned distribution of terms. As seen in the *agriculture to the rescue* narrative, farmers are conceptualised as saviours and environmental protectors as well as just inherently good, emphasised by phrases like:

Every organic farmer wants to offer their animals the best possible environment, that goes without saying (BMEL, 2025f).

Our farmers are prepared to make changes in order to protect and preserve their indispensable production factors - fertile soils and vital biodiversity (BMEL, 2023).

The phrases above also show how farmers' subject positions are conceptualised as in accordance with the content of the material, thus homogenising the entire group as committed to the BMEL's own goals.

On the other hand, the material strongly conceptualises farmers as producers who are part of the market and need fair prices, as outlined in the *ecological modernisation discourse*. Here, I would argue that this conceptualisation, as well as the related call for financial compensation and general focus on creating financial incentives for farmers to adopt more environmentally friendly practices, stands in stark contrast to their conceptualisation above, constructing farmers as exclusively economically driven rather than as providers of public goods. Nevertheless, both conceptualisations are underpinned by similarly constructed farmer agencies, in which farmers require help, be that financially or politically, with which they will then be able to increase food security as well as the provision of public goods, thereby discursively limiting their capabilities. This is further compounded by a focus on scientific knowledge and innovation as discussed in the *administrative-rationalism* and *ecological modernisation discourses*, in which both topics are portrayed as basis for sustainable agri-food systems. With this, I would argue that other knowledge, specifically farmer knowledge, is not acknowledged, thereby further reducing farmers' agency and capabilities.

Further, the BMEL uses different strategic practices to achieve this conceptualisation as well as to construct its own image. Here, the production of different storylines or narratives plays an important role, as well as the rationalisation and scientification of the topic. However, at the same time, the BMEL uses the strategic practice of emotionalisation to increase public support for farmers and agriculture. It also employs normative power to showcase the positive correlation between different policies and sustainability (Leipold and Winkel, 2017). All of these are further compounded through the usage of a government genre and the modality of truth, which both increase legitimacy and authority. Thus, I would argue that the BMEL conceptualises farmers as in need of public and political support, thereby discursively limiting their agency. However, the inclusion of farmers into the production process of the report indicates a different conceptualisation, resulting in a stronger agency, even though this could also be related to the hope of an improved acceptance of different policies within the farming community on the part of the BMEL. In addition, their conceptualisation

as environmental and societal heroes might also influence farmers' agency, as it could contribute to increasing resources and societal support.

5.2.4 Contextualisation

The final step of this analysis is the contextualisation of the findings above in light of the context of surrounding structures and social practices to combine semiotic and non-semiotic practices to get a fuller picture (Fairclough, 2003). As already explained above, the material is embedded in the order of discourse of the CAP, though it shows some interdiscursivity in how agriculture is depicted and how and with which knowledge policies are made. One reason for this might be Germany's interrelation with the EU, where on one side the country makes its own rules and policies, and on the other, it is subject to EU regulations. Germany, and by extension the BMEL, therefore find themselves subject to a certain duality between independent decision making and following the rules of others, further compounded by their adherence to the SDGs conceptualised at the UN level. Thus, the discourses used might reflect this duality, with some, like the *administrative-rationalism discourse,* more prevalent at the EU level and others, like the *democratic-pragmatism discourse,* more dominant at the national level (Dryzek, 2022; Rac et al., 2024). In addition, due to this interrelation, the material might reflect an interdiscursivity occurring at the EU level, such as the existence of the *multifunctionalism* and *ecological modernisation discourse*, which conceptualise farmers in different ways, thereby indicating changes in perception, possibly related to increasing environmental concerns (Leduc et al., 2021; Rac et al., 2024). This change is then also reflected at the national level, where the BMEL utilises both discourses to justify its policies and financial support. At the same time, the demonstrated interdiscursivity could be related to the consultation process preceding the creation of the report, in which different groups were included, subsequently also influencing the discursive practice of the text.

Hence, the BMEL finds itself in the middle of complex power dynamics in which the EU and UN as institutions guide the discursive practice as well as the social practice of its member states. The member states, in turn, use and interpret these discourses, policies and guidelines and combine them with their own to conceptualise policies and regulations targeted at their civil society, thereby manifesting said discursive practice into tangible social structures and practices. However, as seen in the case of Germany, civil society, though being influenced by the discursive practice of their government, can bring new ideas and thoughts into the mix, thereby in turn influencing their government as well as their discursive and social practices, which in turn might trickle all the way up to EU level. This effect marks it as a two-way street and showcases a co-constitutive nature between the different entities. One example is the "Zukunftskommission Landwirtschaft", a

dialogue network of relevant actors established in Germany to achieve consensus and create policy recommendations. Due to its success, the EU Commission now wants to create more dialogue surrounding the CAP modelled after the German example (BMEL, 2025e).

I would argue that those dialogue networks are a manifestation of the discursive practice of the BMEL, which reflects a focus on scientific research, economy, as well as farmers, thereby influencing farmer agency outside of the discursive realm but still adhering to their discursively created value of science and business (BMEL, 2024e, 2024l). Interestingly, since the dialogue networks were created as a response to brewing farmers' protests in Germany, they provide another example of the influence of non-semiotic practices on the semiotic elements of the social practice. Nonetheless, the BMEL's practice of discursively depoliticising agricultural development by maintaining capitalist ideology, focusing on technological solutions and not addressing socio-political challenges, stands in stark contrast to the increasing politicisation of the topic on the farmers' side. One reason might be the ministry's embeddedness in the EU and its ideologies. Hence, when looking at these farmers' protests in Germany, most of the discontent is directed at EU-level regulations being implemented within the country (Agrardebatten, 2024; Lambrecht, 2024). Thus, I would argue that the possible lack of participatory opportunities at the EU-level decreases farmers' agency, which manifests itself in discontent and protests, to which Germany as a country can only react to a certain extent, as it would be fined otherwise. This is not to say that there is not an inherent power imbalance between the government and its subjects, which might further fuel discontent, but rather to show the different levels at which decisions are made. This contextualisation shows that the material is embedded in the order of discourse of the CAP to which not only the BMEL but also the EU is subject. However, within this order of discourse, there is some interdiscursivity which might be related to the different levels of decision-making and the participatory process in which it was created, thereby indicating the co-constitutive nature of the different entities. In addition to their discursive practice, the BMEL is influenced by the EU's social practices as well as the SDGs, thereby also influencing farmers and their agency, which in turn might result in discontent due to lack of power as well as discursive misrepresentation due to lack of voices at higher levels, further summarised in Figure 2.
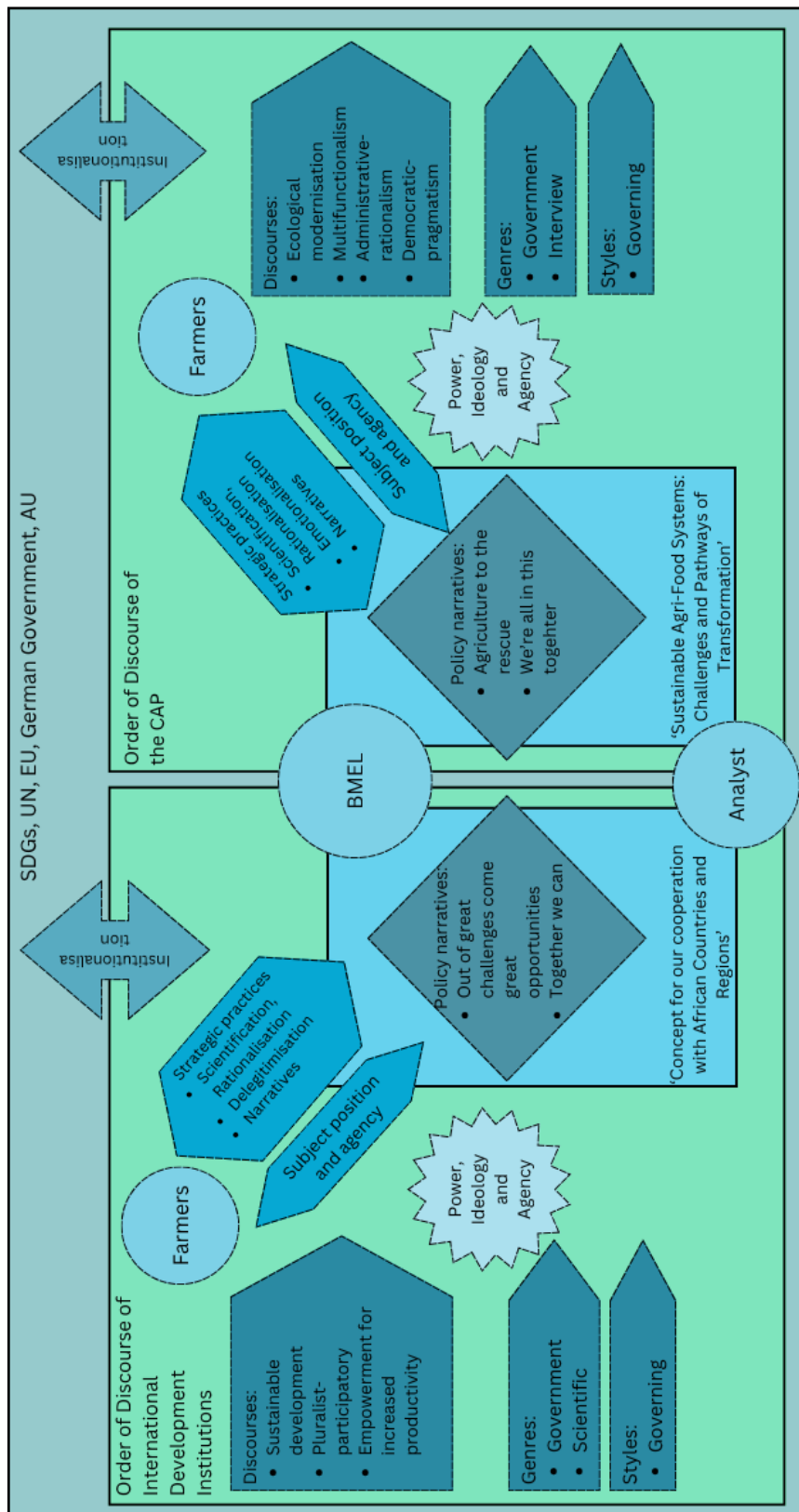
Figure 2: Analysis Results

6. Discussion

But what does the analysis above now reveal about the BMEL's discursive practices and the proposed research questions? In this section, I discuss the findings of this paper in more detail, examine how they shed light on the defined research questions and also connect the analysis to previous sections and the wider context. As seen in Figure 2, the BMEL uses different discourses and practices to construct domestic and international agricultural development, thereby conceptualising, to an extent, different realities and subject positions. This is also demonstrated by the reproduction of different orders of discourse, namely those of international development institutions and the CAP. However, as the figure also shows, the BMEL and its produced texts are embedded in the same social structures and are therefore very much connected.

