



UNDERSTANDING & IMPROVING THE SUSTAINABILITY OF AGRO- ECOLOGICAL FARMING SYSTEMS IN THE EU

The role of market and policy incentives in supporting agro-ecological transition: successful approaches and barriers to adoption

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AGROECOLOGICAL TRANSITIONS IN A TRANSATLANTIC CONTEXT (1)

Concepts, typologies, barriers, drivers and sustainability performance

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AMERICAN ASSOCIATION
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- **UNISECO project**

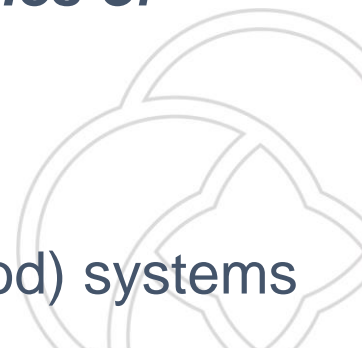
- To **strengthen the sustainability** of European farming systems, through **co-constructing** improved **strategies** and **incentives** for agro-ecological approaches.
- To **improve the knowledge base** of agro-ecological farming in the EU to **inform future policies** at European, national and regional levels

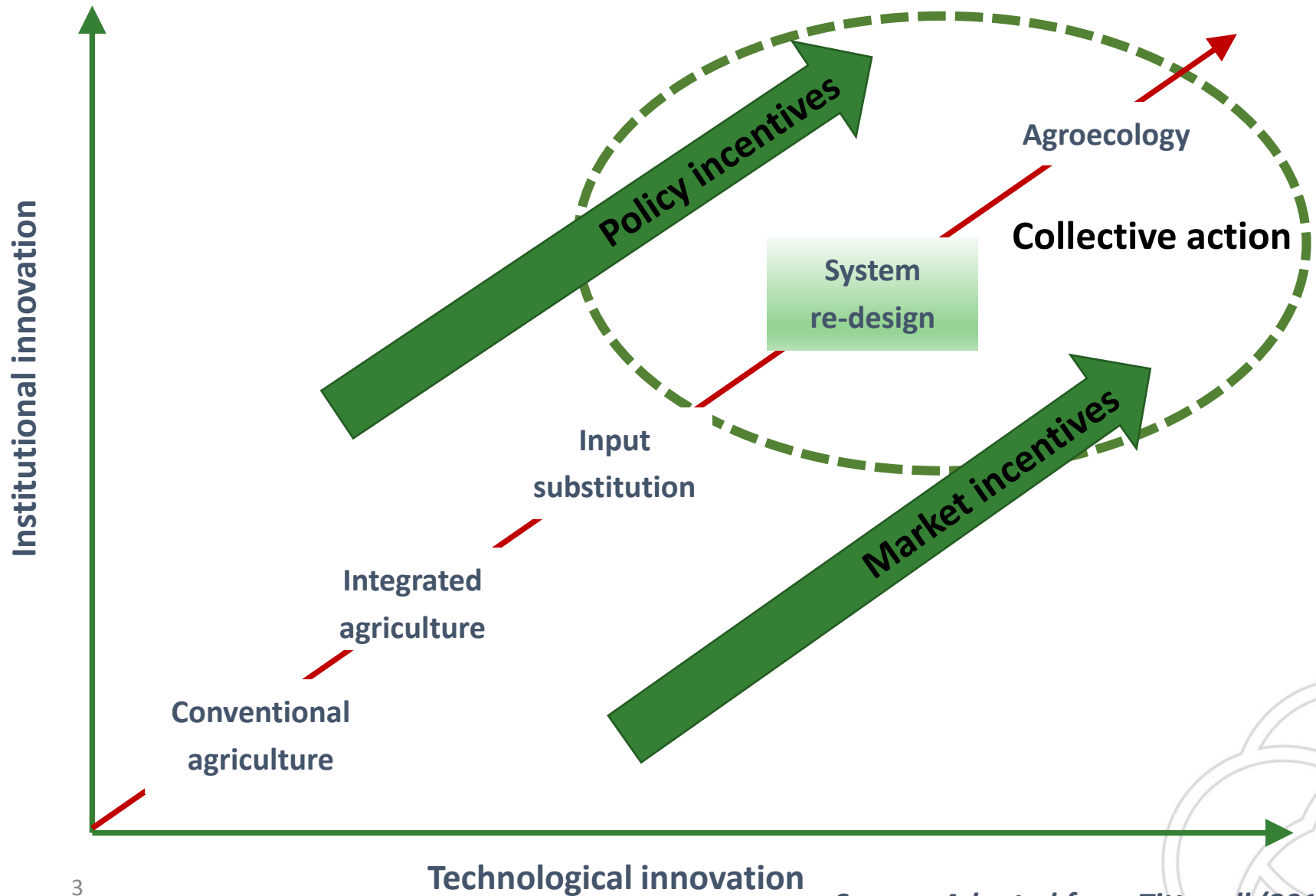
- **Governance and policy assessment**

- Analyse market and policy incentives, with governance mechanisms, supporting Agro-Ecological Farming Systems (AEFS). ***Starting point -> Inventory of key examples of market and policy incentives***

- **Transition**

- Continuum from conventional to agro-ecological (food) systems





- **Objective**

- **Identifying** and **classifying** the different **types of incentives** that have the greater potential to support the transition processes towards Agro-Ecological Farming Systems (AEFS)

- **Approach**

- **Literature review:** scientific and non-scientific publications and EU and international databases (FAO, WFC, ENRD, etc.)
- **Inventory:** collection of examples of market and policy incentives in UNISECO partner countries, in other EU countries and in 5 non-EU countries (Bolivia, Brazil, Cuba, Tunisia, USA)
