

City Research Online

City St George's, University of London

Citation: Sharpe, Rosalind (2016). 'A piecemeal way to save the world': Investigating social sustainability in the UK's conventional food supply. (Unpublished Doctoral thesis, City, University of London)

This is the accepted version of the paper.

This version of the publication may differ from the final published version. To cite this item please consult the publisher's version.

Permanent repository link: https://city-ref-test.eprints-hosting.org/id/eprint/17353/

Copyright and Reuse: Copyright and Moral Rights remain with the author(s) and/or copyright holders. Copies of full items can be used for personal research or study, educational, or not-for-profit purposes without prior permission or charge, unless otherwise indicated, provided that the authors, title and full bibliographic details are credited, a hyperlink and/or URL is given for the original metadata page and the content is not changed in any way. For full details of reuse please refer to City Research Online policy.

City Research Online: http://openaccess.city.ac.uk/ publications@citystgeorges.ac.uk

‘A piecemeal way to save the world’

Investigating social sustainability in the UK’s conventional food supply

Rosalind Sharpe

Submitted for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy in Food Policy

Centre for Food Policy, City, University of London

December 2016

Contents

Investigating social sustainability in the UK's conventional food supply 1

List of Tables 9

List of Figures 9

Acknowledgments 10

Declaration 10

Copyright Declaration 10

Abstract 11

List of Abbreviations 12

Chapter 1 Setting out the problem 14

1.1 Why this study? 14

1.2 Sustainability and 'alternative' food supply arrangements 15

1.3 The context: the UK's conventional food supply 16

1.4 Challenges to the sustainability of the conventional food supply 18

1.5 Sustainability and social sustainability as governance problems 20

1.6 The research problem 21

1.7 A provisional definition 22

1.8 The structure of the thesis 23

Chapter 2: Why sustainability has a social 'pillar' 25

2.1. Introduction 25

2.2 Origins 28

2.3 A hybrid idea: Development meets Environmentalism 29

2.4 One plan, three pillars 33

2.5 A capacious concept 35

2.6 The social pillar of sustainability 37

2.7 Accumulating meanings 40

2.8 A more theoretical approach 42

2.9 Inter-pillar tensions 44

2.9.1 Social-environmental connections 44

2.9.2 Social-economic connections 46

2.9.3 A social 'filter' rather than a pillar? 49
2.10 Normativity, equity and democracy 49
2. 11 Towards definitional agreement 51
2.12 Concluding comments 52
Chapter 3: Social sustainability, food and governance 54
3.1 Introduction 54
3.2 Social sustainability in relation to food 54
3.2.1 Food sustainability by other names 55
3.2.2 Sustainability enters food discourse 58
3.2.3 Social attributes of a sustainable food supply 59
3.2.4 Some related concepts 61
3.2.5 How social sustainability has been used in food studies 63
3.3 Sustainability and business 65
3.4 Social sustainability and governance 66
3.4.1 Policy 67
3.4.2 Governance 68
3.4.3 The importance of networks 70
3.4.4 Policy as discourse 71
3.5 A toolbox of governance measures 74
3.5.1 Ecological Modernisation 74
3.5.2 Indicators 76
3.5.3 'Market based instruments': standards and S-LCA 79
3.5.4. The Triple Bottom Line 81
3.5.5 Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) 83
3.6 Concluding comments 84
Chapter 4: Research design and methods 87
4.1 Introduction: research objective and research questions 87
4.2 Research approach 88
4.3 Choosing the research methods 89
4.4 Selection of data sources 90
4.4.1 Selection of policy data sources 91

4.4.2 Selection of website data sources *92*

4.4.3 Selection of interviewees *97*

4.5 Data capture and handling 99

4.5.1 Public policy data capture and handling *99*

4.5.2 Website data capture and handling *100*

4.5.3 Interview data capture and handling *102*

4.6 Data analysis 105

4.7 Some limitations of the chosen research methods 110

4.8 Ethics 111

4.9 Presentation of the findings 112

Chapter 5: The rise and fall of social sustainability in UK public food policy 113

5.1 Introduction 113

5.2 The social dimensions of UK sustainability policy 113

5.2.1 From nebulous beginnings to sustainable communities: 1994-2005 ..... *113*

5.2.2 The current framework: A 'strong, healthy and just society' *116*

5.2.3 'Mainstreaming' or downgrading? 2010-2015 ..... *118*

5.2.4 The social pillar as 'wellbeing' *119*

5.2.5 Changing interpretations of the social pillar *121*

5.3 Social sustainability in UK food policy 122

5.3.1 Moving beyond 'adequacy': 1994-2001 ..... *122*

5.3.2 Strategies for sustainable farming: 2002-2006 ..... *125*

5.3.3 A sustainability strategy for the food industry: 2006 ..... *127*

5.3.4 Social sustainability eclipsed *130*

5.3.5 Contested definitions of the social pillar: 2010-2015 ..... *131*

5.4 A patchwork of policy measures 134

5.4.1 Fairness in supplier relationships: the Groceries Supply Code *135*

5.4.2 Food quality: the Public Health Responsibility Deal *135*

5.4.3 Farm workers' pay: Abolition of the Agricultural Wages Board in England *136*

5.4.4 Farm working conditions: The Gangmasters Licensing Authority *137*

5.5 Concluding comments 137

Chapter 6: Identifying the governance actors 140

6.1 Introduction 140
6.2 Categorising the actors 140
6.2.1 The actors in more detail 144
6.2.2 Ambiguity and interdependency 146
6.3 The interviewees 148
6.3.1 Interviewees' jobs, job titles and routes to current work 149
6.3.2 Interviewees as individuals within organisations 150
6.3.3 The interviewees as interviewees 152
6.4 The diversity, scale and complexity of the governance actors 152
6.4.1 Diversity 152
6.4.2 Size and scale 154
6.4.3 Complexity 155
6.4.4 For profit or not for profit? 157
6.4.5 So what is a food company? 159
6.5 A 'sustainability sector' within an industry 161
6.6 Social sustainability as part of a bigger job 162
6.7 Concluding comments 163
Chapter 7: Building meanings: how the governance actors defined social sustainability 165
7.1 Introduction 165
7.2 The elusive pillar: social sustainability in the websites 166
7.2.1 Social sustainability within sustainability 166
7.2.2 Selected definitions from the websites 167
7.2.3. A profusion of labels for social sustainability 169
7.2.4 The scope of the terrain: social themes identified in the websites 171
7.2.5 Defining the social out of sustainability 174
7.2.6 Social activity not linked to sustainability 175
7.3 Interpretations from the interviewees 176
7.3.1 Social a less familiar 'pillar' 176
7.3.2 Some capsule definitions and key ideas 176
7.3.3 A relatively recent concern 178
7.3.4 Accumulating meanings 179

7.3.5 A variety of terms *180*

7.3.6 'Work' as a key element of social sustainability *180*

7.4 Deciding what social themes to act on 182

7.4.1 Instrumental defining *182*

7.4.2 Ripples of responsibility *184*

7.4.3 Materiality as a guide to actionable social themes *185*

7.4.4 Social sustainability understood as 'the right thing to do' *186*

7.4.5 The (sacred) shadow of the FISS *189*

7.5 Social sustainability as the process of 'getting it' 189

7.6 Concluding comments 191

Chapter 8: The scramble to act: doing social sustainability in the food supply 193

8.1 Introduction 193

8.2 A miscellany of activities in the websites 194

8.3 A standard response? 195

8.3.1 'Nourishing the world' *196*

8.3.2. 'A great place to work' *197*

8.3.3 'The workers who touch our supply chain' *198*

8.3.4 'Making a positive difference to the community' *200*

8.3.5 'Scaling for good' *201*

8.3.6 The missing 'green filter'? *201*

8.4 The 'boring stuff', and the sustainability of food work 202

8.4.1 Doing what was expected *202*

8.4.2 Putting it into practice *203*

8.4.3 A great place to work? *205*

8.4.4 Fair dealing: from transactions to social relations *209*

8.5 Governing social sustainability in the food supply 211

8.5.1 Re-labelling existing activities *211*

8.5.2 Dis-integrating social sustainability *212*

8.5.3 Using Company Codes and Policies *214*

8.5.4 Collaboration *216*

8.5.5 Outsourcing *219*

8. 5.6 Doing 'engagement' *220*

8.5.7 People making decisions *221*

8.6 Concluding comments 223

Chapter 9: Carrots and sticks: projecting social sustainability onto the food supply 225

9.1 Introduction 225

9.2 The trade associations, levy bodies and unions 226

9.3 Strategising social sustainability: the consultancies 228

9.4 Campaigning for social sustainability: the Advocacy Organisations 230

9.5 The army of auditors 234

9.6 Institutionalised collaboration: the MSIs 236

9.7 Standardising social sustainability 237

9.7.1 Different types of standards *239*

9.7.2 Social criteria in standards *244*

9.7.3 Not-so-standard standards *246*

9.7.4 The emergence of sustainability governance organisations *248*

9.7.5 The Convergence of standards *249*

9.8 The interviewees' experience of using standards 250

9.8.1 Routine use of standards *250*

9.8.2 Standards as drivers of change *251*

9.8.3 Drawbacks and limitations *252*

9.8.4 Beyond audit *255*

9.9 Concluding comments 255

Chapter 10 Agency or complacency? The interviewees reflect 258

10.1 Introduction 258

10.2 The 'social' aspect as inherently difficult to act on 259

10.2.1 Because already taken care of *259*

10.2.2 Practical difficulties *259*

10.2.3 Difficult because hard to measure *261*

10.2.4 Difficult because nebulous *262*

10.2.5 Difficult for cultural reasons *263*

10.2.6 Difficulties or excuses? *264*

10.3 Doing social sustainability with a 'business mindset' 264
10.3.1 Acting 'within the business case' *264*
10.3.2 A business opportunity *266*
10.3.3 Precluding certain choices *268*
10.3.4 The effects of company structure and ethos *269*
10.3.5 A disconnect from business performance *269*
10.3.6 Self-justifying talk *272*
10.3.7 Why do businesses do social sustainability at all? *273*
10.3.8 Cynicism and greenwash *275*
10.4 On the relevance of public policy 276
10.5 Concluding comments 278
Chapter 11: Reflections, implications and avenues for further research 280
11.1 Introduction 280
11.2 An abundance of governance, not much government 281
11.3 A highly dynamic issue 283
11.4 Social in substance and process 284
11.5 How social sustainability is defined in the conventional food supply 285
11.6 The non-state actors: a diverse group 288
11.7 Putting social sustainability into practice in the food supply 292
11.8 The governance of social sustainability 294
11.9 Conflicting rationalities 298
11.10 A clash of ontologies 302
11.11 Implications for public policy 304
11.12 Reflections on the research process 305
11.13 Possibilities for further research 306
References 309

List of Tables

Table 2.1 Selected definitions of sustainability, by date order of publication 27
Table 2.2 Selected definitions of social sustainability, by date order of publication 39
Table 2.3 Examples of substantive ('what') and procedural ('how') aspects of social sustainability 43
Table 3.1 Selected definitions of sustainability and social sustainability in relation to food 57
Table 4.1 Websites investigated, with web addresses and dates accessed (135) 93
Table 4.2 Interviewees by number with anonymised job description 99
Table 4.4 Examples of website data summaries included in Data Tables 108
Table 5.1 Selected aims and attributes associated with the social pillar, 1994-2013 122
Table 5.2 Goals of sustainable agriculture / food, 1994-2002 124
Table 5.3: Themes & activities relevant to social pillar of sustainability for food industry, 2006 129
Table 5.4: Six core issues for a sustainable and secure food system, 2010 131
Table 5.5 Framework for a sustainable food system, SDC 2011 132
Table 5.6 Multiple values for a sustainable food system, SDC 2011 133
Table 5.7 Five core pledges of Public Health Responsibility Deal 136
Table 6.1 Entities by category 142
Table 6.2 Entities by category, cont'd 143
Table 6.3 Distribution of interviewees by category (some appear in more than one category) 148
Table 6.4 Interviewees allocated to categories of actors 'in' and 'on' 148
Table 7.1 Examples of social sustainability themes in websites 168
Table 7.2 Definitions of social sustainability from the interviewees 178
Table 9.1 Ways of standardising social sustainability: 10 examples 240

List of Figures

Fig 2.1 Examples of visualisations of sustainability 34
Fig 4.1 Diagram of research process 88
Fig. 4.2 Data Extraction Sheet 101
Fig. 4.3 Topic Guide 104
Fig 5.1 The five 'guiding principles' of UK sustainable development policy, 2005 117
Fig 11.1 The Research Questions 281

Acknowledgments

I most gratefully acknowledge the patient, generous and constructive guidance I have received over many years from my supervisors, Professor Tim Lang and Professor David Barling. I am also extremely grateful to my friend Professor Anne Murcott, for her wise advice. I wholeheartedly thank my husband and children for their kindness, interest, encouragement and powers of distraction. I am grateful to City University for funding my research, and to the interviewees who gave their time and shared their knowledge (especially Interviewee 27, who supplied the title). I would also like to acknowledge many useful conversations with my colleagues at the Centre for Food Policy at City University, including Dr David Buffin, before illness prevented him from working.

Declaration

I declare that the work presented in this thesis, except for those elements specifically declared, is all my own work carried out and finished at City University London.

Copyright Declaration

The author accepts the discretion of the City, University of London, librarian to allow the thesis to be copied in whole or in part without the prior consent of the author. This thesis may be made available for consultation within the university library and may be photocopied only in single copies or lent to other libraries for the purpose of study.

Abstract

This thesis addresses a gap in knowledge of sustainability in relation to food – namely how the social 'pillar' is being interpreted and acted on, and by whom, in the UK's conventional food supply. Sustainability is widely seen to have three pillars (environmental, economic and social), with the latter the least well understood. The thesis uses a governance perspective, where sustainability is viewed as a problem seen to be in need of intervention by public and other rule-making authorities.

The research first reviewed UK-level state policy relating to social sustainability and food. It then explored organisational websites to find out what types of entity were active on social sustainability, and in what ways. The website research yielded data 135 separate entities, and was supplemented by 27 qualitative interviews.

It was found that actors from a range of categories beyond companies producing food were involved in governing this area, such as financial actors, 'infrastructure' providers, consultants, advocacy groups and standards organisations. They used an array of governance techniques, including re-badging existing activities, outsourcing, advocacy, collaboration, and multiple forms of 'audit'. The range of social concerns on which they acted was extensive, from nutrition and employment to education and animal welfare. They were both *substantive* (such as the nutritional content of food) and *procedural* (such as accountability). However, the activities were very inconsistently associated with sustainability, leading to the conclusion that social sustainability does not yet have a settled meaning in the context of the conventional food supply, and given the highly normative nature of its constituent concerns, its meaning may always be dynamic and contested.

Overall, non-state governance was found to be ad hoc and opportunistic, but also resourceful and idealistic. In the absence of coherent state guidance, it served the actors' diverse interests rather than any agreed public goal.

List of Abbreviations

ABF Associated British Foods
BFAWU Bakers, Food and Allied Workers' Union
BITC Business in the Community
BSCI Business Social Compliance Initiative
BSI British Standards Institution
CASH Consensus Action on Salt and Health
CC Competition Commission
CEO Chief Executive Officer
CFO Chief Finance Officer
COO Chief Operating Officer
CR Corporate Responsibility
CSDH Commission on Social Determinants of Health
CSR Corporate Social Responsibility
DCLG Department for Communities and Local Government
DE Department for the Environment
Defra Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
DETR Department for Environment, Transport and the Regions
DH Department of Health
EAC Environmental Audit Committee
ECRA Ethical Consumer Research Association
Efra Environment, Food and Rural Affairs select committee
EHRC Equalities and Human Rights Commission
E-LCA Environmental Life Cycle Assessment
EM Ecological Modernisation
ESG Environment, Social and Governance
ETI Ethical Trading Initiative
EU European Union
FAO Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations
FEEM *Fondazione eni Enrico Mattei*
FISS Food Industry Sustainability Strategy
FRC Financial reporting Council
GLA Gangmasters Licensing Authority
GRASP GlobalGAP Risk Assessment on Social Practice
GRI Global Reporting Initiative
GSCA Groceries Supply Code Adjudicator
GSCOP Groceries Supply Code of Practice
GSCP Global Social Compliance Programme
GSS Government Statistical Service
HR Human Resources
IAASTD International Assessment of Agricultural Knowledge, Science and Technology for Development
ICIDI Independent Commission on International Development Issues
IIED International Institute for Environment and Development
ILO International Labour Organisation
ISEAL International Social and Environmental Accreditation and Labelling Alliance
ISO International Organisation for Standardisation
ISSC International Social Science Council
IUCN International Union for the Conservation of Nature
KPI Key Performance Indicator
LB Levy Board
LEAF Linking Environment and Farming
MAC Migration Advisory Committee
MAFF Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food
MBIs Market-Based Instruments
MEP Member of the European Parliament

MP Member of Parliament
MSI Multi-stakeholder Initiative
Nef New Economics Foundation
NFU National Farmers' Union
NGO Non-governmental organisation
NHS National Health Service
NI National Insurance
OECD Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
ONS Office for National Statistics
PA Press Association
PCFFF Policy Commission on the Future of Farming and Food
POST Parliamentary Office for Science and Technology
PSFPI Public Sector Food Procurement Initiative
QHSE Quality, Health, Safety and Environment
RSPB Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
RSPCA Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals
RSPO Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil
SAFA Sustainability Assessment of Food and Agriculture Systems
SAN Sustainable Agriculture Network
SCP Sustainable Consumption and Production
SDC Sustainable Development Commission
SDO Standards Development Organisation
Sedex Supplier Ethical Data Exchange
SFL Sustainable Food Laboratory
S-LCA Social-Life Cycle Assessment
SMETA Sedex Members Ethical Trade Audit
TBL Triple Bottom Line
TUC Trades Union Congress
UK United Kingdom
UNDP United Nations Development Programme
UNEP United Nations Environment Programme
UNESCO United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
USAID United States Aid Agency
USDAW Union of Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers
VAT Value Added Tax
WACOSS Western Australia Council of Social Services
WCED World Commission on the Environment and Development
WSSD World Summit on Sustainable Development
WTO World Trade Organisation
WWF Worldwide Fund for Nature

Chapter 1 Setting out the problem

1.1 Why this study?

This study looks at how the social aspects of sustainability are being construed, defined, problematised and acted on, and by whom, in the UK's 'conventional' food supply. It is a study of social sustainability and food governance. It works in the broad framework of political economy, which looks at the relationships between social, political and economic processes (Oosterveer and Sonnenfeld 2012). More specifically, it looks at public policy (the strategies and regulation that emanate from governments) and the governance activity of other actors, as these affect the supply of food. The choice of focus – within sustainability, on the social 'pillar', and within the totality of food provisioning, on the conventional food supply – resulted from two observations made by the author during previous research on food and sustainability (Barling *et al* 2009; Barling *et al* 2010).

