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Creating the meaning of sustainability

A report on farmers' interpretation and framing
of sustainability in Västra Götaland.

Robin Gillenskog

Supervisor: Carl Cassegård

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Abstract

The research aim is to explore differences between the farmers' and the governmental definition of agricultural sustainability to ease process of reaching a mutual understanding. By frame analysis as the theoretical perspective, and interviews together with ethnographic work as methodology, the study asks the following research questions: What is the farmers' perception of the meaning of sustainability and how is it framed and created? Are the guidelines towards ecological and KRAV certification reasonable from the farmers' perspective? When compared, what are the differences between the governmental and farmers' definition of sustainability? The report concludes that the farmers interpret agricultural sustainability as an environmental circular process of growth, environmental conservation, local production, sufficient time to develop a family and social relations, and a minimum of economic self-sufficiency. The farmers frames sustainability with Heritage, local knowledge, media, education, social interactions, income, time, and first-hand experience. The creation is built on Heritage, word of mouth, friends, family, local knowledge, media, education, social interactions, income, time, and first-hand experience. The farmers see the guidelines to be organic/KRAV certified as reasonable but would benefit to be simplified and streamlined. The difference found in defining sustainability was that the process for the farmers is a long-term local project, often spanning generations to keep circle of growth functioning. The governmental definitions focus on change in the agricultural systems to achieve progress that rehabilitates the environment, ensures economic growth and social development.

Keywords: Farming, agriculture, sustainability, ecology, organic, Heritage, framing, agricultural guidelines

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Introduction

In 2016, a report from IPES (International Panel of Experts on Sustainable Food Systems) concludes that the industrial agricultural food production system needs to develop towards organic farming to be sustainable (IPES 2016a, IPES 2016b). organic is defined as “*produced or involving production without the use of chemical fertilizers, pesticides, or other artificial chemicals*” according to the Oxford English Dictionary (OED 2021a). Jordbruksverket, a part of the Swedish government working with agriculture, further elaborates on this definition as “producing food in a sustainable way from soil to table” (Jordbruksverket 2021b). While the global food production system is providing large quantities of goods for consumption, it comes at a cost; There is a lack of balance between what is demanded by the lands, water, ecosystems, and on the other side the production process. This creates numerous issues regarding depletion of the earth resources, such as loss of biodiversity and high emissions outputs from food and farming industry. It also puts stress on the farmers as they work to maintain the lands and their own ability to sustain a decent quality of life (IPES 2016a, IPES 2016b).

Today the work towards sustainability is a process including actors from the entire world and incorporates many levels of organization from global to national, non-governmental and governmental, all the way down to the farmers themselves. This process of organization towards sustainable food production is given to the farmers in legislations, guidelines, and certification processes. The work towards sustainability affects both conventional and organic food production, but the two differ in how they operate, with higher demands on organic farms.

As of today, farmers inside the European Union (E.U.) can apply for organic certification, and in Sweden if the farmers want to be organic certified there is the choice between EU organic and the Swedish further developed organic standard KRAV. Both certifications are given by implementation of a large set of criteria controlled by one of the many certification companies active in Sweden. Organic is closely tied to sustainability; to achieve sustainability more organic production is necessary to develop balance between the earth's resources and human demand (IPES 2016b, Jordbruksverket 2021b).

Unfortunately, as of today the meaning of

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sustainability is established without including the farmers that will work with sustainability; *"It is external experts rather than the agricultural workers that get to decide what sustainable agriculture is."* (Slätmo, E., Fischer, K. and Röö, 2017a:9). This statement is from a report about different frameworks used in assessments of agriculture for certification and evaluation of farms, identifying a hierarchy in defining the meaning of sustainability.

The relevance of farmers' interpretation of sustainability and the guidelines was further strengthened when the United Nations in 2015 established the common global goals for economic, environmental, and social sustainability in what became "Agenda 2030" (Further described in the section levels of governance) that identifies agriculture and food production as related to the core of sustainability, motivated in the report by identifying that without food, fields, and water the 17 goals of the agenda become unreachable. This created much focus on agriculture and thus farming for the "United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization" when further developing the work towards the goals of the agenda (Jordbruksverket 2021a, The Global Goals 2021). Agenda 2030 is also a base for creating guidelines and the different criteria for certification in farming (Jordbruksverket 2021a).

On the frontier of sustainable agriculture are the farmers that choose to be certified as KRAV/organic, in the Swedish goals 30% of all food production should be organic by 2030, and 60% of all food served in public kitchens should be organic (Jordbruksverket 2021b). This demand means that more farms need to get certified; giving relevance to study the farmers' view of the certification criteria.

There are further reasons for focusing on the farmers' perception of both the certification process and sustainability: the two are closely connected. As organic production is a part of the work towards sustainable farming (Jordbruksverket 2021b). This makes the certification progress a gatekeeper towards the goal of 30% organic production. As the certification is voluntary the process should be reasonable for the farm's different premises, encouraging conversion to organic when possible.

This report focuses on the farmers' definition and interpretation of sustainability, and their view on the certification criteria for organic/KRAV. The research gives a short summary of the different major political actors that have shaped the system for EU organic and KRAV certification down to the farmers implementing the different systems to production. Data from the visits and interviews is then analyzed to give a picture of how the farmers frame sustainability and if the picture creates differences in interpretation of sustainability and thus the guidelines for organic/KRAV certification.

Problem definition, research questions and aim of the study:

Earlier research concludes that there is a problem in the interpretation of sustainability, where the farmer's meaning of sustainability differs from the governmental. This is due to lack of standardized definitions, and that an understanding of the farmers' behavior and attitudes needs to be further explored and developed (Slätmo, E., Fischer, K. and Röö, E. 2017b:387,390,

Saunders. 2016:392). By contributing to such an understanding, this research seeks to facilitate a common definition of sustainability, as the goals set in Sweden depend on collaboration between government and farmers. To work towards sustainability every part of the chain from global to local, organizations to consumer, and not least farmers need to come to an agreement of what sustainability in farming means.

This research contributes to such collaboration by exploring specific parts relating to the meaning of sustainability, attitudes towards the Swedish agricultural guidelines, and certification process. The difference in interpreting the concepts of sustainability not only causes friction between the government and the farmers' view of common goals and guidelines, but it also risks excluding valuable knowledge about how to run a farm in the most sustainable way from the prerequisites of the different farms (Saunders 2016, Slätmo, E., Fischer, K. and Rööf, E. 2017a:8).

The research aim is to explore differences between the farmers' and the governmental definition of farming sustainability, and to ease the process of reaching a mutual understanding. To reach the governmental goals of 30% organic farming the meaning of sustainability needs to be agreed upon and the process towards certification needs to be evaluated. This research contributes by answering the following questions:

What is the farmers' perception of the meaning of sustainability and how is it framed and created? Are the guidelines towards organic and KRAV certification reasonable from the farmers' perspective? When compared, what are the differences between the governmental and farmers' definition of sustainability?

The results from the report can be used as a part of a larger narrative about defining farming sustainability, by including the local farmers' perspectives and from that further develop goals and guidelines towards a sustainable future for farming. This helps governmental organizations to deepen, define and expand the meaning of sustainability by including the farmers in creating definitions and guidelines.

Background and point of departure for the thesis:

This research has its roots in the geographic area where the researcher lives, surrounded by farm areas. The topic of sustainability arose from the geographical context of the countryside and to agriculture as a prominent part of the geography. What will the future look like for the countryside and its farmers? From this beginning the research started to develop. Talking to the neighbors working or living at farms, the farmers' life of Västra Götaland began to be explored. By coincidence, the first farms visited had certification badges on the outside of the barns, a badge communicating that the farms were either KRAV or organic classified. When asked about the certification the farmers began to describe the process and the meaning behind the classification, and why they choose to put down the money and time to get the certification. Here the concept of sustainability became a major part of the discussions, and further research about sustainability in agriculture was made after the conversations. It became clear that

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Sustainability is a well-covered topic in Europe's governmental organizations aimed towards farmers. Where a governmental definition of the meaning has been developed and exists as boundaries towards the farmer that wants to be classified as organic, examples of these definitions are discussed later in this report. In general terms sustainability is described as “Capable of being maintained or continued at a certain rate or level” by the Oxford English Dictionary (OED 2018). Reflecting on the conversations and the formal definitions presented, possible differences in the meaning of sustainability between the farmers’ and governmental definitions and how it was meant to be applied to the farms was noticed.

