From organic farmer networking to organic knowledge system

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Plan

• Introduction: Organic agriculture knowledge
• Conceptual framework: Farming system and network approaches
• Case study: Latvian organic agriculture network
• Conclusions: Construction of organic agriculture knowledge system (OAKS)
Organic agriculture knowledge

Organic agriculture: radical innovation
- new knowledge base
- informal knowledge networks
- locally embedded knowledge
- ‘ancestral’ and modern

Focus: knowledge processes in farmer networks shaped by wider socio-political environment
General framework: farming system

- Complexity of the real-world
- Active participation of farmers
- Multi-level processes
Networks as knowledge device

+ Facilitate (innovative) cooperation
+ Consolidation of (fragmented) knowledge
+ Dissemination
+ Legitimisation

- Homogenisation → decreasing creativity
- Norms and values hampering new knowledge
Networks as knowledge device

Actor network theory

• Innovation – new heterogenous network
• Built and maintained in interactions
• Exercising of power

Social capital approaches

• Bridging: knowledge exchanges within a community
• Bonding: access to external knowledge
Methodology: case study

Case: Latvian organic agriculture

Data gathering:
1999
2005-2009

Data sources: semi-structured interviews,
direct observations, document analysis
EC projects MAS, TRUC, COFAMI

8.5 % of agricultural land
2 % of agricultural gross production
Initiating OAKS

Context: independence

- Knowledge laboratories
- Psychological support
- Lobbying
Institutionalisation of OAKS

Context: EU accession
Discussion

- Interrelation of knowledge processes with other organisational dimensions

- Embeddedness of OAKS in broader societal processes

- Institutionalisation: dissolution of informal knowledge system?

- Is better cooperation possible?

- Global:local