- **Interviews:** 52 semi-structured interviews with stakeholders in UNISECO partner countries and at EU level



• Literature review

- To date very few scientific contributions focus on the scope and scale of market and policy (M&P) incentives supporting AEFS
- General recommendations on the types of incentives needed to support transition at different scales but not specific analysis
- In many contexts (including within the EU) policy support fails to facilitate comprehensive, long-term and integrated approaches such as agro-ecology (FAO, 2018)

• Scope and criteria for the inventory

- The “innovativeness” of M&P incentives in stimulating the adoption of (more) sustainable practices at farm level
- The potential of M&P incentives for enabling a transformation of the entire food system



Classification of M&P incentives

	Market	Mixed (policy+market)	Policy	Total
<i>1. National food and farming plans</i>	-	-	8	8
<i>2. Agri-environmental practices</i>	1	1	11	13
<i>3. Sustainable food standards</i>	4	-	-	4
<i>4. Organic food promotion and certif.</i>	7	1	-	8
<i>5. Local food promotion</i>	4	4	-	8
<i>6. Alternative food chains</i>	2	4	2	8
<i>7. Territorial-based farming practices</i>	7	1	7	15
<i>8. Research and capacity-building</i>	2	1	2	5
Total	27	12	30	69

<i>National</i>	20	8	19	47
<i>Regional</i>	2	1	8	11
<i>Local</i>	5	3	3	11

4. ORGANIC FOOD PROMOTION AND CERTIFICATION
THE KRAV ORGANISATION (SWEDEN)
CATEGORY: Market
GEOGRAPHIC SCOPE: National

2. AGRI-ENVIRONMENTAL PRACTICES
PASTURE BANK (FINLAND)
CATEGORY: Mixed
GEOGRAPHIC SCOPE: National

1. NATIONAL FOOD AND FARMING PLANS
THE AGROECOLOGICAL PROJECT (FRANCE)
CATEGORY: Policy
GEOGRAPHIC SCOPE: National

6. ALTERNATIVE FOOD CHAINS
MOBILE FARMERS MARKETS (LITHUANIA)
CATEGORY: Market
GEOGRAPHIC SCOPE: National

3. SUSTAINABLE FOOD STANDARDS
FARMING MODELS FOR HIGH-QUALITY VEGETABLES AND FRUITS (SPAIN)
CATEGORY: Market
GEOGRAPHIC SCOPE: National