The first was that while sustainability was widely recognised to have three pillars (environmental, economic and social), and that all three were seen as relevant concerns for the food supply, there was considerable confusion (shared by the author) on what the social element meant, and indeed why it was there at all.

The second was that academic and civil society discussions of food and sustainability tended to be dominated by conceptions of *'*alternative*'* provisioning systems. There was less debate about how sustainability in general, and much less social sustainability in particular, could be operationalised in the *conventional* food supply.

This presented a paradox and a research opportunity. On one hand, social sustainability was routinely recognised as one of the aspects of sustainability that the food supply needed to do something about (the quintessential characteristic of a governance problem); on the other hand, it was far from clear that the people involved knew what it was or what to do about it. Hence the current research project.

1.2 Sustainability and 'alternative' food supply arrangements

Discussions and descriptions of sustainable food systems tend to define these systems in terms of their 'alterity' to other (by implication less or *un*sustainable) food systems. That is, they set out various attributes of alternative food provisioning arrangements (or even 'alterity' itself, Allen 1993a) as definitive characteristics of a sustainable food supply. A fairly typical example is Kloppenburg's list, devised in consultation with 125 attendees at a sustainable agriculture conference, which included: ecologically sustainable, knowledgeable, communicative, proximate, economically sustaining, participatory, just, ethical, sustainably regulated, sacred, healthful, diverse, culturally nourishing, seasonal, temporal, value oriented and relational (Kloppenburg *et al* 2000).

The 'other' to which these alternatives are posited is often referred to as the 'conventional' food supply. For example, Allen (2004) found that 'alternative agrifood movements', compared with 'conventional' ones, were 'more equitable, environmentally sound, and better for human health' (Allen 2004: 80). Although this discourse is not uncritical of the proposed sustainable alternatives (Allen 1993b; Dupuis and Goodman 2005; Alkon and Agyeman 2011; Goodman *et al* 2012), there is broad agreement on the characteristics that make the conventional system *un*sustainable. In Hinrichs's (again fairly typical) words, it is 'large-scale, industrialised, consolidating and increasingly global … outsized, standardised, environmentally degrading, wasteful, unjust, unhealthy, placeless, disempowering' (Hinrichs 2010: 18). The conventional food supply thus emerges in the literature of food sustainability mainly as the unsustainable 'other' to which sustainable alternatives are advocated.

It is inescapably the case, however, that in the UK it is the large-scale, industrialised food supply that provides the overwhelming bulk of the food eaten. The total combined share of the alternative categories of organic, fair trade, Rainforest Alliance, higher-welfare meat and eggs, vegetarian 'meat' products and sustainable fish (which are grouped together by the UK Department for the Environment, Food and Rural affairs (Defra) as 'ethical' foods) accounted for 8.5% of all household food purchases in the UK in 2012 (Defra 2015a). Land under organic cultivation represented just 3.2% of the total utilised agricultural land area (Defra 2015b). Moreover, where alternative provisioning arrangements exist, their alterity must sometimes be qualified. The most common labels (such as Rainforest Alliance,

Fairtrade and Organic) tap into large-scale supply and distribution networks and are themselves now implicated in global, standardised sourcing and regulatory regimes (Buck *et al* 1997; llbery and Maye 2005; Dolan 2010; Goodman *et al* 2012). Similarly, 'alternative' distribution arrangements, such as Farmers' Markets or box schemes, may sell the products of conventional farming and processing. Without challenging the sustainability, influence or transformative potential of these alternative arrangements, they are at present marginal to (though enmeshed in) the UK's mainstream food supply.

Given that the need to improve the sustainability of the food supply has been depicted in apocalyptic terms (a 'struggle over life and death', Allen and Sachs 1993: 159), the question of what, if anything, this dominant mode of food provisioning was 'doing' about sustainability seemed important. Could the conventional supply only be made more sustainable by negating itself and being reconfigured as its own alternative? Or could a version of 'sustainable conventional food' be devised, that would accommodate traits such as cost reduction, convenience and predictability without compromising the core tenets of sustainability (Morgan and Sonnino 2008)?

1.3 The context: the UK's conventional food supply

The 'conventional' food supply is itself a somewhat nebulous concept, although the term is widely used. As noted above, it encompasses elements of systems sometimes posited as alternatives, such as industrial-scale organic production (Buck et al 1997) or mass distribution of fair trade products through multiple retailers (for example, the retailer Sainsbury's claims to account for 25% of all Fairtrade purchases in the UK)[1]. Another drawback is that the term begs the question, 'conventional to where and when?'. In this thesis, the term 'conventional' is used to refer to the currently predominant, mainstream food provisioning arrangements in the UK. Another useful term that appears less often in the literature is 'industrial', which has appropriate connotations of mechanised and standardised processes.

Atkins and Bowler (2001) outline the 'ideal type' characteristics of the conventional food supply. It tends to be carried out by international companies involved in the large-scale processing and manufacturing of standardised but ever more sophisticated products.

[1] Data Extraction Sheet for Sainsbury (production of the Data Extraction Sheets is explained in Chapter 4.)

Increasing use is made of finance capital for growth, and technology for efficiency and innovation. Sophisticated machinery is used to manufacture foods, with complex linkages among and within firms. Farmers are contracted to produce to highly prescriptive requirements, with strong links to downstream customers, such as supermarkets. Food processors, manufacturers and retailers increasingly define the composition of foods, which tend to be based on generic components, with differentiating properties controlled technologically through the use of processes and additives. Production tends to be concentrated into a small number of large firms.

To the extent that one can summarise something as diverse, dynamic and complex as the food supply in the UK, the literature (and the research) confirmed these characteristics to be broadly applicable. And it must be stressed that by many yardsticks this food supply can be considered highly successful. As Lang comments, its architects might be proud of it (Lang 2010a: 272). In 2010, the then Prime Minister introduced his Government's food strategy with the words, 'Good, safe food on our plates is taken for granted by most people – and so it should be. The last few decades have seen a transformation in the choice, quality, safety and affordability of the food we all eat, day in, day out' (HM Government 2010: 3). Even critics concede that the conventional food supply reliably provides the UK's population of 64 million with a sufficient quantity and unprecedented variety of cheap foods (Lang *et al* 2009). Diseases associated with under-nutrition declined dramatically over the course of the 20th century (Lang *et al* 2009), and some sub-sectors – such as retail logistics – are held to be world-leading (Wrigley and Lowe 2002).

Apart from feeding most people most of the time, the conventional food supply also constitutes an important part of the UK economy, which is another reason why its efforts to tackle sustainability challenges warrant scrutiny. Agricultural production accounts for around 70% of the total land area (Defra 2015c). Beyond the farm gate, close to 200,000 assorted food businesses operate from more than half a million sites to process, manufacture, prepare, distribute and sell food, via shops, cafes, restaurants or other catering outlets (Defra 2015a). Food is the UK's largest manufacturing sector, with 16% of output (compared, for example, with steel and other metals, which account for 11%) (Rhodes 2015). As a whole, the 'agri-food' sector accounted for 7.6% of UK Gross Value Added (£103bn) in 2014, and employed 13% of the workforce, or nearly three million

people (Defra 2015a). Some food enterprises are among the country's largest employers. A single food retailer, Tesco, employs 310,000 people in the UK[2], which means that roughly one in every 100 British workers works for Tesco[3]. The ways in which the enterprises in this system see and act on their sustainability responsibilities have far-reaching impacts and ramifications.

1.4 Challenges to the sustainability of the conventional food supply

For all its achievements, a critique has emerged, as already noted, that the conventional food supply is unsustainable (Allen 1993a, 2004; Buttell 1993, 2006; Garnett 2008, 2014; Lang *et al* 2009; Lawrence *et al* 2010; Oosterveer and Sonnenfeld 2012; Sage 2012; Marsden and Morley 2014). Lang *et al* (2009: 144) comment that 'whichever way the word "sustainable" is defined, food supply chains are currently unsustainable'. Policy-makers have taken up this theme. In 2002, the UK government appointed a Policy Commission to investigate British farming and food, which started from the position that the UK food supply was 'unsustainable in every sense of the term' (PCFFF 2002: 109). The 2010 food strategy referred to above was announced as 'a response to the big food challenges', foremost among which was sustainability (HM Government 2010: 4).

There are many strands to this critique. Post-war intensive farming in Britain has been found to have had negative impacts on soil, water supplies, the climate, biodiversity, the look of the landscape, human health, public finances, the availability and quality of work, and the viability of rural ways of life (Lang 1997; Harvey 1998; Cabinet Office Strategy Unit 2008a; Garnett 2008; Sage 2012; Lymbery and Oakeshott 2014; Marsden and Morley 2014).

Even the cheapness of food – which put abundance and variety within the reach of much of the population – has been seen as a problem, to the extent that it is achieved by externalising environmental and social costs (Pretty *et al* 2005; Lang *et al* 2009). Moreover, by 2015 there was concern that a significant number of people in Britain could not afford to feed themselves. A surge in the use of food banks was widely interpreted as an indication that the poorest in society were having to choose between food and other necessities

[2] Data Extraction Sheet for Tesco

[3] Based on a total of 31.4 million workers, 2016 figure from ONS, available at http://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/bulletins/uklabourmarket/april2016#summary-of-latest-labour-market-statistics (accessed 11.5.16)

(Fabian Commission on Food and Poverty 2015). While farmers, at one end of the food supply chain, complained that the prices they received failed to cover their production costs (PA 2015), health practitioners at the other lamented the consequences of poor diets. With the population consuming more sugary, fatty foods, dairy products and meat than was recommended and less fruit and vegetables (Defra 2015a), the diseases associated with malnutrition, ranging from cancers to depression, had replaced those of undernutrition as a drain on the population and health services (Lang *et al* 2009). Among adults, 25% were obese and another 37% overweight (Defra 2015a). Treatment of diabetes-related illness alone (for which the biggest risk factor is obesity) was estimated to take up 10% of the NHS budget in 2014 (Diabetes UK 2015).

On another front, a number of scandals (such as the deaths of 23 undocumented cockle pickers in Morecambe bay in 2004) highlighted low pay and exploitative conditions in the food supply. Although the food industry is a major employer, just over half of the jobs (51%) are part-time (Defra 2015a), and the workforce is shrinking – between 2000 and 2006, employment in the sector fell by 16% (Jones and Nisbet 2011). In shops, factories, farms, restaurants and cafes, the conventional food supply has been found to require (and produce) labour that is low paid, flexible and amenable to exacting and intensive work regimes (Atkins and Bowler 2001; Rogaly 2008). Along with social and demographic changes in the UK, these factors have in some sectors (notably catering, horticulture and meat processing) led to a dependency on migrant labour (Atkins and Bowler 2001; Pollard 2006; MAC 2013; Strauss 2013). According to Pollard (2006), in 2006 the 'gangmaster' system of supplying temporary workers provided half the labour needed for growing, harvesting and packing UK fruit and vegetables. An investigation of the meat-processing sector encountered evidence of bullying, humiliation, physical and verbal abuse (EHRC 2010). Simas *et al*, calculating 'bad labor footprints' of products, found that food products stood out in volume and intensity of 'bad labor' (Simas *et al* 2014).

The global reach of the conventional food supply has also been seen as problematic. While on one hand long food supply chains have provided transformative economic opportunities for distant growers (Barrientos and Dolan 2006; Blackmore 2011; Vorley *et al* 2012), on the other they have enabled a 'race to the bottom', with products and processes sourced from (or outsourced to) countries with low wages and a lack of environmental or worker

protections (Barrientos and Dolan 2006; Ungoed-Thomas 2007; Lang 2010a). Long and complex supply chains have been found, on the whole, to multiply negative environmental impacts (Garnett 2008).

All of these diverse problems have been discussed in the context of the unsustainability of the food supply. Returning to the original puzzlement over the nature of 'social' sustainability, several of the issues mentioned here (and the list is not exhaustive) seem to be social, if the term is broadly defined as 'the ways in which people interact and organise' (Lockie *et al* 2014: 3). Feeding people and engaging in the world of work (whether as employee or employer), or indeed engaging in commercial transactions, would seem, at first glance, to be social activities. Are these the social aspects of sustainability, at least in relation to the food supply? If not these issues, then which others? Who decides? And whatever the attributes decided on, how should or could they be made more sustainable? These were the questions that prompted this research.

1.5 Sustainability and social sustainability as governance problems

Sustainability has been described as many things. Larsen, for example, lists rubric, vision, philosophy, mission, goal, mandate, principle and marketing ploy (Larsen 2009: 45). Underlying many of these descriptions, though, is the idea that sustainability – or rather, the constellation of issues brought together in this idea – is something that humanity, at this juncture in history, needs to *do something about*. In other words, it is a problem for collective decision making: a governance problem. In the words of Adger and Jordan (2009: *i*) 'the crisis of sustainability is above all a crisis of governance'.

Governance refers to the processes of governing (deciding what is to be governed, making rules, coordinating behaviour), and it comprises both what governments do to their citizens ('government') and what a host of other non-state actors do (Bevir 2009). The study of governance highlights 'the processes and interactions through which highly diverse social interests and actors produce the policies, practices and effects of governing' (Bevir 2012: 4). Miller and Rose (2008) note that public problems are not pre-given; issues have to be 'problematised', or constructed and made visible as problems which are amenable to intervention. The study of governance pays attention both to discourse and to actions. Discourse is important because the language in which issues are discussed makes certain

aspects of these issues visible and invisible (Fairclough 2001), and can determine what is done about the issues and who is called on to act on them; it can also confer 'immunity' on issues that are successfully constructed as non-problems (Fischer 2003: 66). Actions (the ways in which issues are acted on) are important not only in themselves, for their effectiveness or otherwise, but also because the scope and choice of activities illuminate how issues are constructed for governance purposes (or in Miller and Rose's words, made amenable to intervention). Governance is not (or not necessarily) a remote abstraction imposed on passive subjects. Rather, it is 'the product of people's actions' (Bevir 2012: 78), the result of activity and interaction by 'governance actors'.

1.6 The research problem

From this perspective, the research problem was: to investigate how social sustainability was being defined and operationalised as a governance problem in the UK conventional food supply.

To explore this problem, an iterative investigation was undertaken that entailed a literature review; a process of data generation that involved policy research, website research and qualitative interviewing; analysis of the data; and reflection on the findings.

In the light of the literature review, which spanned both sustainability and governance, the research problem was broken down into the following Research Questions, intended to explore both how social sustainability was being interpreted, and how (by whom and in what ways) it was being governed):

> **RQ1:** How is social sustainability defined and discussed in UK food governance, both at the level of public policy and by others involved in this area of governance? In what ways is it construed as a problem to be acted on?
>
> **RQ2:** Apart from the state, which entities are active in social sustainability governance, what sort of entities are they?
>
> **RQ3:** How (if at all) are these non-state actors operationalising social sustainability? What sort of governance approaches and techniques are they using, with what effects, and with what implications for public policy?

For reasons of practicality, some research boundaries had to be set. Thus the study concentrates on the contemporary food supply in the United Kingdom, although global

actors are discussed where relevant. And the study ends at the point at which food is sold to the consumer, although the author recognises that this cut-off point, which is common in food studies, is somewhat artificial (Goodman *et al* 2012).

1.7 A provisional definition

As the foregoing paragraphs have indicated, the research did not begin with a ready-made definition of social sustainability – rather, it set out to find how it was being defined by others, both in the academic literature and in the industrial food supply. For the reader, however, it may be useful to have some starting conception of what the idea entails.

The research found that social sustainability does not (yet) have a settled definition in relation to the conventional food supply, and given the normativity of the content of the idea, it may never have a fixed meaning. Based on the sources studied, social sustainability can be said to be concerned with the *desired social outcomes* of sustainable change (such as adequate, healthy nutrition), as well as with the *desired social processes* by which these outcomes are to be achieved and maintained (for example, through transparent and democratic procedures). It is thus both substantive and procedural (Dillard et al 2009; Bostrom 2012). Crucially, these social outcomes must be achieved with a 'green filter' – an awareness of their environmental impacts (Bostrom 2012). In relation to food, from the very wide array of themes and attributions associated with social sustainability, a summary would include food safety, adequacy, quality and affordability; the nutritional quality of food (often understood in the context of the industrial food supply as a technical function of its formulation); the availability and quality of paid work in the food supply; the quality of relationships among participants in the food supply; the welfare of farm animals; notions of fairness (in the distribution both of access to food and the impacts of the food supply); notions of responsibility and accountability; and the importance of engagement as the prerequisite and enabler of sustainable innovation.

This definition is provisional, because commentators agree (and the research confirmed) that the term 'social sustainability' is still dynamic, with meanings being developed and contested pragmatically, opportunistically, politically and idealistically, by many actors. The rest of the thesis describes this process.

1.8 The structure of the thesis

The remainder of the thesis reviews relevant literature, explains the methods chosen to investigate the problem, sets out the findings of the empirical research, and discusses the implications of these findings for food sustainability and public policy. The thesis is structured as follows:

Chapter 2 surveys the broad literature of sustainability to discover the origins of the social pillar, and looks at how this social pillar has been defined and interpreted.

Chapter 3 then focuses on the two strands of the current investigation, food and governance. It looks at how the idea of social sustainability has been discussed and deployed by food scholars, and at how sustainability has been interpreted by and for the world of business (this being the main context of the industrial food supply). The chapter then looks at the literature of governance to see how this maps onto the emergence of sustainability as a governance challenge, and describes some approaches and instruments which help to understand sustainability as a governance problem.

Chapter 4 explains the methods chosen to conduct the investigation, and describes how the data was generated, organised, stored and analysed.

Chapters 5-11 present the findings.

Chapter 5, supplying part of the answer to RQ1, focuses on public policy, to examine how the UK government has defined social sustainability, and to explore the extent to which public policy for food sustainability has incorporated or operationalised social aspects of sustainability.

Chapter 6, answering RQ2, identifies and categorises the non-state actors found to be active on social sustainability issues in the food sector.

Chapter 7, again addressing RQ1, describes how these actors define and interpret the idea of social sustainability, how they arrive at these interpretations, and how they decide which concerns to act on. This contributes to understanding of how these actors construct social sustainability as a problem on which they can intervene.

