



Acknowledgements

I wish to extend my gratitude to my supervisors at NMBU and ISARA-Lyon, Geir Lieblein, Anna Marie Nicolaysen and Carole Chazoule. Your continuous support has been a great help in writing this thesis, and I am grateful for all insights, inspiration and dedication.

I also wish to extend my gratitude to all professors and teachers in the European Master of Science Agroecology: your enthusiasm, knowledge and perspective always give me new insights.

I want to thank all of my wonderful study colleagues from all over the world, I have learned so much from all of you, and I hope we will continue to share experiences and stories in the years to come.

I would like to thank Kari Mette Holm for being my external tutor in my thesis work- you have given me valuable input and inspiration for finding my research area.

Perhaps most importantly, I wish to thank all the CSA farmers and informants dedicating time to share experiences and stories about the transition process towards becoming successful CSA farmers. You have inspired me and given me the knowledge I needed to write this thesis. I am forever grateful.

Abstract

The growth of localized food systems and alternative food networks reconnects farmers and consumers, and contributes to resilience and sustainability of food systems. Local food systems bring life to rural areas and favor community building, supporting local economies and local ecosystems. Community supported agriculture (CSA) has grown rapidly in the last decades, and builds on the notion of shared risks and costs of food production, by allowing for shareholder contribution and joint learning about food. This study contributes to the discussion about farmer transitions towards CSA by discussing shared characteristics, as well as forces that support and hinder the process. Qualitative semi-structured interviews were carried out with six Norwegian CSAs. Findings revealed that there emerged two main reasons for CSA establishment. One, being in an unwanted situation with vegetable wholesalers, declining income and demand. Two, the desire to connect with consumers and see opportunities to locally produce organic food with increased involvement from the local community. The CSA farmers show a high motivation for producing quality food produced on farm resources while demonstrating environmental engagement and emphasizing sustainable use of resources. Location and organizational form is found to be an important factor for commitment and engagement from shareholders. The network of CSA is a supportive force of collaboration and knowledge-exchange in order to develop new and existing CSAs. CSAs are found to be a viable option for farmers to increase social relationships, foster learning, and improve the economic stability of the farm. CSA is likely to remain a small, but important, part of food systems, and is seen as an essential component in re-localizing food systems.

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1. Introduction

In recent years there has been a rapid growth in alternative food networks and local food initiatives. Local food systems are seen to bring life to rural areas, increasing the connection between those who produce the food and those who consume it. Re-localizing food systems and shortening food chains are argued to favor sustainability by community building, supporting local economies and local ecosystems (Seyfang 2008). At the heart of local food systems, one finds representatives of direct marketing with farmers markets and community supported agriculture (CSA) where consumers purchase food directly from the farmer. Studies conducted on farmers markets, CSAs, box schemes and community gardens, reveals that both consumers and farmers believe in the prospects and potentials of re-localizing food systems. Promoting direct sales, securing farm economy and providing people with safe, fresh and nutritious food with the farmers face on it (Sumner et al. 2010).

The emergence of CSA has rapidly grown in the last decades (Brown and Miller 2008), and the first CSA scheme was set up in Norway in 2006 (Andelslandbruk 2014). The “global” literature on CSA is skewed towards the “consumer” or the “shareholder” perspectives. There are few studies on farmers’ perspectives on how to redesign local food systems, or on the internal movements and transition processes that lead to the establishment of the CSA. Also, there are few existing studies on the topic in Norway. This thesis aims to fill this gap in the literature by contributing to the discussion about CSA and local food systems, from a farmers’ perspective, analyzing the transitions processes, probing into reflections and experiences from CSA establishments. This research seeks to address the following research questions:

- What characterizes the transition process towards becoming a CSA farmer?
- What are the supporting and hindering forces in the transition process towards becoming a successful CSA farmer?

The thesis will first outline views on sustainable local food systems, highlighting their potentials and limitations. Second, the concept of CSA is portrayed as well as the Norwegian food system. Based on six cases with semi-structured interviews, three phases will guide the discussion through the farmer transition towards becoming a CSA farmer.

1.1. A call for sustainable food systems

There is a disconnect between farmers (producers) and consumers in the dominant food system. There are questions about the long-term sustainability of the system and consumers have become passive recipients of food (Feenstra 2002). The distance between farmers and consumers has increased in the 20th century, and Milestad et al. (2010) argues that this is due to the fact that less people are directly involved in food production today, production chains are complex, and because fewer people know how to grow food, or how it comes about (Milestad et al. 2010). Direct contact between producers and consumers allows for a greater knowledge about food production, and learning about food can enable socio-ecological feedback (Feenstra 2002, Milestad et al. 2010).

The growth of alternative food networks (AFN) and local food systems are most often attributed to the consumer distrust with the conventional, or industrial food system. Conventional agriculture is often critiqued for practices of intensive tillage, monoculture, synthetic fertilizers, irrigation, chemical pest and weed management, GMO, factory farming, soil degradation, all argued to affect the environment, global inequality and food security (Renting et al. 2003, Gliessman 2007). Conventional practices represent a combination of powerful centralized institutions and functionally specialized divisions of labor, which hinder resource management reform and challenges adaptive social change. Adaptive and resilient systems based on smaller scale systems, which are responsive, are argued to drive the search for new approaches (Folke et al. 1998).

Conventional food systems with a high level of specialization and productivity reduce the systems resilience. Supermarkets and chain retailers favor specialized systems due to the convenience of providing large quantities of foods, constantly and uniformly (Milestad and Darnhofer 2008). Resilience can be defined as a systems capacity to respond to a magnitude of disturbance by resisting damage and recover to its original form (Folke et al. 1998).

There is a need for new approaches to agriculture and development that rely on a combination of traditional knowledge of small-scale farmers and modern ecological knowledge and practices. As Gliessman (2007) argues, food consumption is detached from the processes that get food from field to fork. Gliessman is calling for new approaches to agriculture and development of food systems by the science of agroecology. Agroecology can be defined as “*the application of ecological concepts and principles to the design and management of sustainable food systems*” (Gliessman 2007, p. 18). Agroecological farming systems aim at mimicking natural ecosystems

and at the same time connects agriculture to nature and society. Therefore, agroecological methods and practices can play an important role in making food and farming systems more resilient and sustainable (Gliessman 2007).

In response to the many issues associated with the conventional food system by environmental, economic and social aspects that are no longer meeting the goals and values of many consumers, there has been a development and growth of AFN (Rigby and Cáceres 2001, Marsden and Smith 2005, Polimeni et al. 2006, Brown & Miller 2008, Macias 2008, Seyfang 2008, Mount 2012). Community gardens, CSA, local markets and food cooperatives are providing people with organic and locally produced food. These direct agricultural markets allow for connection between producers and consumers, and are increasingly seen to be essential to local food systems (Hinrichs 2000).

1.2. The potential of local organic food systems

Local food systems are networks of food production and consumption that aims to benefit local economies, community and environments (Marsden and Smith 2005, Seyfang 2008). Marsden and Smith (2005), and Sayfang (2008) amongst other authors speak about potentials of local food systems. For this work potentials of local food systems is interpreted as a systems future possibilities for further development.

Environmental concerns about food production and farming have led to an increased demand for environmentally friendly production systems. Organic farming has been embedded in policies in many countries as a method to make national agriculture more sustainable (Rigby and Cáeres 2001). Sustainable agriculture is often defined by being environmentally sound, socially responsible and economically viable. This entails that agriculture must be viewed as a complex evolving system with dynamic aspects. Resilience is a prerequisite for sustainable agriculture, as sustainability depends on a systems ability to adapt and cope with change in ecological and socio-economic systems (Milestad and Dernhofer 2008).

Complex evolving systems, as food systems, depend on the ability to adapt and change. Therefore, development of knowledge is important. Development of knowledge depends on the ability to understand cycles of natural and unpredictable events, and farm practices based on knowledge and experiences from long-term relationships with the environment and the dynamics of local ecosystems (Röling and Jiggins 1998, cited in Milestad and Darnhofer 2008). Diverse farming systems allow for spreading risks and the creation of buffers, which is dependent on

flexible *on-farm and off-farm* activities (Milestad and Darnhofer 2008). Support in the local community favors relationships with consumers and enable short distribution channels and direct marketing. Feagan (2007) argues that the local food systems movement is rooted in early sustainability approaches, calling for “decentralization, democratization, self-sufficiency and subsidiarity” (Feagan 2007, p. 24) to current issues with the industrial food system, where connection between farmers and consumers are absent “physically, socially and metaphorically” (Feagan 2007). Local food systems are often argued to solve issues of abandonment of rural areas, and promotion sustainable agriculture, as well as reducing food miles.

However, this might exist as a romanticized approach. Some authors have tried to elaborate on the discussion, define concepts of “local”, “alternative food networks” and “short distribution channels”. What is local food? Is it the “American way” of the 100 miles diet, national and regional, or just food produced and consumed within the local community? These are important aspects to consider when solving the complex calculation of the carbon footprint of a dinner plate. A study from 2008 on local food, food miles and carbon emissions found that if the consumer drives more than 6.7 km to harvest or purchase food at a farm shop, the carbon emission is likely to be greater compared to a large scale organic box scheme including cold storage, packing, transport to regional hub and on to the door step of the consumer (Coley et al. 2009).

