

Values as conflictual linkages between the socio-economic, identity and politics: the case of the agri-food industry

Andy Smith

▶ **To cite this version:**

Andy Smith. Values as conflictual linkages between the socio-economic, identity and politics: the case of the agri-food industry. How 'European values' unite and divide. Identity and morality politics in the EU, Final Conference of the ValEUR project, Cevipol; Institute for European Studies; Université libre de Bruxelles, Nov 2019, Bruxelles, Belgium. halshs-02397639

HAL Id: halshs-02397639
https://shs.hal.science/halshs-02397639

Submitted on 6 Dec 2019

HAL is a multi-disciplinary open access archive for the deposit and dissemination of scientific research documents, whether they are published or not. The documents may come from teaching and research institutions in France or abroad, or from public or private research centers.

L'archive ouverte pluridisciplinaire **HAL**, est destinée au dépôt et à la diffusion de documents scientifiques de niveau recherche, publiés ou non, émanant des établissements d'enseignement et de recherche français ou étrangers, des laboratoires publics ou privés.

Values as conflictual linkages between the socio-economic, identity and politics: the case of the agri-food industry

Andy Smith, Directeur de recherche FNSP
Centre Emile Durkheim-Sciences Po Bordeaux

Paper given to the conference *How 'European values' unite and divide. Identity and morality politics in the EU*, Cevipol/Institute for European Studies, Université libre de Bruxelles, 21st of November 2019.

Abstract: This piece presents a perspective on politics which envisages it as stemming from values and their confrontation around the structuration of socio-economic activity. Values are central firstly because they determine what social actors consider to be fair and right. Secondly, values have social effects because, through the development and the promotion of 'value hierarchies', certain individual, collective or public actors work to change or reproduce the institutions that delimit, but also render possible and predictable, durable socio-economic relations. Indeed, it is value hierarchies which provide the basis for the political identities that in turn fuel and legitimate collective and public action. This perspective is illustrated using empirical examples from the agri-food industry in general and its milk sector and local food chain components in particular.

Introduction: Embracing the Economic as Political and Politics as Value Competition

Contrary to popular belief, and even that held by many if not most political scientists, socio-economic activity is always governed and this governing is always structured and orientated by values (Smith, 2016). It is governed around the establishment, reproduction or change of the institutions (stabilized rules or norms) that structure industries and trans-industry regulation. These institutions are not just imposed by public authorities, they are generated by asymmetric configurations of economic, public, 'expert' and non-governmental actors. Moreover, such institutions are both constraints upon socio-economic activity, but also provide the very conditions that make it possible for this activity to even take place durably (Fligstein, 2001). In turn, envisaging institutions as sites for struggles between actors engaged in socio-economic meshes with the theory-driven postulate that such competition is not primarily driven by differences in power resources. More fundamentally, this competition is profoundly structured by differences in the values of the actors concerned, i.e. what they deem to be fair and, therefore, the right thing to do (Verba, 1987). Specifically, these values are an intrinsic part of the 'political work' constantly undertaken upon institutions through three overlapping processes: public problem definition (*problematization*), collective and public policy instrument setting (*instrumentation*) and legitimation (Smith, 2019).

Of course, the values that feature in political work are not immutable, nor do not float freely within any society or, indeed, at the scale of the European Union (EU). Values are constantly being defined and reshaped by individuals, groups and organizations in the light of their respective experiences and evolving projects. For example, for many economic actors, the value of freedom has taken on new meanings since the deepening of European integration in the late 1980s and early 1990s. More fundamentally still, each value relates to others as interdependent components of 'value hierarchies' held by individuals, groups and organizations. For example, competing conceptions of the value of freedom also entail

differences in how that value is defined and prioritized as regards other values such as equality or security. E.g. freedom + equality of opportunity *vs*. freedom + deep egalitarianism, or freedom + security as health and safety *vs*. freedom + environmental security.

Indeed, a key analytical proposition made in this paper is that value hierarchies are what structure the 'political identities' which fuel collective and public action in the socio-economic sphere (and well beyond it). Specifically, the claim stated here, and to be developed in the remainder of this paper, is that:

- Political identities stem from how, over time, groups of actors have emerged, consolidated then maintained themselves around the hierarchies given to recurrent sets of values;
- These identities enable actors to engage in political work, and this despite the differences they may have over certain aspects of the goals and strategies this entails. As such they can create linkages between actors, just as they can also erect barriers and thus obstacles to their cooperation;
- Defined in this way, one can see more clearly how and why value hierarchies, and thus political identities, generally do not fit easily with territorialized identities and, consequently, render highly difficult political work on, and thus the establishment and upkeep of, legitimate EU wide-institutions.

