



Tropentag, October 5-7, 2011, Bonn

“Development on the margin”

## Determinants for Chain Governance in Fresh Fruit and Vegetables Market: The Case of Northeast Brazil’s Grapes and Mangoes

GUSTAVO HENRIQUE DE SOUZA DÍAS, WOLFGANG BOKELMANN

*Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, Dept. of Agricultural Economics and Social Sciences, Germany*

### Abstract

Considering topics relevant to developing countries involved in the market for Fresh Food and Vegetables (FFV) one has to consider different approaches available for grasping the content and dimension of social and economic processes triggered by the international integration of markets. The literature on Global Value Chains (GVCs) provide a set of concepts said to allow the idea of economic globalisation to be grasped “in terms of a series of relations organised around” commodities or goods. Analysts point out the fruitful advancements in methodology, theory and policy carried out by the literature in this field of study for the investigation of to which measure “commodity chains shape a country’s development prospects”. Amidst these advancements the concept of chain governance has divided the GVCs literature according to different affiliation to scholarly approaches on questions raised by the concept; mainly: how do coordinative arrangements over aspects of chains’ activities are brought about in GVCs? Later developments in this literature turned to advancements offered by the french Convention School of Laurent Thévenot and Luc Boltanski among others. This perspective turns to a pragmatic notion of coordinative outcomes, giving prominence to the variety of standpoints by which social actors find support to solve momentous distortions of concerted actions. This stresses the moment of defining products and services’ quality content as a seminal collective process offering the very substrate orienting the coordination of ‘uncertainly grounded’ business transactions.

Following these later insights this case study aimed to understand the process by which social actors involved in northeast Brazil’s grapes and mangoes GVC to Europe mobilise arguments and legitimacy assets in the pursue of claim-grounding; how they bring forth fundamental sectoral claims for negotiation; how they propose compromises in the situation of ordering the coordination of uncertain transactions (existence of strong contests on quality perceptions); and the process by which the latter is conceived and conceptualised. For this, besides a few participant observations, semi-structured interviews with key-informants on different chain links were carried out. Results inform the strong relevance of the social-political structure mobilised by each actors’ speeches for the strengthening and cohesion of coordinative arrangements.

**Keywords:** Conventions, global value chains, product quality, product service