Chapters 8 and 9, addressing RQ3, look at how social sustainability was being operationalised. They describe the (extremely varied) activities that different actors used to realise or implement their conceptions of social sustainability in the food sector. Because of the bulk of material, these chapters adopt a categorisation proposed in Chapter 6, which divides the actors into those acting '*in*' the food supply (broadly, the entities involved in producing and distributing food), and those acting '*on*' it (entities that are not directly involved in food production but nevertheless seek to influence its conduct and impacts of the food supply). Chapter 8 looks at the activities of the actors 'in', and chapter 9 looks at the activities of the actors 'on'.

Chapter 10 presents the reflections of the interviewees on the experience of 'doing' social sustainability in the food supply, describing in particular the difficulties they felt the issue presented, as something they had to try to govern, and the implications of operating – as they all acknowledged that they did – within the 'business mindset'.

Chapter 11, concluding the thesis, reflects on the answers to the Research Questions, as they emerged from the data. It discusses some themes and observations that arose from the research, highlights some tensions underlying governance in this domain, and considers the implications of the findings for UK food policy. It also reflects on the research process, and suggests avenues for further research.

References appear at the end of the thesis. The Annexes, which contain additional material as indicated in the main body of the thesis, are contained in a separate document.

Chapter 2: Why sustainability has a social 'pillar'

2.1. Introduction

This chapter reviews literature on sustainability and social sustainability, to answer the fundamental question of why sustainability is so widely represented as having a social 'pillar', and to explore how this social pillar has been interpreted.

The initial confusion arose because in previous research (Sharpe *et al* 2008; Barling *et al* 2010) the author had found the idea of sustainability to have mainly environmental connotations: it was understood to refer to the need to build environmental protections into decision-making in the food supply. However, the literature on sustainability quickly reveals that although sustainability is often associated or even conflated with environmentalism (Dobson 1999; Redclift 2000), it has always had social dimensions. In fact its objective – the preservation of a habitable planet for future human generations – might be seen to be unambiguously social. A social dimension (reflecting the idea that the 'social' relates to human associations and interactions (Giddens 1990) is more or less visible, in different forms, in the selection of definitions (from scores of available variants) presented in Table 2.1. They range from one of the earliest, from the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN), through the famous version of the Brundtland Commission in 1987, to more recent examples. Omann and Spangenberg's (2002) and Gibson's (2006) definitions illustrate the scope of the idea, while Barry's (1999) highlights what he termed its irreducible normativity. Banerjee's (2003) contribution represents a seam of criticism that rejects the approving tone in which Sustainable Development is often discussed. It can be seen that definitions have at times strained to be encyclopaedic, but over time have become more succinct, as if ideas and vocabulary were being thought through. By 2012, the UK Parliamentary Office for Science and Technology (POST) could summarise the meaning of sustainability as 'the long-term maintenance and enhancement of human wellbeing within finite planetary resources' (POST 2012: 1). But this compressed definition is the product of many years of discussion. The following sections trace the social thread that runs through the development of this complex, multi-layered idea.

First, though, it is important to note that there are differences of view in the literature on the use of the terms 'sustainability' and 'Sustainable Development'. For some, there is a straightforward semantic difference between Sustainable Development (the process) leading towards sustainability (the goal) (e.g. Waas *et al* 2011). But the term 'Development' is also seen to have negative connotations. These partly stem from resentment at what were perceived to be the inherently colonial assumptions of the larger 'Development' project, of which Sustainable Development was an offshoot (e.g. Banerjee 2003; EAC 2004). For others, the problem is the extent to which Sustainable Development is seen to have been harnessed by entities (such as global corporations and to some extent the UN, with its Global Compact, discussed in Chapter 3) which are dedicated to enshrining, rather than transforming, 'business as usual' (Prudham 2009; McMichael 2000). McMichael summed up this argument when he noted that Sustainable Development had become 'part of the discourse of global managers' (McMichael 2000: 285). 'Sustainable Development' is therefore seen to be too reductive and loaded a term to convey the complex ideas captured, for example, in the term 'dynamic sustainabilities' (Leach et al 2010: 173).

The distinction between sustainability and Sustainable Development thus reflects significant differences in how the idea has been conceptualised. But it is also true that over time and in many contexts the two terms have come to be used interchangeably (Jacobs 1999, Dolan *et al* 2006a; Adger and Jordan 2009); in fact Jacobs found this was already the case when he considered the question in 1999 (Jacobs 1999). While acknowledging the validity of the distinction, this thesis – which focuses on the social element in sustainability (however labelled) – uses the two terms interchangeably.

Table 2.1 Selected definitions of sustainability, by date order of publication

Date	Definition	Source
1980	'Human beings, in their quest for economic development and enjoyment of the riches of nature, must come to terms with the reality of resource limitation and the carrying capacities of ecosystems, and must take account of the needs of future generations. That is the message of conservation. For if the object of development is to provide for social and economic welfare, the object of conservation is to ensure the earth's capacity to sustain development and to support all life'	IUCN *et al* 1980: Foreword
1987	'Humanity has the ability to make development sustainable – to ensure that it meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs'	WCED 1987 8-9
1999	'The core concept of sustainability is … that there is some *X* whose value should be maintained, in as far as it lies within our power to do so, into the indefinite future. This leaves it open for dispute what the context of *X* should be'	Barry 1999: 101
2002	'Sustainable Development is perhaps the most challenging policy concept ever developed. Its core objective – a kind of ethical imperative – is to provide everybody everywhere and at any time with the opportunity to lead a dignified life in his or her respective society'	Omann and Spangenberg 2002: 2
2003	'Current norms for Sustainable Development have emerged within a particular historical context, which is the modern capitalist notion of the business corporation operating within a Judaeo-Christian ethical framework'	Banerjee 2003: 169
2005	Sustainable Development is 'a concept that, in the end, represents diverse local to global efforts to imagine and enact a positive vision of the world in which basic needs are met without destroying or irrevocably degrading the natural systems on which we all depend'	Kates *et al* 2005 : 20
2006	Sustainability is 'a multidimensional integrative concept. Among other aspects, sustainability links the human and bio-physical, present and future, local and global, active and precautionary, critique and alternative vision, concept and practice, and universal and concept-specific. In addition, proper sustainability implementation engages together participants covering the full range of public, corporate and civil society organisations and institutions, as well as individuals with their various capacities and inclinations'	Gibson 2006: 262
2008	Sustainable Development is an 'intellectual perspective which sees the environment as the infrastructure of life; proposes ecology as the science to help unlock the interconnectedness of existence; takes long time horizons when making present decisions; centres on the local but takes a global geographic framework for events; situates human activity within millennia of planetary development; is conservative about the use of energy; celebrates and supports bio and social diversity; and, in theory, is mindful about international justice when allocating and using resources'	Lang 2008: 292
2009	Sustainable Development 'is generally taken to mean a healthy economy, a just society and living within environmental limits'	Atkinson 2009: ii
2012	Sustainability is 'the long-term maintenance and enhancement of human wellbeing within finite planetary resources. It is usually considered to have environmental, economic and social dimensions'	POST 2012: 1
2013	The new global Sustainable Development agenda must 'simultaneously protect human wellbeing and life-supporting ecosystems in ways that are socially inclusive and equitable'	ISSC 2013: 5

Source: The Author

2.2 Origins

The idea encapsulated by sustainability – that humans must conserve the natural resources they depend on, for their own long-term use and the use of succeeding generations – has been part of human experience since time immemorial (Diamond 2006). As a policy concern, however, and 'one of the most contested words in the political vocabulary' (Dobson 1995: 72), sustainability is of relatively recent origin. The contestation Dobson refers to partly arises over questions about which resources to conserve and how, and who decides. These are difficult enough, but even more controversial is the proposition that in order to achieve sustainability, humans must use resources not only more efficiently but also more equitably, and that the latter is not just an optional extra but an inseparable part of the same project. The central question then becomes not just 'what is to be sustained?' but also 'how is it to be distributed?' (Dobson 1999: 4). All of these questions are intrinsically social and political.

Dresner traces the history of the idea as far back as the Enlightenment, following the thread of mankind's exploitative / dependent relationship with nature through the works of Francis Bacon, Rene Descartes, John Locke, Thomas Paine, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Adam Smith, Thomas Malthus, John Stuart Mill, Mary Shelley, the Romantic Movement and Karl Marx (Dresner 2008). Grober associates its emergence with concerns about the depletion of timber (a vital resource) in Europe from the Renaissance onwards. He attributes the invention of the word in its modern sense ('*nachhaldigkeit'* in German) to Hans Carl Carlowitz, a German forester, in 1713 (Grober 2012: 83). Other writers go back further, citing Aristotle's critique of economic activity (Williams and Millington 2004; Stibbe 2009) or the ecologically sensitive habits of aboriginal and prehistoric humans (Diamond 2006).

Most commentators agree that the term 'Sustainable Development' came into use 'in policy circles' (Redclift 2005: 212) after the publication of the report of the World Commission on the Environment and Development (WCED) in 1987 (the Brundtland report), which popularised the definition that has become the standard reference:

> *'Humanity has the ability to make development sustainable – to ensure that it meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs' (WCED 1987: 8-9).*

But Brundtland was making use of a term that already had currency. Her Commission had been tasked in 1983 with finding 'long-term strategies for achieving Sustainable Development to the year 2000 and beyond' (UN 1983 par 8a). Barbier traces its origins to the Paris Biosphere conference and a Washington DC conference on ecology and development, both held in 1968 (Barbier 1987). Lang (2008) notes that the idea emerged in 1970s, championed by the economist Barbara Ward, the ecologist Richard Sandbrook and the anthropologist Margaret Mead. The concept (though not the term) can be found in the Declaration of the 1972 United Nations Conference on the Human Environment in Stockholm (UNEP 1972), which linked the need for 'the enhancement of environmental quality' with 'the creation of a good life' (UNEP 1972: par 6). The opening sentence of the *Blueprint for Survival*, published by the *Ecologist* magazine in 1972, read 'The principal defect of the industrial way of life with its ethos of expansion is that it is not sustainable' (Ecologist 1972: 15).

But credit for launching the phrase 'Sustainable Development' is claimed by the alliance of conservation organisations that published the *World Conservation Strategy* in 1980 (IUCN *et al* 1980, 1991). Their definition (Table 2.1) is notable for prefiguring the three 'pillars' of sustainability. It also establishes, in its reference to future generations, what Harris and Goodwin (2001: *xviii*) describe as 'the great contribution of the word "sustainable"': the issue of time. A key feature of sustainability is that it extends principles of responsibility and fairness beyond the current inhabitants of the Earth to future human generations. Discussion of these ideas proliferated throughout the 1980s, so that by 1987, the year the Brundtland commission reported, Redclift was already 'exploring the contradictions' of Sustainable Development (Redclift 1987).

2.3 A hybrid idea: Development meets Environmentalism

These contradictions partly arose from the fact that 'Sustainable Development' had been devised to reconcile two agendas that were, by the 1970s, pulling in opposite directions: the Development agenda on one hand and the environmental agenda on the other. Sustainable Development was meant to be a form of Development that respected environmental limits. The social pillar of sustainability has inherited many of its attributes (and controversies) from the Development agenda, so it is helpful to look at these in some detail.

According to Escobar, the modern era of Development (with a capital D) began in 1949 when the American President Harry Truman announced that a 'fair deal' for the whole world should address the problems of areas of the globe he described as 'underdeveloped' (Escobar 1994: 3). Other commentators agree that prior to the second half of the 20th century, the idea of 'Development as we know it' hardly existed (Harris 2000: 1). By the 1950s, however, the idea was pervasive among policy makers (Escobar 1994). The United Nations became an important forum for Development policy (and subsequently sustainability policy). It is notable that one of the UN's founding bodies in 1945 had been the Economic and Social Council ('Ecosoc'), and in 1966 the General Assembly adopted the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, covering labour, health, education and the right to an adequate standard of living (UN n.d.). Economic and social affairs were yoked together, and this was the framework within which Sustainable Development was later devised.

The main engine of Development was to be economic growth, conducted in and through free markets. The project succeeded in raising living standards and in some cases transforming economies (Harris 2000). However, while the explicit goal was to alleviate poverty, there were also implicit goals, which included reconstructing post-war Europe, opening markets for Western goods, and promoting a neo-liberal alternative to the Communist model of Development (Harris and Goodwin 2001: *xxv*). These undercurrents contributed to a critique of Development on the grounds that it was at base a neo-colonial project that perpetuated relations of dependence and entrenched Northern interests at the expense of the global South (McMichael 2000, Banerjee 2003, Harris and Goodwin 2001).

From the 1970s, as it became clear that the benefits did not always trickle down to those who needed them most, 'Development' was urged to focus less on economic processes and more on basic human needs (ILO 1976; Streeten *et al* 1981). Education, nutrition, health, sanitation and employment were the priorities of this new 'Human Development' approach, championed by the United Nations Development Program, established in 1965 (Harris and Goodwin 2001). In 1980, a report by the Independent Commission on International Development Issues (ICIDI), chaired by Willy Brandt, concluded that 'Development is more than the passage from poor to rich, from a traditional rural economy to a sophisticated urban one. It carries with it not only the idea of economic betterment, but also of greater

human dignity, security, justice and equity' (ICIDI 1980: 49). The Human Development perspective was further expanded by the work of the economist Amartya Sen, who defined Development as an emancipatory process, arguing that 'the expansion of freedom is viewed … both as the primary end and as the principal means of development' (Sen 2001: *xii*). He identified five freedoms as essential to Development: economic opportunities, political freedoms, social facilities, transparency guarantees and protective social security (Sen 2001: *xii*).

From the 1970s, however, this expanding agenda of concerns was being challenged by the criticism that its enabler, economic growth, was destroying the natural resources it depended on. The call arose for 'a different kind of development that would integrate the goals of economic prosperity, social justice and [the new factor] healthy ecosystems' (Harris and Goodwin 2001: *xxvii*). In other words, Development had to take account of the issues being raised by environmentalists.

Commentators trace the modern environmental movement to the 1950s and '60s, as scientific understanding grew not just of the impacts of human activities on the physical environment, but also of the fundamental interdependence of all life in complex, dynamic ecosystems. Dobson (1995) dates the birth of 'ecologism' to 1972 and the publication of *Limits to Growth*, which used pioneering computer modelling to give new substance to the Malthusian contention that there were natural limits to the Earth's capacity to sustain human life (Meadows *et al* 1974). Ten years earlier, Rachel Carson had raised the alarm about the fatal effects of agricultural chemicals on wildlife (Carson 1962). The publication in 1968 of photographs of Earth taken from space by Apollo 8 was a powerful symbol of the finite planet. This recognition of physical limits to economic growth is axiomatic to ecologism (Daly 1992).

From the 1970s, measures to mitigate environmental impacts were initiated, again led by the UN, which launched a worldwide policy initiative with the Stockholm conference in 1972 and set up the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) in the same year. Both under- and over-Development were implicated: poor people living on the edge of subsistence had no choice but to over-exploit their environment, while rich people living in industrialised countries were blamed for most of the damage. Distributional issues were

prominent. Critics pointed out that negative environmental impacts were experienced unequally and tended to affect those with least power to resist (Agyeman and Evans 2004, Eckersley 2004), while voices in the Global South accused Developed nations of 'pulling up the ladder', to leave poorer states without access to technologies and industries now labelled as polluting (Jacobs 1999). Again, not just more effective policy but a new 'belief system' was called for (Weale 1992: 31).

As the claims of environment and Development increasingly came into conflict[4], the Brundtland Commission was charged with reconciling the two agendas. The tone of its report was deliberately soothing and inclusive. The environment is 'where we all live' and Development 'what we all do to improve our lot in that abode' (WCED 1987: *xi)*: a 'win-win gloss', according to Prudham (2009: 738). To be sustainable, the report declared, Development must recognise the interdependence of the environment, the economy and society, and integrate considerations about all three into policy.

From its Developmental parent, Sustainable development inherited a menu of social concerns ranging from sanitation to political freedom, from education to equity, and a defining concern to 'put people first' (Chambers 1986). From its environmental parent came the conviction that Development must operate within biophysical limits, putting people alongside other life forms, and perhaps also a privileging of the methods of the natural sciences (Beck 1995; Dobson 1995). But from this side, too, came concerns over the social and political implications of the new policy imperative. If growth could not be relied on to provide increasing levels of affluence for larger numbers of people, distribution became an important concern. The *Limits to Growth,* one of the foundational texts of sustainability, was clear about this:

> *'We unequivocally support the contention that a brake imposed on world demographic and economic growth spirals must not lead to a freezing of the status quo of economic development of the world's nations... The achievement of a harmonious state of global, economic, social and ecological equilibrium must be a joint venture based on joint conviction, with benefits for all'* (Meadows *et al* 1974: 195).

[4] This remains a live antagonism. In 2011, Paul Watson, ex-Greenpeace environmental activist, said of the incumbent Greenpeace executive director Kumi Haidoo: 'He should be running the Red Cross. He's not an environmentalist. He's an anti-apartheid organiser who has stated that the only way to save the planet is through alleviating world poverty. It can't be done. There are just not enough resources' (Vidal 2011).

