

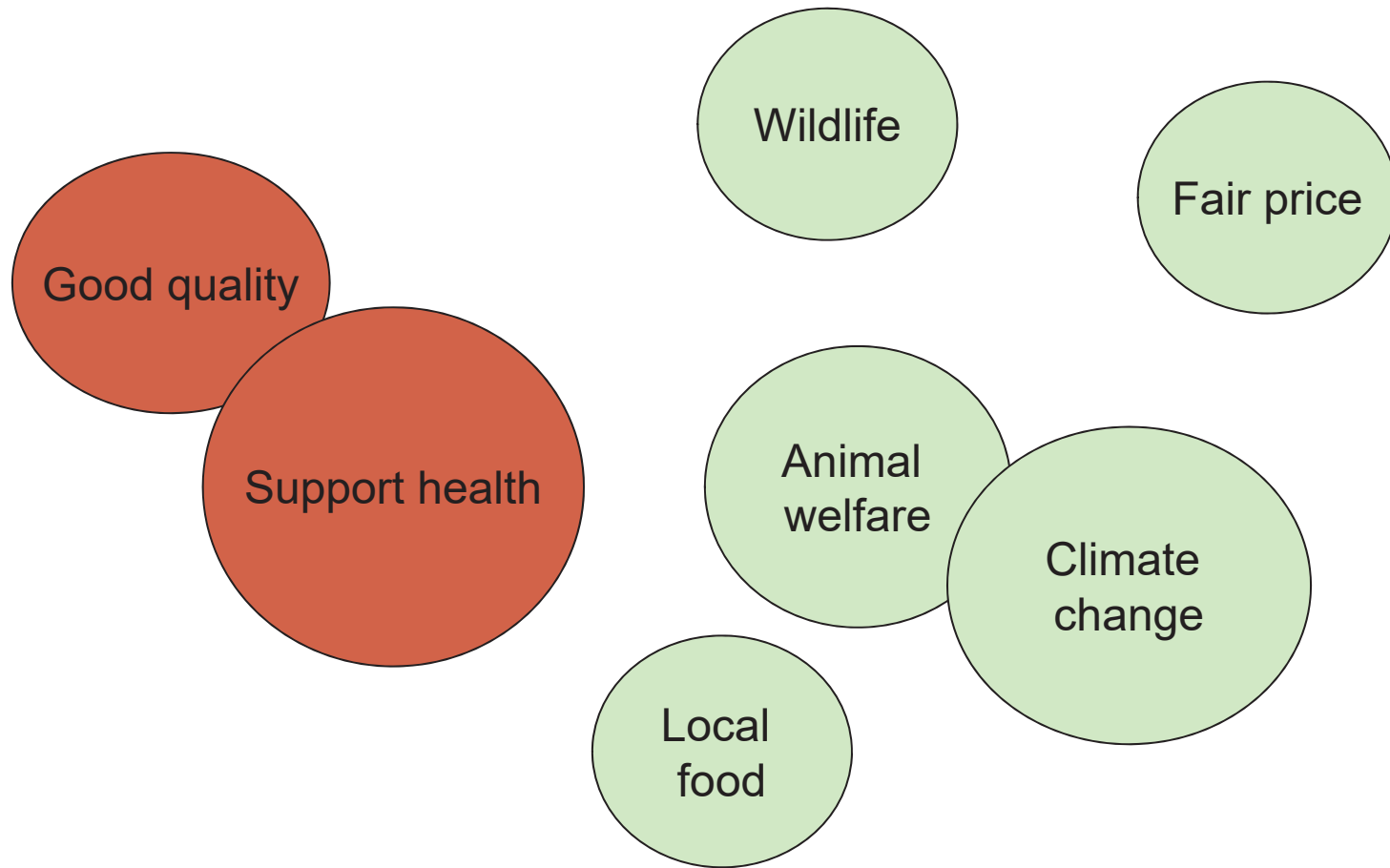
The role of regulation in the development of organic food and farming in Europe

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The roots of the organic idea

- Farm as an organism or system
 - ◆ *multiple goals – sustainability, quality, health, social*
 - ◆ *multiple components, interacting synergistically*
 - ◆ *operating where possible in closed cycles*
 - ◆ *relying on biological/ecosystem processes*
- Long history with many people contributing ideas from globally, representing a wide range of practical farming and theoretical backgrounds
 - ◆ *An ‘open-source’ concept not owned by corporations, institutions or governments*
- Closely linked with other movements
 - ◆ *soil conservation, animal welfare, environmental protection, social justice, agroecology*
 - ◆ *emphasis has changed over time reflecting this*

Multiple aspirations



The advent of certification and regulation

- Early recognition (already in the 1930s-1950s) that producers attempting to make fundamental changes needed support from citizens
- In the absence of direct government support, and reflecting citizen engagement, specialist markets started to develop (biodynamic pioneers)
 - ◆ *Markets developed as means to an end, supporting change - not the central focus/purpose*
- As markets grew, consumers and *bona fide* producers needed protection
 - ◆ *Private certification schemes developed (Demeter, Bioland, Soil Association and many more from 1970s)*
- Continued growth led to introduction of national and then EU regulations in late 1980s/early 1990s

What benefits does regulation bring?

