

Food from where? Strategies for value creation in alternative agrofood networks: a case study of Via Orgânica

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ABSTRACT

The increase in organic consumption and the movement towards (re) localization or shortening of food supply chains have been representative. This type of production explicitly challenges the model of industrial agriculture and global food transport incorporated in the consumption of conventional foods distributed by large supermarket chains and restaurants (Aertsens, 2009). In order to explore this shift of food relation, this article explores how organic production adds value to the consumers in a short food chain in South Brazil. For this purpose, this paper is based on a case study of one of the companies that belong to Via Orgânica, the Mariani Family. The data were collected with in-deep interviews with the managers of the organization, and the analysis was made using the content analysis technique. It is noteworthy that three forms were observed in the case of the Mariani Family: (1) political power of the consumer in food; (2) recovery of confidence in agri-food production; (3) food as medicine. Thus, this article highlights the importance of shortening of the distance between producers and consumers, which generates a relationship of knowledge exchange and trust. This connection teaches the consumer to value and share eating habits giving preference to healthy products and food without pesticides, with quality, cultural origin and fair prices for both parties.

Keywords: Organic Production; Organic Consumption; Short Chains; Value Creation.

1 INTRODUCTION

Financial crises, environmental degradation, excessive consumption, population surplus, concentration of population in large urban centers and social inequality are some aspects that lead to reflection on the future of humanity. Although, society has been experiencing what can be called as "sustainable awakening", from the development of an awareness of the need to find ways towards sustainability. The notion of finite resources has gained space in discussions and the mitigation of environmental problems has been seen as a global challenge. But in this scenario, one of the human activities that most generates environmental impacts is related to food, since resources and energy are spent on its production and distribution, both in its packaging and in its conservation form, for example (Tanner & Kaiser & Wolfing, 2004).

There has been a growing increase in the global market of products and services that provide health and well-being, allied to environmental preservation, and so, agriculture and consumption of organic products are in a process of expansion in the last years (Dias *et al.*, 2015). In Brazil, according to Law Nr. 10.831 of December 23 of 2003, to be considered an organic system of agricultural production, it needs to adopt specific techniques that optimize the use of natural and socioeconomic resources and respect the culture of rural communities, with the objective environmental and economic sustainability, maximizing social benefits and minimizing dependence on nonrenewable energy. Thus, "organic food is a produce of organic farming, which is a type of farming that sets very strict limits on the amount of artificial synthetic inputs allowed" (First & Brozina, 2009, p. 186).

In parallel with the notions of sustainability that involve food production, there is a movement by consumers to seek alternative forms of food, aiming to achieve more

sustainable or health-oriented modes of consumption (Barcellos *et al.*, 2015). Within this perspective, there are consumers of organic foods that search for local and sustainable products.

Food consumption patterns are changing as a result of health and environmental issues. Interest in organically produced food is increasing throughout the world. Global demand for organic products is increasing by over five billion US dollars a year (Willer, Yussefi-Menzler & Sorensen, 2009). Consumers have been showing interest on this type of product because of the search of food that promotes well-being and, at the same time, does not harm the environment. The trend in the consumption of organic food occurs mainly by the search for a socially fair, ecologically correct and economically sustainable agriculture (Keating, 1993). Thus, an organic food market emerges, involving an increasing number of consumers and producers.

By seen this context as an opportunity, a city called Garibaldi, in the very south of Brazil, created a different proposition with the objective of promoting the tourism of the region, the creation of a organic route: Via Orgânica. It was one of the Brazil's first agroecological and manufactured production network, and is constitutes a rural tourism routes of Brazil that contains, for now, ten (10) certified organic properties. This network was created in the end of 2016, and since it's a new phenomenon, it's relevant to be better understood.

Since the companies that belong to Via Orgânica are all producers and sell directly to the final consumers, we can say that it constitutes a short chain. Short chains reduce or eliminate intermediates in the producer and consumer relationship and the locations where the product would pass (Giuca, 2012). Thus, while conventional production chains produce food from nowhere, short supply chains produce food from somewhere (Campbell, 2009). In this sense, it can be seen that in this logic of production, there is a greater added value that is generated for the consumer. Therefore, it emerges as a research problem to understand how organic production adds value to the consumers in a short food chain?