5. LOCAL FOOD PROMOTION
NATIONAL PARK PRODUCT BRAND (HUNGARY)
CATEGORY: Market
GEOGRAPHIC SCOPE: National

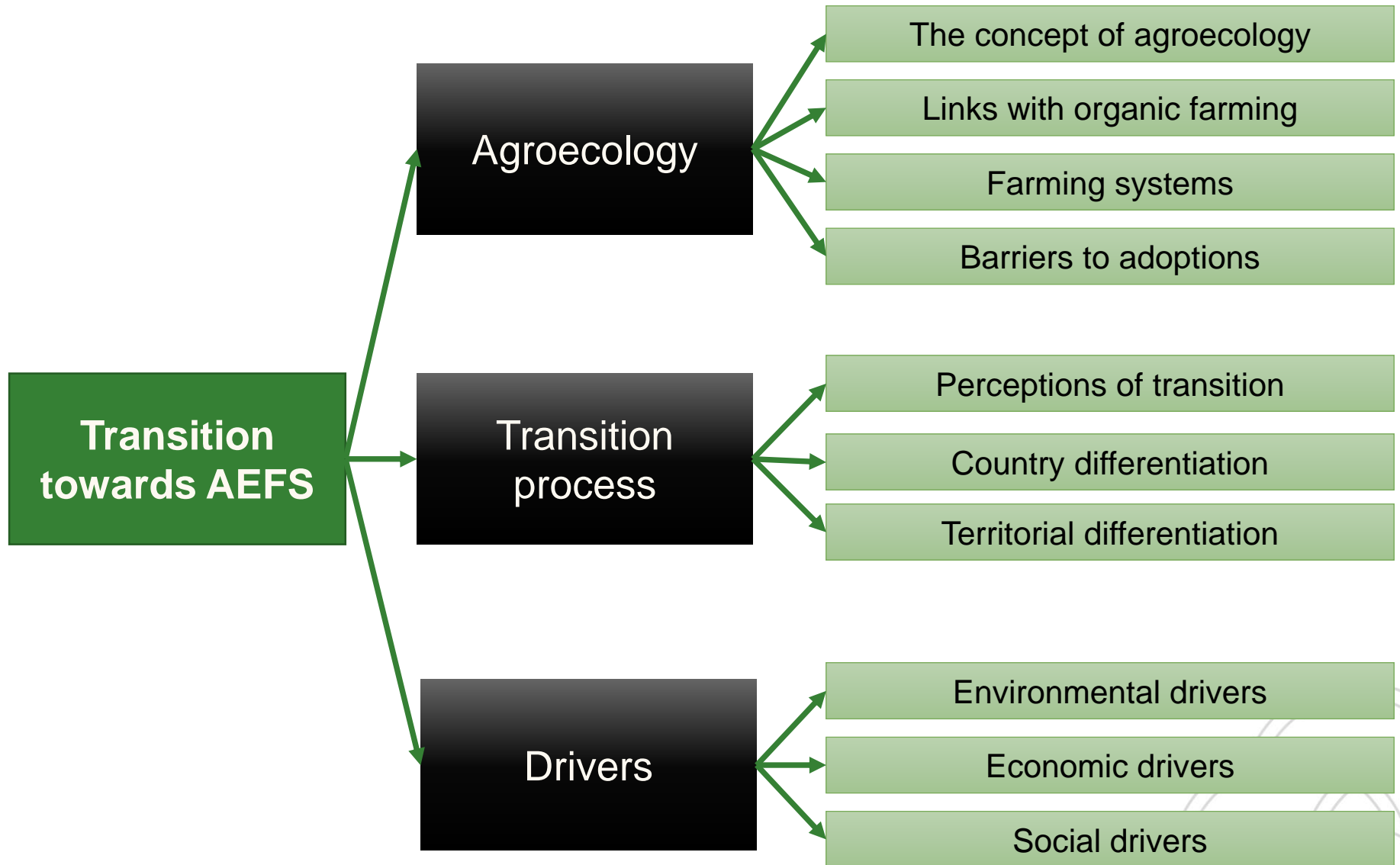
7. TERRITORIAL-BASED FARMING PRACTICES
THE EXPERIENCE OF BIO-DISTRICTS (ITALY)
CATEGORY: Mixed
GEOGRAPHIC SCOPE: Local