As regards this conference and the book project as a whole, I will therefore argue that the EU does not suffer either from 'a value deficit' or, indeed, a 'lack of politics'. Rather, even more than at member-state level, the EU's legitimacy is constantly undermined by the widespread holding of two simplistic ideas: 'the economic is not political' and, 'in any event, public authorities are no longer able to control it'. For this reason, it is important to generate data not only about the politics, and thus mobilizations driven by values, that certainly does take place in and structures the EU. Research also needs to produce analysis of those who propagate simplistic conceptions of politics and, in so doing, contribute so strongly to neglecting its 'supply side', i.e. the actors who engage in political work in general, and the depoliticization of economic activity in particular (Hay, 2007).

The remainder of this paper is devoted to illustrating the heuristic worth of the approach sketched out above, and this using examples taken from completed and ongoing research on the agri-food industry[1]. Over and above reasons of data availability, the latter has been chosen because this industry:

- remains at the heart of the EU's policies and budget;
- entails a variety of deep value-driven clashes;
- and highlights the inextricable link between economics and politics.

Unfortunately, nearly all the recent data presented here was generated solely in France. Nevertheless, as the EU's largest agricultural producer, one firmly embedded in EU-scale economic and political activity, this member state is perhaps not the worst place to start.

[1] My investment in this industry goes back more than 30 years and includes a number of research projects, all based upon interviews (c. 300 in total) with private actors (farmers, processors), and representatives of public and collective action organizations. This involvement began outside academia with 2 years working in London for the National Farmers' Union (1987-88). It then took the form of two masters dissertations and part of my Phd. (1990-5), a PCRD project on the regionalization of agricultural policy (1995-99), a project on Protected Geographical Indications (Jullien & Smith, 2004), two books on the wine industry (2007 & 2016), research on pesticide regulation in that industry and, latterly, a project on local food chains (2017>).

Politics as Values in the Agri-food Industry

As the next reform of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) looms into sight, the media will soon be awash with commentary on the negotiations to come couched in terms of 'French' interests vs. that of Germany, the Netherlands or Eastern Europe. Of course, there will be a moment where officially defined 'national interests' will play a role within the Council of Ministers and this European Council. Indeed, this is what most commentators will call 'the politics of CAP reform'. However, in doing so they will be doing the public a major disservice in terms of both setting out how EU policy is made and, more fundamentally, what politics itself is all about. In keeping with the approach outlined in the introduction, the alternative perspective on the politics of farming and food developed below starts with defining the issue area studied as that of 'the Agri-food industry', setting out its key institutions then, above all, by identifying the value hierarchies, and thus political identities, which compete around its governing. This analysis will then be deepened first using research results from the milk sector, i.e. still one of the parts of the industry that is most wedded to intensive production and its separation from actual consumers. Attention will then switch to the duck product sector, i.e. one dominated until the 1990s by small scale producer-processors but which is now subject to the same divisions of labour as milk. Throughout, of course, the focus will be less on these sectors *per se* and more upon what their analysis tells us about the vital role played by politics in the Agri-food industry, and therefore the competing values and political identities this entails.

The Agri-food industry as a unit of analysis

Particularly for those unfamiliar with political economy, it is first necessary to set out clearly why I group together socio-economic activity in terms of farming and food production within one single industry. The theoretical reason for doing so is to avoid simply adopting wholesale the categorizations of practitioners and, instead, to propose a definition of an industry that applies to all equivalent groupings of goods and services. This definition underlines that an industry can be said to exist when it has developed into an autonomous set of four 'institutionalized relationships that concern finance, employment, production and commercialization (see table 1 and Jullien & Smith, 2008).

