

Report on Participation in [Field Research Trip to Netherlands and Germany]

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M2 (as of January 2014)
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Oversea Experience

During the 13 days of field research, we were able to see Europe in diverse perspectives and it was a fruitful trip both in academic and personal experience.

Culture:

We visited museums and library in almost every city we went to. During our visit to Rijksmuseum and Amsterdam Maritime Museum, we learnt a lot of the history of city Amsterdam and how the citizens participated into the historical development during the 16th and 17th century. Also, I was surprised by the amount of exhibition that related to East Asia, such as ancient Japanese weapon, paintings of young lady in traditional Japanese cloth, and china shaped and painted in a strong Chinese style but with picture of Western trader and farmer on it. Those exhibitions gave me a strong impress on how the early modern history started and on how the world we are now living is was shaped during the past hundreds of years.

Academy:

During this trip, we had three exchange programs in Erasmus University, Goethe University and Heidelberg University. It was a great opportunity for us to exchange our opinions with students from other countries. What impressed me most was the exchange program in Erasmus University where we had a discussion over the international relationship issues. In the discussion of the relationship between China and Japan, we had a valuable chance to hear the opinion from the students from China, Japan, and other Asian and European countries. Additionally, it was my great honor to deliver my presentation about my research topic in the exchange program at Heidelberg University, where I received a massive help from participants in the meeting.

Organizations:

During our visit to the FIAN international, we had a deeply talk about the right to food as well as the ETOs, and we also learnt a lot about how to run an international human right organization. To my own interest, we discussed the role that the UN played in developing countries and how international organization like FIAN works as the coordinators among UN, international funds, local government and local NGOs as the UN and international organization, especially the human right organization is facing the same difficulty in entering China. We also had a meaningful talk with the worker and intern in FIAN, which is a great help for myself because I am considering starting my career by working for international organization or NGOs after I go back to Chia. One of the highlight of this trip is the visit to the farm of Lindenoff and the company of Brandt & Lievie where we learnt about the organic farm in Europe. In the farm, the vegetable are grown in a sustainable and organic way and domestic animals are also raised appropriately. This visit draws my attention to the situation of local distribution channel of organic production and how the community can support those small scale farms and benefit from them. And from this experience I write

the report about the organic certification in different countries and how direct local distribution channel can be an essential factor in the success of local farms.

Organic Certification and Distribution Channel

Organic Farming:

According to the definition of FAO, the organic agriculture is “a holistic production management system which promotes and enhances agro-ecosystem health, including biodiversity, biological cycles, and soil biological activity. It emphasizes the use of management practices in preference to the use of off-farm inputs, taking into account that regional conditions require locally adapted systems. This is accomplished by using, where possible, agronomic, biological, and mechanical methods, as opposed to using synthetic materials, to fulfill any specific function within the system”(FAO/WHO Codex Alimentarius Commission, 1999)¹. Under the circumstance of agricultural and food problem, the organic farming—a system aimed at producing food with minimal harm to ecosystems, animals or humans—is often proposed as a solution. The term “organic” here means that the farming systems that should be ecological, sustainable and that should utilize natural nutrient-cycling process instead of synthetic fertilizer and pesticides so that there would be less harm to the soil quality and natural biodiversity.

Organic farming is a revolutionary pattern for agricultural production based on the new acknowledge and understanding of nature. Although chemical synthesis pesticides, chemical fertilizer, growth regulators and transgenic technology are banned in organic farming in general, it does not mean that the organic agriculture equals to the traditional agriculture or that organic farming suggests that the backward model of production should be employed. The organic farming is against the production technology and materials that have negative influence on the ecological system and natural environmental meanwhile advocates the application of advanced cultivation, irrigation and pest control techniques to improve the quality and increase the production while ensuring food safety and environmental protection.

Organic Certification:

In order to define the products those are produced organically, it is necessary to carry out the process of organic certification for producers of organic food and other organic agricultural products.

In the U.S., products that can be labelled “organic” must strictly meet the following requirements²:

- Produced without excluded methods (e.g., genetic engineering), ionizing radiation, or sewage sludge.
- Produced per the National List of Allowed and Prohibited Substances (National List).
- Overseen by a USDA National Organic Program-authorized certifying agent, following all USDA organic regulations.

The organic product in the U.S. are distinguished into three catalogues: “100% organic” which means that the products are made entirely with certified organic ingredients and methods; “organic” which indicates that the products contain at least 95% organic ingredients; and “made with organic ingredients” is a label for products containing a minimum of 70% organic ingredients.

The process of certification must be done for any farms and handlers that sell more than \$5,000 of organic products per year, as well as vendors that sell their organic products online. An annual recertification process needs to be

implemented in order to provide updated information to certifying agents. However, some exemptions can be made for small organic farms and businesses whose income from organic sales does not exceed \$5,000 per year. Those small organic farms and businesses are not obligated to obtain a certification to produce or sell if they meet minimum requirements of the USDA, meanwhile they are not allowed to use the USDA organic seal without going through the certification process.

