Business as Usual?
Corporatization and the Changing Role of Social Reproduction
In the Organic Agro-Food Sector[1]

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Introduction

The early twenty-first century sees the Organic Agro-Food (OAF) sector at a highly paradoxical moment in its history. On the one hand, organic agriculture originated as a counter-hegemonic movement which challenged the norms and practices of industrialized agriculture by internalizing numerous of its reproductive costs; on the other, it is increasingly becoming part of corporate agendas and the neo-liberal global agro-food regime which seeks to externalize as many of its reproductive costs as is possible. Today, the business of selling OAF is a global multi-billion dollar industry, which has experienced an annual growth rate of 15-20% over the last ten years.[2] The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) predicts that global sales of OAF will be worth nearly $91 billion by 2010.[3] The paradox currently faced by the organic sector is thus, the question of the implications of its rapid growth and changing institutional context for its capacity to uphold its traditional principles and to continue to challenge the norms of conventional industrialized agriculture.

Some scholars argue that the involvement of transnational agro-food corporations and the introduction of OAF into global supply chains[4] have not fundamentally changed the traditional definition of organic and the standing of organic agriculture as a social movement.[5] Instead of organic agriculture converging with the instrumental norms associated with the industrialized agro-food sector, scholars supporting what can be called 'the divergence thesis' argue that organic agriculture can remain distinct from industrialized agriculture and retain the capacity to adhere to a distinct set of principles from that of the current global trading regime. Because of this retained capacity to employ diverse modes of production, this group of scholars argues that organic agriculture remains a site of resistance to the homogenizing forces of globalization; organic agriculture, contributes to the sustainability of rural cultures, biodiversity and the maintenance of local markets that value environmental and social goods. In other words, organic agriculture still has the capacity to internalize the costs of social (and environmental) reproduction into the production process even though OAF increasingly has entered mainstream markets.

Other scholars studying the development of the OAF sector are more sceptical of its capacity to retain its commitment to its traditional values, and advance what can be called 'the convergence thesis'.[6] Against the claim that the OAF continues 'business as usual', these scholars point to the fundamental changes in how the sector operates as production processes have transnationalized and as corporate interests have entered the picture. Some of the changes instituted represent something quite different from the traditional understanding of what organic means. An important body of work has emerged that demonstrates 'the disembedding' of the social elements of organic agriculture from economic processes.[7] The disembedding of social concerns from production has

occurred as new actors from the conventional agro-food sector have entered the OAF sector by acquisitioning smaller organic firms so as to centralize production processes, while reducing overhead costs to meet rising consumer demand. Buck et al. (1997) have observed these trends in OAF establishments in California, and label process of applying market rationality to the 'moral economy' as *conventionalization*.[8] Conventionalization theory stresses that the involvement of corporate actors in the OAF sector has caused convergence in production processes, mainly the commercialization of OAF and the utilization of international divisions of labour. Julie Guthman, in support of Buck et al.'s claims, argues that as OAF gains in popularity, the broader trends of agribusiness involvement in organic agriculture are best seen a "symptom of wider processes of agro-industrialization … [which in turn] unleash[es] the logic of intensification."[9] Thus, while alternatives to conventional practices remain in certain areas, the broader political economic trends of increased corporate activity suggest a significant degree of convergence on a specific, neo-liberal production model, which downplays social reproduction as part of the production process.

This article uses the lens of political economy to address the ongoing debate on the current state of the OAF sector with specific focus on the situations in Canada and the US. It uses the concept of social reproduction to show that OAF's growth and changing institutional context imposes significant pressures for convergence on the neo-liberal organization of the conventional food sector. By conceptualizing traditional organic culture as consisting of socially reproductive and productive processes, the absorption of the OAF sector into the industrialized agro-food system can be made more clear. Feminist political economists use the concept of social reproduction to account for processes that are not included in neo-liberal understandings of the market, and thus provide important insights into how reproductive and productive tasks are separated in order to facilitate capital accumulation.[10] Beyond merely accounting for the actual biological reproduction of people, feminist political economists have expanded the notion of social reproduction to include the reproduction of social values, norms and social spheres,[11] all fundamental elements to traditional understandings of 'organic' culture. Traditional approaches to organic agricultural have incorporated numerous elements of social reproduction in their production processes, such as committing to fair labour practices, preserving rural communities and culture, and localized agro-food chains. The increase of corporate activity has had significant implications for the organization and institutional structure in the OAF sector. This article demonstrates how different aspects of corporate strategies -- transnationalization of production processes, consolidation of ownership, and re-orientation towards consumer demands -- in the Canadian and American OAF sectors have effectively shifted the emphasis of OAF production away from internalizing socially reproductive costs thereby causing it to converge on conventional norms and principles.