Being critical of one’s own shopping habits becomes important when food miles are considered. However, there are potential solutions: many CSAs located at further distances from shareholders have organized drop off points to reduce food miles, or shareholders plan for car-pooling. If environmental concerns are the reason for purchasing organic foods, driving 30 minutes to a farm shop or CSA might have a bigger impact on the environment compared to the super market down the road. However, there is more to local food systems and alternative food networks than just food miles. It’s about the added values, ranging from fresh produce straight from the soil, knowing the farmers’ practices, a wish to support and build a relationship to local farmers, to nutritional aspects and so on. Reasons for participation in the local food community are diverse and complex.

Local food systems are thought to provide people with both knowledge about how their food was produced and access to fresher food (Lamine 2005). The farmer benefit from local food systems with direct marketing that allows for an improved economy and at the same time it ensures, if

wanted a higher contribution to the community (Marsden et al. 2000, cited in Milestad 2010). Improved economy meaning a greater proportion of the money spent in the local food system going to the farmer. However, the increase in interest of local food does not necessarily mean jointly increased interest in community building, as many consumers really are just “in it” for the food, and not so much for the social connections (Brehm and Eisenhauer 2008, Lang 2010). Also, when critiquing potentials of local food systems, questions raises about the relationship between talk and action. Are local food systems as effective as they sometimes a promoted to be? Often, studies on local food initiatives conclude them to be a small, but important part of the food system (Renting et al. 2003, Brown and Miller 2008).

1.2.1. Alternative Food Networks

Alternative food networks (AFN) aims to bring consumers closer to producers by offering short food supply chains (SFSC) and often entails a more direct contact between farmers and consumers (Brunori 2007). AFN enable the consumer to make decisions based on internal values and beliefs, and at the same time create opportunities in agriculture to shift from long, often industrialized systems to a more localized short distribution. SFCS shorten the distance from field to fork, from production to locality, and therefore holds the potential of making farming more sustainable (Renting et al. 2003). AFN are visible at for example farmers markets and CSAs, building on the notion of direct marketing. However, organic consumption is also argued to be an act for one’s own well being, with “chemical-free food” Lockie (2009). Indeed, there is evidence that organic agriculture has become industrialized, parting from the goals of its early movements (Lamine et al. 2014). This might be one reason that many people have called for, and supports local food systems, “reducing the spatial, temporal, social and economic” distance between consumers and farmers. AFNs may be a solution for consumers with promises of reducing food miles, eating seasonally and ensuring that the food dollar is ending up in the pockets of farmers (Lockie 2009, p. 194).

1.2.2. Community Supported Agriculture

CSA is an important component in local food systems. CSA emerged in Japan in the 1960’s as a response to a group of women’s wish to access locally grown fruits and vegetables. In order to make this economically viable for the farmers, the Japanese families agreed to commit themselves over a longer period. CSA is based on the notion that the community is supporting the farm by agreeing to share costs, risks, and often some hours of labor per season. In return the shareholder receives a weekly share of vegetables and sometimes other food products as fruits, eggs, milk, cheese and meat (Brehm and Eisenhauer 2008).

CSA plays an important role in connecting farmers and consumers. The structure of CSAs vary in terms of management, some CSAs are solely based on the farmers labor, where shareholder get to pick up their share at a given location as well as receiving newsletter about the current happenings at the farm. One also finds the more shareholder-oriented version where the members play a larger role in all processes from organization, planting, weeding and harvesting. What they have in common is that the shareholders pay up-front and in return receive a weekly, or bi-weekly share, and at the same time they share the risks with the farmer (Schnell 2007).

CSA goes beyond the notion of just accessing fresh local food with the economic exchange. CSA also gives added value with social ties to the farmer and the other shareholders, providing an arena for learning and fostering social relations in addition to food (Polimeni et al. 2006).

The challenges of being a CSA farmer comes down to ensuring that crops mature at different times and providing shareholders with a diversity of produce throughout the season. Determining the right price and how much that goes into one share in correlation to the shareholders expectations is also viewed to be important to maintain membership for several seasons. Surveys on shareholder turnover reveals that shareholders leave the CSA if they do not get satisfied with the amount of produce they receive, as in too little or too much, or unfamiliar vegetables (Polimeni et al. 2006, Brown and Miller 2008). The CSA also needs to reflect on the types of produce, a combination of familiar vegetables and some new ones seems to be the best arrangement (Lang 2010).

1.3. Norwegian Food System

Norwegian agriculture is dependent on several factors when it comes to climate and topography. About 3 % of Norway is used for food production, and 2.7 % of the population is employed in agriculture and forestry. Two thirds of the farmers are also employed outside the farm (SNL 2014a). Even though many parts of Norway are challenged in climatic factors and topography, there is an agricultural production spread out over the nation. This is doable due to four factors: 1) additional resources from forestry, mountains and marine activities; 2) the technical knowledge development; 3) the organized contribution from the agricultural population and 4) the governments commitment to ensure agricultural services and subsidies (Almås 2002). According to the OECD, agricultural subsidies accounts for 1.3 % of the Norwegian state budget (OECD 2010). In 2011 there were 45.500 agricultural holdings in Norway, with a reduction from 198.000 in 1959. However, about the same areal is under use, which means that farmers today manage larger areas of land, farms have increased in size, and farming has become more specialized. Almost 90 % of the agricultural land is devoted to fodder production (Rognstad and

Steinset 2011). This shows that the country produces most of its meat and dairy products with above 80% self-sufficiency in meat, cheese, milk, butter, eggs and yoghurt. The self-sufficiency with vegetables and potatoes evens out to about 50 %, and with fruits and berries the percentage is four. This shows that Norway is dependent on imports of food, and there is also an import of fodder proteins for livestock (Rolfsen 2013). About 8900 farmers deliver milk to TINE cooperative (owned by 15.000 farmers), which is Norway's largest producer, distributor and exporter of dairy products (TINE 2014). Also about 18.000 farmers supply their animal products of meat and eggs to Nortura SA, which is the leading supplier of meat and eggs (Nortura 2014). The engagement in cooperatives is abundant, and secures the production estimates and prices for the farmers creating a stable farm economy.

Organic agriculture accounts for 5.1 % of the total agricultural land, and the government has a goal of reaching 15 % organic production and consumption by 2020 (SNL 2014b). Farmers started to receive subsidies for organic production in 1990, and jointly agricultural services and research on organic agriculture was supported. However, the broader initiatives emerged later, in 2002-2004 (Solemdal and Kvamme 2005).

2. Materials and Methods

The process for finding the theme, research objectives and questions evolved with reading literature as well as from extensive discussions with professors at the universities where I studied. (In Norway, France and Austria.) Over the course of one year I took important steps in formulating the aims of the research and narrowed down the specific research questions.

During the fall of 2013 I started to approach the topic of CSA. This model attracted me due to my experience with CSA in the United States, Austria and France. My motivation for developing the research questions was to understand the farmers' background and inspiration to establish a CSA, to get insight in the process of change, and to gather knowledge from their experience of establishing and developing the CSA. There are relatively few studies on CSA in Norway as this is a recent development in Norway, and it appeared both to be interesting and important to get insights into the social movement of the farmers' journey towards CSA.

2.1. Qualitative research strategy

A qualitative research strategy with semi-structured interviews was chosen for this study for a number of reasons. It is often characterized by diversity within data and analytical processes, and has the objectives of describing a social phenomenon, or a complex situation, by using empirical data to describe a phenomenon (Walliman 2006). I found this to be suitable in regards to my research questions, as I was to enter into a complex situation with several CSA farmers with different perspectives and structures of the functions of the CSAs. The close relationship between the researcher and the informants' raises several questions related to methodology and ethical challenges (this meaning the trust and relationship between the informant and the researcher). The researcher needs to reflect on personal appearance and attitudes, which is argued by Thagaard (2013) to determine how the researcher is welcomed by the informant (Thagaard 2013). One goal with semi-structured interviews is to create an atmosphere that stimulates more or less a free conversation (Tjora 2012, Thagaard 2013). The advantage of the semi-structured interviews is that they provide detailed information from the informants, which would have been challenging through a survey, or quantitative research.

2.1.1. The case study strategy

One challenge with qualitative research is setting boundaries in the empirical work. Two strategies emerge in refining research: case studies and sample size (Tjora 2012). Case studies are often applied when the motivation for the research is to understand cases and generate knowledge related to experiences, problems, successes and sensations (Yin 1994, Tjora 2012). Research in a real life context with a case study is a descriptive form of empirical inquiry (Yin

1994). According to Yin (1994), multiple case studies aim to build a general explanation that fits each of the individual cases, and at the same time show differences if present.