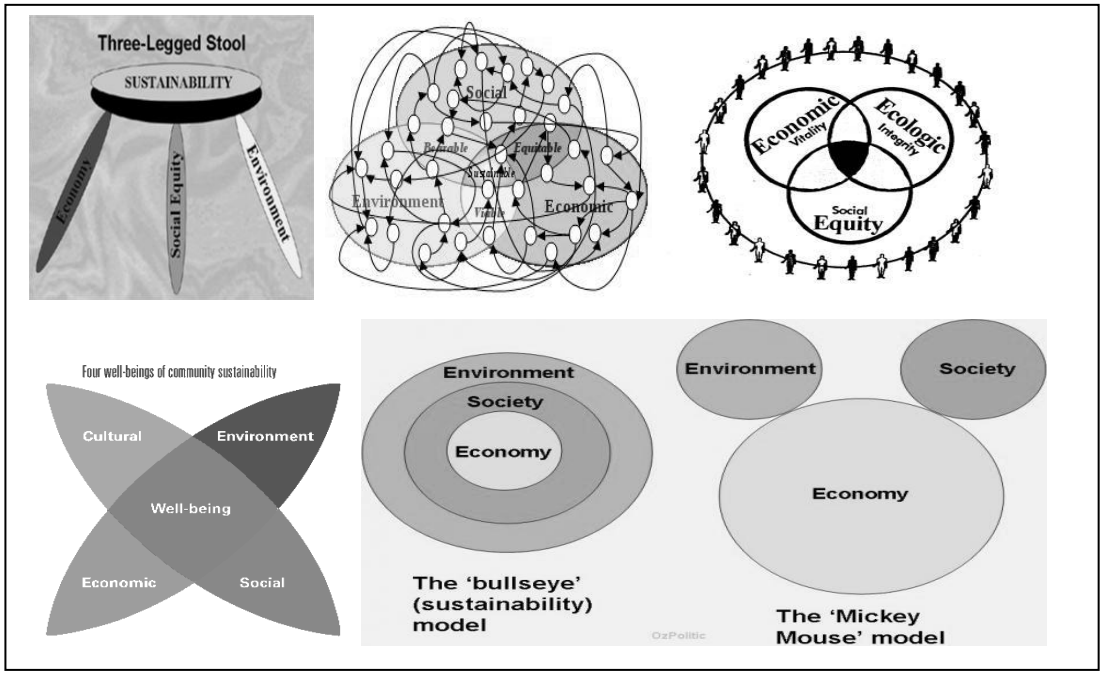
2.4 One plan, three pillars

Sustainable Development was thus conceived in order to integrate social and economic concerns with environmental ones and make them inseparable. The tripartite approach swiftly became ubiquitous, and the three 'pillars' were formalised in the declaration of the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD), in which signatories acknowledged:

> *'a collective responsibility to advance and strengthen the interdependent and mutually reinforcing pillars of Sustainable Development – economic development, social development and environmental protection' (WSSD 2002: par 1).*

But ever since Brundtland brought the three elements together, commentators, policy-makers and practitioners have been taking them apart. From the outset, the choice of categories has given rise to argument, and alternatives have been suggested, such as the intentionally more business-friendly 'three Ps' of people, planet and profits (e.g. Elkington 1997; Benoit and Mazijn 2009). The absence of a political pillar has led to the criticism that sustainability depoliticises issues (Eckersley 2004), though others have seen this as an advantage (Dobson 1995). The academic journal *Sustainability* includes a cultural pillar, and the Brundtland report itself stressed the importance of an institutional dimension (WCED 1987). Littig and Griessler find that the three pillars 'do not make much sense from a theoretical point of view' (2005: 67) and posit that cultural-aesthetic, religious-spiritual or political-institutional pillars could have been added. The choice of 'pillars' as a metaphor has also been criticised; for example it has been pointed out that a three-pillared structure may remain standing if one pillar fails, whereas a three-legged stool would not. Hundreds of visualisations have been constructed (Fig 2.1), involving different elements and prioritising them in different ways.

Fig 2.1 Examples of visualisations of sustainability



Source: http://computingforsustainability.com/2009/03/15/visualising-sustainability (accessed 7.9.15)

Another problem with the three-pillared conception is that its components can seem incompatible or incommensurable. This has led to the development of extremely complex frameworks to manage trade-offs among the pillars. Examples include Spangenberg and Bonniot's presentation of sustainability as a 'composite' policy target, where 'neither environmental degradation nor violating public dignity by poverty or other threats, nor public nor private bankruptcy can be acceptable elements of a sustainable society' (Spangenberg and Bonniot 1998: 3). Another example, the social-ecological model, provides a framework for 'articulating contrasting drivers and pressures on ecosystems and associated service provision, spanning different temporalities and provenances, [where] vulnerabilities ... can arise from both endogenous and exogenous factors across multiple time-scales' (Dawson *et al*, 2010).

Others have argued that looking at sustainability from three separate angles is inevitably reductive and undermines the wholeness it is supposed to represent (Psarikidou and Szerszynski 2012). Many concerns fit more than one category, and the existence of three categories seems to invite a counter-productive ranking process. In this vein, commentators have tried to escape the confines of 'pillar thinking' (Waas *et al* 2011: 1652). For example,

Adger and Jordan (2009) define sustainability in terms of the 'sub-principles' of inter and intra-generational equity, poverty alleviation, public participation in decision making, technological and environmental limits to growth, and policy integration. Murphy proposes four 'pre-eminent policy concepts': equity ('the distribution of welfare goods and life chances on the basis of fairness within and between generations); awareness for sustainability; participation (the inclusion of as many groups as possible in decision-making process); and social cohesion (defined as harmonious social relations conducive to happiness, wellbeing, trust and civic participation in public affairs) (Murphy 2012: 15-23). It is conspicuous that these concepts all seem to fall at the social end of a social-environmental spectrum.

There has been little explanation, theoretical or historical, of why the three pillars of environment, economy and society were chosen. A plausible suggestion is that the three facets 'stuck' because they reflect traditional academic disciplines and customary ways of grouping data (Gibson 2006). The conclusion of this thesis is that the genesis of the three pillars lay in the pre-existing institutional arrangements of the UN. By the time environmentalism emerged as a policy concern, the economic and social policy domain (Ecosoc) was entrenched, so it may have seemed logical to annex the new policy agenda to the existing one. When the UN Commission for Sustainable Development was established in 1992, it was created as a subdivision of Ecosoc (UN n.d.).

2.5 A capacious concept

Sustainability has been described as 'a new paradigm' (Harris and Goodwin, 2001: *xxix*), 'a goal and ... a movement' (Kates *et al* 2005: 10), an 'ideological tool' (Morgan and Sonnino 2008: 1-2) and a 'worldview' (Lang 2008: 272). Larsen (2009: 45) lists the terms rubric, vision, philosophy, mission, goal, mandate, principle, marketing ploy – and adds his own: 'a science, a set of societal goals, a set of values … and an approach for dealing with problems in the real world'. It has achieved widespread penetration of policy. In the UK, the parliamentary committee responsible for monitoring environmental policy has identified Sustainable Development as the 'over-arching framework within which all human activity should take place' (EAC 2004: 3).

But the very capaciousness of the idea opened the door to what has been widely deplored as its over-versatility. Atkinson found the term too vague to be useful in 2009, but the complaint had already been made by Barbier in 1987. The same UK parliamentary committee that claimed sustainability should frame all human activity also found the term 'sustainable' being prefixed to UK policies indiscriminately, trivially, facetiously and in order to 'give ethical credibility to other initiatives' (EAC 2004: 17). For some, the idea has become no more than 'buzzword' and a 'slogan' (Banerjee 2003: 143). Prudham noted in 2009 that the term Sustainable Development was 'increasingly difficult to invoke with any critical weight': it had become 'a form of discursive gloss over disparate material and political projects, including no shortage of mobilisations in political "greenwash"' (Prudham 2009: 737).

For some, the ideas combined in the term – ecological conservation and economic growth – are irreconcilable, leading Redclift (2005) to label it an 'oxymoron'. For others, the term's protean nature is the key to its potency. Kates *et al* (2005: 20) note its 'useful malleability', which allows it to remain an 'open, dynamic and evolving idea' adaptable to many contexts. For Jacobs, it is a 'contestable concept', like social democracy or liberty: disagreements over its meaning 'are not semantic disputations but are the substantive political arguments with which the term is concerned' (Jacobs 1999: 26). It is the sort of idea that enables us to think about the world in a new way (Thompson 2007: 6).

As understanding of underlying ecological principles has expanded, interpretations of sustainability have become more sophisticated. The physical and social worlds are seen to comprise complex, dynamic, interacting systems. The 'equilibrium model', which posited a natural tendency for things to reach self-regulating homeostasis, is perceived as a fallacy – a human projection. Systems in fact work by responding adaptively to particular historical conjunctions of circumstances, which may be unique and unforeseen, so that high levels of uncertainty, the unreliability of probability predictions, multiple forms of incomplete knowledge, and the potential for surprise are inherent features (Leach *et al* 2010).

In this context, sustainability is widely seen as a 'wicked' problem: it has many causes and involves the different, possibly conflicting but equally valid, viewpoints of many stakeholders; these influence both the definition of the problem and the identification of

the desired outcome (Kendrick 2009; Bitsch 2010; Underwood *et al* 2012). The three-pillar approach is too rigid to accommodate these ideas. According to Leach *et al* (2010), 'dynamic sustainabilities' are required: subjectively framed, politically negotiated, valid from multiple perspectives, fundamentally normative. Policy must 'take seriously' the different ways people apprehend and value things; and recognise that pre-existing power relations affect choices (Leach *et al* 2010: 173). This pervasively social and political conception of sustainability leads to the next section.

2.6 The social pillar of sustainability

It is clear that both in its older and more recent incarnations, sustainability is inherently a social concept – a social construct, in fact. It problematises biophysical events, such as rising carbon levels in the atmosphere, and involves conceptions of how such events affect society, and how society can address them. In other words, the problematisation of certain issues under the banner of sustainability is a socially constructed phenomenon. But in addition to this, certain social objectives have been associated with Sustainable Development (such as education and equity), as well as distributional considerations (such as how the resource pie is divided, and who benefits or loses from processes of change) and procedural ones (such as how decisions are made).

In the general literature on sustainability, these social dimensions snake in and out of discussions, often present but not always highlighted. Over the past 15-20 years, however, a literature has emerged that focuses explicitly on the social pillar, trying to clarify its content and significance. The process has been both normative and empirical, with commentators and practitioners seeking out examples in the field, referring to earlier work on topics judged to be relevant, or attempting to theorise a unique basis for the 'socialness' of sustainability.

Table 2.2 provides a selection of definitions. They give an impression of how broad the meaning of the concept still is. They list attributes – social conditions to be sustained or aspired to – such as health and wellbeing, sometimes broken down into more detail, such as gender issues or workers' rights. However, the definitions also illustrate that social sustainability also encompasses a procedural dimension – Stren and Polèse (2000) saw this in terms of policies and institutions that foster diversity, Harris and Goodwin (2001) in terms

of achieving fairness in distribution, McKenzie (2004) seeing social sustainability as both a condition and a process. Dillard *et al* (2009) crystallised this important dual meaning of social sustainability as not just a menu of desired social conditions, but also the preferred social processes that could enable sustainable change. These processes are most often specified as inclusive, participatory and democratic, to achieve greater equity in both procedures and outcomes. Bostrom (2012) refined the definition by suggesting that social sustainability must be 'green' if it was to be different from conventional social welfare. The following sections examine how these meanings of the social pillar have developed.

Table 2.2 Selected definitions of social sustainability, by date order of publication

Date	Definition	Source
2000	Social sustainability refers to 'policies and institutions that have the overall effect of integrating diverse groups and cultural practices in a just and equitable fashion'	Stren and Polèse 2000:3
2001	A socially sustainable system 'must achieve fairness in distribution and opportunity, adequate provision of social services, including health, gender equity, and political accountability and participation'	Harris and Goodwin 2001: *xxix*
2002	Social sustainability concerns 'the impact of formal and informal systems, structures and relationships on the current and future liveability and heath of communities'. It involves five overarching principles: equity, diversity, quality of life, interconnectedness, democracy and governance	Barron and Gauntlett 2002: 3
2004	Social sustainability is: 'a life-enhancing condition within communities, and a process within communities that can achieve that condition'	McKenzie 2004: 12
2009	'The social aspect of sustainability should be understood as both (a) the processes that generate social health and wellbeing now and in the future; and (b) those social institutions that facilitate environmental and economic sustainability now and for the future'	Dillard *et al* 2009: 4
2009	Four 'universal' principles can be said to constitute social sustainability: human wellbeing, equity, democratic government and democratic civil society	Magis and Shinn 2009: 16
2009	Social sustainability concerns 'how individuals, communities and societies live with each other and set out to achieve the objectives of development models which they have chosen for themselves, also taking into account the physical boundaries of their places and planet earth as a whole'	Colantonio and Dixon 2009: 4
2012	'Broad participation, empowerment, equality, environmental justice and human wellbeing'	Casula Vifell and Soneryd 2012: 20
2012	Green social policies and welfare	Bostrom 2012: 4
2014	Social sustainability concerns 'Social welfare, quality of life, social justice, social cohesion, cultural diversity, democratic rights, gender issues, workers' rights, broad participation, development of social capital, individual capabilities and the like. It refers to substantive and procedural issues, such as inclusive, transparent and democratic decision-making'	Bostrom and Klintman 2014: 85

Source: The Author

2.7 Accumulating meanings

Most commentators agree that the social pillar is the least discussed, most variously defined and least well theorised of the three (Elkington 1997; Pepperdine 2000; Redclift 2000; Barron and Gauntlettt 2002; Omann and Spangenberg 2002; McKenzie 2004; Lehtonen 2004; King 2004; Kates *et al* 2005; Littig and Griessler 2005; Colantonio 2007; Dillard *et al* 2009; Larsen 2009; Bitsch 2010; Bostrom 2012 Bostrom and Klintman 2014). However, several authors find that the social dimension is beginning to attract more attention (Colantonio 2007; Dillard *et al*, 2009; Bostrom 2012). In fact, to the extent that it is seen to be the enabler of other aspects of sustainability, the social pillar is sometimes presented as the prerequisite of Sustainable Development (Dillard *et al* 2009).

Dillard *et al* (2009: 1) note that although a social dimension is often included in studies of sustainability, it is not always 'crystallised to the point that it is so labelled', opening the door to a wide range of potential attributes. This has contributed to a view that it is often defined according to the outlook, discipline or objectives of the definers (Beckley and Burkovsky 1999; Giddings *et al* 2002; Littig and Griessler 2005; Van Calker *et al* 2005).

Definitions have sometimes been generated because practitioners were being asked to 'do something' about social sustainability without a clear understanding of what the term meant. For example, noticing that Canadian forest scientists were being asked to assess social sustainability without much guidance, Beckley and Burkovsky (1999) set out to collect information. In the absence of literature on social sustainability, they looked at work on community stability, community capacity, healthy communities and quality of life, which they took to be antecedents of contemporary conceptions of social sustainability. They found more than 100 issues that had been used as markers for something resembling social sustainability, which they grouped under headings on employment, income, economic circumstances, population, education, health, social pathologies, community cohesion, women, race, decision-making and natural resource use.

A similar approach in other circumstances yielded different results. A 1994 UNESCO project on 'socially sustainable cities' focused on equitable social integration, and took social sustainability to refer to the policies and institutions that facilitated this. Elements of social sustainability for these authors included public services (such as sanitation), cultural

institutions (such as the theatre), and a 'social infrastructure' that facilitated equity and wellbeing (including crèches and community centres) (Stren and Polèse 2000). Work by the Western Australia Council of Social Services (WACOSS), triggered by a housing crisis, set out to establish some principles and characteristics of a socially sustainable community. This led to a 'model of social sustainability', which comprised a definition (Table 2.1) and a set of principles that included equity, diversity, interconnectedness, quality of life, democracy and governance (Barron and Gauntlett 2002).

Reviewing earlier academic work, different authors identified different key components. Colantonio (2007) collected 43 'key themes', identifying a move over time from basic needs such as housing and education towards conditions such as social cohesion, empowerment, participation and wellbeing. Magis and Shinn (2009) found that although 'the construct of social sustainability' was still in its formative stages, it was 'informed by a rich and mature tradition of research on social wellbeing', which they defined as the fulfilment of basic needs and the exercise of political, economic and social freedoms (Magis and Shinn 2009: 16). Surveying 'research and practice' in the fields of human-centred development, sustainability and community wellbeing, they found four themes that recurred persistently enough to be classed as 'universal principles' and which could therefore be taken to be 'central constituents' of social sustainability. These were human wellbeing, equity, democratic government and democratic civil society (Magis and Shinn 2009*:* 16).

These and other contributions have led to the compilation of long and varied lists of social attributes. Kates *et al* sorted them into three categories. The first involved a 'generic, noneconomic social designation', using terms such as 'social' and 'social development'; the second emphasised human development, human wellbeing, or simply people; the third focused on justice, equity and poverty alleviation.(Kates *et al* 2005: 12).

As already noted, the selection of attributes is vulnerable to the criticism of definer bias. Beckley and Burkovsky acknowledge that it is never a 'value-free, non-political' exercise (Beckley and Burkovsky 1999: 10). Other authors note that studies may be circular, finding what they set out to look for (Omann and Spangenberg 2002; McKenzie 2004), or be directed by the availability of existing data (Hilderink 2004).

2.8 A more theoretical approach

The underlying criticism is that the processes of accretion and selection that have been used to build meanings lack an underpinning theory (Lehtonen 2004; Littig and Griessler 2005; Larsen 2009; Bostrom 2012; Murphy 2012). Scholars have attempted to fill this gap.

Omann and Spangenberg proposed that 'social sustainability' revolved around 'personal assets' such as education, skills, experience, consumption, income and employment, while 'institutional sustainability' involved interpersonal processes like democracy and participation, distributional and gender equity, or organisations. (This approach illustrates a common phenomenon in sustainability studies, in which different commentators allocate similar concerns to different pillars). On this basis, their 'core elements' for social sustainability included: a commitment to social cohesion; aversion to social exclusion and discrimination; the need to foster citizens' participation in public affairs; and access to social processes to ensure 'the benefits of modern society for most of the population most of the time' (Omann and Spangenberg 2002: 5).

Hilderink argued for consistent, objective and transparent criteria for choosing attributes, ideally based on an underlying conceptual structure, although he agreed this was hard to pin down. The list of criteria he came up with was based on earlier frameworks, such as the UN Human Development Index and Maslow's hierarchy of needs, but did not seem to provide the clinching analytical tool he was seeking. His list included longevity, literacy, poverty, health, opportunities for social cohesion, citizenship / participation, demographic pressure (ratio of old to young), democracy, political stability, conflicts, happiness and wellbeing (Hilderink 2004).

Littig and Griessler (2005) found social sustainability to be a 'catchword' lacking either a clear definition or a theoretical basis on which to build one. As a remedy, they based their discussion on concepts of needs, and on work as an activity to fulfil these needs and also – importantly -- as the principal exchange process between society and nature.

Dillard *et al* (2009) captured something more distinctive when they concluded that definitions of social sustainability tended to miss the dual importance of the social dimension as *both* the means *and* an end of Sustainable Development. Their definition linked the two:

> *'The social aspect of sustainability should be understood as both (a) the processes that generate social health and wellbeing now and in the future; and (b) those social institutions that facilitate environmental and economic sustainability now and for the future' (Dillard et al 2009: 4).*

Bostrom also highlighted the important procedural element of social sustainability, which he termed governance:

> *'Social sustainability often refers to both to the improvement of conditions for living people and future generations*, and *the quality of governance of the development process' (Bostrom 2012: 5).*

He expanded a typology for social sustainability attributes originally proposed by Agyeman and Evans (2004), according to whether they were substantive or procedural, and collated one of the most comprehensive summaries to date of the attributes of social sustainability (Table 2.3).