8. RESEARCH AND CAPACITY-BUILDING
ORGANIC CATTLE HUSBANDRY - PROVIEH (SWITZERLAND)
CATEGORY: Market
GEOGRAPHIC SCOPE: National

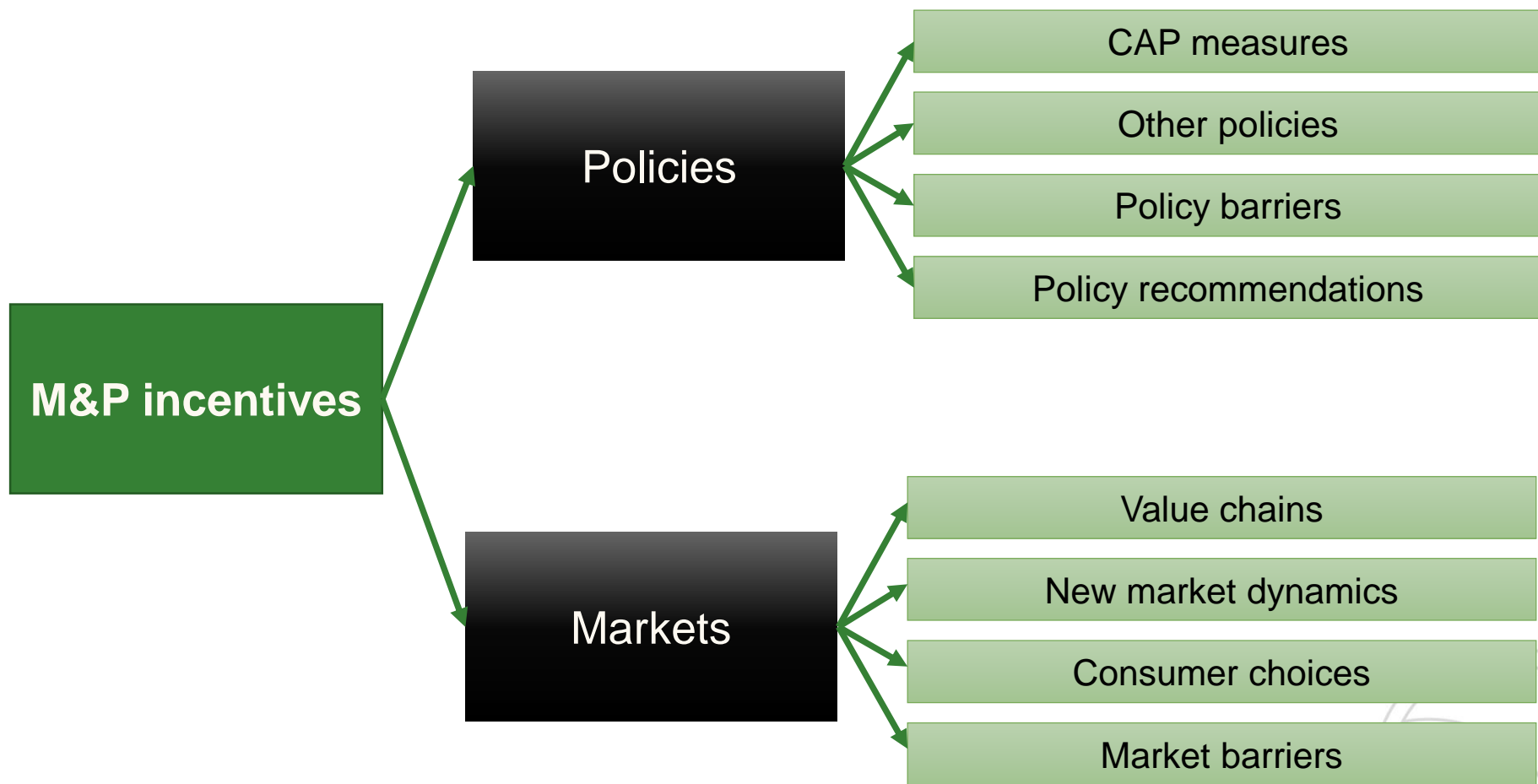
- **Open-ended questions with the objectives of:**
 - Verifying the relevance of M&P instruments identified in the inventory, as well as identifying the most innovative and effective incentives
 - Analyzing the points of view of national and EU stakeholders with specific knowledge and experience on M&P incentives
- **Stakeholders interviewed**
 - 52 stakeholders: 49 in 13 EU countries + 3 EU level
 - 3 Agricultural Consultants
 - 2 Consumer Non-Governmental Organizations
 - 2 Farmers
 - 9 Farmers' Associations
 - 14 Ministry of Agriculture
 - 2 Ministry of Environment
 - 9 Environmental Non-Governmental Organizations
 - 11 Researchers