When using qualitative methodology and obtaining information through semi-structured interviews, one is left with a wide variety of complex information. The goal with case studies is to uncover patterns, determine meanings, construct conclusions, and build theory (Yin 1994). Comparing empirically based patterns with previous assumptions can strengthen the internal validity of the research if they coincide. However, the assumptions should have strong roots in scientific literature, which were obtained by a literature review (Yin 1994).

2.2. Participants

In order to answer the research questions, interviews at six CSAs were conducted, with a total of seven interviews. The aim was to expand on the knowledge about the individual thoughts, experiences, mindsets and interpretations of CSA farmers, regarding their transition towards becoming CSA farmers. The interviews resulted in qualitative findings that would add to our knowledge about several aspects of the emerging CSAs in Norway.

There are variations in the structure of the CSAs I worked with, including how long they have been established. Stakeholders were identified through conversations with people and organizations involved in CSA. After conducting five interviews with the initially planned sample of CSA farmers from about the same geographical region, I made a decision to increase the number of interviews. As CSA is a fairly new concept in Norway, it appeared important to increase the sample to include perspectives from a CSA with longer time under operation.

The CSA farms are described below, and in Chapter 4 Results and discussion. All CSA farmers were assigned pseudonyms.

2.3. Interview process

A semi-structured interview guide was created in the planning process. The guide includes relevant questions according to the background knowledge on the subject that was gained through a literature review. The semi-structured interview guide allowed to some extent for a replication of questions. However the guide was open to follow-up questions and elaboration on emerging themes based on insights gained during the interview. The interview setting had an emphasis on providing a relaxed atmosphere that was expected to make the informants more comfortable by having a conversational tone and setting. I was sought to avoid asking biased or leading questions.

There was focus on a natural flow of questions during the interview, and the questions were designed to elicit longer answers where the subject elaborated (can you explain... can you tell me more about...). The interviewer reflected on mindfulness around the conversation and aimed at taking the role as a listener, and ensuring smooth transitions to next questions.

All participants were given necessary information about the study, and signed a form detailing their consent to participation, and also agreeing to tape recording of the interview. The study was approved by the Data Protection Official for Research.

2.3.1. Performing interview

Four of the six CSA interviews were carried out face to face, and two were conducted by phone due to inconvenience of time and place. The informants were the farmer, or at one of the CSAs, the daily manager and the gardener, resulting in seven interviews at six CSA farms. The shortest interview lasted for one hour and twenty minutes, while the longest lasted for about two hours and fifteen minutes. This reveals that some of the CSA farmers were more talkative than others.

During all the interviews the interview guide was followed, however not strictly. The aim was to nurture an open, flexible dialogue between the participants and myself. Having an open structure can enable respondents to talk about issues and phenomena that are not directly linked to the question itself, and this type of information can bring new and interesting thoughts, experiences and views. It also gives space for follow up questions on matters found to be important and interesting for the overall understanding of the subject.

The interviews were initiated by asking for information about the farm history and practices, and then progressed with asking what motivations and values the farmers have for growing food, growing organic and what local food meant to them. Further, I asked about past and current distribution channels, and their thoughts and experiences with that aspect. Questions were guided towards the topics of how they first learned about CSA, their expectations and the process of establishing the CSA with ideological and economic aspects. I asked about the type of organizational form to understand how the CSA has developed, also their thoughts on future development. Other questions were related to what they enjoy about being a CSA farmer, what challenges they meet in their daily life, and how they gain knowledge. Further questions related to who the CSA members are and what their contribution/commitment to the farm/CSA is, as well as the relationship with members and what they think about time management and planning.

The interview guide (Appendix 1) reflects the main questions and themes that were addressed during the interviews, however it does not cover the follow-up questions.

2.4. Analysis and development of phases

The transcribed interviews were sorted into tables according to the different themes/questions, which enabled systematic coding. The dataset was then organized to sort similar themes in the same columns. In semi-structured interviews, interviewees respond to different themes and often touched upon new themes. The interviewer must pay careful attention to follow up the different themes, and structure the interview. Organization was necessary to provide systematic analysis of the data.

When preparing how to present my results, I found inspiration in the work of Edvin Østergaard (1998), especially his study of transition from conventional to organic farming. I realized that there are similarities in the different phases that the farmers undergo in order to become CSA farmers, with the phases presented in Østergaard's work. He describes five phases in the transition towards becoming an organic farmer. The movement flow through the "five states of mind" starts with a critique that leads to a wish to seek new "head images" that results in a decision to change (in this case, making the decision to establish a CSA). Then two phases follow: enthusiasm and moderation (Østergaard 1998). When reading Østergaard's dissertation, I realized that there are similarities between these two processes of transition, however Østergaard's study is more detailed in its description of the process, as his study was conducted over several years.

In addition to Østergaard's work, I was also interested in the theories in Lamine et al. (2014), specifically what they discuss as a *system redesign paradigm*, with transition of farm scale, as well as the collective and local levels. Lamine et al. found that in conversion to organic farming there is a simultaneous change in the marketing channels and in production systems. This is thought to be due to diversification at the farm that leads to a shift towards shorter market channels. With the transition in the collective and local levels farmers also re-discovered the core identity of farming- using trial and error to accumulate knowledge. Interactions with networks and civil society at the local level showed that engaging in short food chains, transition could be considered to go beyond the agricultural sphere (Lamine et al. 2014).

Building on these two approaches to transition, I found three phases that emerged. The first phase I have called the internal transition, which describes the process prior to the CSA

establishment with thoughts and perspectives from the CSA farmers on motivations and challenges. It has roots in a critique of prior situations that nurtured inspiration and motivation to seek alternatives.

The external transition phase is where the CSA farmers actively seek information about the concept and start planning the establishment. In this phase the farmers harvest information and gain knowledge in the first seasons.

The third and last phase might not really be a transition phase, however it points to the aspects of experience from the CSA with its development and prospects. Moreover, it is about being a CSA farmer, and learning from experiences.

3. CSA in Norway

The first CSA in Norway was established in 2006, and in 2014 there are twelve (Andelslandbruk 2014). The interest for CSA has grown in the last years, and that brings more attention and research. There are some organizations that promote CSA development in Norway, with “Friends of the Earth Norway” in Vestfold County, “Oikos –Organic Norway” which administrates the website for CSA and network, and some early initiative promoters of CSA, for instance, The royal Norwegian society for development.

Map showing distribution of Norwegian CSAs



A: Bodø CSA

B: Medalhus CSA

C: Velledalen CSA

D: Moløkka CSA

E: Ommang Søndre CSA

F: Sjø-Strøm CSA

G: Øverland CSA

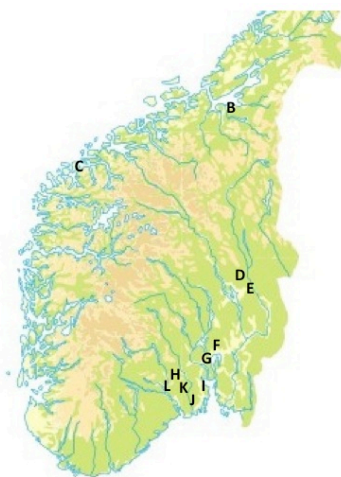
H: Virgenes CSA

I: Holt CSA

J: Sverstad CSA

K: Osebakken CSA

L: Århus CSA



3.1. Friends of earth Norway

Lone C. Haugland is a volunteer for “Friends of the earth Norway” and has initiated a project with the aim of establishing five CSAs in the county of Vestfold. “Friends of the Earth Norway”, “Oikos- Organic Norway” and “Norwegian Farmers and Smallholders Union” associate the project, with economic support from the County Governor of Vestfold. Lone receives a salary

through “Friends of the earth Norway” devoted from the grants from the County Governor, for her work with establishing CSAs.

I interviewed Lone, and she tells me that she saw an opportunity to actively engage to support local farmers, and create opportunities for her and other people to enjoy locally produced organic food. She emphasizes access to a diverse variety of local vegetables from holistic production systems. For the organization she volunteers for, this project was seen as an opportunity to not only protect land, but also use land, and using it sustainably by organic production and favoring diverse farming practices. So far, Lone has been directly involved in establishing two CSAs, one in 2013 and one in 2014. She believes that there are several reasons why the CSAs in the county have been successful. Many people want fresh organic food, and they want to know where it comes from. Secondly, the population of Vestfold is surrounded by agriculture; in the past it was more common to shop at farm shops and farmers markets. After a time of specialization and consumer preferences for shopping at super market the opportunities of direct sales decreased. However, there are again possibilities for farmers to more directly engage with consumers as many consumers miss the connection to how their food is produced. People are becoming more aware, and asking more critical questions related to food. She hopes this project will stimulate growth of more CSAs in the country, and that valuable experience comes from the current project.

3.2. CSA descriptions

Here I present the six different CSAs that are part of this study. They are shortly described with their size, location and organization.

