

Abstract:

The adoption of innovative and more environmentally sound production techniques by horticultural growers is important to meet consumer's and societies' expectations about a more environmental production process. However, previous investigations in horticulture and agriculture show that the adoption rate especially of environmentally favourable production systems is still low (e.g. Wilson and Tisdell 2001, Fuglie and Kascak 2001). The aim of this research project is to investigate individual adoption decision processes and to describe the influence of the interaction of individual decision making with other actors and structural preconditions. Therefore the theoretical concepts of adoption and descriptive decision theory are used for explaining individual decision behaviour. Biological pest control and conversion to organic production systems were chosen as two examples of innovation objects with different complexity. In a qualitative empirical investigation 67 German specialised vegetable growers and experts were interviewed about barriers to convert to organic farming practise and adopt biological pest management techniques in different phases of the decision making process. Qualitative content analysis was used for analysis. The results show that aspects of interaction with other actors – such as social barriers – and structural preconditions of the decision situation – such as extension organisation and market structure – are important factors that can encourage or impede the individual decision making process.