Aiming to answer this question, this paper is based on a case study of one of the companies that belong to Via Orgânica, the Mariani Family. The data were collected with in-deep interviews with the managers of this organization, and the analysis were made using the content analysis technique.

2 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

On this topic, are presented some contributions that based the research in the formulation of the methodology, in the elaboration of the research instruments, and by giving support to the discussions and analyzes made. Thus, the following theoretical perspectives are addressed according to the scope of this work: alternative agrifood production and short chains.

2.1 ALTERNATIVE AGRI-FOOD PRODUCTION

Organic production refers to agriculture that doesn't use artificial chemical fertilizers and pesticides, and animals raised under more natural conditions without the use of drugs and antibiotics common in regular livestock. In this sense, "organic" is merely a production technique, and doesn't necessarily imply any change in supply structures. The term organic agriculture was first coined by the book *Look to the Land* of Oxford University in 1940, as a response to chemical agriculture. The greatest contribution of this book was the idea of the vision of the earth as an organism, which must maintain a biological integrity. Thus, a farm

that depends on fertility that is not in the natural way, according to the author, isn't self-sufficient (Roitner, 2008).

The first logic of sustainable consumption for organic food is that it is a production method in harmony with the environment and local ecosystems. By working with and not against nature, and replenishing the soil with organic material, instead of overriding their natural immunities and relying on artificial fertilizers, the literature states that soil quality and hence food quality will be improved. A second logic is focused in the protection of consumer safety, where the consumption of organic food invalidate the intake of chemical pesticides. In this context, it's noted that currently the most cited reasons for consuming organic food are: food safety, environment, animal welfare and product flavor (Torjusen, 2001; Lockie, 2002).

The study and consumption of organic food until the 1990s was a niche of environmental interest, expressing the desire to avoid intensive agriculture and return to small-scale production, developing a new sense of connection with the land, through concern with the authenticity and the origin of food. The increase in organic consumption and the movement towards (re) localization or shortening of food supply chains has been representative. This type of production explicitly challenges the model of industrial agriculture and global food transport incorporated in the consumption of conventional foods distributed by large supermarket chains and restaurants (Aertsens, 2009).

From the perspective of organic consumer behavior, some research has shown remarkable results on the motivation of buying this type of food. The results of McEachern *et al.* (2002) have shown that consumer buying motivations for organic products are primarily self-interested. In other words, in order to achieve future market development, organic dairy farmers can not rely on the minority of consumers with sustainability motivations to sustain growth, but should aim to change the perceptions and attitudes of the larger consumer segments by implementing Marketing that reinforce the importance of the environmental and social ethics of organic production. Under this approach, Roitner *et al.* (2008) also warn that consumers should have additional information about organic farming. Thus, for example, in a food scandal situation consumers would be aware that organic production methods and organic certification provide additional benefits that can cover their concerns.

Several researches explored the barriers and motivators of the organic consumption (e.g: Sondhi, 2014; Castañeda, M. 2012; Hsu *et al.* 2016; Lea and Worsley, 2005; Tsakiridou *et al.*, 2008). According to Jouzi *et al.* (2017), the motivations of the producers are related to the opportunities generated by the cultivation of organic and are divided into 4 groups: environmental benefits; economic benefits; social benefits; health and nutrition benefits. Other authors, such as Herath and Wijekoon (2013, p. 07) proposed a framework that considers that farmer's behavior is "guided by three kinds of considerations; attitude towards organic farming, social factor and control factor (constraining or encouraging factors)".

About the existing barriers, Stephenson (2012) defends that there are three main groups: economic; production; and market challenges. According to the author, the financial hardship during the three-year transition period, certification and inspection expenses, high labor costs and the difficulty in quantifying success simply through yield and income are some economic aspects that dificultades the transition towards organic production. Also, limited technical assistance specific to organic production is a recurring barrier to transition (Strochlic; Sierra, 2007; Cranfield *et al.*, 2009; Johnston, 2010) and more university research on organic challenges would be useful (Johnston, 2010). Finally, on regarding to the marketing barriers, the main aspects are the lack of marketing networks, lack of farmer interest or ability to aggressively market their products, difficulty obtaining organic price information and geographic isolation or distance to available market (Johnston, 2010; Lau *et al.*, 2010).

