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The domestic fair trade movement in France, a bottom-up regulation?

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List of abbreviations

DFT: Domestic Fair Trade

DFTA: Domestic Fair Trade Association

DGCCRF: Direction Générale de la Concurrence, de la Consommation et de la Répression des Fraudes (General Directorate for Competition, Consumer Affairs and Fraud Control)

ESR: Echanges solidaires et responsables (Responsible and solidarity-based exchanges)

ESS: Economie Sociale et Solidaire (social and solidarity-based economy)

FINE: acronym for IFAT (International Fair Trade Association), FLO (Fair Trade Labeling Organizations International), NEWS! (Network of European Worldshops) and EFTA (European Fair Trade Association)

FNAB: Fédération Nationale de l'Agriculture Biologique (National federation of organic agriculture)

FTI: Fairtrade International

GIE: Group of Economical Interest

ILO: International Labour Organization

InPACT: Initiatives Pour une Agriculture Citoyenne et Territoriale

PFCE: Plateforme pour le Commerce Equitable

PME: Petites et Moyennes Entreprises (Small and medium-sized firms)

US: United States

WFTO: World Fair Trade Organization

Abstract

Over the last two decades, alternative food systems have been developing quickly. Recently, the convergence between the fair trade sector and the growing demand for local products, has participated to the development of a new movement called domestic fair trade. Such initiatives have emerged within countries from the global North, but also from the global South. In Europe, the French DFT network seems to have grown and organized rapidly compared to the neighbored countries. Thanks to participatory observation, numerous interviews and document analysis, this study aims to assess the situation of the French DFT network, and especially its regulation. The results underline the complexity of the web of stakeholders. They show that there are three long supply chains DFT projects in France led by the retailers Biocoop, Bio Partenaire and Ethiquable. The study shows the Fair Trade Plateform (PFCE) has taken the leadership in organizing the movement at a national level, and is playing a key role by making the link between farmers and retailers on one part, and the French State on the other part. This work confirms the assumption that regulation of DFT initiatives' practices can be considered as a bottom-up construction since the historically developed DFT initiatives appeared several years before the DFT movement was recognized by the government in 2014.

Key words

Domestic fair trade, North/North fair trade, France, Regulation, Movement, Structuring

Introduction

Over the last two decades, alternative food systems have been developing and becoming increasingly important (Mead, 2011) (Feenstra, 2002). Community Supported Agriculture, farmers' market, organic shops, direct selling, partnerships between farmers and local schools are some examples of their different forms. Nevertheless, they converge on some principles. For consumers, alternative food systems have to comply with specific attributes such as being ecologically sustainable, fair, relational, healthful, proximate and sustainably regulated (Kloppenburg Jr. et al., 2000). A French study showed that the consumers' role is central in alternative food systems, and often linked to political involvement (Dubuisson-quellier et al., 2011).

Thus, the fair trade movement can be considered as an alternative food system, for these characteristics apply to it.

The fair trade movement

Despite some existing conflicts about the goals and meanings (Raynolds and Murray, 2007) (Robert-Demontrond and Joyeau, 2007a), fair trade is usually thought of as a way to restore balance in the market between developing countries and industrialized ones, which are considered historically unbalanced (Jaffee et al., 2004). This concerns the agro-food sector as well as the artisan craft sector.

As there is no official definition of fair trade, the main stakeholders, under the FINE¹ organization, agreed on one in 2001. *“Fair Trade is a trading partnership, based on dialogue, transparency and respect, that seeks greater equity in international trade. It contributes to sustainable development by offering better trading conditions to, and securing the rights of, marginalized producers and workers – especially in the South. Fair Trade Organizations, backed by consumers, are engaged actively in supporting producers, awareness raising and in campaigning for changes in the rules and practice of conventional international trade.”* (FINE, 2001)

Fair trade can also be defined as a combination of criteria. The table 1, on the following page, presents the most common ones.

Fair trade has been evolving since its creation in the years following the Second World War. It was first associated with political solidarity movements as well as non-governmental and religious organizations (Renard, 2003). From a separated supply chain managed by volunteers and activists, it grew and reached the mainstream market in the 90s with the labeling system introduced by the Max Havelaar organization (Jaffee et al., 2004) (Raynolds and Murray, 2007) (Reynolds and Long, 2007).

¹FINE is the acronym of the four main fair trade organizations that formed the FINE organization: IFAT (International Fair Trade Association), FLO (Fair Trade Labeling Organizations International), NEWS! (Network of European Worldshops) and EFTA (European Fair Trade Association)

Table 1: Most common fair trade criteria (WFTO, 2009)(FWP et al., 2015)(FINE, 2001)

Basic principles	Criteria
Economic criteria	Fair price Advance credit Long-term contracts and trading relationships
Social criteria	Respect of humans rights and ILO ² conditions Access to social benefits
Environmental criteria	Respect of applicable regulations Minimization of energy consumption
Producers governance and autonomy	Priority to small and marginalized producers Technical assistance and capacity building Democracy and transparency in the producers organization
Promoting Fair Trade	Education and awareness Campaigning

The rise of the fair trade movement followed an increasing consumer interest for more ecologically and socially sustainable food (Feenstra, 2002). Today, people seem to be ready to pay for quality and environment benefits. Some consumers, driven by the failure of organic certification to comply with a holistic vision of sustainability, have recently combined both the fair trade and the organic movements by creating a new one, called Domestic Fair Trade (DFT) (Brown and Getz, 2008). This movement exists within the global North, but also within the global South, as several initiatives in Mexico (Jaffee et al., 2004) and others in different parts of Africa (Ballet et al., 2012) can attest.

Building domestic fair trade (DFT) initiatives within the global North

Already in 2004 some alternative food chain projects within the United States (US), sharing some international fair trade principles, were using the term “fair trade” to characterize themselves (Jaffee et al., 2004). In Germany, the starting point of the DFT development was in parallel to a price crisis for dairy farmers in 2004 and 2005 (Kröger and Schäfer, 2014). In Austria and Switzerland researchers have also observed “*a growing demand for combined fair and regional food chains*” (Schumarcher and Eichert, 2010). Some fair trade projects are also being developed in Belgium since the milk crisis in 2009 (Poos, 2013).

Community Supported Agriculture appears to be the first mentioned example that could be used to support Domestic Fair trade in France (Abdelgawad, 2007). Other initiatives are then specified, such as producers’ shops or farmers’ markets, (Robert-Demontrond and Joyeau, 2007a) (Le Velly, 2009) (Le Velly, 2011a).

Two groups of initiatives can be distinguished at this point, according to the type of supply chain they are using : long or short. These last examples can be considered as part of the short supply chain sector. This sector appears to be what inspired the idea of DFT according to Le Velly (2011a). It took more time for the long supply chain initiatives to emerge and be recognized as part of the DFT movement which took place at the beginning of the 2010s (Carimentrand, 2012).

²International Labour Organisation

Kröger and Schäfer point out a difference between the DFT approaches of the US and Europe (2014). They conclude that European initiatives are more focused on fairness and price distribution along the value chain, while the US initiatives are working toward maintaining small-scale farms. Notwithstanding, fair trade initiatives in both countries hinge upon the same environmental and social values, and aims to minimize negative externalities such as transport pollution (Robert-Demontrond, 2008).