This connection can be seen when starting to compare the used discourses and policy narratives. Though they exist under different names, there are still similarities between the two areas of analysis. The *sustainable development discourse*, which is quite broad and encompasses various topics, has overlaps and similarities with the *ecological modernisation discourse*. Both seem to conceptualise sustainability and environmental protection as going hand in hand with economic growth and innovation. Here, next to the immediate goal of environmental protection, different justifications are used for this conceptualisation, ranging from the provision of food security to ensuring world peace and alleviating poverty. Thus, the two discourses have differing focal points, but are nonetheless underpinned by a similar capitalist ideology, which decouples capitalist growth from its adverse effects on the environment and instead presents it as the solution (Rac et al., 2024; Wanner, 2015; Ziai, 2016). This might be due to their embeddedness in the same social structures, namely institutions such as the EU or the SDGs, which continue to enforce a neoliberal capitalist hegemony (Dryzek, 2022; Leduc et al., 2021). In line with this, the BMEL uses technology and scientific knowledge to legitimise its goals and actions in both contexts, as seen in the *techno-scientific-economic discourse* and *administrative-rationalism discourse*. Since this type of knowledge is often portrayed as objective and value-free (Haraway, 2013), it limits academic discussions and creates scientific hegemony. In the context of environmental policy making as well as development cooperations, such supposedly objective science is used to create technological solutions for non-technical problems related to society, culture and power relations, thus rendering technical complex socio-political challenges, thereby maintaining the dominant neoliberal paradigm and depoliticising the subject (Ferguson, 1994; Harding, 2008; Li, 2007; Wanner, 2015). However, there seem to be differing reasons for and effects of such depoliticisation in the two contexts. Where in the

domestic context, the notion seems to be informed by dominating EU ideologies and used to strengthen capitalist and knowledge-related hegemony, the international context unveils influences of multilateral institutions and their ideology. Furthermore, depoliticisation seems to conserve development-related power imbalances as well as ensure the expansion of Global North ideologies, thereby creating a kind of global hegemony.

In the context of the scientific hegemony created within the material, Harding (2008) argues that scientific knowledge is interwoven with the concept of European Modernity, thereby imagining traditional knowledge as something less valuable to be overcome (Harding, 2008). Such contestations can be detected when looking at the conceptualisation of knowledge within the analysed material. The BMEL creates a homogeneity within the domestic context, in which natural sciences seem to dominate, underlie and justify different actions and policies, further compounded by the BMEL's focus on scientific research institutions as mentioned in chapter 2.1. On the other hand, when looking towards its cooperation with African countries, the BMEL clearly distinguishes between expert scientific knowledge and local and traditional knowledge, thereby creating a heterogeneity as mentioned in the *pluralist-participatory discourse.* However, when taking a closer look, local knowledge is solely used in the context of sustainable agricultural practices, whereas scientific knowledge and knowledge produced in countries of the Global North, such as Germany, is conceptualised in the context of technological advancement, economic growth and development, which when viewed against the backdrop of the previously mentioned neoliberal ideology, creates a hierarchy in favour of the latter type of knowledge (Hornidge, 2011). In addition, this shows a certain difference between knowledge produced in the Global North, which is viewed as globally applicable and knowledge from the Global South, viewed as situated and location specific, a phenomenon also seen in other areas of knowledge production (Castro Torres and Alburez-Gutierrez, 2022). Hence, the unequal valuation of knowledge might indicate an underlying assumption of Global North superiority in line with the concept of European Modernity (Harding, 2008).

Against this backdrop, I argue that the notion of European Modernity as well as the privileging of natural science and technology shapes the inner German discourse on agricultural development, through which local traditional knowledge is being devalued. In the international context, on the other hand, there exists an acknowledgement of a certain plurality, though still in hierarchical order, thereby showing a higher openness to somewhat counter-hegemonic knowledge production. In this context, Arora-Jonsson (2018) argues that "Eurocentric narratives of certain Northern countries as leaders in advancing global environmental protection through their promotion of green technologies in the South, can erase local variations and diversity of perspectives at home" (p.750).

This might explain my findings, as it indicates that the portrayal of the Global North as a model of modernity and development can hinder the acknowledgement of plurality at home and at the same time further it in a Global South context, where this model does not seem to apply.

Similar notions can be found when looking at the conceptualisation of participation and empowerment. Seeing as the portrayal of both is deeply linked to the conceptualisation of knowledge and vice versa, it is worth exploring the interlinkage further (Sillitoe, 2009). As seen within the *pluralist-participatory discourse*, the *empowerment for increased productivity discourse* as well as the *democratic-pragmatism discourse*, participation and the inclusion of various voices play a crucial role for the BMEL but seem to be conceptualised differently in the two areas of analysis. In the domestic context, farmer participation is especially emphasised when looking at the production process of different policies and recommendations, whereas the BMEL seems to only conceptualise farmer participation in the context of specific projects when looking towards the international context. Here, one obvious reason shaping this relation is that the BMEL, as a German institution, can only influence political decision-making to a limited extent in other countries and therefore does not have the power to increase participation at this level. However, I would still argue that there are discursive differences worth mentioning. For one, the reasoning behind participation and empowerment seems to differ. Where it is used to increase acceptance and successful implementation in the domestic context, the phrasing is linked to economic growth and productivity in the African context, thereby losing its democratic and political roots in favour of a continued capitalist hegemony. This observation does not imply that people in both Germany and African countries do not strive for exactly this type of development (Matthews, 2020), but rather illustrates a potentially prescribed way of development, which might not be in line with the various points of view of the people being targeted. In addition, such predefined development goals contradict the very notion of empowerment and participation, which are built on the power to make choices and realise them (Kabeer, 1999). Thus, this conceptualisation seems to be in line with the depoliticising process of development as mentioned earlier, where technical solutions are used for social and cultural problems and participation and empowerment are limited to a certain outcome (Li, 2007; Williams, 1998; Ziai, 2016).

When turning back to the domestic context of participation, a different picture unravels where farmer participation occurs at a political level. However, due to the homogeneous conceptualisation of farmers as well as knowledge, it is unclear whether said inclusion into decision-making processes is used to maintain the existing paradigm or indeed whether a paradigm change is even wished for, as

relevant discussions might occur within the dominatingdiscourses and systems rather than calling to change them entirely, as also seen in other European countries (Arora-Jonsson, 2018). In addition, due to the BMEL's embeddedness in the EU, such participation might have a limited impact, as the previously mentioned farmers' protests suggest. Interestingly, my analysis shows that though participation as a whole is mostly targeted at a political level, the parts concerned with gender equality are not. Here, the empowerment of women is conceptualised in the context of increasing female farm ownership and entrepreneurship, but not explicitly mentioned when looking at political participation. Though an important topic, I would argue that the lack of explicit mentioning of women in the participation process reveals a self-imagining as a gender-equal country in which such contestations do not apply, as also seen in other countries, e.g. in Sweden (*ibid*). This is further compounded by the fact that the participation and empowerment of women is one of the BMEL's main goals in the context of its foreign development, where the demonstrated self-image doesn't apply, thus revealing a strong discursive difference.

This contrast between the types of knowledge being conceptualised as well as how participation and empowerment are being portrayed, reveals the central conundrum of development, in that certain improvement interventions and programmes "designed to reduce the distance between trustees and deficient subjects actually reinscribe the boundary that positions them on opposite sides of an unbridgeable divide" (Li, 2007, p.31). In other words, when conceptualising something or someone in need of improvement or empowerment, the conceptualising entity automatically positions itself as an expert with the power to do just that, thereby justifying their presence and reducing the subject's own agency as well as creating and maintaining an inherent power disbalance between the two, even when working to reduce just that (Li, 2007; Ziai, 2016).

This conundrum can also be seen when looking at the conceptualisation of farmers. My analysis shows that farmers as well as the agricultural sector are portrayed differently, with the BMEL subsequently justifying and legitimising its various actions and presence in differing ways. When looking toward the ministry's foreign development, farmers are conceptualised as in need of support and improvement to overcome climate-related challenges and increase food security, productivity and peace. This portrayal extends to the agricultural sector as a whole, imagined as harbouring great potential and opportunities for all, as shown within the *out of great challenges come great opportunities* and *together we can narratives*. In this context, participation, empowerment and knowledge transfer play a crucial role in achieving these goals, thereby emphasising the line of argumentation as seen above (Arora-Jonsson, 2018; Li, 2007). Additionally, I would argue that this conceptualisation creates farmers as an 'other' in need of help and support and the

BMEL as 'expert' ready to give it. Such conceptualisation is central to the notion of European Modernity as described above, since it provides an essential contrast against which the concept can prosper (Harding, 2008).