Within this perspective, in which the transformation of the dynamics on production

and consumption of foods towards a sustainable chain pattern has been pursued, at the same time, the emergence of new dynamics in the agro-food markets (Renting, Marsden, Banks, 2003). It is at this context that the short agro-food chains have emerged, topic further explored on the next section.

2.2 SHORT CHAINS

According to Goodman (2003), large-scale corporate agriculture is a Fordist pact between the corporate food industry that manufactures standardized and processed products on a large scale. For the author this system triggers in a flight of quality, a production without origin and without quality, focused on the supply of a global network. Schneider and Gazolla (2017) complement that in the long chains the identity and the origin of the food disappear, suffering, therefore, of an impersonality. In this context, short chains or alternative agro-food networks are terms created to meet the demand for resistance to conventional food production.

For Ilbery *et al* (2005) the interaction between product, process and place configures a new "food geography" and where the short chains have the role of integrating the different actors, shortening the path of a food in the agri-food system. Thus, for Giuca (2012) the short chains reduce or eliminate the intermediates in the producer and consumer relationship and the places where the product would pass. On the other hand, according to Kneafsey (2013) the short chain exists when it is possible to identify and trace the chain that a food travels from the farm gate to the final consumer, involving a small number of intermediate actors. The European Union has set three objectives for the shortening of food chains: a) that the consumer knows exactly the origin of the food, how it was produced and the price paid to the producer; (B) the chain must be organized in such a way as to ensure that the producer holds a larger share of the value of the food sold; C) Intermediate actors should become partners in the food chain, helping to disseminate and share information about the product (EPI-AGRI, 2015).

The short supply chains CCAAs have consumer-producer relations described in three dimensions. The first focuses mainly on face-to-face interactions, where consumers buy products directly from producers. For example, farmers' fairs, e-commerce, orders, door-to-door selling, ready-made baskets, roadside sales and rural tents. The second category of CCAs relies on the generally spatial proximity relationships where consumers buy products sold in the region of production. For Brunori and Rossi (2000) this modality can favor the local identity of the product and promote the local tourism. This type of chain typically includes an intermediary actor who assumes the function and ensure the authenticity of the product, such as a local grocery store, restaurants, wholesalers stores (Miele, 2001; Renting *et al.*, 2003).

A third category widens the reach of CAAs, where products are sold to consumers outside the production region. In this case the products are exported from a region to the national or international market, and bear certification stamps, production codes or the specific reputation of the region of production. As an example, there are regional specialties such as Parma Ham, Champagne wine, and fair trade such as coffee and tea. These global networks are also considered short chains because they allow the consumer to connect with the place of origin of the food. In addition, the short chains seek alternative systems to the dominant agro-alimentary system and seek to shorten the distance, be they physical, social, cultural or economic (Micelsen *et al.*, 2000; Miele *et al.*, 2003).

From the perspective of the benefits to the stakeholders, for the producers, the short chains involve both economic and social advantages. Economically, short chains allow a

better redistribution of value added and make farmers less sensitive to market risks by reducing the number of intermediaries through diversification and through better price controls, thus ensuring close relations And less asymmetric with clients and rural development (Gazolla, Schneider, 2017, Schermer, 2015).

For the consumer, one of the main advantages is the quality of the products coming from the short chains, which participate in the quality turn process (Goodman, 2003). These products have regional or artisanal characteristics (eg: fair trade, farm processing, designation of origin) or ecological or natural characteristics (eg organic, natural, healthy, safe, unconfined and GMO free). Other advantages include food safety, as well as the rescue of cultural elements inherent in the production, consumption and preparation of food. It is noted, therefore, that while the conventional system produces food from nowhere (Mc Micherm, 2009), alternative agri-food networks produce food from somewhere (Campbell, 2009). The social relations developed within this alternative agro-alimentary system develop changes in alimentary practices through the narrowing of the connection between producers and consumers in relations more complex than economic practices.