- Fundamentally, it implies recognition by governments that the organic approach has value for society
- The EU legal definition has provided:
 - ◆ *a formal basis for trade, recognising the term organic*
 - ◆ *protection for consumers and bona fide producers*
 - ◆ *inclusion of organic in agri-environment and other policy measures from the 1990s*
 - ◆ *inclusion of organic in rural development actions, research and statistical data collection*
 - ◆ *specific requirements that deliver benefits for society (but many more benefits are indirect effects of specific requirements)*

Sound scientific evidence on positive impacts of production rules

Rules (EU Organic Regulations Article numbers refer to Council Regulation (EC) 834/2007 [A] and Commission Regulation (EC) 889/2008 [B])	Respect natures systems/cycles	Contribute to bio- diversity	Make responsible use of natural resources			
			Energy	Water	Soil	Air & climate
Prohibitions [A: 4 (a) iii and (c)]						
No mineral nitrogen fertilisers	√	√	√	√	√	√
No herbicides, only authorised products can be used	√	√	√	√	√	√
No landless livestock production	√		√			√
No hydroponic production	√			√	√	
No use of GMOs	√					
Strict control of external inputs [A: 4 (b)]; minimal use of non-renewable resources [A: 5 (b)]; recycling of wastes and by-products [A: 5 (c)]						
Only permitted fertilisers: low-soluble mineral fertiliser and soil conditioners, need proven	√	√			√	
Only authorised plant protection products when established threat	√	√			√	√
Feed primarily from holding or same region (with exceptions)	√		√			
Stocking density and use of livestock manure restricted to maximum of 170 kg N/ha and year	√	√	√	√	√	√
Obligations to use good husbandry practises and prevention [A: 4 (a) iv and 5]						
Multiannual crop rotation including legumes and other green manures	√	√	√	√	√	
Tillage and cultivation practices that maintains organic matter, and protects soil	√	√	√	√	√	
Maintain crop health through prevention (natural enemies, the choice of species and varieties, crop rotation) cultivation techniques and thermal processes	√	√	√		√	
Number of livestock limited to minimise overgrazing, poaching, soil erosion or pollution	√	√		√	√	√
Preference for inputs from organic origin (Art 4b with exceptions (Art 4d))						
Manage entire holding organically (with exceptions)	√	√	√	√	√	√
Only organic seed (with exceptions)	√					
Only organic feed (with 5 % exceptional rule for monogastrics)	√					

Risks of regulation

- Fossilising current practice, making improvements difficult to implement
- Focus on input restrictions ('no chemicals'), thresholds and prohibited/prescribed practices
 - ◆ *understandable as easier to audit and to communicate*
 - ◆ *introduces black/white distinctions where shades of green may be more appropriate*
 - ◆ *reduces focus on outputs and impacts*
 - ◆ *distorts debate on potential contribution*
- Discouraging producer engagement by being too restrictive and limiting creativity
 - ◆ *unlike most regulations, participation is voluntary!*
 - ◆ *limited focus on what producers really (need to) do, for example:*

An agroecological approach

- Aims to create a self-regulating, regenerative system by
 - ◆ *integrating multiple components (diversity)*
 - ◆ *relying on a range of mechanisms (complexity)*
 - ◆ *synergistic, multiple relationships (integration)*
- Agro-ecosystem management or eco-functional intensification of this type needs more than
 - ◆ *improved efficiency (more with less?) or*
 - ◆ *substitution of risk inputs with better ones*
- It requires a **system redesign** approach to really make change happen
- It also needs to be financially viable – which is where the organic market comes in
- **Does the EU regulation deliver this?**

Is regulation even a fundamental threat to the organic idea?

- Institutionalisation of the 'organic idea'
 - ◆ *no longer an open-source, citizen-owned concept?*
 - ◆ *new 'alternative' models avoid use of organic term*
- Loss of context as support for transformation of food agriculture
 - ◆ *an end in itself without bigger purpose?*
- How can the EU Regulation address these challenges?

