



Tropentag, September 17-19, 2018, Ghent

“Global food security and food safety:
The role of universities”

Ecological Responsiveness Towards a Sustainable Food System of For-profit Organisations in Belgium. the Effect of Size, Maturity, and Support on Ecological Responsiveness Dimensions

ANA ALICIA DIPIERRI¹, TOM DEDEURWAERDERE², MAREK HUDON³

¹*Université libre de Bruxelles (ULB), CERMi, Belgium*

²*Université Catholique de Louvain (UCL),*

³*Université Libre de Bruxelles,*

Abstract

The actual food system faces two challenges: i) to produce more for the growing demand, and ii) to avoid negatively impacting the environment. As a response, many actors of the food system have introduced eco-friendly strategies, operations, and plans. Nevertheless, the motivations towards sustainability remain unknown. Thus, this paper empirically studies the effect of the food system actors' size, maturity, and support on their motivations towards sustainability. The research addresses the following questions: what motivates economic actors in the food system to “go green”? Subsequent working questions are: i) Do all the actors in the system react to the same motivations?, ii) Does the size of the economic actor influence their motivations?, iii) How are these motivations affected by the economic actor's maturity?, iv) Does external support enhance or inhibits the economic actors' ecological responsiveness? To answer the research question, and the working questions, a deductive approach (Johansson, 2003:9) was implemented. Hence the hypotheses were drawn from the literature review. The economic actors' motivations were studied through a multidimensional construct: corporate ecological responsiveness (Bansal and Roth, 2000). The construct consists of three (3) dimensions: competitiveness, legitimacy, and social responsibility. The effect of size, maturity and support in each dimension (competitiveness, legitimacy, and social responsibility) are analysed individually. A case study in Belgium was conducted through a self-reported online survey targeting micro, small, medium and large Belgian food companies. The paper demonstrates that the food sector's particularities derive into particular ecological motivations and that companies' size, maturity, and support mediate their ecological motivations.

Keywords: Case Study, ecological responsiveness, Food System, Maturity, Motivations, Size, Support, Survey, Sustainability