On the other hand, farmers in the domestic context are conceptualised as climate heroes in need of support, with the agricultural sector as a whole viewed as elemental for mitigating climate change and providing essential services, as seen in the *agriculture to the rescue narrative* and *multifunctionalism discourse*. Instead of creating an 'other', the BMEL constructs farmers, agriculture, and society as intricately interwoven, sharing burdens and benefits, as further seen within the *we are all in this together narrative*. Thus, the motivation behind the latter seems to be quite different to that of the former. One reason could be the lack of AES uptake and general conflict surrounding the topic, as discussed in chapter 1.3.1. However, various studies show that the homogenisation of farmers' perspectives and resources, as done by the BMEL, actually plays a major role in reduced uptake, thus making the analysed material more complicit in creating this problem than alleviating it (Brown et al., 2021; Kuhfuss et al., 2019; Lécuyer et al., 2021). Another reason could be the differing contexts that farmers and the agricultural sector find themselves embedded in. As also acknowledged within the material, the German agricultural sector is responsible for around 15% of the country's GHG emissions, as well as a driving force behind biodiversity loss and land degradation (Lécuyer et al., 2021; Malhi et al., 2021). Thus, the conceptualisation of farmers as both heroes and victims at the same time can garner public support for increased financial incentives and subsidies to mitigate the outlined side effects, a conceptualisation only partly applicable to its international projects, where such duality exists to a lesser extent.

However, though there are certain differences between farmers' conceptualisations as outlined above, there seem to be some commonalities as well. In both instances, farmers' perspectives are homogenised as reflecting those of the BMEL and farmers' agency is discursively reduced to justify the BMEL's interventions. Although the BMEL constructs this agency differently, with farmers in Africa as in need of empowerment and farmers in Germany as in need of financial assistance, farmers in both instances are imagined as in need of 'something' to fulfil their potential, with that 'something' being provided by the BMEL. In combination with my previously developed arguments about the portrayal of knowledge and participation, this constructs a certain hierarchy, with the BMEL as essential for providing the necessary tools for change. Therefore, I argue that this conceptualisation maintains existing power dynamics both within Germany as well as in the context of its North-South relations, more than it changes them.

This is not to say that the BMEL, as well as other international institutions such as the EU and UN, are not doing important work or that the formulated goals and strategies are inherently bad, but rather to underscore the importance of language in policy making and the impact it can have on society and power structures (Fairclough, 2013a; Feindt and Oels, 2005). Though I am well aware that policy papers are formulated in a generalising way aimed at emphasising their legitimacy, they still play an important role in constructing reality and are thus crucial for understanding the political climate and for uncovering underlying patterns and assumptions shaping our daily lives (*ibid*). In line with this, my findings reveal relevant connections to the larger movement towards a technocratic society, not only in Germany but also at the EU level and the level of international development institutions, which forgo the socio-political implications of development and sustainability, rather focusing on technological innovation (Ferguson, 1994; Tudzarovska, 2025). In addition, the identified discourses and narratives seem to correlate with findings of other authors in connection with development relations between countries of the Global North and Global South (Harding, 2008; Li, 2007; Ziai, 2016). Nevertheless, my findings are context-specific to the relation between Germany and various member states of the AU, thus also making my drawn conclusions limited to this context and not generalisable. Therefore, future research might target other countries of the Global North and their discursive conceptualisation of their domestic agricultural development and that of their international development cooperations, to gain further insight into North-South relations and continue to question such binary conceptualisation as a whole.

7. Conclusion

Overall, this thesis aimed to investigate how the BMEL discursively constructs agricultural development within Germany and its foreign development context and how farmers' agency and subject positions were conceptualised. By comparing how topics of agrarian development and sustainability are conceptualised within the two contexts, I aimed to identify and overcome still-existing binary thinking and further understand how possible assumptions in the context of development influence and maintain power dynamics in the context of North-South relations, exemplarily examined in German materials with regards to cooperation with various African countries. By developing a multiperspectival framework based on CDA, NPA and DAA, I was able to approach the chosen material from different entry points, thereby enabling a thorough analysis.

My analysis shows that the BMEL utilises different discourses and narratives to construct the two areas of agricultural development. In its international cooperations, the BMEL relies heavily on a *sustainable development discourse*, as well as an *empowerment to increase productivity discourse*. In addition, a *pluralist-participatory discourse* is used, which stands in somewhat of a contrast to the rest. When looking at policy narratives, the BMEL constructs the *out of great challenges come great opportunities,* and *together we can narratives,* all of which contribute to farmers being conceptualised as in need of support and with limited agency. In the domestic context, the BMEL uses an *ecological modernisation discourse* as well as a *multifunctionalism, administrative-rationalism* and *democratic-pragmatism discourse*, the last of which contest each other. Furthermore, the ministry uses an *agriculture to the rescue,* and *we are all in this together narrative*, thereby conceptualising a togetherness also reflected in the overall conceptualisation of farmers as an important part of society in need of public and financial support, thereby discursively reducing their agency.

These findings suggest that the BMEL's discursive practices are embedded in the larger social structures of the EU and SDGs, resulting in overlapping conceptualisations, namely in the context of privileging scientific knowledge and maintaining the dominant neoliberal paradigm, thereby depoliticising the topic. However, I argue that differences in conceptualisation occur due to the fundamental conundrum of development as well as the notion of European Modernity, which creates an 'other' when looking toward the BMEL's foreign development projects. At the same time, similar notions result in a homogenisation in the domestic context, most notably resulting in the lack of acknowledgement of diverse types of knowledge. These findings correlate with the discursive construction of farmers' positions and agency, which are constructed to reflect the BMEL's own goals. In

addition, agency is discursively reduced to justify and legitimise the BMEL's interventions, especially in the international context. Based on these findings, I further argue that the language used within the material maintains power imbalances both within Germany as well as in the context of its relations with African countries. At the same time, my findings also suggest a possible discursive change towards reducing said power imbalances, which in turn might be limited by the political climate in Germany at the time of the analysis. Due to recent shifts back to a more conservative government, it will be interesting to see how the discourses will change in the future and what effect this will have on farmers' agency and subject positions, as well as the power dynamics discussed within this thesis.

References

Agovino, M., Casaccia, M., Ciommi, M., Ferrara, M. and Marchesano, K. (2019) 'Agriculture, climate change and sustainability: The case of EU-28', *Ecological Indicators*, vol.105, pp.525–543.

Agrardebatten (2024) 'Deutschlands Bauernproteste: Stimmen aus der Landwirtschaft', *Agrardebatten*, 2024 [Online]. Available at https://agrardebatten.de/agrarzukunft/deutschlands-bauernproteste-stimmen-aus-der-landwirtschaft/ (Accessed 5 January 2025).

Arora, N. K. (2019) 'Impact of climate change on agriculture production and its sustainable solutions', *Environmental Sustainability*, vol.2, no.2, pp.95–96.

Arora-Jonsson, S. (2018) 'Across the development divide: A North-South perspective on environmental democracy', *Sage Handbook of Nature. London, UK: Sage Publications*, pp.737–760.

Bacchi, C. L. and Beasley, C. (2002) 'Citizen bodies: Is embodied citizenship a contradiction in terms?', *Critical social policy*, vol.22, no.2, pp.324–352.

BMEL (2019a) *Einrichtungen im Geschäftsbereich* [Online]. Available at https://www.bmel.de/DE/ministerium/organisation/einrichtungen/einrichtungen_node.html (Accessed 25 February 2025).

BMEL (2019b) *The Principles for Responsible Investment in Agriculture and Food Systems* [Online]. Available at https://www.bmel.de/EN/topics/international-affairs/agenda-2030/rai-principles.html (Accessed 26 February 2025).

BMEL (2021) *The BMEL's commitment to Africa: ensuring food security and promoting growth* [Online]. Available at https://www.bmel.de/EN/topics/international-affairs/agenda-2030/africa-concept.html (Accessed 25 February 2025).

BMEL (2023) 'Agrarpolitischer Bericht der Bundesregierung 2023'.

BMEL (2024a) *BMEL stellt Zusammenarbeit mit afrikanischen Partnern auf neues Fundament – Projektbüro in Addis Abeba offiziell eingeweiht* [Online]. Available at https://www.bmel.de/SharedDocs/Pressemitteilungen/DE/2024/123-afrikareise-partnerschaft.html (Accessed 11 March 2025).

BMEL (2024b) *Bundesminister Cem Özdemir zum Auftakt seiner Reise nach Äthiopien und Sambia* [Online]. Available at https://www.bmel.de/SharedDocs/Videos/DE/Internationales/afrika-reise-auftakt.html (Accessed 11 March 2025).

BMEL (2024c) *Bundesminister Özdemir reist nach Äthiopien und Sambia* [Online]. Available at https://www.bmel.de/SharedDocs/Meldungen/DE/Presse/2024/241101-afrikareise.html (Accessed 11 March 2025).

BMEL (2024d) *Deutsch–Sambisches Agrartrainings- und Wissenszentrum* [Online]. Available at

https://www.bmel.de/SharedDocs/Praxisbericht/DE/BKP_BTF/sambia_aktc.html
(Accessed 11 March 2025).

BMEL (2024e) *Dialognetzwerk zukunftfähige Landwirtschaft* [Online]. Available at
https://www.bmel.de/DE/ministerium/organisation/dialognetzwerk/dialognetzwerk.
html (Accessed 25 February 2025).

BMEL (2024f) *Internationale Projekte* [Online]. Available at
https://www.bmel.de/DE/themen/internationales/internationale-
projekte/internationale-projekte_node.html (Accessed 25 February 2025).

BMEL (2024g) 'Land- und Forstwirtschaft stärken – Klima schützen'.

BMEL (2024h) *Landwirtschaft, Klimaschutz und Klimaresilienz* [Online]. Available at
https://www.bmel.de/DE/themen/landwirtschaft/klimaschutz/landwirtschaft-und-
klimaschutz.html (Accessed 24 February 2025).