Defining the 'Traditional' Organic Philosophy

Organic techniques of agro-food production were the norm until the *Green Revolution* became the status quo in the post WW II era.[12] This paradigm shift is characterized by the move to increase farm yields through monoculture, mechanization, chemicalization (e.g., pesticides, herbicides) and irrigation techniques in agricultural production. The Green Revolution industrialized agro-food sectors to produce as much product for as cheaply as possible. Under this system, the negative costs of industrialized agriculture

were shifted onto society and the state, (e.g., the costs of environmental degradation and displacement/unemployment).

At first, the organic agricultural movement was focused on the environmental problems associated with industrial agriculture. The organic movement originated in Europe,[13] and was based on a set of counter-hegemonic ideas that offered an alternative to modern, 'conventional' agriculture. Early advocates of the organic philosophy, such as Lady Eve Balfour, Sir Albert Howard and J.I. Rodale, espoused the environmental benefits of promoting and maintaining biodiversity through organic techniques.[14] The original practitioners of organic agriculture promoted environmental sustainability, as it was thought that the over-usage of chemical fertilizers and monoculture reduced plants and animals' natural resistance to disease and depleted the soil of its nutrients.

There are three general components that make up environmental sustainability as included in the traditional organic philosophy; localized agro-food chains, small-scale establishments and poly-culture. With regard to localized agro-food chains, remaining sensitive to the needs of the environment includes all stages of the production process. Excessive *distancing* between the points of production and the points of consumption causes an increase in transportation costs and packaging use. Distancing thus refers to the increase in energy consumption that industrialized agro-food production demands, as the spaces between stages in supply chains geographically expand.[15] Both are fossil fuel intensive processes, and so non-local supply chains are discouraged by the traditional organic philosophy.

In addition to the dissuasion of agro-food distancing, the reliance on fossil fuels in industrialized agriculture is also discouraged, as CO_2 emissions are a major cause of environmental pollution. Maintaining small-scale farming operations and using manual labour are essential to reducing dependency on fossil fuels and so the local and small-scale structure of organic agriculture is fundamental to ensuring the faintest 'ecological footprint' as possible. In contrast, larger-scale agro-food production encourages monoculture and produces more waste than can be recycled back into the production process. Monoculture is counteractive to biodiversity and the mechanization necessary to carry out monoculture encourages dependence upon fossil fuels. Both monoculture and mechanization are highly insensitive to maintaining environmental balance.[16] As a 2001 study by McNeely and Scherr shows (2001), conventional-chemical agriculture is the most pressing threat to biodiversity on the planet.[17] Thus, to maintain biodiversity, the traditional organic philosophy encourages the cultivation of what is native to one's bioregion in a poly-cultural setting.[18]

A more recent addition to the traditional organic philosophy's commitment to biodiversity is the banned usage of Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs). GMOs, and other forms of biotechnology, are not only viewed as potentially dangerous to human and environmental health, but also as tools of agribusiness, used to cement the dependency of growers and farmers on corporate-controlled technologies (such as in the case of Monsanto's 'Terminator' or Suicide Gene).[19] The traditional organic philosophy rejects the notion that knowledge of the biology of plants and animals can be privatized and sold for profit. Free flows of knowledge regarding agriculture are key to ensuring cooperation between growers and farmers in preserving the natural environment, thus connecting environmental and social elements of the traditional organic philosophy. These two commitments are intertwined and contribute to a coherent alternative that