The transition of consumer behavior around the search for sustainable food practices reflects an increase in the shared sense of responsibility, where there is a shift from the individualistic consumer to the citizen consumer. This perspective is related to the condition quoted by the Slow Food movement, which places the consumer as a "co-producer", an actor who, together with the producer, can generate innovation in food practices with attention to environmental and social damages. This thought concludes the literature review, and the methodology used in this article is presented on the next session.

3 METHODOLOGY

The choice of the methodological procedures that will be used for the development of a scientific research is crucial for the construction of knowledge about a given subject, since each method provides a study perspective (Gephart, 1999) . Thus, in order to achieve the research we intend to study, we intend to carry out a qualitative and exchanger type study. The selected method is the case study.

The qualitative approach considers that the researcher's concern is not the numerical representativeness of the researched group, but the deepening of the understanding of a social group, of an organization, of an institution, of a trajectory (Goldenberg, 2001). Moreover, the exploratory type fits when a researcher is planning a detailed study of the nature, sources and consequences of the subject to be understood (Richardson, 2008).

About the method, the case study is appropriate to provide a thorough appreciation of social relations, specially when the objective is to understand complex situations and the dynamics of a single environment (Yin, 2005, 2005; Collins; Hussey, 2003). Gil (2008) further clarifies that the case study is characterized by a thorough and exhaustive research on few objects, in order to allow a broad and detailed knowledge of what is being studied. Yin (2005) corroborates that the case study is an empirical research that investigates a phenomenon within its context of reality when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not well defined, and where several sources of evidence are used.

Also, it is a technically unique situation in which there will be "more variables of interest than data points, and as a result, it is based on various sources of evidence" (Yin, 2005, p. 32). In this context, Goldenberg (2007, p. 33) argues that the case study refers to "a holistic analysis, as complete as possible, that considers the social unit studied as a whole".

The case study was conducted on the Mariani Family, and data were collected from in-depth interviews with the property manager. The Mariani Family was chosen to develop this study because the manager, Jorge Mariani, is an exponent for Via Orgânica, since he is

the president of COOPEG, an important cooperative that supports organic producers in the region, and is one of the stakeholders of Via. Thus, from the study of a property, it is thought that this article can contribute as a first work on Via, since there are no previous publications on the subject.

Gil (2008) explains that the technique of data collection of interview in depth "is a form of social interaction. More specifically, it is a form of asymmetric dialogue, in which one of the parties seeks to collect data and the other is presented as a source of According to Richardson (2008) when referring to interviews, "the best situation to participate in the mind of another human being is the face-to-face interaction, since it has the character, unquestionable, and closeness Among people, which provides the best possibilities of penetrating the mind, life and definition of individuals" (p. 207).

For the treatment of the collected data, the methodology of content analysis was applied. According to Priest (2011) content analysis "focuses much more on latent content and can better consider the subtleties of the structure of arguments and narratives that are not easily captured" (p.138). This technique of analysis aims to search for the meaning of textual materials, be they primary or secondary data, generating as final product a consistent analysis of the theoretical interpretation of what is latent in the data collected (Appolinário, 2006).

In the next chapter, aspects of the theoretical reference will be crossed with the primary data obtained through interviews. From the crossing of these data, inferences of the results obtained in this research can be made.

4 ANALYSIS, DISCUSSION AND RESULTS

In the present chapter, the data obtained through documentary analyzes and the in-depth interview with the manager of the Mariani Family, one of the organic properties belonging to Via, are presented, discussed and analyzed. In order to facilitate the understanding of this process, the analysis is based on the main points brought by the manager in relation to the transition to organic production, followed by the points related to the generation of value for the consumer.

4.1 Transition towards Organic Agriculture

The Mariani Family, originally founded by Italian immigrants, began to differentiate itself from other grape growers when Jorge Mariani implemented organic farming on his estate. One of the first barriers encountered by the manager, however, was relative to the allowance needed to implement the changes he imagined. Other point signaled by the producer was about limited technical assistance specific to organic production. According to some authors, this is a recurring barrier. More university research on organic challenges would be useful (Johnston, 2010). Mariani talks about that, as follows:

I wanted to interact more with universities and research companies, finally ... When I develop Creole yeast, I go in the middle of the bush, I harvest leaves, and pick up the fungus that is there and transform it into nutrients that support the plants, I reproduce They to put here. Where is the tool that tells me that those fungi that I am developing in my cultural way, in the eye, that is really from a selected and healthy fungus family? I do not have tools today that help me create this. What in the microbiological area is being studied for me to combat a fungus with another fungus and not need to use poison? (Mariani, 2017).