BMEL (2024i) 'Nachhaltige Agrar- und Ernährungssysteme: Herausforderungen und
Wege der Transformation'.

BMEL (2024j) *Transformationsbericht: Wege zu krisenfesten Agrar- und
Ernährungssystemen* [Online]. Available at
https://www.bmel.de/SharedDocs/Pressemitteilungen/DE/2024/052-
transformationsbericht.html.

BMEL (2024k) *Wissenstransfer für weniger Nachernteverluste* [Online]. Available at
https://www.bmel.de/SharedDocs/Pressemitteilungen/DE/2024/125-sambia-
projekt-startschuss.html (Accessed 11 March 2025).

BMEL (2024l) *Zukunftskommission Landwirtschaft* [Online]. Available at
https://www.bmel.de/DE/themen/landwirtschaft/zukunftskommission-
landwirtschaft.html (Accessed 25 February 2025).

BMEL (2025a) *75 Jahre unabhängige Expertise: Wissenschaftlicher Beirat für
Agrarpolitik, Ernährung und gesundheitlichen Verbraucherschutz feiert Jubiläum*
[Online]. Available at
https://www.bmel.de/SharedDocs/Pressemitteilungen/DE/2025/014-wbae.html
(Accessed 27 March 2025).

BMEL (2025b) *Agenda 2030* [Online]. Available at
https://www.bmel.de/EN/topics/international-affairs/agenda-2030/agenda-
2030_node.html (Accessed 26 February 2025).

BMEL (2025c) *Agrarministerinnen und -minister aus rund 70 Ländern setzen sich für die
Förderung einer nachhaltigen Bioökonomie ein* [Online]. Available at
https://www.bmel.de/SharedDocs/Pressemitteilungen/DE/2025/009-gffa-
agrarministerkonferenz.html (Accessed 5 April 2025).

BMEL (2025d) *BMEL stellt Zusammenarbeit mit afrikanischen Partnern auf neues
Fundament* [Online]. Available at
https://www.bmel.de/SharedDocs/Pressemitteilungen/DE/2025/007-afrika-
konzept.html (Accessed 11 March 2025).

BMEL (2025e) *Bundesminister Özdemir begrüßt Vision für Landwirtschaft und
Ernährung der EU-Kommission* [Online]. Available at

https://www.bmel.de/SharedDocs/Pressemitteilungen/DE/2025/016-vision-landwirtschaft.html.

BMEL (2025f) *Bundesminister Özdemir zur Bio-Weidehaltung* [Online]. Available at https://www.bmel.de/SharedDocs/Meldungen/DE/Presse/2025/250305-weidehaltung.html (Accessed 1 April 2025).

BMEL (2025g) 'Konzept für unsere Zusammenarbeit mit afrikanischen Ländern und Regionen'.

BMEL (2025h) *Schwerpunkte* [Online]. Available at https://www.bmel.de/DE/schwerpunkte/schwerpunkte_node.html (Accessed 24 February 2025).

BMZ (2012) 'Deutsche Entwicklungspolitik auf einen Blick'.

BMZ (2024) *Rethinking development policy: How to confront coloniality* [Online]. Available at https://www.bmz.de/de/aktuelles/rethinking-development-policy-how-to-confront-coloniality (Accessed 19 March 2025).

Brown, C., Kovács, E., Herzon, I., Villamayor-Tomas, S., Albizua, A., Galanaki, A., Grammatikopoulou, I., McCracken, D., Olsson, J. A. and Zinngrebe, Y. (2021) 'Simplistic understandings of farmer motivations could undermine the environmental potential of the common agricultural policy', *Land Use Policy*, vol.101, pp.105-136.

Calvès, A.-E. (2009) 'Empowerment: The history of a key concept in contemporary development discourse', *Revue Tiers Monde*, vol.200, no.4, pp.735–749.

Castro Torres, A. F. and Alburez-Gutierrez, D. (2022) 'North and South: Naming practices and the hidden dimension of global disparities in knowledge production', *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America*, vol.119, no.10.

Chant, S. and Sweetman, C. (2012) 'Fixing women or fixing the world? 'Smart economics', efficiency approaches, and gender equality in development', *Gender & Development*, vol.20, no.3, pp.517–529.

Chesterman, A. (1997) 'Ethics of Translation', in *Translation as Intercultural Communication: Selected Papers from the EST Congress*, *Prague 1995*, Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamin's Publishing Company, pp. 147-160.

Connolly-Boutin, L. and Smit, B. (2016) 'Climate change, food security, and livelihoods in sub-Saharan Africa', *Regional Environmental Change*, vol.16, no.2, pp.385–399.

Cornwall, A. and Brock, K. (2005) 'What do buzzwords do for development policy? a critical look at 'participation', 'empowerment' and 'poverty reduction'', *Third World Quarterly*, vol.26, no.7, pp.1043–1060.

Cummings, S., Haan, L. de and Seferiadis, A. A. (2020) 'How to use critical discourse analysis for policy analysis: a guideline for policymakers and other professionals', *Knowledge Management for Development Journal*, vol.15, no.1, pp.99–108.

Cummings, S., Regeer, B., Haan, L. de, Zweekhorst, M. and Bunders, J. (2018) 'Critical discourse analysis of perspectives on knowledge and the knowledge society within

the Sustainable Development Goals', *Development Policy Review*, vol.36, no.6, pp.727–742.

Deutscher Bauernverband (2021) *Zukunftskommission Landwirtschaft umsetzen!: Zehn Agrar- und Umweltverbände appellieren an sondierende Parteien* [Online]. Available at https://www.bauernverband.de/topartikel/zukunftskommission-landwirtschaft-umsetzen (Accessed 25 February 2025).

Dryzek, J. S. (2022) *The politics of the earth: Environmental discourses*, Oxford University Press.

European Commission (2022) 'At a glance: Germany's CAP Strategic Plan'.

European Commission (2024) *The common agricultural policy at a glance* [Online]. Available at https://agriculture.ec.europa.eu/common-agricultural-policy/cap-overview/cap-glance_en (Accessed 7 January 2025).

Fairclough, N. (1992) 'Discourse and Text: Linguistic and Intertextual Analysis within Discourse Analysis', *Discourse & Society*, vol.3, no.2, pp.193–217.

Fairclough, N. (2003) *Analysing discourse: Textual analysis for social research*, Routledge.

Fairclough, N. (2013a) 'Critical discourse analysis and critical policy studies', *Critical Policy Studies*, vol.7, no.2, pp.177–197.

Fairclough, N. (2013b) *Language and power*, Routledge.

Feindt, P. H. and Oels, A. (2005) 'Does discourse matter? Discourse analysis in environmental policy making', *Journal of Environmental Policy & Planning*, vol.7, no.3, pp.161–173.

Ferguson, J. (1994) *Anti-Politics Machine: Development, Depoliticization, and Bureaucratic Power in Lesotho*, U of Minnesota Press.

Fischer, F. and Miller, G. J. (2017) *Handbook of public policy analysis: theory, politics, and methods*, Routledge.

Hajer, M. (1996) 'Ecological Modernisation as Cultural Politics', in *Risk, Environment and Modernity: Towards a New Ecology*, Routledge, pp.80-100.

Haraway, D. (2013) 'Situated knowledges: The science question in feminism and the privilege of partial perspective 1', in *Women, science, and technology,* Routledge, pp.455–472.

Harding, S. (2008) *Sciences from below: Feminisms, postcolonialities, and modernities*, Duke University Press.

Hornidge, A.-K. (2011) *" Knowledge society" as academic concept and stage of development-a conceptual and historical review*, World Scientific Publ.

Jorgensen, M. W. and Phillips, L. (2002) *Discourse analysis as theory and method*.

Kabeer, N. (1999) 'Resources, Agency, Achievements: Reflections on the Measurement of Women's Empowerment', *Development and Change*, vol.30, no.3, pp.435–464.

Kothe, C., Wolfram, J., Mergenthaler, M., Christoph-Schulz, I. and Brümmer, N. (2019) 'Die Stellung der Landwirtschaft in der Gesellschaft: Wie Medien ihre Rolle als Orientierungsgeber wahrnehmen (können)', *ASG Ländlicher Raum*.

Kuhfuss, L., Begg, G., Flanigan, S., Hawes, C. and Piras, S. (2019) 'Should agri-environmental schemes aim at coordinating farmers' pro-environmental practices? A review of the literature'.

Lambrecht, O. (2024) *Kritik an Agrarminister Özdemir "Politisch herzlich wenig passiert"* [Online], Tagesschau. Available at https://www.tagesschau.de/inland/innenpolitik/landwirtschaftsminister-oezdemir-100.html (Accessed 24 February 2025).

Lécuyer, L., Alard, D., Calla, S., Coolsaet, B., Fickel, T., Heinsoo, K., Henle, K., Herzon, I., Hodgson, I., Quétier, F., McCracken, D., McMahon, B. J., Melts, I., Sands, D., Skrimizea, E., Watt, A., White, R. and Young, J. (2021) 'Conflicts between agriculture and biodiversity conservation in Europe: Looking to the future by learning from the past', in *Conflicts between agriculture and biodiversity conservation Conflict between agriculture and biodiversity conservation in Europe: Looking to the future by learning from the past,* Elsevier, pp.3–56.

Leduc, G., Manevska-Tasevska, G., Hansson, H., Arndt, M., Bakucs, Z., Böhm, M., Chitea, M., Florian, V., Luca, L., Martikainen, A., Pham, H. V. and Rusu, M. (2021) 'How are ecological approaches justified in European rural development policy? Evidence from a content analysis of CAP and rural development discourses'.

Leipold, S., Feindt, P. H., Winkel, G. and Keller, R. (2019) 'Discourse analysis of environmental policy revisited: traditions, trends, perspectives', *Journal of Environmental Policy & Planning*, vol.21, no.5, pp.445–463.