As the farmers’ perspective was the first one visited by the researcher, it was decided to focus on the farmer views of what sustainability means and compare this to the many guidelines and legislations relevant for their work. The researcher’s supervisor presented tips to earlier research where “Natural versus anthropogenic climate change: Swedish farmers’ joint construction of climate perceptions” by Therese Asplund (2016) was included. The research explores farmers’ perception on climate change, a topic related to sustainability and inspired the researcher to define the research question and giving directions towards what earlier research to search for.

Earlier research

In Asplund's research “Natural versus anthropogenic climate change: Swedish farmers’ joint construction of climate perceptions” (2016) Asplund uses the concept of framing to analyze how perceptions of climate change are formed from data collected under group discussions with farmers. The analysis of the farmers’ perceptions of climate change highlight differences in framing and concludes that farmers create their views on climate change via their own experiences, that climate change is either anthropogenic or natural and that communication tools contributes to the framing of anthropogenic climate change (Asplund 2016:560). Asplund's work was chosen as a basis to take inspiration and borrow concepts from, it also gave a sample of results from a similar research question as in the developing thesis. After continuing the search for additional relevant literature, the keywords “framing” and “sustainability” was inputted to the Gothenburg university library database and I found “The Framing of Sustainability in Sustainability Assessment Frameworks for Agriculture” (Slätmo, E., Fischer, K. and Rööös, E. 2017b).

In this study performed by the Swedish university of agriculture, the researchers explore three different frameworks created to evaluate farming. These frameworks were qualified to be included in the study by four different criteria’s: The frameworks are designed to work in the agricultural sector, the framework can be used for assessment for different types of farming, the framework includes concepts of economic, social, and environmental sustainability and finally that the framework has been analyzed by numerous review articles on assessment tools for agriculture. (Slätmo, E., Fischer, K. and Rööös, E. 2017b:382). The three frameworks found to fit the criteria were Indicateurs de Durabilité des Exploitations Agricoles (IDEA), Response-Induced Sustainability Evaluation (RISE), and Sustainability Assessment of Food and Agricultural systems (SAFA) (Slätmo, E., Fischer, K. and Rööös, E. 2017b:379).

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IDEA is an assessment tool for both farmers and policy makers that works with the themes of social, economic, and environmental sustainability. These themes are then divided into a measurement system to evaluate a farms performance. RISE is also measure oriented, but focused on evaluating planning, advice, and education. This is done by measuring a set of up to 60 parameters via themes of the current condition of the indicator and how much focus the governmental farming system puts on the indicator measured. SAFA aims to be a global and holistic framework. It focuses on the value chains active for agricultural production. In addition to social, economic, and environmental themes SAFA also includes good governance. With a total of 58 sub-themes and 118 different indicators that can be used to assess a farm (Slätmo, E., Fischer, K. and Röö, E. 2017b:384).

The study is not only relevant to this thesis as it gives insight to policy and the evaluation process of farms, the study on these frameworks also identifies a problem in the interpretation of sustainability, where the farmer's view of the meaning of sustainability differs due to lack of standardized definitions. The research concludes that the farmers lack knowledge about sustainability and slows down the progress of agricultural development. Frameworks like IDEA, RISE and SAFA can help by giving set parameters to work with and evaluate. It is also important to notice that the conclusion about lacking knowledge can be questioned, as the many choices that needs to be navigated to make a functioning farm according to the frameworks may be the issue rather than the knowledge of the farmers (Slätmo, E., Fischer, K. and Röö, E. 2017b:387,390).

To further deepen the theories and focus it more on the farmers rather than legislations and guidelines, a study about the notions surrounding farmers where found. In “Complex Shades of Green: Gradually Changing Notions of the “Good Farmer”” Saunders (2016) was inspired by Bourdieu when analyzing what being “the good farmer” means and is seen as, and how both conventional and organic farmers reflect on the relationship between farming and environment (Saunders. 2016:391,403). “The good farmer” is explored via habitus, described by Bourdieu (1984) as a theoretic concept highlighting dispositions given to an individual influenced by what cultural, social, economic, and political circumstances that is created and formed by past events and different structures in a society. This process develops a self-identity for the individual, giving different positions to different social interactions (Saunders. 2016:391,393). The study concludes that what “The good farmer” implies varies between organic and conventional farmers, and that cultural and social context impacts how the farmer contextualizes environmental actions (Saunders. 2016:391,404). Saunders identifies a tension between multifunctional goals set for agriculture, for example production and environmental progress, where the farmers focus on making the production on the farm as effective as possible (Saunders. 2016:391,404). Saunders means that the farmers’ habitus would be better conceptualized as how the farmer is seeing their position in agriculture, which changes as environmental and social expectations on the farmers develops (Saunders. 2016:391,404). Further Saunders highlight the importance of developing an understanding of the farmers’ behavior and attitudes to the environment, as policies are implemented that affects their profession, something this thesis strive to future expand upon (Saunders. 2016:392).

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To Conclude the earlier research, it suggests that the changing framework for the farmers to work inside highlight the question about the farmers' perception of the frameworks. There is a lack of common definitions, and a complex list of different frameworks to work with that not only directly affects the farmers' work, but also the perception of the farmers in the larger narrative i.e., consumers, legislators, and the general population. Slätmo, E., Fischer, K. and Rööös (2017a:9) concludes that experts decide what sustainable agriculture is without including the farmers' perspective, and that there are differences in the farmers' knowledge compared to the organizations that define the legislations and guidelines. The research does not identify how and why the perception may differ from the farmers' views, creating a question what the farmers' view is, and a need to go even deeper and ask how the view is built. The research also states the possibility that the farmers' lack of knowledge may not be the issue, rather that the farmers' knowledge is incompatible with the many rules and guidelines, giving reason to research the knowledge making process of the farmer (Slätmo, E., Fischer, K. and Rööös, E. 2017b:387,390). Further Saunders finds that cultural and social context affects how the farmer contextualizes environmental actions, giving reason to research the social and cultural context of the farmers (Saunders. 2016:391,404).

Levels of governance – From the world down to farmer:

A brief introduction to the organization and work towards sustainability is here given to describe the context of sustainability for the farmers working with or towards organic/KRAV certification. The governmental definition acts as boundaries to what can be done on a farm, limiting use of non-natural tools for their profession. What sustainable is can be seen as an evolving progress and context sensitive, for example, the earlier mentioned Oxford dictionary's description of sustainable is further interpreted and developed by Longo, Clark & Shriver et al. (2016), where sustainable is described as the system with the least negative impact on the environment, human and animals. This includes erosion, heavy metals, use of potentially dangerous chemicals and emissions (Longo, Clark & Shriver et al. 2016:437). Here follows a brief description of the general definition according to various levels of governmental organizations, everyone relevant through their connection with each other down to finally defining the rules and guidelines for the Swedish farmers.

Global level:

In 1987 the U.N. World commission on environment and development (WCED) published the document "Our common future" where focus on development and sustainability got a definition formulated as "development that meets the need of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (Longo, Clark & Shriver et al. 2016:437). The United Nations development program (UNDP) announced the global goals of sustainability called "Agenda 2030" in 2015. Agenda 2030 is built on 17 different goals where several is tied to agriculture, such as zero hunger, responsible consumption and production, climate action and life of land. Many of the E.U. and Swedish guidelines and legislations related to sustainability is based on reaching the goals of Agenda 2030 (Regeringskansliet 2021).

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EU level:

The common agricultural policy (CAP) is operating on a E.U. level. CAP builds upon three key points: social, environmental, and economic sustainability. CAP emphasizes the dependency that agriculture has on environmental conditions and aims to protect and rehabilitate the environment. Economic sustainability aims to ensure that the workers in agriculture can earn a living from their profession. The social key point focuses on the other two points influence over social relations, exemplified as economy and food production sustaining the communities. If the economy and food resources are lacking social consequences may follow (European commission 2021).

Swedish level:

In Sweden there are numerous governmental levels working with sustainability. In the year 2000 a report on the definitions of sustainability was released called “Vad är hållbar utveckling?” (Translated to English as “what is sustainable development?”) (Fegler & Unemo 2000). The article is defining sustainable from the three parts: 1. environmental as protection of the environment to achieve sustainable providing, further defined as ensuring a long-time production capacity and an effective use of the earth resources. 2. Social: To work towards extinction of poverty, towards full employment for every citizen, work towards social integration, achieve equality, equal rights to education, high standards for physical and psychological health, and to improve developing countries. 3: the economical is defined as during further developments of society ensure economic growth (Fegler & Unemo 2000:24).