Table 2.3 Examples of substantive ('what') and procedural ('how') aspects of social sustainability

Substantive aspects: What social sustainability goals to achieve?	Procedural aspects: How to achieve Sustainable Development?
Basic needs such as food and income, and extended needs such as recreation, self-fulfilment	Access to information about risks and the sustainability project
Inter- and intra-generational justice on gender, race, class, and ethnicity; fair distribution of income, fair distribution of environmental 'bads' and 'goods')	Access to participation and decision making in different stages of the process and over time
Equality of rights, including human rights, land user and tenure rights, and indigenous people's rights	Proactive stakeholder communication and consultation throughout the process
Access to social infrastructure, mobility, local services, facilities, green areas	Participating in the framing of issues, including defining criteria, scope, and subjects of justice
Employment and other work-related issues facilitating for local small and medium enterprises	Social monitoring of the policy, planning, and standard-setting process
Opportunity for learning and self-development	Accountable governance and management of the policy, planning, and standard-setting process
Community capacity for the development of civil society and social capital	
Security (e.g., economic, environmental)	
Health effects among workers, consumers, and communities	
Social cohesion, inclusion, and interaction	
Cultural diversity and traditions	
Sense of community attachment, belonging, and identity	
Social recognition	
Attractive housing and public realm	
Quality of life, happiness, and well-being	

Source: Adapted from Bostrom 2012

Although this compendious list covers both substantive and procedural dimensions, it still does not provide the litmus test for social sustainability that commentators have looked for.

This is partly because of a contradiction noted by Bostrom, and traceable back to the divided roots of Sustainable Development described earlier in this chapter. Many of the progressive social policies advocated under social sustainability agendas depend for their fulfilment on a productivist economic paradigm (i.e. growth), with attendant environmental exploitation / despoliation that is fundamentally at odds with Sustainable Development.

Devising genuinely 'green social policies' (Bostrom 2012: 3-4), which deliver high and equitable levels of wellbeing while escaping the imperative of economic expansion and respecting critical planetary boundaries (Jackson 2009; Rockstrom *et al* 2009) is challenging, but may be the central, 'baptismal' problem of social sustainability. Both Bostrom (2012) and Murphy (2012) highlight the relationship with nature and natural limits as the defining quality of social sustainability (and it is also raised by Lehtonen (2004) and Littig and Griessler (2005)). An integrated socio-environmental conception remains the most useful theoretical test to distinguish social sustainability from social welfare more generally – but 'green welfare' is in effect a re-statement of the original aspiration of 'Sustainable Development'.

2.9 Inter-pillar tensions

Efforts to theorise a distinct social pillar of sustainability are influenced by borrowings and conflicts among the three pillars, which are variously seen to be competitive, reinforcing or mutually constitutive. Both the environmental pillar (Dobson 1999; Redclift 2000; McKenzie 2004) and the economic pillar (Harris and Goodwin, 2001; Giddings *et al* 2002; Allen 2004; EAC 2004; Dillard *et al* 2009) have been said to overshadow the social pillar, either separately or as a 'dominating dyad' (Psarikidou and Szerszynski 2012). Social sustainability can only be properly understood in the context of these inter-pillar tensions.

2.9.1 Social-environmental connections

Social-environmental interdependence is the crux of sustainability. Social activity is embedded in the natural environment, although social scientists are accused of neglecting this relationship (Woodgate 2010). Pretty comments that, 'For all of our time, we have shaped nature and it has shaped us, and we are an emergent property of this relationship' (Pretty 2002: 10). Environmental problems are seen to have social causes. For Stibbe, the starting point of 'sustainability literacy' is 'not the environmental problems which are

undermining the ability of the Earth to support human life, but instead the social, cultural and economic systems that give rise to those problems' (Stibbe 2009: 13). Similarly, social problems can have environmental causes. Population displacement, economic activity and patterns of social inequality, for example, have been linked to patterns of ecosystem change (Rathzell and Uzzell 2012; Lockie *et al* 2014). The recent proposition that we now live in a natural environment so changed by humanity that it constitutes a new geological epoch, the Anthropocene, reflects this thinking (Crutzen 2002).

Social-environmental interdependence has linked questions of resource use to questions of resource (and impact) distribution from Brundtland onwards, and continues to preoccupy commentators. Spangenberg, for example, calling for a cap on resource use, acknowledged that it would necessarily entail new distributive patterns 'to avoid hardship and social unsustainability' (Spangenberg 2013: 423). (He then illustrated the difficulty of planning for both at once by focusing only on resource use.) Raworth adapted Rockstrom *et al*'s model of a safe space for humanity (Rockstrom *et al* 2009) into a 'doughnut' designating a 'safe and just' space where humanity could exist within 'social and ecological boundaries', where the selected 'boundaries' included voice, education, gender equity and social equity (Raworth 2012).

The tensions between different conceptions of social-environmental relations are reflected in the distinction between 'weak' and 'strong' environmentalism (Naess 1991). Whereas weak environmentalism is reformative, recognising nature's utility to society but seeking 'a cleaner service economy' and 'cleaner affluence', strong environmentalism is transformative, respecting the intrinsic value of nature, and 'explicitly seek[ing] to de-centre the human being, to question mechanistic science and its technological consequences' (Dobson 1995: 11).

A more instrumental connection between environmental and social approaches emerged as environmentalists (and policy-makers) concluded that social science 'know how' and social processes were necessary to tackle environmental problems (Weale 1992, 2009; Smith *et al* 2005; Woodgate 2010). Harris argued that environmental concerns could only be integrated into Development policy 'with the assistance of the third element of the sustainability triad – the social perspective' (2000: 22). However, there is a difference between recruiting

(hypothetical) social-scientific expertise to achieve the ends of environmental policy, and problematising the same terrain from a social perspective.

Commentators also point to a tension that results from differences between the epistemological approaches of the natural and social sciences (Dobson 1995; Adger and Jordan 2009; Sterling 2009; Redclift 2010). It is clearly mistaken to hold either that the natural sciences are value-free (Dobson 1995; Woodgate 2010) or that the social sciences are purely normative (Sayer 2011), or indeed that normativity is inherently arbitrary or irrational (Sayer 2011). It remains the case, however, that environmental issues are often perceived to be concrete, objective and measurable, and therefore remediable, while social issues are often deemed to be constructed, subjective, culturally variable and therefore intractable.

For some commentators, it has been a mistake for sustainability practitioners or researchers to seek to use the arguments and instruments of natural science – described by Beck as a 'naturalistic misunderstanding', in which the ecology movement has tried, inappropriately, 'to fight science with science' (Beck 1995: 106). Where applied inappropriately, this can have the effect of de-politicising issues, taking them out of democratic arenas and locking them in technocratic decision-making processes. In other words, the procedural social element of sustainability is subverted. Stirling echoes this concern when he argues that decisions about innovation, where views may legitimately vary among social groups, based on different, equally reasonable assumptions and value judgments, are intrinsically matters for democracy, not just for scientific expertise (Stirling 2014).

2.9.2 Social-economic connections

There are also dense connections between the social and economic pillars – to the extent that sometimes no distinction is made between them (a 'socio-economic' pillar), with economic means seen as necessary instruments to achieve social ends. This conceptualisation, in which economic considerations are seen to trump others, is very prevalent in sustainability discourse. But others point out that all economic activity is ultimately dependent on the services and benefits provided by nature (Turner *et al* 1994; Juniper 2013), and society must mediate this relationship to safeguard social interests. For

Redclift 'environmental change is a social process, inextricably linked with the expansion and contraction of the world economic system' (Redclift 1987: 3).

In this context, many authors refer to Polanyi (2001 [1944]), who emphasised that the economic sphere was a product of, and subordinate to, the social sphere (Granovetter 1985; Ilbery and Maye 2005; James 2006; Sayer 2007). For Dillard *et al* (2009: 2) 'economic life should properly be thought of as an element of social sustainability because the economy is clearly a social construction, rather than a natural phenomenon such as the weather'. As well as under-valuing nature, social scientists have been criticised for allowing an 'under-socialised' economic analysis (embodied in the rational, utility-maximising *homo economicus*) to dominate discussions of social behaviour in the context of economic activity (Granovetter 1985).

Despite (or in reaction to) the dominance of the economistic approach, a common theme in sustainability literature is that a capitalist worldview is incompatible with Sustainable Development (Benton 1999; Fine 1999; Redclift 2000; Magis and Shinn 2009; King 2009; Prudham 2009). In particular, the 'ideological ascendancy' of the neoliberal agenda (Eckersley 2004: 66), with its emphasis on private property, curtailment of the welfarist state and elevation of the autonomous individual, has been seen to militate against the collective social responsibility and ethics of care that are ingredients of sustainability (Dobson 1995; Eckersley 2004; Kneafsey *et al* 2008; Morgan and Sonnino 2008; Sayer 2011; Lockie 2010, 2014). Grober notes that neoliberalism emerged at around the same time as 'Earth politics' and 'clashed at all points with the principles and philosophy of sustainability' (Grober 2012: 169).

The tension again goes back to the roots of Sustainable Development, when economic activity to further social progress was seen to be at odds with environmental protection. In economic analyses, sustainability problems are seen as market failures, correctable by market mechanisms. Complicated valuations of natural and social capital, as well as 'ecosystem services', have been developed in support of this approach (e.g. Stern 2006). Alternative programmes for 'steady-state' (Daly 1992) or 'post-growth' economics (Jackson 2009) have been developed, which seek to 'decouple' economic activity from its negative environmental or social impacts. To adapt Beck's image, this might be seen as an effort by

sustainability advocates to fight economics with economics. But in the opposing view, the negative social and environmental externalities of the capitalist economic system are not unintended side-effects that can be corrected, but inevitable, systemic outcomes: 'not ... symptoms of the model's failure but of its success' (Jacobs 1996: 11).

The term 'social capital' (derived from economics) is used by several commentators either as a component of or straight substitute for social sustainability (Wise 2001; Pretty 2002; Kates *et al* 2005; EAC 2011). Social capital has been defined as 'social networks, the reciprocities that arise from them, and the value of these for achieving mutual goals' (Schuller *et al* 2000: 1). It adapts the idea that various reservoirs of resources, power or capability are differentially available to individuals and groups, in the form of 'capitals'. The idea had been used by Bourdieu (1986) to help explain how societies transmitted their status and values through generations and was popularised by Putnam to explain the decline of certain socially binding activities in the US (Putnam 2000). The idea is useful in understanding social sustainability, which is also concerned with how social attributes or conditions are preserved through generations. However, like social sustainability, social capital suffers from definitional ambiguity, lacks an accepted theoretical basis and is subject to definer bias (Portes 1998). Beyond this, the term's economistic connotations are alienating to some sustainability commentators. Redclift says it 'frequently underplays political struggles and has the [in his view undesirable] imprimatur of the World Bank' (2000: 214). For Fine, the idea that 'capital' can be qualified as 'social' is a sign of how the social world is being 'colonised' by economics: 'the social can only be added to capital if it has been illegitimately excluded in the first place' (Fine 1999: 16). This echoes arguments about the 'pillarisation' of sustainability.

To de-fuse tensions within sustainability, some writers have turned to the idea of the 'moral economy'. The historian E.P. Thompson chose the term 'moral' to describe an economy based on custom and obligation with inbuilt social protections, especially concerning the marketing of necessities in times of dearth, which was displaced from Tudor times onwards by the modern political economy of the free market (Thompson 1992). This had the effect of de-socialising economic transactions and 'de-moralising' markets (Thompson 1992: 201). Sayer expands the term to include both 'a kind of study' (perhaps more understandable as moral economics) as well as an object of study (2015: 291). From this perspective, the

economy is seen not merely as a machine that may work well or malfunction, but as 'a complex set of relationships between people, and between people and nature' (Sayer 2015: 291). Moral economy calls for evaluative as well as descriptive assessments of economic arrangements, probing the exploitations and failures to treat people 'as ends in themselves' that account for inequitable distributions of benefits and harms (Sayer 2015). For Morgan *et al*, the moral economy could be re-invoked as a sustainable economy, re-integrating nature and society and redressing economic over-utilitarianism towards nature (Morgan *et al* 2006; Morgan 2015). For Busch (2011a), the moral economy encapsulates the idea of distributive justice, which has been cited as a central social concern of sustainability.

2.9.3 A social 'filter' rather than a pillar?

As noted, both environmental and economic elements within sustainability have been seen to distort or eclipse social concerns. More fundamentally, pillar-thinking and the trade-offs it leads to have been found to be reductive, to sidestep the grand social-environmental fusion that sustainability was meant to achieve. One response was to call for 'dynamic sustainabilities' (Leach *et al* 2010). Others argue for a re-socialisation of the entire framing of sustainability, invoking something like a 'social filter', resembling the 'green filter' proposed by Bostrom (2012). In this argument, sustainability discourse suffers from 'desocialised conceptions of both nature and the economy' (Psarikidou and Szerszynski 2012: 32). What is needed is a 'socio-material' turn in the way sustainability is approached. Sustainability (undivided) attends to economic activity, social relations and practices, cultural meanings and normative judgements, but also recognises that 'social life is conducted by embodied beings in constant exchange with their physical environment' (Psarikidou and Szerszynski 2012: 32-33). The pillars are (re-)abolished.

2.10 Normativity, equity and democracy

The definitions and discussions cited above show that equity (sometimes referred to as fairness or justice) is one of the most commonly cited features of social sustainability. If environmental sustainability is about conserving the environment, social sustainability might be posited as being concerned with the distribution of the benefits (and disbenefits) of environmentally responsible economic activity in an equitable manner, within and between generations. This implies that both the processes and the outcomes of the allocation (the procedural and substantive aspects) must be equitable. But is this a

necessary condition of sustainability, or an optional extra? A 'nice to have' rather than a 'need to have', in the language of business sustainability?

Equity was a preoccupation of the early ecologists, who immediately foresaw that curtailing the availability of resources would raise questions about how they were shared (Meadows *et al* 1974). The central importance of equity in sustainability was enshrined in the Brundtland report (WCED 1987) and subsequent UN declarations (e.g. WSSD 2002), which also stressed that an aspect of equity was equitable participation in processes of decision-making (leading to a preference for transparently democratic processes). Eckersley (drawing on Habermas) expressed this idea in terms of communicative justice. A 'fair / free communicative context' is one in which 'wealth and risk production and distribution decisions take place in ways that are reflectively acceptable by all … who may be affected', i.e. the 'relevant moral community' (Eckersley 2004: 10; 113). She assumed that a greener world would be a more just one, and that in an 'ecological democracy' there would necessarily be a redistribution not just of material resources but also of communicative power.

But the notion of inter-generational equity has been challenged on the grounds that it is unfeasible to provide for the future in this way because current generations cannot know what future generations will want or need (Beckerman 1999)[5]. And Dobson has argued consistently and persuasively (Dobson 1995; 1999; 2014) that equity is always a choice rather than an inevitable element of sustainable change. Sustainability has been described as 'irreducibly normative' (Barry 1999: 105), and equity may (or may not) be part of its normative content. It is possible to envisage a world in which populations live sustainably in environmental but not in social terms:

> *'Sustainable societies could take many forms and there seems no necessary reason why they should be any less exploitative of human beings than are present societies' (Dobson 1995: 21).*

While many would argue that equity *should be* the 'default position' in the post-growth society, it is not an inevitable outcome:

[5] A thought succinctly encapsulated in Groucho Marx's comment, 'Why should I care about posterity? What did posterity ever do for me?' More substantively, the Venetians' long-term programmes of forest conservation traced by Grober (2013) as antecedents of sustainability were obviated by the development of alternative building materials to timber and the collapse of Venice as a naval power.

> *'The actual distribution in a post-growth society could be radically unequal, and people in the future might well succumb to massive inequalities in the goods that make for a flourishing life. This kind of post-growth society is very possible – some would even say very likely' (Dobson 2014: 160).*

Dobson also argues that it is by no means clear that democracy is the most likely route to a more sustainable society, finding 'the possible political arrangements in a sustainable society seem to range all the way from radical decentralisation to world government' (Dobson 1995: 123).

This line of thinking renders something that has been identified as a crucial ingredient of social sustainability a matter of choice, not inevitability. But for some, such as Stirling (2014), quoted above, this reinforces the point that sustainability, as a socially constructed phenomenon with normative content, must always and vigilantly be subject to democratic, not technocratic, processes of decision-making.

2. 11 Towards definitional agreement

Since the first exploratory investigations of what social sustainability might mean, two decades ago, some consensus has emerged. Recent authors have felt able to summarise what they take to be generally accepted meanings, but these definitions often acknowledge that they are still provisional. For example, summing up in 2013, Dempsey defined social sustainability as:

> *'A nebulous term that has conceptual overlaps with numerous other terms: social capital, cohesion, solidarity, order and integration, to name a few. It is also considered an umbrella term, encompassing a wide and diverse range of factors or dimensions including education, mental and physical health, personal safety, access to services, facilities and resources, a sense of community, a sense of place attachment, poverty, human rights, social equity, participation and social exclusion' (Dempsey 2013: 1089).*

In 2014, Bostrom and Klintmann listed 'possible' aspects of what they still viewed as a 'fuzzy' concept as:

> *'Social welfare, quality of life, social justice, social cohesion, cultural diversity, democratic rights, gender issues, workers' rights, broad participation, development of social capital, individual capabilities and the like. It refers to substantive and procedural issues, such as inclusive, transparent and democratic decision-making' (Bostrom and Klintman 2014: 85).*

Also in 2014, Partridge summed up social sustainability as 'the social goals of sustainability strategies' and identified wellbeing, equity, a 'futures focus' and democratic governance

(incorporating ideas of participation and inclusiveness) as 'key themes' around which some consensus exists (Partridge 2014: 6181-82).

The fact that other authors have felt able to use capsule definitions suggests that the idea has gained acceptability. For example, looking at how sustainability projects were organised, Casula Vifell and Soneryd defined the social dimension as 'broad participation, empowerment, equality, environmental justice and human wellbeing' *(*Casula Vifell and Soneryd *2012: 20).*

2.12 Concluding comments

This chapter has traced the origins of the idea of Sustainable Development since its advent as a contemporary policy concern in the 1980s. Although attracting many meanings, to the point of over-versatility, it captures an important idea, which is that humanity must meet its needs and aspirations within environmental limits, ideally in an equitable manner, and (as far as is foreseeable) without jeopardising the life chances of succeeding generations.

