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Self-concepts of Farmers in Brandenburg and Agricultural Discourses

An Explorative Study based on Interviews

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## Abbreviations

AoA	Agreement on Agriculture
CAP	EU Common Agricultural Policy
DBV	Deutscher Bauernverband
EU	European Union
FRG	Federal Republic of Germany
GATT	General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade
GDR	German Democratic Republic
GVE	Großvieheinheiten
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
IPBES	Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services
LBV B	Landesbauernverband Brandenburg
LPG	Landwirtschaftliche Produktionsgenossenschaften
MLUK	Ministerium für Landwirtschaft, Umwelt und Klimaschutz
UN CCD	United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification
UN DESA	United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs
WTO	World Trade Organisation
WW II	World War II

# 1. Introduction

Unlike most of the past of human history we are now living in “a full world” (Daly 2005) where comparably little environmental resources must provide livelihood to a relatively large amount of people (UN DESA 2019). Compared to an “empty” world this has fundamentally changed the preconditions on how we should manage these resources.

Scientific reports show how anthropogenic influences are threatening indispensable natural processes and vital ecosystem functions in their stability. Headlines like “Nature is declining globally at rates unprecedented in human history” (IPBES 2019) started to become regulars. As a result, the peaceful and save life in the 21st century is in danger (see IPCC, IPBES, UNCCD). The current global economic system can no longer pretend to operate “within a limitless ecosystem” (Daly 2005). New ways of thinking are required to tackle challenges like climate change, loss in biodiversity or desertification at their very root.

Besides other parts of economy, agriculture and land use are playing a pivotal role in addressing these problems. Forestry, agriculture and other systems of land use are contributing to almost one quarter of global emissions (IPCC 2014). This can be seen as a major problem – or as a part of the solution. If we really want to prevent a global climate catastrophe the current farming practices have to change, become more sustainable and be accompanied by a new environmental awareness.

Against this background this thesis is trying to better understand the conditions for the required agricultural change.

Agriculture has always transformed and is continuing to do so. The changes in agriculture have been accompanied by a changing way agriculture was perceived and practices by famers, politicians and other parts of society. These different perceptions and attitudes towards agriculture are expressed in agricultural discourses.

Agricultural discourses, understood as shared frames of sensemaking and a “coherent representation of meaning” (Frouws 1998), have been analysed and applied on the level of policy makers and political and public debates. These agricultural discourses or paradigms have shaped the policies and debates about farming since the second world war and have been thoroughly analysed and resulted in numerous scientific studies and publications.

What has not been the centre of attention yet, is the presence of these discourses on the agency level, among the actual practitioners – the farmers.

In order to target policies better and to predict consequences of political decisions at the grass-root level more accurately, it is crucial to understand how farmers perceive themselves and where they see their role in society. A greater knowledge of the relevant stakeholders, the recipients of new agricultural policies and a fuller understanding of how they make sense of the world, can allow an improved policy-fit.

The findings of this work can, by offering a better understanding of ‘real-life’ farmers, contribute to an improved agricultural policy design, which allows policies to actually reach the goals they were initially intended for. With the current reform of European Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) on its way, and the announced “New Green Deal” of the European Commission it is now high time to ignite an vital and decisive change in European agriculture in order to mitigate the effects of global problems mentioned above - a change essential for survival of creation.

This work is of societal relevance, since it contributes to a better understanding of policy recipients, allowing the development of adequate policy instruments and thus potentially enables the required agricultural change.

To learn about the way farmers understand themselves the concept of agricultural discourses on the farmers level is applied in this research. The main research question is posed:

To what extent does the self-concept of Brandenburger farmers reflect agricultural discourses?

For this purpose, ten farmers in Brandenburg were interviewed. Their characterisation and in-depth description of their history and their farms is of great importance to obtain a comprehensive understanding of their self-concept.

This allows to analyse their very personal discourses, the features of discourses they share, features they don't have in common and to detect developments the five different discourses have taken among farmers in Brandenburg today.

In order to answer this research question, the thesis is structured as follows:

Chapter 2 outlines scientific literature on the five main agricultural discourses in political science, introduces the sociological concept of structure and agency and identifies the research gap. Furthermore, the theoretical and conceptual framework of this thesis is being developed. In chapter 3 the methodological approach and the chosen technique of theme-centred interviews is described. Here the historical and environmental specifics of Brandenburg as research unit are elaborated. In chapter 4 the results of the analysed data are presented. Chapter 5 critically discusses the results in the light of theoretical understanding of the discourses. Furthermore, new observations and assumptions are being presented. Moreover, the limits of the research as well as recommendations for stakeholders are identified. Finally, this thesis concludes with a synthesis of the analysis in chapter 6.

## 2. Literature review

### 2.1 Original discourses

The goal of this thesis is to better understand agricultural change. Agriculture today is heavily influenced by agricultural policy and its ideational dimensions. These policies are effects of social constructions, which are articulated in discourses. Taking a discursive perspective allows to comprehend how 'farming and farmers' as subjects and beings are continuously produced and reproduced through changing agricultural policies and everyday practices. In the following section the analytical concept of social discourses on agriculture will be elaborated.

#### *General understanding of discourse*

Although the articulation of a matter or a topic shapes, *how* or even *if* it is dealt with, a discourse "is not just another word for communication" (Gregory 1994). Potter and Wetherell characterize discourse as "all forms of spoken interaction, formal and informal, and written texts of all kinds" (Potter and Wetherell 2010). According to other scholars, discourse goes further and refers to "all the ways in which we communicate with one another, to that vast network of signs, symbols, and practices through which we make our world(s) meaningful to ourselves and others" (Gregory 1994). It can be understood as a set of "ideas, concepts and categories through which meaning is given to social and physical phenomena" (Hajer and Versteeg 2005). This meaning-giving quality of discourses constitutes expectations and responsibilities that help disciplining individuals and the entire society (Feindt and Oels 2005). Feindt and Oels describe discourses as including concepts that are "intertwined with practices, institutional capacities and technologies" (Feindt and Oels 2005), which illustrates the wide sphere of influence of discourses.

Discourses have a very important coordinative function of legitimizing and stabilizing actions to the outside, as well as to coordinate actions within that group of 'discourse-followers'. Discourses are an ensemble of concepts "that structure the contributions of a group of participants" (Hajer 2002). A discourse provides a shared frame of 'sensemaking', which simplifies and allows the coordinated implementation of beliefs and ideational elements into practice.

Discourses shape debates, negotiations, planning activities and organise social practices. They can be understood as an organized set of social representations, which always depend on the organizers. The discourses I am interested in, represent a "coherent representation of meaning, based on values", they determine what problems are considered relevant and what solutions adequate. It is what helps actors create arguments for the relevance or the coherence of a certain topic (Frouws 1998) and it constitutes their identities.

#### *Plurality of discourse*

Discourses are dynamic and often co-produced through interaction and dependencies. It is crucial to understand that discourses are socially embedded and that the social world is processed and constructed through specific actors in specific spatial and temporal circumstances (Jones 1995). Between different discourses a competitive struggle for hegemony can be observed, which constitutes a crucial element of contextuality (Heinelt 2018; Burton and Wilson 2006; Frouws 1998). This struggle is comparable to the struggle of competing identities that comprise the complex self-structure of individuals, in this case farmers (see chapter 2.3 Self-concept). Discourses are contextual. They are produced, altered and reproduced depending on time and space. The same subject, e.g. agriculture debate, can be expressed through different discourses by different actors.

But not just an issue or topic can employ different discourses - even individuals can exert multiple discourses, depending on contextuality, as this thesis will illustrate.

#### *Farmers' discourse*

In order to understand agricultural change thoroughly, research needs to include the perspectives and viewpoints of the ones exercising agriculture, literally, on the grass-root level: the "owners and managers of agricultural land" (Heinelt 2018).

The concept of a discourse will be used to identify how farmers feel, think and perceive themselves. Discourses used by farmers constitute their expectations and what they consider as their responsibilities.

#### *Constructive power of discourses and self-concept*

Discourses do not simply describe; they create and construct objects (Pratt 1996) - in this case they can construct a farmer or a farmer's reality. For Foucault, e.g. a discourse physically shapes reality and is constitutive of 'reality' (Feindt and Oels 2005). Using the concept of discourse allows to get insights into the "process of subject and object formation" (Feindt and Oels 2005). Discourses construct reality or even realities. Instead of having direct contact to reality - all we have is contact to discourses, which constitutes a constraint to this work - as the findings of this thesis are only my discourse on the farmers discourse (see chapter 5.2 Limitations). We need to understand that we will not be able to find the 'true' farmer's reality, but only certain discourses about farmer's reality (Pratt 1996). Someone's reality is closely linked to their self-view and identity. The personal identity and self-concept are, according to Giddens, being developed through affirmation and reaffirmation in social discourses (Giddens 1991).

After this overview of discourses on an individual level, I will now explain the institutionalisation of policy discourses into so-called policy paradigms.

#### *A political discourse or a policy paradigm*

According to political science different discourses, each articulating a set of coherent policy ideas, struggle for hegemony. Whenever one discourse becomes dominant, policy makers inevitably start to work within “a framework of ideas and standards that specifies not only the goals of policy and the kind of instrument that can be used to attain them, but also the very nature of the problem they are meant to be addressing” (Hall 1933). Hall calls this interpretive framework, through which policy makers communicate their work, a “policy paradigm”. A paradigm entails the goals of policies, theories about the way relevant economic, social and sometimes ecological systems work and what instruments and practices are to be preferred (Feindt et al. 2008).

Besides presenting the dominant ideational framework which establishes relevant problems and adequate solutions (Heinelt 2018), a policy paradigm is an institutionalised or enshrined discourse in legislation or legal documents. This manifestation of institutionalised discourses can then be detected in legal documents, norms and statements.

In order to find out what discourses farmers use and how their reality is constructed “discourse” and “paradigm” is used synonymously.

For a better understanding of the theoretical framework of this thesis, it is important to demarcate the discourses employed by individual farmers today and those articulated by policy makers, interest groups and other units of society that are constructing the “structure” (see chapter 2.2.1 Structure).

#### *Agricultural discourses*

In order to better grasp the agricultural situation today, its discourses and the potential for agricultural change, a basic understanding of agricultural policy in Germany and especially in the EU is necessary.

##### *Excuse I: Current agricultural policy structure*

Today's agriculture policy is largely Europeanised. In the period after World War II (WWII) all six founding members of the EU had problems in their agricultural realm: income-disparity with other industries, large inequalities within the sector and a speedy reduction of agricultural work force (Heinelt 2018). Until then all countries had very different agricultural structures and very different policies. At this point Europeanization seemed promising. Consequently, the Treaty of Rome (European Union 1957) dedicates a special title II to agriculture (articles 38-47). Here it is defined that agricultural products are part of the common European market and that a “common agricultural policy” (CAP) among members should be established.

This treaty still lays the foundation of the CAP we have today. Most agricultural policies and most financial support for the farming sector in each European Member state is decided on the European level. This will be important for the following, since the characters of discourses can be illustrated best using examples of CAP policies, which are materialised features of discourses.

The CAP, as it is in place today, follows a simple two-pillar structure: Pillar one contains the direct income support for farmers based on area farmed, which is 100% financed by the EU. Pillar two, in charge of the integrated rural development and agro-environmental measures, requires 50% co-funding from member states. Pillar one has about three times the financial volume of pillar two. Currently almost 40% of EU budget are dedicated to CAP, which is receiving more than any other policy area.



There are several distinguishable discourses in agriculture and rurality. I will focus on the five most prominent agricultural discourses in scientific literature:

The productivist discourse, the market-liberal discourse, the multifunctional discourse, the global discourse and the hybrid discourse. Parallel to the five discourses run the features of agricultural exceptionalism and agricultural post-exceptionalism.

The emergence of the different discourses can be more or less adequately ordered chronologically – whereas the course of development is still up for contestation. Beginning in the 1950s the productivist or state assisted discourse, rooted in the after-war period, is the first to develop. This was presumably followed by the market-liberal discourse (Coleman et al. 1996). The multifunctional discourse took shape in response to the upcoming neo-liberal challenges in the 1980s. Only within the last decade or two the global discourse became distinguishable. The hybrid discourse has no specific era or epoch.

All discourses differ in terms of what images of agriculture they share and what cognitive assumptions are underlying these images, the role of the state, ideas on what goals and instruments should be used in agricultural policies, the role of the farmer and each discourse is delivering different justifications to defend such a large amount of public spending.

All five discourses “have a material and institutional basis. They also have a history” (Feindt and Oels 2005). Not all discourses were institutionalised to the same degree. I will provide examples of documents typical for each discourse. The introduced documents or policies played an important role in shaping agriculture in Europe for the last 70 years.

Many scholars, who are attentive towards ideational elements of politics, observed a change in agricultural discourses and policy paradigms in the last decades. The agricultural policy discourses will be elaborated in detail and their change or transformation will be subject to the following chapter.

So the crux of the matter for this work is that discourses construct farmers realities and constitute farmer’s self-concept. Rural or agricultural discourses are vital in the process and formation of structure through which the access to or the use of rural and natural resources are constructed. Discourses materialise in touchable artefacts like documents, but also in patterns of practise or statements. The constructive power of discourse is composed of symbols, tokens and statements which make the world meaningful to the owner of that specific discourse (Frouws 1998). These signs, symbols and especially statements are investigated in this work.

Adjacent thereto a description of (post-)exceptionalism and the discourses that have shaped agricultural politics since WW II.

### 2.1.1 Agricultural exceptionalism and post-exceptionalism

Whenever engaging with actors involved in agriculture you can detect the attitude of “agricultural exceptionalism” (Grant 1995). Exceptional views base on the idea that one particular sector has a unique nature which “renders it unsuitable and/or inappropriate to be governed by market forces and highlights how the sector contributes to broader societal values” (Daugbjerg and Feindt 2017).

Indeed, in the agricultural sector you see farmers, representatives of farmers’ interest groups, politicians dealing with agriculture or even people remotely involved in farming, showing their belief that agriculture is special and therefore merits extra attention. The reasons often listed for this perceived uniqueness are:

- Natural risks in farming (weather instabilities; climate change; invasive species; unpredictable animal and plant diseases) which result in fluctuating market prices that are frail to price oscillations;
- Economic disadvantages of the agricultural sector (long investment and production cycles; inherent instability of agricultural markets; suboptimal price mechanisms for an effective and productive agricultural sector);
- The ‘farm income problem’, where it is argued that in growing economies the farm incomes are chronically low, due to low income elasticity of food demand i.e. even if incomes rise, the share of income spent on food won’t rise accordingly, which will urge farmers to expand production, but if not enough farmers are willing to exit, this results in depressed agricultural incomes (Daugbjerg and Swinbank 2009);
- Farming being indispensable for the national interest (maintaining independence of national supply with food, i.e. food security; contributing to the welfare state through delivering employment in rural areas, income and safe and affordable food; contributing to healthy natural resources and ecosystems (Daugbjerg and Feindt 2017));

This uniqueness, embedded in the exceptional ideational framework, then eventually “legitimizes a sector’s special treatment through compartmentalized, exclusive and producer-centered policies and politics” (Daugbjerg and Feindt 2017), which we find in European and German agricultural policies. This perceived exceptional role is further encouraged by the specific actor constellation you find in agriculture: a relatively small group of producers and landowners is represented by a well-resourced and influential sectoral interest group that propagates and cognitively justifies this “specialness” quite effectively. Politicians and jurisdiction then deliver the political legitimization through policies like export subsidies, market orders or direct payments that underline the exceptionality of agriculture.

This perception was shared by the founding fathers of the European Union. The ministers of foreign and economic affairs who decided on the Treaty of Rome in 1957 shared the view of agriculture providing vital goods and at the same time it suffering from natural and structural disadvantages. The main concern of agricultural policies at that time was to eliminate the disparity between agricultural incomes and those from other sectors. In brief: “the early Common Agricultural Policy fully embraced agricultural exceptionalism” (Daugbjerg and Feindt 2017).

#### *From exceptionalism to post-exceptionalism*

In the last decades agricultural exceptionalism was increasingly challenged. Developments like the rise of economic liberalisation in the 1980s, or the growing concerns about sustainability, where environmentalists encouraged more sustainable forms of agriculture (Daugbjerg and Feindt 2017), led to a turn from agricultural exceptionalism towards agricultural post-exceptionalism. This coincided with *new consumerism*, where the method and place of production of food becomes increasingly important and is seen as a value itself. Regionality, environmental friendly production, animal welfare and social sustainability gained significance (Darby and Karni 1973) and as a consequence the food market became more differentiated (Daugbjerg and Feindt 2017). The latest challenge to agricultural exceptional ideas origins in the 2007/2008 food price spike. The debate of food security, hitherto resting on a productivist argument, was then contested by the idea of long-term food security. This ascent of long-term food security debate led to a discussion about “conservation of soil, ecosystem services and biodiversity along with dietary change rather than increasing yield” (Daugbjerg and Feindt 2017). These developments led to a partial turn in public debate of how agriculture is seen. For some, agriculture still represents a special sector which merits special attention, for others it is increasingly

seen just like any other sector.

The notion of exceptionalism and post-exceptionalism runs parallel to the five discourses represented in the next sections. The “specialness” or “not-so-special-after-all” can be combined with all other discourses, varying in intensity. Traditionally the productivist discourse is the one most closely linked to agricultural exceptionalism. The move towards a market-liberal discourse was accompanied by increasing post-exceptional views. The multifunctional discourse on the other hand also has exceptional tendencies, but for slightly different reasons than the traditional productivist discourse. It emphasises the literal multifunctional role of agriculture with special focus on the indispensability of providing public goods, like environmental services and a viable rural area.

The global discourse is rather in line with the post-exceptional notion, since agriculture here is just one part in a multi-link global value chain driven by consumer needs. The hybrid discourse includes both exceptional and post-exceptional ideas.

The notion of productivism and post-productivism regimes in agriculture is also to be mentioned at this point. These are two dualistic terms which *inter alia* characterize the role of agriculture in society. Whereas productivism claims a central and hegemonic position of agriculture in rural society (Clove and Goodwin 1992) the post-productivist regime is increasingly questioning this rational approach to ideological, environmental and economic problems (Whitby and Lowe 1994). Further understanding of these concepts will not be required since the followingly described discourse is dealing with more or less the same subject but in greater differentiation.

In the following, a closer look at each of the five agricultural discourses will be taken. Each of the discourses is, to varying degrees, institutionalised. This means codified or manifested in written down documents, legal norms or policies. For each discourse a short historical background, typical keywords used in the discourse and some examples of their manifestation will be given.

### 2.1.2 Productivist discourse

This discourse stems from the time after WWII, where the main concerns were to feed the population and to create employment. Representatives of this discourse feel that agriculture contributes to an important national goal: providing a sufficient supply of food and therefore ensuring food security (Erjavec and Erjavec 2015), whilst being under constant threat caused by market failure.

This era highlights the importance of maximum production and the primary role of countryside as a place for production of food and fibre rather than a place of consumption and environmental services (Burton and Wilson 2006). In other words: other functions of land use than production of food and fibre are being backgrounded by productivity, growth and yield increase.

Supporters of the productivist discourse have a strong focus on producers and production while having an image of farming as being an expansive, efficient, modern and technologically advanced industry (Marsden et al. 1993). The producer-oriented policies and the strong focus on protecting agricultural producers had their heydays in the 1960s till late 1980s.

Clunies-Ross et. al see this discourse describing a triple responsibility: the farmers community has to deliver a stable and sufficient supply of food and other raw materials, the individual farmer has to optimise her methods of production in order to increase her yields and the policy makers need to provide a framework that enables high-yielding farming as well as meeting social demands (Clunies-Ross et al. 1994). Here the driver of

output maximisation goes hand in hand with profit maximisation for the farmer. Wilson characterized the productivist regime as “a central hegemonic position of agriculture in rural society” (Wilson 2001). This shows the tight link to above-mentioned agricultural exceptionalism. It also illustrates how difficult it is to draw a line between these different concepts of agricultural regimes and how interwoven they are.

Another indicator for agricultural exceptionalism in this discourse is the high degree of self-regulation (Daugbjerg and Feindt 2017). This shows in policies, where farm commodity associations, like dairy boards, were in charge to administer the governmental regulations and manage the subsidy schemes themselves (Grant 1987).

One form of the productivist discourse is the “state-assisted agriculture” policy paradigm. It promotes that the state needs to actively support the agricultural sector to produce the maximum amounts possible. This assessment, according to Coleman et al., is based on two principles: “First, the agriculture sector contributes to national policy goals and therefore merits special attention; and, second, the price mechanism is a sub-optimal mean of achieving an efficient and productive agricultural sector” (Coleman et al. 1996). I.e.: Supporters of the state-assisted paradigm believe that agriculture deserves state assistance, due to its important role in society. Demanded state support and state subsidies for the agricultural sector are justified by the combination of imperfect agricultural markets, unmanageable natural risks, the concern for food security and the belief, that income in the agricultural sector is much lower than in any other comparable sector. Further prevails the belief that agriculture is not competitive, since it can’t compete with other sectors over scarce resources, nor can the sector compete with other countries over market outlets (Feindt et al. 2008).

During this era farming has intensified and governmental intervention through protectionist and interventionist policies in agricultural production is perceived as normal (Marsden et al. 1993; Wilson 2001). Typical keywords used in the productivist discourse are food production and food security, natural disadvantages as well as securing and creating jobs.

#### *The role of the farmer – the role of the state*

In the productivist discourse you always find production as the main duty of the farmer’s community. Although right after WWII the focus was lying on production of food to feed the undernourished population, the farmers were also seen as growers of other raw materials.

A good farmer produces maximum amounts and constantly tries to optimize her method of production, amongst other means, through the use of increased mechanisation and a growing use of biochemical inputs (Wilson 2001). The state must support the sector and intervene in order to stabilize markets, manage the supply through e.g. import controls, buying up of surpluses or export subsidies.

#### *Manifestations of the productivist discourse in policies*

In the after war period the agricultural policy community was already small but powerful and vested “with great internal strength” (Wilson 2001). Both the productivist and the state assisted paradigms can be spotted in the first decades of the CAP and they still represent the core of the European agricultural policy today (Heinelt 2018).

In article 39 of the founding documents of the European Union, the Treaty of Rome, the five main objectives of the CAP were stipulated as: a) increase in agricultural productivity, b) increase earnings of people involved in agriculture, c) stabilise markets, d) assure availability of supplies and that e) the supplies reach consumers at a reasonable price. All these goals are text book examples of state-assisted agricultural exceptionalism

(Heinelt 2018). These different objectives are results of historical developments and somehow contradicting each other (Feindt et al. 2008): on the one hand the farmers' incomes need to be increased and on the other hand the agricultural products need to stay affordable. This can only add up when either the productivity is being increased or subsidies are being paid. In this case both measures were taken.

This understanding of farmers and agricultural production in Europe led to the establishment of guaranteed minimum prices for agricultural products. This is a critical juncture where the path of 'farmers perceiving state support as their natural right' was entered. As dominant proponents of this discourse conservative and traditional farm interest groups are to be named. For Germany, the 'German farmers' association (DBV) founded in 1948, is a prime example.

### 2.1.3 Market-liberal discourse

In the 1980s the productivist agricultural policies of the EU, in combination with technological and chemical progress in agriculture led to overproduction, increased government spending, negative environmental impacts and, in the early 1990s, to a tensed international trade situation.

These growing pressures on the agricultural system and the spilling-over of new market ideas of Thatcher in the UK and Reagan in the US led to an ascent of more (neo-) liberal ideas (Coleman 1998). The market-liberal discourse has been present before but increasingly challenged the productivist and state assistance beliefs in the 1990s.

The market-liberal notion views agriculture as an economic sector like any other and believes that, indeed, it can compete and be compared to other industries – a typical indication for post-exceptionalism. Supporters of this belief see no need for any special treatment of the agricultural realm and competitiveness is a vital asset in this economic sector too. In this discourse "market allocation takes precedence over state intervention, and efficiency over equity" (Coleman et al. 1996). Competitive markets where demand and supply determine the prices should be the source of producer's income and "only those producers who can earn an income from the sale of commodities in these free markets should remain active in agriculture" (Coleman et al. 1996). In general, the market-liberal idea demands, agriculture should be more exposed to market signals (Feindt et al. 2008).

The upcoming 'new consumerism' with its emphasis on value and diversity of food, which is mainly taken up by the multifunctional discourse (see below), is used to now label food as "quality food" and to create new market outlets. Insurance is not seen as the state's responsibility anymore. Individual farmers should limit their risks of income losses due to natural conditions self-reliantly and be responsible mainly through private insurances (Coleman et al. 2004).

*Typical keywords* used in the market-liberal discourse are competitiveness, free markets, efficiency, and comparability.

#### *The role of the farmer – the role of the state*

A good farmer is a bold entrepreneur and business owner. She is not afraid to compete with other sectors and is constantly looking to increase efficiency of her business. State support is not as vital as it was seen before and new consumer interests are new market possibilities waiting to be captured. In this discourse the role of the state should be reduced to the minimum. It should liberalise markets and thus foster competition. Policy recommendations focus on the effective and efficient use of taxpayer's money (Heinelt 2018). Governmental supply controls should be loosened in order to stop hampering the competitiveness of the agricultural sector.

#### *Manifestations of the market-liberal discourse in policies*

The European agricultural policies preceding the market-liberal discourse were in line with productivist and state-assisted agriculture ideas, i.e. guaranteed minimum prices for agricultural products. This led to problems like high governmental expenditure, overproduction and growing resentment from international trade partners. In 1990 the international trade negotiations about the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) collapsed over fierce disagreements on agricultural trade. Consequently, in 1992 the MacSharry reform of the European agricultural policy partially replaced the managed markets with direct payments, which was in spirit of market-liberalism and eventually appeased the trading partners. In the shift from price support to producer support and a decline in state intervention in agricultural markets, Coleman sees an indicator for a transformation from “protected development to market-liberalism” (Coleman 1998). Liberal policies that followed were e.g. increased decoupling of support from production and the slow fading out of direct payments. Typical proponents of market-liberal discourse are high-level industry groups, export-oriented parts of the agricultural sector and well-resourced farmers looking for new market outlets.

#### **2.1.4 Multifunctional discourse**

Instead of now fully taking over the market-liberal ideas in agriculture a new discourse unfolded from the 1980s onwards, the multifunctional discourse. In this era the sole emphasis of food provision by the countryside was enriched, and multiple functions of agriculture and the countryside are being recognized and increasingly valued.

A growing consensus emerged among developed economies on the significance of non-commodity outputs or non-marketable goods of agriculture, such as its environmental and spatial impacts (Erjavec and Erjavec 2015). Besides food and fibre agriculture produces landscape beauty for e.g. recreational purposes, provides for clean water, sustains farmland biodiversity and farmers are contributing to the viability and stability of rural areas through employment and maintaining settlements even in remote and less-favourable areas. The farmers, who are the supplier of these valuable public goods, deserve to be rewarded. The mental landscape of agriculture and rural areas is experiencing a move away from production to “the consumption of countryside” (Marsden et al. 1993). Supporters of this discourse are promoting programs, which reward e.g. services that are trying to curb the dominance of ‘monofunctional’ agriculture (Moyer and Josling op. 2004). This development runs parallel to the above mentioned ‘new consumerism’, where food represents certain values to the purchaser as a result of the method or place of production (Darby and Karni 1973). The ascribed attributes are associated with “environmentally friendly production, animal welfare, social sustainability, geographical origin and perceived healthiness” (Daugbjerg and Feindt 2017), which all play a leading role in the multifunctional discourse.

The concept of ‘sustainability’ experiences a great boost and is augmented with the social aspect such as “social and territorial balance” (Erjavec and Erjavec 2015). The multifunctional discourse shares an agricultural exceptionalist view to that extent, that it considers agriculture as the one single sector combining a myriad of different and crucial functions for society. It provides employment and the social backbone of highly valued rural areas and provides indispensable public goods (Daugbjerg and Feindt 2017). Keywords used in the multifunctional discourse are e.g. public goods; rural area and sustainability.

#### *The role of the farmer – the role of the state*

A good farmer runs a diversified farm that doesn’t simply focus on production of food and fibre. Those farmers don’t simply perceive themselves as one-dimensional producers of food (productivists) or entrepreneurs



(market-liberalists) but also as stewards of the countryside with great responsibility for a sustainable handling of natural resources. They may even be offering tourist accommodation on their farm, run a bio energy plant, as well as a small farmers' market for direct marketing of farm products.

In terms of farming techniques there is a shift towards more sustainable agricultural practices (Wilson 2001). Due to the underlying understanding of agriculture producing marketable goods as well as public goods, the provision of public goods serves as the justification for public support. This belief has rallied around the catchy slogan: Public money for public goods. The state has to support farmers due to their exceptional (agricultural exceptionalism) role as providers of crucial social and ecologically important services. So, the general attitude that farmers need to receive support like in the productivist discourse remains - but for a different reason.

