



Foreword

In recent years the organization of food supply chains has gained increasing importance in agricultural economics research. Special attention has been given to international supply chains linking developing and transition economies from the global South with developed economies in the Northern hemisphere. In many cases this type of international trade regards so-called non-traditional agricultural exports, i.e. products which formerly were not exported by the exporting countries but which have gained increasing attention and seen growing production due to their potential for increased value added. Non-traditional agricultural products often include fruits and vegetables, i.e. highly perishable products which can only be traded internationally due to organizational and technical innovations.

In her Ph.D. thesis Dr. Verena Otter addresses the organization of export chains for non-traditional agricultural products in Chile. The country has emerged as one of the world's leading exporters of agricultural products with a strong focus on non-traditional, high-value products. She describes her main research question as follows (p. 3): "... the thesis aims to investigate the influence of supply chain and network design on farm, firm and supply chain performance in order to derive management and policy implications." She focusses her research mainly on table grape, avocado and raspberry production and exports. Dr. Otter's empirical research is grounded on a contingency-theory approach which goes back to seminal writings, for instance by Lawrence and Lorsch (1967) and other pioneers in organization science research. She combines the contingency approach with the more recently proposed netchain approach by Lazzarini et al. (2001). The combination of the contingency and the netchain approaches allows simultaneously addressing of the multitude of vertical, horizontal and lateral relationships along food supply chains. Furthermore, the conceptual framework developed by Dr. Otter allows taking into account both the influence of important contingency factors on supply chain design and the performance of both firms and the whole supply chain.

All in all, Dr. Otter has done a great job in developing an innovative theoretical concept and providing new empirical insights into the organizational design of non-traditional food supply chains. Thereby, she has made a strong contribution to the rapidly emerging field of research into international high-value chains. Several appearances on international conferences and the Best Paper Award she won on the 11th Wageningen International Conference on Chain and Network Management 2014 demonstrate that Dr. Otter's research is highly appreciated by the international scientific community. This Ph.D. thesis provides a broad overview over her research so far; it is highly recommended to readers interested in non-traditional agricultural exports and international high-value chains.

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- Prof. Dr. Ludwig Theuvsen -