The review found that in the absence of an explanation for why the three designated pillars (environmental, economic and social) were chosen, the most likely reason is that the UN, a leading actor on Sustainable Development, already had an established framework covering Economic and Social policy, to which it added environmental protection. Although Sustainable Development was intended to reconcile antagonistic policy agendas (environmental protection and economic Development), and has inherited attributes from both, it has retained fissures and remains a malleable and contested concept.

Although a social dimension has been present from the outset, the social pillar has attracted a literature of its own only within the past 15-20 years. Like the parent idea, it has been variously defined, often according to the objectives of the definer, leading to long lists of characteristics. A more useful analysis sees social sustainability both as the preferred social attributes to be sustained and the preferred social processes by which sustainability is to be achieved. The inclusion of the 'green filter' offers the best theoretical way to differentiate social sustainability from wider social policy. The 'green filter' would be applied to social and economic activity to ensure it stayed within safe planetary thresholds, and a corresponding 'social filter' has been suggested to anchor environmental change within a 'safe' (i.e. just and inclusive) social sphere. Although some desired attributes and procedural forms appear

on many lists, this may reflect the accretive process by which meanings have been assembled, as well as preferences on the part of researchers. Although equity and democratic and participatory processes are sometimes said to be inherent social attributes of sustainability, it has been argued that these aspects are always normative.

Characteristics commonly identified as being central to (or desirable for) social sustainability include equity (within and between generations), democratic and participatory governance, social cohesion, health, wellbeing, diversity, and individual and collective capability. Social sustainability is seen to be more subjective, more politicised, harder to measure and harder to operationalise than environmental sustainability. However, it is also argued that the social aspects of sustainability may not only be normatively desirable, but also instrumentally essential.

Overall, the chapter has shown how, at a certain point in time, a (contested) set of issues came to be seen as a complex problem (a lack of sustainability), which was in need of governance. As already noted, Adger and Jordan (2009: *i*) have described the 'crisis' of sustainability as 'above all a crisis of governance'. Within this, the social pillar has been seen as both a set of governance objectives and also a preferred procedural framework for sustainable governance. Taking these ideas forward, the next chapter looks at how social sustainability has been defined by food scholars and approached as a governance challenge.

Chapter 3: Social sustainability, food and governance

3.1 Introduction

Chapter 2 traced the origins and meanings of the social pillar of sustainability. This chapter brings that knowledge to bear on the two strands of the thesis, food and governance. It explores how the idea of social sustainability has been interpreted in the food literature, taking in the literature on sustainability and business, which has been an important strand in framing sustainability for the food industry. It then draws on the literature on policy and governance, to see how this maps onto the emergence of sustainability and Sustainable Development as governance challenges, and describes some concepts which are helpful in understanding social sustainability as a governance problem.

3.2 Social sustainability in relation to food

While the literature on food and sustainability is extensive, relatively little of it focuses on social sustainability, and almost none on social sustainability in the conventional food supply. The following paragraphs look at the general treatment of sustainability in the food literature, then at how the social pillar has been conceptualised, including in relation to themes such as food security and sustainable diets. Finally, approaching the topic from a different angle, the section looks at how some food researchers have made use of the concept of social sustainability.

'Food sustainability' is difficult to define, certainly in a way that encompasses the industrial means by which most people in the UK are fed. Even books devoted to the subject avoid clinching definitions (e.g. Lawrence *et al* 2010; Oosterveer and Sonnenfeld 2012; Marsden and Morley 2014). A report from the thinktank Chatham House makes frequent use of the word 'sustainable' without providing a definition, and observes that 'although current methods of industrialised agriculture are widely seen as ultimately unsustainable, there is huge debate about the ways in which agriculture should be required to adapt' (Ambler-Edwards *et al* 2009: 23). Oosterveer and Sonnenfeld conclude that while sustainability in the broadest sense, namely optimising the economic, social and ecological interests of present and future generations, is widely accepted as an overarching goal of food provision, 'no

unanimous understanding of what sustainable food provision entails has yet been reached' (Oosterveer and Sonnenfeld 2012: 250-251).

Many 'definitions', therefore, are in fact aspirational descriptions of what a more sustainable food supply might look like. Table 3.1 presents a selection. They show how the core ideas of sustainability have been translated into the context of food, centring on the requirement to meet current needs while safeguarding environmental resources for future generations. The definitions also illustrate two persistent traits – the tendency to focus on agriculture, rather than the whole food supply (e.g. Allen and Sachs 1993; Kloppenberg *et al* 2000), and on environmental aspects of sustainability more than other aspects (e.g. Pretty 2008). They clearly illustrate the term's capacity to encompass wide-ranging lists of attributes. Most relevant to this study, they also demonstrate that conceptions of sustainable food have long involved social elements, both substantive and procedural.

3.2.1 Food sustainability by other names

It should also be said that efforts to clarify what is meant by food sustainability are complicated by the fact that many works have addressed the subject without mentioning the term. Examples include Malthus (2004 [1798]) on the relationship between food supply and population levels, Balfour (2006 [1943]) on the importance of maintaining soil fertility, Carson (1962) on the unforeseen effects of crop pesticides on wildlife and Mintz (1986) on the political economy that allowed a tropical commodity dependent on slave labour to become an essential source of cheap calories for distant industrial workers. Harvey's (1998) book on the environmentally destructive effects of industrial-scale agriculture in the UK has only one reference to sustainability in the index. A 1991 study of food and ecology, by Goodman and Redclift, does not index the term. It continues to be the case that issues associated by some authors with food sustainability are discussed by other authors in different terms. For example Lang *et al* (2009) and Rayner and Lang (2012) use the lens of 'ecological public health' to explore a terrain that resembles sustainability (Rayner and Lang's core proposition is that 'human health is dependent on how people co-exist with the natural world', Rayner and Lang 2012: 92).

Looking more specifically at social sustainability, it often seems to be present in food discourse even when not, recalling the words of Dillard *et al* (2009: 1), 'crystallised to the

point that it is so labelled'. One reason is the pervasively social nature of food itself. Food occupies a central role in social relations, and vice versa (Mennell *et al* 1992; Beardsworth and Keil 1997). Food has been described as an 'intimate commodity' (Winson 1993), but could equally be said to be a social commodity, shaping and shaped by myriad social arrangements. All food provisioning arrangements carry 'a dense set of social meanings' (Psarikidou and Szerszynski 2012: 32), and agriculture, in particular, bridges the social-environmental divide that is central to sustainability. Beginning with the first domestication of plants and animals, 'humans posed the problem of creating social relations through which to act in concert upon nature' (Friedmann 1993: 213). Agriculture is an 'integral nexus of society and ecology over time, a co-evolution of culture and nature, humans and landscape (Bacon *et al* 2012: 2). Given that food is seen to be so important in social arrangements, it is perhaps surprising that so little of the most frequently referenced academic work on social sustainability focuses on the food supply. On the other hand, given that food carries so many social meanings, much of the discourse on food sustainability has social overtones.

Table 3.1: Selected definitions of sustainability and social sustainability in relation to food		
Date	**Definition**	**Source**
1993	'Sustainable agriculture needs to be focused, centrally, on meeting human needs, which are consumptive (food, water, fuel), protective (clothing, shelter), and regenerative (dignity, self-determination and freedom from exploitation). These needs need to be met for current and future generations. In other words, sustainable agriculture should maintain the ecological conditions of production and provide the means for everyone to live and work with dignity, including securing adequate, safe food. This in turn is predicated on developing non-exploitative relations of race, class, gender and nation'	Allen and Sachs 1993: 159
2000	Sustainable agriculture would be ecologically sustainable; knowledgeable/ communicative; proximate; economically sustaining; participatory; just /ethical; sustainably regulated; sacred; healthful; diverse; culturally nourishing; seasonal / temporal; value oriented; relational	Kloppenburg *et al* 2000: 178
2002	More sustainable food systems would be 'more environmentally sound, more economically viable for a larger percentage of community members, and more socially, culturally and spiritually healthful'	Feenstra 2002: 100
2008	Sustainability concerns centre on the need to develop agricultural technologies and practices that: (i) do not have adverse effects on the environment (partly because the environment is an important asset for farming); (ii) are accessible to and effective for farmers; (iii) lead both to improvements in food productivity and have positive side effects on environmental goods and services. Sustainability in agriculture incorporates ideas of resilience (ability to buffer shocks) and persistence (the capacity to continue over long periods)	Pretty 2008: 447
2010	A sustainable food system would be 'an equitable, viable food system that accounts for social, economic and environmental concerns for citizens in developed and developing countries, rural and urban regions alike'	Blay-Palmer 2010: 6
2012	Aspects of social sustainability in the 'moral economy' of alternative agrifood networks include: relations of solidarity and justice with proximate and distant others, concern for land and the global environment, social inclusion of the disadvantaged, and re-skilling	Psarikidou and Szerszynski 2012: 30
2013	Social sustainability is about the satisfaction of basic needs and the provision of the right and freedom to satisfy one's aspirations for a better life. This applies as long as the fulfilment of one's needs does not compromise the ability of others, or future generations, to do the same	Sustainability Assessment of Food and Agriculture, FAO 2013: 176

Source: The Author

3.2.2 Sustainability enters food discourse

Sustainability (explicitly labelled as such) became a prominent theme in food discourse soon after it first emerged as a global policy concern in the 1980s. Buttel noted in 1993 that from 1980 sustainability (along with biotechnology) had been 'the most important trend' in food and agriculture studies (Buttel 1993: 19). Allen commented that whereas she had to convince colleagues of its validity in the 1980s, by the early 1990s sustainability had entered mainstream debate (Allen 1993a).

Food quickly became a favoured topic for sustainability analysis and prescription. Allen (1993a) argued that food should be seen as a cornerstone of sustainability debates and efforts, because of its necessity to human life and its impact and dependence on environmental systems. For Blay-Palmer (2010: 7), food 'unites all dimensions of sustainability – environmental, economic and socio-cultural'. Hinrichs found that food provided a useful 'analytical, practical and experiential touchstone' for the exploration of sustainability (Hinrichs 2010: 19).

Sustainability is now a common, explicit theme in food discourse. As Oosterveer and Sonnenfeld indicate in the quotation above, some version of sustainability is seen as an objective of most contemporary food policy. Food supply arrangements are recognised both to make a significant contribution to negative sustainability impacts and to offer a site for significant mitigation (Cabinet Office Strategy Unit 2008a, 2008b; CSDH 2008; Garnett, 2008; IAASTD 2008; Ambler-Edwards *et al* 2009; Lang *et al* 2009; Barling *et al* 2010; De Schutter 2010; Lang 2010b; Borras *et al* 2011; Foresight: 2011; SDC 2011; Rayner and Lang 2012; Sage 2012; Marsden and Morley 2014). Commentators have also argued that achieving a more sustainable food supply is not just an urgent objective in itself, but is also a platform from which to leverage wider sustainability programmes. In this guise, the food supply is seen as both test-bed and exemplar of sustainability governance (Kloppenberg *et al* 1996; Drummond and Marsden 1999; Allen 2004; Blay-Palmer 2010; Goodman *et al* 2012).

From an early stage, the discourse of food and sustainability was criticised for concentrating on agriculture to the neglect of other stages in the food supply, and on the environmental dimension of sustainability to the neglect of other dimensions (Buttel 1993, 2006; Dahlberg 1993; Allen 2004). Scholars sought to expand the approach to include social, economic and

political angles, as well as other stages in the food supply (Allen 2004; Morgan *et al* 2006; Constance 2009; Lang *et al* 2009; Hinrichs 2010; Oosterveer and Sonnenfeld 2012). As in the general discussion of sustainability, food commentators find the term to be overused or vaguely defined (Ilbery and Maye 2005; Hinrichs 2010), but also find the malleability of the idea to be a strength (Buttel 2006).

As noted in Chapter 1, a peculiarity of the extensive literature on food and sustainability is that the conventional supply tends to feature as a negative image, the epitome of unsustainability and the opposite of more sustainable alternatives. (Allen explicitly conflates 'alternative' with 'sustainable', 1993a *x*). This means that although there is no shortage of normative descriptions of what sustainable provisioning arrangements might look like, they tend to exclude the conventional supply, even though, as mentioned in Chapter 1, alternative arrangements are woven into conventional arrangements at the production, processing and distribution stages (Buck *et al* 1997; Ilbery and Maye 2005; Sharpe *et al* 2008; Dolan 2010; Goodman *et al* 2012).

3.2.3 Social attributes of a sustainable food supply

Nevertheless, it is possible to state with confidence that social attributes have frequently been associated with depictions of sustainable food supplies (or sustainable agriculture), and have sometimes been prioritised. The scope of these depictions is ambitious, reaching beyond the satisfaction of hunger into many areas of social life and governance. As Table 3.1 shows, they include the ability to provide work, dignity, self-determination and freedom from exploitation, and may be predicated on the need for transformed relations of 'race, class, gender and nation' (Allen and Sachs 1993). Food sustainability is associated with justice, knowledge, participation, health, diversity and values (Kloppenburg et al 2011), with resilience (Pretty 2008), equity (Blay-Palmer 2010) and concern for proximate and distant others (Kloppenburg *et al* 2000 and Psaridiikou and Szerszynski 2012). Sustainable food and agriculture are endowed with 'sacred' power to bring spiritual fulfilment (Kloppenburg *et al* 2011; Feenstra 2002). A (rare) 2013 capsule definition of social sustainability comes from the FAO's (2013) comprehensive framework and indicators for sustainable agriculture and food (SAFA) (Table 3.1). It invokes ideas of basic needs, rights, freedoms and aspirations for a better life, limited by the need not to impinge on the needs and aspirations of future generations, but does not define precisely how this is to be interpreted in relation to food.

Overall, these wide-ranging definitions are consistent with the presentations of social sustainability in the general literature.

More glimpses of what are considered to be the desirable social attributes of a sustainable food supply are provided by critiques of the sustainable alternatives. The proponents of alternative food provisioning arrangements (who often refer to themselves as part of a 'movement', e.g. Allen and Sachs 1993; Friedmann 2005; Constance 2009; Hinrichs 2010) have made the point that some 'sustainable' systems risk reproducing undesirable social aspects of the conventional systems against which they are a reaction. Allen's work was prompted by what she saw as a bias in favour of natural-science based approaches that left out important social, economic and political concerns (Allen 2004). Commentators warn of the dangers of, on one hand, neglecting the biophysical basis of food provisioning and, on the other, 'naturalising the social' by assuming that exclusive provisioning arrangements, exploitative labour divisions or inequitable patterns of land ownership were inevitable and had arisen naturally, rather than having developed historically, as products of 'class and power laden human choices' (Allen 1993b: 4; Allen 2004; Dupuis and Goodman 2005; Alkon and Agyemon 2011). It has been pointed out, for example, that a normative preference for local sourcing might not equate with greater fairness, and could even be so 'unreflexive' (Dupuis and Goodman 2005) or 'defensive' (Winter 2003) that it risked replacing one set of inequities with another.

Lang (2010a) is one of relatively few authors to provide an outline for what a sustainable food supply might look like that is not explicitly tied to alternative supply arrangements. To draw together the multifaceted nature of the problem, it makes use of his concept of 'omnistandards', under which 'fragmented single issues coalesce and articulate a new paradigm' (Lang 2010c: 1814). In his model, the overarching goal is to feed everyone sustainably, equitably and healthily. It would address availability, affordability and accessibility, would build the capacities and skills necessary for future generations, and would also apply the 'green filter', aspiring to be diverse, ecologically sound and resilient. The term 'sustainably' is further defined to include social attributes such as health (specified as safety, nutrition, access and affordability), and social values (specified as animal welfare; ethics, working wages and labour conditions), with an emphasis on equality of distribution. The outline thus encompasses both substantive and procedural elements (Lang 2010a: 279).

3.2.4 Some related concepts

Social dimensions of food sustainability are also captured or articulated in other strands of food discourse.

3.2.4.1 Food security

Food sustainability is often linked to food security. Defined narrowly, food security has a more limited meaning than sustainability, focusing on security of supply or even national self-sufficiency (the capacity of a state to feed its population from its own resources), and omitting social attributes such as nutritional value, equity or affordability that are associated with social sustainability (Ambler-Edwards *et al* 2009; Lang 2009; Barling *et al* 2010; Lawrence *et al* 2010; Marsden and Morley 2014). In this sense, food security might be a component of food sustainability.

But food security is sometimes defined much more broadly, in ways that have more overlap with sustainability. In these interpretations, food security is linked to social sustainability concerns such as adequacy of supply, nutritional quality and an absence of food-related anxiety. The most commonly used definition of food security originated at the 1996 World Food Summit (which aspired to achieve 'sustainable food security') and has since been refined by the Food and Agriculture Organisation:

> *Food security [is] a situation that exists when all people, at all times, have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life" (FAO 2002: 4-7).*

To meet the criteria of sustainability, this definition would need to include provision for resource conservation and future generations (and a UK government advisory body, the Sustainable Development Commission (SDC), proposed a clause to fill the gap, SDC 2008), but several authors argue that this is unnecessary: food supplies can by definition *only* be secure if they are sustainable and vice versa (Lang 2009; Garnett 2014).

3.2.4.2 Sustainable diets

Sustainable diets, which reflect a need for 'nutrition once more to engage with planetary capacities to feed humans' (Rayner and Lang 2012: 88-89), appear to represent a rare example of an effort to integrate social and environmental dimensions of sustainability into the green social policy held (e.g. by Bostrom 2012) to be a definitive expression of sustainability. As an example of integration, though, sustainable diets have if anything

demonstrated the difficulty of the exercise, and have yet to be translated into policy or operationalised (SDC 2009b; Macdiarmid *et al* 2011).

Sustainable diets were first mooted by Gussow and Clancy (1986), when they challenged as unsustainable a food industry that supplied needlessly large quantities of resource-intensive, high-calorie, low nutrient food. Following the publication of the official Dietary Guidelines for Americans, they proposed Dietary Guidelines for Sustainability, recommending foods that took account of the planet's health as well as human health (Gussow 2006). In 2009, the UK Sustainable Development Commission took up the idea and commissioned research to assess how trade-offs might work between different impacts. There were a few 'win-wins' (for example reducing consumption of products with low nutritional value, such as fatty/sugary foods and drinks, was found to have mainly positive impacts on health, the environment and reducing health inequalities) (SDC 2009b). However, the report found that although sustainable diets were urgently needed, there was no accepted definition, the evidence base was incomplete and the theoretical foundations for devising such a diet were lacking (and it must be acknowledged that any such model would entail enormous cultural variation). In the face of the difficulty of the task, later efforts have tended to concentrate on environmental impacts (e.g. Macdiarmid *et al* 2011; Defra 2013a).