Leipold, S. and Winkel, G. (2016) 'Divide and conquer—Discursive agency in the politics of illegal logging in the United States', *Global Environmental Change*, vol.36, pp.35–45.

Leipold, S. and Winkel, G. (2017) 'Discursive Agency: (Re-)Conceptualizing Actors and Practices in the Analysis of Discursive Policymaking', *Policy Studies Journal*, vol.45, no.3, pp.510–534.

Li, T. M. (2007) *The will to improve: Governmentality, development, and the practice of politics*, Duke University Press.

Malhi, G. S., Kaur, M. and Kaushik, P. (2021) 'Impact of Climate Change on Agriculture and Its Mitigation Strategies: A Review', *Sustainability*, vol.13, no.3, pp.13-18.

Matthews, S. (2020) 'Colonised minds? Post-development theory and the desirability of development in Africa', in *The Development Dictionary@ 25,* Routledge, pp.104–117.

Naylor, T. (2011) 'Deconstructing Development: The Use of Power and Pity in the International Development Discourse1', *International Studies Quarterly*, vol.55, no.1, pp.177–197.

Özdemir, C. (2024) *Die wichtigsten Akteure bei der Verwirklichung des Rechts auf Nahrung sind wir alle* [Online], BMEL. Available at https://www.bmel.de/SharedDocs/Reden/DE/2024/240412-dgap-ernaehrungssicherheit.html (Accessed 11 March 2025).

Pinyol Puig, G. (2025) *US vs. EU development approach: One is dead, what's next for the other?* [Online], ecdpm. Available at https://ecdpm.org/work/us-vs-eu-development-approach-one-dead-whats-next-other (Accessed 12 April 2025).

Rac, I., Erjavec, K. and Erjavec, E. (2024) 'Agriculture and environment: friends or foes? Conceptualising agri-environmental discourses under the European Union's Common Agricultural Policy', *Agriculture and Human Values*, vol.41, no.1, pp.147–166.

Roe, E. (1994) *Narrative policy analysis: Theory and practice*, Duke University Press.

Schojan, F., Machin, A. and Silberberger, M. (2024) 'Sustainable development discourse and development aid in Germany: tracking the changes from environmental protectionism towards private sector opportunities', *Critical Policy Studies*, vol.18, no.3, pp.446–469.

Sillitoe, P. (2009) *Local science vs. global science: Approaches to indigenous knowledge in international development*, Berghahn books.

Sultana, F. (2022) 'Critical climate justice', *The Geographical Journal*, vol.188, no.1, pp.118–124.

Tudzarovska, E. (2025) 'The rise of technocratic politics in the EU: the legacies of neoliberalism', *Comparative European Politics*.

Tyllianakis, E. and Martin-Ortega, J. (2021) 'Agri-environmental schemes for biodiversity and environmental protection: How we are not yet "hitting the right keys"', *Land Use Policy*, vol.109.

Umwelt Bundesamt (2024) *Agrarumwelt- & Klimamaßnahmen in der europäischen Agrarförderung* [Online]. Available at https://www.umweltbundesamt.de/daten/land-forstwirtschaft/umweltmassnahmen-im-agrarbereich#umweltschutz-in-der-landwirtschaft (Accessed 7 January 2025).

van Hulst, M., Metze, T., Dewulf, A., Vries, J. de, van Bommel, S. and van Ostaijen, M. (2024) 'Discourse, framing and narrative: three ways of doing critical, interpretive policy analysis', *Critical Policy Studies*, pp.1–23.

Wanner, T. (2015) 'The New 'Passive Revolution' of the Green Economy and Growth Discourse: Maintaining the 'Sustainable Development' of Neoliberal Capitalism', *New Political Economy*, vol.20, no.1, pp.21–41.

Williams, M. (1998) 'Aid, Sustainable Development and the Environmental Crisis', *International Journal of Peace Studies*, vol.3, no.2, pp.19–33.

Wong, K.-F. (2003) 'Empowerment as a panacea for poverty - old wine in new bottles? Reflections on the World Bank's conception of power', *Progress in Development Studies*, vol.3, no.4, pp.307–322.

Ziai, A. (2016) *Development discourse and global history: From colonialism to the sustainable development goals*, Taylor & Francis.

Ziai, A. (2019) 'Towards a More Critical Theory of 'Development' in the 21 st Century', *Development and Change*, vol.50, no.2, pp.458–467.

Popular science summary

Language shapes how we see the world. The words we use and the words we hear influence what we think about different topics and how we behave. Therefore, the analysis of language can be a good indicator of what kind of assumptions and ideas are related to a topic and how these result into action. Here, the analysis of language used in various policies can indicate how a certain government views different topics and what is deemed important and what is not. This type of analysis is especially useful in contexts that are difficult to understand and where many different ideas and values seem to collide.

One such context is agriculture, where some people are, for example, concerned with increasing environmental protection and others with increasing productivity. In addition, the language used concerning agricultural development differs depending on where in the world one looks. Therefore, the analysis of the language used by governments can unveil underlying assumptions and values connected to the topic. To do just that, I analysed the language used by the German Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture (BMEL) in the context of its domestic agricultural development as well as its foreign agricultural development projects. In addition, I focused on how the capabilities and motivations of farmers were portrayed in both instances.

Here, I found that the BMEL uses similar language in both areas in the way it prioritises expert knowledge over other types, as well as its focus on technical solutions for socio-political problems, which in turn takes out the political aspects of the problem altogether. Nevertheless, there are also differences, with the main one being that the BMEL seems to view Germany as fully developed, whereas other countries are viewed as in need of help and development. With this, a divide is created which is not easily bridged, since bridging it would also mean that there is no further need for the BMEL's presence, thereby defying the very existence of the analysed material of foreign projects. This aim to justify their policies is also reflected in how farmers are portrayed. In both instances, they are painted as in need of help, be that financial or knowledge-based, thereby also portrayed with limited capabilities. However, where farmers in the domestic context are shown as some type of climate hero, they are painted as different and far removed in the international context, thus furthering the assumption that help is needed.

Overall, the language that the BMEL uses might indicate that existing unequal power structures, both within Germany and between different countries, are further maintained.

Appendix 1

‚Unser gemeinsames Ziel ist klar: Wir wollen eine Landwirtschaft schaffen, die produktiv, nachhaltig und an lokale Gegebenheiten angepasst ist und dazu beiträgt, das Recht auf Nahrung für alle Menschen zu verwirklichen. Damit schaffen wir nicht nur Ernährungssicherheit, sondern fördern auch wirtschaftliche Entwicklung, Stabilität und Frieden weltweit' (BMEL, 2025g, p.3).

‚Die wichtigsten Akteure bei der Verwirklichung des Rechts auf Nahrung sind wir alle. Es geht nur gemeinsam oder gar nicht, wenn wir unser weltweit zusammenhängendes Agrar- und Ernährungssystem verändern wollen' (Özdemir, 2024).

‚Die großen Krisen unserer Zeit – Klimaveränderungen, Hunger und Konflikte, aber zunehmend auch Tierseuchen – können wir nur gemeinsam lösen' (BMEL, 2025d).

‚Klimakrise, Hunger und Konflikte verstärken einander und haben längst über ihre lokalen Schauplätze hinaus weltweit enorme Auswirkungen. Diese Herausforderungen betreffen uns also gemeinsam, lösen können wir sie darum auch nur im Schulterschluss' (BMEL 2024c).

‚Wir setzen uns im bilateralen Austausch sowie in den internationalen Formaten der Zusammenarbeit wie FAO, UNFF, ITTO, G7 und G20 sowie dem GFFA dafür ein, Ausdehnung und Produktivitätssteigerungen in der Landwirtschaft von Entwaldung und Walddegradierung zu entkoppeln' (BMEL, 2025g, p.29).

‚In unserem Bilateralen Kooperationsprogramm (BKP) fördern wir Projekte, die neben der Beratungskompetenz für rechtliche Rahmenbedingungen und Institutionenaufbau auch eine Innovations- und Transformationsplattform im Sinne des SDG 17 darstellen' (BMEL, 2025g, p.9).

‚Obwohl afrikanische Länder für weniger als vier Prozent der weltweiten Treibhausgasemissionen verantwortlich zeichnen, sind die Auswirkungen der Klimakrise auf Teile des afrikanischen Kontinents überdurchschnittlich groß' (BMEL 2025g, p.14).

‚Klimakrise, Biodiversitätsverlust, Kriege und Konflikte sowie veränderte geopolitische Rahmenbedingungen haben massive Auswirkungen auf unsere Agrar- und Ernährungssysteme' (BMEL, 2025g, p.6).

‚Ein langfristiges Ziel ist es, die Versorgung mit Düngemitteln auf einem nachhaltigen kreislaufbasierten System aufzubauen. Konsequenterweise sind damit auch Länder des Globalen Südens bei der Reduktion ihrer importabhängigen Bedarfe, den entsprechenden Abhängigkeiten und der nachhaltigen Produktion von Düngemitteln zu unterstützen' (BMEL, 2025g, p.18).

‚Ein Problem beispielsweise ist, dass auf unseren Äckern, Wiesen und in Ställen häufig Monotonie herrscht – nicht nur hier, sondern in vielen Ländern dieser Welt' (Özdemir, 2024).

‚Dazu braucht es Investitionen, v. a. auch von privatwirtschaftlichen Akteuren, um Innovationen zu fördern, Unternehmertum zu stärken und mehr Wertschöpfung in den Regionen zu ermöglichen' (BMEL, 2025g, p.35).

‚Vor dem Hintergrund der skizzierten Herausforderungen sind wir der Überzeugung, dass die Prinzipien der Agrarökologie ein innovativer Ansatz sind, um langfristig tragfähige Lösungen zu finden, die im Sinne der Freiwilligen Leitlinien der FAO zum Recht auf angemessene Nahrung zu einer Steigerung der Produktivität beitragen' (BMEL, 2025g, p.16).

