

Abstract:

The motives of farmers to convert to integrated or organic farming (or not) were studied as well as factors affecting these motives. Possible solutions also are mentioned. The results are based on twenty in-depth interviews with experts in the field of integrated or organic farming. Different kind of motives to convert to integrated or organic farming can be distinguished: idealistic motives, related to the intrinsic 'drive' of farmers, economic motives, related to the financial aspects of converting, technical motives, related to matters such as the control of weed and the availability of workers and institutional motives, related to the institutions surrounding farmers (traders of chemical crop protection products, policymakers, farmers living in the area). According to the respondents, idealistic motives are the most important reason to convert and institutional motives the most important reason for not converting. This illustrates that it is important to involve all relevant actors when considering a conversion to integrated or organic farming. Different factors affect the decision to convert to integrated or organic farming. According to the respondents, the personal characteristics of farmers, such as perseverance and dealing with uncertainties, are the most important factor. Other 'internal' factors, related to the farmer are his financial scope and farm conditions. 'External' factors mentioned by the respondents are related to the economic, technical and institutional motives for converting or not. Motives for not converting to more sustainable agriculture are often related to a perceived risk or uncertainty. Involving relevant actors in the process of conversion, financial incentives, providing knowledge, consistent policy or offering farmers some room for experiments might help to reduce the perceived uncertainty. The most important conclusion is that it does not only concern the farmers who have to convert. The actors surrounding them have to join them.