#### *Manifestations of the multifunctional discourse in policies*

In the 1990s this discourse became institutionalized through policies recognizing agriculture as a diverse sector. The Declaration of Cork on Rural Development of the EU (1996) can be seen as one of the first milestones of the paradigm's institutionalisation (Heinelt 2018). The introduction of cross compliance in 1999, which entailed the member states possibility to link governmental agricultural payments to requirements of animal, environment, nature and consumer protection (Feindt et al. 2008), also indicated a change in the political perception of agriculture. As mentioned above, the current CAP, with budget and policies, is split into two pillars. The first is the producer support based on area farmed; the second pillar is dedicated to rural development, which clearly indicates multifunctional objectives. Since 2015 the attainment of direct payment from pillar one is linked to fulfilling certain environmental measures, called 'greening'. Here the environmental aspect of the multifunctional discourse is institutionalised.

Whereas the policy community was exclusive and small in the productivist era, in this discourse the agricultural policy community is putatively widened, and formerly marginal actors are included in the policy process (Cox et al. 1988).

Supporter of the multifunctional discourse are environmental NGOs, consumer groups, ecological farm groups as well as small farmers and those living in remote areas (Coleman et al. 2004).

### 2.1.5 Global production discourse

This discourse is probably the most recent one and still in the process of formation (Coleman et al. 2004). In the mid-1980s, as mentioned above, the increasing overproduction and the expensive disposal of surpluses of European agricultural products on markets outside the EU became increasingly problematic. While agriculture still had its exceptional regulations, other sectors of economic systems became part of the growing open world economy and a less regulated domestic market. This general economic shift toward neo-liberalism, which partly provoked the ascent of the multifunctional discourse as a counter move, led ministers to put increasingly pressure on the agricultural sector and raise questions about government expenditure on farm programmes. So far this sounds like the market-liberal discourse. In the last decades however, new information and communication technologies as well as advanced transportation have allowed the growth of global flows of commodities, people, capital as well as the globalisation of ideas. Just like the idea of agriculture and the role of farming has spread and is not confined to one region of the world (Coleman et al. 2004).

In the global discourse, or "globalised production paradigm" (Moyer and Josling op. 2004) agriculture is now, due to the international flow of ideas and the steep increase of international trade, no longer only understood as the national food system, but rather as a part of a more or less loosely integrated global food system of an

increasingly interdependent world. Through the growing vertical integration of all sectors (Feindt et al. 2008), agriculture turns into one link in the internationalised and interwoven network of production. This new conception of agriculture focuses less on its “peculiar characteristics as a sector and more on its integral place in the food system” (Coleman et al. 2004).

Farmers are seen as “supplying land and animal management services to an integrated vertical process from input supply and technology provision through marketing of the product” (Coleman et al. 2004). Agriculture is not seen as the beginning/origin of everything anymore but as one stage of many in a global supply chain. This chain is stretching from “finance providers and chemical and biological input suppliers to retail stores and niche marketing outlets such as farmers’ markets” (Coleman et al. 2004).

Under the global paradigm the supply chain is not a simple relation between one exporting country selling to another importing country but much rather a link of different firms in different countries which have a “variety of different contractual relationships inherent in them” (Coleman et al. 2004). The national perspective with its “national” markets is ceasing relevance unless it coincides with other market perspectives – “countries don’t trade with each other – firms do”. In some cases within this global trade system the “international” path of a product is in fact the transfer of a product across borders within the same firm. The desire for more liberalisation of the global market, that should be more differentiated and increasingly driven by demand and supply, caused some scholars to call this discourse the advanced neo-liberal discourse. Consumers fear of biotechnology leads to an increased focus on traceability and identity preservation. Due to the increased internationalisation and the at times confusing flows of goods, trust plays an increasingly important role. International standards and labels should provide the demanded traceability and transparency. Those required standards and legal security needs to be internationally harmonized. Through developments like the processes of industrialisation, increasing importance of economics of scale, growing interrelations between different markets and rising levels of international trade, agriculture became more similar to that of the manufacturing goods. These developments show traits of agricultural post-exceptionalism, as agriculture is increasingly viewed as any other sector.

*Typical keywords* used in this discourse are internationalisation, differentiation and transnational trade.

#### *The role of the farmer – the role of the state*

Another distinct feature of this paradigm sees the retail consumer as the driver of the system - not the farmer. Farmers should be serving the differentiated, consumer driven market rather than producing vast amounts of low-quality food for government stocks, which indicates a clear demarcation to the productivist paradigm. The farmer’s income depends on bargaining power and how well she is meeting desired quality standards in this consumer driven concept of global agriculture. Knowing consumer taste and buying habits become vital assets in the decision process about future production. The location of production and attributes considered to be associated with that location constitute vital selling points of agricultural products (Coleman et al. 2004). The farm is seen as an enterprise active in global economy that needs to react to market developments and the farmer is an entrepreneur.

New vital aspects of the production process besides location and reliability of supplies are meeting health and safety standards. A typical farmer in the globalised production paradigm is an entrepreneur who searches to find products that will satisfy consumer’s needs and sees her farm as an enterprise active in global economy. In this discourse a clear idea on what the state should provide prevails. Other than that, governments intervention is creating rather instability and uncertainty (Coleman et al. 2004).

The state and politics should establish standards essential for consumers (like health and safety) and



environmental protection, guaranteeing transparency and consumer safety. These standards should foster contracts and all relations along the chain to be “fair and acceptable”.

Also new marketing labels and control systems, like organic food-labels and regional designation of origin labels (Feindt et al. 2008), should be partially set up by the state. The state should foster differentiated quality products instead of quantity (Feindt et al. 2008). The governments should use “harmonization of regulations and standards and the establishment of effective global rules” to ensure a frictionless transmission of information and generally lower transaction costs. Here to mention are tariffs and export subsidies, which are not desired because they get in the way of smooth transfer and business transaction among willing partners or even branches or even of the same company.

Although elapsed market distortions, like price policies and other constraining regulations have been abandoned, the protection of intellectual property and the maintenance of competitive conditions are still required.

#### *Manifestations of the global discourse in policies*

Simultaneously to increased globalisation governments, sought to support farmers rather than products and negotiations on new multilateral trade rules, also in agriculture, occurred. In the course of the establishment of the World Trade Organisation (WTO), the Agreement on Agriculture (AoA), entering force in 1995, was established. For the first time agricultural commodities were included in such a multilateral trade agreement, currently counting 164 members. As another institutionalisation of this paradigm one can consider international standards, which often have been set up by private players.

Global GAP for example is a global certification scheme for good agricultural practice, created in the late 1990s. Several European supermarket chains and their major suppliers set up this standard in order to ensure good Agricultural Practices between multiple retailers and their suppliers in an increasingly globalized production chain. Here the sector’s self-regulation becomes obvious which is a trait of agricultural exceptionalism. But compared to the exceptional self-regulation in the productivist paradigm here the authoritative power moved from producers to the “retailer end of increasingly transnational value chains” (Daugbjerg and Feindt 2017). Supporters and advocates of this discourse see things in a de-territorialized way” in terms of contractual relationships designed in the end to meet the demands of consumers. Those are globally acting firms, farmers with often large farms and an entrepreneurial spirit.

#### **2.1.6 Hybrid discourse**

The hybrid discourse, sometimes referred to as a paradigm mix, is characterized by harbouring some or even all co-existing discourses at once. It has not suddenly emerged due to historical reasons; these mixed forms have always been in use. In the last decade though, even high-level institutions like the EU commission started adopting it. One prime example for the use of a hybrid discourse is therefore the Communication of the European Commission. Karmen and Emil Erjavec (Erjavec and Erjavec 2015) identified how the Commission uses three different discourses (productivist, multifunctional, market-liberal) in just one document (European Commission 2010). Not just different discourses were employed, but also a strategic use of discourses at certain points can be found: sometimes a certain discourse is used quite bluntly and in other parts very subtle only in a sub clause. E.g.: the productivist discourse is quite prominent in the first part of the document, with an emphasis on guaranteeing food security. This typical productivist concern about food security is then justified by market instabilities, which on the other hand are caused by climate change. Using the environmental element, climate change, although only used as a justification, is hugely popular in the media and among the public (Erjavec). Observing environmental concerns is typical for the multifunctional

discourse. Here the commission cleverly combined two discourses. Another example out of the same document is the fusion between the multifunctional and productivist discourse with neo-liberal elements. In this paper the commission determines another strategic aim of the CAP as: “to support farming communities that provide the European citizen with quality, value and diversity food produced sustainably”. Here the emphasis still lies on food production (productivist), but a focus on sustainability and diversity (multifunctional) combined with the new label of “quality food” which creates new markets, just in the spirit of market-liberalism, or even globalised production paradigm. Summing up: in this document, elements of all three discourses were “merged in almost every paragraph” (Heinelt 2018). This combined use of discourses allows the commission to foreground selective discourses according to the audience.

Employing the hybrid discourse is a clever move, since concerns and elements from all other discourses can be addressed, which is crucial for any institution that needs to secure qualified majorities in order to operate. Not just the commission is profiting from the multiple use of discourses - the member states are also benefitting. Using not just one, but all discourses allows each stakeholder to “cherry pick” and interpret their favourite part and pass this on to their constituency, which they need to please. Basically the same European policy gets sold differently and with a different focus by different actors according to whom they have to convince – “serving the same wine in different bottles” (Alons and Zwaan 2016).

### 2.1.7. Hegemony of discourses

After having described the public discourses on agriculture of the last decades, it is to note that in the late 1990s three discourses (productivist/state-assisted, multifunctional and market-liberal) were competing for predominance. Recently the global discourse became distinguishable. The Hybrid represents a mixture of some or sometimes even all of the other discourses. Now the question arises: which one is the current dominant one? Most scholars agree that there has been a development of discourses and paradigms shifting from one to the other, some even replacing the old dominant one (Coleman et al. 1996; Heinelt 2018; Feindt et al. 2008). For some there was even a linear transition or transformation from the productivist to the market-liberal (Marsden et al. 1993; Cloke and Goodwin 1992) and even further to the multifunctional discourse (Marsden 2003; Wilson 2001; Potter and Burney 2002). On the European level, many scholars argue that in decisive policy areas the hegemony of agricultural exceptionalism and its connected productivist views on agriculture are still strong.

The policy core is still truly productivist and exceptional with its main objective of farm income support (Daugbjerg and Swinbank 2016). The later reforms like MacSharry (market-liberal) or the creation of the second pillar/greening (multifunctional) or international standards like Global G.A.P. (global) only put policy layers on top of the productivist policy core. Or as some scholar puts it: the “productivist discourse in disguise”.

Therefore, I argue that the current dominant social discourse on agriculture is a hybrid one with an increasingly uttered importance of environmental elements, but still retaining a productivist core. Due to the hybrid discourse the ideational base for a future agriculture these days is manifold! In the description of the discourses above, I used international developments and mostly European documents and sources to illustrate the discourses and paradigms. Due to the Europeanisation of agriculture and trickle-down effects, I presume these discourses also being present in the “lower levels” of agricultural administration, interest representation and generally among relevant agricultural stakeholders, constituting the “structure”.

Later in this work (see chapter 2.2.1. Structure) I will investigate what discourses are used by the relevant ‘structure’ actors in the federal state of Brandenburg.

Table 1: Systematic overview of agricultural discourses; author's work

Discourse	Key words	Proponents	Nature of agriculture	Manifested structure in documents (National, European and international level)
Productivist / state assisted	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "guarantee of food security"</li> <li>• "secure agricultural employment"</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dominant (mostly conservative) farm organisations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contributes to national policy goal</li> <li>• Low incomes</li> <li>• Not competitive with other sectors or countries</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Germany: Landwirtschaftsgesetze (1955)</li> <li>• EU: Treaty of Rome (1957)</li> </ul>
Market-Liberal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "competitiveness"</li> <li>• "free markets"</li> <li>• "efficiency"</li> <li>• "quality food"</li> <li>• "gradual reduction of states role"</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High level industry groups</li> <li>• development groups</li> <li>• agricultural traders</li> <li>• larger farms</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• competitive with other sectors</li> <li>• competitive in world market</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• WTO: General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (1992)</li> <li>• EU: MacSharry Reform (1992)</li> </ul>
Multifunctional	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "public goods"</li> <li>• "sustainable"</li> <li>• "rural areas"</li> <li>• "ecosystem services"</li> <li>• "social and territorial balance"</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Environmental and consumer NGOs</li> <li>• ecological farm groups</li> <li>• smaller farmers</li> <li>• farmers in remote areas</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• producer of marketable and non-marketable goods</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• EU: The Cork Declaration (1996)</li> <li>• EU: Cross Compliance (1999)</li> <li>• EU: Creation of second pillar of CAP (1999)</li> <li>• EU: Greening (2015)</li> </ul>
Global	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "global supply chain"</li> <li>• "harmonization of health and safety regulations and standards"</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Globally operating food companies;</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a part in the global food system and global supply chain</li> <li>• there to meet consumer demands</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• AoA (1993)</li> <li>• Global G.A.P (1997)</li> <li>• Marine Stewardship council (1997)</li> </ul>
Hybrid	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• taking up ideational elements from all other discourses</li> <li>• sometimes subliminal contradictions possible when employing conflicting discourses</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• no fixed proponent</li> <li>• mostl likely governments (like EU commission) with a moderating role</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• varying according to the degree another discourse is present</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• EU: "voluntary modulation" in Fischler Reform (2002)</li> <li>• EU: many communications since 2010</li> </ul>

## 2.2. Giddens' theory of structuration

After an overview of the five discourses in agriculture, the sociological concept "Theory of structuration" which will contribute to a better understanding of society and agricultural change, is introduced. The emphasis on agriculture will follow later, first the "pure" concept of sociological structuration is explained. This sociological concept constitutes one crucial element of this work's theoretical framework which will be interjected in chapter 2.4.

"Structure" and "agency" are two concepts in social science, which are used in order to explain society and human behaviour. Theorists that share the view that *structure* is predominant (the *objectivists*) define individuals' behaviour as largely determined by their socialisation into that *structure*. For them the capacity of human action is constrained by powerful stable societal macro structures, like political institutions, religion or education. This societal constraint can be expressed through e.g. conforming to society's expectations when it comes to gender or class.

On the other hand, you find the *agency theory*. This concept is supported by sociologists, who explain society on the micro level and who argue that the individuals are indeed able to express a free will and make their own choices. Proponents of that theory share a so-called *subjective* view.

### *Structuration – at the interface of structure and agency*

In sociology and social science, structure and agency are often seen separately or even as two different entities operating at different levels. However, the nexus of structure and agency has always been central. Giddens' theory of structuration (Giddens 1984) attempts to bridge this division and postulates a dynamic relationship between these two facets of society and basically tries to explain how society works (Salzborn 2016).

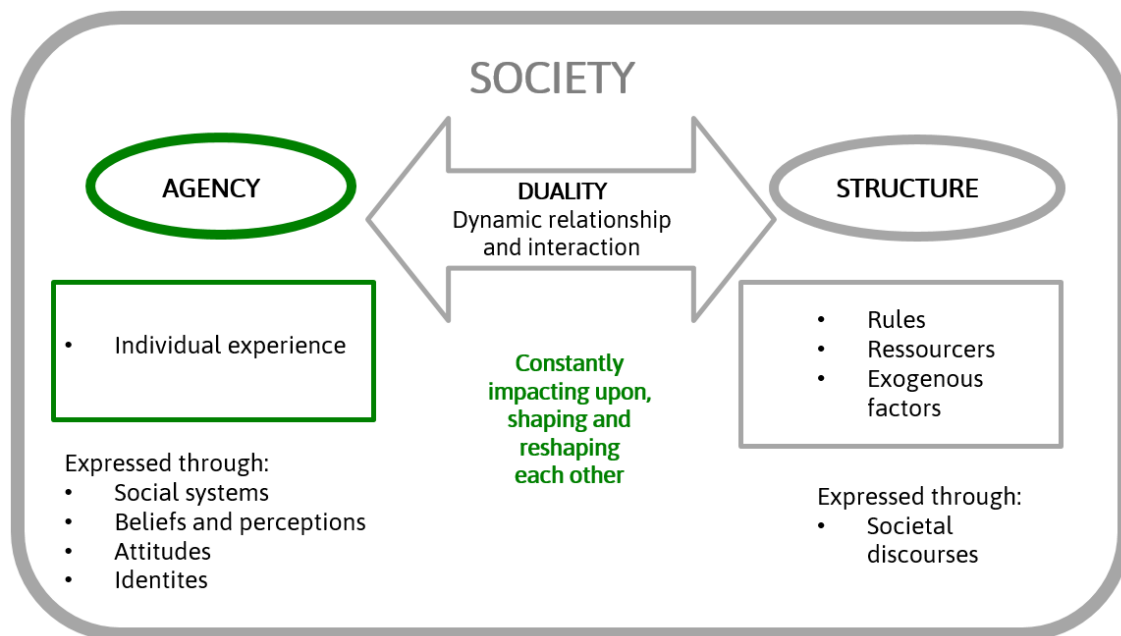
British sociologist Anthony Giddens questioned the polarized nature of the structure-agency model. For him society and social systems are created and reproduced through the duality of structure; i.e. social structure is simultaneously both outcome and medium of social action. Social actions are constituted through agents and structure.

He argues that social science should "focus more on social practices rather than on individual experience or simply on social structure" and he attempts to "bridge the schisms of macro and micro, actor and structure, and the traditional structuralist interpretative frameworks" (Burton and Wilson 2006).

He argues that the individual's autonomy is indeed influenced by structure, but the structures of society are exercised and adapted through agency. The point or the interjection where an actor is meeting a structure is called *structuration*.

Therefore, the process of *structuration* incorporates both, *agency* and *structure*, which he calls the "*duality of structure*". "*Structure* is thereby the medium for actions by human *agency*, as well as the outcome of the reproduction of social practices and actions of the agents that constitute the social system" (Burton and Wilson 2006). So, agency and structure interact and thereby structure a social system and constitute society.

Figure 1: Visualisation of authors own understanding of Giddens' theory of structuration, auhor's work



In this thesis, the underlying research interest is to explain agricultural change. In order to do so Giddens' theory of structuration will be used and consequently I will look at agriculture as a sector including it's actors, through the structure and agency lenses.

It follows a description of what constitutes these two elements of agency and structure in case of the farming community.

### 2.2.1. Structure

As mentioned above, structure is seen as the result of production and reproductions of social actions by agents, constituting the social system. Structural elements of social systems are, according to Giddens, results as well as means of social practices (Salzborn 2016).

Structure describes the rules and resources, which are constituting the social system. Structure is therefore a variable which can allow transformations to occur, but also be a limiting and constraining factor. In order to better understand agricultural change, I focus on the structure excreted through the constructive power of discourses. For that purpose, I understand structure as being described by and excreted through public agricultural discourses. Dominant discourses on the macro, structure level have a direct influence on rules, like agricultural policies and politics, resources, like farmland, and exogenous factors like political economy (Burton and Wilson 2006). Their production and reproduction can therefore be an enabling and constraining element, which influences agriculture as an entire sector.

After having described the five discourses in depth based on scientific literature, it showed that scholars argue that the productivist core is still dominant and different layers of the other discourses have been put on top, resulting in a hybrid discourse, with different intensities of the discourses characteristics, according to whom you ask.

In order to verify this assumption, which is largely based on politics and communications on the European and national level, a closer look at the relevant agricultural actors on the “Länder-level” of Brandenburg will be taken. This is crucial, since discourses are historically and geographically shaped and the *local structure’s* influence should not be underestimated. Therefore, a short document analysis on the prevailing agricultural discourses in the current political system of Brandenburg is necessary.

#### *Excuse II: Document analysis of a selection of relevant political agricultural stakeholders in Brandenburg*

1. The farmer’s association of Brandenburg employs mostly a productivist discourse with a good dash of exceptionalism, but uses still a lot of multifunctional arguments whereas only some market-liberal beliefs are noticeable.

The Landesbauernverband Brandenburg (LBV B) is the interest representation of farmers in Brandenburg. The LBV B is member of the German farmer’s association (DBV) which represents farmers interests on the national level in Berlin and on the European level in Brussels. The LBV B itself has 13 member organisations which are farmer’s associations on the local level (Kreisbauernverbände). In their “Leitbild” (Landesbauernverband Brandenburg e.V. 2012), a public statement about the general principles and values, you find several agricultural discourses.

First they state the “basic prerequisites” for a “flourishing and attractive rural area” is a “competitive and sustainable agriculture”. Within that sentence you find three discourses: the focus on sustainability and the vivid rural area clearly belongs to the multifunctional discourse. The notion on competitiveness indicates a market-liberal approach, and finally the definitiveness with which the rural areas are dependent on agriculture show traits of agricultural-exceptionalism. These interweaving of different discourses proceeds in the two pages of the document. In the later sections about “the position of agriculture in society” and their “position towards the value of their work” the productivist discourse prevails. They employ the common narratives of the markets not serving an optimal allocation and the incomes in the agricultural sector are still running risk of being “decoupled from society”. Merely the global discourse is not employed.

Overall, the LBV B is using a hybrid discourse with a strong productivist and exceptional focus. Compared to the other Landesbauernverbänden and the DBV the LBV B uses more multifunctional statements – this might be due to the comparably poor soil in Brandenburg, the high number of ecological farmers in Brandenburg, and the president of the LBV B being an ecological farmer, which is an exception among the other presidents of the Landesbauernverbände - but this just an assumption without scientific proof.

To give a visualisation of the interwovenness, find the coded Leitbild below. The market-liberal statements are marked red, the multifunctional ones blue and the productivists green.

### Leitbild des Landesbauernverbandes Brandenburg e.V.

Der Landesbauernverband Brandenburg e.V. hat im Rahmen des Projektes des Deutschen Bauernverbandes „Werte im Dialog“ eine intensive Diskussion mit seinen Mitgliedern über zentrale Werte und Leitlinien für die Verbandsarbeit der Zukunft geführt.

Entstanden ist eine Zusammenfassung von Grundüberzeugungen, Vorstellungen und Werten der Mitglieder unseres Verbandes, die Auskunft über Positionsbestimmung, Aufgaben und Zielstellungen unseres Berufsstandes geben.

Dieses Leitbild sehen wir auch als gelebten Beitrag in der gesellschaftlichen Diskussion um Stellung und Aufgaben der Landwirtschaft der Zukunft.

#### 1. Unsere Position in der Gesellschaft

Der Landesbauernverband Brandenburg e.V. ist die Interessenvertretung der Landwirtschaft im Land Brandenburg. Eine **wettbewerbsfähige und nachhaltige Landwirtschaft ist die Grundvoraussetzung für einen vitalen und attraktiven ländlichen Raum**.

- Zuallererst vertritt der LBV die betrieblichen Interessen seiner Mitglieder.
- Wettbewerbsfähige Landwirtschaft und ein **lebenswerter ländlicher Raum** bedingen einander. Dieser Verantwortung stellen wir uns. Wir treten für attraktive Lebensbedingungen und eine **leistungsfähige Infrastruktur** ein.
- Wir unterstützen die Schaffung von Arbeitsplätzen mit Zukunft und treten für aktive Nach- wuchsarbeit und Weiterbildung ein.
- Ländliche Entwicklung auf Kosten der landwirtschaftlichen Unternehmen lehnen wir ab.

#### 2. Wen vertreten wir?

Der Landesbauernverband Brandenburg e.V. bündelt und vertritt die Interessen seiner Mitglieder auf den verschiedenen politischen Ebenen. Er ist parteipolitisch unabhängig.

- Der LBV unterstützt und koordiniert die Arbeit der Kreis- und Regionalbauernverbände im Land Brandenburg.
- Die aktive Mitarbeit unserer Mitglieder in Gemeinden, Parteien, Vereinen und Kirchen ist für eine durchsetzungsstarke Interessenvertretung unabdingbar. Berufsständischen Interessen gebührt dabei Vorrang.
- Pragmatismus geht vor Fundamentalopposition. Bei der Verfolgung unserer Interessen nutzen wir die Spannweite demokratischer Meinungsäußerung.

#### 3. Unsere Position zur Vielfalt der Unternehmen in der Landwirtschaft

Der Landesbauernverband Brandenburg e.V. ist der Berufsverband für alle Landwirte gleichermaßen – Familienbetriebe wie Gemeinschaftsunternehmen, **ökologisch wie kon- ventionell wirtschaftende Betriebe, Tierhalter wie Marktfreudbauern**

- Wir vertreten landwirtschaftliche Interessen, unabhängig von Betriebsgröße, Produktions- richtung und Bewirtschaftungsform. Wir stehen für einen fairen **Wettbewerb** zwischen den Unternehmen.
- Wir stehen für Landwirtschaft über Generationen hinweg – das beinhaltet gute fachliche Praxis und Verantwortung für die Region. Wir lehnen **kurzfristige Gewinnmaximierung** und Bodenspekulation ab.

#### 4. Unsere Werte im Handeln

Das Handeln des Landesbauernverband Brandenburg e.V. ist bestimmt von Geschlos- senheit, Kompetenz und Zuverlässigkeit.

- Geschlossenheit steht für einen klaren Standpunkt und Überzeugungskraft, setzt innerver- bandliche Solidarität aber auch Kompromissbereitschaft voraus.
- Verbandsdemokratie heißt: wir vertreten die Meinung der Mehrheit geschlossen und halten die Belange der Minderheit im Blick.
- Kompetenz und Offenheit schaffen Akzeptanz der modernen Landwirtschaft in die Gesell- schaft. Öffentlichkeitsarbeit für die Landwirtschaft muß ein Schwerpunkt unserer Arbeit sein, sie beginnt mit jedem Mitglied und in jedem Betrieb
- Gegen sensationsorientierte Berichterstattung setzen wir wertorientiertes Auftreten und Handeln.

#### 5. Unsere Position zur Verantwortung der Landwirtschaft in der Gesell- schaft

Der Landesbauernverband Brandenburg e.V. steht für eine **nachhaltige** und vielfältige Landwirtschaft, die Lebensmittel und nachwachsende Rohstoffe im Einklang produziert.

- Wir stehen für eine flächendeckende Landwirtschaft
- **Nachhaltigkeit** heißt – **wirtschaftlich leistungsfähig**, ökologisch verträglich und sozial gerecht, für uns und die nachfolgenden Generationen.
- **Vorrangige Aufgabe der Landwirtschaft ist und bleibt die Sicherung der Ernährung. Flächen- entzug ist Nahrungsentzug.**
- Erneuerbare Energien und der Anbau nachwachsender Rohstoffe sind ein positiver Beitrag zum Klimaschutz und eine wirtschaftliche Ergänzung für landwirtschaftliche Unternehmen.

#### 6. Unsere Position zum Umweltschutz

Der Landesbauernverband Brandenburg e.V. steht für einen verantwortungsvollen Um- gang mit den Nutztieren, eine umweltschonende Bodennutzung und einen sinnvollen Naturschutz.

- **Artgerechte und leistungsorientierte** Tierhaltung sind miteinander vereinbar.
- Die langfristige Erhaltung der Bodenfruchtbarkeit und die Vermeidung von **Belsstungen für Wasser, Boden und Luft** bestimmen die „gute landwirtschaftliche Praxis“ auch in einer **ges- tragsorientierten Landwirtschaft**.
- **Naturschutz in Kulturlandschaften** verlangt Interessenausgleich.
- Wissenschaftlich-technischer Fortschritt in der landwirtschaftlichen Praxis ist unverzichtbar. Hierzu brauchen wir eine praxisorientierte und weitsichtige Agrarforschung.

#### 7. Unsere Position zum Wert unserer Arbeit

Der Landesbauernverband Brandenburg e.V. steht für **angemessene, leistungsgerechte Einkommen landwirtschaftlicher Unternehmen**.

- Von der Gesellschaft gewollte, aber von den **Markten nicht honorierte Leistungen** müssen von der Gesellschaft entgolten werden.
- Lebensmittel sind mehr wert. Höhere Produktionsstandards müssen sich im Preis widerspie- geln.
- **Die Einkommensentwicklung in der Landwirtschaft darf sich nicht weiter von der der Gesell- schaft entkoppeln.**

2. The federal ministry of agriculture, environment and climate protection of Brandenburg uses mostly the multifunctional discourse with a state-assisted touch

On the “Länder-level“ the ministry of “Landwirtschaft, Umwelt und Klimaschutz“, led by Axel Vogel (Green party) is in charge of the execution and implementation of German and European legislation. Especially environmental measures and schemes for rural development are the federal ministries’ responsibility. Already the ministry’s name presents a multifunctional discourse. In a position paper (MLUK 2018) with demands for the future of the GAP you clearly find the multifunctional discourse.

The first thesis, “the local agriculture is irreplaceable“, shows a strong agricultural exceptional attitude. This is first justified by the production of food (productivist) but followed by examples of its multifunctionality (multifunctional). The second thesis strongly emphasizes the responsibility of the state (state assisted) to support the local farmers in an increasingly globalized market. The following two theses are as multifunctional as it can get: the third thesis is advocating the strengthening and stabilisation of rural areas and the fourth thesis is even called “Public money for public goods“. In the following, these usual exceptionalist’s arguments of ‘farm income problem’ and inherent instability of agricultural markets are mentioned. Thesis eight stresses the responsibility agriculture is bearing towards the protection of environment, nature, animal welfare and climate. Those are clear multifunctional traits.

Only in the very, end market-liberal key words like “efficiency” and “performance” are mentioned, but in a context of bureaucracy rather than farmers’ performance.



3. The parties of the federal government of Brandenburg are employing

- a hybrid discourse, dominated by multifunctional elements (SPD)
- a hybrid discourse with a, for me surprisingly large amount of multifunctionalism (CDU)
- a pure multifunctional discourse (Green Party)

Since the federal elections in Brandenburg in autumn 2019 the federal government of is composed of a coalition of social democrats (SPD), Christian Democrats (CDU) and green party (Green Party).