At the end of the 2000s, the number of initiatives that would claim themselves to be DFT was very few. However, companies and organizations soon understood the potential of this market opportunity (Howard and Allen, 2008). The beginning of the 2010s observed the arrival of various DFT initiatives in France.

The convergence between international fair trade and other alternative food networks

The nascence of the DFT movement is steeped in different consumer tendencies. Indeed, DFT shares many values with the short supply chain sector: equity, autonomy, authenticity (Le Velly, 2011a) but also with localism (Dubuisson-Quellier and Lamine, 2008), and the anti-globalization movement (Robert-Demontrond and Joyeau, 2007b).

Several publications have established a strong relation between both the international fair trade and the organic sectors, which are considered the two biggest alternative food systems (Jaffee and Howard, 2010) (Kröger and Schäfer, 2014). Some articles point out that consumers from both sectors are the same (Robert-Demontrond and Joyeau, 2007b) (Tagbata and Sirieix, 2008). Likewise, more and more fair trade products are also labeled organic, corroborating that both systems are now converging (Kröger and Schäfer, 2014) (Raynolds, 2000). The latest data states that organic-fair products made up 70% of fair trade's annual turnover in 2014, a number that has been steadily rising for the last two years (PFCE, 2015a).

As Brown and Getz (2008) explain, DFT initiatives also confirm this tendency. Today, most of the existing DFT projects in the US (Cosner, 2015) or in France (PFCE et al., 2014) deal with organic products. They generally aim at defending the social and economic principles of equity that are oftentimes missing in the organic movement (Brown and Getz, 2008) (Kröger and Schäfer, 2014).

Farmers from the global North and farmers from the global South: the same struggle?

The connection between fair trade and local producers is frequently thought of as a natural extension of the previous objectives of international fair trade (Le Velly, 2011b). However, this situation is not necessarily a self-evidenced truth. Farmers from the global North are facing the same injustices as the ones in the developing countries – i.e. low prices and wages, high fluctuation, late payments – (DFTA, 2015) (Jaffee et al., 2004) (Brown and Getz, 2008). Yet, their life conditions can hardly be compared, due to the gap existing between the social and economic realities of these countries (Gendron and Ballet, 2011) (Le Velly, 2011b).

Even though there are some divergent views within the fair trade network about this topic (Robert-Demontrond and Joyeau, 2007a) (Le Velly, 2009), the majority of the fair trade stakeholders seems to agree on the necessity to integrate farmers from the global North in the fair trade movement (Abdelgawad, 2007). However, the question remains open as how to adapt the original model developed for North/South trade within a specific country (Brown and Getz, 2008).

France and the US: the most advanced countries regarding DFT

France and the US seem to be the most advanced countries regarding the DFT movement, mostly due to the presence of a structure that tries to unite the network: the Domestic Fair Trade Association (DFTA) in the US, and the Plateforme pour le Commerce Equitable (Fair Trade Platform – PFCE) in France.

Since its creation in 2007, the DFTA gathers diverse stakeholders from the sustainable agriculture network of the US: farmers, retailers, processors and NGOs. It aims at linking principles from both fair trade and organic movements (Brown and Getz, 2008). Its main mission is to organize the DFT movement in the US by identifying national initiatives that claim to practice fair trade principles, upholding the ones that are serious and establishing a discussion place between stakeholders (Cosner, 2015). The DFTA has established a 13 point document that sets its own domestic fair trade principles (DFTA, 2015).

In France, the DFT network gathered later on, at the beginning of the 2010s, within the PFCE (Fair Trade Platform). The original objective of this organization, gathering the most important fair trade national stakeholders, was to defend and promote international fair trade in France (PFCE, 2015b). However, the PFCE has started to work at the domestic level since 2011, when a working group was created to write a domestic fair trade charter. This group is composed of PFCE members and two other national organizations. One is promoting organic agriculture (the FNAB³) and the other stands for local and sustainable agriculture (the InPACT⁴ network). The DFT charter was published in 2014 (PFCE et al., 2014).

In some countries, as the DFT movement is being structured, lots of questions persist concerning its goal and meaning (Le Velly, 2011b). What type of farmers should it defend first? Should it only be concerned with organic agriculture? Does it have to defend a collective project? How to agree on a fair price establishment? And last but not least: how to guarantee it?

On this last point, France and the US have developed several regulation mechanisms worth mentioning.

Regulation, private labels and third party certification

International fair trade regulation is based on labels and third party certification, even though labeling is not an obligation. Many different fair trade labels exist (FWP et al., 2015). All of them are private. Contrary to the organic sector, there is no public policy regarding fair trade

³ Fédération Nationale de l'Agriculture Biologique (National federation of organic agriculture)

⁴ Initiatives pour une agriculture citoyenne et territoriale (Initiatives for a territorial and civic based agriculture)

labeling. As a consequence, standards can differ highly from one fair trade label to another. For this reason some fair trade stakeholders are looking for public agency recognition (Renard, 2005).

France has been the first country to legislate upon fair trade with the “PME law” in 2005 (Abdelgawad, 2007), which defines fair trade. Albeit the law planned to publically recognize private labels, this has still not been accomplished.

This issue also affects the DFT movement. Several labels certify DFT products, such as Ecocert in France, Fair for Life in Switzerland, Naturland Fair in Germany, Food justice certified in the United States (FWP et al., 2015) (DFTA, 2015). Some are fair trade labels that have been extended to include domestic farmers in these northern countries; others are organic labels that merged with economic and social standards.

However, many local initiatives did not wait for organizations to officially label them as practicing DFT. Therefore, most of them are not labeled. In this context, each of the DFTA and the PFCE are trying to put a framework around the movement in their own country in order to regulate it. The DFTA has opted for evaluating the already existing DFT standards, labels and initiatives in the light of its own principles (Kröger and Schäfer, 2014) (Cosner, 2015). As for the PFCE, it is still thinking about a process to enable the French DFT initiatives to join its charter.

Recently, in France, a new government law – the “ESS⁵ law” – was published in 2014, opening the fair trade definition to North-North exchanges also.

As the DFT movement moves quickly forward, this study aims to assess the situation of the DFT movement developing in France, and compares two assumptions:

- first that the DFT network is being organized at the moment in France by the PFCE,
- second that the DFT regulation in France is a bottom-up development that started from the different initiatives’ practices.

⁵ ESS is a French acronym for “social and solidarity-based economy”

Methodology, materials and methods

This section discusses the conceptual framework and methods supporting this study, mainly framed by the approach developed by Quivy and Van Campenhoudt in their *Handbook for social sciences researches*, and completed with other social science methods' books. The different phases of the study are presented in the figure 1.

I chose the case-study approach, since this method aims to capture the complexity of a single case (Johansson, 2003).

