

Session Biosphere: April 12th 11.30 hrs

1s3 The contribution of biodiversity to productivity in circular agriculture

What to conserve and how? Framing of biodiversity and biodiversity management in different contexts

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Biodiversity has become a key topic in the debates around agricultural sustainability, both in academic and public spheres. As such, biodiversity is also often discussed in the context of circular agriculture. However, biodiversity is a broad and complex concept, and it is increasingly recognized that biodiversity is being understood in many different ways. Related to this, people express different ideas of how and for what purposes biodiversity should be managed, using different arguments. In addition, the context of the biodiversity issues that are being discussed are different everywhere; consider regional differences in environmental conditions, agricultural practices, and wider cultural and economic context. For these reasons, we are conducting a study to unravel how people put their ideas about biodiversity into words – how they frame these ideas – and how this framing relates to the regional context. We focus on biodiversity in relation to dairy farming, in four contrasting case study areas in the Netherlands and France. Specifically, we aim to address three questions: 1) Which topics are used in the framing of biodiversity and biodiversity management in dairy farming? 2) Which patterns stand out in the framing of biodiversity and biodiversity management in dairy farming? and 3) How does the framing of biodiversity and biodiversity management in dairy farming relate to the regional context? We follow a qualitative approach, based on interpretative analysis of in-depth interviews with stakeholders in the different case study areas. In our analysis, we use the frame-of-reference model (consisting of values, norms, convictions, interests, and knowledge) to systematically organize the topics in the frames that the interviewees brought forward. We then look for patterns of symbolic convergence across these individual frames and their possible relation to the regional context. We can report on a first analysis of a major part of our interviews, which already revealed a remarkable diversity in ways of reasoning about 'which' biodiversity is relevant in a dairy farming context and why; in perceptions about the impacts of this biodiversity on dairy farming and vice versa; and in proposed approaches to conserve, manage, or use this biodiversity. We argue that better understanding and more explicitness about this diversity of understandings can benefit both the academic and public debate around biodiversity in (circular) agriculture.

Keywords: Dairy farming, stakeholders, framing, context