3.2.1 Virgenes CSA

Virgenes farm is located in a rural area in Vestfold county about 30 km from the city of Larvik. The family farm consists of 23 hectares in rotation with vegetables, cereals, grass and pastures. In addition to the CSA they produce pork for a brand of “freeland pork”, and chickens. The CSA was established in 2012. The members are mostly from the nearby cities in Vestfold, but also a few from further distances. The farmer gained valuable experiences from the first two seasons, and for the 2014 season they will expand to 150 members. Due to the distance to nearby cities and towns, the farmer organizes drop offs at several locations so shareholders have easier access to their share. As a shareholder, one commits to contribution work of three hours per season. If this is for some reason not an option for the shareholder, a price is set to compensate the hours. If a shareholder wishes to work more, the price for the next season is reduced. One share consists

of vegetables, potatoes, eggs, flour and a fish license to the river. In addition, the shareholders can purchase meat (pork and grass fed beef) at the farm shop.

3.2.2. Sverstad CSA

Sverstad farm is located in the city of Sandefjord in the county of Vestfold, and consists of 35 hectares under biodynamic practices. The farmer took over a farm that was mostly producing cereals. He saw the possibility of biodynamic practices, and started the conversion process towards a more diverse farm that emphasized the biodynamic approach. The farmer has a long experience in growing a diversity of crops and vegetables. Today the farm produces milk and meat, which is distributed through TINE and Nortura for the commercial market. The farmer has been familiar with CSA for a long time, and after considerations and help with organization of the new establishment, 2014 will be the first season for the CSA with 100 shareholders, and they have experienced good response from the local community. "Friends of earth Norway" has been taking an active part in the process of becoming a CSA farm. The farmer emphasizes that it is important that the initiative and interest comes from the consumers, people in the local community. A share will consist of vegetables, fruits and berries.

3.2.3. Holt CSA

Holt Farm with its 20 hectares is located in Undrumsdal, Vestfold, 12-20 km from nearby cities. The family farm has a diverse production, with several farm animals (cows, pigs, chickens) and some for pure enjoyment (horses and peacocks). Milk and meat is distributed through TINE and Nortura. They have some previous experience with vegetable subscription, and they offer several services and social events at the farm for children and adults. At the brew house, there is a café, and also a part that can be used for meetings and banquet facilities. They established the CSA in 2013, in collaboration with Lone Haugland that is taking care of the administration for the CSA, while getting a wage for her work. The shareholders will increase from 50 to hopefully 75 in 2014. All shareholders commit to engage in farm work of six hours. This can be compensated with an increased price if the shareholder cannot commit to these hours. One share consists of a weekly basket of vegetables.

3.2.4. Osebakken CSA

Osebakken CSA is located 1.4 km from the city center of Porsgrunn in the county of Telemark. The CSA rents 1.5 hectare from Borgestad farm. The CSA was initiated in 2013 as part of a municipality project "green urban district". The first season the CSA had 134 shareholders, and this will most likely increase to 220 in 2014. A daily manager, a gardener, and the shareholders organize the CSA. Shareholders harvest their own shares. Some of the shares are devoted for

kinder gardens and youth. They are also involved in projects with the “green urban district”, one topic being an “artistic approach to sustainability”.

3.2.5. Århus CSA

Århus CSA is located three kilometers outside the city center of Skien in the county of Telemark. Århus farm is owned by Telemark landbruksselskap (agricultural organization/enterprise), and the CSA uses 1.5 hectares of the land. The CSA was established in 2011, and is shareholder based in addition to a daily manager and a gardener. An additional 1.5 hectares is under conversion to organic certification, and will be devoted to the CSA to better articulate rotation. Most of the shareholders are residents of the city of Skien, and they harvest their own weekly shares. One share consists of vegetables and berries.

3.2.6. Ommang Søndre

Ommang Søndre is a farmer based CSA, located in Løten, Hedmark, approximately 120 kilometers from Oslo. Most of their shareholders are located in Oslo, and receives their shares at the farmers market, which the farmers attend regularly. Shareholders that live close to the farm pick up their shares on location. The farmers emphasize that the shareholders always are welcome to the farm. The farm consists of 40 hectares under biodynamic production with a diversity of farm animals with cows, goats, chickens and ducks. Ommang Søndre delivers milk to TINE, and produce cheese, meat, honey, vegetables, herbs, grains and flour. Their market channels are diverse with the farm shop, the CSA, a cooperative, farmers market and a butchery that process and sell the meat (also sold at the farm shop). Shareholders can subscribe to two different shares, vegetables, or a combination of honey, cheese, meat, eggs and flour.

4. Results and discussion

The results and discussion chapter is divided into three phases that were shortly presented in the methodology chapter. The chapter will present and discuss the three different phases CSA farmers undergo on their path to become successful CSA farmers.

Defining if a CSA is shareholder-based or farmer-based is not always clear. Two of the CSAs are shareholder-based with a daily manager and a gardener. Two of the CSAs are clearly farmer-based, however two are more challenging to define. These CSAs are located at a farm, and the CSA pays rent for the land to the farmer, and the farmer receives wage for hours spent cultivating. The farmer views the CSA to be part of the farm, but also an independent part. The farmer is highly involved, but so are the core group and the rest of the shareholders. It appears to be more of a hybrid model.

4.1. Phase one: The inner transition

For the first phase I found that the CSA farmers established the CSAs as a response to seeking alternatives from being locked into the conventional market system, and/or had a strong desire to show people where their food comes from. They long for relationships with consumers in order to jointly learn how the local food system has potential to evolve through the CSA. Many want feedback from their consumers, and CSAs make that possible. The CSA farmers emphasize local, organic food production driven by farm resources. There is a strong affinity for food with unique quality, whose origin is known, and to share this information with consumers. At the same time CSA is argued to improve the farm economy through a stable supply and demand from a known and predictable group of shareholders.

4.1.1. The conventional link between producers and consumers

A key aspect of CSA is connection between farmers and consumers. The farmers in this study emphasize how important the connection to consumers is, as it gives them a pride and meaning in what they produce. Also, without connection, consumers are most likely to be unaware about the type of production system the food comes from, where there are common issues with animal welfare, dependence of fossil fuels, monocultures, practices for weed and pest management, as well as the social aspects of farmers and farm workers. Environmental engagement is mentioned as an important factor for people's desire to engage in agriculture with increased connection between producer and consumer. One farmer argues that chefs and journalists are probably doing the most important job in providing information about issues related to food systems, and sparking a desire to consume food with a greater diversity and a known origin. CSA has emerged

as an important tool in triggering an interest in food and enlightening people about its production. The fact that people talk about CSA is positive, especially for recruiting new shareholders, as very few of these farmers spend money on advertisement.

Four of the CSAs are part of privately owned farms. When these farmers talked about what initiated the transition process to CSA, they often spoke of issues and challenges with their prior model. The challenges described by some of them were more or less a fixed situation of bulk production in a market that had become more oriented towards uniformity and large quantities.

For ten years we produced vegetables for a shop in Oslo that wanted more and a greater diversity of vegetables. The market was predictable for us, and we expanded the vegetable and potato production to meet the demand. But after some years, larger organic farms started to deliver vegetables too, so competition became an issue. Some of these larger farms could supply more, and their distances were also shorter compared to ours. Also, eventually when organic vegetables appeared in the supermarket, the wholesaler became more or less only interested in large producers. Some conventional farms also saw an opportunity to convert some land for organic production, and the wholesaler could then get larger quantities from the same place, with conventional and organic vegetables. (Kristian)

Being a small-scale producer was in some sense easier before organic food became available at the super market. Only a few shops had organic produce prior to this, and when the sales of organic food increased, it favored those with larger production systems, resulting in a squeeze of smaller scale producers with different varieties and a broader diversity. This squeeze is also found by Seyfang (2008) in the UK, as a response to growth in organic farming and consumption resulting in a mainstream system that limits the potential of rural development by efficient supermarket chains that favors cheaper organic food from large producers, and from overseas (Seyfang 2008).

Shareholder-based CSAs also prioritize alternatives as a motivation for change. The findings from the interviews reveal that there are two motivational processes that nurture the desire to seek alternatives. 1) The feeling of being in a fixed situation with wholesalers, leading to declining income and security in production, and 2) the feeling that something needs to be done, an active approach to involve people in agriculture, by seeing opportunities to produce local, organic foods, with the prospects of higher involvement and commitment from the local community.

The global food system has taken the wrong path; it will not work this way if it keeps up. The CSA is something completely different, where we work with nature and the farm identity. For us its about showing other people what experiences and adventures that comes from the farm, and by this make a connection between people, food and the environment. (Henriette)

Here, *Henriette* is expressing her thought around regarding what she believes to be “wrong” with the global food system, and what opportunities CSAs can create.

The CSA farmers also show a desire to run what we picture as ideal farms learned from childhood, where chickens wander around kicking in the grass to find food, pigs plow up the fields in hunt for delicious snacks, and cows graze soundly on pastures. In the modern food system, this is far from reality in many cases. The CSA farmers strive for a diverse spectrum of foods, driven by internal processes, with crop rotation, manure and compost, integrated pest management, and openness to share their experiences in farming with the community. These are elements of what Gliessman (2007) and Milestad and Darnhofer (2008) is arguing for in terms of increased resilience and sustainability in farming systems (Gliessman 2007, Milestad and Darnhofer 2008).