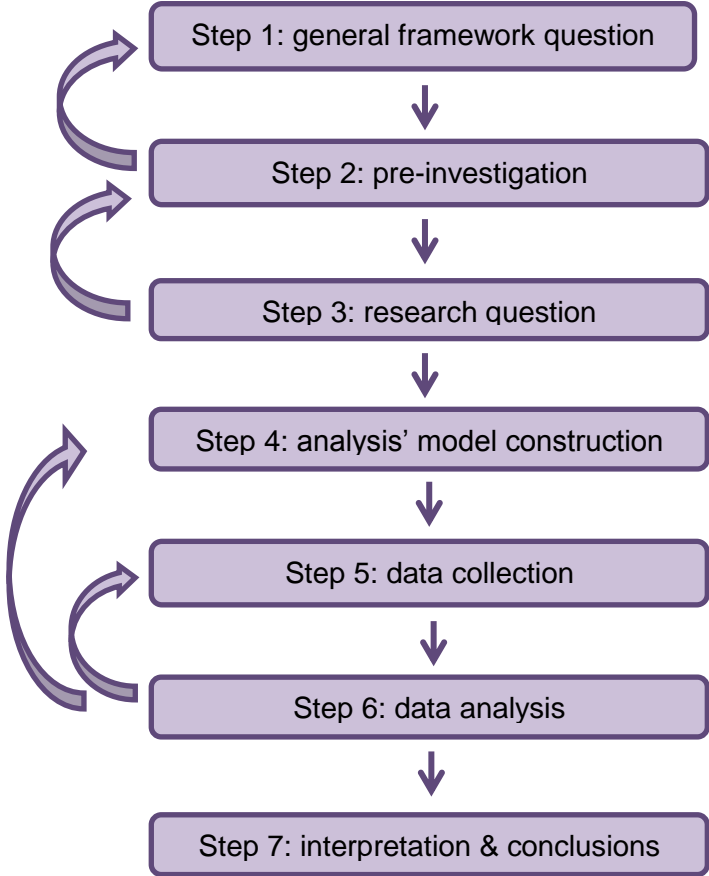


Figure 1: schematization of the scientific approach used in this study, based on (Quivy and Van Campenhoudt, 2011)

Step 1 - General framework question

A preliminary framework question is the starting point of any research work. Albeit only temporary, the role of the framework question is important since it organizes the work at the beginning. It is the guiding thread that enables the researcher to start from somewhere, before setting up the research question (Quivy and Van Campenhoudt, 2011).

The question I asked myself before starting to explore the context deeper was: *How is the Domestic Fair Trade network in France organized?* This gave me the necessary structure to continue onto the next step.

Step 2 – pre-investigation

The next step was about examining the topic through different methods.

Bibliography research

A bibliography research aims to demonstrate how the framework question is situated within the research community and what is already known about it (Zagre, 2013). I therefore read scientific articles dealing with my research question, as well as websites and publications of stakeholders involved. I broadened my researches to the European and international level, so that I had a global view of domestic fair trade issues. This helped me to decide on my research question later on.

Exploratory interviews

Based on the information read during the literature review, I interviewed people directly involved in the DFT movement: farmers, Ethiquable employees, PFCE members. These interviews were centered-interview, that is to say not well structured but focused on a defined topic (Aktouf, 1992). I had then a good vision of the French domestic fair trade context.

Additional exploratory methods

Other methods such as observation and analysis of internal documents given by stakeholders were used to complete the pre-investigation phase. Thanks to these, I better understood what the actual core issues in the French DFT movement were. Observation and document analysis enabled me to confirm and/or complete information gathered through exploratory interviews. This additional exploratory step was a decisive part of the research question.

Step 3 – research question

The research question is the theoretical approach used to answer the issue arisen in the general framework question (Quivy and Van Campenhoudt, 2011). The research question and the framework question are closely linked. In this study, I decided to treat a specific topic that was arising within the DFT network: regulation. My research question became the following: *How are the French domestic fair trade initiatives regulated?*

I decided to use the method of a case study, since “*it is an ideal methodology when a holistic, in depth investigation is needed*” (Tellis, 1997). Moreover, my “case” studied – the French DFT network – met with the conditions listed by Johansson (2003): it was a complex functioning unit, contemporary, and I was able to investigate it through different methods from the inside by working in the network for six months.

Step 4 – analysis’ model construction

In order to fulfill the study, I used the **inductive method**. Inductive studies are often based on empirical generalizations, and therefore have a bottom-up direction. Contrary to a theoretical approach that starts from theory developed by scholars, inductive reasoning is based on learning from the reality (Loubet del Bayle, 2000). According to Aktouf (1992), the inductive method is close to the principle of empiricism developed by Locke, an English

philosopher, during the 17th century. He stated in his Essay II i 2, that “*all of our knowledge and ideas arise from experience*”.

I started with the **observation method**, which enabled me to establish my research question and to draw out assumptions about it. My work was then to collect data and analyze them in order to confirm or not these assumptions.

The pre-investigation phase enabled me to decide to focus on the issue of regulation, which established my research question. Out of the observations from the pre-investigation, I could already make two assumptions:

- the DFT network is being organized at the moment in France by the PFCE
- DFT regulation in France is a bottom-up development that started from the different initiatives' practice

My work set out to confirm or contradict these assumptions. To achieve this, I used the **descriptive strategy** (Zagre, 2013), also called **explicative strategy** (Johansson, 2003). This strategy is well adapted to case studies as it focuses on one case but encompasses many variables and qualities (Johansson, 2003). Consequently it aims at gathering as much information as possible in order to have an holistic vision of a situation (Zagre, 2013). I had then to multiply my sources and methods for the data collection.

Step 5 –Data collection

After having settled the theoretical approach I was able to start the field work. This step is the meeting of the conceptual framework with the data that was collected (Quivy and Van Campenhoudt, 2011). Defining the field of study was the first stage (Zagre, 2013). Given the constraints I had of time, resources accessible (public or confidential documents, people available), and my own skills and knowledge as a French intern in a fair trade company, I restricted the study to the French case and focused exclusively on long supply chain initiatives.

I had to define precisely what data was useful and how I would collect it. My research question and the specific context where I conducted the study helped me to achieve this. Working for one of the companies developing a DFT project – Ethiquable – I had the opportunity to enter the PFCE discussions. I analyzed three companies – Ethiquable, Bio Partenaire and Biocoop – to have some elements of comparison, but my position enabled me to go deeper in the Ethiquable's DFT project.

Since this work was a case study, I needed to investigate through a multitude of methods (Johansson, 2003) to collect data. These included: participatory observation, interviews, document collection, field research.

Participatory observation

To conduct a case study, “*it is necessary for the case to be investigated in its natural context*” (Johansson, 2003). I had the opportunity to work six months for one of the supply chain initiatives, Ethiquable, which allowed me to observe one of the three initiatives (Ethiquable, Bio Partenaire and Biocoop) from the inside. Moreover, I was able to participate in PFCE meetings and working groups in 2015.

According to Zagree' classification (2013), this is considered as **participatory observation**. I carried out **direct and indirect observation**. Through this, I was able to gain the confidence of all the stakeholders, which was essential to collect insights from them, meeting minutes,

topics of presentations and discussion topics. It was a constant balancing act between involvement and detachment (Kohn and Nègre, 1991), in other words between my mission for the company Ethiquable, and the study I was conducted. To carry out this type of observation, I had to gain the confidence of the stakeholders during the first weeks. During this period of time I acted mainly as an outsider and made passive observations.