ensures value stays with the producer,[20] and encourages the reproduction of " local knowledge and a [person's] sense of place" in the community.[21] Keeping these substantive environmental values in the production process is largely dependent upon internalizing numerous costs associated with social reproduction in OAF supply chains. Thus, the commitment to environmental sustainability extends beyond the technical definition of the product, and touches on broader issues of the process. It is this focus on the process that connects the organic philosophy's commitment to environmental sustainability and social reproduction. The linking of environmental and social values in agricultural production processes, provided the foundation for a transnational, yet concentrated grassroots 'organic' social movement in the 1960s. The integration of social elements with the economic and environmental values was an effort to establish a " completely new system of food production and distribution, and with that a major social decentralization."[22] Nicholas Lampkin, a noted researcher on organic agriculture, has formulated a definition of traditional organic agriculture that captures the important connection between economic and social processes. The traditional organic philosophy is

> an approach to agriculture where the aim is: to create integrated, humane, environmentally and economically sustainable agricultural production systems, which maximize reliance on farm-derived renewable sources and the management of ecological and biological processes and interactions, so as to provide acceptable levels of crop, livestock and human nutrition, protection from pests and diseases, and an appropriate return to the human and other resources employed.[23]

Though organic agriculture is most often associated in the public mind with environmental sustainability, Lampkin's (1994) definition shows a second set of commitments. By emphasizing an appropriate return to human labour, the traditional organic philosophy defends a socially reproducible mode of production. This differs from neo-liberal principles, which seek to externalize as many of the costs of production as possible. Thus, the traditional organic philosophy consists of two major tenets; environmental sustainability and the inclusion of social reproduction in the productive process.

Social reproduction, as part of the traditional organic philosophy, consists of three main elements: commitment to fair labour practices, gender equality (both principles of a general egalitarianism), and the preservation of rural communities and culture. Fair labour practices are a major characteristic of the traditional organic philosophy's understanding of social reproduction. The elements of fair labour practices include valuing the work that is put into all aspects of the production processes of OAF and valuing individual workers' knowledge and skills of organic techniques. Since the traditional organic philosophy rejects the use of chemical inputs and monoculture, manual labour is in many cases necessary to complete farm tasks (e.g., weeding, harvesting) and requires some level of training and awareness of organic techniques. Because of these commitments Atkins and Bowler (2001) argue that "organic farming…supports more jobs per hectare of farmland contributing to social stability of farm populations and rural society."[24] The reliance on manual labour has been the primary justification for the premium price attached to OAF products that were traditionally sold at the farm gate, farmers' markets or health food stores.[25] In order to maintain fair treatment of labour, much of the value of OAF must remain as close to the production stage as possible.

The traditional organic philosophy's commitment to the principle of gender equality also emerged as a response to the practices in conventional, industrialized agriculture. As with other elements of social sustainability, gender equality became a fundamental component of the organic philosophy in conjunction with other social movements of the 1960s, such as the women's movement. The traditional organic philosophy's emphasis on agro-food production for localized consumption is rooted in the customary practice of small-scale backyard gardens, which were often tended by women.[26] Further, the traditional organic philosophy values the diversity in social relations that characterize less institutionalized forms of agro-food production and horizontal means of decision-making. The disaggregated decision-making associated with organic agriculture has allowed for women's socially reproductive functions to be recognized and translated into decision-making power.

Underlying the commitments to fair labour practices and gender equality, are small-scale and localized modes of production. Localization contributes to consensus-based decision-making in agro-food chains by keeping land ownership disaggregated and rooted in the community.[27] It is therefore, as Mutersbaugh claims, the local, grassroots nature of organic agriculture that makes it *sustainable* agriculture.[28] The traditional organic philosophy's commitment to preserving rural communities and culture rejects the organizational structures that dominate conventional agriculture. It is, as noted by the National Farmer's Union's *Policy on Sustainable Agriculture*,[29] corporate consolidation of agriculture, which effectively displaces farming populations. The traditional organic definition encourages the local sourcing of foods, eating in-season, minimal processing and a decentralization of marketing.[30] Local Consumer-Supported Agriculture (CSA) networks are nurtured throughout the organic agricultural sector to support farmers who adhere to the traditional organic philosophy and who promote the 'grow local, buy local' mantra.[31] These networks base trade on direct distribution schemes and local food links, and as Powell (1995) notes, " the idea behind [CSAs] is to provide growers with a guaranteed market for their produce, and to give consumers access to a food at a reasonable price. Usually growers and consumers… live within a short distance of each other, and there may be social links as well."[32] Limiting the links in OAF supply chains is important to maintaining the social connections between the land, the producer and the consumer.