‚Auf dem afrikanischen Kontinent und weltweit bildet eine starke, selbstbestimmte, resiliente Land- und Ernährungswirtschaft das Fundament für gesellschaftlichen Zusammenhalt und politische Stabilität. Sie nährt Frieden, Sicherheit und Entwicklung' (BMEL, 2025g, p.3).

‚Aber, was mir sehr wichtig ist, wir kommen nicht als Lehrmeister, sondern als Partner' (BMEL, 2024b).

‚Ein zentrales Ziel ist für uns deshalb die kontextangepasste Mechanisierung der Landwirtschaft. Diese muss nicht der Logik der europäischen Landwirtschaftsentwicklung der letzten Jahrzehnte folgen. Vielmehr geben die Erfordernisse vor Ort die Richtung vor' (BMEL, 2025g, p.35).

‚Die fachlichen Kompetenzen des BMEL und unserer nachgeordneten Behörden sowie Ressortforschungseinrichtungen sind ein Alleinstellungsmerkmal; sie zeichnen unsere internationale Zusammenarbeit aus' (BMEL, 2025g, p.7).

‚Die dafür notwendigen Maßnahmen wollen wir beschleunigen, indem wir unsere Expertise für Landwirtschaft und Ernährung in unsere bilaterale und multilaterale Zusammenarbeit einbringen' (BMEL, 2025g, p.6).

‚Durch das Teilen von Know-how wird der Aufbau von Zivilgesellschaft unterstützt, Strukturen gestärkt und der Organisationsgrad von Akteuren verbessert' (BMEL, 2025d).

‚Weil wir eben sehr viel auf Wissenstransfer setzen auf Wissenschaft setzten auf Austausch setzten' (BMEL, 2024b).

‚Im Fokus stehen Erfahrungsaustausch und konkreter Wissenstransfer – für eine produktive, nachhaltige und standortangepasste Landwirtschaft' (BMEL, 2024c).

‚Ein entscheidender Schlüssel zum Erfolg liegt im Wissenstransfer und in der Ausbildung' (Özdemir, 2024).

‚Für uns bietet das eine Chance des Voneinander-Lernens und Gemeinsamen-Entwickelns innovativer Formen von Landwirtschaft, die auch anknüpfen können an lokales Wissen und vorhandene Anbaumethoden' (BMEL, 2025g, p.17).

‚Ein weiterer Schwerpunkt des Projekts liegt auf der Integration von traditionellem Wissen in Verbindung mit wissenschaftlichen Erkenntnissen' (BMEL, 2025g, p.23).

‚In unserer Projektarbeit richten wir insbesondere einen Fokus auf die Einbindung junger Menschen und Frauen: Gelingt sie, liegt hier aus unserer Sicht ein Potenzial an Wirtschaftskraft, aus dem sich eine steigende Nachfrage und eine intensive stadtnahe Land- und Ernährungswirtschaft entwickeln kann' (BMEL, 2025g, p.30).

‚Ganz gezielt werden hier Frauen und junge Nachwuchskräfte bei der Verwirklichung des Rechts auf Nahrung unterstützt, indigene Gruppen werden aktiv einbezogen' (Özdemir, 2024).

‚Die Prinzipien der Agrarökologie sind dafür der Kompass' (BMEL, 2024a).

‚Mit diesem Kompass ausgerüstet arbeiten Vertretende der Zivilgesellschaft, der Wirtschaft und der Politik zusammen, um eine vielfältige, ressourcenschonende und klimaangepasste Landwirtschaft zu entwickeln' (Özdemir, 2024).

‚Agrarökologie steht für nachhaltige und lokal angepasste Lösungen für die Probleme bei der Ernährungssicherung, der Bekämpfung von Armut und sozialen Ungleichheiten, für die Anpassung an den Klimawandel und zum Klimaschutz, für die Gesundheit von Mensch und Tier, für den Erhalt von Biodiversität und der natürlichen Ressourcen' (BMEL, 2025g, p.16).

‚Der afrikanische Kontinent steckt voller Chancen – gerade in der Landwirtschaft, die derzeit in vielen Bereichen strategisch neu gedacht wird. Gleichzeitig stehen die afrikanischen Länder vor großen Herausforderungen' (BMEL, 2025g, p.3).

‚Herausforderungen als Chance zu begreifen und gemeinsam dort anzufangen, wo man gerade steht' (Özdemir, 2024).

‚Und da habe ich eine gute Nachricht: Etwa ein Drittel der Treibhausgasemissionen weltweit gehen auf unser Agrar- und Ernährungssystem zurück. Jetzt fragen Sie sich zurecht, was daran eine gute Nachricht sein soll. Nun, das kommt ganz auf die Perspektive an' (Özdemir, 2024).

‚Dabei wird von den 1,08 Milliarden Hektar landwirtschaftlicher Nutzfläche nur knapp ein Viertel genutzt. Während ein Teil des Potenzials dieser Flächen nicht nutzbar ist, weil sie zum Beispiel aufgrund fehlender Infrastruktur, Krisen und Konflikten nicht zugänglich sind, fehlen an anderen Stellen die notwendigen Voraussetzungen, um diese zu bewirtschaften. Ein zentrales Ziel ist für uns deshalb die kontextangepasste Mechanisierung der Landwirtschaft' (BMEL, 2025g, p.35).

‚Diese Chancen und Herausforderungen betreffen uns alle. Herausforderungen können wir nur gemeinsam bewältigen, Chancen wollen wir zusammen nutzen – beides im Geiste von Partnerschaft und Respekt' (BMEL, 2025g, p.3).

‚Es ist keine gönnerhafte Wohltat der Industriestaaten, den Hunger auf der Welt zu besiegen. Es ist vielmehr knallhart in unserem eigenen Interesse, Agrar- und Ernährungssysteme so zu verändern, dass alle Menschen Zugang zu ausreichend, sicherer und gesunder Nahrung haben – und zwar nachhaltig und dauerhaft! Denn es ist ja kein Naturgesetz, dass wir hierzulande in 10, 20 oder 50 Jahren noch reichhaltige Ernten einfahren. In diesem Sinne bedeutet Transformation der Agrar- und Ernährungssysteme zugleich auch immer, in globaler Sicht Boden, Wasser, Luft, Klima und Artenvielfalt zu schützen. Da sitzen wir nun wirklich alle in einem Boot' (Özdemir, 2024).

‚Zusammenarbeit mit afrikanischen Ländern und Regionen, denen wir uns auch vor dem Hintergrund geopolitischer Verschiebungen als verlässlicher Partner anbieten' (BMEL, 2025g, p.6).

‚Nur gemeinsam finden wir Lösungen für globale Herausforderungen wie den Kampf gegen den Hunger und die Klimakrise, die wesentliche Fluchtursachen sind. Uns muss es darum gehen, dass die Menschen in ihren Ländern eine langfristige Perspektive haben' (BMEL, 2024a).

‚KleinbäuerInnen und -bauern spielen dabei eine besondere Rolle. Es gilt, sie zu stärken und in die Lage zu versetzen, autarke Entscheidungen über ihre Wirtschaftsweise zu treffen, Wissen zu nachhaltiger Bodenfruchtbarkeit umzusetzen, Zugang zu Saatgut und unabhängiger Beratung zu haben und an Wirtschaftskreisläufen teilzuhaben' (BMEL, 2025g, p.20).

‚Im Fokus stehen kleine Erzeugerinnen und Erzeuger, um das lokale Ernährungssystem zu entwickeln und zu stabilisieren' (BMEL, 2025g, p.23).

‚Wir folgen den Freiwilligen Leitlinien der FAO zum Recht auf Nahrung, wonach die aktive Mitwirkung von Organisationen der Zivilgesellschaft und anderen maßgeblichen gesellschaftlichen Gruppen auf nationaler und regionaler Ebene, einschließlich der Kleinbäuerinnen und Kleinbauern und traditionellen Bäuerinnen und Bauern, des privaten Sektors, von Frauen und Mädchen und von Jugendorganisationen an allen Aspekten der Agrar- und Nahrungsmittelproduktion gefördert werden soll' (BMEL, 2025g, p.31).

Quotes Chapter 4.2

‚Die stoffliche und energetische Nutzung biologischer Roh-, Neben- und Reststoffe ist die zentrale Ressourcenbasis der deutschen Bioökonomie. Die stoffliche Nutzung von Biomasse wird zukünftig an Bedeutung gewinnen, denn für die Transformation der Wirtschaft wird Biomasse als zentrale Kohlenstoffquelle von Bedeutung sein' (BMEL, 2024i, p.40).

‚Die Entkopplung des Ressourcenverbrauchs vom wirtschaftlichen Wachstum sollte dabei mit dem Schutz der Ökosystemleistungen einhergehen' (BMEL, 2024i, p.15).

‚Mit den Forschungsprojekten sollen Innovationen ermöglicht und Impulse für einen ökonomisch erfolgreichen Anbau von Leguminosen und deren Verwertung gegeben werden' (BMEL, 2024i, p.29).

‚Als Landwirtschafts- und Forschungsminister wünsche ich mir, dass der Beirat auch weiterhin die Politik kritisch begleitet und mit Weitblick innovative Ideen und Konzepte entwickelt' (BMEL, 2025a).

‚Biobasierte Innovationen sind ein echter Gamechanger, die fossilen Rohstoffen den Rang ablaufen. Sie verbinden Nachhaltigkeit mit wirtschaftlichem Fortschritt und schaffen neue Chancen' (2025c).

‚Hierbei ist eine methoden- und technologieoffene Forschung eine wichtige Voraussetzung für Entwicklungen und Innovationen. Dies ist eine wichtige Grundlage für die wissensbasierte Konzeption und gelingende Etablierung nachhaltiger Agrar- und Ernährungssysteme' (BMEL, 2024i, p.11).