Interviews

As recommended by Zagre in his social sciences methodology book (2013), three types of persons were interviewed: experts and scholars, key informants and people directly concerned (table 2). I conducted **semi-structured interviews** in order to be able to get as much information as possible while verifying precise points linked to the hypotheses (Aktouf, 1992).

Table 2: interviews conducted during the study

Experts and scholar	Key informants	People directly concerned
Marc Dufumier, agronomist, teacher-researcher, president of PFCE, expert of comparative agriculture and agricultural development	<u>PFCE</u> - 1 person responsible for partnerships and development - 1 person responsible for assessing fair trade guarantees	<u>Ethiquable</u> : 1 manager and 3 employees in charge of research & development, quality and commercialization <u>Biocoop</u> : 1 manager and 1 employee in charge of a store <u>Bio Partenaire</u> : 1 manager
	<u>InPACT⁶</u> network - 1 person from FADEAR - 2 person from ARDEAR Rhône-Alpes	21 farmers and 7 workers from 9 <u>producers' groups</u>
	<u>FNAB⁷</u> : its president	

The producers' groups that I met were in different parts of France. These included: Terr'Etic, Sibio, producteurs de piments d'Espelette Idoki, Qualisol, Sicarappam, Ferme de Chassagne, Paysans du Rance, AGP, Coufidou.

As the long supply chain DFT network is still quite small, I was able to interview all the organizations and initiatives involved. However, in regards to the farmers interviewed, I only contacted the ones who were dealing with Ethiquable. Nevertheless, half of them were also dealing with the two other companies (Bio Partenaire and Biocoop), which enabled me to have a farmer point of view from other initiatives.

Step 6 – data analysis

This step was to compare the results with the assumptions, in order to confirm or disprove them. The methods used were different types of **content analysis (quantitative and qualitative)**, which is a technique defined by Aktouf (1992) as the detailed study of all types of documents' content: text, recording, interview, speech, archive, report...

⁶ Initiatives for a territorial and civic based agriculture

⁷ National federation of organic agriculture

Quantitative content analysis

I used the nominal transcription method (Zagre, 2013) to establish a list of criteria that the different initiatives impose on their practices. I did this work out of the different DFT standards.

After setting up the list of criteria, an ordinal transcription of the interviews was used to establish the degree of conformity of the three initiatives to the external regulation of both the law and the PFCE. It was a yes-or-no transcription.

Qualitative content analysis

This type of content analysis was used to analyze interviews through a **thematic method**. The importance given to the themes is not based on their frequency but on the specific interest reported to the context (Aktouf, 1992). For example, I used this method to complete the list of criteria already established thanks to the documents analysis.

Step 7 – interpretation & conclusions

This last step consisted in interpreting the data and linking them to the concept framework chosen. This way the assumptions of departure can be confirmed or not (Zagre, 2013). It led me to the discussion part, where I compared my results with others and put them in perspective with the broader context.

Results

The web of the French DFT network

In France, the DFT movement is composed of lots of different actors. The Figure 2 gives an overview of this complex network by organizing stakeholders regarding the role they are playing.

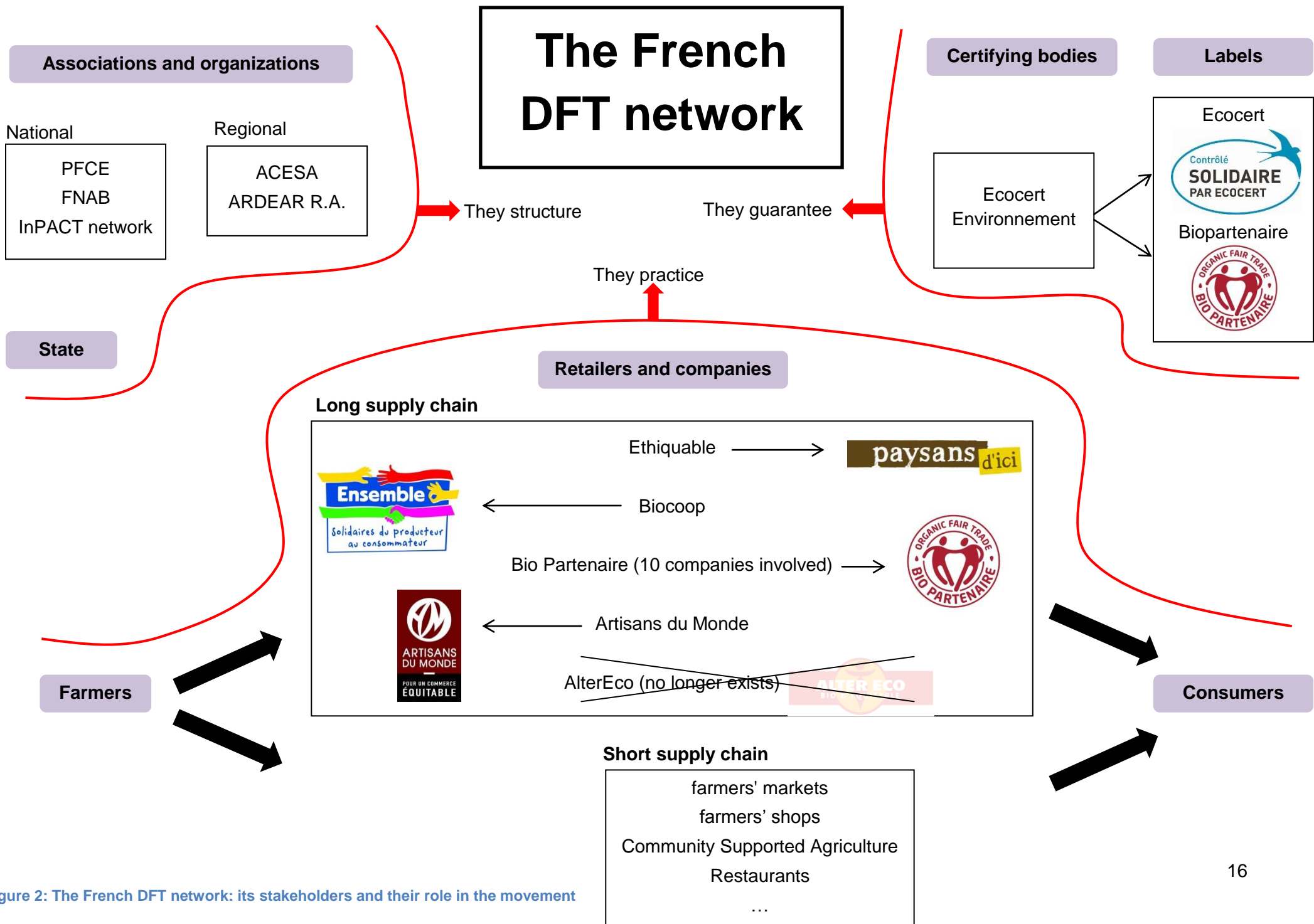


Figure 2: The French DFT network: its stakeholders and their role in the movement

Farmers and consumers

Farmers and consumers started, and remain the basis of the DFT movement. This is obvious among the short supply chain initiatives where farmers and consumers are in direct contact.

