

Appendix A – Interview Protocol

Promoting Viable Supply Chains in the Agri-Food Sector

Background on Project:

The project I am working on is a master's thesis at the Louvain School of Management, supervised by Professor Constantin Blome. This work focuses on how hybrid Supply Chains (SC) can bring viability to businesses that specialise in sourcing and selling food products. It is believed that collaboration within the SC can largely enhance its results, sustainability, and survivability during normal operations and disruptive events, such as a pandemic. This project aims at analysing this assumption and bring new conclusions to this topic.

Why I want to talk to you specifically:

I want to interview you specifically as I believe you and the organisation you work in can bring valuable insights in my study.

How will the results be used?

The results will be used only for academic purposes.

How will data be handled (storage/confidentiality):

With your permission, this interview will be recorded and stored in a safe location, offline (not in the cloud). You have the right to remain anonymous in this process, and participation is voluntary.

Do you consent to these terms?

Interview

Name:

Date:

Anonymity:

1. First, I would like to talk about the general structure of the organisation and its decision-making process.
 - a. Could you describe the structure of this organisation in general terms?
 - b. Do you believe that this structure enhances collaboration with the partners you

work with?

- i. *If so*: What types of collaboration methods are more common in your organisation (e.g., contract, information sharing, joint-decision, co-creation)?
 - ii. *If not*: What characteristic of the organisation is the most important to you?
- c. → Cooperatives: Does this cooperative actively seek collaborations with other cooperatives (e.g. consumers, farmers')?
 → Conventional: Does this organisation actively seek collaborations with other players (e.g. to promote the environment and society)?
- d. In general terms, could you explain how the decision-making process works?
- i. How are the requirements of the many stakeholders (e.g. members/consumers, suppliers, farmers) integrated?
 - ii. Does the organisation have specific, standardised guidelines for decision-making, or is this process often dependent on personal judgement?
- e. To satisfy the consumers' needs, which strategies does the organisation use to source products?
- i. → Cooperatives: Are members willing to adapt their diet according to seasonality?
 → Conventional: Was it ever necessary to do product substitution?
If so: How did you proceed?
 - ii. What are the criteria for selecting/rejecting specific suppliers?
 - iii. How do you define the supply conditions (e.g. price, risk of overproduction or underproduction)?
- f. Do you believe this organisation shares the same values as its suppliers/partners, or is this generally unimportant?
- g. Do you believe this organisation shows more trust, commitment, and influence over other actors in the SC than others?
- i. *If so*: How do these factors change the relationship between the organisation and its suppliers?
 - ii. *If not*: Are these unimportant factors? Why?
- h. How does your organisation process and share information internally and externally?

2. Now, I would like to talk about how this organisation is preparing for unpredicted, disruptive events that may alter the day-to-day operations here and in the SC in general.
 - a. Specifically, I urge you to think about how disruptions like COVID-19 and the war in Ukraine affected your organisation's structure and operations:

- i. Before the event occurred, did your organisation ever identify that these scenarios are possible?
 - ii. What were the most difficult challenges you had to face?
 - iii. What lessons would you draw from overcoming these challenges?
 - iv. → Cooperatives: Do you believe that the specific characteristics of this organisation's structure and the decision-making process that you described before gave you an advantage over conventional retail?
 - v. During this time, did your organisation adopt any type of new technology or a new way to process information?
 - vi. Looking into the future, how is your organisation preparing for similar events to these? Would you prefer to adapt in advance and what would be the strategies to use?
 - b. Can you describe any unique features of your organisation's structure that support the long-term viability of your business model?
3. Finally, I would like to assess how this organisation seeks sustainable initiatives within itself and how it encourages others to follow its lead.
 - a. In the decision-making process, do you tend to also consider the perspective of how this organisation's decisions affect the whole of the SC?
 - i. → Cooperatives: Do you believe that because your organisation acts on an alternative network, it loses economies of scale? Do you think economies of scale are achieved by certain activities your organisation does?
 - ii. Do you believe your influence has a significant effect on your suppliers' activities?
 - iii. Does your organisation monitor the profit distribution in the SC?
 - b. → Cooperatives: Does your organisation seek to connect local producers and the demand of your partners, as well as connect your partners with your members?
 - c. Does your organisation make efforts to build and strengthen collaboration and coordination between your suppliers and partners by bringing together different types of actors in the SC? (e.g. by creating flows of interactions between two actors)
 - i. *If so*: Do you believe the collaboration your organisation creates changes the SC and its interactions as a whole?
 - ii. *If not*: Do you believe it is not your organisation's purpose to do this, or do you not have the resources for this?
 - d. Now, I urge you to imagine all your existing suppliers and future suppliers that may not work with you now but may do so in the future. Does your organisation

seek to bring them together to achieve a collective mass?

- i. *If so*: How does it do this? Does it seek to preserve the products' origins?
 - ii. *If not*: Do you believe it is not in the scope of your activity?
- e. Looking to the future, how do you envision your organisation growing (e.g. monitoring new business models, trends, technology)?