Jordbruksverket is a governmental organization focused on agricultural workers. The three themes of environmental, social and economic sustainability is divided in 12 goals to work towards: No hunger, no poverty, equality, clean water and sanitation for everyone, sustainable energy to everyone, high standards in working conditions and economic growth, sustainable consumption and production, fight climate change, maintain the seas and lake resources, ecosystem and biodiversity, and finally what is called “goal 17” which is focused on developing governmental systems and legislations (Jordbruksverket 2021a).

Lantbrukarnas riksförbund (LRF) have created a guideline document for farmers if they aim for organic certification. The document is created from directives given by the EU in council regulation 834/2007 “organic production and labelling of organic products and repealing Regulation and commission regulation 889/2008” (2007) and “organic production and labelling of organic products with regard to organic production, labelling and control” (2008).

Länsstyrelsen is functioning on a regional level and is the governmental organization that handles many of the subsidies to the agricultural sector. Länsstyrelsen also does controls at agricultural workplaces to check that the legislation is followed. Controls for certification is handled by hired third party certification companies that the farmer can choose themselves (Länsstyrelsen 2021).

KRAV and Organic are the certification types given by different certification companies. The two are similar, the difference is that organic is defined by EU legislations and KRAV is a further development, including defined and additional rules regarding crop and livestock keeping, climate and social regards. Both certifications cost money for the farmer and give a certification stamp on products, and possibilities to apply for certain economic subsidies and sanctions (KRAV 2021, Jordbruksverket 2021c).

Theoretical approach

Frame analysis

Early in developing this report it was decided to focus on the farmers' perspective and adopt a theoretical approach around exploring their knowledge and world view, to find answers to the research questions. From the first conversations with the farmers, the impression was that they had much to say about their life on the farms. The farmers could be seen as skillful conversationalists that were happy to share their knowledge and views about farming. To take advantage of the farmers' knowledge and ability to speak in detail about their life and work, a theoretical approach was adopted that benefit from the type of data gathered from the methodology. To choose a theoretical approach a look at earlier research was done, and the identification of the farmers' knowledge as something to further explore became a focus. In Asplunds "Natural versus anthropogenic climate change: Swedish farmers' joint construction of climate perceptions (2016)" Asplund refer to Lakoff (2010) that argues for the importance of frames in the process of knowledge making, and why it matters how the environment is framed:

In "Why it matters how we frame the environment (2010)" Lakoff suggest that knowledge makes use of frames, every word definition is defined by what frames is activated when the word is used, thus all talking and thinking involves framing. A comparable way of thinking is applicable to sustainability and agriculture, let us use agriculture as an example: The agricultural frame may include roles such as the farmers themselves, the consumers, the stores, the legislators, and organizations researching and applying rules. It also includes things we may think of as related to agriculture, such as tractors, animals, food production, plowing fields, the environment, the countryside etc. The point is that a single word is part of a larger system that makes ones understanding and knowledge of the world we live in. Lakoff (2010) suggests that individuals that are schooled in and work with public policy tend to neglect the frames of the people to which policy is applied, leading to an ineffective way of communicating and applying guidelines and legislations. Further Lakoff (2010) argues that this neglecting comes from a view that the creation of reason is a conscious and logical process. This clash of thought between frames and the traditional empirical and reason-built teaching-learning process gives reason to research and compare them, to develop ways to reach "sustainability" by understanding the sustainability framing process of the farmers.

Lakoff's (2010) arguing for the importance of frames relating to the environment influenced the research to use the analytical concept of frames. In his finishing words Lakoff (2010) argues

for the importance of coherent frames for social movements, as a coherent frame around a subject is needed to define the discourse that enables mobilizing of people. An example of how such a definition may look is given by Lakoff (2010) with environmentalism: “*The natural world is being destroyed and it is a moral imperative to preserve and reconstitute as much of it as possible as soon as possible.*” In this thesis, the farmers were looked at by the researcher as a potential kind of social movement, as they had made an active choice to become organic/KRAV certified. This identified the question why the choice was done, and what potential beliefs and ideologies that framed the decision. Is there something in the agricultural system they think should change that made them take a stance by becoming certified?

Inspired by Lakoff’s (2010) argue for framing social movements, and Asplunds (2016) chosen analytical perspective, the chosen type of frame analysis was based on social movement studies. Developed from Goffman’s (1986) interactional school of frame analysis, focusing on individuals as conversationalists, that in different interactions with others co-constructs a meaning of their world (Goffman 1986, Dewulf et al., 2009) Snow, Rochford, Worden and Benford (1986) adapted Goffman’s (1986) frame analysis to look at social movements, identifying diagnostic, prognostic, and motivational as three ways of framing. The concepts show diverse ways the frame of a topic is used to create a perception for the individual. Diagnostic framing identifies a problem and where the fault may come from, prognostic framing is where one creates tactics and solutions to the identified problem, and motivational framing is what calls for action. If there is a motive behind wanting change in the agricultural system by the farmers, there is a possibility that one can look at the certification as a sign of frame alignment, described by Snow, Rochford, Worden and Benford (1986:464) as when links between different actors’ frames becomes coherent and complement each other. By finding potential similarities in the farmers’ frame when creating their meaning of sustainability, and thoughts about the certification, the researcher can analyze if there are any main concepts that links the farmers’ choices towards change in the agricultural system.

By looking for why the farmers choose to get certified, how they think about their choice and certification, and analyze what possible goals the farmers try to reach by becoming certified, the researcher had a set perspective to look from when writing the analysis. The theoretical approach made the researcher look at the organic/KRAV farmers as carriers of both beliefs and ideologies, and a potential part of the global narrative of creating the meaning of sustainability (Snow, Rochford, Worden and Benford 1986). Several diverse kinds of frame analysis exist, and frame analysis has also been applied to different kinds of material, e.g., in media analysis, social movement studies and policy research (Semetko, and Valkenburg 2000, Snow, Rochford, Worden and Benford 1986, Lakoff 2014). The type of frame analysis used here is chosen to find how the farmers construct their view of sustainability and if there are potential differences in the interpretation of the words meaning when compared to the governmental definitions. Frame analysis works to explain the context from the respondent’s perspective. The method helps to identify what one's worldview is built upon from the world around the respondents. The frame is seen as what influences one's understanding of the world and thus, when analyzing the data creates an analysis of the many workings behind an individual's

created views. It moves the focus from the individual to how the individual builds their knowledge that the view is based upon.

Limitations and scope of research

A possible issue was that the wide approach and focus of the research could make the results too vague and general, as sustainability is connected to many things and concepts. To focus the research the analysis of the word “sustainability” is limited to the relevance of farming, meaning that the global goals of sustainability that stretches over every kind of social, economic, and environmental sustainability is limited to agriculture. Thus, focusing on what social, economic, and environmental sustainability is, related to farms and farmers. This choice was made as the data from the interviews in the start of the project indicated that economic, social, and environmental sustainability had no clear conceptual boundaries for the farmers, influencing and defining each other. To make an example: To explain environmental sustainability both economic and social needs to be included, as they are a part of the framing of environmental sustainability for the farmers. An account of my own use of the term sustainability when doing the interviews is given below under the section “*What was asked? A presentation of the interview guide.*”

The report takes place in a limited geographical area, but instead of seeing this as a limitation it gives insight to how different farming operates depending on climate and geography inside Sweden. The different prerequisites for farming in distinct parts of the land needs to be considered as it gives different opportunities to work with agricultural sustainability.

The work strives to give a picture of the farmers’ thoughts about their profession and lifestyle. The focus will be on the respondent’s stories therefore the data will be focused on the interviews and experience while being with the farmers. This will in this case exclude workers from organizations like Jordbruksverket, the governmental view is instead based on available information from published documents when needed. In the case that different non-governmental organizations, media, and governmental organizations become a part of the respondent’s stories they will briefly be discussed to get a clear picture of what it is, and why it is relevant. To do an as correct description as possible both earlier research and data collected was used to find the most plausible empirical explanations (Dewalt & Dewalt 2001:180). In the conclusion the results are compared to earlier research. If the results complement each other or show comparable results the generalizability and validity of the study is strengthened. The results will have the opportunity to be relevant to different non-governmental organizations and governmental organizations interested in the results (Jordbruksverket 2020c).