The SPD is primarily employing a multifunctional discourse, with a focus on fostering organic farming in Brandenburg. In their governmental program (SPD Brandenburg 2019) they are also putting a focus on the competitiveness of rural areas and emphasise the economic power of agriculture, which indicates some market-liberal tendencies. They are also planning the creating of a label for food originating from Brandenburg and thereby the only party uttering some global discourse elements.

In their government program (CDU Brandenburg 2019) from May 2019 the CDU is using the hybrid discourse with an emphasis on ecological farming and the compliance of agriculture and environmental measures, which is surprising. At least on the national level the CDU gives the impression to be the party that advocates ecological farming the least. The global discourse is not used at all. The Green Party is employing a text-book example of multinationalism. Each sentence of the first two chapters, on agriculture and food, of their 27-chapter election program (Bündnis 90/Die Grünen 2018) is dealing with the multidimensional role of agriculture and how ecological farming is key. In the farming chapter, they do not use any other discourse. Although farming is playing an essential role for the Greens, agriculture finds no mentioning in the chapter about globalisation and cosmopolitanism – which would have been perfect for a global discourse of agriculture.

### 2.2.2. Agency

The political discourses compose structural exogenous factors and indicators rather than "agency-related endogenous characteristics" (Burton and Wilson 2006).

The *agency* in this context is understood as the attitudes and beliefs at the grass root level. Human agency is, according to Giddens, expressed through social systems, convictions, mindset and positions towards relevant topics as well as through identities.

In the case of this study agency is composed of farming cultures, dominant beliefs and attitudes among farmers and of course farmers' identities. In the agency concept, you find the actor in the centre of analysis. How do they perceive themselves? What constitutes their identity as a farmer?

I argue that in the *structure* -focused analysis of agricultural discourses, individuals and their actions have so far been neglected. This micro-level is what will be investigated in this work. I will acknowledge the farmers community from within and focus on the agency-related endogenous characteristics.

This will be done by investigating the self-concepts of actors of the grass root level: farmers in Brandenburg.

## 2.3 Self-concept of farmers

As described above I will investigate the farmers identities, beliefs and their attitudes towards certain topics. These elements constitute the self. The self-concept entails all details that make up a person's self. The self-concept represents how a person sees himself or herself and is composed of different components that can get into conflict.

The theoretical approaches employed here stem from the American sociologist Sheldon Stryker who focuses on social-structuralist interpretation of symbolic interaction (Burton and Wilson 2006). This goes deep into

the complex field of social psychology and for this work there is certainly no need to attain a deeper understanding of the entire theory behind. For my purpose a basic concept will be sufficient: This concept, based on Stryker's identity theory (Stryker 1994), basically posits that, "as the self reflects society, and society comprises multiple social groups and is structured and hierarchical, it follows that the self, arising from social experience, will be constructed of multiple identities, which are similarly structured and hierarchical".

Therefore, according to identity theory, the self is comprised of "a set of identities, each of which is imbued with shared expectations for social actions between the individual and the group" (Burton and Wilson 2006). This implies that one individual can maintain many identities, which are layered, according to their importance or situational relevance.

The self can be conceptualized as a set of several identities, whereas there are e.g. occupational identities, family identities or gender identities. The occupational identities are among the most salient, and identities associated with farming are expected to be motivationally extremely important (Burton and Wilson 2006). The notion that the self is made up from several identities that are competing and conflicting explains, why sometimes contradictions between action and statement might occur. Some research even suggests that farmers hold different attitudes or identities for different parts of their farm (Wilson and Hart 2001).

In this paper the self-identity of farmers will be understood as being developed through affirmation and reaffirmation in social discourse (see chapter 2.1 Discourse).

The self-identity will not be seen as a single one-dimensional entity but as being constructed of multiple identities that are structured in a hierarchical way.

## 2.4 Theoretical framework – interjecting concepts

In the previous chapters different political and sociological concepts have been presented: agricultural discourses and their presumed transformation, Giddens' theory of agency and structure and Stryker's conception of the complex and multi-dimensional self-identity. Now these concepts will be interjected and enriched with substance related to agriculture – in order to contribute to a better understanding of agricultural change.

### *Agricultural discourses*

The five different agricultural discourses, (P, ML, M, G, H) and their evolution and development since WW II have been the subject of scientific research for a long time.

Most scholars agree that there has been an almost linear transition from the productivist to the market-liberal discourse, which was then partly replaced, or concealed, by the multifunctional discourse. Institutions depending on majorities then started to employ the hybrid discourse, where there is 'something for everyone'. The most recent discourse is the global discourse. These shifts in agricultural policy discourse have been examined closely.

The prevailing view is that today the hybrid discourse with a deeply entrenched productivist core is dominant in the political and public arena. In Brandenburg's political arena the multifunctional discourse is increasingly gaining relevance (see chapter 2.2.1 structure).

The political and public sphere with its policy instruments, its actors and their interests, the ideological changes within that metier as well as the path-dependent historical events shaping the policies, have been sufficiently researched. The political economy and its framework have also been examined thoroughly. Dominant agricultural discourses have materialized into policy paradigms and took shape in form of policies



and distribution of resources. Their shifts can be detected in documents and publications released by agricultural authorities and farm interest groups. These exogenous factors on the macro-level have so far been at the centre of attention – also in order to describe agricultural change.

Now taking Giddens' theory of structuration into account, these policies and institutionalised rules, expressed in the form of agricultural discourse, are considered the *structure* of society. The structure is the macro-level of the two interdependent facets that constitute society. The other part is called *agency*. The individual's autonomy is highly influenced by *structure* and its development can be constrained or enabled by structure, but reciprocally the *structures* of society are carried out and shaped by the individual actor. For this thesis it is important to understand that, according to Giddens, *structure* and *agency* shape each other in a dialectical manner and are therefore moving along the same line and at the same pace.

In contrast to *structure*, which has sufficiently been researched in form of the agricultural political discourses, the *agency*, expressed through individual farmers self-concept, has been scientifically neglected. These exogenous *structure* factors have long been the centre of scientific research on agricultural change - what has been left out is the attempt to explain agricultural change through endogenous characteristics of agriculture, the micro-level structural elements. Hereby I mean the *agency*. According to Giddens though, you cannot understand society with focusing on one element and neglecting the other.

Therefore, it is time to investigate agricultural change at the grass-root level, the *agency* level, the individuals, the farmers, their perceptions and their action. To explain agricultural change, it is important to understand profound shifts in the political framework, but it is equally important to know and understand the attitudes, perceptions, behaviours and identities of the actors in rural areas. For a thorough understanding, not just of agricultural change, but of society, it is essential to "include the perspectives of the owners and managers of agricultural land" (Feindt in Heinelt 2018).

*Agency* in this context can be understood as social systems (like farming culture), beliefs, attitudes and identities - these elements are the subject of interest of this thesis. How do farmers in Brandenburg perceive themselves? What beliefs do they share? What identities can be found among the farmers' community? This is where the last concept comes into play: Self-identity and concepts of self are developed through affirmation and reaffirmation in social discourse (Giddens 1991).

Stryker's identity theory purports that individuals attain a set of identities. This implies the identities being multiple, hierarchically ordered and that different identities can be conflicting, e.g. the farmer's business identity clashes with the farmer's family identity in some respects. As mentioned above, farmers can even hold different attitudes with respect to different parts of their farm.

#### *Interjecting the different concepts*

Interjecting these concepts is laying the theoretical framework for this thesis.

Supposing structure and agency have moved interdependently and parallel, as suggested by Giddens, then farmers' identity and self-concepts (*agency*) must have moved along the spectrum of societal agricultural discourses (*structure*) (P, ML, M, G, H) at the same speed and manner.

Integrating this notion of multiple identities would allow one farmer to employ several identities and therefore several discourses. In order to still keep the crucial openness during the research (Wagenaar 2011) the main claim, which will guide through the project, is articulated openly:

The self-concepts of farmers mirror the societal agricultural discourses on an individual level.

This would suggest that the self-concepts shift according to the transformation and changes on the public discourse level, which I showed in the previous chapter.

Hence, the farmer's role would be a vehicle from public agricultural discourses onto the farm, expressed in actual farming practices:



Self-concepts are deeply entrenched and shaped through years and generations of socialisation. This could explain why changes in agricultural practices are sometimes lagging behind the public discourse.

In order to test this claim “against the empirical world” (Wagenaar 2011), the framework will then be enriched with empirical qualitative data from interviews conducted with ten farmers in Brandenburg.

The interest of this thesis is to understand how self-concepts are being constructed. What influences and path dependencies play a role? How does the interplay of structure, which is not just the societal discourse but also the farm's endowments, and agency shape farmer's self-concept?

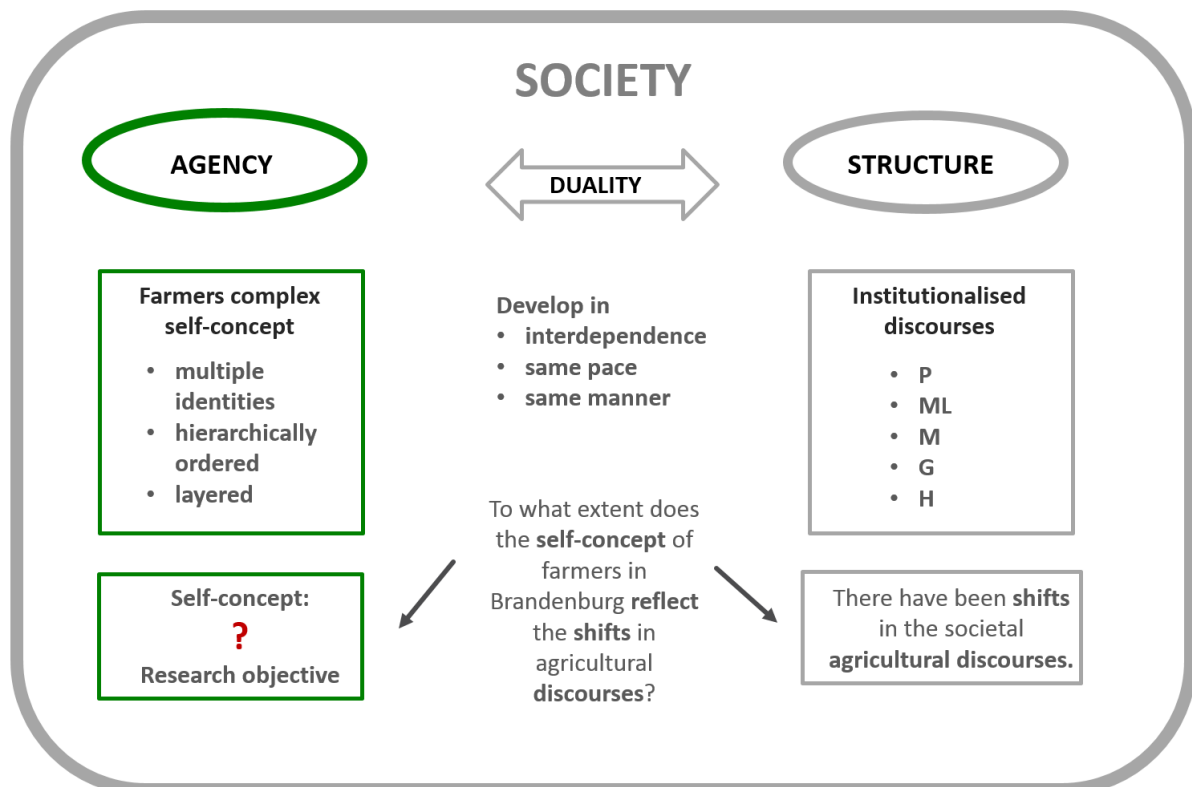
How do the public discourses actually influence the agricultural practices in Brandenburg these days?

Combining these research interests with the theoretical conceptual framework (see below) containing ideas from Giddens, Stryker and the notion of agricultural discourses leads to the research question.

In order to narrow it down to a viable research question, but still leaving it broad enough to be open for surprise and ambiguity (Wagenaar 2011) I will answer the following question:

To what extent does the self-concept of farmers in Brandenburg reflect shifts in agricultural discourses?

Figure 2: Visualisation of the conceptual framework and the research question through interjecting Giddens' theory of structuration, with Stryker's identity theory and the concept of agricultural discourses; author's work based on (Burton and Wilson 2006)



### 2.4.1 Theoretical claims

In order to answer the research question and to sharpen the focus of the entire research process, the following claims will give guidance. To open a broad perspective and to avoid the risk of a limiting and narrow expectation driven approach, nine relevant claims were chosen. These claims are mainly interest driven and backed up with scientific evidence. They are not to be proven true or false, but should rather encourage the element of discovery. This open heuristic strategy of inquiry and the non-fixation on a rigid theory leaves the researcher ready for “novelty” and tries to “create the conditions for surprise” (Wagenaar 2011) to the required amount.

The gender claim:

*Female farmers tend to show more traits of multifunctionalism than their male counterparts.*

Literature suggests that female farmers have a tendency towards more sustainable farming than their male colleagues (Chiappe and Butler 1998; Karami and Mansoorabadi 2008; Sachs et al. 2016). Women farmers are meeting barriers to farming including limited access to capital, land and labour. This is mainly due to gender disparities in agriculture, which can be summed up as: “farmers are farmer’s sons”. They started to respond to these challenges with innovative strategies like diversified high-value and value-added products, unique marketing strategies and sustainable practices (Sachs et al. 2016). These approaches are in line with the new consumerism and with the increased attention towards sustainability - typical for the multifunctional approach. Another explanation see Chiappe and Butler in women’s concern for quality of family. They suggest that not just the rational of sustainable farming, increasing health of family and environment, but also that the decreased labour time of sustainable farming can be spend on more valued family related activities instead (Chiappe and Butler 1998).

The farming system claim:

*Conventional farmers tend to express more productivist views, whereas ecological farmers have the tendency to support multifunctional attitudes.*

This could be explained by the different natures of these two kinds of farming: Ecological farmers try to work closer with natural cycles, with less invasive methods and fewer or even no use of yield increasing pesticides, herbicides and fungicides. This would suggest a more environmentally minded and therefore multifunctional view.

Conventional farmers, on the other hand, might still be in favour of productivist views. Yields are higher on conventional farms, and since production output is valued as the defining variable in the productivist paradigm, farmers with a favour for yield increasing farming methods tend to run conventional farms.

The farm type claim:

*Compared to crop farmers, livestock farmers tend to share multifunctional approaches, whereas crop farmers tend to support productivist views.*

One consideration behind this claim is that crop and arable farmers have always been in the centre of attention of the productivist paradigm. Since WWII they receive the lion share of state support and were viewed as the food providers of the nation. Until recently, they also enjoyed preferential treatment when it came to subsidies. The farmers’ responsibility in the productivist discourse is to optimise their methods of production in order to increase their yields – this could be more easily done with new techniques, new breeds of grain and bigger machinery, than in a pigsty that is already full to the legal maximum.

On the other hand, you could assume that livestock farmers with a certain connection to their animals might be receptive for issues like animal welfare and natural cycles and therefore tend to adopt more multifunctional views. Also livestock farmers often have acres to produce their own animal feed. This could contribute to a greater awareness of diversification and the implied multifunctionality.

The age claim 1:

*The multifunctional discourse tends to be supported by younger farmers, whereas the productivist paradigm finds its supporters among the older farmers.*

The most recent farmer educational program is more conservation-focused and includes a curriculum where environmental issues are more focused upon (Wilson 2001). Younger farmers tend to be better educated and have a more positive attitude towards environment (Ruto and Garrod 2009). Therefore, they might be more aware of tensions between agriculture and the environment and consequentially share a broader view on agriculture and support a more environmentally aware and a multifunctional view.

Potter suggests also that the fact that most farmers in Europe are over 50 years old may explain why productivist thinking continues to be relatively dominant in most European rural areas (Potter 1998; Burton and Wilson 2006).

The age claim 2:

*The global paradigm tends to be more prominent among the younger farmers than among the older ones.*

Younger farmers who grew up and were socialised in a globalized world, rather see themselves and their farm in the context of an international value chain. The younger generation grew into a world where traveling became affordable even for lower incomes and many have been to different countries and most likely different continents too.

For farmers of the old generation, on the contrary, the narrative was always quite focused on the nation and only later, due to increasing Europeanization, opened up to a European picture. But the level of internationalisation of our economy has now, is more likely to be embraced by the younger farmers.

The soil type claim:

*Farmers with farms with comparably fertile soil tend to share productivist beliefs whereas farmers with poor soil share multifunctional beliefs.*

High yields, one defining objective in the productivist paradigm, can be more easily reached on fertile land. It is therefore easier to adopt a productivist self-concept, if you are able to produce satisfyingly big yields. As a farmer on poor soil you start looking for alternatives, since you will never be able to compete with your colleagues working on fertile soil.

Research shows that among the most important reasons that farmers initially took up organic practices is the concern for decline in soil fertility (Fairweather 1999).

Knowing this, it could be concluded, that if a farmer who already has poor, sandy soils rather uses soil-conserving organic methods than conventional ones in order to not degenerate it any further. Furthermore, diversification or ecological farming offers new business opportunities, which are especially important if you cannot harvest enough on your poor soils. Therefore, I can imagine farmers with poor soils rather supporting a multifunctional discourse.

The farm resource claim:

*Farmers with better resources (farm size, financial means, farm staff) tend to support market-liberal views.*

Farms with better resources might have a professionalised organisational structure, which allows a better

integration into market. Farmers with an entrepreneurial spirit who feel comfortable with their position in the market might share beliefs that the market is a good mean to organize the agricultural sector and therefore share market-liberal ideas.

The identities claim:

*Farmers self-concepts tend to show tensions between the farmer-identity and the non-farmer-identities.*

As Stryker points out identities can be multiple and hierarchical. Therefore, there could be tensions or even clashes between the farmer identity and the non-farmer identities. Due to the constructivist approach of this work the socialisation of individuals plays a pivotal role. Younger farmers are socialised into a society where multifunctional elements are valued, but within the family the productivist attitudes from the parental generation might still be dominant. This could lead to mismatches and inner conflicts.

This could also happen the other way around: If an older farmer has an particularly strong family-oriented identity, this could influence how the farmer follows a specific economic development path (e.g. business expansion, or switch to organic production) in presumed favour of the successor, even if his own farmer business identity's agricultural preference lies elsewhere (Burton and Wilson 2006). Another example could be a young farmer who, newly joined the business and has learned to execute multifunctional approaches in the educational training – but his family-identity pushes him to earn a living for his young family, which makes the productivist approaches and yield maximization attractive.

This claim is especially complex and requires a sensitive handling, since farm transfers and family matters are a delicate and highly emotional matter.

The enablement claim:

*There is a broad range of different factors that are enabling or constraining the farmer.*

Although this is the broadest claim in this research, it is where it's getting into the core of the matter. Since this research wants to stay open and attentive to all kinds of possibly limiting or facilitating factors that influence a farmer's self-concept and eventually her practices, such wide claim seems appropriate. In social science, whenever you find constraining or enabling elements, this is when you start to get to the heart of the matter.

Within this conceptual and theoretical framework and the research claims, I hope to find answers to my research question. With this study, I hope to provide a valuable insight into farmer's identities and their meaning for determining the future direction of agricultural change.

### 3 Methodology

This thesis is taking a constructivist perspective. Since I want to comprehend the farmer's own perceptions and sense making, a constructivist approach and qualitative research methods are most suitable. What will follow is an analysis of the construction of collective patterns of interpretation as well as a research on production and reproduction of social reality – textbook examples for qualitative research. The qualitative research method of interviewing delivers a better and more vivid image of the perspectives and perceptions of individuals. The entire research is guided by the heuristic strategy of a entering a dialogue between the researcher, theory and literature, and the empirical data (Wagenaar 2011).

### 3.3 Data collection

#### 3.3.1 Technique of literature review and document analysis

##### *Literature review*

The starting point for the conducted literature review was the article by Burton and Wilson (Burton and Wilson 2006), which provided the idea for the conceptual framework of this thesis. Following the snowball strategy and searching the references for other relevant articles, combined with literature recommendations from fellow researchers and my supervisors, I ended up with a good dozen of relevant articles. In order to fill gaps in my understanding and to undermine my claims with appropriate scientific literature, I conducted a literature research using four online search data bases for scientific literature:

Research gate, which had the advantage of personal contact to the authors, a great responsiveness and 100% success rate of requested articles as well as a very useful function to suggest other related articles; AgEcon and Scopus, in order to find working papers, conference papers, journal articles, reports, theses, and books; And google scholar, to find well-cited articles and less known articles. Furthermore, the university's online library proved useful, but due to corona virus related closures of it it was hard to get hold of some older primary literature, which was not available as E-book.

I searched by English and German key words, which can be found in the Appendix A, with a preference for English articles.

##### *Document analysis*

For the short document analysis I chose presumably influential players or agenda setters on the *structure* (see chapter 2.2.1 Structure) side in Brandenburg. I utilised the online search engine google, and for the parties' positions, the help of their parliamentary group experts on agriculture, to find position papers or other relevant forms of publications from each actor. Then MAXQDA was used, a software for computer-assisted qualitative text analysis, in order to extract the main discourses present in the publications.

#### 3.3.2 Case selection

##### *The case of Brandenburg*

The landscape of Brandenburg is strongly characterized by agriculture.

Almost half of Brandenburg's area is in agricultural use (44,69 %), employing 1,6% of the population (Statistisches Bundesamt 2016) which is just above the national average of 1,4%.

Located in the north east of Germany, Brandenburg's agricultural sector has natural disadvantages compared to most of other federal states. The annual rainfall in Germany in 2019 was 730 litre/m<sup>2</sup>, but Brandenburg only received 495 litre/m<sup>2</sup>, only Sachsen-Anhalt received less rain. Brandenburg was also the second warmest and the second sunniest federal state in 2019 (DWD 2019).

In addition to the arid climate Brandenburg has poor, mostly sandy soils with an average 'Ackerzahl' of only 33 (Troegel and Schulz 2018). 'Ackerzahlen' indicate the soil quality and can vary from 0 (very poor) up to 120 (very good).

This, from a productivist farmer's perspective, unfortunate combination results in a harvest yield usually 20-30% lower than the German average (LBV Brandenburg 2020).

Environmental protection plays a considerable role in Brandenburg these days. One quarter of Brandenburg's agricultural land lies within a protected area, natural park or a biosphere reserve (Bachinger 2002). With a share of 12,1% of organically farmed agricultural land in 2018, Brandenburg is ranked fourth after Saarland (16,5%), Hesse (14,7%), and Baden-Wuerttemberg (14%) (BMEL 2020). The German farm structure is very heterogeneous, with a pattern of rather small family businesses in the south and larger farms in the north and especially in the east.

This farm structure is to be explained by historical events, which still might influence the mind-set of farmers in Brandenburg today:

Almost 40 years of socialist model of agricultural production in the German Democratic Republic (GDR) left its mark. Enforced land reforms, repressions of farmers cultivating more than 20 ha and finally the collectivisation of agricultural production often into state-owned so-called 'Landwirtschaftliche Produktionsgenossenschaften' (LPG) between 1949 and the 1980s contributed to the agricultural structure we find today (Wolz 2013). After reunification the common LPGs were often transferred to co-operatives with several co-shareholders and owners, which resulted in today's typical Brandenburger large-scale corporate farms. The average farm size of such a corporate farm sums up to 1.421 ha (LBV Brandenburg 2020), and the average of all farms in Brandenburg lies by 249 ha, which is four times as much as the German farm size average of 62 ha (DBV 2019). A higher average number of hectares is only observed in Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania, which shares a large part of Brandenburg's history.

Under the socialist ideology agriculture operated under different ideological and economic conditions: A very pronounced productivist discourse was established due to the need for self-sufficiency (Wilson 2007) and the non-capitalist ideology with its state planned economy suppressed all kinds of market-liberal thinking. The large state-owned production cooperatives worked "hand-in-hand with state officials and state-developed production goals that often showed no sense of agricultural reality" (Wilson 2007).

Since the early 1990s the animal stock in Brandenburg declined and consolidated heavily (Troegel and Schulz 2018). Today, with only 0,4 'Großvieheinheiten' (GVE) compared to the national average of 1,29 GVE (city states excluded) it becomes clear that livestock farming in Brandenburg is carried out with a lesser intensity per area than in other federal states (MLUK 2020). This results in a lack of manure to keep all arable land in a fertile condition. Dependencies on livestock farmers in other parts of the country are to be observed.

Since November 2019 Brandenburg is politically governed by a coalition of SPD, CDU and the Green party, led by the minister president Dietmar Woidke (SPD) who holds office since 2013.

The ministry of agriculture, environment and climate protection, already the name indicates it, is led by one of the founding members of the green party, Axel Vogel.

Summing up, Brandenburg is drier, hotter and has poorer soil compared to the rest of the country and the dominating farm type is large and owned by legal entities, governed either by private or public law and most likely cultivates crops rather than keeping livestock.






### Case selection and sampling strategy

Due to the infeasibility of a probability, or even representative sample, I decided to use an exploratory and non-probability sampling strategy (Denscombe 2014). Explanatory samples are often used in small-scale research and suitable for qualitative research. In total, the number of ten different Brandenburg farmers were questioned.

Keeping the research question and especially the claims about gender, different farm types and farming practices in mind, it was made sure to interview female farmers too. Agriculture has the reputation of a male dominated sector, which certainly is the case when looking at e.g. the boards of farmers associations and organisations. Those committees are often exclusively male and the female voice remains therefore unheard or at least underrepresented.

Although 36% percent of the agricultural work force is female, only less than 15% of the leading positions on farms are taken by female farmers (DBV 2019). This indicates a structural disadvantage for women in the agricultural sector and makes it even more important to get a picture of their views. Although it was much harder to find female farmers, I managed to interview two women in leading positions, so with 20% of the sample they are even slightly overrepresented (indicated in *italic*). The average hectare number in this sample is 1.573 ha and way above the usual average of all Brandenburg with 249 ha. This can partly be explained by five out of ten farms being former LPGs.

Table 2: Presentation of ten interviewees, according to farm type and farm size; author's work

	Livestock 	Crop / arable farmer 	Mixed farm 
Organic farming			Farm No 2 (2.000 – 3.000 ha) Farm No 10 (< 100 ha)
Organic and conventional farming		Farm No 4 (1.000 -2.000 ha)	Farm No 5 (1.000 -2.000 ha)
Conventional farming	Farm No 3 (2.000 -3.000 ha) Farm No 7 /100 - 1.000 ha)	Farm No 8 (100 - 1.000 ha)	Farm No 1 (> 3.000ha) Farm No 6 (100 - 1.000 ha) Farm No 9 (< 100 ha)

### 3.3.3 Technique of interview: Theme-centred interview

Instead of generating a large amount of standardised data, in this research ten cases were investigated in greater depth. This depth is required in order to get to know the farmers' 'worlds', and what it means to belong to a certain social group.

As an interview technique a one-to-one problem-centred interview after social scientist Andreas Witzel (Witzel 2000) was used, which is a "qualitative, discursive-dialogic interview technique of collecting and reconstructing knowledge about relevant problems" (Reiter 2015).

Although the fixation on a method can be limiting, the principle of 'matching the method to the question' was followed: the title of the method was altered to "theme-centred interview". The procedure stays largely the same, since many 'problems' dealt with in the problem-centred interview are themes and topics rather than specific problems. I argue that the chosen method of a theme-centred interview, which aims to capture the interviewee's self-concept, goes well with the constructivist approach and leaves enough openness and necessary space to "create the conditions for surprise" (Wagenaar 2011). It allows to keep the required openness and offers a balance between theory guided structured interviews and



the very open narrative interviews. This kind of interview method represents a theory generating method that tries to overcome the perceived gap between being directed by theory or being open minded (Witzel 2000). Insights are gained through data collection and evaluation, which are organised in an interplay of inductive and deductive thinking. This concept is in line with the entire research strategy. According to Witzel one principle of a problem-centred interview is to gather “evidence on subjective perceptions and ways of processing social reality” (Witzel 2000), which is exactly the core of this work. The chosen method has an empowering concept of the respondent, and sees the interviewee as a “comprehensively competent and self-reflective research partner” (Reiter 2015). This image of the interviewee goes well with Wagenaar’s approach, demanding to establish a “working relationship” with the respondent and to collaborate in producing useful material (Wagenaar 2011). Another advantage of the theme-centred interview is the great methodological flexibility: it allows employing a combination of methods. This sounds promising, since singling out one method is counterproductive (Wagenaar 2011).

In my interviews I decided to combine a biographical method, which helps to develop “patterns of meanings in the process of an individual’s confrontation with social reality” (Witzel 2000), with a rather structured interview guideline to make sure the respondents answer to the same questions in order to guarantee some comparability. During the theme-centred interview, also different conversation techniques can be applied. According to the respondents level of reflection or eloquence the researcher can choose between narration or recurrent questioning (Witzel 2000).

The original problem-centred conversation entails four instruments, and so does the theme-centred interview: a short questionnaire, interviewing guidelines, tape recordings and a postscript.