‚Daher wäre es wünschenswert, wenn versteckte Kosten für die Umwelt, Gesundheit und Gesellschaft in Preise internalisiert werden, um die richtigen Handlungsanreize zu setzen' (BMEL, 2024i, p.18).

‚Auch unser eigenes Konsumverhalten beeinflusst die Höhe der Treibhausgasemissionen aus Landwirtschaft und Ernährung' (BMEL 2024g, p.18).

‚Landwirtinnen und Landwirte [sollen] auch für die Bereitstellung gesellschaftlich erwünschter nicht-marktfähiger Güter angemessen und differenziert honoriert werden' (BMEL, 2024i, p.19).

‚Die Voraussetzung dafür, dieses Prinzip erfolgreich umsetzen zu können, ist jedoch, dass Gemeinwohlleistungen für die Landwirtschaft ökonomisch attraktiv, d. h. einkommenswirksam sind' (BMEL, 2024i, p.42).

‚Damit Landwirtinnen und Landwirte ihre Arbeit zum Wohle der Bevölkerung leisten können, brauchen sie Planungssicherheit' (BMEL, 2023).

‚Landwirtinnen und Landwirte leisten als Erzeugende von Nahrungsmitteln, Futter und Energie einen immens wichtigen Beitrag zur Ernährungssicherheit und zur ländlichen Entwicklung. Gleichzeitig ist die Landwirtschaft durch die intensive Bewirtschaftung von Böden, die Tierhaltung und den Einsatz von Düngemitteln eine Quelle von Treibhausgasemissionen' (BMEL, 2024g, p.2).

‚In dieser Umgebung sollen Landwirtinnen und Landwirte ökonomisch tragfähig wirtschaften und insbesondere auch junge Menschen Perspektiven erkennen und nutzen können' (BMEL, 2024i, p.7).

‚Eine Tierhaltung ist zukunftsfest, wenn sie tier-, umwelt- und klimagerecht ist und Landwirtinnen und Landwirten eine Perspektive für die wirtschaftliche Erzeugung und Vermarktung ihrer Produkte bietet' (BMEL, 2024i, p.22).

‚Unsere europäischen Landwirtinnen und Landwirte decken uns Tag für Tag den Tisch mit hochwertigen Lebensmitteln – eine Leistung, hinter der harte Arbeit und viel Leidenschaft steckt' (BMEL, 2025e).

‚Die Land-, Ernährungs- und Forstwirtschaft steht vor enormen Herausforderungen: Klimawandel, Artensterben, Bodenqualitätsverschlechterung und -verluste, zunehmende Verschmutzung und ein hoher Ressourcenverbrauch gefährden unsere natürlichen Lebensgrundlagen und damit auch die Ernährungssicherheit' (BMEL, 2024i, p.10).

‚Nachhaltige Landwirtschaft beginnt mit fairer Bezahlung und guten Markbedingungen' (BMEL, 2025e).

‚Nur mit nachhaltigen, zukunftsfesten Agrar- und Ernährungssystemen ist es möglich, Ernährungssicherung, Klimaschutz sowie den Erhalt und die Förderung der Biodiversität mit wirtschaftlichen und sozialen Anforderungen auf einen gemeinsamen Nenner zu bringen. Daran müssen wir weiter arbeiten' (BMEL, 2024i, p.48).

‚Eine erfolgreiche Landwirtschaft ist die Basis für eine wettbewerbsfähige Ernährungswirtschaft, die gerade in unseren ländlichen Räumen Arbeitsplätze sichert' (BMEL, 2023).

‚Ernährungssicherheit, Wettbewerbsfähigkeit und Klimaschutz sind kein Entweder-oder' (BMEL, 2025e).

‚Der Erhalt und die nachhaltige Nutzung der biologischen Vielfalt sind essentielle Bausteine für die Versorgung einer wachsenden Weltbevölkerung mit gesunden Nahrungsmitteln bei sich wandelnden Klimabedingungen' (BMEL, 2024i, p.16).

‚Häufigkeit, Dauer und Intensität von Wetterextremen wie z. B. Hitzeperioden, Dürren oder Starkregenereignisse werden im Zuge des Klimawandels zunehmen. Sie werden umso heftiger, je mehr Treibhausgase ausgestoßen werden, die das Klima aufheizen. Ein wirksamer Klimaschutz, also die Senkung der Treibhausgasemissionen, ist daher zentral' (BMEL, 2024i, p.13).

‚Eine bedarfsgerechte und somit nachhaltige Düngung ist die Voraussetzung für gesunde Böden, sauberes Grundwasser und große Artenvielfalt' (BMEL, 2024i, p.27).

‚Einige werden durch den Data Act geregelt, der demnächst auf EU-Ebene veröffentlicht und ab Mitte 2025 zur Anwendung kommen wird' (BMEL 2024i, p.20).

‚Eine zusätzliche Änderung im DüngG betrifft die Durchführung der EU-Düngeprodukteverordnung. Zudem sind Bußgeldvorschriften zur Ahndung von Verstößen gegen die EU-Düngeprodukteverordnung aufzunehmen' (BMEL, 2024i, p.28).

‚2021 leitete die EU-Kommission gegen Deutschland ein sogenanntes Pilotverfahren zum verpflichtenden Weidegang für alle Pflanzenfresser auf Bio-Betrieben ein.[...] Rechtlich bleibt damit klar: Die Weidepflicht für Bio-Pflanzenfresser ergibt sich unmittelbar aus der EU-Öko-Verordnung 2018/848 – die Vorgaben gelten unverändert' (BMEL, 2025f).

‚Dieser Transformationsbericht ist deshalb so wertvoll, weil bei der Erstellung eine Vielzahl von Beteiligten einbezogen wurden: Bürgerinnen und Bürger, Politik, Verbände, Wissenschaft, Wirtschaft, Kirchen und dabei – was uns als federführende Bundesministerien besonders wichtig ist – insbesondere junge Menschen. [...] Wir haben darüber hinaus diejenigen eng eingebunden, die konkrete Maßnahmen vor Ort in die Tat umsetzen: Die Praktikerinnen und Praktiker aus Landwirtschaft und Naturschutz' (BMEL, 2024i, p.3).

‚Für Nachhaltigkeit ist die enge Verknüpfung des ökologischen Wandels mit sozialer Gerechtigkeit alternativlos. Es braucht viele Menschen und dezentrale Strukturen im Ernährungssystem, (Arbeitsgemeinschaft bäuerliche Landwirtschaft), (BMEL, 2024i, p.12).

‚Wandel heißt Umdenken, Zielkonflikte benennen, Bewährtes prüfen. Und zwar mit den Landwirtinnen und Landwirten, die von ihrer Arbeit leben können müssen und ohne Gegeneinander zwischen Verbrauchern und Erzeugern, zwischen bio und konventionell' (Theresa Schmidt, Bundesvorsitzende Bund der Deutschen Landjugend) (BMEL, 2024i, p.22).

‚Im Rahmen der Weiterentwicklung der GAP nach 2027 prüft das BMEL, inwieweit spezifische Möglichkeiten zur Förderung von Frauen stärker verankert werden können und ob und ggf. wie eine verbesserte Sichtbarkeit der aktuellen Stellung und der Leistungen von Frauen in der Landwirtschaft im Hinblick auf den identifizierten Handlungsbedarf erreicht werden könnte. Hier gilt es allerdings, den bürokratischen Aufwand im Auge zu behalten' (BMEL, 2024i, p.41).

‚Die Land-, Ernährungs- und Forstwirtschaft steht vor enormen Herausforderungen: Klimawandel, Artensterben, Bodenqualitätsverschlechterung und -verluste, zunehmende Verschmutzung und ein hoher Ressourcenverbrauch gefährden unsere natürlichen Lebensgrundlagen und damit auch die Ernährungssicherheit' (BMEL, 2024i, p.10).

‚Der menschengemachte Klimawandel ist eine der größten Herausforderungen dieser Zeit. Hitzewellen, Dürren und Waldbrände unterstreichen noch einmal: Die Auswirkungen der Klimakrise sind spürbar, auch in der Land- und Forstwirtschaft' (BMEL, 2024g, p.4).

‚Um dieser Herausforderungen dauerhaft bewältigen zu können, ist eine nachhaltige und sozial gerechte globale Transformation der Agrar- und Ernährungssysteme dringend notwendig' (BMEL, 2024i, p.10).

‚Eine der größten Herausforderungen unserer Zeit ist es, die Land-, Ernährungs- und Forstwirtschaft zukunfts- und krisenfest zu machen. Denn nur so kann sie auf Dauer die Voraussetzungen für eine ausreichende und gesunde Ernährung schaffen und dabei unsere Lebensgrundlagen schützen' (BMEL, 2024i, p.3).

‚Land- und Forstwirtschaft sind aber nicht nur von den Auswirkungen der Klimakrise betroffen – sie sind auch Teil der Lösung. Schon heute leistet die Landwirtschaft in Deutschland ihren nationalen Beitrag zur Reduktion der Treibhausgasemissionen. Doch um der Klimakrise zu begegnen und sich besser an ihre Folgen anzupassen, muss die Landwirtschaft noch nachhaltiger, innovativer und resilienter werden' (BMEL, 2024g, p.2).

‚Die diesem Bericht zugrundeliegende Vision sind zukunftsfeste Agrar- und Ernährungssysteme, die die Grundlage für eine ausreichende und gesunde Ernährung schaffen, ländliche Räume nachhaltig entwickeln sowie gestalten und dabei unter Betrachtung des One-Health-Ansatzes die Gesundheit von Mensch, Tier und Ökosystemen sowie das Klima schützen' (BMEL, 2024i, p.7).

‚Gleichzeitig kann und muss sie Teil der Lösung sein, da eine nachhaltige Landnutzung der Atmosphäre Kohlendioxid entziehen kann und als organischen Kohlenstoff in landwirtschaftlich genutzten Böden sowie in Landschaftselementen, wie zum Beispiel Hecken, speichern kann. Zusätzlich leistet die Landwirtschaft einen Beitrag zur Klimaanpassung' (BMEL, 2024i, p.13).