In long supply chain DFT, farmers involved are usually organized in groups. They gather through cooperatives, companies, associations or other specific French forms of collective organizations, like GIE (group of economical interest).

Adherence to the DFT movement was not immediate for all the farmers interviewed. *“At the beginning, it made me uncomfortable to be compared to small farmers in the developing countries for whom fair trade is a way to survive. They are much more in need than we are. But now I’m ok with it. We also have the right to get access to a real and stable income.”* (Farmers’ interview n°3, 06/15/15) *“We are involved in an organization that puts farmers from the global south in touch with French farmers. We’ve been standing for fair trade for a long time, so domestic fair trade seems just right to us”* (Farmers’ interview n°1, 05/20/15).

By developing long supply chain DFT projects, all farmers aim at getting access to a fair and stable price for their produce and guaranteeing a long term commitment with retailers. Most farmers expect a greater interest from retailers in their activities and better communication and awareness between consumers. Even though all the farmers interviewed had the organic label, few were saying that it should be a criterion. However, they all agreed on the necessity to set environmental conditions.

Retailers and Companies

Retailers have an important role as they open commercial possibilities for farmers and extend buying possibilities for consumers. *“Our role is to build bridges between producers’ groups and big distributors. We want to give farmers access to this commercial outlet while maintaining their interest. But to organize farmers between themselves is not our role. They have to do it themselves, with the help of the numerous farmers’ organizations that exist in France. We take part at the end of the chain only.”* (Ethiquable’s interview n°1, 05/01/2015)

If we only focus on the French long supply chain activity, five DFT initiatives are to be mentioned. I considered only the “long supply chain” initiatives that were of national importance, and dismissed the local ones such as restaurants or independent shops that I put by default with the “short supply chain” initiatives.

Artisans du Monde is an historical fair trade organization that played a major role in developing fair trade in France. The association is composed of a network of small shops that are mainly run by volunteers. The question of integrating DFT in their program, raised in 1988 for the first time, divided the organization until 2006 where it was finally voted (Le Velly, 2011b). However, very few actions have been undertaken since then. It comes out mainly as making the shops available for Community Supported Agriculture distributions (Artisans du monde, 2015), but very few French products are for sale. For these reasons, I decided not to research deeper in this organization, and focused on the others.

Biocoop is the first organic supply network in France, with 357 shops all over the country and a 657M euro turnover. Fair trade represents 24% of their global sales while DFT accounts for 14%. As well as Ethiquable, Biocoop has its own DFT brand: *“Ensemble, solidaires du*

producteur au consommateur”, also called *Ensemble*, which means “*All together, united from farmer to consumer*”.

Bio Partenaire is an association of 27 companies selling organic products that gather around their own fair trade label: *Bio Partenaire*. DFT involves 10 members, and 368 product references. Bio Partenaire labeled products cannot be sold in big distribution. They are mainly found in organic shops.

Ethiquable is a company specializing in the fair trade sector that buys raw or finished products from farmers in order to sell them to the big distribution companies such as Carrefour. With a turnover of 19M euros in 2014, it is the third biggest fair trade company in France dealing with big distributors, after Malongo and Alter Eco. Ethiquable has about 140 products. 21 of them, under the brand *Paysans d’Ici*, are French products that Ethiquable claims to be DFT.

Alter Eco is a company specializing in international fair trade. It has pretty much the same working system as Ethiquable. It has also developed its own DFT brand in 2011 called “*agriculture française durable*” (sustainable French agriculture). Yet, after some bad years the company was acquired by a bigger one that decided to stop the DFT projects, two years after its creation.

Labels and certifying bodies

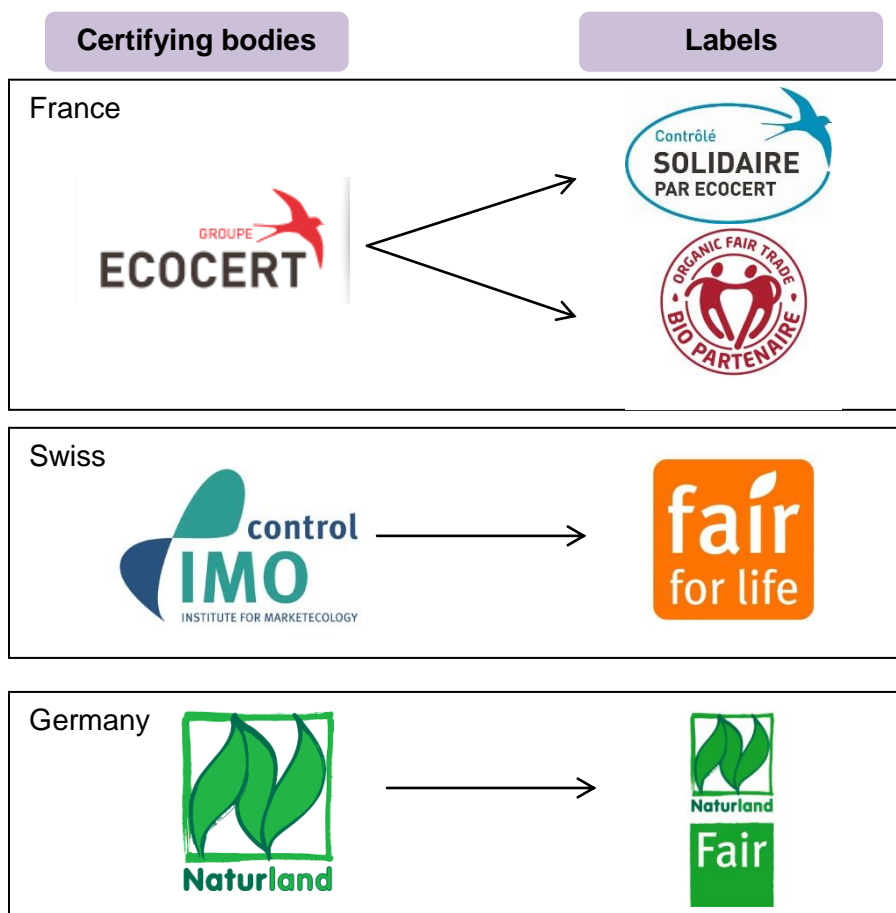


Figure 3: Domestic Fair Trade labels and certifying bodies in Europe

In France there are one DFT certifying body and two labels. Indeed, the two labels – *Ecocert Solidaire* and *Bio Partenaire* – use the same standards developed and certified by the company Ecocert Environnement. However, like the international fair trade labeling system, French products can use foreign labels. Therefore two other European DFT labels are worth mentioning to give a broader view of the possibilities.

The first one is *Naturland Fair*, a German label owned by the Naturland Association for Organic Agriculture, which is also the certifying body. The second, owned and certified by IMO, a Swiss group, is *Fair for Life*. Even though the IMO group has recently merged with Ecocert Environnement, the label remains its property.

This is illustrated in Figure 2. It is important to note that the certifying bodies that propose DFT standards are originally certifying organic products.