Methodology

Coding for analysis

To be able to categorize the data collected from the visits on the farms, inspiration was taken from the coding process of grounded theory in Julianne S. Oktays book *Grounded Theory*

(2012). The coding process was used to develop analytical concepts in the frame analysis. When the ethnographic data was processed it became possible to analyze the data from concepts defined from the data itself. As an example the concept of “family” is created from the identification of repetition in the different interviews and the descriptions given by the respondents. The concept is then further developed with added descriptions found in the interviews and ethnographic notes by the researcher. The coding process gave an approach of what to look for in the data, and from start to finish of the research encouraged the researcher to reflect and compare what was found. The ongoing comparisons included the happenings during the interviews and the experiences gathered under the ethnographically inspired fieldwork. The ongoing process of comparison helps organize the data from the experiences of the respondents as accurately as possible, as it both is fresh in mind and includes the experience of the researcher. This method of data analysis was further developed by including the concept of Theoretical sensitivity; that means analyzing beyond the face value of what is happening, to categorize and create data from more than what is spoken. This is something that is difficult to achieve to its full extent, as it is built on the way the researcher thinks analytically and if the researcher’s experiences are both distanced enough to the research project to analyze it objectively, and close enough to truly understand it and give a fair picture of what is being said by the respondents, but it expanded the possibilities to gather data to be used in the analytical process (Oktay 2012:16). The comparisons help form the empirical data in this methodological approach by finding patterns in the studied world to build validity and find what is a part of the farmers’ framing of sustainability.

The coding process worked as followed: Ongoing notes was taken during the interviews. When similarities between interviews was noticed it was highlighted by the researcher in the notes of the interview (Oktay 2012:16). In tandem with regular notes, jotting notes were used to document what happens surrounding the conversation in addition to what was recorded in audio during the interviews (Yin 2018:258). The recordings were listened to after the visit, here certain concepts began to be noticed as recurrent between the interviews. When transcribed, the interviews where color coded into different larger themes, if re-occurrent the quote form the interview were taken to a separate document under a corresponding theme. These themes are then used in the analysis and acts as categories for theoretical analytical concepts. This workflow was ongoing under and between the meetings with the farmers, thus, the comparison progress was ongoing in every step from start to finish of the thesis. The themes and concepts are the foundation of explaining the farmers’ framing of agricultural sustainability and found what parts the frame is built on. They are realized in similar ways as the roles and things in the example of “agriculture” used earlier when discussing Lakoff “Why it matters how we frame the environment” (2010) in the theoretical approach. The themes and concepts found in the coding process is what defines the frame and what here is identified and analyzed. During the process of coding and classifying the notes for analysis the amount of data was reduced, as data not fitting to a theme and that did not repeat enough to create a new theme or concept was sorted into a separate category of unique thoughts and quotes from each farmer (Dewalt & Dewalt 2011:181). The interview data was structured from geographical place, type of farmer, type of interview and chronology. This method was used to have an organized structure to the

collected data during later stages of analysis (Marshall & Rossman, 2014). There is a difference between theme and concept, where themes fit in a larger picture than concept. A theme can be exemplified by the three parts of sustainability: economic, social, and environmental. These themes are built by related concepts that fits the theme. In this report some themes were set before the coding process and others created during the process, like the theme “Ideology” found in the ethnographic analysis. The concepts are defined as the parts creating a theme, as an example the word “circularity” that in the main analysis is identified to several themes, such as family and heritage.

To be able to identify when to stop the data collection and analysis the concept of Saturation was used. The process can be seen as two ongoing trials; one of the evolving theories and one of the evolving empirical process (Oktay 2012:18). If the data did not show anything conclusive further interviews were executed until the data started to repeat itself (Glaser & Strauss 1967). A deadline was also set, to give enough time to do the post-analysis. Glaser and Strauss (1967) discuss the saturation principle in the following ways: When during the fieldwork and ongoing analysis the data starts to repeat itself and become too similar to further develop the themes and concepts, it is time to start the post fieldwork analysis. First, thought on possible further roads to follow relevant to the questions asked for the research needs to be done. To not get derailed and expand over the given limitations such as deadline, budget, and the scale of the thesis the limitations was taken into consideration when it was time to decide how to proceed (Glaser & Strauss 1967:61). In this study the data became saturated in time for the set deadline and the post analysis began. The concept of saturation was influenced by the limitations of the master’s thesis and when to stop was decided when the data felt sufficient to build a conclusion of rich rigor from the set of premises. To strengthen the validity the conclusion from the analyzed data needs to be considered from as many angles as possible. In moments of no alternative explanation found the researcher was extra critical with further analysis, as a single explanation often is improbable and varies depending on whose data and worldview is being analyzed (Emerson, Fretz & Shaw 2011:197). The found themes and theoretical concepts was then used in the main analysis and discussed in detail there.

Ethnographic work

As the work started during the pandemic the first idea was to do interviews online, however when the contact process began it became clear that not all respondents were comfortable with this interview form, and from the given guidelines about social distance in Sweden it was still possible to do visits to the respondents. There were still considerations needed to account for and safe distance was kept. The visits not only gave a familiar environment for the respondent but also stimulated the interviews, as references to the environment around the meetings became possible. This led to the interviews becoming ethnographic in nature, as it became possible for the researcher to take notes about what was being referenced by the farmers in the surroundings, developing a thick description of the situation. The ethnographic collection of data is based on Emerson, Robert. Fretz, Rachel. Shaw, Linda *Writing ethnographic fieldnotes* (2011).

As mentioned earlier, the interviews became ethnographic in their nature during the process, and connects to theoretical sensitivity, where the interviews got influenced by the location in which it was set. Some interviews were at the farmers' home, and some in their workplace, in many interviews these places are at the same location. The ethnographic method expanded the possibilities of collecting data and helped by including the context of what was being said during the interviews. By the ethnographic approach to data collecting the validity is further developed, and strengthens a rich rigor, considering more around the complexity of the subjects. When using ethnographic fieldwork, although valuable as examples from reality, one should always consider the methods shortcomings, or rather what the style of work strives to deliver (Emerson, Fretz & Shaw 2011:197). As the focus in this project is an inside view of the farmers' perspective, potential problems and shortcoming needs to be addressed: Reliability of the data is limited by the timeframe and number of participants for this project, narrowing the scale. Therefore, the results are formed as an example of perceptions rather than the objective truth for every Swedish farmer.

The basis of the methodology is the creation of new analytical concepts and systems to process the data via the coding borrowed from grounded theory. The data was gathered via ethnographic notes and interviews. Finally, a pre-set analytical perspective (frame analysis) to build the thesis was used. The result from the coding processes works in tandem to explain not only the farmers' interpretation of agricultural sustainability, but how it is built from the farmers' context. By looking at framing the study not only includes how the farmer interpret sustainability, but what the frame is built from, defined by concepts created via the coding process.

Interviews

The data used was collected from 10 interviews with KRAV or organic classified livestock farmers and crop growers in Västra Götaland Sweden. The interviews include both female and male respondents from ages between 30-65 that work full time or part time as farmers. The interviews were done with set questions and as open-ended discussions from these questions. The focus is on the life of the farmers and their view on their profession, and how the frame of their agricultural life is created. This was done to explore how the term sustainable is conceptualized and framed. The choices of sampling needed to be reflexive and able to change depending on how the data developed (Oktay 2012:17).

The methodological approach and sampling for the interviews were at the beginning stages wide, focused on farmers that are working or worked with organic certification (Oktay 2012:17). Convenience sampling was in this case looked at as a valuable approach when analyzing inside the boundaries of time and scale given for the master thesis. As the researcher lives surrounded by farmers geographically it made economical and time effective sense to begin there, the snowball principle later led to include a larger geographical area, spawning over Västra Götaland (Marshall & Rossman 2011:111).

Demographics

The results of the study were built from interviews with 10 farmers in Västra Götaland over a span of approximately three weeks. The participants were between the ages of 30-65 and every participating farmer comes from a tradition of farming in the family, this was however by coincidence and not something that was necessary to be included in the study. five of the participants work part time as farmers with another job as their main source of income. The other five works full time. Eight farmers work with livestock for meat production and three works with crops. Two of the interviewees were group interviews with 3 participants and 4 interviews with one participant and the researcher. Every farm was either KRAV certified or organic certified, this was chosen as they are actively working with the certification process tied to agricultural sustainability. The interviews spanned from 35 minutes to 1 hour and 20 minutes.

List of participants:

Interview order	Number of participants	Type of farming	Approx. age	Approx interview length	Worktype
1	2 male 1 female	Livestock	30-60	45	Full time
2	1 male	Livestock	35	45	Full time
3	1 male	Livestock	60	35	Part time
4	2 male 1 female	Crops	40-65	80	Part time
5	1 male	Livestock	35	40	Part time
6	1 female	Livestock	35	40	Part time

The number of working women and men in agriculture somewhat equal with 44% of the working force female in 2013 (Jordbruksverket 2013). In this research the ratio is seven male and three females. When different age and gender groups were overall similar during the process of contacting respondents, a searching process began to find individuals to get an as diverse group as possible. The interviews were semi structured and followed an interview guide.

