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Role of Multi-stakeholder-partnerships for Achieving a Higher Degree of Sustainability in Cross-border Agri-food Supply Chains

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Abstract

The UN Global Compact Network Germany defines sustainability in supply chains as the management of ecological, social and economic effects and the promotion of good corporate governance over the entire life cycle of products and services. However, how sustainability is to be implemented and interpreted in agricultural supply chains in practice is controversial, not least against the background of the currently discussed German “Supply Chain Act”. The promotion of multi-stakeholder partnerships (MSP) to promote cooperation between all actors in a supply chain from production, trade and industry as well as representatives from politics, civil society and research seems reasonable and is increasingly being promoted, also within the framework of the Sustainable Development Goals, SDG. Nevertheless, the effects that can be achieved through MSP for different supply chains have so far hardly been scientifically researched.

With the help of a political network analysis, this paper analyses if, how and through which channels MSP and / or individual actors within the food system negatively and / or positively influence political decision-making processes in Germany in favour of more sustainability. Based on the “German Initiative for Sustainable Cocoa” (GISCO), the “Forum for Sustainable Palm Oil” (FONAP) and the “Partnership for Sustainable Orange Juice” (PANAJO), standardised interviews with several hundred of representatives from politics, the private sector, civil society and science are analyzed, using the snowball procedure. Results are presented and interpreted via sociograms and network measures, allowing to draw conclusions on whether and under which conditions MSP should be further promoted in future.

Keywords: Agri-Food Policy, MSP, Network Analysis, Standards, sustainability