Associations and organizations

There are numerous organizations that aim at developing DFT in France. Some are of national importance and want to organize the whole of the DFT network's key players. Others are of regional importance and usually animate DFT locally. Their impact concerns, rather, the short supply chain network. For example, the ACESA association is working in the Aquitaine region in the South-West of France, and the ARDEAR R.A. is active in the Rhône-Alpes region in the South-Est.

The PFCE is a fair trade organization of national importance. It plays a key role in the French DFT network. After some years of hesitation this organization has decided in 2011 to broaden its field of work – until now it was restricted to international fair trade – to the domestic issue, as DFT initiatives were taking more and more importance. It has taken up the leadership in gathering the whole of the DFT stakeholders in order to organize the movement. The PFCE asked the National Federation of Organic Agriculture (FNAB) and the InPACT network – working for family and small scale farming systems – to be part of a DFT working group.

There are other fair trade organizations with very strong opinions that want to promote DFT, such as the Minga national network, or the Breizh Ha Reizh association in the North-West of France. However their radical position isolates them from the mainstream movement. Therefore, we will not discuss these types of stakeholders in this study.

State

The State's role is legislative and regulatory. The French government wants to control what is being done under the DFT appellation. Therefore, it has developed legislative texts that participate in the structuring of the DFT network.

A growing interaction among the stakeholders

As the French DFT network is quickly developing, the link between actors is evolving. In the first instance, in the 2000s, companies were developing their DFT activity separately. There was no interaction between them and they were growing independently from one another. They gathered for the first time in 2011 when the PFCE started to work on a DFT charter with the FNAB and InPACT network. During the writing process, they gathered insights from the DFT movement's stakeholders. The PFCE has thus been playing a key role in gathering the different initiatives around a common project: the *Charter of Local Fair Trade*.

Except for the Bio Partenaire label, other labels and certifying bodies are staying away from the DFT movement. This can be explained by the fact that DFT labeling still remains secondary compared to the international fair trade or organic labeling.

When considering the relationships between retailers, farmers and consumers, the situation is different for each initiative, but usually specified by an internal document that set out standards and criteria to regulate it.

There is a debate within the French movement concerning the term used to describe domestic fair trade. Companies and retailers are using the expression “North/North fair trade” when the PFCE chose the term “local fair trade”. Experts and researchers are using one or the other.

The French DFT initiatives: an historical movement

The history of the three main French DFT retailers is being developed further in the following paragraphs, in order to understand the nascence of the movement.

Biocoop

As an organic cooperative funded in 1986, Biocoop was already talking about fairness in its charter in 1992: *“In partnership with producers’ organizations, Biocoop creates fair supply chains based on social and ecological criteria of high standards.”* In 1998 the word *“sustainable partnership”* appeared and laid the foundations of the brand *Ensemble*, which was created a year after.

However, it is only in 2008 that Biocoop started to communicate its brand *Ensemble* with the “North/North fair trade” term. This decision was made after an internal discussion provoked by the marketing department, concerned that the approach needed to speak more clearly to the consumers.

Bio Partenaire

Bio Partenaire is a more recent structure. Initiated in 2002, it gathers companies from the French organic sector that want to involve the organic label with the social and economic criteria that are missing, since the label only involves environmental issues. To give visibility to their approach, the Bio Partenaire association created its own label. Since its constitution, the association has been willing to apply its project for products from the global South as well as products from the global North.

Yet, when it came to accredit a French dairy chain in Brittany, *“[Bio Partenaire] realized some criteria were incompatible because of the big differences of the socio-economic contexts. For example, there was a criteria about accompanying people to respect fundamental labor rights.”* (Bio Partenaire’s interview, 08/06/2015). The association decided to create a new label that will be adapted to the situation of a developed country such as France. In 2015 these two labels have been merged in a single one (Figure 3), but standards remain different for North/North products.

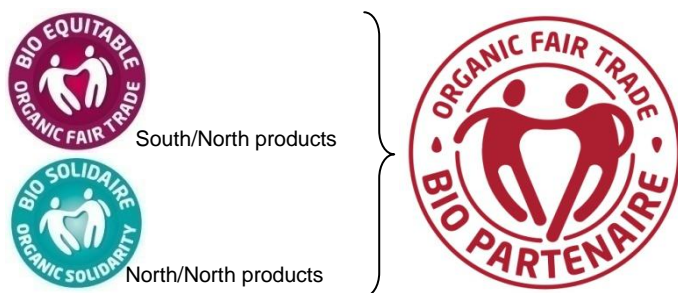


Figure 4: Bio Partenaire, a unique label for South/North and North/North products

Ethiquable

Ethiquable’s situation is different since the company, developed in 2003, created later on – in 2011 – a domestic fair trade brand, *Paysans d’Ici*. Nevertheless, history of the brand comes from two elements. First Ethiquable has specialized in fair trade since its creation and exclusively sells fair trade products. The company clearly shows its desire to defend sustainable and family scale farming systems. Second, Ethiquable had been asked several times by French organic farmers to work together with them. “We have been pushed by farmers from the organic farmers group in Gers⁸. It was not the only reason why we created *Paysans d’Ici*, but it surely was a decisive element.” (Ethiquable’s interview n°1 05/01/2015). For these reasons, in 2011, Ethiquable decided to expand its activity to domestic fair trade as well.

These different North/North fair trade initiatives can be considered as historical given the fact that they were existing before the word “domestic fair trade” became widespread. Considering Biocoop, even though the term has only been used for a few years, the initiative existed since its creation. The project of Bio Partenaire recognizes already existing practices within organic companies’ activities. As for Ethiquable, it seems to be a logical outcome of the fair trade activity of the company and originates from local farmers.

For each initiative, a proper guarantee system

As the nascence of these three projects was not related, each of them developed its own rules to frame their initiative. I distinguished their guarantee system (table 1) from their practices (table 2).

Table 1: comparison between the domestic fair trade guarantee systems of Biocoop, Bio Partenaire and Ethiquable

	<i>Ensemble</i>	<i>Bio Partenaire</i>	<i>Paysans d’Ici</i>
Label	no	yes	no
Brand	yes	no	yes
Requirements specification	Internal standards	ESR standards	Charter <i>Paysans d’Ici</i>
Third party certification	yes	yes	no

⁸ District of the South West of France where Ethiquable has its home office

In regards to the guarantee system, the three initiatives have a different one. Only the Bio Partenaire association chose to use a label for the consumers to be able to identify their products as fair. The member companies can label single products of any of their brands. As for *Ensemble* and *Paysans d'Ici*, they are domestic fair trade exclusive brands.

The criteria the products have to comply with are strict standards certified by a third party organization in the case of *Ensemble* and *Bio Partenaire*. However, *Ensemble*' standards come from an internal document and therefore can only be applied to *Ensemble*' products. Whereas *Bio Partenaire*' standards originate from the ESR⁹ standards developed by the company Ecocert.

Concerning *Paysans d'Ici*, the requirements appear in the Charter Paysans d'Ici, a document written by Ethiquable at the brand creation. As said by the company "this document is more of a set of good practices we try to stick to than proper standards" (Ethiquable's interview n°1, 05/01/2015).