Table 3: Overview of interview instruments; author’s work based on Witzel (Witzel 2000)

Theme- or problem-centred interview	
<i>Instrument</i>	<i>Rationale</i>
Instrument 1: Questionnaire	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• collection of information on social characteristics;</li> <li>• facilitates starting a conversation (especially in combination with open-ended questions) (Witzel 2000)(Witzel 2000)(Witzel 2000)</li> </ul>
Instrument 2: Guidelines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• preformulated questions to start the discussion;</li> <li>• provide a framework of orientation;</li> <li>• sticking to guideline ensures comparability of interviews;</li> <li>• ideas of lead questions that stimulate narration</li> <li>• helping to supervise how individual elements in the course of the discussion are worked though</li> </ul>
Instrument 3: Recording	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To allow a full transcription later;</li> <li>• allows the researcher to fully concentrate on the discussion and observe situation-related conditions and nonverbal expressions</li> </ul>
Instrument 4: Postscripts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• written right after the interview;</li> <li>• contains comments on the situative, nonverbal aspects and aspects</li> <li>• noting down of anything spontaneous noteworthy</li> <li>• to identify possible foci of the interviewee</li> <li>• serves as a reminder to anything relevant which is not part of the transcript</li> <li>• functions like an (analytical) post-interview memo (Saldaña 2016)</li> </ul>

Knowledge and the claims attained earlier through the research process, helped me to establish a

framework of ideas and questions for the guideline part. It was made sure that the preformulated questions of the guideline were all open enough to not push the respondent in any direction, and can all be answered using one, all or even none of the societal discourses.

The following table provides a condensed overview of themes and corresponding questions, covered by the guideline of the theme-centred interview. The detailed plan of the theme-centred interviews can be found in Appendix B.

Table 4: Overview of theme and corresponding rationale behind; author's work

Theme and Question	Rationale
Narrative impetus, preformulated introductory question.	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If you had to describe your profession/job to someone, who has no ideas about it, how would you describe a farmer's job these days?</li> </ul>	Personal description might reveal elements of self-perception, triggers reflection on own reason of being
Comparison: Farming in the past, in the present and in the future	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What does it mean to be a farmer today compared to 30 years ago?</li> <li>• What do you think did the previous generation do differently compared to you today?</li> </ul>	Investigating retrospective; detecting a potential shift in practices and perceptions compared to the past, triggering potential conflict lines with predecessor
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What do you think does it mean to be a farmer in 2040?</li> <li>• Where will be the biggest differences to farming today?</li> <li>• What will the next generation of farmers have to do differently?</li> </ul>	Identification of prospects, outlook and expectations; detect a potential shift in practices/perceptions expected by the interviewee in the future
The combination of the five questions above	Finding out if the focus of business, the values or the perceived role of their profession has changed
Challenges and chances – constraining and enabling elements	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What challenges do you expect a successor will be faced with when taking over the farm?</li> <li>• Are these challenges already an issue for your farm today?</li> <li>• Where do you see the chances, awaiting a potential successor?</li> <li>• Are these changes already an issue for your farm today?</li> </ul>	Identification of potential challenges and problems; detecting of constraining elements and obstacles; investigation of enabling elements; Identification of chances and potential for development; detecting of constraining elements and obstacles; investigation of enabling elements
Exceptionality and special status of agriculture	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In your view, is there something that distinguishes the profession of a farmer from other professions?</li> <li>• Please name three aspects of your job which you enjoy the most, and up to three aspects which you like the least.</li> </ul>	detecting a potential exceptional thinking; still open enough to not go down that exceptional road; identify farmers motivation as part of the self-concept and professional identity
Multifunctional status of agriculture and its functions	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• On a scale from 1 to 5, how versatile to you find your job? (not versatile, less versatile, so-so, versatile, very versatile)</li> <li>• Please describe the tasks/responsibilities you have today as a farmer?</li> <li>• Which one is the most important one?</li> </ul>	Identify potential multifunctionality and exceptionalist thinking; Find out perceived functions; Trigger reflection on own profession; Investigate what dimensions are being perceived as important; Singling out the most important one; giving the interviewee a 'good' feeling, since her job is expected to be rated versatile
(Societal) functions of agriculture and relationship farmers and society	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are there tasks/responsibilities ascribed to farmers and agriculture by society which are in your opinion inadequate or unrealistic?</li> <li>• If so, what are these?</li> <li>• In your opinion, do you think your farm should receive state support?</li> </ul>	Gather information on perceived relationship farmer and society as well as society farmer; How they perceive that they are being perceived (public-self); find out attitude on Government and state support; Investigate potential justifications and reasons for special treatment

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If so, why?</li> <li>• And what should this support look like?</li> </ul>	
Perception of public representation and public debate	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How do you, as a farmer, feel treated in the public debate?</li> <li>• From whom do you, as a farmer, feel represented in the public sphere?</li> <li>• From the farmers associations?</li> <li>• And how do you feel treated by the agricultural policy especially?</li> <li>• Do you think the Corona-crisis might have changed something of the role of agriculture?</li> </ul>	Investigate feeling towards public representation; Sense of belonging to a public group; Trigger identification or non-identification with public group; Investigate farmers opinion on representation of traditional farm groups; Find out opinion on agricultural policies as indicators for support of potential discourse; Flexibility of self-concept due to recent severe events; Potential reinforcement of role of indispensable provider of food

### *During the interview*

During the interview process the researcher must be attentive in order to monitor the quality of the interview, thus, ensuring useful material for the research project is being produced. It must be avoided that the interview is sliding into a conversational style, where the respondent e.g. uses broad generalizations states or good intentions (Wagenaar 2011). None of this provides the interesting details we are after.

The interviewer's task is to help the respondent develop the material by e.g. asking for some more concrete detail at the right moments. The interviewer needs to be careful with the right timing for further probes but she also needs to tolerate silences (Denscombe 2014). The questions needed to be posed open but precise to invite the respondent to develop his or her story enriched with personalized descriptions (Wagenaar 2011). This can be encouraged through probes like asking for an example, for clarification or more detail (Denscombe 2014). During the interview the interviewer must adopt a non-judgemental stance, but also show the interviewee through body language that he /she is listening and interested and through that encourage the interviewees to tell their story.

One major advantage of an interview is that it offers the researcher to check if he/she understood the informant correctly (Denscombe 2014) and questions of understanding can be posed during or at the end of the interview.

### *Interviewer effect*

Research shows that interviewees respond differently depending on how they perceive the person asking the question. Especially the sex, the age and ethnic origins of the interviewer are known to have an effect on the amount of information people are willing to reveal and how honest they report (Denscombe 2014). In particular on personal issues the interviewer's identity is assumed of particular importance. Therefore me, as the researcher, should be aware of the age gap between me and most of the interviewees (me: 28 years, them: most of them in their 40s) the different educational qualifications me and some of the interviewees have (me: university degree, them: vocational training – university degree) and the ethnical origins, which can e.g. be detected by the accents (me: north German, them: half and half of them West Germany and east Germany). In order to minimize the interviewer effect and to create the right climate for an interviewee to feel comfortable, to open up and provide honest answers, I made efforts to be polite, punctual, receptive and neutral (Denscombe 2014). It is important to remain non-judgemental and non-committal on the statements made during the interview.

### 3.4 Data Analysis

Following Wagenaar's heuristic during the analytical process, the trilog of empirical data, the theories behind the research and the researchers previous understanding was entered. Each element is shaping the other in a dialectical manner, which makes it difficult to foresee the research process. Since this work is an attempt to let theory development, data collection and data analysis develop hand in hand, we are now entering the trilog's heuristic key moment: bringing the initial, theory based perspective on our topic together with the rich empirical data of the real world (Wagenaar 2011).

#### *Transcription of interviews*

The transcription of the interviews is a laborious but valuable part of the research. The transcription system of Christa Hoffmann Riem (IPBES 2019; Hoffmann-Riem 1998) was used, which allows to focus on the content of the interview rather than on style. During the transcription the talk is brought back to life again and it becomes obvious which questions worked and which did not. The first broad themes and concepts crystallise and noteworthy, possible invivo-codes appear.

#### 3.4.1 Coding strategy

'Coding' is, according to Wagenaar, entering the dialog between theory and data. The process of coding is moving beyond the data without losing touch with it. Successful coding is more than the descriptive organization of data – "a well-chosen, evocative coding label creates a conceptual category that simultaneously describes and explains the data" (Wagenaar 2011). A good code "adds value", rather than "diminishes it" (Saldana 2016) and acts as a link between the data collection and their explanations of meaning. By creating and constructing codes one starts to explain the data. A code is, according to Saldana, a "word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data" (Saldana 2016). During the iterative coding process, I followed three steps suggested by Saldana: precoding, 1<sup>st</sup> cycle of coding and the 2<sup>nd</sup> cycle of coding. In order to extract as much information as possible, coding must be complete, systematically and exhausting. The complete codebook can be found in the Appendix C. Besides the categorizing and coding of the data, analytical memos were written during the process, where e.g. non-mentioning, repetitive utterings, possible patterns or anything that drew attention to it, was noted down.

Important to note is, that my first priority is to find out what self-concept the farmers have through inductive codes, meaning extracted straight from the material. In the second step, I investigate what statements possibly belong to what agricultural discourse, using the deductive approach working with theories suggested by literature.

## 4 Findings

### 4.1 Case selection: description of farms

The interviews were conducted from april to june 2020. Interviewees were approached via telephone or e-Mail asking for an interview about "What does it mean to be a farmer these days". The farmers contacted where mostly recommendations from personal contacts from my farmers network, or

interviewed farmers recommended some other farmer nearby. It is important to know that I did not know any of the farmers personally before interviewing them.

This section describes the ten interviewed farmers and their farms, ordered by size, beginning with the largest. A table, which allows a better comparison of the farms as well as a map of Brandenburg and the locations of farms can be found in Appendix D.

#### Farm 1:

This farm is former LPG and now an agricultural cooperative cultivating more than 3.000 ha of very poor soil (average Bodenpunkte 27). They have more than 2.000 cows for milk and meat production as well as fattening pigs and their own processing facilities. Additionally, there are several farm shops and the entire cooperative is employing more than 100 people. All branches are farmed in a conventional manner. Worth mentioning is that they decided to take 800 ha of their poorest land out of production and only cut the grass once a year, since all other kinds of cultivation would not make any economic sense.

hectare:	more than 3.000
livestock:	cows and pigs
employees:	more than 100
style of farm:	conventional
direct marketing:	yes

#### Farmer 1: "The proud patron of the region"

The interviewed male farmer is an elected executive manager of the cooperative. He grew up in a village nearby, completed a vocational training as a butcher in Brandenburg and studied agricultural engineering in Berlin. He was socialised in the DDR and a teenager when Germany unified. He started working in the cooperative more than 10 years ago and was elected chairman of the board a couple of years ago. They deliver a big share of their cereal to a local bakery and the farm is in many ways closely bound to the region.

During the interview it became clear that he is a very strategical thinker and he is content with his position of the 'puppet master' within the region and the firm/business. He enjoys being a team player and at the centre of society. He has a strong feeling of responsibility for the people, the region and his staff. He mentions the word „Region“ and „regional“ 28 times - more than any other interviewee. He seems to experience affirmation and support from the local population.

*"Als Landwirt also... in der Region sehr gut behandelt. Ich bin sehr gut vernetzt, kenne dort viele Leute und komme mit allen gut klar."*

Since he is only the elected head of the cooperative, he always has to decide for the economical sake of the company, even if this contradicts his personal preference., e.g. he personally despises windturbines but the board of the cooperative is in favour – so he has to fight for something he doesn't want. *"Wie mit den Windrädern - wenn ich es nicht baue, baut es der Nachbar und ich verliere unter Umständen meinen Posten. Ich bin auch nur ein Angestellter."*

They organize several social events per year, like a harvest party for school kids, which is appreciated

by the local population („wird einem immer sehr gut angerechnet“). He also does this in order to have strategic business benefits, like a good relationship with their lessor and eventual advantages in renewal of land lease contracts.

He holds several honorary offices and is involved in politics. He is proud to hold such an influential position, which, in his view, comes with a certain responsibility for the entire farming sector of the region: *“Und man muss sich auch ehrenamtlich gut engagieren, um dann da auch noch ein bisschen Einfluss in die Politik oder in andere Sachen zu bekommen, um dementsprechend die Dinge in die richtige Richtung zu schubsen. Das kostet dann auch ziemlich viel Geld und Aufwand und Kraft. Wenn wir das nicht machen... Kleinere haben dafür eh keine Zeit.”*

He is well aware that the cooperative is the biggest in the region and that their decisions have consequences for the way farming is done in the area.

*“Wir sind im KBV drin, und wenn wir das Handtuch schmeißen und sagen wir machen da nicht mehr mit - dann könnte das ne kleine Lawine geben.”*

He is bold and convinced that his words matter, e.g. he wrote a *“ziemlich bösen Brief”* letter to the prime minister of Brandenburg complaining about how the cooperatives couldn’t get any Corona related financial aid.

He left the impression of being very content with his job and he has a positive take on problems and challenges. He is open for new solutions and ways -as long as he thinks it makes economic sense, he can pay his people a proper wage and the measures don’t damage the production, e.g. he will join the “Ackerrandstreifenprogramm” from Brandenburg – but in a different way, because he doesn’t want to risk that *“Wildkräuter (...) pflanzenbaulich später nicht mehr in den Griff bekomme”*.

## Farm 2:

This farm can rather be understood as full ‘farming and food enterprise’ firm with many different business branches. The enterprise cultivates between 2.000-3.000 ha with cereal and vegetables (Bodenpunkte 58), has dairy cows, dairy goats, chicken and vegetable production. They market their own brand of consumer products, which they produce in their own dairy, own bakery and kitchen. They sell their products in their own farm shop, their online shop as well as in supermarkets in the region.

hectare:	2.000 – 3.000
livestock:	cows, goats and chickens
employees:	more than 100
style of farm:	ecological
direct marketing:	yes

## Farmer 2: “The self-critical and proud large-scale eco-entrepreneur”

This farmer is the executive manager and owner of the largest part of the business. He came to the farm years ago and was running a big conventional farm in Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania before.

In this interview, it became clear that he has a focus on his staff, their well-being and their loyalty to the firm. He is the only one who mentions *“work-life-balance”*, but not for him, but for his employees. For him the future of the farm and it’s profitability is tightly linked to the people working there. He sees his loyal employees, who believe in the business and the ideology of sustainability and awareness for nature, as the most valuable asset of the firm. He loves his job, because he sees a purpose in what he is

doing. He feels responsible for his staff, the consumers and the environment. For him society has a clear right to formulate demands for things like nature protection, biodiversity and good quality agricultural products. To him it is obvious that agriculture must deliver those public goods, since the urban population simply can't – on the other hand the urban population has to buy the products that consider these requirements, which the products from his farm do and are known for.

He is the only interviewee, who feels appreciated by the greater public *"Ich persönlich fühle mich sehr gut behandelt. (...) Weil ich für das was ich tue total viel Akzeptanz erfahre"*.

He is aware that his business is successfully established and is occupying the „market niche“ of society's top demands concerning agriculture: *"(...) wir besetzen Themen, die im Moment in der Gesellschaft oben anstehen: Biologische Landwirtschaft, Soziale Verantwortung, Naturschutzprojekte und solche Geschichten."*

For him cultural and craftsmanship aspects of agricultural production in rural areas matter. He is disappointed that the structural change has led to the concentration of fewer big farms, even bigger and fewer processing companies and gigantic dairies. For him the artisan aspect and the rural art of food production and processing has been suffering. Whilst on one hand focusing on regional development and rural areas, he is the one who's business is actually trading with other continents, and who has several business contracts with fruit producers from tropical countries.

#### Farm 3:

This farm is another former LPG, which is now run by three executive managers. It is conventionally cultivating more than 2.000 ha of land (Bodenpunkte 34) and has cows, of which the half are dairy cows, and has sheep for meat production. They are producing their own fodder for their cattle, sell their cereal to big trader companies and deliver their milk to a local dairy which produces a local brand of Brandenburg. They are cultivating a certain kind of old rye, which goes to a local bakery. The farm does not have any kind of farm shop or direct marketing.

hectare:	2.000 – 3.000
livestock:	cows and sheep
employees:	more than 30
style of farm:	conventional
direct marketing:	no

#### Farmer 3: "Increasingly frustrated and disenchanted female head of animal production"

This female farmer grew up in Brandenburg and was in her twenties, when Germany unified. She came to this farm 25 years ago and is working there as the head of animal production and is mainly involved in milk production. She is one of three elected executives of the farm. She has completed her vocational training and her studies as an agricultural engineer in East Germany. She does not have a family background in farming.

She is very much caught up in her job. When I asked her what the main task of a farmer is, she was not able to generalize and answered in an amazingly detailed description of what the daily routine of a dairy farmer involves. She is one of the two interviewees, who emotionally talk about their kids. Although this farmer loves her job, she seems frustrated and expresses her disillusionment throughout the interview, e.g.: *"Aber ich bin mittlerweile schon zu lange im Geschäft und habe schon zu viele*



Tiefschläge erlitten und muss mich auch ein wenig zwingen, mich noch darüber (= die schöne Arbeit mit den Tieren) zu freuen.“ She is disappointed by the consumers, who demand animal welfare and are not willing to pay for it: „Das jeder die heile Heidi-Welt haben will, oder sie direkt fordert, ohne zu wissen, was man da fordert, und ohne im Umkehrschluss bereit zu sein, dass dann auch zu bezahlen.“ She is frustrated about her position in the value chain and feels powerless towards the dairy companies who dictate the price: “Und die Molkerei sagt mir Mitte des Monats, was ich für den Vormonat für meine gesamte Milchmenge bekomme. Das ist doch wohl das Hinterletzte. Das gibt es in keiner anderen Branche. Also der Preisdruck und das schlechte Image... Tierquäler, Umweltverschmutzer und Subventionsempfänger...”

She doesn't feel represented enough from farm groups like the Bauernverband and demands that they should rather do more PR for farming. Instead she accuses them for receiving “überdurchschnittliche Gehälter (...) - die Leute da verdienen wesentlich mehr als wir hier in der Praxis, deswegen gehen auch genügend Leute aus der Praxis weg zu solchen... ja, Behörden, kann man fast sagen.”

She is fed up of always being the “guilty one” and does not utter a single self-critical word. It is interesting how she expresses how depressed and hopeless the entire situation is – and in the end it turns out that she always has been politically involved and actively expresses her opinion on the political stage when possible.

#### Farm 4:

This arable farm is cultivating between 1.000 – 2.000 ha, of which 25% are cultivated ecologically, the rest conventionally. It is a family farm run by the female interviewee, in charge of the conventional land and her husband, who runs the ecological cultivation. They are employing about five to ten members of staff and are selling their cereal to large international trading companies.

hectare:	1.000 – 2.000
livestock:	no
employees:	5-10
style of farm:	conventional and ecological
direct marketing:	no

Farmer 4: “Strategic, rather unemotional female farmer, who is actively looking for new potential and market outlets for her business”

This female farmer is in her thirties and grew up on their family farm and was a kid, when Germany was reunited. She studied in east and west Germany. She mentions two children and how she and her husband are sharing the childcare duties.

Besides the other female farmer, she is the only one who mentions her children and that she is happy that they are growing up with a different perception of agriculture and environment: “Ich bin froh, wenn die diese neue Wahrnehmung in sich aufnehmen...von sich und der Umwelt.”

She is sure that in the future “Naturflächen” will have their own economic value and a new market will emerge. She sees herself as a manager and her main task is to be thinking ahead and knowing where new developments will lead.

She left the impression of a strategically, sober thinking business manager. E.g. they used to have cattle and decided to sell it for economic reasons. Usually such a decision does not come easy and lots of



emotions are involved, but she mentions it rather casually. „Wir haben keine Viecher, wir hatten eigene Rinder, hatten früher ne' eigene Schlachtung, und ne Direktvermarktung, das ist alles total schön, aber echt nen Haufen Arbeit. Aber wir haben ne strategische Entscheidung getroffen, wir machen jetzt Ackerbau. Das ist auch ne' strategische Entscheidung, das ist was Solides, damit kann man Geld verdienen.“

She shows a very reflective and self-critical approach to today's farming, and admits, that there have been mistakes in the past in conventional farming, like intensive use of chemicals, which needs to be accepted and changed. She partly blames the profession, including herself for becoming "betriebsblind". In her eyes, everyone is responsible for their own actions, and every farmer knows what he or she is doing and what the consequences are. She is certainly one of the farmers who left the impression of being the least passionate about her job.

#### Farm 5:

This farm is cultivating also cultivating between 1.000 and 2.000 ha, also conventionally and some parts, including the mother cow branch, ecologically. The soil quality differs a lot and varies between 32 and 60 Bodenpunkte. The farm is diversified, and they also have fattening bulls, as well as chicken on a larger scale. They deliver a lot of their maize to the biogas plant, of which they are a shareholder. They are selling their cereal to large trading companies and market a big share of their cattle to a supermarket chain where their meat is sold on the "regional" top price level. The farm is split in several different companies, and is also running a contractor business, where machines and worker are rented out to other farms. They are constantly looking for other opportunities of market outlets, e.g. a big ecological laying-hen business or their own farm shop.

hectare:	1.000 - 2.000
livestock:	cows, bulls, chicken
employees:	10
style of farm:	conventional and ecological
direct marketing:	no

Farmer 5: "The rational, analytical entrepreneur who rejects all accusations from society"

This farmer grew up on the family farm, and studied agricultural engineering before returning to the farm and taking it over from his father 17 years ago. For him the future lies in expanding the farm through, e.g. a farm shop, and in better technology. He sees great potential in digitalisation and innovative technology. He is convinced that ecological farming is not necessarily better for the environment but recently transformed the mother cow branch of the company to organic due to a better economic position in the market.

He doesn't see any demands of society as justified: "Naja, es wird von uns ja schon verlangt, dass unsere Produktionsweise am besten alle in den Ökobereich umstellen und dadurch dann das Klima retten. (...) Also diese Beschuldigung als solche und die Forderung als solches ist Mumpitz. Im Ökobereich werden Sachen anders gemacht, aber das führt nicht dazu, dass wir weniger emittieren. (...)"

Where he sees a problem, is in the bad image of agriculture and he thinks that he and other farmers should start to better present themselves and do more for a positive image. He sees a need for a better public image of farmers and agriculture and again, connects this with a better potential market outlet.

He often mentions that everything on the farm has to have a certain “*Ordnung*”, like the finances, the processes and how routine and order are essential. He is not very fond of changes of any kind and seems inflexible when it comes to new directives or support measures.

He is one of the few, who take the global markets into account and sees them as a business-man-challenge rather than a threat.

He likes to work independently and would rather not get any subsidies and does not demand anything from politics – only that the policies are fixed and he can get planning security.

Farm 6:

This 1.000 ha conventional farm is producing milk from about 400 cows for a big dairy close by. The poor soil (30 Bodempunkte) benefits from an old irrigation system which is fuelled by an underlying lake, which allows the farm to produce potatoes on a larger scale. The potatoes are processed in their own facilities and sold to commercial kitchens in the region. Many of the buildings of the former manor are now part of a hostel business, where school classes come and spend a week on the farm learning about nature and farming.

hectare:	1.000
livestock:	milk cows, deer, a few pigs
employees:	between 30 – 50
style of farm:	conventional
direct marketing:	yes

Farmer 6: “Passionate, motivated farmer who claims that instincts for markets, timing and staff are most important”

This manager got to the farm only three years ago and works as their executive manager. He grew up in a village next door, completed a vocational training in the GDR and managed a big farm before. He shows a great passion for his job – *„Also mir macht das so einen Spaß - ich empfinde das nicht als Arbeit. Ich vergesse ja manchmal abends nach Hause zu fahren!“* He emphasizes how much responsibility he carries as a producer of food, and how afraid he is that food production will be pushed aside or even replaced by eco-friendly and biodiversity fostering “landscape design”. This is also his explanation for the silly and sometimes contradicting legislation enacted by the government, especially the Dünge VO. Some directives even go against laws of nature. He expresses that he knows more about natural and agricultural processes than people enacting laws. He also talks about ways how to move around the requirements and how to “trick” the system. But he seems to only take these measures because running the farm according to all single legal requirements would be impossible for a farm like his, since the legislation is contradicting and hindering itself. *“Ich muss ja auch ein bisschen was anderes machen, als ich aufschreibe, um wirklich was zu ernten.“*

He feels patronized by the authorities and is sure, that farmers would not act very differently, if there weren’t any legal requirements. He shows a great trust in his farming skills and the ones of his colleges. He also denies the responsibility of farming for the “Insektensterben” and names other non-farming related reasons, which are to blame.

He finds it dreadful, that *“die ganzen guten Mittel, was die Insektizide angeht, die sind ja alle verboten worden. Das ist ja fürchterlich. Und was du heute bekommst, das wackelt dann hinterher genauso wie*

*vorher. Und zusehen, wie die die Ernte auffressen... das tut so weh... wir werden den Raps rauswerfen aus der Fruchtfolge, weil das nicht in den Griff zu bekommen ist..., dass man das Saatgut nicht beizen darf... dann muss man viel mehr spritzen. Das kostet auch alles Geld. Und alles was dann da wegfliegt, dass kriegt einen mit. Diese Neonix waren echt wichtig.“*

He claims that the government tries to suppress farmers in order to promote other industries, like the car industry in order to allow better trade on a global level.

He is convinced that the right instinct and the right timing for harvest and sowing as well as for selling and buying, are much more decisive than earning big yields. *“Es geht um den Zeitpunkt des Verkaufens, gerade beim Getreide. Das man hier so ein bisschen das kaufmännische... da ist das meiste Potenzial. Dieses Gespür für den Markt. Das kann man keinem beibringen. Das muss man einfach in sich haben.“*

He sees himself as a clever entrepreneur, who has a feeling for economic markets and for staff – motivated employees are important. *“Na, das wäre erstmals das Personal zu motivieren. Ich bin ja nur Psychiater hier, in diesem Laden. Du musst ständig die Leute aufbauen!“*

#### Farm 7:

This conventional farm with an average soil quality of 42 Bodenkategorie is very diversified. With its about 20 members of staff they are keeping dairy cows, running a biogas plant and have a lot of photovoltaic. They are located not too far from Berlin and see this as a future business opportunity.

hectare:	500 -1.000
livestock:	dairy cows
employees:	20
style of farm:	conventional
direct marketing:	no

Farmer 7: *“Proud, young farmer, who sees being a dairy farmer as a special privilege and as an exclusive circle of tough and grief resistant farmers”*

This farmer is in his thirties and was born in the village next door, and completed his vocational training on this farm and studied in Saxony Anhalt, both in the former GDR. For years now he has been responsible for the animal production. His father has also already worked on this farm. This farmer loves his job and is able to emotionally express his feelings, which distinguishes him from the others.

He has a rather deep relationship with “his” cows. Although he doesn’t own them, his biggest concern is their wellbeing. He even identifies with them *„...auch wenn du durch den Stall gehst, und die Tiere laufen dir hinterher, stupsen dich ein bisschen an, oder so schlecken Dich so ein bisschen an oder so wat - und da weisst du auch, du bist in der Herde so richtig aufgenommen. Und kein Fremdkörper mehr, sondern, dass du zu Herde auch son bisschen mitgehörst.“*

He is very proud of being a farmer and sees it as a special job that comes with a unique professional ethic, where you show responsibility for the region, for the land and for the animals: *“Also der Spruch “Landwirt sein ist kein Beruf, sondern eine Berufung” der stimmt. Man muss da mit Enthusiasmus hinterstehen, man hat eine gewissen Berufsethik, nenne ich das mal.“*

Especially being a dairy farmer is something extraordinary and only a certain kind of suitable people can enter this exclusive circle: *“Ich sage mal so, wir sind ein erlesener Kreis, wir Milchproduzenten“.*

According to him, you have to be willing to get dirty, work physically hard and the ones who can't stand the pressure and workload anymore, give up and sell their cows and become profitable crop farmers.

#### Farm 8:

This diversified conventional farm is run by the farmer and one worker. They are a crop farm and sell Christmas trees in winter and produce compost and also work as contractors. The soil quality is rather poor with 35 Bodenpunkte.

hectare:	100 – 1000
livestock:	no
employees:	2
style of farm:	conventional
direct marketing:	no

Farmer 8: "Young, negative farmer who came from west Germany, who likes to experiment and has diversified his farm"

This farmer received his vocational training and studied in west Germany and came to the farm 20 years ago – which his uncle bought for them. He likes to experiment (e.g. adding micro nutrients to plants) and appreciates to exchange information and tips with other farmers.

He is not convinced that there is a decline in insects, and he does not see the guaranteed market prices in the EU (before 1991) as subsidies, but as real prices. For him the policies are making it increasingly harder to be a farmer. He feels that society is not appreciating his hard work. In general, this young farmer seemed in a good mood, but almost every uttering was a complaint.