The Garibaldi's city hall launched a call for farmers to form a group focused on

agrotourism and a movement that shared knowledge on production ecology, both formed by the rural union in the late 1990s.

I will not do what I know and I already know, give me the vine to deliver to the common industry do not want, but then you will do what? So it seems that sometimes you are scheduled to do something in the world, I listen in the radium to a program that has a seminar in Garibaldi and I went to look for those represented to us, a rural union and a secretary of agriculture. [...] That's where I go in the rural union and they have an ecology movement, and they invited me to participate. And I an oenologist, I thought, ecology? [...] If with poison is it difficult to imagine without anything?(Mariani, 2017).

The interviewee mentioned that this initiative of the city was essential for him to learn more about ecology and from this beginning the implementation of changes in the production system, going towards the organic. According to him, "the sinner is not the one who does nonsense without knowing rules, but the one who knows the rules and keeps doing the same things". Thus, in 1998, knowing the harms of traditional agriculture, the interviewee reports that he was prepared to reconstruct the profile of agriculture of the Mariani Family to transform it into organic family farming and bio-ecological.

According to Goodman (2017), the large-scale corporate agriculture is a Fordist pact between the corporate food industry that manufactures standardized and processed products, resulting in a system that triggers a flight of quality, production without origin and without quality, focused on the supply of a global network. This placement is convergent with the interviewee's speech, which mentions that these factors were decisive for his motivation to transform his property into organic: "Company X, for example, has a corporate and not a social management. With you, it's a half-dozen management that decides what's going to pay you"(Mariani, 2017).

In 1999, the manager of the Mariani Family also became director and founding member of the Garibaldi Ecological Producers' Cooperative (COOPEG), which focuses on the organic production of grapes, fruit and vegetable juices, wines, sparkling wines and artisanal sweets. In order to form a cooperative with a "healthy, clean and harmonious" environment (Coopeg, 2017), Mariani implemented a differentiated management strategy, a result of the whole experience of her family with cooperatives. Thus, COOPEG has developed following two primary rules: none of its members and directors earn a salary and all administrative decisions are taken together with the group. In this way, COOPEG has become an organization that assists the producer, and with which the associated producers achieve several benefits, such as gain of strength and bargaining power to insert their products in the distributors. Currently, Coopeg brings together 31 members, being active in the social development of families and contributing to a more just society and a cleaner and sustainable planet (Mariani, 2017).

Who has to invest in the property? Who will work in the area and produce? Who will sell and pay the commitments? Who will buy the supplies? The associate. So we create a contribution rate without taking away from the producer. Embutimos in the price, to assist in the administrative part, 7% that is paid by the market, by the consumer (Mariani, 2017).

One of the criteria, both to participate in COOPEG and the Organic Route refers to organic certification. Therefore, in order to generate confidence for consumers, members receive four times a year visits by technicians who analyze whether production maintains the quality standard. In addition to organic certification, it has the Ecovida certificate, which certifies the quality of producers focused on agroecology. In view of the above, it may be

inferred that the Cooperative, although not the focus of this study, emerges as an actor of great importance in the dynamics of the property under study, and also of the Organic Route as a whole. Next, we analyze the aspects that relate to the generation of value for the consumer, from the organic production.

4.2 Short Chains and Value Creation

About the generation of value provided by the organizations that fit into the short-chain model, it can be inferred, according to Goodman (2003), that one of the main advantages is the quality of the products, which have regional or Artisanal characteristics, or ecological or natural characteristics. The interviewee converges with this reasoning, also inferring that the establishment of a trust relationship, in this sense, is fundamental. "By consolidating trust, you brand territory, the consumer learns your story, knows your product and sees that you have to have quality" (Jorge Mariani, 2017).