Table 1: An industry as a set of four connected Institutionalized Relationships

Institutionalized relationship	*What its rules, norms and conventions cover*
Finance	The holding of property and capitalization
Employment	Pay and conditions of workers
Production	Limits on what can be produced and how
Commercialization	Limits on sales and marketing practices

What is key to retain is that all industries possess these four sets of institutions, that at any one time they are largely 'complementary' but also the source of friction between the actors concerned. Moreover, it is equally important to consider that all actors who seek to affect these institutions –be they farmers, private company managers, public officials or specialized NGO activists- are part and parcel of the industry: the latter is not just made up of producers

and processors. This is important first so as to take into account the entire range of actors who compete over socio-economic institutions. Second, this point guides research to focus not only upon competition between actors with asymmetric tangible resources, but also upon the value hierarchies that each of them holds and, generally, seeks to impose upon others when working to either change the industry's institutions or to reproduce them.

Indeed, in the agri-food industry these value hierarchies can typically be grouped into four sets, each generating a specific political identity:

1) *Hyper-liberalism*: for holders of this value hierarchy, the state should stay out of agriculture, food production and marketing as much as possible, and this so as to enable only 'the most efficient' producers to survive. Wedded to the emergence of very large farm-firms and processing companies, together with support for large supermarket chains, 'efficiency' is defined here in terms of profit margins generated through the maximization of economies of scale. The value promoted is freedom (of the entrepreneur), whereas security is reduced to issues of product safety and the value of equality to the policing of fair competition between firms. In farming union elections Hyper liberals in France tend strongly to vote for the FNSEA (or not at all), and *Les Républicains* in local and national elections (although some have recently turned instead to Emmanuel Macron's *La République en marche*). Today, holders of this value hierarchy not only dominate the processing and distribution of food, they also now account for no less than 10 % of all French farms, employ 28 % of farmworkers in that country and produce 30% of its production (Legagneaux et Olivier-Salvagnac, 2017, pg. 277 et 287).

2) *Liberal dirigisme*: Statistically, a second set of liberals has dominated the Agri-food industry in Europe since the 1950s and, to a large extent, still does. These liberals are also committed to what they call the freedom of the farmer and the businessman (sic.). In this respect, they also consider that public authorities should stay out of markets and issues concerning production, processing and distribution as much as possible. In contrast to Hyper liberals, however, they do not see the development of large production units as desirable or necessary. Instead, they vaunt the merits of 'the family farm', the organization of production and its commercialization via (large) cooperatives, as well as public intervention in order to protect both these features of the industry. Consequently, a *dirigiste* mode of such intervention through public policies is seen as legitimate and often necessary (Ansaloni & Smith, 2018). Indeed, although freedom is a key value for this model, so too is security, defined here as that of individual farms to persist as the central building block of European farming. Indeed, it is this commitment to security essentially at the farm level, that over the past two decades, has caused some Liberal *dirigistes* to switch to voting for extreme-right farming unions, such as *La Coordination rurale*, and political parties like *Le Front National*, rather than the FNSEA and *Les Républicains*.

3) *Socio-democrat interventionism*: Although much lower in number than the Liberal *dirigistes*, the fourth political identity found in the agri-food industry is both left of centre and interventionist. Here the cardinal value is security, defined this time in terms of the durability of the sectors concerned and, increasingly over the past thirty

years, in terms of environmental protection. Because of their overall commitment to social goals, equality is also an important value, however, here this can be defined in ways ranging from that of the centre-left (such as the PS) to that of leftist parties such as *La France Insoumise*. Socio-democrat interventionists are strongly present in some French *départements* such as Les Landes, but are relatively weak in many others. In farming union elections they support either *la Confédération paysanne* or, when it exists at all locally, the MODEF (*Mouvement de défense des exploitants familiaux*).

4) *Leftist autarkists*: Finally, a small minority of actors in Europe's agri-food industry seek to place themselves on its margins by making their economic practices as 'autarkic' or autonomous as possible from sectors dominated by large processing or marketing firms, a representation of farmers dominated by unions like the FNSEA and EU or state public policies. By developing instead alternative distribution networks (such as local food chains, see below), and by processing much of their own products, these actors seek to be coherent with a value hierarchy where freedom from domination is key. This leftist conception of freedom rarely goes as far as to make these actors anarchists. However, they do believe that by acting as autonomously as possible, and thereby short-circuiting and thus undermining what they depict as 'conventional farming', the security of farming as a whole, together with that of the environment, can best be realized.