Organic Inc[33]: Contradictions of the Corporatized Organic Philosophy

In some ways, the challenges faced by the OAF sector to maintain its commitment to including socially reproductive tasks as fundamental parts of what makes a good organic has been a result of its growing economic success. In his examination of the growth of OAF and shifting definitions of organic, Timothy Vos notes, "[the] ideological lineaments of organic farming…represent an historically persistent cultural paradigm…yet…this paradigm may be increasingly called into question by the burgeoning economic successes that organic farming has recently been enjoying."[34] Numerous factors have contributed to the expanding market shares of OAF. For example, rising fears regarding agro-food safety and security have been major drivers of increasing consumer demand. Public attention is being drawn towards the ill effects of conventional farming techniques, including environmental degradation, chemical residues on food and other causal links with human disease. The questionable safeties of GMOs in the food system and cases of Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE or

'mad cow disease') also helped the OAF industry grow in North America throughout the 1990s.[35] As the FAO reported in 2003, " it took 30 years for organic agriculture to occupy 1 percent of agricultural land and food markets…food safety concerns [have] resulted in its recent spectacular and unforeseen increase."[36] The insertion of OAF into the global system of trade imposes significant contradictions into the institutional formation of the OAF sector and the ability for practitioners to maintain a commitment to the traditional organic philosophy.

The involvement of conventional agro-food corporations in the Canadian and American OAF sectors has led to the emergence of an alternative organic philosophy; one that places far less emphasis on productive processes in favour of the technical definition of the end product. This contending definition can be understood as a 'corporatized' organic philosophy, which crowds out the traditional organic philosophy. As scholar Julie Guthman (2001) states,

> the organic food sector is increasingly bifurcated into two very different systems of provision: one producing lower cost and/or processed organic food…appealing to meanings of health and safety; the other producing higher value produce in direct markets and appealing to meanings of organicism, political change, and novelty…Practitioners in both systems are able to claim the moral high ground.[37]

By downgrading the importance of process (in favour of the technical definition of the final product), the corporatized organic philosophy diminishes the role of social reproduction in the OAF sector. Organizations committed to neo-liberal market principles have helped to contribute to this burgeoning corporate ideology governing the OAF sector. In the 2003 OECD publication entitled, *Organic Agriculture: Sustainability, Markets and Policies*, one contributor characterizes sustainability as embodying economic viability, environmental soundness and social *acceptability,*[38] whereby social acceptability is defined as " meeting wider values of society, such as supporting rural communities and addressing cultural/ethical issues such as animal welfare concerns."[39] This definition put forth by the OECD, makes little reference to the importance of including socially reproductive functions as essential elements to what makes a good 'organic'. As Cowley (2002) explains, "[t]he new organic is all about bigger farms, heartier crops, better distribution and slicker packaging and promotion."[40]

Three major changes in the structure of OAF have fostered a corporate friendly version of the organic philosophy: the transnationalization of OAF supply chains, the consolidation of ownership over production processes, and the shift in orientation of the OAF sector towards consumer demands. All three of these elements already exist in conventional agro-food production, and thus their growing overlap with OAF contributes to the convergence of the OAF sector towards conventional models of production.