3.2.4.3 Food ethics, food democracy and the moral (food) economy

Another strand in food discourse which is often explicitly associated with the social dimension of sustainability concerns food ethics. Many ethical concerns are linked to food production, distribution and consumption – in fact Goodman *et al* (2010: 1782) comment that 'all food is inescapably ethical / moral in character'. Current food-related ethical concerns centre on the conditions in which food animals live and die, on the quality of life and livelihood of food producers and food workers, on distributional issues along supply chains, and on trust and honesty (Buller 2010). They are often linked to the sourcing of foods from distant and poor countries, referred to as 'ethical sourcing' or 'ethical trade' (Barrientos and Dolan 2006). Summing up what he posits as an 'ethical foodscape', Morgan (2010) describes its core values as ecological integrity and social justice. Expanding the notion of ethics to take in democratic procedures and accountability, Lang says:

> *'the pursuit of ethics in the contemporary food system is intrinsically a social process, an illustration of the long struggle for food democracy, defined as a situation where people have not just adequacy or sustainability of food, but accountability and control' (Lang 2010c: 1816).*

In this definition, food democracy represents a form of equity of process (as discussed in Chapter 2) and embodies a procedural social dimension of sustainability.

Finally, the related concept of the moral economy is invoked by some authors as a way of capturing the social dimension of food sustainability. As noted in Chapter 2, a moral economy is one that entails a framework of obligations, customs and 'just pricing' which operates outside or alongside the market economy (Thompson 1992). The conventional food supply is perceived to be de-moralised – its distancing, 'de-naturing' and de-skilling practices are seen to 'actively erode' the moral economy of the food supply (Kloppenburg *et al* 1996: 38). Consistent with this view, Psarikidou and Szerszynski (2012**)** found the alternative food markets they studied, which were a rich repository of the social connections, reciprocities and shared meanings they saw as social sustainability, to exemplify a moral economy. But Morgan *et al* (2006) apply the idea to the conventional food supply, arguing that the moral economy perspective helps to envisage a mass food supply which could reintegrate nature and society, and find a valued place for considerations such as health and fairness, the values crowded out by (amoral) market priorities. Morgan also argues that food's biophysical and cultural embeddedness gives it exceptional status as a business sector, 'not to be treated on a par with steel or software', and makes it a prime site for a re-moralised economy (Morgan 2015: 294).

3.2.5 How social sustainability has been used in food studies

More light can be shed on the meanings ascribed to social sustainability by the way food researchers have made use of the concept. Researchers have used empirical methods to establish what is understood by the term, and from the early 2000s, researchers began to use capsule or 'off the peg' definitions in a range of food studies, implying that the term had achieved some legitimacy or settled meaning. However, the range of usage suggests that its meanings are still flexible and, as in studies of sustainability in general, are open to opportunism and definer bias.

A relatively common approach is to define social sustainability in the food supply as being at least partly about labour issues. For example, Schreck *et al* (2006: 439), who had often

explored work-related issues in the Californian farm sector, used a social sustainability 'lens' to ask whether certified organic agriculture encompassed 'a commitment to sustainability that prioritised social goals', which they defined as labour issues. Bitsch (2010), also used the lens of social sustainability to look at how various food certification schemes covered labour issues.

Other authors have adapted the concept to suit different research agendas. For example, Ferris *et al* (2001), in a study of the social dimension of Sustainable Development in the context of community gardens in the US, took the social dimension to refer to health, education, community development and food security. Shekle *et al* (2009), contributing a chapter on social sustainability to a (rare) book on sustainability in the food industry (Baldwin 2009), covered food safety, health and nutrition. A study by Muller *et al* (2009), looking at how social sustainability was treated in the supply of table grapes from south Africa into European markets, did not provide a definition of social sustainability but included as relevant information on the provision of social supports to workers (such as housing, water, schooling, pensions and healthcare), as well as labour practices, gender discrimination and worker safety.

In an empirical search for definitions, Van Calker *et al* (2005) asked Dutch dairy farming 'experts and stakeholders' to identify attributes for 'internal' and 'external' social sustainability' (these categories were pre-determined by the researchers). 'Internal' social sustainability related to on-farm conditions, and 'external social sustainability' related to societal concerns about the impacts of agriculture. They found just one attribute, working conditions, to be associated with internal social sustainability, and 19 attributes, ranging from animal welfare and pesticide use to farm size and land use in Developing countries, to be associated with external social sustainability (Van Calker *et al* 2005). Psarikidou and Szerszynski (2012: 30), investigating social sustainability in 'alternative agrifood networks' in Manchester, found social sustainability to be constituted by 'relations of solidarity and justice with proximate and distant others, concern for land and the global environment, social inclusion of the disadvantaged, and re-skilling'.

A few authors have concentrated on what Bostrom (2012) identified as the procedural aspects of social sustainability. For example, Mortberg *et al* (2010) interpreted social

sustainability as the quality of social relations among workers in a school kitchen. Casula Vifell and Soneryd (2012), using a case study of food production to examine how the social dimension of sustainability was implemented in project organisation, took the social dimension to refer to inclusive and participatory methods of decision-making and project organisation. Bacon *et al* (2012: 40) acknowledged that discussions of sustainable agriculture 'often overlook the full range of social dimensions' and therefore took a 'dual focus', considering both a set of 'criteria' (including human health, labour conditions, democratic participation, quality of life, wellbeing, resiliency, cultural diversity, equity and ethics) and a range of 'supportive institutions' (including state policies, farmers' organisations and civil-society initiatives such as Fairtrade schemes).

Finally, a few authors have used the term to investigate aspects of the corporate nature of the food supply (Fuchs and Clapp 2009; Fuchs *et al* 2009; Fuchs *et al* 2011a). These authors take social sustainability to encompass nutritional concerns, food safety, labour rights, abuse of workers, food security, livelihoods, participation, transparency and accountability.

3.3 Sustainability and business

Business (a collective term for commercial entities variously referred to as companies, firms or corporations, Wilks 2013) was implicated in discourse on sustainability very early on. Certainly, from Brundtland onwards, the UN has championed the need for businesses of all sizes to be enrolled in sustainability programmes, and the approach was consolidated with the launch of the Business Council for Sustainable Development (a forum for business executives) at the 1992 Earth Summit. The UN continues to promote the involvement of business through the Global Compact, established in 2000, which describes itself as 'the world's largest corporate sustainability initiative', with the remit of 'aligning' corporate practices with the goals of Sustainable Development (UN Global Compact n.d.a) .

From the point of view of business, sustainability has been defined as:

> *'The ability of a company to continue indefinitely by making a zero impact on environmental resources. That way, future generations will also benefit from the goods and services provided from the employment offered' (Blowfield and Murray 2011: 59).*

This interpretation asserts the company as the object that is to be sustained. It recognises environmental limits and the obligation to future generations, but limits the social

dimension to the material benefits provided by economic activity. Others have provided broader definitions. Hawken, for example, an early exponent of an 'ecology of commerce' or 'restorative capitalism', argues that companies must 'squarely address social injustice' along with environmental issues (Hawken 2010 [1993]: *xi*).

In the wider literature on sustainability and business, views range from a conviction that business can be both an object of and a catalyst for transformative change (e.g. Hawken 2010; Elkington 1997; Zadek 2007) to extreme scepticism (e.g. Banerjee 2007; Fleming and Jones 2013). The hope is that businesses can become 'cannibals with forks' (Elkington 1997), with their destructive proclivities tamed, their inequities restrained and their scale and creativity harnessed for constructive, publicly beneficial purposes (Elkington 1997; Zadek 2007). But for some, Sustainable Development is no more than a kind of green smokescreen for business-as-usual. For Benton, the 'core meaning of Sustainable Development' has been the quest to sustain the 'necessary legal, socio-political and ecological conditions for continuing capital accumulation' (Benton 1999: 220). Banerjee (2003) finds sustainability and business mutually incompatible. For McMichael (2000: 285) Sustainable Development is the process of 'regulating the access to and use of natural resources in such a way as not to compromise the accumulation of economic wealth', and the Global Compact a cynical alliance between the UN and corporations to give 'a human face to the global market'.

3.4 Social sustainability and governance

As noted in Chapter 1, the 'crisis' of sustainability – its emergence as a preoccupation for policy-makers in many fields, including food – has been described as 'above all a crisis of governance' (Adger and Jordan 2009: i). Omann and Spangenberg (2002: 2) comment that Sustainable Development is 'perhaps the most challenging policy concept ever developed'. Much of the literature reviewed in this and the previous chapter looks at sustainability in this light – explicitly or implicitly, it is approached as a *governance problem*: a conjunction of factors perceived to have adverse consequences for some sections of society, and which is therefore in need of intervention. This section draws on the literature of policy and governance to substantiate this observation, and to provide a theoretical framework for the investigation that follows.

3.4.1 Policy

Policy has sometimes been seen narrowly as 'what governments do' (Hill 1997), a form of hierarchical authority (Bell and Hindmoor 2009) or high-level decision-making. The process has been depicted in many ways. For example, it has been presented as a series of stages, from agenda setting through policy formulation to implementation (Cairney 2012), although it is recognised that this neat model bears little relation to reality, because the stages overlap and interact (John 1998). It has also been described as a process of rational selection among options by well-informed, authoritative decision-makers (John 1998). In a less linear manner, Kingdon saw policy resulting from a dynamic interaction among 'streams' of activity, in which problems might rise from the 'policy primeval soup' of competing, potential issues and appear on the 'policy agenda' (i.e., the concerns attracting the attention of policy-makers), or fall off again as 'policy windows' (conjunctions of favourable circumstances) opened and closed. This account recognises the role of a wide range of participants, both within and beyond governments ('policy entrepreneurs'), and also conveys the contingency of the process – the importance of currents of opinion and chance events– in bringing policy problems to the fore (Kingdon 1995; John 1998; Cairney 2012). It is a social and political process, involving interactions among many individuals and groups, with various interests, affinities, antagonisms and ideas as well as different levels of power and resources. Bevir (2012) describes policy-making as both action in pursuit of goals and coherence around values, while Blackmore and Lauder (2011) note that policy-makers seek to change both behaviour and values.

It is not the objective of this thesis to analyse Sustainable Development policy in general, but very broadly the processes discussed in Chapter 2 can be seen to fit with the above descriptions. An agenda emerged in the mid-20th century for 'developing' areas of the world problematised as 'underdeveloped'. Over time, this problematisation was challenged by various interest groups on the grounds that it was ineffective at addressing poverty and in any case concealed self-serving motivations (Escobar 1994; McMichael 2000; Banerjee 2003), and the agenda was modified as a result (Streeten et al 1981; Sen 2001). A fundamental challenge to the agenda was presented by the rise, from the 1970s, of environmentalism (Ecologist 1972; Meadows *et al* 1974), which called forth a new agenda for governance: Sustainable Development (WCED 1987). The process has been widely

attested to be extraordinarily complex and contested (Redclift 1987, 2005; Jacobs 1999; Kates *et al* 2005). Hence Omann and Spangenberg's (2002: 2) conclusion that it may be the most challenging policy concept ever developed, of which the objective is nothing less than 'to provide everybody everywhere and at any time with the opportunity to lead a dignified life in his or her respective society'. Hence also the complex policy frameworks from Stirling and colleagues, attempting to provide for 'dynamic sustainabilities' (Dawson *et al* 2010; Leach *et al* 2010).

The object of the current study is to look at policy around one aspect of sustainability, social sustainability, in the defined arena of the conventional food supply in the UK. In this context, approaches that recognise a wide range of participants and go beyond the notion of policy as high-level or 'authorised' decision making (Colebatch 2002: 129) are appropriate. Lang *et al* (2009: 22) define food policy as the factors and processes that shape 'who eats what, when and how'. It involves diverse actors at many levels, and is not necessarily ordained by the state, although the state retains an important role (Lang *et al* 2009: 23).

One useful idea is to think of vertical and horizontal policy dimensions (Colebatch 2002). The vertical dimension is 'what governments decide to do', while the horizontal dimension entails 'structured interaction' among a range of participants with diverse expectations and understandings of the problem, arriving at policy in a messy and fragmented way (Colebatch 2002: 127). The vertical dimension, in which authorities hand down policies that purport to rest on objective and rational decision-making processes, may seem detached from the realities of the terrain it relates to, but Colebatch argues that it has a symbolic importance, helping to legitimate outcomes and maintain 'a semblance of social orderliness and meaning' (Colebatch 2002: 128). It is the 'sacred' version of policy, while the untidy and pragmatic process of negotiation – the empirical reality – is the 'profane' version (Colebatch 2002: 62).

3.4.2 Governance

Policy commentary now generally recognises that policy-making arises in many sectors and involves a wide range of participants. State actors struggle, not always successfully, to 'steer' other actors (rather than 'row' the policy boat, in a widely used metaphor). They

meet challenges from above, below and horizontally, and policy is the outcome of fractious negotiation (Bevir 2012). This understanding of policy moves it close to the concept of 'governance', which has to some extent subsumed the notion of policy 'both because people see the world differently and because the world has changed' (Bevir 2012: 2). Governance is the process of governing (deciding, making rules, coordinating behaviour), and it comprises both what governments do to their citizens ('government') and what a host of other non-state organisations do. Bell and Hindmoor (2009: 1) describe it as 'the attempts of governments and other actors to steer communities, whole countries or even groups of countries in the pursuit of collective goals'. Governance recognises not only that these non-state organisations may compete to govern, but also that governments increasingly rely on private and voluntary sector actors to deliver their policies and services (Bevir 2009, 2012; Cairney 2012). It also shifts attention from 'who is managing society to what is being done in social management' (van der Meulen 2011: 48).

The tilt towards governance also reflects the perception that in a globalised world, national governments have a diminished ability to exert control. This has been an important factor in sustainability policy, which is widely seen to involve issues that cannot be resolved at the level of the nation state (Eckersley 2004). It also recognises a shift from public to 'private' governance, with non-state entities taking on rule-making tasks – another phenomenon that has manifested itself in sustainability governance, including for food, where private regulatory mechanisms are now widespread (Henson and Reardon 2005; Fuchs et al 2011b; Busch 2011). Governance highlights 'the processes and interactions through which highly diverse social interests and actors produce the policies, practices and effects of governing' (Bevir 2012: 4). It is hybrid and pluralistic, combining established administrative arrangements with features of the market, and is multi-jurisdictional and multi-layered (Cairney 2012). In this depiction, participants may either be trying to maximise their advantage within the existing rules; or trying to change the rules (John 1998).

The role of the state is contested in governance theory. While some commentators argue that the notion of governance implies a loss of state authority in policy-making, or a 'hollowing out' of states (Bell and Hindmoor 2009; Bevir 2012), an alternative view is that states have simply learned to work with a variety of other actors in order to achieve their goals, but retain a controlling authority. Bell and Hindmoor (2009: 3) call this a 'state-

centred relational approach' which recognises the 'pivotal' power of the state to make and enforce laws and to allocate resources, but also the need for the state to make strategic alliances in order to accomplish its ends. In fact Bell and Hindmoor go further, and suggest that governance by non-state actors is to a large extent driven and underpinned by 'changes in state preferences and strategy', with states retaining the power to alter the rules of governance or fail to recognise the power of non-state actors. They argue that new private-public and multilevel governance modes extend the reach of governments, allowing them to govern better, not govern less (Bell and Hindmoor *2009*: 2).

An important aspect of governance from the point of view of this thesis is that it recognises that businesses, especially large ones, play an important part in the process of governing. Governance is said to have been marketised in various ways – for example through the sale of public assets or services to the private sector, or through the adoption of market practices by public authorities (Bell and Hindmoor 2009). Partly as a result of these processes, and partly because of companies' expansion so that they operate between and outside the jurisdictions of nation states, large companies have been identified as key governance actors, although their role remains relatively unscrutinised (Crouch 2004; Fuchs 2007; Fuchs and Kalfagianni 2009; Wilks 2013). Wilks finds that public policy is increasingly determined by 'the strategic decisions of corporations' relating to their products, services, technological trajectories, wages, shares, pensions, brands and discursive power (Wilks 2013: 129), leading to an undemocratic arrangement that he terms 'the New Corporate State' (Wilks 2013*:* 70).

Confusingly, 'corporate governance' does not generally refer to the role corporations play in the governance of public affairs, but applies more narrowly to companies' levels of disclosure, integrity, accountability and anti-corruption measures (Cairney 2012). Corporate governance is sometimes listed by corporations as part of their activity on social sustainability.

3.4.3 The importance of networks

Complex decision making that bridges policy areas, industrial sectors or national jurisdictions almost by definition involves collaboration, sometimes conceptualised as networking, and this is another hallmark of contemporary sustainability governance.

Networks are 'policymaking relationships between those in formal positions of responsibility and those who seek to influence them' (Cairney 2012: 165). An early depiction in the policy literature was of a plurality of 'interest groups' competing to influence government decisions, contributing to Lindblom's argument that policy develops through 'disjointed incrementalism', as different groups gain or lose ground (Lindblom 1968). Weale has used this term to describe the way in which sustainability policy has emerged in the UK (Weale 2008). Policy networks, policy communities, issue networks, policy collectivities and policy advocacy coalitions have been identified as different types of groupings, with varying degrees of linkage, mutual commitment or permanence (John 1998; Colebatch 2002; Cairney 2012). The networks may be loose or tight, long-term or temporary, based on common interests or shared values. They may coalesce independently of the state and seek to influence it or be initiated by the state and deployed on an interactive basis to secure state goals (Bevir 2009). The changed role of the state in these arrangements is described as 'metagovernance' (Bell and Hindmoor 2009; Bevir 2012), a version of the 'steering not rowing' metaphor.

Particularly in relation to sustainability, where problems are seen to affect everyone (though not necessarily equally) and require collective responses, collaborative governance is presented as more effective than top-down regulation in that participants will be more likely to comply with rules if they have had a say in determining them (Eckersley 2004; Bell and Hindmoor 2009; Bevir 2012; Cairney 2012). This idea contributes to the value placed on participatory or democratic approaches in sustainability discourse, which are sometimes presented as procedural aspects of social sustainability (Magis and Shinn 2009). Many of the private governance mechanisms investigated during this study were developed or maintained by different sorts of collaborative (or multistakeholder) initiatives.