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What was asked? A presentation of the interview guide

The guide was developed as a prototype before the fieldwork started and evolved during the fieldwork. The following questions were in the interview guide, but additional questions were asked when opportunity was given to further develop the discussions.

Main question	Addition
Describe your agricultural profession	What animals, crops, and size?
How would you describe an optimal agriculture from your perspective?	What can be done to achieve it?
What is sustainability for you?	Is it achieved?
What is environmental sustainability for you?	Are we where we need to be regarding agriculture?
What is social sustainability for you?	Is it hard to balance work and private life?
What are the benefits of organic farming?	Is it needed today?
How is the certification changing your work?	Describe the process, who does what?
When and why did your farm change to organic?	Was sustainability a part of the decision?

To not influence the respondents' answer by giving a specific theme of sustainability from the governmental definitions of social, economic, and environmental, the interview guide first focused on the general meaning of sustainability and then later questions about the three governmental definitions were asked. The result is thus a general discussion of the framing of sustainability and a more specific part tied to the governmental themes.

Ethics

The researchers needed to consider possible consequences when presenting the ethnographically collected data, validity is important to work towards, but "do no harm" is seen as even more important. The narrative told is built on that of the respondents and their world, while the analyzed data is the researchers' way to present themes and analytical concepts to describe to the reader what they mean in an as objective way as possible. This was however still formed by how the researcher handles the data and this should be taken in consideration by the reader of the finished report (Dewalt & Dewalt 2001:180). Every respondent gained a document with their rights and information about the research. Every participant is anonymous with fictional names and has the freedom to be excluded from the work at will. The document was signed by the respondent to ensure they feel comfortable to be a part of the project. One

interview was not on location and was done over the phone, with the consent document paper read to the respondent. To further develop the ethics of the paper the transparency of the process will now be discussed:

The context for the researcher is briefly mentioned in the introduction and here shortly expanded upon: In this research the researcher is living surrounded by farmers and have relatives that work as farmers, but the researcher has no deep knowledge or investment in agricultural work himself. The topic explored, at least on a consensus level both for the farmers and the researcher were not seen as controversial or sensitive, and in a discussion with the respondents this was controlled for. The unconscious level is more complicated and only possible to acknowledge by asking oneself about why certain analytical conclusions are done and include them in the work for the reader to evaluate. Reflexivity was in mind during the fieldwork to ensure that the researcher is aware of his position in the research and how this could shape the data (Tracy, 2010; Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2017). The ethnographic analysis tries to be clear when describing what is told by the respondents, what is experienced during the fieldwork and what is analyzed and theoreticized by the researcher. Quotes from the respondents are stated by their fictional given name and with the quote following in cursive with citation symbols (“).

The master's thesis intends to explore the research questions from a specific perspective, that of the participating farmers. The data collected could differ depending on the system of collecting the data. When reading the results consideration needs to be taken from what perspective the work is written from. Reality and qualitative empirical data can look different from different views, this will also be the truth in this case. Every way to strengthen the validity of the data was explored as they came. It is necessary to point out that the results shown are created from experiences, and therefore are limited by the chosen method, analysis, theoretical concepts, and the researcher's interpretation of the data (Emerson, Fretz & Shaw 2011:18-20). The interviews where in Swedish and the quotes translated by the researcher. The meaning and the structure of the quotes is translated as closely as possible from Swedish but consider the possibility of the meaning changing in the translation process, even if the researcher took careful thought to keep the meaning the same when translating.

Concluding methodology: A coding process inspired by the one seen in grounded theory is used to shape themes and concepts. The concepts created was both applied to explain the perception of sustainability and how it is framed. The data was collected via a hybrid between ethnographic fieldwork and interviews.

Ethnographic Analysis

First when meeting the respondents, the questions about the farms size, type of production, and the formal information about participating in the study were talked about, then the interviews began. When asked about their background the farmers talk about their relation to farming and how the choice of profession came to be. The discussion went into the background of their life:

Family

All interviews mention their family and their heritage as a main source that builds their agricultural knowledge, and is identified as one of the key parts of framing sustainability.

Lisa: "My grandfather was a father and his father before that..."

Sustainability was here discussed as a tool to keep the agricultural tradition for future generations. "Sustainability" is reached when the earth, plant life and livestock can be kept in a way creating abundance to be sold for profit, or at the very least to be self-sufficient.

As several organic farmers today combines their agricultural life and other professions it is not always viable or the main idea to earn large profits. The potential issue for the profession is thus in part built on sustainability, but not firsthand for the environment in the narrative, but from the possibility of being able to continue the tradition of agriculture. The environment is for the most part there latent, as a natural part of their profession but not always mentioned in the narrative directly. The concept of a circle for preservation is prominent, where the profession and thus lifestyle for the farmer is dependent on that the grounds continue to prosper every season, making the possibility for future generations to continue and cultivate the grounds.

Adam: "In part I think that organic farming is built on that one needs animals for the circular, otherwise one needs to buy bone dust, artificial fertilizers or chicken manure from a conventional farm. Nothing wrong with that but then the idea (of circularity) is gone. Today its needed to do organic farming, to grow the grains in the volumes that is needed."

The topic of sustainability was also discussed in ties with circularity and heritage by focusing on time and keeping the grounds workable, the answer is the response to a direct question about the meaning of sustainability:

Ulf: "(About sustainability on the farm) It is that we can do, under a long time, without it deteriorating..."

Lisa: "Sustainability is what is not permanently consumed but becomes a cycle."

In some cases, sustainability was tied to locally produced wares, and transportation was framed as an issue.

Li: "Sustainability is a cycle with as little transportation as possible."

Lisa: "We need to collaborate with other farmers in the local area, so we don't produce the same goods... Maybe it is better to buy locally produced food rather than KRAV or organic, when talking about transports I mean..."

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The farmers' perception of sustainability is built more on conservation than development, heritage and tradition is one part of a frame that creates this discourse, as the aim is to keep the grounds fertile and usable to future generations. The tradition is thought through practical experience, where the farmers from an early age are a part of the family farms operation. There is however a big interest in tools to make the farms more effective, where new technology like tractors and automatic systems are welcomed to ease their work. The farmers' conversations about circularity ties to the concept of family as the circle makes it possible for future generations to keep the farm going. The concept of time indicates that circularity is a long going process that is evaluated by experiencing the results from different decisions regarding the farms production. Many of the results comes from older members of the family and their process of evaluating experiences of running a farm. Thus, a part of how farmers perceive sustainability is via the evaluation process that is passed through family. The concept of family is later in this analysis expanded upon when the farmers include farming neighbors and friends in the process, expanding the sources of knowledge to include the conversations about the other farmers' evaluations. These farmers either works in the same geographical area or are close to the family.

For two of the farmers further education focused on farming at the Swedish gymnasium level was done (A voluntary education of three years after year 9 of school) that deepened their knowledge of agriculture. The education process expands the knowledge making process but were never used as a source to the discussion of sustainability in the same ways as for instance family. For the farmers that attended such education the knowledge gathered was put through the same evaluation process of long-time trials as other ideas. Thus, it is a part of the process, but when compared with the other concepts such as family, not as prominent in the narrative of the interviews. Practical training such as driving machines was instead mentioned as a valuable experience from school.

Ivan: "There are a lot of people applying for the agricultural gymnasiums now. It has gone up... They become farm workers but cannot own their own farm (Due to the prices)."

The farmers in this study with an education were approximately in their thirties. In the discussions the future of young farmers trying to start their own farms started conversations about industrialized farming: The dismantling of smaller family farming towards what is mentioned as industrialized farming was ongoing in the narrative, as large-scale companies today is the main actors with the capital to invest in to farming, as the technology and scale of the areas needed constantly increases in value according to the respondents, making newcomers to farming having a difficult time to establish, and invites future generations to dismantle or sell the family farm. This in return ties to the concept of heritage, as the farms driven by family today either have a long-term leasing contract from the church or municipality or have owned the lands for generations. The view of the future is then partially built from the possibility of sanctions and subsidies, as one of the main ways to stay in business for organic and KRAV certified farmers, but the process of becoming certified is not a practical option for everyone. Some areas are not suited for organic/KRAV certification, evaluated through the certification

process. This creates competition when trying to find land areas suitable for various kinds of farming.

Ivan: "The farms are getting fewer and fewer; the conventional farms are getting bigger. The old farmers lease their grounds, and there is a problem with organic. You can't grow it everywhere, and then the conventional farmers take over the areas."