Transnationalizing OAF supply chains

To understand why the transnationalization of OAF supply chains has moved the sector towards convergence upon the norms and practices found in the conventional agro-food sector, we must first briefly examine the transnationalization of the agro-food sector in general. The transnationalization of agro-food supply chains is fostered by the declining labour and environmental regulations of states. Declining regulation is mandated by the neo-liberal market principles, which currently guide regulations and trade in the global economy via the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) and the World Trade Organization (WTO). The establishment of transnational agro-food supply chains was

possible through what Coleman et al. refer to as a, " combination of liquid international capital markets and few restrictions on the movement of goods and skilled labour [which] allowed for the growth of foreign direct investment in agro-food…sectors."[41]

Though transnational supply chains existed before the processes of globalization were fully underway,[42] the institutionalization of neo-liberal principles in the global trading system, and the involvement of corporations in the agro-food system, accelerates the pace at which agro-foods are produced and the speed at which they are transported around the world. The focus on market competition and global integration encourages market actors to reduce overhead costs (e.g., monocropping), and increase the scale of production to meet economies of scale.[43] The encouragement of integration in the global trading system structurally dissuades the localization of agro-food chains. Due to the increasing popularity of OAF products in Canada and the US, some localized OAF supply chains have become transnationalized, as these countries cannot themselves create adequate supply of certain products.[44] For example, 2003 Canadian statistics show that 85-90% of all OAF products sold in Canada are imported from the US,[45] while the US imports 41% of all exported Canadian OAF products.[46]

The OAF sector's incorporation into the global economy through transnationalized production networks has caused the OAF sector's norms and practices to converge on those which currently govern the global agro-food system. Traditional organic agriculture avoids the relationship of dependence with agribusiness, and is not reliant upon purchasing the off-farm inputs introduced by the Green Revolution such as fertilizers and large-scale machinery. But as demand for OAF products has increases, organic businesses in California, for example, are increasingly using monoculture to reduce costs and maximize profits from the production and sales of OAF. [47] As Michael Pollan (2001), a vocal critic of industrialized agriculture claims, five giant farms have now cornered half of the $400 million organics sector in California.[48] For example, *Greenways Organic* is a large-scale, 2 000 acre farming operation that grows and packages organic vegetables for sale in the US and Canada. US based *Earthbound Farms* also participates in transnational OAF supply chains. *Earthbound Farms* has vertically integrated from 'field to plate' and contracts over 200 growers throughout California.[49] The US based *Cascadian Farms* has transnationalized its production processes and now, "can't even afford to use produce from Cascadian Farm *the farm*: it's too small…the company buys…from as far away as Chile."[50]

The transnational organization of OAF supply chains disadvantages fair labour practices by forcing all producers to reduce economic costs and ignores the social costs of reproducing labouring populations.[51] The move away from localized agro-food chains undermines the ability for the inclusion of socially reproductive tasks in production processes because transnational agro-food supply chains have decision-making structures that are far removed from the point of production, reducing the ability for producers to participate in decision-making that directly affects their livelihoods. Transnationalizing OAF production processes effectively separates many of the economic processes from the social reproductive processes that have traditionally been a fundamental part of what makes a good organic. Further, the transnationalization of production processes moves the value further away from the producer by increasing the links in supply chains; thus more 'middlemen' must gain profit from the sale of the good, who do not necessarily

place the same emphasis on social reproduction as the traditional organic philosophy commands.

Statistics Canada reports that the conventional farmer participating in transnational agro-food chains only retains 25% of the consumer dollar spent on agro-food, while the rest goes to processors and retailers.[52] Incorporating OAF into a system of production that moves value away from the point of production make keeping social reproduction connected to the production process increasingly difficult. Instead of competing with other local producers with similar labour and environmental standards, local producers are forced to compete with foreign ones who may be able to reduce labour costs by increasing the scale of production operations through mechanization and monoculture. The trend of increasing scales of production has been observed in California where labour relations in OAF supply chains are beginning to utilize the international divisions of labour found in conventional agro-food chains.[53]