#### Farm 9:

This is a small one-man farm close to Berlin. It is mainly a conventional crop farm with poor land (25 Bodenpunkte) but generates most of its income with pension horses and provides many facilities for horseback riding. They are increasingly trying to get into direct marketing and just started to establish a herd of cattle.

hectare:	less than 100
livestock:	cows and pension horses
employees:	1
style of farm:	conventional
direct marketing:	not yet

Farmer 9: "Timid farmer who desperately tries to keep family business running – for emotional heritage sake"

This farmer shows many interesting facets. On the one hand he is a sensitive nature lover and has a great passion for all animals. He e.g. keeps records on how many pheasants he sees in one summer, has 95 swallow nests on his farm, which he does not remove although they produce so much dirt and he replants fruitful hedges to give birds and animals shelter: *"Und denn so ne Streifen, so ne Randeplanzung mit Holunder, Wildbirne, Wilderapfel und Beeren und so. Das is jut für die Vögel und blüht auch noch schön. So wat freut einen dann."*

He enjoys his work and that he can work independently, that's why he doesn't like the pension horse

business that much. He despises being a “Dienstleister” and is sometimes annoyed by all the ‘complicated’ horse owners and only keeps this branch because he loves horses and needs the money. He is the interviewee who mentions his family history intensively and seems to be carrying a great burden: the business is not going too well, but selling the farm is not at all an option. Before the war this farm was flourishing, after the war the farm became expropriated and later part of a LPG and was then given back in a very bad state. He mentions his father and his grandfather often throughout the interview. The next generation plays a role too – both his sons want to take over the hardly profitable farm. It is noticeable how happy the farmer is about this fact, but he also knows that this is not going to be easy.

On the other hand there are many statements, which are not soft, sensitive, emotional or thought through and partly even contradicting to what he just expressed before.

He repeats, sometimes even populist, slogans about agricultural politics: *“Die Politiker da in Berlin – davon hat keiner mehr einen landwirtschaftlichen Hintergrund! Das sind nur noch Rechtsanwälte! (...) und die sind so ...blind... die wollen am liebsten einen großen Naturpark aus Deutschland machen”*. Without considering, that this „Naturpark“ could actually be what he is appreciating and trying to foster on his own farm already himself.

Or he denies the *“Insektensterben”* and proclaims the pesticides, which he calls *“Gifte”*, have no impact on the plants or the insects, *“das ist oftmals die Unwissenheit von vielen Leuten”* – but in the same sentence he admits: *“Weil ich einfach nicht gerne mit Gift arbeite... (...). Aber wie gesagt, das Gift selbst, wenn man das einatmet, das hat schon Nebenwirkungen, das ist nicht ohne... und das ist eben Gift.”* In his view the “Gift” is poison for him, but if he puts it on the field – there will not be any impact! Another typical “Stammtisch” slogan he utters is that there are way too many wolves around already, they are everywhere – but when I ask him, if he or anyone he knows has seen one, he has to deny it.

#### Farm 10:

The smallest of the 10 farms is an exception. It is run in a collective by about 10 people. They are living and working together, whereas some only stay for a couple of days per week. Together they cultivate about between 0-100 hectares of poor sandy land. Most of the farm is grass land but they also produce vegetables, which they sell on ecological farmers market in Berlin.

hectare:	less than 100
livestock:	cows
employees:	10
style of farm:	ecological
direct marketing:	they sell vegetables on markets in Berlin

Farmer 10: “Educated, eloquent and ideology driven eco farmer, who sees great potential in farming and stresses the political dimension of farming”

This farmer is also an exception, since he is the ‘least farmer’. He is about 30 years old, studied bachelor and master in ecological agricultural management and doesn’t have a farming background. Like most of his fellow farmers on the farm he is ideology driven and thinks that the right kind of agriculture is the key to a healthier and better planet. He hopes that ecological farming will be better supported in future and sees sustainability, ecology and regionality as values that need to be pushed and eventually become

marketable goods. It is obvious that he studied agricultural politics and is familiar with the current situation as well as with history and can express clearly his demands for future agricultural policies.

He stands out of the other farmers, because he freely chooses that business and mostly for ideological reasons.

## 4.2 Inductive codes - analysis question by question

Since theorizing should be generative, new and interesting I first analysed the answers given without any attention to agricultural discourses. The discourses will become the focus in 4.3. This open, nonbiased approach enables to find new aspects of self-concepts, which will be connected to the discourses later. In the following section the given answers are grouped into nine theme complexes (see chapter 4.2.1 – 4.2.9).

A table with answers to all interview questions by all farmers can be found in Appendix E.

### 4.2.1 Being a farmer: yesterday, today and tomorrow

The first five questions of the interview were aiming at a description of how the interviewees see their profession. This open descriptive question allowed the interviewees to decide, what to stress and what to leave out. These descriptive answers allowed to be grouped into three categories: past, present and future.

#### *Farming today*

Farmers 1, 2 and female farmer 4, (and to a lesser extent farmer 5) - the ones with the largest farm and the most employees - have a technical description and used the word 'manager' and stressed the importance of an economical overview and good controlling, as well as being familiar with all processes on the farm. One of them describes his job as a "*Problemlöser*", who tries to combine what the consumer wants with what politics demands. He has the self-image of an entrepreneur, who provides services – but always keeps the economical aspect in mind: "*Und der große Punkt ist ja noch, wie bezahle ich all die Aktivitäten, die andere wollen?*" (Farmer 1).

All other, smaller farmers have a more emotional and less technical approach. They stress how rewarding and diverse their job is, but also emphasise that it is tough and usually you have extraordinary long working hours.

The first answers of the interview show that farmers of larger farms have a more technical and entrepreneurial approach, whereas those of smaller farms give an emotional description of their job. Farmers with more employees see the future as a challenge, but are confident that they will be able to keep their business running. Smaller farmers leave the impression of being afraid of the future.

#### *Farming yesterday*

When they have to compare their job today with the job 30 years ago, they list advantages, which they enjoy today, like: less physical work due to technical progress and less constraints from their narrow-minded predecessor, mostly their fathers or uncles.

But the lion share of differences they name are negative aspects: today there is much more paperwork,

more constraints from bureaucrats that don't make any sense, less room for spontaneity, difficulties to find qualified workers, not getting the appreciation in public you deserve and due to competing on the world market the price pressure has increased and many farms had to close down. Here the cliché of the moaning farmer is indeed confirmed. It could be summarized as: (almost) everything was better in the past.

But there are two exceptions, who don't complain but mention other kinds of differences. Farmer 2, who runs the large business, says that society has opened up and allowed a business like his to flourish. He adds *„Heute bin ich Ökobauer und vor 30 Jahren war ich noch konventionell. Das ist ein Schritt, der sich in der Gesellschaft vollzogen hat, dass man sich geöffnet hat, zu anderen Betriebstypen“* (Farmer 2).

The second exception is the young, eco-collective farmer (Farmer 10), who says, that today farming has to fulfil many societal demands like biodiversity, animal welfare and environmental protection. Most farmers feel that everything used to be easier in the past, but the eco farmers positively regard a change within society, their demands and therefore consequences for today's farmer's work.

#### *Farming tomorrow*

Seven out of ten farmers mention that increased digitalisation and technologization will be dominating agriculture in the future.

Farmer 7, the passionate dairy farmer and farmer 9, the struggling one-man-business, are worried if their farm will still exist in 2040, due to their bad economic situation or the continuing centralisation of the agricultural sector.

Three farmers, 4, 6 and 10 are the ones not just mentioning technical differences or the number of farms but are addressing potential changes in the market, moving away from exclusive food production. Farmer 6, the passionate farmer, who claims instincts for markets are key, predicts that future farmers will produce less food but rather be working as landscape designers, and is not sure how he feels about it but would rather not have it that way. The ideology driven young farmer 10, on the other hand hopes that ecological achievements will be rewarded in future farming and demands support for the provision of public goods. The strategically thinking female farmer 4, who always looks for new market outlets, forecasts that ecological services will become their own market. Nature areas will create their own value and will be tradeable. Since she is an analytical businesswoman, she will certainly start providing these goods.

#### *Climate change and loss of biodiversity*

I would have expected the farmers to mention climate change and a loss of biodiversity as parameters that will determine future farming, but only three farmers mention it. Farmer 8 doubts that climate change is manmade, but thinks about new breeding methods to tackle it. For the biggest farmer with very poor soil, farmer 1, technical remedies, like irrigation, will be necessary.

The loss of biodiversity was mentioned by half of the farmers, where four out of those five denied that there was any loss. Two of them said *“Das mit dem Insektensterben, dass ist Schmarren!”* or *„Vergiftung usw... aber wenn ich das jetzt nur als Beispiel von letztem Jahr sehe - alle reden vom Insektensterben, aber (...) so viele Käfer, wie wir dieses Jahr mit auf dem Anhänger hatten, habe ich noch nie gesehen. Also da kann man nicht sagen "Insektensterben!"* (Farmer 8).



The exceptional young farmer 10, who is highly educated and has no farming background, supports the contrary view. He says the following sentence which is a text book example of a green and academic discourse: *“Die größten Herausforderungen, vor denen wir gesamtgesellschaftlich stehen, (sind) der Klimawandel und vor allem aber auch der Artenschwund”* (Farmer 10).

90% of the farmers mention that future farming will be determined primarily by technology and digital innovations - climate change or declining biodiversity is only mentioned by few and never as the first, mayor aspect.

#### 4.2.2 Challenges and chances

Throughout the interviews it became clear what aspects farmers see as new opportunities and where they face challenges.

Most farmers see their main business chances in increased direct marketing. All of them see Berlin as a market outlet and support the idea of increased regionality of consumption. The other chance mentioned by most is to (keep) diversifying their farm, e.g. through direct marketing, or energy production through biogas plants, wind energy or photo voltaic.

All of them say they are already practicing direct marketing or diversification or are at least thinking about it and will start to realize these in future. Interestingly the chances are not seen as a positive mean to e.g. improve the economic situation or to make the farm more resilient, but rather as tool to minimize the damage. Here again the “moaning farmer” attitude becomes obvious. They diversify their farm, not because they intrinsically want to – but only because they are forced to by outside factors in order to be more resilient. E.g female farmer 4 explains why they founded the ecological branch of their farm: *“Wir haben eben gemerkt: der Markt ist voll mit dem konventionellen Getreide und wir müssen was anderes machen”* (Farmer 4).

For farmer 9, the struggling one-man-business, the pension horses are only there to keep the business going, although he despises being a service provider: *„Um nicht als keiner Familienbetrieb auf der Strecke zu bleiben. (...) Bei uns funktioniert halt dieses Paket nur mit Pferdepension und Ackerbau und dann geht es gerade so. Aber das bleibt schwierig...”* (Farmer 9).

In the farmers’ view, chances lie in diversification and direct marketing - but only in order to control the damage and to stay in business. A reactive rather than a proactive attitude can be observed. One exception here is the large eco-entrepreneur, who sees chances for his business in increased staff loyalty. He employs 180 people and he is the only one who sees potential in something that already exists. *“Wenn man weiß wofür man etwas tut (...), dann glaube ich, dass das dem ganzen Betrieb dienlich ist”* (Farmer 2).

The challenges mentioned by the farmers are related to the chances. They feel the need to invest in public relations in order to improve their reputation and in connection with increased direct marketing. The other problem many farmers face is the lack of qualified workers. Finding the right worker and keeping them motivated is hard: *“Na, das wäre erstmal das Personal zu motivieren. Ich bin ja nur Psychiater hier, in diesem Laden. Du musst ständig die Leute aufbauen. Die werden ja immer schlecht gemacht die Landwirte... und dann letztes Jahr die Trecker-Demos - ich halte da nicht viel von, aber ich hab die Leute hingeschickt. Die fühlen sich denn so’n bisschen mitgenommen und das hat echt was*

*gebracht hier für den Betrieb“ (Farmer 1).*

Throughout the interview all farmers, but the young ideological farmer 10, mention that it all comes down to being able to keep the farm economically running and pay their workers sufficiently. Farmer 8 puts it most dramatically and names as the biggest challenge for his successor: *“Überleben!”*. Farmer 9 sees it the same way and adds that it is hard to keep the business running, that he is not sure whether farming is actually still wanted by non-farmers.

Farmer 5 sees the uneasy economic situation based on the fact that you need to compete on the world market whilst producing under higher standards. Farmer 1 is concerned about the degree of technology that will be required and the dependency on high skilled mechanics that can fix those machines. The challenges farmers face today are staying in business, finding and keeping qualified workers and to improve public relations and their image.

### 4.2.3 Pros and cons of being a farmer

When asked about the differences between their job and other jobs, they mention that their work is more outside and tied to nature and to change of seasons. They also stress the dependence on weather, which makes the business quite unique, but also cost some nerves.

The other aspect which differentiates farmers from other professions is the intensive, sometimes physical work. They state to have long working hours and especially livestock farmers have almost no holiday – somehow, they seem proud when they mention these facts. They seem to indulge their justified reputation of working hard.

This pride-aspect is linked to the responsibility the profession carries. According to farmer 8, farmers are uniquely important due to them feeding the population.

For the young dairy farmer 7, the profession is only suitable for the chosen few, who can stand the pressure and the working conditions and share the same “work ethic”. The job of a dairy farmer, to him, is highly exclusive and exceptional.

The aspects they like most about their job are the work outside and with animals. They enjoy the creative or creational element (das “Gestalterische”) and to see things grow or develop. When asked about the level of diversity in their job tasks, eight of ten farmers score 5 on a five-step likert-scale. Only two decide for 4.

The farmers feel exceptional, due to their exposition to nature and, some feel privileged since not everyone can become a farmer - you have to be born for it: tough and grief-resistant. Every farmer seems to be proud of their physical, psychological and economical stamina.

All in all everyone sees their job as hard work but diverse and fulfilling.

Without any exception all farmers hate to be restricted by authorities or regulations. They are, to different degrees, convinced that they know better than any ministry or scientist. E.g. the ‘Düngeverordnung’ is in their view mostly “Blödsinn”. Here the female crop farmer 4, and the ecological farmers are less extreme and rather concentrate on their own business than fulminating about the incompetence of politicians. But conventional farmers are highly confident that they know better. Farmer 6 is convinced that farmers are fully aware of what they do, and states: *„Und ich denke immer: wenn man alle Gesetzte wegnimmt und den Bauern freie Hand lassen würde, die würden gar nicht so*

*viel anders machen! Denn das kostet ja alles Geld!“ (Farmer 6).*

What also annoys farmers 1 and 2, the ones with most employees, is to settle disputes between their workers and to be involved in negotiations with feisty business partners. They seem to have a need for harmony.

All farmers are convinced that they know best and give the impression that they would rather just be left alone – and not patronised by politicians and scientists nor harassed by business partners.

#### 4.2.4 Tasks and responsibility

When asked what their main task as a farmer is today, there are interesting differences in the detail or depth they choose to answer.

Exceptional is the description of the female dairy farmer 3. She elaborately describes the very detailed daily routine of a dairy farmer and does not mention any general task or duty of an “average farmer”. She is stuck on her description of a dairy farmer and unable to generalize and to zoom out. This could indicate how much she identifies with her job.

The other farmers name more general and universal tasks. For the majority of other livestock farmers animal’s wellbeing is their first priority and their most important task.

Farmers 1, 4 and 8 name ‘being a manager or coordinator with a clear plan’ as their main task. Not just short term but long-term planning and being aware of future trends is key, according to their statements. For farmer 2, the large eco-entrepreneur, who stresses the importance of ecological aspects and his worker’s wellbeing in the rest of the interview, has a surprisingly clear economical answer: *“Die wichtigste Aufgabe ist, den Betrieb betriebswirtschaftlich im Griff zu haben. Denn die Alternative ist: Aufgabe. Das ist total wichtig, das dabei zu haben. Was bringt dir der Weizen auf dem Feld, wenn du all das Geld im Büro wieder rausschmeißt?” (Farmer 2).*

Only two farmers, 9 and 10, name the almost self-evident task of producing food. The young, eco-farmer 10 adds, that he thinks that this is also a role the farmer fulfils for society: *“Die wichtigste Aufgabe, finde ich, ist, dass er oder sie Nahrungsmittel produziert. Das finde ich die wichtigste gesellschaftliche Aufgabe. Und das ist im Übrigen auch eine Sache, die mich immer daran gereizt hat, einfach einen wirklich wichtigen, systemrelevanten Beruf zu wählen” (Farmer 10).*

He then mentions the environmental aspects as the second most important task:

*„An zweiter Stelle ist aber auch die Produktion umweltfreundlich und nachhaltig zu gestalten, sodass es eben nicht auf Kosten von Artenvielfalt geht“ (Farmer 10).*

All interviewees share a feeling of responsibility or even responsibilities for several aspects. Although not specifically asked for, “responsibility” is mentioned many times by the interviewees. Mostly in connection to how they see their job. For farmers 1, 6 and 8 there is a high responsibility towards the public, since they are “feeding the population” and female dairy farmer 3 agrees and adds *“ohne uns würden alle verhungern” (Farmer 3).*

Fifty percent of the farmers mention how they feel responsible for their staff.

Farmer 6 even mentions four different kinds of responsibility, without me asking for it: he sees the responsibility towards society to produce good food, he feels responsible towards his workers to ensure a nice working environment and enough wages, he feels responsibility towards his cattle and wants them

to be treated well and he also feels responsible towards biodiversity – but it needs to be paid sufficiently! “Wir müssen von unserer Arbeit leben können!” is the justification he adds for maybe not fulfilling that responsibility to his expectations.

Farmer 9, the struggling one-man business farmer, does not mention it specifically, but with no doubt feels some sort of responsibility for the family heritage.

Farmer 2, the large eco-entrepreneur, stresses that farmers need to take responsibility for what society demands: *“Das wir Naturschutz betreiben, dass wir in einer gesellschaftlichen Machtaufteilung oder Verantwortungsaufteilung die Verantwortung übernehmen, uns um das Land und die Artenvielfalt zu kümmern. Und um den Naturschutz. Das wird von uns erwartet”* (Farmer 2). Later he adds that any societal demand must be heard and is potentially justified.

Farmer 1, the patron of the region, emphasises the responsibility he and his farm bear for the entire region and the local population. E.g. he is keeping up the regional production, although it is tough, in order to keep the rootedness in the region and somehow the population is expecting that of him. Due to the size of his farm he feels responsible for his smaller colleagues and is politically engaged and fights for farmers’ rights, because he has the capacities to do so.

They mention taking care of animals, having a business-owner like overview, staying economical and to produce food as their main tasks.

They share the feeling of responsibility for society, for their workers and staff, for their animals, for their family and property, for the region, and for environment with all its creatures.

#### 4.2.5 Government and politics

##### *Current political system*

The question “Do you feel your farm should be receiving governmental support?” is the only question, which is answered the same way by all ten farmers: Yes. Farmers should receive subsidies, but only because the market does not reward them with the true value of goods they produce! And all of them agree that they would rather be paid by the product price via the market, than receive governmental support. Farmer 8 adds, that he doesn’t want any financial help from the government – he wants the system to be like when his father was still an active farmer – good and stable prices for the products. What he doesn’t see or doesn’t want to see, is that the guaranteed minimum prices he demands were also subsidised and artificial. This obliviousness is astonishing and shows some degree of denial of reality.

##### *Future political system*

When asked about, what the future support should look like, very different answers are given: Only one farmer, the large 5.500 ha farmer 1, is happy with the current payment system per hectare and about the extra premium for deprived areas.

Female farmer 4 of the mixed farm (eco and conventional) sees it the other way around and would like to see a future focus on ecosystem services and moving away from the “unconditional” payments per hectare. Farmer 6 would also like to replace the area-based payments and calls for payments that are linked to certain measures on the farm. This would make the support more targeted and would lead to

increased public acceptance. As mentioned above farmer 8 is also against area-based payments and requests stable and guaranteed prices for products. The frustrated female dairy farmer 3 demands the future support to strengthen the position of farmers in the value chain. Especially in negotiations with big dairies she feels like she has no leverage. The analytical farmer 5 demands better

*“Planungssicherheit”* and that regulations should only be altered every 7 years.

The smallest conventional farmer, farmer 9, demands that Germany should import less goods from other countries and rather support its own production and market. He doesn't say if he would like entirely closed borders but leaves the impression that he would welcome such decision.

The large eco-farmer 2 claims that rural development policies failed to look after regional and artisan ways of food production and after craftsmanship, which used to be practiced in rural regions. Instead, they fostered centralisation, which weakened rural areas.

The small, ideological eco-farmer 10 demands that subsidies should be used to “fix the problems” caused by the current agricultural system, e.g. water pollution and resistances against antibiotics.

#### *Representation by the government*

Farmers 6, 8, 9 and 3 feel like politicians are patronising them. First, they doubt, if those politicians have any specialist background and second, they don't feel included in the decision process. Even after the big tractor demonstrations in autumn of 2019, farmer 9 states disapprovingly: *“Aber trotzdem wurde über den Kopf hinweg entschieden...”* (Farmer 9).

The large conventional farmer 1, is a bit tensed, when he thinks about the future decisions of the government in Brandenburg with its green minister for agriculture: *“Bis dato war es leidlich erträglich, was mit uns so gemacht wurde. Also schlecht kann man nicht sagen, denn am Ende wurde es immer so ausgestaltet, dass wir immer mit nem blauen Auge davon gekommen sind und wir in unserer Form und Größe weiter wirtschaften konnten. So wie wir das seit jeher gelernt haben. Und wie es hier auch richtig ist. Aber wie es jetzt in Zukunft läuft... Also die Ideen, die jetzt die grüne Landesregierung in Richtung Brandenburg trifft...naja”* (Farmer 1).

The large ecological farmer 2, on the other hand, feels represented quite well, especially in Brandenburg and on the European level.

No unanimous attitude towards the current and future political system nor the representation by the government can be observed. When it comes to these topics the interviewed farmers are discordant. The only consensus lies within the necessity of current subsidies.

### 4.2.6 Farmers & society

The questions about how the farmers feel accepted or treated in public debate is emotional and appears to be a highly explosive topic.

#### *Societal demands*

Seven of ten farmers feel the need to defend themselves and are rejecting all kinds of demands uttered in the public debate. Many agree that “the public”, or at least a very vocal part of society, is demanding more animal welfare, more measures for increased biodiversity etc. but is not willing to pay for it: *“Dass jeder die heile Heidi-Welt haben will, oder sie direkt fordert, ohne zu wissen, was man da fordert, und*

ohne, im Umkehrschluss bereit zu sein, dass dann auch zu bezahlen. Also diese Forderung von Dingen, die sie nicht verstehen bis zum Schluss – das muss ich so sagen. Jeder Verbraucher, jedes Mitglied in der Gesellschaft bildet sich ein, fordern zu können, wie die Tiere gehalten werden sollen“ (Farmer 3). Here again they feel that non-farmers don't trust them and don't appreciate their work – although the farmer, in their view, is working hard every day to feed the 'ungrateful population'.

For farmer 1 society is clearly demanding things they are not responsible for - as long as they don't get payed for it: *“Also die Gesellschaft möchte gerne ne blühende Landschaft haben und alles soll immer schön bunt sein. Ehm... dafür sind wir nicht zuständig. Wir sind zuständig dafür: unsere Aufgabe ist es Lebensmittel zu produzieren für die Gesellschaft. Das ist unser Zweck! Wenn wir jetzt Fördermittel bekommen für Blühstreifen und Ähnliches, dann machen wir das gern. Ich habe immer gesagt: Ich mache alles was Sie wollen - ich muss davon leben können!”* (Farmer 1).

For farmers 7, 8 and 9 it has to be made clear that agriculture is not the only cause for climate change, contaminated water or the decrease in biodiversity (which farmer 8 and 9 have denied before...). The conventional farmers share the attitude that society is requesting things from agriculture and farmers, which they either are not responsible for or which they don't get payed or rewarded for. All in all there is a willingness to fulfil those demands - if they get paid for it.

The other three farmers were much more understanding of the societal demands, which are articulated towards the farmers. All of them are full or at least partly ecological farmers and see that society has indeed the right to formulate demands. For farmer 2 there is some kind of unwritten contract between people working in the cities who don't have the chance to have a great impact on e.g. biodiversity actively, but can buy the right product and the farmers who, on the other hand, have the possibility to positively influence nature. To the question, if he finds those demands justified, he answers: *“Total. Wer soll das sonst machen als wir Landwirte? Es kann kein anderer machen”* (Farmer 2). He adds, that society demands *„(...) dass wir in einer gesellschaftlichen Machtaufteilung oder Verantwortungsaufteilung die Verantwortung übernehmen, uns um das Land und die Artenvielfalt zu kümmern. Und um den Naturschutz. Das wird von uns erwartet. Das haben wir aber nicht gemacht. Wir haben stattdessen die Böden verseucht, "Agrafabriken" unterstützt und uns Nichts haben sagen lassen. Ich glaube, dass ist der wichtigste Punkt”* (Farmer 2).

Female farmer 4 agrees and adds that farmers, who are now annoyed by public demands, just acted too late and too slowly: *“Auf der anderen Seite spürt man jetzt den Unmut, den die Landwirte haben auf die Gesellschaft. Und wer den jetzt hat, der hat einfach nicht rechtzeitig reagiert. Wenn ich mir dessen bewusst bin, dass ich zu viel dünge, oder falsch spritze, dann weiß ich das einfach. Dann muss ich nicht warten, dass einer kommt und mir das sagt. Da sind wir viel zu lange so gefahren. Und da haben wir, ich ja auch, zu lange nicht richtig hingehört und insofern tun wir auch richtig daran, da auch mal hinzuhören”* (Farmer 4).

The eco farmers see most demands as justified and that they have to deliver, what is requested. On the other hand, they claim trust and faith from society in their skills and know-how.

#### *Perceived treatment and representation in public*

All farmers agree that they are treated in a nice way by people living in the region. All farmers, but the large eco-entrepreneur, farmer 1, feel that the image of farmers in the public is negative. Many complain



that the media etc. constantly paints with a broad brush and does not differentiate. Farmers 3, 6, 7 and 8 name the Brandenburger Bauernverband as the institution that comes closest to a good representation. Most are hesitant to name any institution representing them, and 4 of the farmers say, they don't feel represented by any. Interestingly female farmer 4 feels represented by the Bauernverband, the CDU on the national level, and by the Green party on the federal level. This is astonishing, since the first two institutions have little in common with the Green party.

#### *Role of farmers during Corona virus pandemic*

All farmers think that during corona crisis their reputation has risen, and they were more appreciated. But only one of them, farmer 6, is convinced that this will last.

### 4.2.7 Feelings expressed

Throughout the interviews the farmers express many different emotional states.

#### *Positive feelings*

All farmers share the strong feeling of pride in what they are doing and in their businesses. They are proud of having a profession, which has a meaning and makes sense. They leave the impression that the expressed pride is also an answer to the increased public critique they experience, and I have the feeling this could be an act of defiance. As described above, the young dairy farmer 7, feels satisfied with his job and enjoys every part of his hard work. He expresses the deepest emotional connection with his job and especially with his cows. Some farmers say they enjoy the appreciation of the local population for what they are doing and only farmer 2 receives this appreciation also by the public.

#### *Negative feelings*

Female dairy farmer 4 feels under pressure of the food retailers and she feels left alone by politics and unions and is disappointed by the consumer. She is very negative and disappointed by almost everyone – but not by herself. She does not utter a word of self-criticism.

Most farmers express the feeling of being underestimated by society and not taken seriously or – like the know-how and skills they have are not being recognized. Farmer 8 says about the image the public has of a farmer: „Man sagte ja immer "der Dumme Bauer" - aber wenn der Bauer dumm wäre, würden die keine Produkte produzieren und dann würden die anderen nicht mehr leben“ (Farmer 8). Most of them are fed up of being the scape goat of society.

The female farmer 4 demands more trust from society in the skills of the farmers. In line with the non-recognition of their skills stands the feeling of non-appreciation. For most farmers this lack of recognition of their work shows in consumers always buying the cheapest product. Although this accusation is probably valid, I think, that this argument is used by the farmers as a knock-out argument, which they can use to counter any accusation with.

Only the eco-farmer 2 did not use this knock-out argument – because his consumers do buy his expensive products.

Farmers 3, 5, 6 and 9 share the feeling of knowing better than authorities, scientists and especially law makers. For some this is a reason to complain and to find themselves in the role of the victim that is confronted with “silly” regulations they have to comply with. They don't just feel constrained but even



“gegängelt”(Farmer 6) by politics.

For the ‘cheeky devil’, farmer 6, this is a reason to trick a bit in the paperwork and to put down numbers which he manipulated slightly. He doesn’t want to be limited by people who don’t know his farm – he knows best and he knows how to manoeuvre around certain directives, in a “Schlitzohr-way”. Farmers 6 and 9 share the feeling of agriculture and farmers not being wanted. They are afraid that other industries are preferred to farming, like the car industry. For them the foul deals in agriculture the EU or Germany has with other nations, are only there to keep the car industry running.

All farmers share the strong feeling of pride in their profession. Most of them feel unappreciated and underestimated by society and constrained by politics and authorities.

#### 4.2.8 Constraining and enabling elements

During the interview, it became obvious that there are certain aspects that are either enabling the farmer to realize e.g. new business ideas, trying out alternatives to the methods they are used to, and some elements that are hindering and constraining them.

Enabling and facilitating elements are e.g. the closeness to Berlin with its many opportunities of market outlets and new possibilities for direct marketing. That is linked with the belief that better public relations e.g. through social media, and a better image of agriculture will open up new opportunities. But some farmers feel constrained by the lack of their own digital skills and abilities to handle new media. The idea to invest in “agritourism”, like a farm café or some holiday homes on the farm site, is an option many of them are considering. New technological innovations and modern machines are further aspects farmers see as broadening their space for future development. New breeding methods and new ways of cultivation are means, they are eager to use.