4.1.2. Farmer perspectives on farming and environment

When the CSA farmers were asked about reasons for organic production and thoughts around local food, they revealed a strong environmental engagement and argued for sustainable use of resources. They strive to work with nature and ecology, not against it. Using the farm resources sustainably is valued as important and meaningful, especially when this is done in collaboration with other people to show what one can create and harvest from the farm.

Ecology is a science. The science of ecology tells us that if we don't respect the laws of ecology, we will go extinct. When we know that we can start to understand how to work ecological and how to get the community to get closer to that. You are on your way when you get certified organic, but its not enough. We need to do more. (Morten)

Here Morten speaks about the different approaches to organic farming, and indeed conversion to organic farming is a step towards a more sustainable farm system. However, organic farming has evolved and become more industrialized. This is found in the work of Lamine et al (2014) where there is a distinction between organic farmers with one being market-oriented, and the other

value-oriented. The market-oriented organic farmer is argued to be pragmatic, and so are the practices, meaning the farmer has a tendency to replace chemical by organic certified products. The value-oriented farmer on the other hand seeks other changes, with shorter distribution channels and diversification being examples (Lamine et al. 2014).

For one of the farms, converting to organic farming started with an alternative to spraying the fields with chemically based products. The farmer had a strong desire to show that it is possible to grow food organically. The farmer experienced some negative responses from neighboring farmers and other people, and this response made the farmer even more eager to show that it is actually possible to produce organic food with a high emphasis on using farm- and local resources. Simultaneously, there are economic benefits derived from reduced expenses on fertilizers and pesticides, and although it is more labor intensive, the price he gets for the produce is also higher.

All the neighbors says that its impossible to grow organic, I wonder if they have forgotten that this is the way that we have been growing food up until 50-60 years ago... (Anders)

There exists a high motivation for organic production amongst these CSA farmers. For *Anders* it came about as an alternative to adding chemical fertilizers and pesticides, and then taking actively effort to learn more about organic farming and eventually converting to organic production. For *Fredrik* it has been a given choice for many years, since childhood. Reasons for organic production vary from sustainable use of resources, that organic is more interesting, to organic being part of their internal beliefs and values. Some argued organic farming to be more knowledge intensive, and it requires more time, but this is not viewed as a burden, but rather with excitement in making it possible.

The issue that many consumers thinks organic food is more expensive, which is true in many cases, has been a theme in the interviews. The farmers believes that many consumers start to understand why organic produce often has a higher price, and many are willing to pay the price to consume organic food. A study conducted on consumer perceptions also found that people are willing to pay more for local food with added value of freshness, tastiness and increased relationship with producer (Chambers et al. 2007).

People don't understand what organic food is, that is why I have promoted locally grown food. People understand what that is, and they want it. If I advertise organic potatoes, price: NOK 10,

some people call. But if I advertise locally grown potatoes, price: NOK 20, the amount of people that calls doubles. I think many people don't understand what organic means, they think it's too expensive, and that it's a brand. But local produce they are eager to get. (Anders)

The CSA farmers have many reflections around the concept of local food and resources. They want to make the most of the resources at the farm, and in the local community. However, there are differences in what the farmers view as local.

It's a very widely used term, local food. Its not so easy to define, some will say food from Norway, others will say that it is food produced within one hour. It's hard to make boundaries and limitations I think. But for me it's food from a small-scale producer. (Birgitte)

The past three to four years I have experienced that local food has become a topic and increase in demand. When I offer locally produced food from the farm, there is a positive response. It seems like its trendy, and that is interesting. It has turned into a sales argument, and that is fun. But it can go to far, with small quantities that will be transported long distances due to popularity. (Fredrik)

It became evident that any definition of local was challenging. During the past years they have experienced an increased interest in locally produced food, and this is seen as very positive. Issues like food miles and loss of transparency due to a large network of distribution channels is often argued in favor for local food, and more transparent production systems.

“Proving that it is possible” is a common phrase that emerges. Proving that it is possible to manage a farm with crops, animals and people with a greater diversity emerged as important for the CSA farmers. This enables crop rotation and more or less reliance of farm manure for fertilizer, and also less dependence on one specific part of the production. It is also argued to give the farm an identity and character, and enable less dependency on external resources.

4.1.3. Interest in food with quality and taste

Experiences with producing vegetables are somewhat different, as some have produced a diversity of vegetables for several years, while others have more limited experiences, such as only having grown potatoes or experience from past trials. During the interviews it become clear that they have a strong desire to produce vegetables with a unique taste and freshness, which is perceived as positive among shareholders.

Four of the six CSAs also produce food for the commercial market, for example milk and meat. Each year the farmers know how much they can produce and deliver, and what the economic return will be. This gives a sense of certainty to the farmers, as they know what needs to be done in order to fulfill the quotas. However, as the milk or animals leave the farm, the connection is lost. The farmer will know what kind of quality and quantity he or she produced, but the connection to the consumer is absent. They speak highly about short distribution channels, and have a desire to know where the food gets consumed. This desire is something that is met with the CSA, as they have a personal relationship with the shareholder, and get to show how the food is produced, with shareholders at different levels taking a more active part. They see this as a good opportunity to increase the network around the farm, establish connections, educate consumers about food and farming, and also to retain feedback.

I have an obsession about plants, but my obsession does not make sense in the long run if I can't share it, and if it's not of use for other people. Here at the CSA I get direct feedback from my co-farmers, the shareholders. I see them as associates. I didn't get so much feedback when I was a milk producer. (Morten)

The feedback is perceived as important, and as something that was missing prior to the CSA. When receiving feedback from consumers, one learns about what works well and what can be developed. It is also viewed as an appreciation that leads to more pride in being a farmer.

A common view is that many people search for something else, something they can't access in the supermarket: food with a story and greater diversity. When the CSA farmers were asked about consumer preferences and values when shopping for food, issues like price, quality and availability were addressed. However, the CSA farmers believe that there is a larger fraction of the population that wants something more than what is considered to be uniform food items at the super market. They view that many are becoming interested in the origin of their food, and wanting to consume locally grown food from local farmers. For the most part, CSA farmers experience that shareholders are highly motivated by being able to consume fresh, flavorful food that is grown in their area, and that they wish to take a more active role in the food production and be part of a social network.

The discussion I had with many of the farmers demonstrated that price might be an important factor, but there was no doubt that scandals with food (as horse meat in prepared food items,

animal welfare and food origin) has started to concern some people, leaving them with a desire to seek alternatives; a wish to know where food comes from, and how it is produced. Even though the farmers believe this percentage is a small part of the population, it has started to make an impact on buying habits and this creates opportunities for farmers.

4.1.4. CSA: A wanted and needed economic reform

The participants view CSA as enabling smaller scale organic and diverse farming systems, as well as providing desired and needed economic reform where shareholders commit themselves to the farm for a season(s).

The CSA will give the opportunity to again produce vegetables and fruits. Today, the farm produces grass and fodder for the cows, but the farm is now at a very low level of its potential, and this new arrangement will give me the ability to diversify the production again. I think it's a new economic reform that is needed, and I think its very interesting that the consumers are motivated for this new opportunity at the farm. I will do my part of the job with producing the vegetables, but they must do their job with harvesting, and I hope they will like it here, that they will use the farm, I think that is necessary in order for them to join for several seasons. There might be some more potential in also getting milk and meat from the farm. (Kristian)

The CSA gives the farmers, to some extent a stipulated overview of how much should be produced during the season. However, all shareholders are well aware that they share the risk with the farmer, as one has little control over unexpected events such as weather or pest outbreaks. For example, one of the CSAs experienced an unexpected pest outbreak early in the season of 2013. All the cabbage was infested with cabbage moth, which seems to occur approximately ever 20th year. Since it was early in the season, there was still time to replant, and that solved the situation.

The CSA farmers also benefit economically by receiving “cash up-front”, which enables them to make necessary investments in the start of the season. This economic support makes business predictable, which is also found in other studies that argue that this economic support is crucial for small-scale farmers in “the age of agribusiness” (Schnell 2007, Brown and Miller 2008). The CSA enables farmers to be economically empowered, thus some of the CSA farmers still view the CSA to be a smaller project of the farm, and a small contribution to the farm economy as a whole. However, the sizes of the CSAs are different, ranging from 50-220 shareholders. For two of the CSAs establishing contact in the local urban population was seen as very positive due to grounding of the farm. Urban areas are growing, and farmland is lost to infrastructure and

housing, and grounding in the local population is seen as positive to ensure the future farm operation and protecting farmland.