Corporate consolidation and neo-liberal reforms in industrialized countries strengthen the ability of market actors to concentrate power over decision-making in the agro-food system. The freer flow of capital that results from declining state controls over capital inflows and outflows, led to a number of takeovers and mergers in the 1980s that established the "conglomerate integration" that now characterizes the current stage of organization of the agro-food sector.[54] William Heffernan defines the oligopolistic concentration of ownership amongst a few corporations and their cooperation with each other to gain market shares as "network clusters."[55] As a result of network clustering, agro-food TNCs now provides almost 60 % of all food sales in North America and Europe.[56] Unlike the capitalist ideal of free market competition between firms, clustering between TNCs characterizes the recent development of the agro-food sector in North America that has been labelled the 'agro-industrial complex'.[57]

The network clustering strategy used by TNCs has made it possible for the market share of the top twenty US food manufacturers to double from 1967 to the early 2000s. The consolidation of the agro-food sector is further evident from the fact that a mere one hundred firms now control over 80 % of all value-added food products worldwide.[58] TNCs have increased their control over the decisions made regarding agro-food because economic power has been concentrated, giving well-placed market actors the ability to squeeze out smaller competition and to increase their market shares by specializing in various stages of the agro-food supply chain.

The corporate involvement in links in the OAF supply chains exploded in the 1990s as growth in the conventional agro-food sector slowed to 4-5%.[59] Though the market for OAF products is still relatively small (1-3% of the total global sales)[60] compared to conventional agro-food, the OAF sector is a niche market that garners huge profits through price premiums. Price premiums on OAF can range anywhere from 50 to 200% above conventional agro-food costs.[61] As a result of these price premiums, in 2002 retail sales of OAF in Canada grew to $750 million[62] and around $12 billion in the US.[63] Today, food processing TNCs like *Coca Cola*, *Dole*, *General Mills*, *Kraft* and *H.J. Heinz* have all invested in the OAF sector.[64] *Hain-Celestial*, a conventional food processing TNC (partially controlled by *H.J. Heinz)*, has acquisitioned more than 20 smaller OAF processors in the US and Canada since 1997. *Hain*'s corporate strategy is to " be the leading manufacturer, marketer and seller of natural and organic food…by anticipating and exceeding consumer expectations…"[65] Numerous corporate investments from the

conventional agro-food sector signal a radical departure from the traditional motivations associated with organic agriculture that reject the concentrated, corporate control of production processes.

Corporate involvement in the OAF sector has caused concern and protest from practitioners and supporters of the traditional organic philosophy who believe *organic* stands for something quite distinct from corporate models of capitalism. As stated in by the OECD in 2003, " [corporatization]… presents a challenge for some in the organic movement, who are concerned with the social and environmental impacts of business practices and structural characteristics of mainstream agriculture but also want to spread organic farming principles and facilitate greater consumer access to organic food."[66] Conventional corporations seeking profits and greater market shares impose an economic structure upon the production of OAF that is at odds with traditional understandings of the organic philosophy. The consolidation of ownership over the agro-food sector that is now extending to the OAF sector allows for already large and powerful corporations to expand their influence and interests by acquisitioning smaller firms. Instead of the disbursement of value added to disaggregated groups of market actors, profits are concentrated in the hands of few, already financially powerful corporations, further giving them more influence over how production is organized and 'who gets what' throughout the supply chain.

Consumer Orientation

The corporatized organic philosophy is largely centred on meeting consumer demand. As Clunies-Ross aptly posits, " paradoxically, just as consumers are beginning to make a negative link between food quality and the industrialization of the food process, attempts are being made to draw producers of organic food into the commercial food sector in an effort to meet consumer demand."[67] The traditional organic philosophy's commitment to social sustainability is made more difficult to practice as meeting consumer demand as quickly and economically efficiently as possible becomes the priority of the corporatized OAF sector.