As with any typology, these four political identities are of course not always reflected neatly in reality. Moreover, their content and number of followers varies across Europe's territories and has shifted over time. Nevertheless, redefining and problematizing the politics of the EU's agri-food industry in this way provides a means of deepening analysis of its contemporary cleavages and controversies. Many of these will now be examined further, first in the milk sector and then in or around local food chains.

The Milk Industry and its Post-Interventionist Politics

Analysing how the production, processing and selling of cow's milk has been governed in the EU is particularly revealing for at least three reasons. First, milk is one of the most commonly produced farm products in Europe and one that generates massive amounts of value from both internal consumption and exports (see Table 2). Moreover, although the number of milk farmers has declined rapidly in the last twenty years due to a concentration of farms and indeed the rise of 'firm-farming' (see Table 3), this sector still accounts for around 20% of all farmers and, despite it all, continues to recruit young farmers. Unsurprisingly, this structural shift in favour of firm-farming has been supported by Hyper liberals and deeply criticised by Leftist autarkists, and this because of the way it fits, or fails to fit, with their respective valuation of freedom. As will be seen below, however, what is much less clear is how Liberal *dirigistes* and Socio-democrat interventionists in the milk industry have reacted to, contributed to, or fought against, this trend.

Table 2: Volumes of milk produced in major producing states in 2017

Pays	*Volumes (millions de tonnes*
USA	97.7
India	83.5
Brasil	35.7
China	35.5
Germany	32.7
Russia	30.9
France	25.0
New Zealand	21.5
The EU's 28 states	165.5
World total	696.1

Source : CNIEL, *Economie laitière en chiffres 2019*, p. 169.

Table 3: The number of milk farms in France in 2017 and change since 2000

Region	*Number of farms 2017*	*Reduction 2000-2017*
Bretagne	11,296	<10,801
Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes	9,333	< 10,384
Pays de la Loire	7,874	< 7,727
Normandie	7,870	< 9,443
Hauts-de-France	4,890	< 5,245
Grand Est	4,766	<4,907
Bourgogne-Franche-Comté	4,488	< 3167
France	59,679	< 63,427

Source: Compiled from CNIEL, *Economie laitière en chiffres 2019*, pg. 20.

The second reason for analysing the politics of the milk industry is that it is central to general societal debates regarding climate change and environmental protection. All cows are large producers of carbon. Indeed, in Europe it is estimated that they account for around 20 % of all the continent's carbon emissions. To date, however, the public problem is seldom defined in terms of drastically reducing the number of European cows. Instead, the rarely politicized debate that has begun concerns the methods of farming used by dairy farmers in particular. Although some of Europe's milk is still produced from cows who essentially eat grass either directly in pastures or, during winter, indoors in the form of hay, most of it is now generated in farms whose cows rarely, if ever, leave the farm buildings – ones within which they are fed a diet based on maize and protein-rich foods, notably soja (Devienne et al., 2016; Derville, 2018). The consequence is a major loss of grass land that absorbs carbon and a rise in the use of fossil fuels to produce maize and to import vegetable proteins. Unsurprisingly, Leftist autarkists and Socio-democrat interventionists are the strongest critics of this shift in milk farming methods, whereas Hyper liberals applaud it while considering that carbon emissions from cows can be best tackled using new technology (and thus 'the freedom to innovate'). What is again much less clear is how Liberal *dirigistes* interpret this shift other than in a register of fatalism which buries the possibility of political choices beneath a plethora of technicized reasoning and denial.

Finally, the third, and this time widely politicized, controversy in the milk sector concerns the distribution of value between farmers, processors and distributors. If this question has a long history (Vatin, 1990 & 1996), over the last decade it has been revitalized by the programmed phasing out of milk quotas which terminated in 2015. Introduced by the EU in 1984, a system based on quotas of production per farm impacted heavily upon the way farmgate prices were negotiated between each farmer and their respective processor. Quotas introduced a strong