4.2. Phase two: The external transition

The second phase represents how the CSA farmers explored and established the CSAs, as well as aspects on location and organizational form. I found that the CSAs that have short distance to cities have a higher commitment from shareholders compared to the ones that are located at longer distances. However, these CSAs have organized drop-off points. A core group is valuable in assisting the farmer in planning, organization and logistics of developing the CSA. The network of CSAs has multiple benefits from accessing information to guidance of establishment and development of the CSA. This phase also points to some of the challenges related to the different CSAs.

4.2.1. Exploring the concept and seeking information

The farmers came to hear about CSA from different arenas. Some of the farmers have known about CSA for many years, and one of the farmers had a trial with vegetable subscription some years ago. However, it is not until recently that they started the journey towards becoming CSA farmers. One heard about it at a meeting, and just after decided that this was the right thing for them, others have been seeking opportunities with possibilities with growing vegetables, to getting guidance from an environmental organization.

The process of accessing information is done through various sources, from finding valuable information through Internet sites of other CSAs with clear description of management practices and crop plans, literature and seeking information in their national network through people with experiences from CSA in Norway and abroad. There are several matters that needs to be researched, from organizational form to interest from possible shareholders. Existing knowledge is also reflected upon, for example with knowledge in producing a greater variety of vegetables. Århus CSA actually researched if a CSA was feasible, the report from the agricultural advice concluded negatively towards establishing a CSA. However, the motivation for establishing the CSA combined with agricultural knowledge and economical insight gave them the confidence in trying. Today, some years later the CSA have about 200 shareholders, and is one of the largest CSAs in Norway (Andelslandbruk 2014).

4.2.2. Establishing the CSA

After researching the concept and reflecting upon whether a CSA is possible for the farm the process of finding shareholders starts. They have been using their network the spread the word

that there might be possibilities of starting a CSA. Common strategies are also social media like Facebook, as well as advertisement in local media and stands at food festivals and farmers market. Then, a meeting is in order to bring interested people together to share the idea and see if there is interest from people to join. After the meeting they got a good feeling about the group of people that were possible shareholders, and they could continue the planning process and keep sending out information about establishing the CSA.

The response at the information meetings has resulted in establishment of the CSAs, where people were able to sign up. One CSA decided to implement a standard of four-hour work per share, which can be bought free for a given sum of money if the shareholder for some reason does not want to fulfill the four-hour work. One other CSA has six hours mandatory, which also can be compensated to hire work force elsewhere. These are examples of decisions the farmer in collaboration shareholders agree on. Committing to some work hours ease the extra-required labor, and keeps the price per share lower. It also makes sure of a minimum even contribution from the members. However, a shareholder is more than welcome to contribute more than the given three or six hours per season.

4.2.3. Location and organizational form

Three of the CSAs are located in an urban area where shareholders have a short distance to the farm by walking, biking or driving. The other three farms have a greater distance to nearby cities. These CSAs have organized drop-off points in city centers so shareholder can minimize time spent driving to the farms. The farmer or shareholders takes turn in dropping off shares for other members.

The location of the farm also, to some extent determines how accessible the farm is for shareholders. CSAs that are located close to their shareholders experience a higher participation from them. All the CSAs promote, and also for five of them rely on the idea that shareholder should harvest their shares. However, it can be a challenge for the CSAs with greater distance. An example of this is with Ommang Søndre that has most of their shareholders living in the Oslo region. The farmer travels often to participate at the farmers market in Oslo, and combine this with delivering produce to their shareholders. They emphasize though, that the shareholders are welcome at the farm when members are eager to visit. They also organize events to bring shareholders together, contribute to farm work and socialize. Finding the best organizational form, depending on the location of the farm, and the group of people is important when planning

to establish the CSA, as it will somehow determine the success of the CSA, and meeting the goals and visions for the establishment, for the farmer and the shareholders.

During the first season there tends to be some confusion and mixed attitudes to what can be expected from the shareholder. Many of the shareholders are very optimistic and enthusiastic about the time they tend to spend on the farm during the season, however, there seem to some thoughts and expressions that not meet the prior goals. An example of this is that shareholders express that they will have time to use the farm and contribute a lot, but as the season comes, time appears as a constraint to how much a shareholder can actively engage.

The more time passed being a shareholder and getting to know the place, it seems like they use it more and more. They know how to plant and harvest, and where to find equipment, and also know the other shareholders so it's also seen as a social thing during the week. (Morten)

Creating an environment that welcomes all shareholders with their different backgrounds and personalities is viewed to be important. Especially as some of the CSA farmers experience that the more the shareholders get to know the place, the more they use it.

A core group of members are present at several of the CSAs, these groups of shareholders are working with the farmer to organize logistics, events and discussing challenges and opportunities and other emerging topics. The groups are argued to help the farmer in developing the CSA and also spread work effort with budgeting, keeping accounts, newsletters and other matters that concerns the CSA. Having a core group is seen to be positive by the CSA farmers; it creates opportunities in sharing work and discussing issues. It also emerges as a suitable approach to create joint visions and goals for the CSA. The core group helps in planning and organizing events to bring shareholders together, which stimulates learning, networking, and enjoyment of being a CSA shareholder. Benefits from core groups are also found in other studies (Brown and Miller 2008).

At several of the CSAs focus groups consisting of shareholders have been created to engage in activities of their interest. These groups work with abilities to access organic meat, preparing food together, working with herbs, conservation of food, trial with plants and other similar groups with the aim of bringing people together to engage in activities and enjoy time together. All the CSA farmers respond that they like the social aspect of becoming a CSA farmer; it gives them opportunities in being part of a social network and producing vegetables in collaboration

with the shareholders. Feedback from the shareholders is pointed out to be positive and motivating. It gives a sense of meaningfulness with producing food for a group of people, and not just sending goods of to the processing and distribution system. However, they spend time on information and coordinating. CSA is still a new concept in Norway, and it is therefore necessary to devote some time to provide information. One of the CSAs commented that they receive numerous phone calls each week wondering if this is garden parcels and what CSA is.

4.2.4. Network of CSAs

A very positive factor is the network of CSA farms with their motivation for helping each other and promote CSA establishment. The gardener at one of the CSAs has been helpful in the planning process of establishment of three other CSAs, guiding the gardener at one CSA and providing information and giving advice for different crops and planning of the season. They also put emphasis on learning from each other and experts during the network-meetings that are arranged. One example on how collaboration occurs is with the joint seed order.

No competition between the CSA farms was detected during the course of this work. It appears that they exclusively support each other and together finds solutions and develops ideas, combined with a desire to expand their network with more CSAs.

4.2.5. A combination of enthusiasm and moderation

It turns out that the informants continuously evolve between enthusiasm and moderation. Enthusiasm for the new prospects of the chosen path of establishing the CSA, but also moderation in the sense that they do have expectations and visions of what the CSA can turn into. However, they also emphasize that the development of the CSA is taken step by step to learn about its functions and structure. Indeed they show enthusiasm for the CSA, and have strong beliefs in it, but at the same time they reflect around not having too high expectations.

The CSA is just a project in combination with all the other projects at the farm. I think we should just see what comes from it. We're not depending on the CSA, but it's a nice contribution to the diversity, and we increase the interest and the network of the farm. I think I had higher expectations from the shareholders. The interest from them is there, but it's not always enough time for them to engage as much as they initially wanted. (Fredrik)

Fredrik here speaks about the relationship between enthusiasm and moderation, from the process of getting inspired to seek alternatives and deciding on CSA, to the fact that he reflected on what to expect from it. Certainly he believes in the CSA, and commits time and resources towards the project, but at the same time he points to precautions of having strong expectations, and with

time see how the CSA evolves to its fully potential. This depends somehow on the combination of the shareholders, by how much they devote time and engagement, which will be determining for the structure and organization of the CSA, and also for its long time success.

I think the CSA has a great potential. We must create an organization that functions, where shareholders make it happen independently, that they harvest, and actively engage and pose opportunities. The farmer must do his part. I hope we will get a good harvest, and that people are happy about it, and comes again next season. (Kristian)

The CSAs in this study is at different levels in their process, with one starting up this season, and others that have experience from some seasons. It appears that the interviewees show a reflected view on the relationship between enthusiasm and moderation, as both conditions emerges in different stages in the process of internal and external transition.

4.2.6. Creating the social- learning arena

When the interviewees were asked about what they enjoy about being a CSA farmer, they responded that they like the social connection with the shareholders. They speak of knowledge exchange, ideas and simply getting to know new people. It becomes evident that they view the CSA as social arenas where learning could occur at different levels. However, the potential of creating this arena might not be determining for the success of the CSA. The most important aspect might be people's access to local fresh food, and not the sometimes-romanticized ideal of fully engaging in the process from seed to harvested vegetable.