In EU, in 1991 the European Council of Agricultural Ministers adopted Regulation (EEC) No. 2092/91 on organic farming and the corresponding labelling of agricultural products and foods. In 2007 the European Council of Agricultural Ministers agreed on a new Council Regulation on organic production and labelling of organic products.³ The EU organic label, which is often named "Euro-leaf", can only be used on products and food containing more than 95% of organic ingredients and certifying the EU organic control system. For any organic pre-packaged food produced within the European Union, the use of the EU organic logo is compulsory. And next to the EU organic logo, information about the place where production place of the ingredients used in the product and code number of the control authorities is also obligated to be displayed. However, aside of the EU organic logo, there are some other organic logos on organic products packaging across EU. The use of EU organic logo is not exclusive: the previous national and private labels can continue to be used on the product packaging by displaying on organic products next to the EU organic logo. This means that although the organic farms can continue use the labels they obtained before, it is mandatory to apply for the approval of EU control system if any anyone wants to claim their product to be organic. The control system in EU countries is a mixture of private control bodies and public control authorities that varies from country to country.

In Japan, according to the homepage of MAFF, there are 80 active certification agencies⁴ that are responsible for organic food producers of 6,687. According to the report from the NPO MAO⁵, the rate of organic farmer in Japan is only 0.47% (2010) The data contains only those who acquired the license from JAS and the rate of the organic farmers who have not obtained the license from JAS is approximately 0.36%.⁶ It usually costs around ¥50,000 to ¥100,000 for the certification process and over ¥10,000 for annual update.⁷ The small scale farms have to hand out the production plan and annual report the same as large scale business.

Distribution Channel of CSA:

The concept of organic farming aims at resolve the problem of sustainable development. For common consumers, using or eating organic products is a way to improve the quality of life and to show our responsibility to the future of the planet. However, due to the issue of information asymmetry, it is hard for common consumers to tell the real quality of the product or even harder to tell how they are produced. The organic logo, which is controlled by governments, is a way to distinguish the organic product from other products. The use of organic logo is usually strictly restricted and only those producers who passed the certification process are qualified for putting organic label on their products. This regulation builds the consumer trust toward organic product as people can recognize the organic products by a national or regional logo.

On the other hand, the application for the organic certification maybe demanding for small scale business, and the administration fee maybe a burden for small farms and businesses. Also, it is still controversial on some issues in organic farming. Therefore, some people may refuse to apply for the organic logo for political reasons. The ultimate objective of organic certification is to set up a trustful mechanism between producers and consumers. When a

consumer buys from a chain store retailer, it is almost impossible to know the producer of the products. Thus under this situation, consumers have to rely on authority organization to recognize the product of good quality. Meanwhile, this problem can also be solved by shorten the marketing channel to, for example, direct channel.

The community supported agriculture (CSA) is a way to build the trustful mechanism between buyers and sellers of organic products. The producers sell directly from the farm to the consumer and cut out the middleman. This concept is original from Europe and developed firstly in Japan. The consumers sign contract with the producer in the beginning of production season and make the advance payment. In that way, the consumers share the risk of cultivation and the producer need to cultivate and manage his product in a sustainably and organically. The consumers can visit and work in farm during leisure time to build up the trust with the producer.

The issue of food safety has attracted increasing attention nowadays in China. Especially among the citizens in large cities who are able and willing to pay more attention to what they are eating. In Beijing, there are several local citizen farms such as "Little Donkey Farm", "Green Vegetable Farm", "Dandelion Cooperative" that provide farmland renting service for city citizens who want to farm themselves. And the members of those farms need to work in the field every one or two weeks. For those consumers who only want to buy product from the farm, they can make payment before production season and receive farm product every week.

Another characteristic of those farms is the widespread use of SNS. For farms that grow vegetable, they will use SNS to connect with members and update news about growth of crops. Meanwhile for livestock farms, they use SNS platform to report the everyday growing state of the animals to the consumer.

Organic farming is a new solution for food security and sustainable development. However, one of the most essential issues in organic farming is how to build trustful mechanism between producers and consumers. The organic certification is set up for people to recognize the organic product whereas the CSA pattern can be a supplement for organic certification and truly realize the concept of "organic, local and healthy".

Reference

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¹ Food and Agriculture Organization of United Nation, <http://www.fao.org/organicag/oa-faq/oa-faq1/en/>

² "Labeling organic products". U.S. Department of Agriculture, <http://www.ams.usda.gov>

³ European Commission Agriculture and Rural Development Organic Farming

http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/organic/index_en.htm

⁴ 有機食品の検査認証制度,農林水産省, http://www.maff.go.jp/j/jas/jas_kikaku/youki.html

⁵ 一般社団法人MOA自然農法文化事業, <http://www.moaagri.or.jp/>

⁶ 平成22年度有機農業基礎データ作成事業報告書概要, 一般社団法人MOA自然農法文化事業,

http://www.moaagri.or.jp/pdf/H22_yuki_kiso_gaiyo.pdf

⁷ 株式会社アファス認証センター, <http://www.afasseq.com/price.html>