The discussions highlight the importance of economy for the future of farming, as the process of evaluation for circularity on the farms includes profitability. Later in the analysis different ways around this is discussed, exemplifying how part-time farming is used as a solution for some of the farmers.

The farmers plan from the premises given every season, dependent on climate and weather. The profit is highly dependent on growth and prices of crops, both for the farmers that grows crops for human consumption and the farmers that grows it to give the livestock. If the harvest fails to produce enough to give the animals the livestock farmer will have to buy it. The knowledge to work around these possible issues caused by the seasons is built upon experience and tradition in the same ways as discussed earlier. What the farmers get paid for their products is built upon the competition from other neighboring countries, conventional farms, and consumer habits. Again, the knowledge is here from first-hand local experience, an evaluation of past and present is created from how different weather cycles and farming methods affect the growth, also, profit becomes a clear indicator of success when evaluating the work. For all participant farmers economic sustainability was only possible due to economic subsidies, and a part of framing sustainability is tied to economics:

Economical sustainability

As agriculture in Sweden is affected by governmental influences in form of legislation, guidelines, and subsidies, the level of autonomy for the farmers is to some degree controlled by income. The difference in agriculture compared to other traditionally free markets is the production of food: A fundamental need for societies. The artificial way of economically stimulating organic/KRAV farming by state subsidies was welcomed by most of the respondents, even if some concern about over-governance was mentioned:

*Ivan: "Yes! its communism *laughter*. The state is the employer and Jordbruksverket... There is control over the subsidies. If they come and something is wrong, they take away the sanctions directly."*

The ways the respondents' farms are working is indirectly controlled by the state as both conventional and organic farms need to not only follow regulations for outputting their products, but also depend on the subsidies and sanctions to operate. This is true for both Organic and conventional farming, but as the output of organic farming generally is less with only marginal positive economic output compared to conventional farming they depend more

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on subsidies and sanctions. However, this is generally not seen as a negative by the respondents, as food prices are kept low for consumers, described as necessary by the farmers.

Bob: "It has to be up to the consumers, if they buy the cheap products, it will impact the world in a certain way, mostly negative... The prices influence the decision. If the consumer pays extra for a tastier meat, it is also better for your health. It's pretty simple really."

Distributors and the food markets take much of the profit according to the respondents, however when asked most of the farmers sees it as necessary for these actors to exist, as the farmers neither have the time or expertise to be able to handle distribution and final sales.

Adam: "We could grow lenses if anyone wants it and pays good money for it, we don't have the time to run around and ask the distributor what they want, and we don't have the time to package it."

The control of subsidies and sanction by the governmental organizations is a newer part in framing sustainability for the farmers. The traditional way to reach circularity becomes evaluated, meaning that parts of the process of maintaining the farm becomes influenced by the governmental organizations in a bigger way than during earlier generations, examples of this is choices of fertilizers and use of machinery. Earlier the choice of what to use was made from the knowledge gathered by tradition, evaluation over time, family, and friends. Now many of the farmers need to adapt to the limitations given by the certification process, sometimes seen as reasonable by the farmers and sometimes not. According to the respondents the governmental process of defining sustainability also influences consumers choices and is communicated to them mainly by media. This is seen as shaping the consumers frame of what agriculture is and should be. As consumers is the main source of income combined by the subsidies and sanctions, the farmers let other actors closer tied to the consumers such as distributors give the information to them by evaluating the current prices and orders made given by the distributor. This is done because of time management, so the farmers can focus on maintaining the farm.

As for the smaller part-time producers that participated in the study, they are less driven by profit and communicated that they were happy if they could produce ethical and healthy food for themselves and close ones, they paid little attention to all the actors after their spot in the production line. This way of farming is closer tied to the earlier generation's ways of farming, where the evaluation process and knowledge is developed locally. They are however still influenced by the guidelines and legislations in the same way as the farmers seeking larger profits.

There is a concern stated by the respondents about the market development of farms, as the land areas become more expensive to buy or lease larger companies becomes the main investors in farming. The large-scale farms buy the smaller ones, creating a market where small organic farmers have more and more trouble to compete. The prices according to the farmers are not that different between conventional and organic.

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Ivan: "Organic products are a small thing; a small group buys it. If we produce more too fast, we get overproduction and the prices plummet. The question is where the balance is."

If new farmers aim to start from nothing the investment is too large to make a normal market profit. This ties to the type of farms created. The scale of the farm is not only tied to profit, but also to geography, where many areas of Västra Götalands coast is not suitable for large scale farming, making part time farmers more common. Large flat areas make it easier to produce crops both for sale and to feed livestock. Many of the livestock keepers along the coastline lets the animal's move free through mountainous terrain and find food. This leads to free range keeping being the most viable alternative, and conveniently for the farmers that wants organic or KRAV certification it is in line with the criteria for the certification. The prices of meat do not scale to the necessary degree to make it economically sustainable for these farmers, that instead gets other jobs on the side. Infrastructure has made the food market more competitive, and locally produced food in a conventional food store is not priced that differently from other places in Sweden, effectively putting local farmers in some areas out of business as the products get imported both from inside Sweden and from other countries. Economy is pictured as a concept of framing sustainability for the farmers. Without thinking about profits the work towards circularity becomes complicated, as running a farm is expensive. This is true both for small- and large-scale farmers, but some small-scale farms survive without taking out salary for their work.

Adam: "We gain a little money if you don't count the work hours. If that is accounted for, we lose money. That's the way it is. But it is fun to maintain the lands, its landscaping."

To be certified KRAV or organic the subsidies is necessary to function and thus shapes their work with sustainability, and affects more than just keeping the farm running:

Social sustainability

When the farmers were asked to define social sustainability from their perspective it was described as connected to economic and environmental sustainability. As the profession tends to be a combination of work and lifestyle most of the respondents described it as a possibility to have and maintain social relations and create a family. Here conventional media was mentioned as an example of how hard it can be for a farmer to find the time for social life, but also what is communicated about the farmer lifestyle to the public. The Swedish reality tv show "bonde söker fru" (meaning farmer seeks wife) where farmers try to meet their future wife or husband was stated as an example by a respondent, as such a concept would not exist if it wasn't something special with the agricultural lifestyle.

Adam: "There is a reason "Bonde söker fru" exists... It is easy to be home working a lot of the time... It is an issue. Many begin at the wrong end. Beginning with farming and then realizing that the social life is nonexistent, one should include the family in the life as a farmer."

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There are several media channels related to farming, including internet, tv shows and magazines, some following farmers' everyday life and some educating how to do small scale farming. However, this was never described as a reason to the choice of the profession for the respondents, rather it acts as a sign of the times and how new agricultural interest may be created in societies. It is however at a small scale mostly focused on leisure farming activities such as growing vegetables or keeping smaller livestock such as chickens. Some respondents however mention that such small-scale activities have led to interesting new consumer possibilities and habits, where digital farmer markets have been created. The digital market acts as a contact platform between producer and consumer who later meets up at gatherings to make the exchanges.

Li: "There is small eco farming groups on Facebook now, where you can order products and get it at markets."

Farmers from around 35 years of age mentioned how social media plays a part in creating agricultural communities, where topics related to farming can be discussed. The new type of social networking expands the ways farmers gain information to form their view of sustainability, as modern technologies and different traditions may interchange.

ULF: "Facebook has many fun groups to join, there is a lot to talk about, how to work the soil, muddiness and stuff like that."

The older generations of farmers who participated acknowledged the existence of such social channels, but their participation on forums were neglectable compared to the younger generation. Information about news related to agriculture was instead from conventional media as radio, television, and papers. The main source of information described by the respondents were other farmers active geographically close or working in the same type of agriculture from word-of-mouth conversations. During an interview, a crop farmer introduced the concept of fish tank farming to both gain organic fertilizer from a small area and be able to sell fish for meat. A somewhat new style of farming with cheap costs compared to traditional livestock keeping. The interest was spawned by word-of-mouth conversations with other farmers in the area. The conversation exemplified how agriculture may develop, not from the guidelines but from local networks of farmers trying new ideas.

When asked if consumers seemed more aware of what they consume several examples were presented, mainly from the presence of small-time farms and home growing in traditional media, and the creation of digital organic markets on social media. Social sustainability for the farmers is much about time management. To be able to work with agriculture and form social relations they seek a balance between the two. Social sustainability relates to farming by the perception of the farmer not only as a profession, but a lifestyle given by media to the public. The farmers' view of what social sustainability means is formed by experience from close personal relations and how the farmer manages time. The farmers see how the public interprets farming from their perspective and evaluates what the public think farming is. Consumers may change their habits of buying food when certain kinds of media communicate to the public, if

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a documentary about poor livestock conditions is sent on T.V. the consumers may stop buying meat, if a certain type of plant is reported as unhealthy by a magazine the sales can be affected, even if the incidents reported are anomalies to farming. If certain kinds of foods get commercial time they sell more.