I see a clear difference between some of the CSAs in the country; some of them have become highly idealistic and member-based. This requires allot from the shareholders. One can ask the question of how much the average really engages. It seems like it's a group that dedicate allot of time, and others that just wants to harvest. I think that if we are to reach more people, and the average consumer, I think it's a good idea that the farmer takes control of the CSA. The farmer knows how to grow the food. Being part of that might not interest everyone, and many don't have the time or wish to spend time with meetings and organization. We need to have a democracy, and this can be done with shareholder questionnaires, annual meeting and an open budget and accounts. (Anders)

There exist some differences in what the informants think about the potential of engaging shareholders. The combination of the shareholders seems to be determining for the social potential of the CSA. Several studies conducted on CSA shareholders reveal that many of the

shareholders are women, well educated and within a specific age. CSA is sometimes argued to be oriented towards an “elite” of the population (Schnell 2007, Lang 2010). *Anders* raises important aspects of how to make CSA more feasible for a greater diversity of the population, as the majority might not have time or wish to fully engage. Lang (2010) found that most of the shareholders were members of the CSA for the benefit of the produce, and it appeared that many of the shareholders were less interested in the ‘community-building component’ of the CSA. However, Lang states: “CSAs can be seen as a grouping of social movement organizations within the sustainable agriculture movement because many CSA members share the same concerns as members of the sustainable agriculture movement” (Lang 2010, p 21). The level of commitment and organization that *Anders* raises is important aspects that needs to be reflected upon. Especially since the level of success in terms of shareholder involvement is dependent on so many factors, such as distance to CSA, available time and interest in participation.

4.2.7. Challenges

Coordination and time management is argued to be a challenge at most farms due to colliding tasks that occur at the same time due to seasonality, harvest times, weather events etc. Figuring out their time management in coordination with farm activities and obligations with the CSA can sometimes be stressful, however it is not seen to be a big issue by the respondents.

Soil management appears as an issue at two of the CSAs. One farm experience poor drainage due to clayey soil and has prospects in improving drainage and continue with crop rotation to improve soil structure. The other farm experience low humus content, and are currently working on improving this with manure and compost.

Establishing the right price also emerges as a topic during planning process as there is little experience, and also sometimes uncertainty of how many shareholders there will be during the first season as more people becomes interested during the season. The farmer must plan for the initial shareholders, but also consider if there is room for more shareholders during the season. This entails that there must be sufficient produce, and that the budget must be planned and approved by the existing shareholders. However, the farmer and the existing shareholders have viewed more shareholders positive. Even though it can be challenging to have exact plans during the first season, they experience positive feedback from the shareholders and understanding for a trial season where the farmer in collaboration with the shareholders can map out the future of the CSA.

Two of the CSAs rent land from a farm, and are organized by a daily manager, a gardener and the shareholders. In the first season, one of them experienced some challenges related to tools and farm equipment. They had the ability to rent a tractor from the farm where they are positioned, however, the tractor is too big and heavy, for the 2013 season they borrowed a small tractor from one of the other CSAs, which then needed to be transported. A blog post shortly after the interview revealed that the CSA now owns a tractor that has a suitable size.

One CSA farmer has a history from participating in the board at another CSA. *Nina* stumbled across the CSA in her research after local produce for a restaurant. She immediately became aware that the engagement at the CSA was the start of a great journey with a stronger environmental commitment and affection for food with an origin and story. The farmer at Virgenes CSA also shows enthusiasm about producing food with added value. He speaks highly of the diversity of vegetables he has learned to grow, and is proud of the development at the farm the past years, from conversion to organic production and the process of becoming a CSA with 150 members in the third season. He argues that people that eat organically produced vegetables do more than consuming organic food. He believes they to some extent consume less meat, have a greater diversity in their diet and waste less food. Especially when people are taking a more active role in how food is produced, they get to learn about effort factors and therefore think more about their eating habits and how it affect them and their environment. There are also some thoughts around the consumer's perspectives on organic food. It might not be determining that the CSA is organic for all the members, however it is perceived as important for the CSA. Feedback from the yearly surveys and conversation with members reveal that for many of them, locally grown fresh diverse food seems to be the most important factor.

4.3. Phase three: Learning from experience

As time passes with experience from several seasons, valuable knowledge accumulates. Knowledge is gained from several aspects, both agronomical and social. *Henriette* raised the issue of the unsustainability in the global food system, and believes that “something needs to happen, something has to change”. The CSA opens up possibilities, in having a transparent production so shareholders can evaluate for themselves, and it increases the notion of seeing connections in food systems. Taking a more active role in food production stimulates knowledge about agriculture, and the CSA is seen to have possibilities in changing eating habits. Here, the shareholders learn that food becomes ready for harvest according to biological factors, so in this way they are argued to become more aware about seasonality.

4.3.1 Response and engagement from shareholders

There are some thoughts concerning shareholders engagement with the CSA. It appears that the relationship with the shareholders have further prospects with higher engagement. During the spring many shareholders show a great enthusiasm for how much time they seek to spend in the fields with planting, weeding and harvesting, and also with interacting at meetings. However, there is still potential to increase this part. What seems to be a limiting factor for the shareholders is availability of time to engage more at the farm. However, one farmer expressed that the more time a shareholder spends on the farm and learn how to perform tasks; the easier it is to generate involvement. This perspective is also discussed by Schnell (2007) by views on shareholders having initial engagement due to access to fresh organic produce, However, people that remains over several years can come to an understanding of the connections with food to local economies, community and environment (Schnell 2007).

There is also a reflection about better planning from the farmers' side. One example being that it would be feasible to inform shareholders before the summer holiday about times that they need extra help with weeding and harvesting, and not during the summer holiday where many people are away from home. This is a typical example of experiences from the first season. One gardener expresses that growing vegetables is the most valuable in life, especially when able to share this with other people. The relationship with the shareholders are solid, however there has been a few cases where some shareholders have expressed that they do not feel like they get satisfaction with their weekly share in regard with the price they pay. When designing the CSA organizational form, it can be challenging to meet all shareholders demands and interests, as they are a complex group with different backgrounds and perspectives. It is important to have

sufficient time to guide and teach shareholders, as some have no experience in working with plants, and have never experienced dirt under their fingernails.

The types of shareholders are also said to be important for the function and future of the CSA. Depending on the level of engagement, it becomes important that the shareholders get along and find solutions together and with the farmer. There has so far not been experience with conflicting members at the CSAs. Some of the shareholders are more active than others, and this gives opportunities in engaging more in the farm activities and organizational matters.

Having a smaller group of people to be part of a working committee is seen a helpful and supporting when organizing the CSA. One of the farmers speaks of opportunities in inspiring the shareholders, to increase the awareness around food, and food production with social and environmental factors. One way in doing this is to organize events at the farm during the season, and therefor the farmer planned several events for the coming season to increase awareness and nurture affection and knowledge about food. One event that is under planning is to arrange a inspiration day with one popular author that has published several cook books with a emphasis on Norwegian cuisine. The farmer believes that this will be inspirational for the shareholders, and they get the opportunity to learn how to cook with vegetables that might not be so familiar for them.

The “added value” of learning and experiencing the social aspect of the CSA is important in order to sustain members. Polimeni et al. (2006) states that if the shareholders do not learn, or value the changes in their “new food pattern” resulting from participating in CSA, members are most likely to not rejoin the next year (Polimeni et al. 2006). This supports the reflections on how important it is to create an arena where shareholders feel comfortable, and feel that they retrieves both food, and valuable experiences from their commitment. The CSA farmers have received, for the most part positive feedback from their shareholders with pure enjoyment of the foods, and also about the social setting at the CSA. The CSA farmers both takes part and observe the social connections with small talks and discussions. Brehm and Eisenhauer (2008) found that reasoning for participating at a CSA was more about the food, and less about the social connections (Brehm and Eisenhauer 2008). This can also be true for the CSAs in this study, as the farmers believe that the social engagement has greater prospects. In order to fully understand this, a study on the shareholders for the CSA would enlighten this aspect.

4.3.2 Ability to learn and adapt

It has been argued by several of the interviewees that organic is more knowledge and time consuming. However, this is seen as an opportunity to learn and adapt to changes. One CSA farmer said that she has one foot on each side of the fence, working with organics at the CSA, and running a conventional farm at home. She has strong beliefs in being an intermediary as she sees this as a great opportunity for organic and conventional farmers to learn from each other and develop methods and practices that are more sustainable and at the same time economically viable. However, she points to that she believes and experiences that organic is more interesting since one has to work with and not against nature.

At two of the CSAs shareholders have access to not only vegetables, but also produce like flour, meat, eggs, honey and cheese. Several of the other CSAs have visions of extending available food.

Kristine: Where do you see the CSA in 10 years?

Fredrik: I see that we can increase the diversity, and create more foods that can be sold locally; this will also improve the organic practices here. We have a lot of resources and potential here; I think we can make cheese from the milk and things like that. It's also a human-development process, I wish that interested people can actively engage. I think we can supply about 300 families with most of the food that they need, with milk, cheese, meat, jams, juice, eggs, vegetables and fruits. This will also create more jobs for people to work here, and make a living from it.

The farmer at Virgenes farm also sees potentials in shortening the supply chain with his pork production. Today, he delivers about 600 pigs to the butcher, and this meat is sold under a brand of organic pork meat "Grøstad Gris", from pigs that live most of their lives outdoor.