‚Daher gilt heute mehr denn je: Wir müssen das schützen, was uns erhält' (BMEL, 2024i, p.48).

‚Den Schutz der Böden und Gewässer, gute Tierhaltungsbedingungen sowie der Weg zur Klimaneutralität bedarf allerdings enorme Kraftanstrengungen. Mit einem „Weiter so" wird uns dies nicht gelingen. Den notwendigen Wandel müssen wir heute gestalten – gemeinsam mit Landwirtinnen und Landwirte, Lebensmittelwirtschaft und Verbraucherinnen und Verbraucher' (Helmut Kleebank (MdB)) (BMEL, 2024i, p.7).

‚Ihre Zukunft – und damit unser aller Zukunft – entscheidet sich daran, ob wir es schaffen, Boden, Wasser, Klima und Artenvielfalt besser zu schützen' (BMEL, 2024g, p.2).

‚Die Entwicklung zu nachhaltigen, also zukunfts- und krisenfesten Agrar- und Ernährungssystemen kann nur gelingen, wenn alle Beteiligten zusammenarbeiten. Das sind Politik, Wirtschaft und Wissenschaft und insbesondere auch die Bürgerinnen und Bürger' (BMEL, 2024i, p.22).

‚Mit einer nachhaltigen Ernährung kann jede und jeder Einzelne einen Beitrag zur Reduzierung der Treibhausgasemissionen leisten' (BMEL, 2024g, p.18).

‚Die gute Nachricht ist aber, dass wir es in der Hand haben, das zu ändern' (BMEL, 2024j).

‚Lassen Sie uns deshalb weiter gemeinsam daran arbeiten, unser Agrar- und Ernährungssystem zukunftsfest zu machen. Denn nur dann ist ein gutes Leben für alle möglich' (BMEL, 2024i, p.3).

‚Das Ziel der Transformation ist und bleibt: Ein gutes Leben für alle – nicht nur heute, sondern auch in Zukunft' (BMEL, 2024i, p.48).
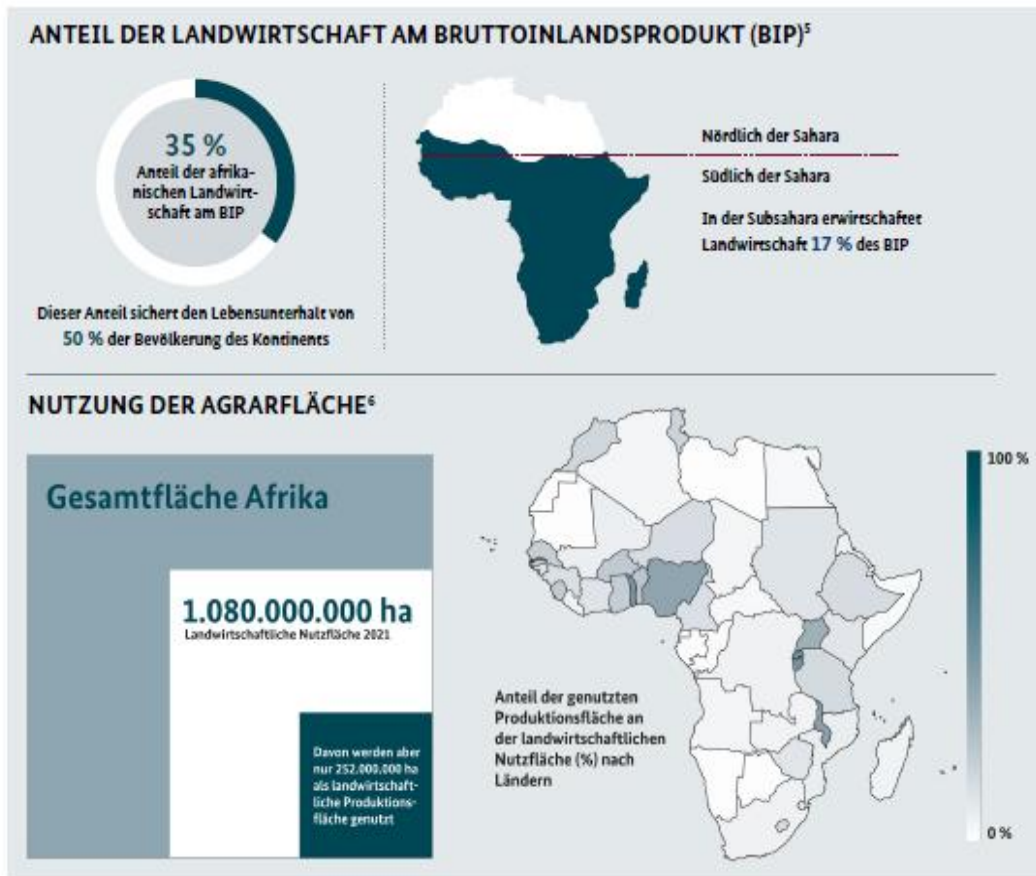
‚Jede Bio-Landwirtin und jeder Bio-Landwirt will den Tieren die beste Umgebung bieten, das versteht sich doch von selbst' (BMEL, 2025f).

‚Unsere Landwirtinnen und Landwirte sind zu Veränderungen bereit, um ihre unverzichtbaren Produktionsfaktoren – fruchtbare Böden und die lebensnotwendige Artenvielfalt – zu schützen und zu erhalten' (BMEL, 2023).

Appendix 2

Example graph depicting agrarian land-use in Africa and its potential (BMEL, 2025g, p.15)

Appendix 3

Table 1: Relevant Discourses in the international context with key elements and words

Discourse	Sustainable Development	Pluralist-Participatory	Empowerment for increased productivity
Origin	*Dryzek, 2022; Ziai, 2016* Multilateral institutions, German development institutions	*Cummings et al., 2018; Hornidge, 2011* SDGs	*Calvès, 2009; Chant and Sweetman, 2012* Female-focused development work
Aims	Increase sustainability worldwide, Increase global cooperation, Increase economic growth	Increase plurality of voices in policies/projects	Female empowerment, Increase economic growth
Means to realise goals	Technological solutions/ Innovation, Private Sector investments, Bi-and multilateral cooperation, Development projects	Participatory projects and processes	Economic participation, Increased productivity
Construction of knowledge	Expert and scientific, but also local, Knowledge transfer	Traditional and local Knowledge exchange	*Not specified*
Conceptualis ation of sustainability	Environmental protection, economic growth, intergenerational justice	Multitude of voices	*Not specified*
Key Words	Global, together, community, private sector, trade, economy, productivity, development, innovation, science, technology, experts /expertise, research, modern	Participation, local, traditional,	Empowerment, economy, productivity

Table 2: Relevant domestic discourses with key elements and words

Discourse	Ecological Modernisation	Multifunctionalism	Democratic-Pragmatism	Administrative-Rationalism
Origin	*Dryzek, 2022; Hajer, 1996* German Government, EU	*Rac et al., 2024* CAP	*Dryzek, 2022* German Government	*Dryzek, 2022* German Government, EU

Aims	Increase environmental protection	Increase provision of food and public goods	Problem-solving through societal participation	Legitimisation of state interventions for problem-solving
Means to realise goals	Technological solutions/ Innovation, Sustainable economic growth	Compensation for provision of public goods, Policy intervention, Positive view of farmers	Democratic processes, working groups, dialogue networks	Top-down implementations, Hierachy, policy interventions
Construction of knowledge	Expert and scientific	*Not specified*	Plurality	Expert and scientific
Conceptualisation of sustainability	Environmental protection, economic growth	Increase of agricultural public goods, fair pay	*Not specified*	*Not specified*
Key Words	Bioeconomy, innovation, research, market, consumer, environment	Public goods, rural development, fair compensation, biodiversity	Participation, equality, society	Experts, indicators, regulations

Table 3: Identification of storylines after NPA

Storyline	Identification
Beginning	Problem statement, environmental issues, challenges
Middle	Actions, relevant actors, how to overcome challenges
Ending	Possible benefits, costs and outcomes

Appendix 4

Table 4: Word count of words relevant for the analysis, in order of appearance

Discourse	Word	Count
Sustainable Development	Global	48
Sustainable Development	Worldwide	14
Sustainable Development	World	44
Sustainable Development	Together	60
Sustainable Development	Cooperation	58
Sustainable Development	Economy	39
Sustainable Development	Trade	64
Sustainable Development	Productivity	10
Sustainable Development	Innovation	46
Sustainable Development	Research	45
Sustainable Development	Technology	18
Sustainable Development	Expert/ise	14
Sustainable Development	Scientists	7
Sustainable Development	Transformation	24
Sustainable Development	Partner	68
Sustainable Development	Developing Countries	2
Sustainable Development	Development	29
Pluralist-Participatory	Local knowledge	3
Pluralist-Participatory	Tradition	9
Pluralist-Participatory	Participation	4
Pluralist-Participatory	Knowledge exchange	3
Empowerment for increased productivity	Empowerment	3
Empowerment for increased productivity	Women	29
Ecological Modernisation	Bioeconomy	17
Ecological Modernisation	Innovation	36
Ecological Modernisation	Consumer	27
Administrative-Rationalism	Science	26

Publishing and archiving

Approved students' theses at SLU can be published online. As a student you own the copyright to your work and in such cases, you need to approve the publication. In connection with your approval of publication, SLU will process your personal data (name) to make the work searchable on the internet. You can revoke your consent at any time by contacting the library.

Even if you choose not to publish the work or if you revoke your approval, the thesis will be archived digitally according to archive legislation.

You will find links to SLU's publication agreement and SLU's processing of personal data and your rights on this page:

- https://libanswers.slu.se/en/faq/228318

☒ YES, I, Hannah Pauline Faessle, have read and agree to the agreement for publication and the personal data processing that takes place in connection with this