Table 2: comparison between the main requirements of Biocoop, Bio Partenaire and Ethiquable' domestic fair trade initiatives

CRITERIA	<i>Ensemble</i>	<i>Bio Partenaire</i>	<i>Paysans d'Ici</i>
1.Organic certification	Yes		
2.100% organic farms	Yes	No	No
3.Small scale farms	No	No	Yes
4.Direct relationship between the brand owner and the farmers	Yes	No	Yes
5.Collective project between farmers	Yes	No	Yes
6.Price based on production costs	Yes		
7.Price greater or equal to market price	Yes		
8.Minimum guaranteed price	Yes	Yes	No
9.Mid-term commercial commitment contract	Yes		
10.Annual commercial contract	Yes		
11.Prefunding	Yes		
12.Premium	Yes	No	Yes

Concerning the criteria of each initiatives more specifically, the Table 2 shows the list of their main requirements and underlines their common points and divergences.

Criteria 1, 2 and 3 concern the production model. The three initiatives impose the organic label as a precondition for the products. *Ensemble* goes further by requiring that farms and farmer organizations have to be 100% organic. *Paysans d'Ici* is the only one to check and set a limit on the size's farms.

Regarding social criteria, *Ensemble* and *Paysans d'Ici* establish direct relation with farmers and ask them to gather around a collective project. These are not obligatory requests for the Bio Partenaire members.

The most important part of the criteria concerns commercial conditions, and are shared by the whole of the initiatives. Indeed, they all establish the price based on farmers' production cost, and are vigilant to be above or equal to the market price. A slight difference is the

⁹ Echanges solidaires et responsables (Responsible and solidarity-based exchanges)

implementation of a formal minimum guaranteed price in *Ensemble et Bio Partenaire*' cases, when *Paysans d'Ici* only agrees on a fixed price with farmers at the beginning of the partnership.

In addition, the three initiatives fix two different contracts. One is a mid-term commitment contract of minimum three years between the company and farmers. The other is an annual contract that specifies volumes purchased for each agricultural campaign. The last shared criterion is the possibility for farmers to get access to prefunding on their demand. Finally, a premium for farmers' collective project has been implemented for *Ensemble* and *Paysans d'Ici*, but not for *Bio Partenaire*.

This situation shows that Ethiquable, Biocoop and Bio Partenaire have developed their own DFT system as there is no single model for it.

Structuring the French DFT network, the key role of the PFCE

In order to organize and regulate these initiatives, the PFCE started a DFT project in 2011, even though it took some years for the organization to recognize the movement and the role it could play in it.

In 2011 the PFCE initiated a group work with the FNAB and the InPACT network. Together with farmers and retailers, the group worked on writing a *Charter of Local Fair Trade* that would have a national value. Published in June of 2014, the PFCE clearly explains in a press release that "*this charter is destined to gather existing initiatives and the ones that are being developed [...] by giving them visibility and consistency*" (PFCE et al., 2014). As examples, the PFCE give the names of *Ensemble*, *Paysans d'Ici*, *Bio Partenaire* and the Ecocert label' *Ecocert Solidaire*.

In 2015, the group worked on the adhesion process to this. The meetings hold were about finding minimum requirements – based on the *Charter of Local Fair Trade*' criteria – that DFT initiatives would have had to comply with to join the charter. The PFCE was about to start the testing period of the accession process during the autumn of 2015 when the project changed. "*Since the beginning we are clear on the fact that the charter is not a standard, and that we are not willing to create a label. We don't want to do the job of a certification organism either, and that what we were about to do.*" (PFCE's interview n°2, 12/11/2015). Therefore, the PFCE prefers to stay away from any kind of audit work. Instead, it orients itself toward accompanying DFT initiatives that are willing to improve their practices toward the *Charter of Local Fair Trade*' criteria.

In addition, the PFCE pursues its desire to organize the French DFT movement. During the last "fair trade summer universities" organized every year by the PFCE in September, the organization invited DFT stakeholders and dedicate time to specific issues raised by the DFT movement. In December of 2015, the PFCE organized a one-day actors/researchers' seminar titled "*Fair price in France: issues and practices for a farmers/retailers/consumers partnership*". The PFCE is willing to continue the dynamic by organizing an annual meeting for DFT stakeholders specifically.

Then, the PFCE appears today as the place where DFT initiatives can share experiences and DFT stakeholders can meet regularly.

A new law for a public recognition and regulation

Alongside these actions, the PFCE stood for integrating DFT in the French law. Indeed, France has included a definition of fair trade in the article 60 of the “PME law” n°2005-882 of the 2nd of August, 2005. However, this definition specified that “*fair trade organizes goods and services’ exchanges between developed countries and disadvantaged farmers from developing countries*” (Legifrance, 2005), excluding any North/North exchanges.

The increasing number of North/North products with the mention “fair trade” on the packages forces the government to check on them to protect consumers. “*The DGCCRF¹⁰ came in our office a few months ago to check on Paysans d’Ici. They asked us to prove that we were doing fair trade*” (Ethiquable’s n°1, 05/01/2015).

In this context, the French government decided to modify the law in 2014 with the article 94 of the “ESS law” n°2014-856 of the 31st of July, 2014. The text acknowledges DFT by replacing the mention about developing countries by the following sentence: “*Fair trade aims at securing economic and social progress of workers in a situation of economic disadvantaged*” (Legifrance, 2014). It also gives a more precise definition of fair trade by listing some fundamental criteria.

In addition to the law, two decrees were published in 2015. The first one, the decree n°2015-1157 of the 17th of September, 2015, gives precisions about fair trade criteria mentioned by the law (Ministère de l’économie de l’industrie et du numérique, 2015a). The second one, the decree n°2015-1311 of the 19th of October, 2015, creates a Concertation Committee of Affairs (Ministère de l’économie de l’industrie et du numérique, 2015b). This committee would be in charge of acknowledging fair trade labels according to the French government criteria.

These recent law modifications prove that the French government has adapted its legislation to the evolution of the fair trade movement.

¹⁰ General Directorate for Competition, Consumer Affairs and Fraud Control

Discussion

Before resuming the findings of the study, reminding the starting assumptions is needed. After the pre-investigation, I made the first assumption that the DFT network is being organized at the moment in France by the PFCE. The second was that DFT regulation in France is a bottom-up development that started from the different initiatives' practices.

The first finding suggests three types of stakeholders among the DFT network: the ones that practice, the ones that guarantee and the ones that structure the movement. The complex web of this network is similar to the international system and its multiple actors, intricacy of labeling and regulating bodies (Renard, 2005). Among the large variety of DFT "practicers", I chose to put aside the local initiatives and focus only on the long supply chains in order to have the mainstream vision of the French DFT movement. The study has identified three initiatives of national importance: the Biocoop's brand Ensemble, the Bio Partenaire's label and the Ethiquable's brand Paysans d'ici. We are far from the 400 French companies working in the international fair trade sector, and the 500M euro turnover they represented in 2014 (PFCE, 2015b). Yet, it shows the DFT movement is at an early stage of its development.

Looking deeper at these three models – Ethiquable, Biocoop and Bio Partenaire – enabled me to study their operational modes. It seems that they have appeared independently from one another, driven by different motivations. Their nascence is linked with the history of each company's activities that have evolved from fair trade, organic or family scale farm principles to domestic fair trade approaches, named as such. Thereupon, the DFT movement in France hints at the convergence between organic and fair trade sector, already attested by several publications (Kröger and Schäfer, 2014) (PFCE, 2015a). Indeed, the French DFT development has led to the meeting of actors from both sectors. The opening of the PFCE membership to organic specialized organizations such as the FNAB illustrates well that phenomenon.