It's good for me to be a "Grøstad farmer", the market is growing steadily, and we get to keep the same prices. My day is devoted 50 % towards the pigs, and 50% towards the CSA. But I have made some calculations. Today, we produce 600 pigs annually, and if I sell the meat directly; I can earn the same from producing 100 pigs. So it's an option that has potentials.

This shows that the CSA farmers see the CSA as a viable option for their present situation, and for the future. Diversifying foods available will enable shareholders to access a greater proportion of the foods that they use, and the CSA farmers says that this is something that is requested. This is visible through engagement from shareholder groups working to establish

cooperations with other farmers to access meat for example. At Ommang Søndre they have different options for their shareholders, just vegetables, or a share of meat, eggs, honey and cheese. The farmer at Søndre Ommang said that people are becoming more interested in the vegetables, and a greater diversity of them, so they will try to increase the vegetable part of the CSA to meet the demand and further stimulate interest. The aspects of diverse farming systems and innovation in marketing channels are also found by Lamine et al. (2014). They conclude that farmers that diversify their farming system by converting to organic production, and at the same time diversify their crop line-up; tend to shift towards shorter marketing channels (Lamine et al. 2014).

5. Conclusion

This study aimed at understanding the internal and external processes of establishing a successful CSA. It agrees with many of the other studies on CSA, however the farmers' perspective contributes to the discussion on the potentials of CSA and local food systems. The study seeks to fill a gap in the literature on CSA by examining and analyzing CSA from the farmer perspective by trying to answer the two research questions.

- What characterizes the transition process towards becoming a CSA farmer?

There emerged two reasons for establishing the CSA. One was seeking alternatives due to a more or less fixed situation with vegetable production due to low prices and absent interest from vegetable wholesalers. Two was to establish contact with consumers to foster appreciation, feedback, and contribution, and learning about food and farming.

The CSA farmers in this study are environmentally engaged and they show a high motivation for local organic farming systems. All CSA farmers have a desire to learn more about diverse production systems, and show a motivation for vegetables with a unique taste and quality. Connection with shareholders allows for direct feedback, which is a motivation for the CSA farmers. The CSA is also viewed to be a wanted and needed economic reform that enables small-scale farmers to nurture diversity in the farming system, which enhances resilience and sustainability.

- What are the supporting and hindering forces in the transition process towards the successful CSA farmer?

The location and organization of the CSA is found to be an important factor for success of the CSA. It appears that the CSAs that are located a short distance from cities and towns have a more active engagement from shareholders. The CSAs with a greater distance to their shareholders have organized drop-offs to ensure an easier access to the shares.

The first season is important for the shareholder to learn and evolve with the new membership. The farmers reflect on the importance of the shareholder feeling comfortable in contributing to CSA work, with planting, weeding and harvesting to nurture a desire to commit to several seasons. The CSA farmers' experience that it takes time to explain the CSA concept, as well as

understand the group of shareholders and how motivated they are to commit to contribution of work. The CSA economy appears to be improved with engagement from shareholders as they volunteer to some hours of farm work, and the CSA farmer saves capital on hiring labor. The CSA farmers reflect on the initiated motivations of the shareholders, and the actual time to engage in the growing season.

The network of CSAs are a supporting force as they help each other in the planning and establishment of the CSA, as well as they argue that sharing knowledge to learn from another is favoring development of CSA.

CSA as a component of AFNs is at the heart of understanding local food systems. It would be interesting to conduct a study on the shareholders committed to these CSAs to explore if there exists similar or different thoughts and experiences in correlation to other studies conducted on shareholders of CSAs. Also how CSA links to political frameworks and practical importance, to see how CSA can feed in to the understanding of politicians to facilitate further development of CSA.

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Appendix 1 Interview guide

Background:

- Can you tell me about your farm?
- Establishment/ownership
- Crops/ animals
- Employees
- Size
- Conversions to organic farming

What does farming mean to you? What do you like about being a farmer?
What has been your motivation for organic farming?
What do you think of local food, any thoughts?

Can you tell me about your distribution channels?
Can you tell me about where your products are sold?
Are you satisfied with these channels?
Is there a challenge to meet standards of quantity, and quality?

1. What characterizes the transition process toward becoming a CSA farmer?

How and when did you get to hear about CSA?
What was it about CSA that attracted you? Ideological-economical.
What made you make the decision to start the CSA?
What were your expectations to CSA?
How did you start the process of establishing the CSA?
Did you get any help or advice?
Did you see any challenges or un-advantages with CSA?

What have been your challenges with establishing the CSA?
Any thing that has been difficult? Have you considered to stop/quit the CSA?

What do you think about the interest for CSA? Do you see some changes in the interest?
How is/was the process of finding shareholders?
Is there a big interest? Do you need a wait-list? Do shareholders sign up yearly?

If present, how does interest from consumers affect you? Opportunities/challenges.
Do you think it can be too many CSAs in you region?
Do you experience some problems or issues with being a CSA farmer?

2. What are the supporting and hindering forces in the transition process towards the successful CSA farmer?

What do you enjoy about being a CSA farmer?
What are your challenges in the daily life of being a CSA farmer?
How is the relationship between you and the shareholders?
Are you satisfied with their contribution and commitment?
How is it to have the shareholders at your farm?
Do you have a drop-off point?

Do you think you want to expand the CSA?

Does the CSA give you opportunities?
How do you market the CSA?

Are you satisfied with infrastructure of production, processing and transport?
What do you think consumers emphasize when buying food?

Is there a request for more produce/products?
Do you experience interest for what you produce?
Do you see any need for more sales channels in your region?

Appendix 2 Information document (in Norwegian)

Forespørsel om deltakelse i forskningsprosjektet

Tittel: Økt interesse og muligheter for utvikling innen lokal økologisk mat. –Bondens perspektiv

Bakgrunn og formål

Formålet med prosjektet er å undersøke potensiale for videre utvikling og utbredelse av alternative økologiske mat-nettverk og salgskanaler i Norge, sett fra bønders perspektiv. Gjennom intervjuene med utvalgte bønder og nøkkelpersoner vil jeg fokusere på hvilke muligheter og utfordringer det finnes for utvikling av lokale økologiske matsystemer. I tillegg vil jeg og benytte meg av publisert forskning innen temaet for å øke forståelsen. Prosjektet er en mastergrads-studie ved Institutt for plante- og miljøvitenskap ved Universitetet for miljø- og biovitenskap.

Utvalget for prosjektet er bønder som driver økologisk produksjon og andelslandbruk i Vestfold. Bøndene er valgt utfra personlig kjennskap og fra tips fra Fylkesmannen, Naturverforbundet, Oikos' lister og innspill fra andre produsenter jeg kjenner. I tillegg består utvalget av enkeltpersoner knyttet til organisasjoner og instanser i landbruket.

Hva innebærer deltakelse i studien?

Deltakelsen innebærer intervju på omtrent en til to timer per deltaker. Spørsmålene vil omhandle gårdens historie og produksjon, salgskanaler og motivasjon for andelslandbruk. Spørsmålene vil også omhandle bondens tanker og synspunkt knyttet til tema som omsetning av økologiske varer i Vestfold.

Data vil registreres på lydopptak samt skriftlige notater på privat datamaskin.

Hva skjer med informasjonen om deg?

Alle personopplysninger vil bli behandlet konfidensielt. Det er kun jeg, samt mine to veiledere som vil ha tilgang til personopplysningene. Lydopptak vil ikke bli brukt videre når prosjektet er avsluttet.

Miljøet for økologisk landbruk er lite i Norge, og bruk av beskrivelser av enkelte deltakere vil kunne føre til gjenkjennelse. Beskrivelser som kan føre til gjenkjennelse av de deltakere som ikke samtykker til det vil bli utelatt.

Prosjektet skal etter planen avsluttes 01.juni 2014. Alle lydopptak vil bli slettet ved prosjektslutt.

Frivillig deltakelse

Det er frivillig å delta i studien, og du kan når som helst trekke ditt samtykke uten å oppgi noen grunn. Dersom du trekker deg, vil alle opplysninger om deg bli anonymisert

Dersom du ønsker å delta eller har spørsmål til studien, ta kontakt med Kristine Formo, 94301019.

Studien er meldt til Personvernombudet for forskning, Norsk samfunnsvitenskapelig datatjeneste AS.

Samtykke til deltakelse i studien

Jeg samtykker at

- opplysningene jeg gir brukes til forskning i forbindelse med Kristine Formo sin masteroppgave
- intervjuene kan tas opp på lydbånd
- informasjonen jeg gir anonymiseres med mindre annet er ønskelig, men at min posisjon vil kunne spores ved min tilknytning til en organisasjon eller gårdsbruk.

Kryss av om du ønsker/tillater at ditt navn brukes i oppgaven og du dermed ikke anonymiseres

Ja

Nei

Jeg har mottatt informasjon om studien, og er villig til å delta

(Signert av prosjektdeltaker, dato)



Norwegian University
of Life Sciences

Postboks 5003
NO-1432 Ås, Norway
+47 67 23 00 00
www.nmbu.no