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“Solidarity in a competing world —  
fair use of resources”

## Short Supply Chains of Organic Food: Socioeconomic Emancipation of Family Farmers

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### Abstract

Organic production of vegetables and fruits is assumed to be less harmful for the environment than conventional production and brings socioeconomic development for smallholder farmers. The distribution of organic products can be executed via the conventional chain or via alternatives, such as the short food supply chain, in which the intermediates between farmer and consumer are limited to maximum one. The relationship between farmers and retailers of short food supply chains can promote socioeconomic emancipation, although they might be as oppressing as conventional retailing in long chains. To gain inside in the relationships of farmers and short food supply chain retailers, an analysis of both actors was performed with regard to organic fruits and vegetables. One fair, one specialised organic shop and one supermarket were analysed on reciprocity in relationships and autonomy of the small holder farmers by surveys. The supermarket and the specialised shop were determined as canals with a considerable sales volume and great importance in the production flow, but showed asymmetric relations with the small holder suppliers. On the contrary, the fair revealed relationships with its suppliers which were far more symmetric, but accounted for a smaller sales volume. The fair resulted as the most democratic supply modality which offers the most autonomy to its suppliers. Due to the engagement of the fair in farmer organisations, farmers are involved in important decisions such as price setting. Moreover, the fair was, in comparison with the supermarket and the specialised shop, more efficacious in turning its objectives to face social, economic and environmental problems of commercialisation of organic products into action. Consequently, to promote a more correct and efficient market, it would be valuable to firstly, open new fairs which can bridge the gap in sales volume in the most symmetric way and secondly, stimulate supermarkets and specialised organic shops to invest in participation with the farmers.

**Keywords:** Autonomy of smallholder farmers, organic production, short retail chain