level of publicly-backed regulation into this price fixing process, one which in most cases stabilized prices and thus reduced uncertainty for all concerned. This in turn slowed the rate of the concentration of farms and the rise of herd sizes. Quotas were nevertheless always criticized by Hyper liberals as 'interference' in the market and as reducing the freedom of both farmers and processors. In line with the rest of the CAP (Fouilleux, 2003), as of 1992 EU policy began to side with the Hyper liberals and, in the case of milk, adopted their proposals wholesale in the early 2000s. Again, unsurprisingly Socio-democrat interventionists and Leftist autarkists in the industry firmly opposed this transformation of public policy but were easily ignored. What is more interesting to examine closely is how Liberal *dirigistes* have reacted to the end of quotas and its fall-out in terms of farmgate prices. Although conscious that the collecting and processing dimensions of their industry had undergone considerable concentration[2], thereby strengthening the negotiating position of large firms such as Lactalis, apart from during a short period in 2009, until 2015 farming organisations dominated by Liberal *dirigistes* did not define the price of milk as a public problem. However, this changed suddenly in 2015-6 when farmgate prices fell again (see table 4).

Table 4: The average price of milk paid to farmers in France (euros/1000 litres)

Année	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Prix	274	300	327	315	343	366	316	294	334	338

Source: CNIEL, *Economie laitière en chiffres 2019*, 86.

Indeed, mobilisations led by the FNSEA in particular fed into an agri-food industry-wide call for state intervention in the commercial relations between farmers, processors and distributors (revealingly, the EU scale of government was not called upon to act…). After many consultations and negotiations, in November 2018 the French government adopted new legislation ostensibly designed to rebalance the power of producers as regards processors in particular: la loi EGAlim: *Loi pour l'équilibre des relations commerciales dans le secteur agricole et une alimentation saine et durable*. Specifically, this law sought to give power to farmers by making them the initial proposers of prices on the basis of their production costs, by relegitimizing interprofessional organizations as a source of data to be used in price negotiations and by authorizing the state to ensure that the latter take place in a transparent and equitable manner. To date, however, there is little evidence that prices have risen as a consequence of this law[3]. More fundamentally, price negotiations in the milk sector remain clouded by the refusal of large processors to provide information about their own costs and profit margins, as well as by the fragmentation of the organisations of producers charged with representing the farmers' point of view in most instances (Lambaré, Dervillé & Yon, 2018).

So what does analysing this episode reveal about the politics of the milk sector and, more generally, of the agri-food industry at least in France? First, we know from their public declarations, and in particular during their auditions before a committee of the National Assembly[4], that Hyper liberals from this industry are reasonably satisfied with the Egalim law because of the emphasis it places upon the transparency of information, but also because it

[2] According to the French milk interprofessional organisation (la FNIL), today 650 organisations collect from farms, but 26 of them account for 77% of all the milk collected. Meanwhile, in terms of processing, 13 companies now process 78% of French milk, and the largest of these, Lactalis, alone processes 22% of it

[3] On this point see the report by the French Senate published in October 2019 on *La loi Egalim* (report 89 of the 2019-20 session).

[4] Rapport de l'Assemblé nationale – Commission d'enquête sur la situation et les pratiques de la grande distribution et de ses groupements dans leurs relations commerciales avec leurs fournisseurs, September 2019.

does not strongly reintroduce the state 'into the equation'. By contrast, Liberal *dirigistes* are much less satisfied, and this precisely because of the distance from price negotiations that the French state continues to want to maintain. Although holders of this political identity support the law's urgings that farmers organize themselves better prior to price negotiations[5], many of the leaders of the FNSEA, for example, have begun to criticize more openly the managers of large processing firms, even going so far now as to depict them as political adversaries. Indeed, the case of milk provides a particularly clear-cut example of how Liberal *dirigistes* have become deeply torn between defending the value of security on the one hand, while on the other becoming very uneasy with the consequence of defending the freedom of enterprise on the other. The most lucid among them are conscious that by favouring that freedom, their commercial strategies, together with the public policies they have contributed to, have all fed into the drop in numbers of their totemic 'family farms'. However, having recognized this social fact, they still remain incapable of abandoning their liberal values and, consequently, opening themselves up to the possibility of allying themselves with socio-democrat interventionists, in order to promote an alternative agri-food model wherein security, not freedom, would be the cardinal value.