As an additional finding to the initiatives' operational mode, it appears clearly that each of them has developed their own guarantee system and practices. It is most likely because of a legal loophole concerning the subject. It is important to note that these initiatives' operational modes have evolved since their creation. *Ensemble*, *Bio Partenaire* and *Paysans d'ici* have changed their practices and adjusted them to the situations faced and experiences gained with time. If each of the initiative has a different politic regarding the guarantee system, they all share a good number of common points in their practices, especially the economic ones. This is an encouraging fact for the build-up phase of the network.

Indeed, besides the operational modes of the different initiatives, observing PFCE' work and meetings enabled me to attest that the organization seems to gather DFT main stakeholders around a common project – the *Charter of Local Fair Trade*. Moreover, the PFCE appears as a privileged place where the DFT network can gather and share insights. Thereupon the role played by the PFCE in France can be compared to the DFTA's in the US. The DFTA gathers all types of DFT actors, from farmers to retailers through civil society organizations. It also has developed its own DFTA standards in 2007, constituted in 13 principles (DFTA, 2015), and echoing the *Charter of Local Fair Trade*. Nevertheless, the PFCE and the DFTA differ by their operational mode. The US organization has clearly put itself in an auditor's role by evaluating DFT initiatives' practices, though it is only for information purposes and has no legal value. The French organization, for its part, chose to let this responsibility to the Concertation Committee of Affairs created by the government. It prefers to limit its role to

being the federator of the French DFT movement and providing guidance for the volunteering initiatives.

In regards to the DFT regulation in France, the study suggests a three-scale regulation with, from the less authoritative valued one to the most authoritative valued one: the initiatives' own regulation system, the PFCE's *Charter of Local Fair Trade*, and the government law about fair trade. These three types of regulation appeared one after the other, first led by the DFT initiatives, followed by the PFCE's work and concluded by the ESS law.

The results can therefore confirm the assumptions made at the beginning of the study. Indeed, the PFCE seems to have taken the leadership in structuring the French DFT movement. And the regulation of the initiatives' practices can be considered as a bottom-up construction as it started from the initiatives themselves to finally (after some years) reach the government law. This phenomenon took time though, as more or less a decade passes between the first initiative claimed as DFT, and the recognition of the movement by the law in 2014.

Such conclusions let assume that DFT regulation is taking the same path as international fair trade, which was also build from self-regulation to state-regulation as Abdelgawad pointed out in an article published in 2007. It shows that public authorities get inspired from standards developed by civil society organizations.

On the contrary, it looks like the DFT movement wants to stay away from the kind of standards that regulate the organic sector. Such regulation system is composed of a set of "yes-or-no standards". According to some researchers and organizations (Kröger and Schäfer, 2014), this is what conducted the organic label to become highly competitive and allow drifts and practices' incongruities. French DFT movement seems to be careful to avoid this phenomenon. As a consequence, DFT regulation is for now based on principles rather than strict standards. This was observed in the three initiatives' practices, with the idea of assessing the global situation rather than evaluating the conformity of a list of standards. Moreover, DFT regulation is facing complex issues, the first one being the determining of a fair price (Robert-Demontrond, 2008).

Such intentions, albeit coming from considerate purposes, make DFT initiatives difficult to vet objectively. This explains the reason why, likewise the DFTA (Brown and Getz, 2008), the PFCE refuses to become an accreditation body and is careful to remain a networking and gate-keeping entity.

Nevertheless the actual regulation system doesn't answer the question of the need of a third party certification. It is not an obligatory requirement for fair trade product today, yet the issue remains within the movement, as it is the case for international fair trade also. When asked, farmers are divided between protection and freedom in their work: "*A third party certification? We have enough with the organic label, plus all the administrative tasks that increase every year! But I'm not saying DFT shouldn't be regulated though. We need to control who can benefit from DFT and avoid misrepresentations. For example farmers involved should respect some environmental requirements such as the organic label.*" (Farmers' interview n°4, 06/17/15). Jaffee et al (2004) imply that third party certification gives credibility and therefore is necessary to achieve legitimacy with consumers. Brown and Getz (2008) underline the fact that the growth of fair trade would not have been possible without the certification system. Thus, if third party certification and labels are not likely to become

obligatory, it seems that their generalization could give to the DFT movement some visibility and speed up its development.

To answer this issue, further researches are needed. Looking deeper at the pros and cons of labeling and third party certification helps better understand the benefits and dangers that can loom from it. Likewise, this study has stick to the French case but it might be interesting to look at the European level to have a broader view of the DFT movement. I have chosen the case of France due to my own familiarity with this country, and the opportunity I had to work several months and be immersed in the French DFT sector. However the issue can be different in the neighboring countries. In France, DFT is seen as a national issue, whereas Belgium sees it as a European issue (Oxfam Belgique, 2013). Nevertheless, France remains of great interest because of its head start on the subject over other European countries, reflecting the leadership France had taken in adopting the first fair trade legal mention in 2005 (Abdelgawad, 2007).

Results of this study should be taken with caution given the fact that social reality is a dynamic that never stops evolving (Zagre, 2013). Therefore, the scene drew up here is vowed to change. DFT regulation will evolve as initiatives' practices have evolved. In addition, readers should be aware that in order to achieve the study, I was immersed several months in one of the company developing a DFT project: Ethiquable. Even if special cautiousness was taken to avoid any subjectivity biases, I was able to go deeper in the analysis of *Paysans d'ici* than in the case of *Bio Partenaire* and *Ensemble*.

Conclusion

The study of the French DFT movement pointed out its complexity and suggests further potential. The movement is indeed composed of numerous stakeholders coming from different sectors: international fair trade, organic agriculture, family scale farming. They interact more and more as the network is being organized by the PFCE organization, which steers the movement toward more dialogue and facilitates the development of new projects. Even though the number of DFT initiatives of national importance remains few, it seems that there are as many DFT guarantee systems as DFT initiatives. These initiatives have developed their own DFT practices which have inspired the *Charter of Local Fair Trade* initiated by the PFCE. This organization seems to be playing the role of the networking entity. As its president says "*The short term role of the PFCE is to avoid fraud*" (Marc Dufumier' interview, 09/10/2015). But to regulate such a hazy movement is not an easy task, and the PFCE is still looking for the best way to control it. Nevertheless, following the previous fair trade law making process in 2005, the French government ended up modifying the fair trade law, pressured by PFCE's lobby, to make it fit with the growing DFT movement.

If this study underlines the complexity of the DFT movement, from the high variety of actors to the intricacy of different scales of regulation, it also shows the power civil society can have on government's decision making. It suggests that inventing, developing and organizing alternative ways of consumption is up to citizens rather than politicians. It also suggests that a new model of regulation should be further developed; a model that would take into account the complexity of a situation with all its components; a model based on a holistic approach that would be adaptable to the large diversity of agricultural and food systems existing in France.

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