Their farm’s development is constrained by elements like overflowing legal regulations, bureaucracy and required documentation: “...und was wir hier heute an Papierkram machen müssen. Und was wir hier eingeschränkt werden und teilweise auch gegen Naturgesetz verstoßen müssen” (Farmer 6). Especially limiting and also a cause for frustration is the tensed market situation: the power of the few large food retailers to set the price and the farmers weak bargaining power is limiting their ability to negotiate and behave like emancipated trading partners.

The staff situation also has a major impact: is the father still on the farm? Are there enough qualified workers around? Those are factors limiting the farmer’s ability to unfold.

Most farmers see the closeness to Berlin and technological innovations as enabling elements. They feel constrained by regulations, their weak bargaining position towards the retailers and in their limited farm recourses like workers.

#### 4.2.9 Denial of reality and scientific facts

Astonishing is the certainty and emphasis with which some of the interviewees deny scientific facts. For farmers 8 and 6 it is clear that there is no loss of biodiversity. For them it is even the opposite – they assure that there have never been these many insects.

The obliviousness or stubbornness of farmer 8 continues when it comes to state support and subsidies. Although he leaves the impression of an “academic” farmer, who emphasises his final academic thesis

many times, he doesn't seem to know that the guaranteed market prices his father used to receive were also supported by the government. He states how back in the days they received the adequate price for their work. Alternatively, he is indeed aware of the fact, maybe subconsciously denies it, and just follows this easy line of argumentation.

Another example is how farmer 9 has the gut instinct that pesticides, or *poison* as he calls it, has a bad influence on him. He simply does not like to work with "Gift". But he refuses the connection that the poison will do any harm to the insects and other small animals on the field. There is a separation between him, as a living being, and other creatures.

Many farmers share the denial of scientific facts.

### 4.3 Appearance and use of agricultural discourses in the interviews

After an overview of characteristics, attitudes and beliefs of farmers which were inductively derived from the data, I will now focus on the elements of the five agricultural discourses.

The characteristics of the political and social agricultural discourses have been elaborated in chapter 2.1. The following part describes how these discourses, so far expressed in academic papers on the political sphere, are present on the grass-root actor level i.e. expressed by the *agency* - in from of the farmer's interviews. This section will elaborate on the accordance of the theoretical discourses extracted from textbooks, with the 'reality' of the farmers.

In other words: the following section is a description of how the farmers, the *agency*, confirm, use and apply the discourses, which are based on scientific analyses of the *structure*.

Sometimes discourses were expressed directly, sometimes they were uttered more subtle and between the lines.

The differences between the textbook versions of the discourses and the in the interview expressed versions of the discourses, will be subject of the discussion (see chapter 5).

#### 4.3.1 Agricultural exceptionalism in the interviews

Agricultural exceptional traits were indeed to be observed in the data. The argument most prominently and directly brought up by the interviewees is the indispensability of farmers. For farmer 6 this could be summarized as: "*Wir sind systemrelevant. Punkt*" (Farmer 6). He adds how proud he is that only 1 -2 % of the population are feeding the entire rest of the people. Both female farmers 3 and 4 argue along the same line and say how they are serving the *most fundamental need* of all by producing food, and how without them "*würden die alle verhungern!*" (Farmer 3).

The uniqueness of farming is illustrated here by the function of producing food – a very productivist trait. For farmers 1 and 8 the element of being at the mercy of nature is crucial. For them 'farmer' is one of the few jobs that is working with and not against nature. For them decisions made during the year (like what crop, and timing etc.) are only to be judged upon once a year – during the harvest.

Especially the weather is mentioned several times.

For the large eco-farmer 2 one newer element of exceptionalism is essential: the ability to work for nature and for biodiversity. This is the agricultural exceptionalism aspect in the multifunctional discourse. He mentions the unwritten contract between people living and working in the city, who have no chance of having direct influence on nature, but who can buy agricultural products, and the farmers

who work with nature and animals all the time. For him the unique, exclusive and exceptional feature of farming is the impact farming has on the environment. So here the exceptionality of farming is for a new, a multifunctional, reason.

In summary, it can be said: yes, agricultural exceptionality elements constitute the self-image of farmers in Brandenburg. No farmer showed post-exceptional tendencies. As literature suggests, they mention arguments like contributing to food security, being exposed to nature and, mentioned by the eco farmers, being able to provide multifunctional goods like no other business.

### 4.3.2 Productivist discourse in the interviews

Half of the farmers utter explicitly or implicitly arguments of the productivist discourse.

#### *Production function and food security*

A text book productivist example is the statement of farmer 9. He states that he would have a bad conscience if he would only "produce landscapes" and not food anymore. For this farmer it is clear, that the main task of an arable farmer is to produce crops and food for humans. *„Wir müssen aufpassen, dass wir nicht aus den Augen verlieren, dass die Ernährung für Deutschland auch gewährleistet sein muss“* (Farmer 9). Farmer 6 feels the same way and seems to be concerned that there will only be meadows of flowers left and no food production any more.

#### *Food production*

Along the same line of thought is this statement of farmer 1:

*„Also die Gesellschaft möchte gerne ne blühende Landschaft haben und alles soll immer schön bunt sein. Ehm... dafür sind wir nicht zuständig. Wir sind zuständig dafür: unsere Aufgabe ist es Lebensmittel zu produzieren für die Gesellschaft. Das ist unser Zweck! Wenn wir jetzt Fördermittel bekommen für Blühstreifen und Ähnliches, dann machen wir das gern. Ich habe immer gesagt: Ich mache alles was Sie wollen - ich muss davon leben können!“* Farmer 1).

Here it becomes obvious that food production for him is the main task of agriculture, even their reason for being. Interestingly he seems to see "blühende Landschaften" as the opposite of food production, like two things that cannot be combined.

The third interesting dimension is, that he is very well willing to do whatever is asked of him (even flower meadows!) as long as it is paid for (see 5.1.6.2. Multiple identities).

#### *Imperfect markets*

The imperfect agricultural market, which is a disadvantage inherent in agriculture, is regularly brought up by productivists and also mentioned by most of the farmers. They focus on the aspect of not being rewarded enough and product prices not showing the real value of the goods they produce.

#### *Yield increase*

The young dairy farmer 7, who otherwise only shows moderate tendencies of productivism, is the only farmer, who mentions explicitly the yield increase or the maximization of output as a farmers responsibility. He mentions that the most important thing to him is that staff and cattle are happy and healthy. Only when I inquired why those two things are crucial, he hesitated and then said *„Wenn die Kühe nicht gesund sind und vernünftig melken, kannst du nicht hohe Ergebnisse erzielen. Wie mit den*

Mitarbeitern. Wenn die krank sind und keine hohen Ergebnisse erzielen, dann funktioniert das nicht“ (Farmer 7).

### 4.3.3 Market-liberal discourse in the interviews

Slightly more than half of the interviewed farmers express beliefs and attitudes that can be counted to the market-liberal discourse.

#### *Entrepreneur - Feeling for timing and tricks*

According to farmer 6 the right amount of a smart salesman's-nature is essential. He focuses less on competitiveness, but rather on efficiency and instincts. He claims to have the necessary feeling for markets, like knowing the right timing of selling and buying as well as the right amount of boldness to even trick authorities in order to keep the business going.

Farmer 5 also stresses the importance as a crops farmer to keep an eye on the international markets.

#### *Efficiency*

When asked about images of future farming seven out of ten farmers mentioned increased digitalisation and technologization – with the goal of increased efficiency. I assume that they are talking about more output (yields) with fewer inputs (fertilizer and pesticides), rather than improvement of biodiversity. This would be in line with the market-liberal as well as the productivist discourse.

#### *New consumerism and regionality as new market outlet*

Many farmers support the upcoming trend of regional consumption and see this as a new potential branch of their business. They emphasise the value and quality of their products and are planning to establish direct marketing elements on their farms.

#### *Refusal of state support*

All farmers share the dislike of any kind of state intervention. They feel constrained by regulations, stipulations and all kind of state action. They feel the role of the state should be reduced to the minimum – a typical market-liberal demand. On the other hand all of them are aware that they could not sustain without the state (see chapter 5.1.3 The new market-liberalism).

#### *Competitiveness*

Two farmers, 7 and 8, mention that they are not fond of subsidies, because they are only used to 'straighten the balance of uneconomic farmers' or to disguise the business mistakes of a farmer. If you would take away the state support, you could see, who really is 'doing a good job'. So being economically successful is perceived as the way to measure the farmer's performance. This certainly enunciates their fable for competition where everyone is responsible for their own results.

#### *Staying economical is the most important dimension*

Across all farmers it became clear that staying economical is the decisive element, since it determines if you are staying in business or not. Female farmer 4, the sober analytical business farmer, decides everything based on the question: is this economical or not? They sold their cattle, they changed part of the farm to organic – all of this without ideological or emotional reasons, only economic considerations

seemed to play a role. Farmer 8 puts it literal: *“Ein Landwirt ist auch Geschäftsmann und der macht das, womit er am meisten Geld verdient (...)”*.

This is confirmed by farmer 1 who admits that he would do anything – as long as he gets paid for it. Although the mere quantity of mentioning does not indicate how decisive it is, nonetheless the code “economical / uneconomical” was used 11 times in the data – more than any other code.

#### 4.3.4 Multifunctional discourse in the interviews

##### *Public goods*

Six out of 10 farmers show clear aspects of the multifunctional discourse. Both ecological farmers and the mixed farmers especially. The young ideological farmer number 10 delivers a textbook example and some phrases he used could even be straight from an encyclopaedia on multifunctionality. He uses all the right academic terms and fills this technical language with a belief and the hope and the conviction of it to become reality:

*“Ich hoffe, und glaube, dass Landwirtschaft im Jahr 2040 mehr bedeutet, dass Förderprogramme und Subventionen fast vollständig darauf ausgelegt sein werden, dass ökologische Belange konsequent mitbedacht werden, und die ökologischen Leistungen, die ja auch gesellschaftliche Leistung im Endeffekt sind, dass nach denen vielmehr verfahren wird und die berücksichtigt werden und eben nicht nur die reine Ausbeutung der natürlichen Ressourcen stattfindet” (Farmer 10).*

Female mixed farmer 4 suggests that the CAP should be focusing more on environmental services and introduce an ecological-premium. For farmer 2, the large eco-farmer, it is a question of shared responsibility: *“Das wir (Bauern) Naturschutz betreiben, dass wir in einer gesellschaftlichen Macht- oder Verantwortungsteilung die Verantwortung übernehmen, uns um das Land und die Artenvielfalt zu kümmern. Und um den Naturschutz.”*

##### *Supplying more than one function*

The amount of diversification the farms show is considerable. The only farmer, who did not mention any form of direct marketing, tourist accommodation, bio gas plant or any other branch of business which they have, was farmer number 3 – the female head of animal production, who was anyway very much caught in detail and had difficulties with ‘zooming out’. But even they have a strong focus on regionality (marketing the milk for Mark Brandenburg) and therefore followed the demand of new consumerism. Regional products and the idea of increased direct marketing of their own products plays a role for almost every farmer.

Interestingly and against the common belief of farmers unions, only one farmer wants to keep the current system of area-based payments. All others are convinced that payments need to be targeted better and linked to measures, which the farmers must follow in order to serve public interest. This reflects the multifunctional slogan of ‘public money for public goods’.

#### 4.3.5 Global discourse in the interviews

This discourse is only present to a little extent. Only two farmers seem to see globalisation and international value chains as a chance, and not as a threat. Only one of them, farmer 2, is already involved in some kind of global trade. Interestingly he is also the only farmer who mentions the

international value chains as something being affected by the corona crisis. The other ones seem to blend out that their business is truly influenced by international trade.

Farmer 5 is one of the few who takes global markets into account. He sees them not only as a threat, but also as a businessman challenge, which he knows how to evaluate: *“Wie gesagt, dass ist das Problem mit der ganzen Globalisierung: dass sich immer irgendwo jemand findet, der die ganze Geschichte günstiger hinkriegt. Und wenn ich so produzieren könnte, wie die Amerikaner oder die Südamerikaner oder die Russen, dann könnte ich es auch zu einem günstigeren Satz machen - aber ich darf es hier nicht. Ich habe so viele Auflagen und Sachen, die ich beachten muss, und das treibt dann die Kosten hoch. Bringt mir aber in der Vermarktung im Endeffekt nichts, weil ich ja trotzdem mit dem Produkt aus China konkurrieren muss.”*

All farmers stress the responsibility of the consumer and how they are managing the market and determining the supply. This is in line with the global paradigm characteristic that sees the retail consumer as the driver of the system.

#### 4.3.6 Hybrid discourse in the interviews

The hybrid aspect shows in all interviews but two: Farmer 10 has a self-concept of entirely multifunctionalism and farmer 5 is almost exclusively market-liberal. All the others show a mixture of two or even three different discourses.

### 4.4 Discourses and discourse mixes assigned to farmer

After an overview of the five textbook discourses found in the interview data, follows a classification of each farmer's individual discourse or discourse mix expressed in the interviews.

Farmer 1: “The proud patron of the region”

Has a strong productivist believe e.g. that farming's purpose is to feed the population. He also has a strong multifunctional vein (cooperation with bird protection groups, fostering diversification and feeling of responsibility for the region) but in the end everything has to pay off – this is where the economic aspect of the market-liberal discourse comes into picture.

In summary he certainly understands himself through several discourses and therefore employs a hybrid discourse with a tendency towards market-liberal attitudes.

Farmer 2: “The self-critical and proud large-scale eco-entrepreneur”

This farmer has fully adopted the believe that agriculture should be delivering public goods. He is in favour of diversification, circular economy and environmentally friendly closed nutrient cycles. But he is also convinced that smaller farms and food processors as well as craftsmanship aspects in rural areas contribute to the regions identity and need to be fostered. On the other hand is he running a profitable 2.500 ha farm, just bought a new farm to expand his business and has business ties across the globe. Here the multifunctional discourse gets blended with global and market-liberal aspects. In summary this farmer expressed a hybrid discourse in the interview, with a very strong focus on multifunctionality.

Farmer 3: "Increasingly frustrated and disenchanted female head of animal production"

This farmer is the hardest to characterize. She keeps complaining about everything and has almost no tendency towards any discourse. If there is one, it would be "non-multifunctional". For her there is no such thing as a public good, and consumers' demands are unfounded. The second aspect would be "non-market-liberal". She feels that the dairies as well as food retailers have too much power and that markets don't function properly in the milk business. She feels left alone by everyone, also by the state – but she does not ask for help.

I would characterize her as non-multifunctional and non-market-liberal.

Farmer 4: "Strategic, rather unemotional female farmer, who is actively looking for new potential and market outlets for their business"

This farmer has a multifunctional approach towards agriculture and to her understanding of her job – but everything is determined by economic considerations.

She has a market-liberal self-concept with a good dash of multifunctionalism.

Farmer 5: "The rational, analytical entrepreneur who rejects all accusations from society"

For farmer number 5 all decisions are economical. He is running and owning a large profitable business and sees himself as an entrepreneur. The international markets are not seen as a threat, but rather as a challenge he feels equipped to face. He likes his independency and would rather work without any regimentations but his own. His self-concept of a farmer is fully market-liberal, with a tiny twinkle of global discourse.

Farmer 6: "Passionate, motivated farmer who claims that instincts for markets, timing and staff are most important"

This farmer shows concerns that food production – in his view the only main duty of farming – will be pushed away by 'landscape design' and other multifunctional aspects of agriculture. He also likes to see himself as a smart businessman, but does not seem to fully embrace competition convincingly. Therefore, I characterize his self-concept as hybrid, consisting of anti-multifunctional, productivist and some tendencies of market-liberalism.

Farmer 7: "Proud, young farmer, who sees being a dairy farmer as a special privilege and as an exclusive circle of tough and grief resistant farmers"

Farmer 7 expresses how he would rather not receive subsidies – in order to see who is actually a 'good' economical farmer. He sees yield increase as the overarching purpose. But he also feels a great responsibility towards the cows, their wellbeing and the wellbeing of the entire region. Sustainability and a responsible handling of natural resources play an important role to him. He shows a very hybrid self-concept, consisting of productivist, market-liberal and multifunctional aspects.

Farmer 8: "Young, negative farmer who came from west Germany who likes to experiment and has diversified his farm"

For this farmer the guaranteed minimum prices before McSherry were no subsidies – and he wants them back. On the other hand is he demanding no state support, in order to see who is the "better" farmer in



economic terms. These slight contradicting views make it hard to characterize him, but he shows mostly state-assisted productivist views enriched by market-liberal beliefs.

Farmer 9: “Timid farmer who desperately tries to keep family business running – for emotional heritage sake”

This farmer showed many interesting facets and he proves that farmers can have multiple discourse identities. He would have a bad farmer-conscience if he would do anything else on his land but produce food, in order to be a good farmer he uses all pesticides required. On the other hand is he personally a great friend of nature and animals and could never harm them, and even shows some esoteric tendencies. Furthermore has he aversions to international and global markets and is a friend of protectionism and state assistance.

He has a very strong productivist and state assistance self-concept which is covering up the underlying true multifunctional heart.

Farmer 10: “Educated, eloquent and ideology driven eco farmer, who sees great potential in farming and stresses the political dimension of farming”

This young farmer left university a few years ago and studied topics related to multifunctionality. This could be an explanation why he speaks so eloquently using all buzzwords of multifunctionality. Compared to the other interviewees I would even rather characterize him as a true multifunctionalism-activist than as a farmer. He is a prime example of a self-understanding in a multifunctional discourse.

Table 5: Overview of farmers and their individual discourses and discourse mixes; author's work

Farmer	Productivist	Market-liberal	Multifunctional	Global
Farmer 1	X	X	X	
Farmer 2		X	X	X
Farmer 3				
Farmer 4		X	X	
Farmer 5		X		
Farmer 6	X		X	
Farmer 7	X	X	X	
Farmer 8	X	X		
Farmer 9	X		X	
Farmer 10			X	
	5	6	6 (7)	1

## 5 Discussion

The overarching aim of this thesis is a better understanding of agricultural change. A close look at the practitioners, the farmers, was taken. The research question is investigating to what extent the self-concept of farmers is reflecting agricultural political and societal discourses, described in scientific literature. In this section the dialogue between literature (see chapter 2. Literature) and findings of the collected data (see chapter 4. Findings) is entered.

First the differences and alterations of the original scientific discourses to the observed discourse are

discussed, leading to the in interviews observed, “new” agricultural discourses.

The hybrid discourses turn out to be dominant among the farmers. These “new hybrid discourses” are presented in detail. (For similarities and parallels of the literature discourses and the observed discourses see chapter 4.3 Appearance and use of agricultural discourses in the interview).

The discussion of the original and new discourses is followed by limitations of this thesis and recommendations to stakeholders.

## 5.1 The ‘original’ discourses from literature vs. the expressed discourses

The *structure* dimension of the original agricultural discourses has been researched and can be found in textbooks and academic papers. The *agency* version of the discourses can only be investigated through direct contact with the agents, the farmers. The original versions of the scholars, which are conform with farmers versions, have been shown in chapter 4.3.

More interesting are the differences, alterations and amendments that farmers showed in comparison to the pure academic scholar version of the discourses.

How are the theoretical original discourses, based on the analysis of the *structure*, changed and transformed in the field, on the agency level? The theoretical assumptions are tested against observations of farmers realities.

### 5.1.1 The new agricultural exceptionalism

All farmers share the belief that farming is an exceptional business and being a farmer entails more special features than other jobs. Besides the expected arguments like indispensability, exposure to weather and nature and the multifunctional element of providing public goods, a few new justifications for their ‘specialness’ are mentioned like their work ethic, their pride and their regional indispensability.

#### *Special work ethic*

For the young dairy farmer 7, the special work ethic is an unique element of being a (dairy) farmer. The responsibility towards animals and the unwritten code of honour to put the wellbeing of cows first, is something he claims as being unique. Other farmers with livestock confirm this belief. You have to be tougher than other professions and you carry more responsibility.

Another aspect, which, in the eyes of farmers, makes farming extraordinary and special, is the workload. Many mentioned that there are no holidays at all, and the working hours are more than in any other job. Although the physicality declined due to technical developments, it still remains high.

#### *Pride and passion*

All farmers share the belief that their job is meaningful. This feeling of serving national interest, as predicted by the original discourse, needs to be enriched by the feeling of pride and passion. It is amazing how passionately they described their job and how proud they are of being a farmer. They are listing all elements, which make their job so hard and difficult (long working hours, constant price pressure, lack of appreciation etc....), but, with one exception, no farmer would ever consider to give up it his or her job voluntarily. This soft form of self-flagellation seems to make this business special.

Pride and passion for their profession play a role, which should not be underrated. If other businesses also have this code of honour and pride too, needs to be researched.

#### *Indispensable for region*

For the patron farmer 1, no other job is this closely linked to the region. Not just the element of immobility, which was brought up by other farmers too, but the aspect of being socially and economically inseparable from the region is new. The responsibilities (see chapter 4.2.4 Tasks and responsibility) which the farmers claim to carry is enormous and contributes to their believe of being unique and irreplaceable. The original general indispensability argument needs to be enriched by regionality.

This research shows, that the farmers did not mention the expected arguments, suggested by scholars, like the 'farm income problem' or the general economic disadvantages like price fluctuations and long investment- and production cycles. They did mention the natural risks in farming, their indispensability due to food production, the imperfect price mechanisms and the unique ability to provide public goods.

Nonetheless agricultural exceptionalism needs to be enriched by new arguments brought forward by the farmers like their distinctive work ethics, the workload, their meaningfulness of their job, the different responsibilities they carry and the pride and passion they share, which makes them tolerate the numerous disadvantages of their profession.

### 5.1.2 The new productivist discourse

Farmers did mention expected arguments of the original productivist discourse like their production function, the prices not representing the true value of the products and the farmers' task of yield increase as well as contribution to the national goal of food security.

Nonetheless there are a few elements, which changed their focus and some arguments need to be sharpened like their approach to yield increase, their perceived role, their struggles to find workers and their wish for financial independence.

#### *Yield increase*

It is astonishing that the individual aspect of the triple responsibility (see chapter 2.1.2 Productivist discourse), the duty to increase their yields through optimizing of farming methods, is only brought up once (by the young dairy farmer 7), and only after I had asked further questions and after pushing him in this direction. Even the question: "What is your main task as a farmer" – which was targeting at productivist answers like "increasing the yields" or "maximum output", did not deliver the productivist answers I expected and tried to provoke. So the 'yield increase'-dimension of today's productivist discourse is smaller than expected.

#### *New victim role*

The productivist argument of the imperfect agricultural markets, which is regularly brought up by scholars, is also visible in the data. But instead of supporting the general belief that the income in the

entire sector is in general much lower, today's farmers focus on the problem of too small prices. They say that the goods they produce do not cost the real price and that the price tag does not show their real value. The traditional productivist argument, that the income is much lower, is now transformed to the new argument that the product price and the appreciation is much lower. Although too small prices can be explained by the traditional productivist argument of suboptimal price mechanism, the explanation for the non-sufficient prices is now the lack of consumers' appreciation. Although those two arguments are tightly linked and directly influencing each other, this new focus becomes obvious in the interviews. The farmers turn away from self-pitying the entire sector for being disadvantaged for several structural reasons - to pitying themselves for not receiving the recognition they deserve. The farmers feel that consumers and state are to blame for the lack of appreciation: the consumer for not valuing their work and being frugal and the state for keeping their products artificially cheap.

So in the new productivist discourse, the farmer still sees him- or herself in the victim-role, but for different reasons.

#### *From offering jobs to lack of workers*

The traditional argument used to be that agriculture was a major employer and securing jobs in rural areas. This has changed, since the old laborious tasks have been replaced by jobs demanding technical skills and due to technical progress, a general decline in number of jobs in agriculture has occurred. Anyhow the farmers all complain about the problem of finding qualified workers. Today's farming is offering fewer jobs and farmers are still struggling to find staff.

#### *No governmental help wanted*

Although the farmers also confirm the fact that agriculture is disadvantaged in many ways, no farmer is actively asking for state support - rather the opposite: all farmers would like to abstain from subsidies and would rather be rewarded by the market. Even miserable farmer 3, who complains about the power asymmetry between dairy farmers and large dairies, does not ask for state intervention. Only farmer 2 leaves the impression that he would like the state to intervene - but only to repair the damage it has done in terms of destroying regional artisan food production structures.

The findings show that the traditional productivist arguments like in general much lower income, the unmanageable natural risk and the demand for state support are not mentioned.

But, besides the emphasis on the production function of agriculture, the other expected aspects of the original productivist discourse - food security, (natural) disadvantages as an entire sector, and securing jobs in rural areas - are mentioned to a much lesser extent than literature has suggested. The new facet of the original "agriculture is disadvantaged" has now altered and focuses on the aspect of missing appreciation and lack of consumers' willingness to pay fair prices.

### **5.1.3 The new market-liberalism**

At least six of ten farmers see themselves as entrepreneurs and support the dimensions of the original market-liberal discourse suggested by literature: focus on efficiency, competitiveness, dislike of state intervention and staying economic as their main concern. Nevertheless, the interviews show differences

and transformations of this discourse like the urge for entrepreneurial freedom, their aversion to free markets, their demand of a certain kind of competition and a certain kind of market.

#### *Entrepreneurial freedom*

The element of entrepreneurial freedom seems to be crucial. Whenever the farmers feel patronised or limited by rules put in front of them by the government they complain or find a way around (e.g. farmer 6 who admits to cheat a bit with the painstaking documentation – but only to prevent doing more bad than good to the farm). Only the ecological and mix farmers do not complain about the content of the policies – only about the amount of required documentation.

In general the bureaucracy and level of control the farmers feel is going against their belief of being independent, business man and women who know best what benefits their land.

#### *Free markets – rather a threat than a chance*

For most of the smaller farmers the free market is rather seen as a problem or a challenge than a chance. This is probably connected to the slight aversion of farmers towards globalisation (see chapter 5.1.5 The new global discourse).

#### *Competition among themselves – but not on the market*

On the one hand two of them explicitly wish for the competition distorting subsidies to end, in order to be able to judge which farmer is managing his or her farm best. They want to benchmark with each other and to see how well they are doing compared to their German colleagues. On the other hand, none of them wants competition on the free market to determine the price of their product, nor do they seem to want competition on the international market.

They want to openly compete within their sector, but this should not have any influence on the prices. They don't seem to be aware of these contradicting demands.

#### *Source of income: market – but not competitive market*

All of them confirm the original market-liberal discourse argument, that the market should be the source of income instead of subsidies. But they don't want the logical second part of the argument: the competitive free market determining the price. Almost all of them confess that they would not be able to survive on the current prices. Here the predicament becomes visible: they want to be exclusively rewarded by the market – but that is impossible with the current prices. This situation is constantly impeding their entrepreneurial spirit.

None of them confirms the traditional market-liberal discourse of agriculture being 'just an economic sector like any other', this post-exceptional argument does not occur once. None of them says explicitly that they would like the price to be determined on a free-flowing market by demand and supply. Efficiency is mentioned only as an outlook to future farming, which they assume to be increased through technology and innovation – not as something they are actively trying to increase.

But at least six of them see themselves as business entrepreneurs, who act like proper business man and women and would like to compete among each other. They would also rather be rewarded by the market than through state support – but have to accept that this is currently not possible.

### 5.1.4 The new multifunctionalism

Especially the ecological farmers in this sample support arguments of the multifunctional discourse like the provision of public goods and the several functions agriculture fulfils besides food production. The conventional farmers show slight alterations to the original discourse, like a strong focus on regionality and aesthetics, new non-marketable good, as well as the new value of and responsibility for public goods.

#### *New focus: regionality*

A new aspect of multifunctionality is brought up by several farmers. Besides the typical multifunctional focus on rural areas, which many scholars predicted, the farmers in this sample stress the (social) responsibility and the embeddedness they feel in their region. The aspect of belonging to the region with its landscapes and interactions with the local people is highly important to farmers 1, 2, 4, 5, 7, 8, and 9. The “Heimat” as a safe haven certainly plays a big role in their self-concept.

The aspect of being responsible for the region is shared by most farmers – but not by young farmer 10, who has only been working as a farmer for the last two years. He is complaining about the immobility that his jobs entails. This suggests that the former disadvantage of being ‘stuck to one place’ has been re-interpreted as being socially responsible for and embedded in that specific region. This new interpretation and appreciation of regionality and ruralness also brings the new marketing opportunity of regionality as a value and a brand with it. The development of new consumerism where food represents certain values as a result of the place of its production leads to almost all farmers considering of direct marketing via farm shops or deliveries to Berlin.

#### *True embrace of multifunctionality or just economic calculus?*

As mentioned, almost all farmers diversified or fulfil other dimensions of multifunctionality. The question remains, why they did so. Did they recognize the many functions farming can have besides food production – or did they open the new business branches because they found this was a logical economical decision? Farmer 1 leaves the impression that he only diversified in order to “reduce the damage” rather than following the multifunctional ideology. When asked about the chances or the potential, which he sees in the farm he answers: *“Die Chancen, muss man sehen, wie die sich jetzt entwickeln. Aktuell sind die nicht allzu rosig. Wir gehen jetzt in die Bereiche, wo wir sagen, wir belegen jetzt 85ha mit PV, wir haben auch ne Biogasanlage und sind hoffentlich bald an der Windkraftanlage beteiligt. (...) Also die Energieproduktion ist ein Punkt, der uns nach vorne bringen kann. Und die regionale Produktion, wenn nun diese ganzen weltweiten Lieferketten gestört sind...”* (Farmer 1).