The Mariani Family, together with COOPEG, operates in all dimensions of local chain, being the first dimension, the contact with the consumer, the most important. In this way, the family acts mainly through face-to-face interactions (Brunori & Rossi, 2000), where the farm receives tourists from all over Brazil, participates in local fairs, CSA groups (community that supports agriculture) and events such as Expointer, Fenadoce of Pelotas and Biobrasil in São Paulo. Mariani says that organic consumption is driven by the rapprochement between consumer and producer, which creates a mutual relationship of trust and exchange. When you tell the family story and the benefits of organic food for the consumer who visits a fair or farm, their work is recognized, understood and shared with other people: "you have to get involved in things, there the tourist Listen to stories, stroll, and are various types of tourist, and will consume and more importantly, will advertise" (Jorge Mariani, 2017).

The second dimension is related to spatial closeness, where consumers buy products sold in the region of production. This modality can favor the local identity of the product and promote the local tourism (Brunori & Rossi, 2000). In this sense, the performance of the Mariani family in the second dimension of the short chain occurs when consumers purchase COOPEG products from local stores, such as Sabor Ecológico, located in Garibaldi.

A third category widens the reach of CAAs, where products are sold to consumers outside the production region. In this case the products are exported from a region to the national or international market, and bear certification stamps, production codes or the specific reputation of the region of production (MICELSEN et al., 2000; MIELE et al., 2003). This third dimension also finds support in the work of the Mariani, but thanks to the effort made by COOPEG, which unites the producers and gives them bargaining power with major distributors, such as Rede Pão de Açúcar and Rede Zaffari, through which they Can be present in more states of Brazil. It is noteworthy that in this dimension, despite the contact between producer and consumer, the origin of the product is guaranteed by the certification of organic products from Brazil and Ecoinovar, and that the short chain pattern is still maintained by a few actors.

According to authors such as Rodrigues *et al.* (2009), Tsakiridou *et al.* (2008), Castañeda (2012), among others, there are several ways to generate value for the consumer through short chains. It is noteworthy that three forms were observed in the case of the Mariani Family: (1) political power of the consumer in food; (2) recovery of confidence in agri-food production; (3) food as medicine. Regarding the consumer's political empowerment aspect, it can be said that Mariani Family property stands out for providing food education experiences, awareness raising and environmental sensitivity, awareness of the importance of the organic producer, leading to a politicization of foods. In this way, when the consumer has

contact with these producers, the consumption transcends to a co-producer experience, where the search for trust and quality of the individual starts to guide the producer and, thus, the production. Thus, individuals gain political power, which can be summarized through the expression vote with your fork (Portilho & Barbosa, 2016). That is, the idea of the quality turn (Goodman, 2003), increased environmental awareness and food politicization is fostered mainly through the direct relationship between the Mariani Family and its consumers. This awareness goes beyond the physical when the political consumer acts as a food value sharer and teaches other consumers, passing on the information learned, creating a value chain generated between co-producers (political consumer) and producer.

The aspect of the rescue of the trust in the agrifood production, was one of the most indicated constructs in the literature as motivating factor of the consumption of organic. For Mariani the trust is created from the contact of the consumer with the history of the producer and with the experience. In addition, the proximity of the consumer to the producer allows him to experience, to know, to appropriate the productive process, creating a bond with the food. The trust between the actors is thus naturally born as a consequence of the developed relationship. The interviewee mentioned in several moments elements related to trust, but it can be said that the factor that most fuels this security for consumers is the coexistence with producers who have a belief in organic food, as Jorge Mariani has. The next topic addresses and illustrates this point.

The third aspect is one of the main motivations of the producer interviewed to make the transition to organic production - and to remain in it. It is their desire to change the agrifood system through the promotion of organics as medicine. Faced with several barriers encountered by the producer, it is highlighted that the main motivation, in the case of the interviewee, to continue producing organic seems to be its values. He believes in what he produces and much more than merely economic activity, Jorge Mariani wants his work to positively impact people's lives by producing quality food that will fulfill its most essential mission: to nourish, not harm.