By and large, the main motivator for corporations to become involved in OAF is the increasing consumer demand, which translates into the potential for huge profits from premium priced food. The premium prices attached to OAF products under the traditional organic philosophy was originally justified in order to support social (and environmental) sustainability practiced along OAF supply chains by, in effect, internalizing the costs of production. Consumers who support traditional organic agriculture are prepared to pay a higher price for the internalized costs of social and environmental sustainability.[68] Today, OAF is marketed as 'healthier' than conventional agro-food with far less emphasis on the societal benefits than the traditional ways of producing OAF. Since social reproduction is externalized in the corporatized organic philosophy, the profits from premium prices are passed onto the corporate owners and managers of the OAF sector, since no enforceable legislation exists that forces corporations to abide by the productive practices associated with the traditional interpretations of the organic philosophy. Because including social reproduction in organic agriculture is based on local, small-scale production, the pressure to economize scales of production (which includes downward pressure on labour costs, materials and centralization of production), while maximizing profit, has fundamentally challenged the ability for organic agriculture to put its traditional social values into practice when

competitors are under no formal obligation to internalize social costs in the current global trading system. The corporate interpretation of the organic philosophy is based on the end product, not valuing *how* OAF is produced, processed and distributed and *who* is involved in this process. Unlike the organic movement's broader social goals, the only elements of the organic philosophy to be widely instituted into public policy and regulation are the banning of GMOs and synthetic chemicals in OAF products.[69]

The traditional organic philosophy ultimately rejects the industrializing processes associated with conventional agriculture, but some practitioners in organic agriculture have benefited from growing consumer demand and the lack of emphasis placed on the importance of fair labour practices in the corporatized, market-oriented interpretation of the organic philosophy. Increasing demand for low cost OAF, and the purchasing of OAF in large-scale supermarkets/mega stores such as *Wal-Mart*, encourages conventional forms of production, which stress standardization, efficiency and price competitiveness.[70]

In 1991, 7% of all OAF products were sold in conventional supermarkets in the US, while 68% were sold in health food/ natural products stores and the remainder sold through direct consumer methods (e.g., farmer's markets, home delivery). As a result of the OAF sector becoming more corporatized, in 2000, the US Department of Agriculture reported that 49% of all OAF products were sold in conventional supermarkets and 48% was sold in natural food/ health food stores and only 3% through direct consumer methods.[71] This shows a noticeable decline in the involvement of direct consumer methods, which traditionally is the channel that practitioners of the traditional organic philosophy prefer to use. The shift towards conventional food retail outlets also shows the increasing volume of OAF products being sold through conventional food retailers that demand competitive pricing from their suppliers. Since consumer tastes now largely drive the expansion of the OAF sector, its traditional commitments have given way to satisfying consumer demands through industrial modes of production that largely omit the production process as a fundamental 'ingredient' in OAF products.

Conclusion

Some practitioners of the traditional organic philosophy predicted that organic agriculture would hold 40% of the total agro-food market by 1975.[72] The ideal vision of the future of organic agriculture was that it would be a " post-industrial ecologically sustainable system of family farming-farmers [who] are again agrarian crafts persons."[73] While consumption of OAF has grown (though not to this extent) its growth has not changed the industrial, corporate nature of the current agro-food system. Today, it is not 'business as usual' in the OAF sector, as more conventional interests have transformed this previously local, small-scale sector into a global system of production that externalizes social reproduction.

The social ideals associated with the traditional organic philosophy are now further away from becoming the principles guiding the majority of the practices in the OAF sector. Instead of the principles of traditional organic agriculture overtaking and replacing the environmentally and socially damaging practices associated with conventional, industrialized agriculture, organic agriculture has become absorbed into the global economy through the involvement of corporate interests and rising consumer demand. The absorption of the OAF sector into an economic system based on neo-liberal principles undermines the applicability of the traditional organic philosophy, especially

its dedication to valuing social reproduction as a fundamental element to what makes a good organic.

The shortcomings of OAF as a counter-hegemonic position are demonstrated by traditional adherence seeking new sites of resistance. The recent attempts to link the organic and the fair trade movements to combat the negatives associated with globalization demonstrates how the dedication of those practicing the traditional organic philosophy has proven difficult to maintain and achieve in a sector that is converging upon the norms and practices associated with the conventional, corporatized agro-food sector. The current global system of trade based on the institutionalization of neo-liberal principles emphasizes on the end product over the process, and rewards market actors who externalize social goods from the production process. As a result, the traditional organic philosophy and its inclusion of socially reproductive functions in the production process have been undermined as OAF is further incorporated into the global economy.

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