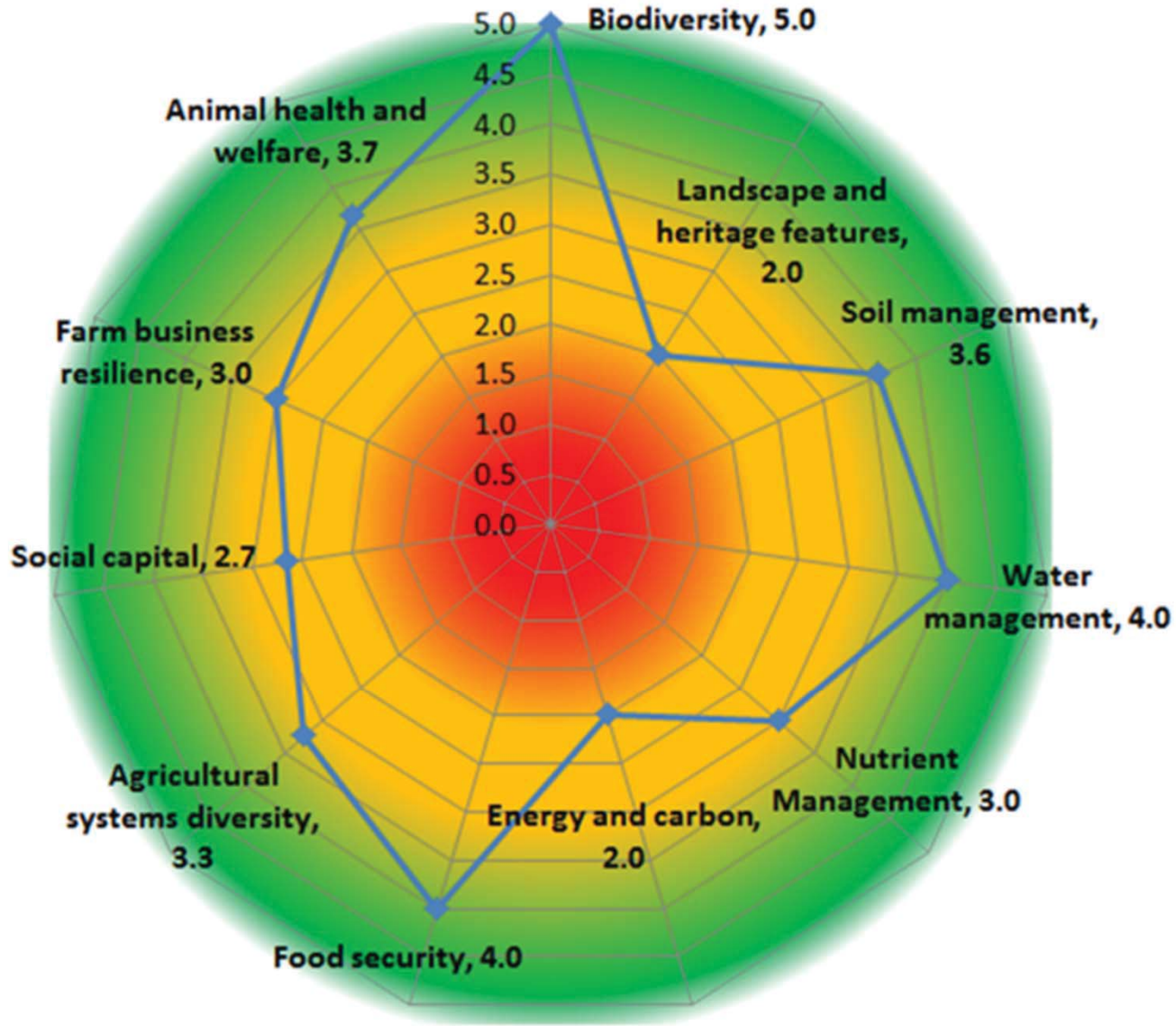
From the citizen perspective, regulation needs to:

- Safeguard the minimum requirements consistent with the global understanding of the organic idea
 - ◆ *Improve clarity of reasons why compromises are made*
 - ◆ *Public understanding of how systems work and generate benefits is limited – need for evidence and debate*
- Address public concerns about food and farming through a combination positive incentives, not only restrictions

For producers and food businesses, regulation needs to

- Recognise that willingness to expose their operations to external scrutiny is **voluntary** and **significant**
- Provide a foundation to support **creativity**
 - ◆ *not a straight-jacket or a prison, stifling innovation*
- Support a teacher as well as a policeman role
 - ◆ *Conversion to organic farming is a learning process*
 - ◆ *Is specific to the individual farm or business*
- Reward innovation and improved sustainability beyond the minimum pass/fail requirement
 - ◆ *shift focus to environmental, animal welfare and other outputs valued by citizens/society?*
 - ◆ *are there smarter ways to verify delivery without increasing regulatory burdens and transaction costs?*

ORC Public Goods Tool (or SMART, RISE etc.)



Let's rebuild a partnership approach to the new regulation



We need to foster a partnership approach between citizens and producers, businesses and government, so that the agroecological, organic system idea can continue to:

- ◆ *Inspire producer and citizen engagement*
- ◆ *Integrate food production, environmental, health and welfare goals*
- ◆ *Innovate ecologically as well as technologically*
- ◆ *Inform thinking about future development paths*
- ◆ *Influence the process of change*

So we can bring about the transformation of European and global agriculture to a more sustainable model