The coding process (1)



The coding process (2)



- **CAP measures**
 - **Agri-environmental and organic support schemes**, were recognized as **key tools** in the promotion of agro-ecological thinking and practices in many EU countries
- **Other policies**
 - CAP intervention should be **better integrated with additional policies** targeted to local farming systems, specific food chains and new consumers demands
- **Policies barriers**
 - CAP measures are **too prescriptive**, they **lack flexibility** and above all fail in promoting the systemic perspective of agro-ecological thinking
- **Policy recommendations**
 - Policies should ensure stronger support for the development of local **farmer networks**, as well as a better integration between **economic and environmental objectives**

The role of policies (2)

- *In Hungary the high degree of dependence on the RDP for support is in itself a barrier to a transition to agro-ecology [HU-MA].*
- *The rules on the calculation of compensation payments are important barriers, since they are based on pure conventional economics, not on environmental accounting [EU-AC].*
- *Transition to agro-ecology is embedded in the wider context of rural renaissance or revitalization of rural areas [...] public funding should be made available to build rural networks and ownership of regional development [DE-ME].*
- *Incentives should motivate farmers to innovate and improve their performance through agro-ecological practices in a non-prescriptive fashion and in the long-term [RO-F].*



The role of market incentives (1)

- **Value chains**
 - Private schemes and value chain initiatives have a great potential in facilitating **interactions between different actors of the food supply chain** and foster agro-ecological transition
- **Consumer choices**
 - Increasing consumer demand for safer, healthier and environmentally friendly products is stimulating **sustainability certification processes**
- **New market dynamics**
 - In some contexts **short supply chains** could be a good solution to valorize environmentally friendly practices
- **Market barriers**
 - Key challenge: better **incorporating the negative externalities** and the **value of public goods** produced by farmers into market prices