#### *Aesthetics and creation as new public goods*

The truly productivist farmer 9, who only subconsciously shows multifunctional beliefs, states that he appreciates the landscape beauty of e.g. a blooming wild bush hedge and sees their purpose in ‘being nice to look at’. Here the aesthetic seems to be a value of its own without any economic or financial benefit. Farmer 7, the passionate dairy farmer, states how he values the aesthetics of farming: *“Also, das klingt jetzt vielleicht blöd, aber wir haben letzte Woche Weideaustrieb gemacht. Da siehst Du wie sie sich freuen und auf der Wiese stehen, schon alleine die Farbe, das schwarz-weiß, da in dem Grün so drin, und denn der blaue Himmel, das ist für mich immer so ein Erlebnis jedes Jahr, worüber man sich auch*

*richtig drauf freut. Das ist zwar nur wat kleenes, aber... oder wenn ein Kalb geboren wird. Vielleicht sogar ein schönes Kalb. Wir hatten letzte Woche auch ein schönes rotbraunes. das sind so schöne Momente..."* (Farmer 7).

This shows that farmers appreciate a dimension which is not output related or economical, but only non-material. Interestingly the conventional farmers see this value of landscape beauty and biodiverse structures themselves – but don't consider it being a marketable good, or something they could cultivate and be rewarded for. This multifunctional discourse argument-chain is only realized or fully thought through by the ecological farmers. The conventional farmers see the value for themselves but are not aware of its potential.

This non-awareness of goods they also provide, leads to farmers thinking, they receive state support in order to supply the population with food and not in order to provide the population with a functional ecosystem.

#### *New non-marketable goods*

A new non-marketable good provided by agriculture is brought up by the eco- and mixed farmers 2 and 4: they emphasize how much they like the creational element of their work, *"das Gestalterische"*. They find it satisfying to decide where to grow and what to grow and to see the landscape change according to their planning.

This 'new' focus on pure pleasure derived from perception or vision and the satisfaction of creating something, has probably always been there, but the conscious articulation of it is new. Maybe 'soft' elements of agriculture are gaining relevance through the public multifunctional discourse.

#### *Economical value of public goods*

For analytical, female mixed farmer 4, public goods like *"Naturflächen"* seem like a lucrative market and she predicts, in her sober, businesswomen way: *"Und irgendwann haben wir die Naturflächen neben den intensiv genutzen anderen Flächen. Die Naturflächen haben dann ihren eigenen Wert und werden genauso einen Wirtschaftswert besitzen und auch gehandelt werden können. Und da wird sich ein neuer Markt einstellen"* (Farmer 4). For her the economical aspect of the multifunctionality overrides the ideological or ecological ones.

#### *Responsibilities for public goods*

The multifunctional discourse, when used by farmers, is always enriched by the feeling of responsibility. The several responsibilities brought up by the farmers (see chapter 4.4.4 Task and responsibility) partly count to the multifunctional discourse, since they are considered as public goods. The social responsibility farmers share for rural areas and regions they live in, as another function of farming, is mentioned among others by the young dairy farmer 7.

He is in favour of keeping cattle on the farm in order to keep the circular economy going. For him having labour intensive cattle and therefore employing the local population is one way to keep up the necessary social structure.

Farmer 6 mentions four different kinds of responsibility: responsibility towards society (food production), towards his workers (pleasant work environment and sufficient wages), towards his cattle (animal welfare) and, the most public public good, towards nature (biodiversity and sustainable use of natural



resources).

The original multifunctional discourse is only been exercised by the ecological farmers and to a lesser extent by mixed female farmer. They truly leave the impression that they themselves believe that public goods do have a real value which they appreciate and acknowledge as an end in itself. For all other conventional farmers the multifunctional aspects are something they personally appreciate a lot. But when the provision or cultivation of these goods is openly demanded of them, they act egoistically and they feel this is something the politicians dictate and they are not responsible for – or they want to be adequately paid for in order to provide it!

The only ones who think that an articulated awareness and a sustainable use and handling of these goods can be crucial to keep their business going, are the ecological farmers.

### 5.1.5 The new global discourse

The global discourse, which scholars see as one of the latest developments, is only present to a very little extent. Farmers are very well aware that the international standards and the EU market play a role in their business, but except one farmer, none of them is actually using any of the potential possibilities. More than any global perspective is the anti-global attitude visible. Farmers 3, 5 and 6 are hoping for more regionality in the food sector as opposed to more internationalisation.

Female farmer 3 wishes to turn back globalisation and hopes that corona could help to do so. For farmer 6, it makes only little sense to trade food globally: *“Und in dieser Gunst-Region der Welt, wo wir unter natürlichen Bedingungen noch was ernten – da müssen doch gerade wir hier was produzieren und nicht nur in den Länder, wo es schwer geht und denen noch was abnehmen“* (Farmer 6).

It is astonishing how they seem to deny or ignore how decisive the international market is for their business. Although they always stress the importance of the prices they receive for their products and the fact that the cereal traders they trade with are operating on an international level - they don't mention how the open markets and their fluctuations are the most decisive component in their entire business! At least the different standards for production in different countries are being mentioned – but only in a complaining way. Interestingly no farmer is actively demanding that government should focus on the harmonization of these standards, which would be assumed according to original global discourse literature.

Summing up: the global discourse is the least present among the interviewed farmers.

### 5.1.6 The predominant discourse: the new hybrid discourses

The hybrid discourse is a mixture of the above-mentioned discourses. As the analysis shows (see chapter 4.4. Discourses assigned to farmer) all farmers but one show a mixture of discourses – a new hybrid discourse. Each farmer has his own unique combination of discourses – except farmer 1 and 7, who both show traits of productivist, market-liberal and multifunctional discourse.

The new individual hybrid discourses will be explained and enriched with details in the next three subchapters.

### 5.1.6.1 Conflicts and harmonies

The new different individual hybrid discourses employed by the farmers show lines of tension and harmonies between the different 'original discourses' composing the new individual hybrid discourses.

#### *Well matching elements of discourses*

Farmer 2 stresses how exceptional and unique (agricultural exceptionalism) it is that, farming can provide public goods (multifunctional discourse).

Many farmers express how they will push the regionality of their production (multifunctional discourse) as well as the specifics and attributes considered to be associated with their place of origin (global and multifunctional discourse) in order to open a new market outlet and expand their business (market-liberal discourse).

Furthermore, the multifunctional elements of farming are mainly seen as a way to open up new economic markets. For most farmers the value of biodiversity, a sustainable and careful use of natural resources (multifunctional discourse) is not seen as a value in itself but as a potential market and a new way to earn money (market-liberalism). It will be interesting in future to see, if these two means will be seen as counter-rotating elements or conceptualised as perfect partners.

#### *Conflicting elements of discourses*

In the data it becomes clear that 6 of the 10 farmers see a dichotomy of food production (productivist discourse) and all farming practices, which are not 100% aimed at food production (multifunctional discourse). Multifunctional elements, like fostering biodiversity or nature conserving measures and landscape altering actions, are seen as the natural opposite of food production - the "farmers real purpose". Throughout the interviews it becomes clear that the concern is prevailing that food production is endangered due to new societal demands, which are restricting the production function. There is the fear of soon only having "Blühwiesen" and no grains anymore. They worry that soon there will be no crop farming, but only landscape design left.

Another conflict emerges between the element of regional production (multifunctional discourse) and the demand for cheaper and more efficient production (market-liberal discourse). So farmer 3 is afraid that the regional brand "Mark Brandenburg" is eliminated by cheap retailer's own brands whose unique selling point is the low price.

Some farmers have the feeling that their production function (productivist discourse) is being questioned – or rather suppressed and subordinated to other economic interest of Germany, like international trade with industry products (global discourse). The exact same argument was brought forward by farmer 9 and farmer 6, both who followed a strong productivist discourse. They feel that, especially the automobile industry, has strong interests in good trading relations with South America – and that's why Europe and Germany are buying up "antibiotikaverseuchtes Essen" from there, so that they will buy European cars. For farmer 6 it's clear that the regulations like the DüngeVO are only there to suppress German agricultural production ability – to keep up the need to buy south American goods for the good trade relations sake.

### 5.1.6.2 Multiple discourses – multiple identities?

As elaborated earlier, literature suggests that farmers show different attitudes and different identities, sometimes even for different parts of the farm (see chapter 2.3 Self-concept of farmers). This can be extended to the degree that farmers show different discourses when talking about different topics. The self is comprised of a set of identities, and this explains why farmers employ a set of discourses, constituting their very individual hybrid discourse. Just like the identities, the discourses are structured in a hierarchical way and depending on the situation and context, different discourses gain hegemony.

There are several examples in the data:

E.g. Farmer 9 loves nature and all kinds of animals. He sees himself as a great *“Tier- und Naturfreund”* but would have a *“schlechtes Gewissen”* when not producing food but e.g. cultivating a very biodiverse nature park. These contradicting identities and discourses also become visible when he is in his multifunctional *“Naturfreund”*-identity and then has to switch to the productivist *“farmers-do-that”*-identity, where he admits that he does not like to work with Gift. He can't even say why he is not so fond of it – *“das is halt Gift”*, must be a sufficient reason. But his *“farmers-do-that”* identity here combines with his identity of the *“productivist father's son”* and this seems to stop him from thinking any further and leaves no space for the *“Naturfreund”* -identity. Transferred to the agricultural discourse level, this means that the productivist discourse is stronger than the multifunctional discourse, at least concerning pest management. Then again, when we changed setting and left the office to walk around the farm, he proudly presents 95 swallow nests, here the multifunctional discourse prevailed again.

Another clear clash of identities could be observed with female farmer 3. She says how happy she would feel when her daughter would have chosen to become a farmer too, because she loves her job as farmer with passion. But as a responsible mother who wants her kid to have an easy life free of hardship – she would have told her daughter to not take this job. Here her caring mother-identity stood in conflict with her farmer-identity.

Farmer 1 seems to be very well aware of his multiple identities. He mentions the conflicts between his personal identity (as a farmer with great connections, history and love for the region) and his professional identity (of being the elected CEO). He even uses this as a handy way to justify his position, which way ever suitable. E.g. he says that he personally would never put up wind turbines on his field, he finds them awful – but since he has to report to the board, he has no choice but to build them in order to earn money- his hands are tied. The aesthetical vein for the landscape beauty (multifunctional discourse) is here competing for hegemony with his economic profit maximizing identity (market-liberal discourse).

Just like the EU commission uses the hybrid discourse to allow member states to up- and download their favourite and most suitable part of the content – farmer 1 uses whatever identity, he thinks, his counterpart would sympathize with.

#### *The dominance of the economic personality*

For all farmers (the only exception could be the young, ideology driven eco farmer 10) the strong impression is left, that everything gets pushed aside when the argument of economic efficiency comes in. Not necessarily the increasing of yields and outputs but the simple argument of *“staying economical”*

and keeping the business running, is the knock-out argument justifying almost everything. Even if they say 'we are not responsible for e.g. beautiful flower meadows!' – they would cultivate them if it pays. Farmer 1 sums this observation up with: "*Ich habe immer gesagt: Ich mache alles was Sie wollen – ich muss nur davon leben können*" (Farmer 1).

This attitude of abandoning all other principles and beliefs, like the bad conscience of not producing food anymore, was even visible in the otherwise very critical, ecologically, and socially thinking farmer number 2. Even he said that the most important argument is - the farm must stay economical. Although this makes perfect sense, it is interesting to observe how this simple rule pushes aside the other aspects, which were valued so high before.

This means that the economic "staying-in business"-identity, but not the economic "profit-maximing"-identity, dominates all other identities, even the deepest and most passionate other personal identities.

### 5.1.6.3 Paralleles and Patterns

During the data analyses, some patterns and similarities revealed. Some of the claims expressed in chapter 2.4.1 can be confirmed and are further elaborated in the following section.

#### *Conventional and organic farmers*

According to the data, the farming system claim can be supported. It is presumed that conventional farmers tend to express more productivist views, whereas ecological or organic farmers have the tendency to support multifunctional views. The five farmers, who show some extent of productivist discourse, are all conventional farmers. All ecological or mixed farmers (2, 4, 10) on the other hand did not express any productivist views.

The findings also show that farmers involved in ecological farming see public demands towards agriculture as justified. For them dialogue and action are the only way to tackle the challenges agriculture and society face. Mixed female farmer 4 even says, that any farmer who now rejects societal demands and is feeling insulted by the public requests, has just acted too late. On the contrary, no conventional farmer sees all articulated demands from society as justified.

As expected, another shared trait of organic farmers is the importance of sustainable use of natural resources in order to stay in business. They realize that the natural balance is the basic condition for successful and future farming. This ideology or understanding is what made them become ecological farmers (farmer 10), or is something they learned after turning organic (farmer 2 and 4).

Another parallel between ecological farmers is the pleasure they derive from the 'creational element' of their job. This argument of enjoying to structure and form landscapes is not brought up by any conventional farmer.

#### *Prevalence of anti-globalisation ideas*

For most farmers globalisation and international trade is negatively connoted and seen as a threat to their business and domestic agricultural production. They either feel other industries (especially higher processed goods) receive a preferential treatment, or they complain that German farmers have to compete on the world market, but under competition-distorting higher standards.

Many farmers with a strong productivist discourse show protectionist tendencies: they wish for higher appreciation of German agricultural products and less international trade and fewer imports.

The only farmer who feels comfortable on the international floor is farmer number 2 – and he is only receiving goods from the international market and not even delivering to it. The presumed claim, that younger farmers rather than older farmers promote the global paradigm has to be rejected. The three farmers who showed the least aversion against globalization were aged 58, 38 and 44. The average age of farmers in this sample was 43,5 which was also the median. In this sample the age has no clear influence on the global discourse. Moreover, the farmer's age does not seem to have any impact on their attitudes and the followed discourses.

It has to be noted that the global discourse is only present to a little extent. In this sample the few globalisation-friendly statements are combined with a market-liberal drive (farmer 2 and 4). The prevailing anti-globalisation views are often linked to the productivist and even protectionist request to focus on the domestic agricultural production.

Another observation suggests a connection between the active membership in farmers unions with anti-globalisation attitudes and the productivist discourse. Both farmers 6 and 9 are active members in the Bauernverband Brandenburg and both expressed anti-globalisation views, justified with the same line of argumentation. They share the feeling of being 'hurt', that their work is being 'sacrificed' in order to promote and support other industries, like the car industry. Also both are of the same opinion that the worst thing that could happen to agriculture would be that they should only produce "landscapes", like the Green party wants, rather than producing food.

### *Gender*

The claim, that female farmers show more traits of multifunctional discourse than their male counterparts, can only be supported for one of the two female interviewees. Farmer 4 certainly shows a great extent of multifunctional views on agriculture. The other female farmer does not show any clear discourse. But what could be connected to gender, or at least what drew the attention, is, that from three interviewees who mentioned their family, two were female.

Both women mention their children in connection to concerns about their kids' future, and what world they will be living in. Male farmer 9 mentions his sons only in connection to the future of the family farm and not with concerns about his sons' individual futures.

Another aspect which can be observed in relation to gender is interview length. The interviews with the two female farmers were much shorter. They lasted only 40 and 33 minutes, whereas interviews with male farmers regularly took up to 57min. The impression is left that the women stick closely to the question, whereas most male farmers digress a lot.

Noteworthy is the non-mentioning of gender. Neither for the female nor the male farmers gender plays a role in connection to their job.

### *The stronger the discourse – the stronger the language*

The language used in the interviews varies a lot. Some stay rather unemotional and supposedly objective; others are very eloquent and use academic terms and some are highly emotional and passionate. Two farmers show signs of populist or polemic wording, i.e. using words and statements that are known from feisty, 'post-factual' public debates. Interestingly those are the two farmers with the content-related biggest distance between them. Farmer 2, the large eco-farmer, uses the wording, which environmentalists are known for and exactly what all (conventional) other farmers hold up against and

criticise them for: *“Wir (the farmers) haben stattdessen die Böden verseucht, „Agrar-fabrikanten“ unterstützt und haben und nichts sagen lassen!”*

The opposite is what farmer 9 says. He criticises environmentalists and green party in the same undifferentiated manner: *“...(…) die Grünen sind natürlich so blind....”, “(...) alles Blödsinn!”*

This observation suggests that the more one discourse is followed the more extreme the language gets and that the more extreme the positions the more radical the language.

#### *Appreciation*

All farmers, but one, share the feeling that they are not receiving the appreciation, which they deserve by the broader public. This perceived lack of public appreciation plays a crucial role in farmers' self-concepts. They constantly victimize themselves and blame the others (the politicians, the public, the retailers) for their ignorance towards them and their work. The impression is left, that they take the easy way out and use the non-appreciation argument as a comfortable excuse and a way to escape responsibility for e.g. their production method or the way they keep their cattle.

Interestingly they state that 'the people' treat them as public scapegoats, but investigating further they can't provide proof. A closer look even shows that farmers 1, 2, 4, 5, 6 feel respected and even valued by the local population in their region. This probably leads also to the strong feeling of responsibility and bond towards their individual region, which most farmers mention.

This observation indicates a difference in the farmer's perception of 'the people' and 'the local people'. If they are referring to the urban vs. rural divide is not clear.

#### *Regionality*

Observations show that the hope for more regionality as a buying incentive for consumers, is not bound to a specific discourse. Farmers with no overlap of discourses within their individual's hybrid discourse mix share this demand. Increased focus on regionality seems to be a consensus demand.

#### *Farm resources and quality of soil*

Before the data collection the assumption was made that farmers with comparably fertile soil tend to share productivist attitudes whereas farmers with poor soil share multifunctional beliefs. This claim could not be supported during this research. The data suggests the opposite: Farmers 1 and 9 farming the land with the poorest soil (27 and 25 Bodempunkte) uttered clear productivist beliefs, whereas farmers 4 and 7 (42 and 43 Bodempunkte) show traits of multifunctionalism.

An explanation could be that the poor soil farmers can mentally not afford to invest too much thought and time in alternative ideas. Instead, they are fully focused and occupied by getting the most out of the little they have. They might see no room for experiments or feel like they have no capacities to think about other sources of income.

Another finding related to farm endowments is that farmers with better resources (farm size, financial means, farm staff) tend to support market-liberal views. The two smallest farms (9 and 10) with little staff and a rather tight financial situation do not support market-liberal beliefs and on the other hand - the two largest farms (1 and 2) with the most hectares and the most employees, are run by farmers who certainly have market-liberal tendencies.

This could be explained by farmers, who have a certain degree of separation of labour, who can afford

to think about new market outlets or business opportunities and have generally more free mental capacity than small, struggling farmers who are fully occupied by surviving. The smallholders prefer a stable market rather than a free one with no level of protection.

#### *Socialisation in the West or East*

In this sample three of ten farmers are socialised, respectively educated, in former west Germany. Female farmer 4 grew up in the GDR but studied in the FRG (Federal Republic of Germany). Interestingly all farmers who fully or partly cultivated their land ecologically were educated in former West Germany.

All farmers who were exclusively brought up or educated in the GDR (except highly market-liberal farmer 5) show the productivist discourse. As elaborated in chapter 3.3.2 the productivist approach to farming was promoted in the GDR.

## 5.2 Limitations

Every scientific research process is encompassing several choices. Whenever a choice for a framework, a certain approach or a method is being made, other doors close. This is an inevitable limitation to every research.

One restriction of the chosen framework of this thesis is the conscious separation of structure and agency as two analytical entities. A. Giddens states that you cannot treat them as two separate units as they are a dynamic and in constant interaction, shaping and reshaping each other. Nevertheless, I disobeyed Giddens' assessment and treated them separately in my theoretical concept, understanding the manifested political discourses as the structure and the farmers discourses as an expression of the agency. I did so to learn more about the agency and their self-concepts.

Another general constraint inherent in discourse analysis is that the analysis is always the "researchers' discourse on discourses" (Frouws 1998, S. 57). During the reconstruction and framing of discourses and concepts about farming and agriculture the researcher always selects and orders the information in a specific way. My constructions of each farmers individual hybrid discourse is, so to speak, a "construct of the second degree" (Schuetz 1953).

The sample of ten farmers is also exposed to several limitations. Generally, due to the relatively small number of conducted interviews, no general conclusions can be derived, but ideas for further research are given. The preliminary conclusion of this work can be further explored in both qualitative and quantitative research.

The interview data is biased due to the choice of farmers. Six of ten farmers were recommended via my network within the agricultural interest representation sector. This could explain the slight overrepresentation of larger farms, since those are often the vocal farmers, which are known or active within the sector. During the search for the remaining four farms I focused on smaller family farms in order to reduce the bias.

Another limiting factor during the research project was the outbreak of corona virus, which led to a shut-down of daily public life and made it difficult to get hold of the necessary primary literature, which was not available online.

Finally it has to be said that the results presented in this research are only a snapshot of a few farmers



opinions and utterings, in Brandenburg in spring and summer 2020. Neither shifts, changes of opinions can be detected, nor general conclusions for the German farming sector can be drawn. This means that it is not possible to say with what speed and manner the farmer's self-concepts are transforming. If they are lagging behind the discourses of policy makers can only be speculated.

### 5.3 Suggestions and recommendations to stakeholders

Based on the findings of this work recommendations for different stakeholders involved in agriculture can be made. All recommendations are focusing on enabling potential agricultural change and are directed towards farmers, policymakers, farmer's unions and consumers.

The research shows that regional production and value chains are something farmers would like to increase for several reasons. Policy makers should pick up this demand and foster the establishment of local value chains and support direct marketing attempts.

The perceived lack of appreciation for their work, which farmers feel, needs to be addressed. The consumers need to be educated about farming practices and how labour and resource intensive agricultural products are. An alliance between policy makers, farmer's representatives and the food retailers needs to ensure that product prices reflect the true value. The communication between farmers and civil society needs to be improved and prejudices on both sides need to be removed. This could lead to the necessary appreciation for agriculture and its products.

Lastly, the farmer's self-understanding needs to be extended and enriched. As this research shows most farmers still see their main task in producing food and their job as one-dimensional. Due to the big challenges our world is facing, the farmer's self-concept needs to be enriched by the function of producing and caring for public goods.

The rivalry between food production and farming practices which are not exclusively focusing on maximum output of food, needs to be ended. The minds need to open up and allow and reward hybrid and multifunctional land uses.

Farmers need to understand that their job should also entail taking care of biodiversity, a functioning ecosystem, clean water, fresh air and healthy soil. Policy makers need to realize, that these services need to be rewarded and consumers need to recognize that this needs to be priced-in into the product prices and eventually payed for. Farmer's unions need to redefine themselves and foster this new and broader understanding of farming, and therefore promote and show new perspectives and income opportunities for the agricultural sector.

## 6 Conclusion

As stated in the introduction, anthropogenic influences are threatening indispensable natural processes and vital ecosystem functions. Developments like climate change, loss of biodiversity and degradation of natural resources need to be actively tackled. Agriculture can play a pivotal role and be part of the solution. The current land use needs to be adapted and changed in order to live up to its potential as a powerful instrument to address those problems.

As a contribution to respond to these challenges ahead, this study aims at a better understanding of

conditions for agricultural change. The focus was set on the farmers, the actual practitioners. The intention was to learn more about their beliefs, attitudes, opinions and motives for agricultural action.

A conceptual framework based on political agricultural discourses and the sociological concepts of structure and agency was constructed.

Five well-known original agricultural discourses, the productivist discourse, market-liberal discourse, multifunctional discourse, global discourse and their mixture, the hybrid discourse, are present in agricultural policy and materialize in publications, laws and directives and therefore constitute the *structure* of agricultural society. The *agency* in this context, is understood as the attitudes and beliefs at the farmer's level as well as through their identities and self-concepts. The discourses on the farmers level have so far not been the centre of any research available.

This analysis is guided by the research question, to what extent the self-concepts of farmers reflect the agricultural discourses observed in politics and society. Nine claims were used to guide and focus the research.

Ten theme-centred interviews with farmers were conducted in spring and summer 2020 on their farms in Brandenburg. In other words: the agency itself was interviewed and analysed in their natural surroundings to investigate their personal attitudes and beliefs, constituting their self-concepts.

The interview data suggests that eight of ten farmers employ a mixture of discourses - a hybrid discourse. One female farmer does not show any distinct discourse and one young farmer exclusively employs the original multifunctional discourse.

None of the original discourses is adopted exclusively, unchanged and in its pure form by the farmers - with one exception. Instead eight farmers show a self-concept, which is composed of a highly individual mixture of the original discourses, shaped by their socialisation and personal history.

The most prominent original discourses among the farmers hybrid discourses, is the multifunctional discourse, which is employed by seven farmers. This is followed by the market-liberal, adopted by six farmers and the productivist discourse, used by five. Only the global discourse can almost be neglected, since just one farmer showed global discourse tendencies. All farmers consider agriculture as an extraordinary and unique sector of economy and society and therefore can be characterised as agricultural exceptionalists.

One of the two exceptions is the young, west German academic with no farming background, who left university and employs a textbook example of the multifunctional discourse. The second exception is the female farmer, who does not utter any distinguishable discourses and is instead fully absorbed by her complains about her current situation as a farmer, especially by the farm's economic situation.

In general, the interviews show that, no matter to what extent other discourses are employed, in the end the overruling argument is the economic efficiency. On the other hand, no or only a minor role, play the current global challenges, like mass extinction, degradation of soil and global warming. Those are hardly mentioned and sometimes even denied.

Among factors like the farmer's age, gender, education, socialisation, family background, farm size, number of employees, quality of soil, membership in farmer's unions and market outlets, the farming

system, meaning conventional or organic farming, has the biggest impact on their self-understanding. The claim that farmers have different identities and employ different discourses, sometimes even contradicting, can be confirmed.

This study also shows that the perceived lack of adequate appreciation for their work, by the consumers as well as by the government, plays an important role in their today's self-understanding. Regionality, and the connected embeddedness within a region along with the strong feeling of responsibility, has an importance, which has been underestimated so far.

The results show that the four original discourses presented in literature and currently used to distinguish agricultural policy, the *structure*, are not sufficient to characterize the discourses used by the *agency*. The discourses used by farmers in Brandenburg in 2020 are new individual hybrid ones.

This study contributes to a better understanding of farmers in Brandenburg and discovers new dimensions and altered versions of the original agricultural discourses employed by farmers. To both, policy makers and farmers unions it can be recommended to focus their work on the increase of knowledge about today's farming within the population and foster the appreciation of agricultural goods. On the other side, the farmer's self-concept needs to be extended: still maintaining the production function but enriched by responsibility and ability to conserve natural resources, guard biodiversity and creation and to sustain a functioning environment.