What happens to us when we are poorly fed? We get sick. And what happens to the plant that has been poorly fed? It also gets sick, it creates fungus. There, they created the fungicide to control the fungus. But when he used it there, he contaminated the water, the air, the producer, and the food. Where is it going? Then if it is not for the food it is for the air or for the water that you drink. You get sick and stop where? In the doctor. [...] So here we are fighting the tide to see if we can get more and more people and people involved (Mariani, 2017).

Considering these considerations, a framework was developed to compile and illustrate the analysis performed. Figure 01, presented below, shows the observations made, synthesizing them.

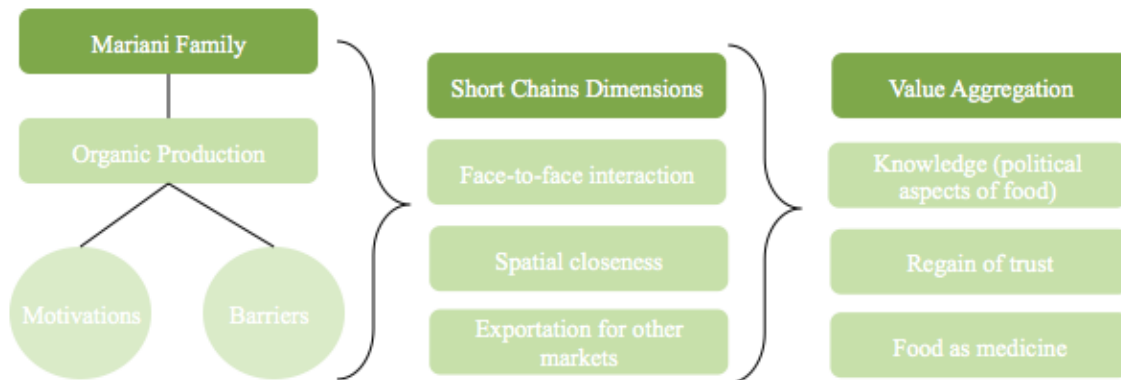


Image 01 - Analysis framework
Source: developed by the authors (2017).

It can be inferred, therefore, that the Mariani Family is a property that converted its productive process to organic, motivated by the knowledge acquired through a program developed and fomented by the city hall of Garibaldi, where it is inserted. From this acquired knowledge, the farmer interviewed felt the moral obligation to make this change. The barriers, however, are very imposing, but COOPEG enters this scenario with a key role in supporting local organic producers, giving them a number of benefits and assistance. Thus, one can identify that the property analyzed has all the dimensions that the literature points out as characteristics of a short chain, and still generates added value to consumers through these characteristics. This completes the analysis and discussion of results, and starts with the final considerations.

5 FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

"Let food be thy medicine and medicine be thy food."

The growth of alternative agrifood networks is related to the problems and criticisms of the conventional agri-food system, which emphasizes its environmental unsustainability, risks to health and rootlessness. As a reaction, consumers' interest in food origin, quality and organic production grows. In this scenario, the present paper had the objective to understand how organic production adds value to the consumers in a short chain agrifood production. Through the case study of the Mariani Family, three forms of aggregation of value to the consumer stand out: (1) consumer's political power regarding food relations; (2) recovery of trust in agri-food production; (3) food as medicine.

Under the focus of analysis of short value chains, it's noticed that the shortening of the distance between producers and consumers generates a relationship of knowledge exchange and trust which teaches the consumer to value and share eating habits giving preference to healthy products and food without pesticides, with quality, cultural origin and fair prices for both parties. Thus, the short chain studied differs from conventional agri-food networks mainly because it's an alternative to the dominant model (Maye, 2014).

Another relevant point were the motivations and barriers for the producer to convert his property into organic production, a point widely covered by publications, but whose discussion is still pertinent. Thus, stands out the importance of the municipal initiative of Garibaldi to proposes the creation of an ecological agrotourism program, which at the end of the 1990s was decisive for the producer to achieve the turn for the organic production. Again, in 2016, the prior mentioned city hall launches the challenge of Via Orgânica, one of the first routes of organic agro-tourism in Brazil.

A series of questions arise about this formation. The present article intended to make a first approach to Via Orgânica through the Mariani Family, but it's recommended that future studies interview more properties, in order to better understand the formation of Via, as well as the relationships that are established by the actors that compose it, and how consumers fall into this logic.

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