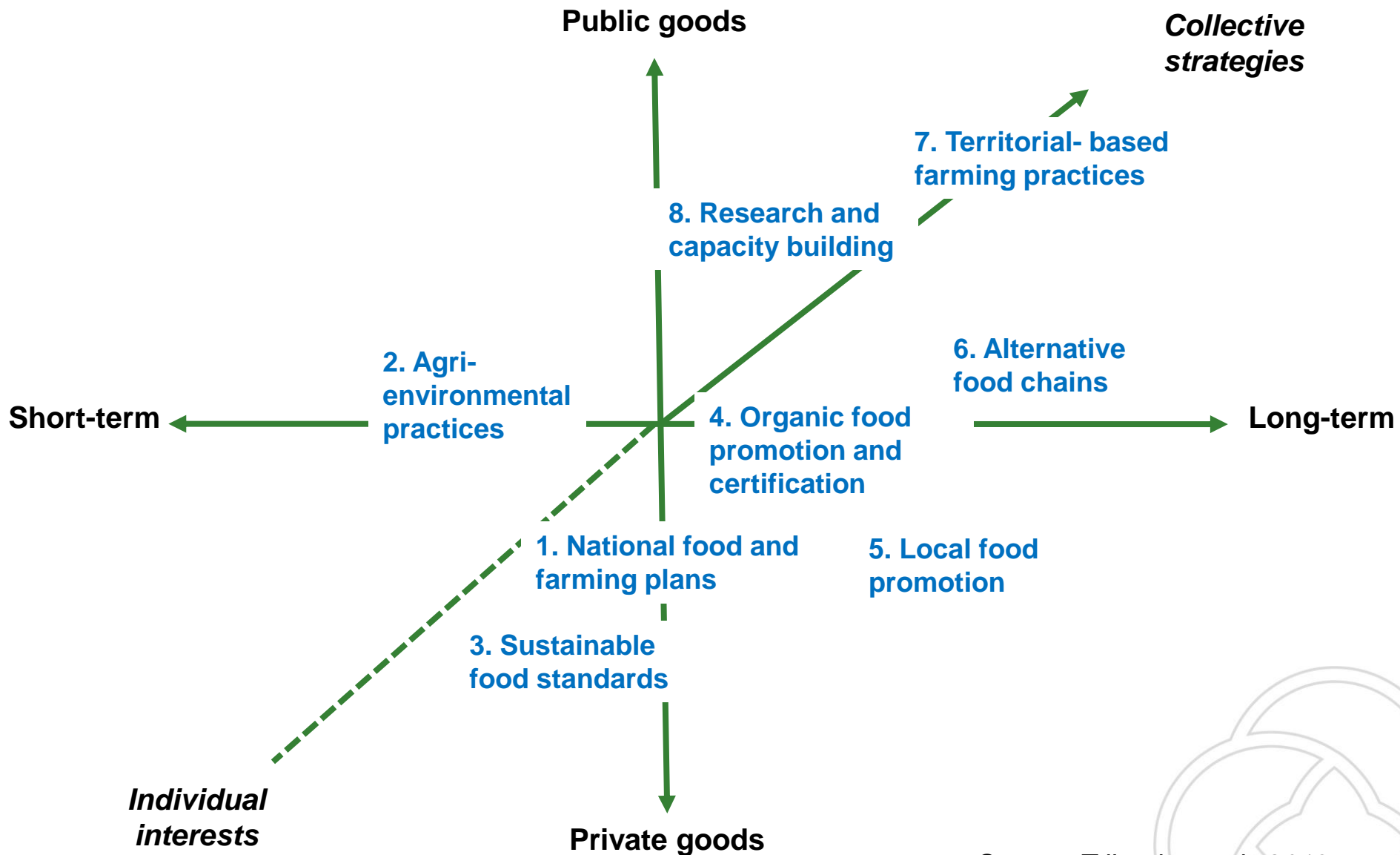


The role of market incentives (2)

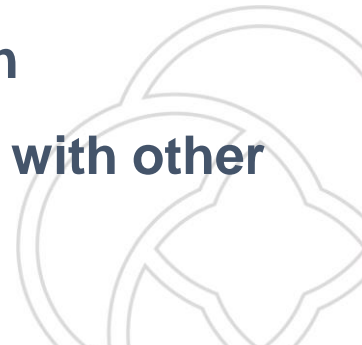
- *When big corporations such as Barilla implement projects on sustainable farming practices such initiatives are usually more effective than those driven by public support [IT-NGO].*
- *Facilitating interaction between different actors of the food supply chain could be a means to foster the agro-ecological transition [...] instead of focusing only on technical practices at the farm level [FR-FA].*
- *In France [...] it is not easy to get added value for this effort on the final products as there are no distinct agro-ecological labels ... the strategy employed is rather to create their own rules or to use existing private labels [FR-FA].*
- *If externalities not taken into consideration, the market is flooded with cheap products that disadvantage those producers who practice agro-ecology [FI-MA].*



The governance challenge



- **Analysis of cultural and economic barriers** that may hinder the adoption of agro-ecological practices promoted by M&P incentives at farm level
- **Analysis of the role played by:**
 - **the private sector** in promoting agro-ecological initiatives and the opportunity for greater cooperation with public sector
 - **research, local training and advisory systems** in the uptake of agro-ecological approaches
- **Co-construction of M&P incentives:**
 - better **targeted** to local farming systems, local food chains and new consumer demands
 - that stimulate **greater cooperation and collective action**
 - based on a **better integration of agricultural measures with other** (national, local and environmental) **policies and sectors**



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