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## Appendix

### Appendix A: Key search terms for literature review

English	German
Social discourse	
Structure AND agency	Selbstbild Landwirte
Giddens Theory of structuration	Selbstbild Bauern
Structuration	
Self-concept AND farmer	Selbstkonzept Landwirt
Self-perception AND farmer	Selbstkonzept Bauern
Gender AND farming	
Gender AND farming AND sustainability	Selbstkonflikt Landwirt
Gender AND farming AND environment	Selbstkonflikt Bauern
Age AND farming AND globalization	
Age AND farming AND environment	Landwirtschaft in
Young AND farmer AND environment	Brandenburg
Young AND farmer AND sustainability	
Young AND farmer AND	
Soil quality AND organic AND conventional AND decision	
Soil AND motive AND conventional AND organic	

## Appendix B: Detailed interview plan with questions

































































Section	Theme / Question	Follow-up questions	Rationale and Background
Section A. 2 min	Introduction		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introducing myself</li> <li>• Thanking for the interview</li> <li>• Mentioning that 8-10 farmers in Brandenburg are being interviewed</li> <li>• Handing out form of consent, allowing time to read it though and sign</li> <li>• Clarification of any questions up front</li> <li>• Mentioning that it is not about giving right or wrong answers, but about their opinion</li> <li>• Asking for permission to start the recording</li> </ul>		<p><i>Methodological rationale:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Building up trust</li> <li>• Establishing of a good 'working atmosphere'</li> </ul>
Connecting passage	<p>Wunderbar, wenn es von Ihrer Seite keine weiteren Fragen gibt, würde ich jetzt mit dem Interview beginnen. Zunächst ein paar kurze Fragen zu dem Betrieb und Ihnen persönlich.</p>		<p><i>Methodological rationale:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Guiding the interviewee through the process</li> <li>• Highlighting the start of the interview</li> <li>• Announcing next steps and allowing interviewee to mentally prepare</li> </ul>
Section B. 5 min (In total 17 min)	Short questionnaire		
	<p><i>Farm related</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Was machen Sie hier auf Ihrem Betrieb?</li> <li>• Und wie groß ist der Hof? (Hektar, GVE)</li> <li>• Wie viele Mitarbeiter sind hier beschäftigt?</li> <li>• An wen liefern Sie, bzw. Für welchen Markt wird produziert?</li> <li>• Gibt es sonst noch so etwas wie Direktvermarktung oder einen Hofladen?</li> </ul> <p><i>Personal</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seit wann arbeiten Sie hier auf dem Hof?</li> <li>• Vorgänger? Bzw. Eltern auch in der Landwirtschaft tätig?</li> <li>• Gibt evtl. Hofnachfolger?</li> <li>• Wo haben Sie Ihre Ausbildung zum Landwirt gemacht?</li> <li>• Und wo sind Sie aufgewachsen?</li> <li>• In welchem Jahr sind Sie geboren?</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Getting an overview on the farm</li> <li>• Get to know the personal background</li> <li>• Collecting social characteristics for the purpose of later comparisons or to identify possibly next interview partners</li> </ul> <p><i>Methodological rationale:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Functions as an easy entry and facilitates the start of the conversation</li> <li>• Starting with 'easy' questions is generating trust, which is needed in order to establish a working relationship and is required when slowly entering the more personal topics</li> <li>• gathered information helps to personalise the following narrative-provoking questions</li> </ul>

Connecting passage	Vielen Dank, soweit zum Hof und Ihrem Werdegang. Im Folgenden interessiert mich besonders Ihre persönlichen Meinungen und Ansichten, darüber wie Sie Ihren Beruf so sehen.		<i>Methodological rationale:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emphasising that the next passage is not as factual based a</li> <li>• Setting stimulus on more narrative answers</li> <li>• Announcing next steps and allowing interviewee to mentally prepare</li> </ul>
Section C. 30 min (in total 37 min)	Guidelines		
C 1.	Wenn Sie Ihren Beruf jemandem vorstellen müssten, der sich gar nichts darunter vorstellen kann, wie würden Sie den Beruf als Landwirt in der heutigen Zeit beschreiben?		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Personal description of own profession might reveal elements of self-perception</li> </ul> <i>Methodological rationale:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Serves as a preformulated introductory question</li> <li>• Stimulating respondents to narrate</li> <li>• Should function "like an empty page" (Witzel 2000), which is filled out by interviewee in her own words</li> </ul>
C 2. 1.	Was heißt es heute Landwirt zu sein im Vergleich zu dem Beruf als Landwirt vor 30 Jahren?		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Investigating retrospective</li> <li>• Detecting a potential shift in practices and perceptions compared to the past</li> </ul>
C 2. 2.	Was glauben Sie hat die vorherige Generation (oder ggf.: ihr Vater/Mutter/Onkel) anders gemacht als Sie heute?		
C 3. 1. + follow-up question	Was glauben Sie wird es heißen, im Jahr 2040 Landwirt zu sein?	Wo wird es die größten Unterschiede geben?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identification of prospects, outlook and expectations</li> <li>• Detect a potential shift in practices/perceptions expected by the interviewee in the future</li> </ul>
C 3. 2.	Was wird die nächste Generation (oder ggf.: ihr Sohn/Tochter/Neffe) anders machen müssen?		
C 4. 1.	Wo sehen Sie die Herausforderungen, vor denen ein Hofnachfolger stehen würde?		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identification of potential challenges and problems</li> </ul>
C 4. 1. 1.	Und sind diese Herausforderungen für Sie heute im Betrieb schon ein Thema?		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Detecting of constraining elements and obstacles</li> <li>• Investigation of enabling elements</li> </ul>
C 4. 2.	Und wo sehen Sie die Chancen, die auf einen Hofnachfolger warten?		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identification of chances and potential for development</li> </ul>
C 4. 2. 1.	Und diese Chancen, spielen die für Sie im Betrieb heute schon eine Rolle?		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Detecting of constraining elements and obstacles</li> <li>• Investigation of enabling elements</li> </ul>
C 5. 1.	Gibt es aus Ihrer Sicht etwas, was den Beruf des Landwirts von anderen Berufen unterscheidet?		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Might detect a potential exceptional thinking</li> <li>• still open enough to not go down that exceptional road</li> </ul>
C. 5. 2.	Nennen Sie mir bitte die drei Aspekte, die Ihnen am meisten Spaß machen und bis zu drei, die Ihnen am wenigsten Spaß machen.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify farmers motivation as part of the self-concept</li> </ul>

C 6. 1.	Auf einer Skala von 1 bis 5, wie vielseitig finden Sie Ihren Beruf? (sehr vielseitig, eher vielseitig, teilweise vielseitig, eher nicht vielseitig, nicht vielseitig)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify potential multifunctionality and exceptionalist thinking</li> </ul>
C 6. 2. + follow-up question	Bitte beschreiben Sie mir die Aufgaben, die Sie heutzutage als Landwirt haben.	Welches davon ist die wichtigste?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Find out perceived functions</li> <li>• Trigger reflection on own profession</li> <li>• Investigate what dimensions are being perceived as important</li> <li>• Singling out the most important one</li> </ul>
C 7. 1.	Gibt es, aus Ihrer Sicht Aufgaben, die die Gesellschaft den Landwirtinnen und Landwirtinnen zuschreibt, die Ihnen unrealistisch oder unangemessen erscheinen?	Wenn ja, welche sind das?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gather information on perceived relationship farmer and society as well as society farmer</li> <li>• How they perceive that they are being perceived</li> </ul>
C. 7. 2. + 2 follow-up questions	Aus Ihrer Sicht, sollte Ihr Betrieb staatliche Unterstützung erhalten? (z.B. durch die EU)	Wenn ja, wieso? Und wie sollte diese in Zukunft aussehen?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Find out attitude on Government and state support</li> <li>• Investigate potential justifications and reasons for special treatment</li> </ul>
C 8. 1.	Wie fühlen Sie sich als Landwirt in der öffentlichen Diskussion behandelt?		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Investigate feeling towards public representation</li> </ul>
C 8. 2.	Von wem fühlen Sie sich als Landwirt in der Öffentlichkeit repräsentiert und wieso?		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sense of belonging to a public group</li> <li>• Trigger identification or non-identification with public group</li> </ul>
C 8. 3.	Und von der Interessensvertretung speziell?		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Investigate farmers opinion on representation of traditional farm groups</li> </ul>
C 8. 4.	Und speziell von der Agrarpolitik?		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Find out opinion on agricultural policies as indicators for support of potential discourse</li> </ul>
C 9.	Letzte Frage: Glauben Sie, dass sich die Rolle des Landwirts durch die Corona-Krise verändert hat oder verändern wird?		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Flexibility of self-concept due to recent severe events</li> <li>• Potential reinforcement of role of indispensable provider of food</li> </ul>
Section D. 3 min (in total 40 min)	Thank you and possible questions		

## Appendix C: Codebook

### Liste der Codes

- ▾  Codesystem
  -  Others
  - ▾  relation to non-farmers
    -  how the media treats them
  -  public-self
  -  Schlagwort: climate change
  -  Schlagwort: animal welfare
  - ▾  Schlagwort: environmental protection and biodiversity
    -  INVIVO Und das wir da einfach mehr auf die Umwelt achten...
    -  cooperation with nature protection
  - ▾  pesticides and posion
    -  INVIVO Also meinVater hat mehr gemacht mit der Spritzerei...
    -  insects dying
    -  importance of environmental protection
    -  contraint through environmental protection
  - ▾  Chances / potential
    -  regionality
    -  diversivication
  - ▾  Challenges
    -  more PR nessesay
    -  staying in business
    -  flexibility required
    -  feeling for nature
    - ▾  worker (number and motivation)
      -  INVIVO Ich bin ja nur Psychater hier, in diesem Laden.
  - ▾  Feelings
    -  feeling of pride - belongig to the selected few
    -  feeling of being powerless face to face with food retailers
    -  feeling of being disappointed (Angebote werden nicht wahrgenomm)
    -  feeling of being underestimated
    -  feeling of apprechaition!
    - ▾  feeling of non-appriciation
      -  feeling of consumer / trader not qiving enough money
    -  wrong societal demands
    -  feeling of knowing better (agri. pratice wise than authorities)
    - ▾  feeling of not being wanted
      -  feeling of being less important than other industries
      -  feeling: farming loosing it's production function!
  - ▾  Non-mentioning
    -  Worres about climate change
    -  maximum output
    -  environmental reasons for e.g. Dünge VO
  - ▾  future farming
    -  chance to create a sustainable future farming system!
    -  more focus on staff and their loyalty
    -  new conditions due to climate change
    -  new breeding methods
    -  less farmers needed
    -  further regionalisation
    -  further specialisation
    - ▾  Digitalisation , technolocial innovations
      -  worried about affordability
  - ▾  Constraints
    -  being dependent on technique
    -  immobility of farm
    -  though farther on farm
    -  Silly legislation and bürokratie
    - ▾  lack of qualified workers
      -  expecting more workers due to Corona
    -  Way ou of constraints: betrail
    -  conflicts between leagal directions and its goals
    - ▾  feeling of being misunderstood / underestimated / patrinozed by
      -  INVIVO: eingeschränkt werden und teilweise auch gegen
      -  INVIVO: ch föhl mich da echt manchmal gedängelt.

- ▲ ● 🗨️ How they feel perceived
  - 🗨️ Blöder Bauer
- ▲ ● 🗨️ Sracpe goats (die Buhmänner)
  - 🗨️ : Da bin ich der große Buhmann. Weil, 5.500 ha, über 3.000 Schwe
  - 🗨️ ...auch Bauern tragen da mit Schuld
  - 🗨️ tractor demonstration
  - 🗨️ regional society is interested/ in favour in farming
- ▲ ● 🗨️ Discription of job
  - 🗨️ taking care of animals
  - ▲ ● 🗨️ being a manager with a plan
    - 🗨️ INVIVO: Also ein Problemlöser zwischen den Fronten
  - ▲ ● 🗨️ Negative aspects
    - 🗨️ being immobile and responsible and inflexible
    - 🗨️ being under constant price pressure from retailers
    - 🗨️ being a "Dienstleister" (Pferdepension)
    - 🗨️ tough and no holidays
    - 🗨️ negative image in public
    - 🗨️ all farmers painted with a broad brush
    - 🗨️ being dependent on nature
    - 🗨️ Not rewarded for affords
    - 🗨️ silly leagal directions
    - 🗨️ paperwork
  - ▲ ● 🗨️ Positive aspects
    - 🗨️ handing out extra payment when economically successful
    - 🗨️ more room for experiments
    - 🗨️ contact to other farmers
    - 🗨️ technical spectrs (Machines)
    - 🗨️ proud to feed the population
    - ▲ ● 🗨️ love for nature / animals / outdoors
      - 🗨️ being apprechiated by the herd
      - 🗨️ the aesthetics
    - 🗨️ Diverse and rewarding
    - 🗨️ huge responsibility
    - 🗨️ Passion for job
- ▲ ● 🗨️ Deductive codes
  - ▲ ● 🗨️ Exceptionalism
    - 🗨️ no holiday
    - 🗨️ wheater and seasons
  - ▲ ● 🗨️ Productivsit
    - 🗨️ das würde ich auch machen, aber da hätte ich ein ganz schlechte
    - 🗨️ food security
    - ▲ ● 🗨️ state assistance
      - 🗨️ assistance indispensable but would rather not recieve it
  - ▲ ● 🗨️ Market liberal
    - 🗨️ competion between farmers
    - 🗨️ we do whatever pays off
    - ● 🗨️ Entrepreneur
      - ▲ ● 🗨️ uneconomical / econmical
        - 🗨️ wir machen jetzt ackerbau. das sit auch ne strategische entsche
  - ▲ ● 🗨️ Multifunctional
    - 🗨️ public goods
    - 🗨️ circular economy and social responsibility
    - 🗨️ regionality
    - ▲ ● 🗨️ Und wir kommen dann immer mehr ab von der Nahrungsproduktion hi
      - 🗨️ und wenn sie dafür geld bekämen, den naturpark zu bewirtschafte
  - ▲ ● 🗨️ Global
    - 🗨️ sees it as a challenge
    - 🗨️ Anti-Global
    - 🗨️ Global aspect, aber kein global paradigm(!)
  - 🗨️ Hybrid

# Appendix D List of interviewed farmers and map of Brandenburg and farms

Farmer	Gender	Age	Educated in West or East	Size (ha) small < 100 medium 100 – 1.000 Large >1.000	Number of employees	Production (conventional / organic)	Reported Soil quality
Farmer 1	Male		East	large		Conventional	27
Farmer 2	Male		West	large		Organic	33
Farmer 3	Female		East	large		Conventional	34
Farmer 4	Female		West and East	large		Conventional and Organic	43
Farmer 5	Male		East	large		Conventional	32-60
Farmer 6	Male		East	large		Conventional	30
Farmer 7	Male		East	medium		Conventional	42
Farmer 8	Male		West	medium		Conventional	35
Farmer 9	Male		East	small		Conventional	25
Farmer 10	male		West	small		Organic	32





## Appendix E: Interview answers given by farmer 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5

Farmer	Farm Size	conventional or organic	Livestock	number of employees	produces for what market	extra	quality of land Bodenpunkte	Gender	Age	Titel / role on farm	on farm since	Education	Sozialisation (Ost, West)	Parents in farming?
1		conventional and ecological					27	male					DDR, Brandenburg	
2		ecological					33	male					West	
3		conv					34	femal					DDR, Brandenburg	
4		conv and eco					43	female					West and East	
5		conv. and eco.					32 - 60	male					DDR, Brandenburg	

Farmer	C.1. Job description of farmer today	C. 2.1 Farmer today compared to 30 years ago	C. 2.2. What did previous generation do differently?	C.3.1 What does it mean to be a farmer in 2040? Where will be the biggest differences?	Mentioning of climate change, loss of biodiversity	C. 3.2. What will your successor have to do differently?	C.4.1. What are the challenges waiting for a successor?	C. 4.1.1. Do these challenges play a role today?
1	strategical Problem solver - moderating between consumer and Politian's, trying to combine future demands whilst earning enough money to reasonable pay wages to his employees. Economical aspects are dominant, tying to keep work attractive enough so employees don't leave the farm	it used to be easier to get qualified worker; today the costs are getting higher but the price for the product stays the same; 30 years ago they were allowed all the herbicides and pesticides, which they used with care - today they are all forbidden.	they were able to decide spontaneously and without these beaurocratical constraints, today there are so many documentations, demands - and less qualified workers	if weather keeps being this dry, thy will have to invest in watering systems; documentation wise it can't get much worse	climate change: irrigation will become necessary if it keeps this dry, taking more land out of production is another option	more public relation, better explaining of what they do; he already does a lot: giving farm tours for children, keep regional people involved	keeping the business profitable	yes
2	a allrounder= manger who economically understands all branches of the farm; needs to understand and work with animals; needs to read the weather; needs to be flexible; needs to be able to suffer; needs to be able to fix technical things, needs to be ok with earning only a little	today: he is a eco farmer, he used to be a conventional one; society has opened up for a change like that; much more regularities and admission tasks; less farms, cause many had to close down; much more specialisation	they were more modest and didn't have the need to expand; had less technology and less abilities to restructure processes	more technologically, more digital solutions, less big farms, more small ones	no	find ways to diversify the farm in an optimal way;	being able to manage the workers, who have changed the way they want to work - more socially competent cause the working environment will be more in teams and less hierarchical	Yes, constantly
3	very rewarding BUT you don't receive enough appreciation - rather the opposite: you feel hostility	today: much less farmers, and the population doesn't know where their food comes from;	everyone spent more money on food	even higher pressure on price of products, agricultural production will go abroad where	no	nothing	same problems: if they can stand this price pressure from food retailers	Yes, cause It's the same

		much more technologisation; higher price pressure		wages are lower, farms will have to close down - more structural change				
4	manger, who is in charge of: controlling, HR, processes in the firm	today: more mechanisation, which makes the job easier but also pushes you in some kind of dependence on mechanical experts,	they had a different hands- on mentality: "hands on - I can fix it!"	more mechanisation; more focus on ecology; more ecological priority areas, less pest control, less chemicals; nature areas will have their own market and their own value; more attention to the environment	indirectly: in the future they will have to take even more care of the environment than they though they already did	they will have to understand the connections between nature and agriculture better than we are doing to day, have a different perception if them and the environment	climate change	Yes, that's my task
5	not easy, producing qualitative high commodities and at the same time competing on world market (where there is always someone who makes it more difficult); making economical decisions;	they used to get more appreciation and had a better reputation	his father didn't have to compete on world market, he had less pressure; he also had less paper work to do	more digitalisation; more technologisation; hopes for more regionality	climate change: no biodiversity: very little, and if, than more or less disrespectful	much more public relation, better marketing and more explaining of what they do	not so much, staying economical and better marketing will be important	yes, they have in on their list

Farmer	C. 4.2. Where do you see the chances and opportunities for a successor?	C.4.2.1. do these chances paly a role already?	C.5. Is there a difference to other jobs?	C. 5.2. Three fun aspects	C. 5.2 something annoying	C. 6.1. Diversity scale 1-5	C. 6.2. What tasks do you have today as a farmer?	C.7.1. Does society demand things from you which you don't feel being appropriate?	C. 7.2. Do you feel your farm should receive governmental support?
1	diversification (photovoltaic, wind energy, bio gas plants) - but rather as damage control than a proper opportunity; regionality which will increasingly be fostered by the politicians of Brandenburg, come have a look, work with us!	yes!	having to work with nature, not against her so regionally bound is no other job	working in nature; manual work and seeing the progress is rewarding; working with people handing out supplementary grants if possible to workers; working with people	paperwork; sometimes working with people	5	being economical, having a plan not just for the next season, but also long term; responsibility for staff and HR	"society wants flower strips and colourful landscapes - not our task! We produce food! (conflict between payed environmental programs and when they are in conflict with future farming programs)"	Yes, but only because the market doesn't pay enough
2	to work for a better consumer loyalty and worker loyalty; invest in staff - care for their health and happiness	yes, he is working on it	yes, you are immobile, therefore proper rooted in the region	the creational elements of the work, the physical work outside (which he only has a little from), working with the staff, feels that his job has a purpose and makes sense	settling disputes between staff members; talking with banks; dealing with business partners, who are feisty	5	keeping the business profitable and economical	no, they demand environmental protection and reasonable treatment of natural resources - and we (who are the ones who can actually do something about it!) didn't deliver	yes, because it would not work without
3	only if consumers commit themselves to regionality and sustainability	Yes, but they are struggling hard	yes, there are no holidays if you have animals you have to work 365 days per year	working with animals and nature, the challenge of organizing workers so that the animal welfare is guaranteed, knowing that farmer is a highly important job	being under constant price pressure from retailers, and having a bad image in public	5	only explained operational works as a dairy farmer; summing up: most important is milking and feeding the cows	society wants the perfect Heidi-Welt, without understanding it and without being willing to pay for it	yes, because without it the farm would have to close down but only because the market doesn't pay enough
4	yes, property is always a chance		Yes, farming is serving the most	working with nature, the creational element	lack of qualified workers	4	thinking ahead - knowing what	no, they have the right to do so. Any farmers who is	no, rather be payed by the product prices,

			fundamental need and is producing food!				comes next, where are the new trends	annoyed now has just acted to late.	but you cant change it one day to another...
5	good direct marketing, you might earn more than with the big trader companies	yes, it is on their list	yes, stuck to seasons; dependent on weather	being outdoors; working with animals; seeing how things grow	paperwork	4	being a coordinator and manager with a plan	society wants all farming to be organic - but that is non sense - conventional farming is binding more CO2 than ecological farming	Yes, since this is only a compensation for the higher standards which he has to fullfill compared to non-eu countries

Farmer	What should this support look like in the future?	C.8. 1. How do you feel treated in public discussion	C. 8.2 Whom do you feel represented by in the public?	C. 8.4. How do you feel represented by the agricultural policies?	C.9 Do you think the farmers role has changed through Corona crisis?
1	not too different, he likes the payment per ha and that he receives an additional payment for deprived areas; disappointed, cause he does already so much the politicians demand, but somehow falls through the cracks"	from people in the region: very good! From the greater public who has no idea about agriculture: scrape goats; big farms especially are the centre of distrust	no one; he is a member in associations of all kinds, but only to keep strategically important contacts	not too good, the Brandenburg government supports ecological farming, but doesn't see that ecological isn't always better.	No, people are not hungry enough to start changing the way they think about agriculture
2	ensure higher food prices, so the could do without the subsidies; rural development policies have done much harm in the past: artisan "Lebensmittelhandwerk" ist verloren gegangen - instead the concentration of huge processor has emerged	personally very good, cause he receives a lot of credits for his work	no one, but he doesn't see the need - the costumers are loyal enough	in Europe (new green deal) and Brandenburg (new green agricultural minister) good	not quite sure, but if so, it will strengthen the role of the farmer; has a global perspective on value chains
3	support the position of farmer in the value chain - in negotiations with big dairy companies you have no chance	very bad	partly by the Bauernverband	very bad, some policies are contradicting and silly	no, not really.
4	more focus on nature and ecosystem services, moving away from unconditional payment per hectare	good standing with local population; annoyed that public paints with broad brush and doesn't differentiate	partly by the Bauernverband, the CDU on national level, the Green party in Brandenburg	the government decided that land gets sold to the one who offers most - so they can't complain "big farms are evil"	not sure
5	the regulations should be fixed for these 7 years! He needs "Planungssicherheit"!	by the 'loud' ones as scrape goats, by the regional population a good reputation	not by a specific group	too many changes constantly	no

Interview answers given by farmer 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10

Farm er	Farm Size	conventional or organic	Livestock	number of employ ees	produces for what market	extra	quality of land Bodenpunkte	Gender	Ag e	Titel / role on farm	on farm since	Education	Sozialisati on (Ost, West)	Parents in farming?
6		conv.					30	male					DDR, Brandburg	
7		conv					42	male					BRD, Brandenbur g	
8		conv.					35	male					BRD, Hesse	
9		conv.					25	male					DDR, Brandenbur g	
10		ecological					32	male					West	

Farm er	C.1. Job description of farmer today	C. 2.1 Farmer today compared to 30 years ago	C. 2.2. What did previous generation do differently?	C.3.1 What does it mean to be a farmer in 2040? Where will be the biggest differences?	Mentioning of climate change, loss of biodiversity	C. 3.2. What will your successor have to do differently?	C.4.1. What are the challenges waiting for a successor?	C. 4.1.1. Do these challenges play a role today?
6	super diverse, never boring loves his work high responsibility (feeding population) feels regional appreciation	less silly constraints by politicians that work against nature (!) , more about „real farming“, less	work was physically harder, but maybe more fun due to less paperwork	more digitalisation; more specialisation; more regionalität, more technological progress; less food production - more „landscape designing“	climate: no loss of biodiversity: only that he misses the "guten Mittel", that got rid of all the bugs		keeping the workers motivated, to keep the farm economically well off, having the „sales men's sixth sense“, understanding nature, flexible adaptation or production	yes
7	physically demanding, but there are so many events that are very rewarding (letting cows on the new grazing area, birth of a clave, being appreciated by the cows)	today: more explaining and PR required, more justifying in public, more technical progress, less qualified workers, so you have to treat the ones you have right	they didn't care much about animal welfare or workers welfare	there will be less dairy farmers, if the conditions keep being this bad (whether, price, bad image in public, lack of workers)	no	more public relations, invest in new stable, more animal welfare	same things	yes, they are thinking of opening up a new branch of business "new stable and more public relation"
8	super diverse outdoors as well as in office dependent on nature important to be up-to date with neighbouring farmers	more physical work, less room for experiments! Today you are much more free! Last generation too rigid	much more afford for the same result	much more digitalisation, more technology --> less farmers needed keep an eye on climate chance --> maybe new breeding methods?	climate: mentions that it is not 100% man made loss of biodiv: denies Insektensterben und sagt: so viele Insekten wie	new natural conditions for farming (climate) people will forget where their food comes from, a lot of negative reports in media about farming...	keep the business going and earning enough money	yes, today every decision is an economic one. E.g. Fertilizer costs money and you always have to weigh up if it pays off in the end

					letztes jahr gabs noch nie!				
9	nice job, but you have to be born for it; not easy, little holiday, you need to keep going to stay in business	less physical work, less people required for same amount of work today you feel uncertain and you don't know where this all will lead to	his father used much more pesticides - he uses much less, but not because of nature	technical progress, not sure they (small farms) will be able to afford that, bigger farms won't have a problem	pesticides has nothing to do with insektensterben			farming might be pushed aside; politicians try to make live so hard for farmers to push them aside take care to keep food production going, challenge: keep the business going, more difficult due to more and more constraints	Yes, all the time
10	very regulated and ruled by directives; sometimes leads to resentment	today: agriculture has to fulfil more societal demands (e.g. Animal welfare, environmental protection, insects and bee protection) and farmers have to react to this.	they were much more after profits and partly destroyed valuable ecological structures, profit maximization and a vast used of chemicals on the field	more mechanisation he hopes: subsidies will be focused on ecological achievements and therefore foster and support services which help public goods	no		find way to do agriculture in the presence of climate change and loss of biodiversity		Yes, climate change with the third dry year is there, and they adapted their way of farming (never leave the ground uncovered, using a lot of under sown crops etc)
Farmer	C. 4.2. Where do you see the chances and opportunities for a successor?	C.4.2.1. do these chances play a role already?	C.5. Is there a difference to other jobs?	C. 5.2. Three fun aspects	C. 5.2 something annoying	C. 6.1. Diversity scale 1-5	C. 6.2. What tasks do you have today as a farmer?	C.7.1. Does society demand things from you which you don't feel being appropriate?	C. 7.2. Do you feel your farm should receive governmental support?
6	will keep playing an important role in the future, many farms are run by farmers 70+, they will need a successor		high flexibility and adaptability required (due to non-plannable business)	the Abwechslung! Diversity; working with animals, modern technology	being dependent on nature, long working hours	5	responsibility towards your animals;	they require animal welfare (which is fine) but won't pay for it!	yes, because it would work without. Would rather receive more money through true value of products...
7	the closeness to Berlin	yes, they are thinking about it	yes, there is a certain "work ethic" (enthusiasm, good treatment of animals, social responsibility for the region, for their land)	working with the animals, seeing progress and results directly, teaching younger colleges	if colleges act careless	5	care for healthy and happy cows and workers,  ensure food security, care for healthy cows, fulfill some environmental requirements	yes, that farmers man up for water contamination, for killing the soil...	yes, because without it the farm would have to close down but only because the market doesn't pay enough
8	better direct marketing and little manufactures, but difficult for 400 ha cereal; to find a niche	yes, they do the Christmas tree sale	working outside , high responsibility für producing food lack of appreciation	see thighs grow, work outside in nature, enjoys being important	all farmers are "painted with a broad brush", silly legal directions that don't make sense! Not being	4	being a manger with a plan, being up-to date, being a sales man but also knowing nature	they claim that we should solve climate, biodiv, water ...- > but this is not only us!!!	this is a dilemma: without the subsidies it wouldn't work due to open markets - the German agricultural sector would die; his dad had the stable market prices

					rewards (money) for all their hard work				and he doesn't count this as subsidies; solution: enough money for their products
9	further diversification, being so close to the Berlin - direct marketing!!!	yes, all the time!	no standing-still, no Feierabend, always being up-to date	working with animals being alone on the tractor	annoyed by the berlin horse people on his farm and being a Dienstleister	5	production of food and responsibility towards animals	Society wants them to man up to dirty water and loss in biodiv.	only because the market doesn't reward them in the amount which they should
10	to create landscapes that are full of biodiversity and which allow a climate friendly future of farming!	Yes, this is what they are doing on their farm already		working outside in nature; working with animals; the creational element of the work	being immobile and inflexible since you can't go away for e.g. three weeks; too many regulations that are constraining	5	producing food; having a environmental friendly and sustainable production; explaining what they do - more PR; help building regional value chains	no, they have the right to demand things from agriculture, but maybe in a friendlier way	Yes, but only because the market doesn't pay enough

Farmer	What should this support look like in the future?	C.8. 1. How do you feel treated in public discussion	C. 8.2 Whom do you feel represented by in the public?	C. 8.4. How do you feel represented by the agricultural policies?	C.9 Do you think the farmers role has changed through Corona crisis?
6	easier! Not so much bureaucracy	sometimes not too nice – but admits that some colleges don't act sensitive and sometime pro vocate	Bauernverband Brandenburg	patronized and as if he doesn't know what he is doing	yes! They are system relevant! This will last!
7		bad and not appreciated, lack of rewards	Deutscher Bauernverband, but he is aware that you always need to find compromises	he can't understand why politicians says: we want to keep the small and medium-sized farms, but demand so much documentation which is impossible to deliver; feels like politics is against them;	during the crisis yes - people from Berlin called and asked if they could come pick up milk; now he is uncertain if they can keep it up...
8	stable prices rather than subsidies	misunderstood, too much negative media coverage, and painted with a broad brush	no one with 100% , bits and pieces here and there	the policies are not realistically, things demanded are not feasible/viable	no
9	less goods imported from other countries, rather concentrate on own goods. (Anti-Global)	bad, there has been a negative campaign against farming from NABU etc....	Bauernverband Brandenburg and LSV	"die Entscheidung über unseren Kopf hinweg"	maybe - he liked that there were shortages, he hopes that people appreciate their work more now
10	part of the subsidies should consider the struggle against resistances of anti-biotics or the fight against water pollution	not diverse enough, mainly the slightly thick farmer is pushed - but farmers are diverse!	by the manifold movement "wir haben es satt", the BÖLW (ecological farmers association) and die FÖL (Fördergemeinschaft Ökologischer Landbau)	he has hopes that the CAP is moving in the right direction of environmental protection, climate change measures and biodiversity	not, rather not - the time period where there was a lack of something was too short