Ivan: "KRAV gets to market themselves a lot on TV and such. That is what it is about, because then people buy it. It's the marketing it's about."

The public picture of farming is important and is seen by the farmers as not coming from direct knowledge of farms and farming, rather what other medias communicates. This may lead to different interpretations of sustainability depending on what perspective the interpretation is built upon.

Environmental sustainability

There were no surprises found by the respondents in the legislation and guidelines from the government when becoming certified. Overall, the rules set for organic/Krav farming was seen as reasonable. However, certification is not always seen as sustainable.

Adam: "I think organic is built on having animals for circularity. Otherwise, one needs to buy fertilizers from a conventional farm, and then the main idea is gone. Today it is needed to be able to grow all the organic grains in the quantities needed."

The concept of a connecting circle was mentioned by several respondents. Environmental sustainability for the KRAV/organic farmers is in many ways just to go back to their traditional style of work to maintain circularity before what we call conventional farming today became standard. As pesticides, artificial fertilizers and genetic modifications heightens the production it also puts strains on the farmers' possibilities to keep the croplands, animals, and themselves healthy.

Lisa: "Sustainability is a cycle or many cycles."

The cropland farmers interviewed stated concerns for their own health as many farmers around them had developed cancer, that from their beliefs may have been caused by the pesticides.

Ivan: "I became KRAV certified 2004, I went with organic because I have seen what happened to the guys that used pesticides, they got sick one after another, some got cancer and such."

The conclusion that the pesticides is to blame is from first-hand experience and the local creation of knowledge between the farmers. Same goes for consumption of food. The consciousness of what the farmers eat was a recurring theme from both livestock and cropland farmers. What goes in the earth of the croplands will go into the grains or meat, same for what supplements are given to the livestock in conventional farming. There exists earlier research that states that plants grown conventional has the same nutrition values as organic (Smith-Spangler, C. et al., 2012). However, from the farmers' view the issue is not the lack of nutrition

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from conventional products, but the artificial pesticides, medicines, and fertilizers necessary to be able to have a high-volume output of their products. The view of the consequences is created from their first-hand experience from the products and from other farmers near their own farms.

The environment is cared for in the same way a family takes care of their homes, the farmlands have in many cases been in the family for generations, creating unique knowledge of its benefits and issues and how to maintain it. Thus, the environment is a concern for the farmers, but mainly in their local geographical area, rather than national or global. The farmers want to preserve their lands, which leads to benefit the environment in a larger context. As every respondent concluded that the different land types found inside Sweden varies greatly with different types of farming more suitable than others. For instance, the vast flat croplands of Västgötaslätten (the inland of Västra Götaland) give different opportunities than the mountainous coast areas more suitable for smaller livestock farms. From this view there was no resentment towards conventional farmers. As some areas are harder to convert for organic certification and keep profitable, both types are needed as organic/KRAV cannot meet demand, or simply is not chosen by the consumer because of for instance pricing. Environmental sustainability is framed by tradition and experiences from the local area, and both conventional and organic farming is needed to find a balance of quantity and quality. The balance is tied to the guidelines as they define the context of how conventional and organic farming functions, according to the farmers both is needed.

Guidelines

Li: As organic or KRAV we must follow certain criteria and recommendations... I believe Organic and KRAV certification would benefit from more flexibility and make it so we can be a part of forming it."

The guidelines are seen as a tool to ensure environmental sustainability, the social and economic themes are not recognized from the guidelines by the respondents, linking sustainability to the environment. Overall, the view of the guidelines is that they are reasonable, but some flexibility is lacking.

Adrian: "Although overall fair, the legislation can be stale in some situations. The country (geologically) is not the same everywhere."

Organic is connected to sustainability in the guidelines but is also interfering with economy and social sustainability. To be organic means substantial paperwork and controls, leading to either a KRAV certification or an organic certification where KRAV as the Swedish standard is described as the higher level of the two. As the guidelines for organic farming are for the most part compatible with the farmers' views of a sustainable agriculture, the guidelines, and the system around it is not described as a major problem. There were however some discrepancies, mainly in the number of rules set for organic farming. The respondents do not imply that the content of the rules is the issue, but that it would benefit to be more streamlined and compact to be easier for the farmers to follow. As of now, several of the respondents had

hired help to make sense of how to comply with the many guidelines to get or keep their certification.

Li: "Conventional is getting by a little better than the organic farms. Conventional is less paperwork."

Although overall positive, there are some conventional farming tools that according to the respondents would be helpful for the farms without harming the environment, but from the guidelines these are neglected on the grounds that they are in one way, or another partly or completely artificially made. The farmers see the question about what can be used on the farm as something that needs to be developed. Organic farming forbids artificial tools for the most part, regardless of whether it is environmentally questionable or not, leading to what is ideology and what is defined as sustainable. The farmers' knowledge about their own premises is in tandem with word of mouth and tradition what shapes the frame around the guidelines. The perception about lack of flexibility is a consequence from the guidelines trying to be both general for all farmers, and the farmers' knowledge of their local premises. The differences also have their ground in ideology when building the meaning of sustainability:

Ideology

What is organic? Is it always sustainable? The analysis of the respondent's view, ideology, and the frames of the meaning of organic is somewhat complicated and locks out many of the possibilities that nonorganic tools may contribute to sustainability. The issue is identified by the farmers as being a part of the "only natural supplements" that organic/KRAV classification implies and the consumers perception of it as something to work towards, leaving potential harmless effective tools behind. The guidelines and legislations are in part built on ideology and is described as reasoning behind media narratives and political choices, as exemplified by this respondent quote:

Ulf: "Its politics! I believe that Swedish meat production is not as big an environmental hazard as it is said to be. I think global trade is the issue, you cannot compare with what we need to do here. And meat production is necessary to uphold the landscape."

The farmers are aware of the larger narrative and the many opinions surrounding livestock keeping and crop growing given by traditional and social media, but in this case the farmers' perception is from their own circumstances, created from tradition they build their knowledge from generations of agricultural work from their specific geographical circumstances. The respondent identifies that meat production is seen by a group of consumers as a hazard to the environment, while also seeing the global competing market and transports as a bigger problem.

Lisa: "People care. I live in the countryside and most people here are trying to buy locally, it is a community thing. Then sometimes you can treat yourself with luxury with other produce."

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But most want it from close by. It's close to the heart for most farmers, that we want to continue to exist."

The reasoning is partially created by the respondents via their perception of consumer choices, this view is primarily gathered by social experience, reviewing profits, and anecdotes from their life. Consumers that live in the countryside or knows farmers are generally seen as consuming the same way as the farmers prefers, locally produced. The many opinions on farming and what we eat can be identified as a clash of frames, where different sources of knowledge and views about farming is built from different sources. Ideology is put into practice via politics, that in turn develops the legislations and guidelines that affects the farmers.

Concluding the ethnographic analysis

Heritage, local knowledge, media, education, social interactions, income, time, and first-hand experience is all concepts contributing to frame agricultural sustainability, achieve circularity and maintain the areas for the future. The land areas need to be looked after to not overgrow. Small-time farmers along the coast of Västra Götaland keep the farms active in some way to maintain the lands. The farming profession and knowledge from tradition and heritage will continue to exist at some level, as for many farmers economy is not the main cause of why they are into farming. It is a combination of a lifestyle, a hobby, and a profession, dependent on many factors but the future of the farmers can be summarized in the following quote:

Lisa: "Farmers are survivalists and inventors, they are wise, and need to be to survive as a farmer. There is a reason why there is something called "Sunt bondförnuft" (In English a farmers' common sense)."

Results

I will now turn to a comparison of the farmer's interpretation of sustainability and what defines sustainability on governmental level. The choice of source for the governmental definition was evaluated by comparing the many different definitions from the sources gathered under the earlier section "levels of governance" and find the most concise summary according to the researcher. The following is the results:

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The Swedish definitions from the report "Vad är hållbar utveckling?" (Fegler & Unemo 2000) And the farmers' definitions.

Sustainability	Swedish definition	Farmers' definition
Environmental	Protection, providing, production, resource management	Circularity, conservation, local production
Social	Eliminate poverty, full employment, integration, equality, education, health, development	Enough free time to develop family and social interactions
Economical	Ensure growth	Minimum of self-sufficiency, for larger farms including to provide for family.