Local Food Chains: Islands of Autonomy vs. the Liberal-*dirigiste* tide

Throughout the EU and much of the developed world, the negative externalities of intensive agriculture and the strong division of labour between farming, processing and distribution have fuelled a return of local food chains as alternatives to the mainstream agri-food model (Chiffoleau, 2017 & 2019; Le Velly, 2017; Le Velly et. al., 2016). Specifically, these chains take the form of farmers themselves being responsible for the processing and selling of at least some of their respective production. Although much publicized, this trend has thus far not impacted heavily upon food consumption, one which at least in France remains heavily dominated by the mainstream, Taylorist model[6]. But from the point of view of this conference what is more revealing is to reflect instead upon how the values and value hierarchies held by advocates of local food chains have been treated within their respective sectors and by the agri-food industry in general. Here the key point from political economy to be retained is that although promoters of local food unsurprisingly present themselves as being 'autonomous' from the rest of this industry, in actual fact they can never escape from its impacts entirely for at least two reasons (Jullien & Smith, 2004). Firstly, producers of local foods have to abide by nearly all the same rules and norms that apply to other agricultural models, and this as regards all four of the institutionalized relationships set out earlier in this paper: finance, employment, production and commercialization. Moreover, as actors from conventional agriculture tend strongly to dominate the production and the implementation of these rules and norms, it is their interpretation of these institutions that almost always trumps of that of local food producers. Secondly, even if local food production often targets niche consumers and, in so doing, frequently manages to attain higher prices through product differentiation and marketing innovation, its prices are never completely independent of those set by conventional farmers and long food chains. Consequently, the central question to be

[5] For example, in December 2017 the milk interprofession (FNIL) were already highlighting the progress they had made in terms of data generation and good practice recommendations to producer organizations (see their document *France terre de lait. Le plan de la filière laitière*).

[6] For example, only 4-7% of fruit and vegetables sold in French retail outlets is 'local'. http://agriculture.gouv.fr/circuits-courts

addressed is the extent to which short (local) and long food chains can peacefully 'co-exist' within agri-food sectors (Galliano, Lalau & Touzard, 2017). Using new data from the foie gras industry in South-West France, below two contrasting views on co-existence will first be presented, before I then proceed to unpack them in terms of the competing values and value hierarchies that our research has enabled us to reveal (Joltreau & Smith, 2020). Indeed, in the area of France studied, but also more widely, the *foie gras* sector is not only structured by the distinction between 'short' and 'long' productive models. It is also shaped by a deep cleavage between its actors who, on the one hand, consider that 'short' and 'long' models are complementary and, on the other, those who believe that there is a fundamental contradiction between the two. Here are some examples of these two antagonistic points of view.

As regards the believers in 'complementarity' and 'co-existence', a first argument highlights the diversity of *foie gras*'s consumers and, consequently, how the existence of both 'long' and 'short' models constitutes a means of satisfying this demand:

> 'We need one another. Honestly, the long chain is the one that is going to supply *foie gras* to the whole country, everywhere in France. On the other hand, the long chain needs a consumer-friendly image, which is what the short chain provides. We are the shop front, they need us for the image' (Short chain producer from the Landes, activist-member of the FNSEA, March 2018).

> 'For me, there's no competition between these markets, it's really two different things, two different products, a completely different approach, and there is a synergy between the two' (Official from the Landes Chamber of Agriculture, April 2018)

A second argument in favour of 'co-existence' concerns the importance of the sector as a whole, and of its long variant in particular, for the local economy:

> 'The problem is that if we consider that everything must be done through short chains, production would have to be divided by ten. […] That would raise problems for a number of production areas, for types of production that – much like we are – are specialized. […] for the economy of the *département*, if we remove the long chain, we are going to lose a lot of jobs, in terms of agriculture' (Long chain producer from the Landes, activist-member of the FNSEA, March 2018).

To counter these arguments, those who contest 'co-existence' firstly criticize strongly the underlying economic logic of 'long' productive systems. According to a 'short chain' producer from the Dordogne, for example, such systems make farmers into vulnerable sub-contractors of large co-operatives:

> '[When] we hear that someone from the long chain constructs buildings everywhere, doesn't pay their employees… because there are too many products on the market, here, I would say that the balance [between short and long supply chains] is not respected' (Short chain producer from the Dordogne, April 2019)

From there, an argument that durable 'co-existence' is simply impossible generally spills over into the following accusation: due to its overall effects upon product quality and pricing, 'the long' will always end up undermining 'the short'. A producer from the latter located in Dordogne put it in this way:

> 'There is one model that always destroys the other. Why? [When] a building for a thousand ducks is built, where does that take us… toward economic performance. That is very clear. Not environmental performance […] The difference [in price between products from the long and short chains] is made by this economy of scale, and a production model that drives prices down necessarily drags the short chain down as well' (Short chain producer from the Dordogne, April 2019)

Finally, those who contest 'co-existence' also strongly tend to believe that only 'the short' productive system is in line with the rural economies within which they operate and live:

> 'For me, family farming and the conservation of small- and medium-sized farms depend on that: the local level and short chains […]. Growing corn to sell it at world price here in Chalosse, without irrigation, don't bother even thinking about it. But growing corn to produce something for your livestock to eat and sell it yourself afterwards, that's different, that's it. So, if we want to save farms, this is the way to go' (Short chain producer from the Landes, activist-member of the *Mouvement de défense des exploitants familiaux*, MODEF – the family farmers' defense movement, March 2018)

This debate and these citations tell us a great deal not only about cleavages within the foie gras sector, but also within the agri-food industry as a whole. In this sector there are few Hyper liberals, partly because the production of ducks and duck products do not lend themselves to large scale farming. However, amongst the Liberal *dirigistes* who dominate the sector, the value of freedom clearly predominates over all others. Alongside the shared commitment to encouraging 'free enterprise' that this value has fostered, dominant long chain producers and processors have certainly sought to organize production in the sector (e.g. via a common specification for South West foie gras protected by an EU-backed geographical indication) and to channel its commercialisation through 'market devices' such as collective marketing campaigns. In this way they have sought to enhance the security of the sector and of its long-chain farms in particular. Nevertheless, in this case such interventionist policy instruments are above all used to consolidate and enhance the commercial and political resources of the producers and processors who are already the best resourced in the sector. For many, their commitment to the local economy is no doubt sincere, but their liberalism distances them considerably from holders of Social-democratic interventionist value hierarchies, actors for whom the objective of achieving long term security for their sector, and thence for their territory, is paramount. This is particularly evident in Les Landes, for example, where the MODEF farming union continues to provide a social movement within which leftist producers committed to saving smaller units of production and encouraging only 'quality' products (via recourse to the *Label rouge* quality standard) can mobilize to promote institutional change.

Indeed, organizations like the MODEF in Les Landes and the *Confédération paysanne* in the Dordogne express a clear preference for short chain and local food production, i.e. a mode of producing duck products that is often adopted by farmers holding Leftist autarkist value hierarchies. For these actors, the value of freedom predominates, but here it is freedom from domination that is vaunted, not the freedom of enterprise. Indeed, being free from

domination means that, in their view, public authority ought to intervene to prevent the development of economic and political hegemony in any sector. Moreover, Leftist autarkists are also firmly committed to working for the security of their mode of production to be protected and enhanced, and this alongside the security of the environment. Nevertheless, it is important not to simply assume that all short chain producers hold Leftist autarkist value hierarchies, and this because, in both les Landes and the Dordogne, the values of many other short chain producers are closer to the Liberal *dirigiste* pole. Indeed, it is largely for this reason that such producers vote for the FNSEA in farming elections and, more fundamentally, believe that peaceful co-existence between long and short chain production is not only possible, but economically and politically desirable.

Conclusion

Much more could and should be said about the value conflicts that structure the milk and duck product sectors in contemporary France. Much more research is needed to extend the type of analysis begun here to other sectors within the agri-food industry and, above all, to other EU member states. In so doing the EU scale of politics, and thus of value competition, could be treated much more directly and comprehensively than it has been here. Notwithstanding these limits, what this piece has begun to do is highlight how and why values are at the very centre of all the cleavages and controversies that the agri-food industry illustrates so clearly. Identifying these values, their hierarchization and their mobilization as key parts of political work to change or reproduce institutions simply must be placed at the forefront of the agenda of contemporary political economy, and indeed political science more generally. In so doing, this would also provide a means of studying value hierarchies at the scale of the EU in a way which includes values considered to be typically 'European' (Foret & Calligaro, 2018), but also others better captured by more generic analytical frameworks and research questions.

References

Ansaloni M., Smith A. (2018) 'The neo-dirigiste production of French capitalism since 1980 : The view from three major industries', *French Politics*, 16(2): 154-178.

Chiffoleau Y. (2017) 'Dynamique des identités collectives dans le changement d'échelle des circuits courts alimentaires', *Revue française de socio-économie*, 18(1), p. 123-141.