The result summarizes the differences of how sustainability is defined between the governmental definitions and the farmers. Every participating farmer except one found the guidelines given for KRAV or organic certification reasonable. However, the substantial number of guidelines and rules to follow would benefit from being streamlined and more flexible to local premises, easing the farmers work. For the participating farmers, the concept of sustainability and KRAV/organic certification meant going back towards how it once was, or for many participants how they always did farming, meaning that the process of certification suits some farms better than others. As for the framing and creation of what sustainability is, a deeper analysis will follow: The pre-set themes where: Economical, environmental, and social sustainability. The added themes from the coding process where: Family and ideology.

The research concludes that the respondents frame the meaning of sustainability based on the following main concepts: Heritage, local knowledge, media, education, social interactions, income, time, and first-hand experience. Note that these concepts are not the only ones found, but the most frequent from the methodological approach. The following is a short concluding description of analytical concepts found in the themes from the interviews:

Theme 1: Family. Main Concepts: Heritage, local knowledge, social interactions, first-hand experience.

Relatives are a major part in the overall framing process. Family is a source of knowledge spread by conversations. The knowledge is created through passing experience gathered forward to next-coming generations and is also shared with the community in proximity, such as neighbors. The testing of latest ideas is evaluated by practical experience and passed

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onwards in the same way. Sustainability is in part framed by the possibility to keep the tradition of farming ongoing.

Theme 2: Economy. Main Concepts: Income, heritage

Economy is a part of deciding the scale of the farm and type of farm. Economy is a part of the frame of sustainability as it influences how to keep and develop a farm. Some farmers change to organic/KRAV to benefit from subsidies and sanctions, meaning that economic decisions are a key part of how sustainability is framed by the farmers. The choice between organic/KRAV and conventional is made depending on economy and scale of the farm. Part-time farmers balance the economy by part-time jobs. Economy in the form of subsidies and sanctions is seen as a tool used by governmental forces to make the farmers follow the rules and guidelines, and economic sustainability is defined as being able to continue without the costs becoming so large that the farmers cannot afford to continue, rather than striving for large profits.

Theme 3: Social. Main concepts: Heritage, social interactions, time, media

The social theme is closely tied to the theme of family, but where family is described with concepts of knowledge-making the social theme focuses on the ability to maintain a family and social life. Where environmental is framed by heritage and conservation, social is the possibility to not only work, but have family and casual relations. Organic and KRAV takes time to maintain, time that needs to be balanced with social life. Media is seemed as communicating that farming is more than a profession, framing farming as a lifestyle. Social sustainability is defined by the farmers as having time to create and maintain a family and social interactions.

Theme 4: Environment. Main concepts: Heritage, local knowledge, first-hand experience, income.

The environment is framed as something to maintain rather than develop. The knowledge of the environment is tied to geography, where different prerequisites and local knowledge shapes how the environment is maintained. The environment is thus framed as local rather than national or global. To maintain the environment every local farmer uses their heritage, first-hand experience, and local knowledge to their specific local environment. The theme of economy is important to maintain their environment in a conventional or organic/KRAV work system, as doing so is expensive and time consuming for the farmers. Environmental sustainability is defined by the farmers as maintaining environmental Circularity i.e., no long-term degeneration of the environment when exploiting the natural resources.

Theme 5: Ideology. Main concepts: Media, social interactions, income, first-hand experience.

The governmental definition of sustainability and consumer habits is seen as influenced by ideology. For the farmers organic is not always the most valuable option to achieve sustainability. The farmers frame sustainability by their experience of what they see as usable

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to achieve circularity, some tools like a variety of artificial fertilizers that are forbidden if the farmers want to be organic/KRAV is seen as counterproductive, thus some parts of the organic/KRAV certification work against reaching the governmental definition of environmental sustainability.

Ties to earlier research

The results generalizability is strengthened by comparing to the results of earlier research where Asplund (2016) concludes that the farmers' framing of the connected topic of climate change is built upon their own experiences, here comparable with heritage, local knowledge, and first-hand experience (Asplund 2016:560).

Slätmo, E., Fischer, K. and Röö, E. (2017b:387,390) highlight the difference in interpretation due to lack of standard definitions, the conclusion is strengthened by the differences found in the descriptions of sustainability between the farmers and governmental organizations.

Saunders (2016:391,404) description of the creation of "The good farmer", and how the farmer contextualizes environmental actions is further explored in the analysis of how the farmer frames the public narrative of sustainability and ideology. Saunders focus on productivity when defining the "good farmer" is similar to the respondent's views on economical sustainability. The results can be used to further answer questions told by Saunders about the importance of developing an understanding of the farmers' behavior and attitudes to the environment, as policies are implemented that may impacts their profession (Saunders. 2016:392).

Further research on the topic of defining agricultural sustainability can be done in different geographical areas to strengthen the validity of the definitions, concepts, and themes. The research can be expanded by researching farmers with no family tradition of farming, and to compare if the perception and framing of sustainability differs. The methodology can be used in combination with quantitative research to further explore differences in the interpretations of sustainability and to further shape guidelines on how to work towards sustainability, including every level of actors in the agricultural chain.

Concluding discussion

The research questions were as follows:

What is the farmers' perception of the meaning of sustainability and how is it framed and created?

The research found that the farmers interpret and frame agricultural sustainability as an environmental circular process of growth, environmental conservation, local production, sufficient time to develop a family and social relations, and a minimum of economic self-sufficiency. The creation is built on a knowledge making process from the following main sources: Heritage, word of mouth, friends, family, local knowledge, media, education, social interactions, income, time, and first-hand experience.

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Are the guidelines towards organic and KRAV certification reasonable from the farmers' perspective?

The farmers see the guidelines to be organic/KRAV certified as reasonable, but would benefit to be simplified and streamlined by lowering the quantity of criteria, make them more flexible to fit the geographical prerequisites, and invite the certification organizations to a discussion on what can be used on their specific organic/KRAV farm.

When compared, what are the differences between the governmental and farmers' definition of sustainability?

The governmental definition taken from the report " *Vad är hållbar utveckling?*" (Fegler & Unemo 2000) describes sustainability as protection, providing, production, and resource management. Social sustainability as eliminate poverty, full employment, integration, equality, education, health, and social development. Economic sustainability is described as Ensuring economic growth. The farmers describe sustainability as environmental circularity, conservation, and local production. Social sustainability as enough free time to develop family and social interactions. Economic sustainability as minimum of self-sufficiency, for larger farms including to provide for family. The difference found in defining sustainability identified by the research was: The process for the farmers is a long-term local project, often spanning generations working with the lands to find the best ways to maintain them and keep circle of growth functioning. The governmental definitions focus on change in the agricultural systems to achieve progress that rehabilitates the environment, ensures economic growth and social development.

The choice of implementing organic/KRAV is primarily framed by economical prerequisites and ideology. Ideology is framed by the farmers with media and local social interactions, for example with friends and family. Media is seen as the main defining actor for the consumer knowledge making process, where, to name a few; food commercials, health coaches and the different shows on T.V. related to farms such as the Swedish shows "Bonde söker fru" and "Mandelmanns gård (English: Mandelmanns farm)" shapes consumer behavior and their views on what a farm and the farmers' life should be like, but also what is healthy and what is ethical when consuming the farmers' products.

The guidelines and legislations become a forced part of the frame in similar ways Lakoff (2010) describes the difference of knowledge making between frames and conscious logical knowledge learning. The farmers' framing of sustainability does not change depending on the different rules and guidelines, they simply adapt. Some because of the compatibility with their specific scale and type of farming, some for economic benefits and some for ethical reasons.

The definition of sustainability may be endlessly complex, but there are ways to let it develop towards a common definition rather than letting the actors involved defining it separately: Instead of the governmental forces solely communicating through different ways what sustainability is, take advantage of the ways the farmers frame sustainability. To change the

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frame by teaching them with guidelines, laws and legislations is less effective than to create the governmental definitions to use in the different governmental processes from the farmers local prerequisites. This could mean in practice that the certification process benefits from being more flexible. An example to achieve this is more local discussions between the organizations and farmers to shape economic, social, and environmental sustainability to fit the different farms. This process could include the laws and legislations in the farmers' frame in a way not forced by governance, but from knowing that the farmers is a part of developing what sustainability is. This is not to say that scientific approaches and governmental evaluations towards what sustainability means is useless in the process, ideally it pays an equal role in the process as the farmers' perspective, to together create the meaning of sustainability to build the legislations and guidelines upon.

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