Chiffoleau Y. (2019) *Les circuits courts alimentaires. Entre marché et innovation sociale*, Toulouse, ERES.

CNIEL (2019) *Economie laitières en chiffres. Edition 2019,* CNIEL.

Derville M. (2018) *Comment peut se construire la compétitivité des exploitations laitières aujourd'hui ?,* research report ENSFEA-LEREPS, December.

Devienne S., Garambois N., Mishler P., Perrot C., Dieulet R., Falaise D. (2016) *L'exploitation d'élevage herbivore économes en intrants (ou autonomes)*, report to the Ministère de l'agriculture et de l'alimentation, Institut d'élevage-Réseau agriculture durable-AgroParisTech

Fligstein N. (2001) *The Architecture of Markets*, Princeton N.J.: Princeton University Press.

Foret F., Calligaro O., (eds), *"European values". Challenges and opportunities for EU governance*, London, Routledge, 2018.

Fouilleux E. (2003) *La politique agricole commune et ses réformes*, Paris, l'Harmattan.

Galliano D., Lallau B., Touzard J-M. (2017) 'Introduction: coexistences et transitions dans l'agriculture', *Revue française de socio-économie*, 18(1), p. 23-30.

Hay C. (2007) *Why We Hate Politics*, Cambridge: Polity.

Itçaina X., Roger A., Smith A. (2016) *Varietals of Capitalism: A Political Economy of the Wine Industry*, Ithaca N.Y. : Cornell University Press.

Joltreau T., Smith A. (2020) '*Short* versus *long* supply chains in agri-food sectors: peaceful coexistence or political domination? The case of *foie gras* in South-West France', forthcoming.

Jullien B., Smith A. (2004) *Organisation industrielle et politique des IGP. Les leçons de l'examen des cas des quatre poids lourd aquitains : Volaille fermières des landes, canard à foie gras du Sud-Ouest, Jambon de Bayonne et Pruneau d'Agen*, report for the Conseil régional d'Aquitaine.

Jullien B., Smith A., dir. (2008) *The Politics of Industries*, Basingstoke, Palgrave.

Laferté G. (2018) *L'embourgeoisement: une enquête chez les céréaliers*, Paris: Raisons d'Agir.

Lamberé P., Dervillé M., Yon G. (2018) 'Quelles conditions d'accès au marché des éleveurs après les quotas laitiers?', *Economie rurale*, n° 364, p. 55-71.

Legagneaux B., et Olivier-Salvagnac V. (2017) 'Les exploitations agricoles françaises aux allures de firmes. Lecture statistique d'une nouvelle diversité', in Purseigle F., Nguyen G. & Blanc P., eds., *Le nouveau capitalisme agricole : de la ferme à la firme*, Paris, Presses de Sciences Po, p. 275-302.

Le Velly R. (2017) *Sociologie des systèmes alimentaires alternatifs. Une promesse de difference*, Paris, Presses des mines.

Le Velly R., Dufeu, I., Le Grel, L. (2016) 'Les systèmes alimentaires alternatifs peuvent-ils se développer commercialement sans perdre leur âme ? Analyse de trois agencements marchands', *Economie rurale*, n° 356, p. 31-45.

Purseigle F., Nguyen G. & Blanc P., eds. (2017) *Le nouveau capitalisme agricole : de la ferme à la firme*, Paris, Presses de Sciences Po.

Purseigle F., Nguyen G., Mazenc L. (2017) 'Anatomie de firmes agricoles : les dimensions d'un basculement', dans Purseigle F., Nguyen G. & Blanc P., eds., *Le nouveau capitalisme agricole : de la ferme à la firme*, Paris, Presses de Sciences Po, p. 29-64.

Smith A. (2016) *The Politics of Economic Activity*, Oxford : Oxford University Press.

Smith A. (2019) 'Travail politique et changement institutionnel : une grille d'analyse', *Sociologie du Travail*, 61(1).

Vatin F. (1996) *Le lait et la raison marchande. Essais de sociologie économique*, Rennes, Presses universitaires de Rennes.

Vatin F. (1990) *L'industrie du lait, essai d'histoire économique*, Paris, l'Harmattan.

Verba S. (1987) *Elites and the Idea of Equality*, Cambridge M.A.: Harvard University Press.