3.4.4 Policy as discourse

Seeking interpretations of social sustainability, the investigation looked extensively at texts (policy documents and websites), which were found both to inscribe and prescribe meanings. Here another perspective, which sees policymaking as a discursive activity, was helpful. Discourse is 'a form of social practice' (Fairclough 2001: 16) that helps define how people both shape and interpret the world around them (Fischer 2003). The discursive approach to policy originates with Foucault, who saw governance as 'the conduct of

conduct' (Gordon 1992: 2), or 'the correct manner of managing individuals, goods and wealth' within the state (Foucault 1991: 92). Foucault's attention to the importance of language and knowledge to power, and his conception of power as being dispersed through societies and operating on and through 'self-governing' subjects, have been widely influential. This thesis does not aspire to present a Foucauldian analysis, but aspects of the governmentality approach – especially as interpreted by Fairclough (1992; 2001), Murdoch (1997), Fischer (2003) and Miller and Rose (2008) – have been useful.

Like other writers on governance, Miller and Rose (2008) note that public problems are not pre-given; things have to be 'problematised' or constructed and made visible as problems. For example, Murdoch (1997: 310), describing how and why agricultural statistics began to be compiled, finds that agriculture was partly rendered 'amenable to administration' through the normalisation of the practice of collecting certain farm statistics. Miller and Rose comment that the construction of problems is a complex, often slow and essentially discursive process, which may entail work by experts, professionals, pressure groups, politicians, corporate leaders, the media, or others. A 'zone' that is in need of governing must be constructed. A discourse is needed that enables people to talk to each other about the problem – a common language – even if they disagree about solutions. Crucially, the problem has to be made amenable to intervention: it has to be constructed in a way that allows it to be acted on (Miller and Rose 2008). (Again, the process through which an array of contending issues were corralled into a programme with the label Sustainable Development is illustrative.)

According to Miller and Rose, Foucault argued that a certain mentality, which he termed governmentality, had come to characterise the way modern societies thought about how problems (and which problems) could be acted on through governance. For Miller and Rose, governmentality is the notion that 'reality is, in some way or other, programmable' (Miller and Rose 2008: 29), and frames the way participants in governance administer the lives of each other and themselves. For Miller and Rose, governmentality has two strands. One consists of 'rationalities' or programmes of governance, which are styles of thinking or 'ways of rendering reality thinkable in such a way that it [is] amenable to calculation and programming' Miller and Rose 2008: 16). These rationalities are contingent and dynamic – there is no necessity or inevitability for them. The second consists of 'technologies' of

governance, which are the tools and techniques that enable rule-makers to act on the conduct of others. The techniques are how the rationalities are operationalised – the techniques are ways of intervening, the rationalities ways of thinking. This approach was helpful to the current study in various ways. It was one way of accounting for the colliding agendas that have divided sustainability (for example between the rationalities of economic development and ecological conservation), and for the emergence of elaborate 'calculative' technologies such as standards, which shape the choices open to individuals and organisations (examples of these abound in sustainability governance). It also pays attention to the importance of communities of experts (epistemic communities) and their role in constructing problems which purport to call for 'professional know-how' in their solution (Miller and Rose 2008: 11). (The British Standards Institution defines standards as 'the distilled wisdom of people with expertise in their subject matter and who know the needs of the organisations they represent', BSI 2016).)

The discursive approach emphasises the importance of meanings and definitions. Fairclough (2001) argues that power is exercised through the control of language, where markers of dominance are embedded (and become invisible or taken for granted) in everyday speech. How problems are defined can determine who is called to act on them; and also confer 'immunity' on issues that are successfully constructed as non-problems (Fischer 2003: 66). For Beck, 'relations of definition', like relations of production, can determine who holds power (Beck 1995: 64). These insights are pertinent to the study of social sustainability, where meanings are still in the process of being formed, chosen, agreed on and perhaps excluded.

A criticism of the governmentality approach is that it can seem totalising, and to undervalue the potential of individuals to resist or bring about change (Bell and Hindmoor 2009). Miller and Rose explicitly reject this, acknowledging that the resourcefulness with which individuals implement or resist policy programmes can disrupt their progress. They do not depict 'totally administered societies': there are unforeseen outcomes and setbacks, warring subjectivities and approaches, differently assessed interests, all of which make programmes unpredictable – and ultimately call forth different programmes. They note that 'we do not live in a governed world, so much as a world traversed by the "will to govern"' (Miller and Rose 2008: 71). Bevir also rejects the idea of 'inexorable and impersonal forces'

(Bevir 2012: 77) – on the contrary, governance is always 'the products of people's actions' (Bevir 2012: 78).

A final comment is that the study of governance involves looking at the 'effects of governance' (Bevir 2012: 4). This does not mean it is about evaluating policies. Evaluation, according to Miller and Rose, is an inherent part of the programmatic nature of governmentality. The effects of governance include the intended and unintended outcomes of policy programmes, and the reactive activities of governance actors. The 'failure' of a policy or set of policies is usually linked to attempts to propose policies that would work better (very much evident in the unfolding of Sustainable Development policy). Governance may fail, but governmentality – the idea that social affairs could be governed better – is optimistic (Miller and Rose 2008).

3.5 A toolbox of governance measures

The quest for greater sustainability has given rise to range of governance measures. By drawing on the literatures of sustainability, food, business sustainability and governance reviewed here, it was possible to identify some key measures that were likely to be relevant to, or be encountered in, the specific context of the empirical research. They all have relevance to the governance of social aspects of sustainability in the conventional food supply in the UK. These concepts formed a kind of toolbox with which to investigate the research problem. They are described next.

3.5.1 Ecological Modernisation

Ecological Modernisation (EM) has emerged as a prominent framework for sustainability governance, among both states and businesses. Described by one of its progenitors as a theory of environmental reform (Mol 2010), it has also been treated as a kind of blueprint for action (Eckersely 2004). According to Mol, it describes how an 'ecological rationality' of government (Mol *et al* 2014: 18) developed from the 1980s in response to widespread recognition of the need to avoid fatal environmental damage (Mol 2010). EM made a pragmatic case for far-reaching reform, arguing that stringent environmental protection was a pre-condition of successful economic development partly because clean-up costs would expand and partly because the resource base would be exhausted (Mol 2010). From this perspective, high levels of environmental protection could be presented as competitive

advantage (Eckersely 2004), rendering Sustainable Development a more amenable proposition for states and business. By challenging the 'zero-sum' assumption that growth and environmental protection always had to be at odds, EM helped shape the discourse of Sustainable Development itself (Eckersely 2004), and offered a way of making the intractable contradictions of Sustainable Development governable in a way that avoided disruptive change (Eckersley cites Hajer's description of Sustainable Development as 'one of the paradigm statements of EM', Eckersley 2004: 72). EM is essentially optimistic (Williams and Millington 2004), reflecting the central argument of 'weak' sustainability, namely that current activity (including economic growth) can be incrementally improved sufficiently to achieve a state of sustainability. EM underpins many public and private policies around sustainable development, green growth, economic 'de-coupling', resource efficiency and the circular economy.

EM has been criticised on the basis that it holds out a false hope of transformation, when all it can achieve is reactive adaptation (Eckersley 2004; Hawken 2010); on the grounds that it does not seem to be working (York *et al* 2010); and because it provides a green cloak for the goals and methods of capitalism (Eckersley 2004; Redclift 2010). Redclift defines EM as 'the process through which large-scale capital has incorporated and internalised green policy, in an attempt to widen its market and appeal (Redclift 2010: 127). These comments imply that EM is misnamed, and represents too anthropocentric and instrumental a relationship to the biosphere to be properly ecological.

A criticism relevant to this study is that although EM emerged from the discipline of environmental sociology, it says little about the social pillar. Some commentators have attempted to remedy this deficiency. In UK food policy, the programme for 'sustainable intensification' of agricultural production can be seen to apply EM to agriculture (e.g. Foresight 2011). But the Foresight report, while using a narrowly environmental definition of sustainability, accepted that the purpose of the food system is to feed people, and saw the existence of underfed and overfed billions as evidence of failure, thus enshrining a concern for equity (Foresight 2011). Discussing food security, Horlings and Marsden note that the UK the conventional food supply has responded with a 'narrow ecological modernisation process of agriculture', which decreases negative environmental effects but may also produce new, negative side-effects (Horlings and Marsden 2010: 3). They outline

as an alternative a 'real' EM process that would include social, cultural, spatial and political aspects.

The food scholar Harriet Friedmann, who described a series of 'food regimes', or periods in recent history when stable sets of political-economic relations governed food production and distribution (Friedmann and McMichael 1989), has detected a pervasive EM at work in the agro-food sector. She has posited a new 'corporate-environmental' food regime as 'part of a larger restructuring of capitalism in response to green issues' (Friedmann 2005: 228). But she too includes social considerations alongside environmental ones. She suggests agro-food corporations are 'selectively appropriating' elements of food safety, animal welfare and fair trade alongside environmental protection.

3.5.2 Indicators

Another important approach to governing sustainability and social sustainability has been through the production of sets of indicators. Indicators use quantified information to measure, and thus help explain, how things change over time (DE 1996: 1). Many commentators express some version of Parris's view:

> *'If the concept of Sustainable Development is to prove useful in both policy and scientific contexts, it is essential to define the concept in measurable terms. Without such a mechanism, we cannot know if we are making genuine progress toward or away from sustainability' (Parris 2002: 184).*

Beyond this, however, commentators agree that indicators perform a normative function in the governance process (Bell and Morse 2008). Indicator sets are developed to help mark out a terrain and understand its dimensions and variables, and the production of indicator sets has been an important way of defining, entrenching and assessing sustainability (Hilderink 2004). Indicators are used to 'gain insight into the dynamics of a complex reality' (Hilderink 2004: 3). They reflect underlying interactions and relationships (in other words, they are social and political), and by reducing huge complexes of variables to manageable essentials, they make large and difficult problems seem coherent and governable. Hilderink cites as an example the UN Human Development Index, which attempts to map the concept of human development with one composite index. (An indicator is a measurable quantity, while an index is a composite made from a set of indicators.)

The UN has been pre-eminent in producing indicator sets both to define and to help operationalise Sustainable Development. Chapter 40 of Agenda 21, an output of the 1992 UN conference in Rio, called on countries and the international community to develop indicators of sustainable development, not least to prompt nations to collect data to fill the gaps it had identified in the information needed to assess and act on sustainability (UN 1993). Since then, many indicators and indices for sustainability have been produced by public and private bodies – in 2005, Kates *et al* already found hundreds to be in existence. The UN's latest iteration of Sustainable Development Indicators (SDIs) appeared in 2016, in the form of a dashboard which aggregates available global data on the 17 Sustainable Development Goals into a 'highly preliminary' composite index (Sachs *et al* 2016). The FAO produced indicators to complement its Sustainability Assessment for Food and Agriculture Systems (SAFA) in 2013 (SAFA 2013). The UK government has also produced sets of both SDIs and indicators for sustainable food.

One persistent strand of work has been to develop indicators for sustainability that would broaden the commonly used economic indicators, such as GDP, to include social and environmental criteria, in order to provide a more rounded picture of social progress (Stiglitz *et al* 2009). Examples have included the Index of Sustainable Economic Welfare (ISEW) developed by Daly and Cobb (described in King 2009), the New Economic Foundation's Happy Planet Index (nef 2006), and the Better Life Index from the OECD (OECD n.d.). Indicator sets have also been developed for sustainable business, e.g. the Global Compact Self assessment Tool (UN Global Compact n.d.b).

Indicator sets are usually grouped into themes, for which precise indicators are then selected. As with other ways of specifying social sustainability already discussed, the choice of themes and indicators varies widely, as does the allocation of themes to different dimensions of sustainability. For example, the SAFA posits a four-dimensional model of sustainability (social, environment, economy and governance). Within this model, themes on cultural diversity, human health and safety, equity, labour rights, fair trading practices, and decent livelihoods are allocated to the social dimension. However, localism and product quality are allocated to the economic dimension, animal welfare to the environmental dimension and accountability to the governance dimension – all of which are elsewhere included under the social pillar, as discussed in Chapter 2 (SAFA 2013).

The use of indicators as a way of framing and implementing Sustainable Development, and especially its social dimension, has attracted criticism. One complaint is that indicators are reductive: their selection is guided more by what can than what should be measured, so that framings are determined by the practical availability or collectability of information, rather than what should normatively be included (Bell and Morse 2008). But another criticism is that the selection of indicators is always normative, so that while indicators may appear to be neutral and objective they are in fact political and tendentious, and may be misleading in their apparent comparability (Beckley and Burkovsky 1999; Hinrichs 2010). Hilderink (2004) finds that indicator selection often lacks any theoretical basis, and the choice can be pragmatic, unsystematic or even random.

Another difficulty is the sheer complexity of the task (attested by the 267-page SAFA), which can raise profound theoretical and methodological difficulties concerning the selection of topics, the treatment of uncertainties, and the difficulty of aggregating the divergent social interests and value judgements which govern prioritisation among the dimensions of sustainability (Stirling 1989). This is especially apparent in relation to social indicators. It was noted in Chapter 2 that the social aspects of sustainability are seen as more subjective than others, and intrinsically harder to measure. Even when agreement has been reached on themes, finding measurable indicators that instantiate those themes has proved difficult. Stapleton and Garrod (2007) point out that social justice and wellbeing were named as national headline sustainability indicators for the UK before any robust definitions had been established, or any means of measuring them developed. In fact, prior to the use of the social justice indicator, Defra research had indicated that, for the foreseeable future, it would not be possible to operationalise the concept as an indicator of Sustainable Development. Indicators such as ‘community vibrancy’ have also proved hard to quantify.

Technical difficulties aside, some commentators take issue with the whole idea of attempting to quantify some social qualities and attributes. Because qualities like ‘justice’ or ‘dignity’ are not amenable to quantification, efforts to govern by measuring and counting inevitably exclude some of the things that ‘count’. Beck’s reference to the misplaced use of ‘science to fight science’ in areas more appropriate to social evaluation has already been quoted (Beck 1995: 7); others have seen the search for costings and measurements as a sign of ‘misplaced concreteness and crackpot rigor’ (Daly 1992: 4), or even ‘destructive of

civilization' (Schumacher 1993: 31). Bell and Morse's 2008 book on sustainability indictors is subtitled 'Measuring the immeasurable?'

Nevertheless, indicators remain a widely used tool in social sustainability governance.

3.5.3 'Market based instruments': standards and S-LCA

Recognising the importance of business to Sustainable Development, a family of governance tools has developed that works with the grain of markets, to facilitate 'business sustainability'. These tools have been collectively described as market-based instruments (MBIs) (Lockie 2010; Ponte 2012), non-state market-driven governance systems (Cashore 2002) or market governance mechanisms (Blackmore 2011; Garnett 2012). They are 'set[s] of formal or informal rules consciously designed to change behaviour – of individuals, businesses, organisations or governments – to influence how markets work and their outcomes' (Blackmore 2011: 1). They may emanate from public or private authorities, civil society, or combinations (Ponte 2012).

MBIs, which can seem 'elegant' ways of making complex issues, such as sustainability, manageable (Lockie 2010: 365), have been extensively used in food sustainability governance, including in pursuit of social objectives (a notable example is the elaborate governance system for fair trade based on the Fairtrade standards). Because MBIs are 'voluntary' in that they are not legal requirements, they are prominent illustrations of the shift from top-down, state-led 'government' to a more pluralistic, public-private mode of 'governance'. (Although commentators have pointed out that in some sectors MBIs have become *de facto* requirements for market-entry, Busch 2011b; Fuchs *et al* 2011b). Several commentators see MBIs as typical or 'totemic' (Dolan 2010: 33) features of neoliberal governance, with its preference for private over public regulation, its application of market logics to previously non-market domains, and its privileging of individual choice (Guthman 2007; Dolan 2010; Lockie 2014). Goodman *et al* cite arguments that MBIs may be 'doing the work of neoliberalism' by propagating its 'entrepreneurial ideologies and individualistic subjectivities' (Goodman *et al* 2012: 247). Busch describes this neoliberal shift as a transition from regulation *of* to regulation *for* markets (Busch 2011a).

Standards, which are now extremely widely used in food governance, are a dominant type of MBI (Busch 2011b). They are discussed below, along with a less prominent but relevant approach, Social Life Cycle Assessment.

3.5.3.1 Standards

Standards, broadly defined, are tools for specifying, qualifying, measuring and comparing products and processes, and perform an important market role in reducing transaction costs (Busch 2011b). At a higher level, they are important ways in which a variety of entities, public and private, may coordinate and govern their own and others' activity, including shaping the conduct of distant others, such as those involved in lengthy supply chains (Higgins and Larner 2010). Although developed to improve efficiencies in manufacturing, they have been adapted to assure various aspects of quality in many supply chains, and from their original application to technical or safety issues, they have expanded to encompass other social aspects of products and production processes (Hatanaka *et al* 2005; Henson and Reardon, 2005; Busch 2011b; Fuchs *et al* 2011b; Ponte *et al* 2011).

Standards provide assurance that products or processes consistently meet a specified set of criteria. Standards resemble indicators to the extent that they also break down entities (or processes, or qualities) into measurable components. And as with indicators, the selection of social criteria within standards has proved contentious (Busch 2011b).

To develop and enforce standards, extensive governance systems have evolved (Power 1997; Busch 2011b). Loconto and Busch have identified a dominant three-part governance structure which they refer to as a Tripartite Standards Regime (TSR), involving standard-setting organisations (which may be single organisations or large, multi-stakeholder groupings), certification organisations (which certify compliance against standards) and accreditation organisations (which verify the qualifications and conduct of the auditors) (Loconto and Busch 2010). Important roles have been identified for experts, consultants and epistemic communities in the standard-setting process (Miller and Rose 2008; Ponte *et al* 2011).

The ubiquity of standards attests to the fact that a wide range of organisations finds them useful. However, they have attracted a critical literature, which finds them to be highly politicised (Hatanaka *et al* 2005); to create a deceptive aura of consensus and authority

which masks power imbalances within standard-making processes (Djama *et al* 2011; Loconto and Fouilleux 2011); and to pre-empt state-led regulation of markets (Loconto and Busch 2010). Far from being 'an objective and impartial tool to facilitate markets and trade', TSRs are said to be highly normative, and to 'transform and discipline' the people and things involved (Hatanaka *et al* 2005: 355). Rolling the notion of standard-setting, measurement and verification into the concept of 'audit', Power says it reflects 'the goals and values of the people who instigate the process' and more broadly 'shapes public conceptions of the problem for which it is the solution (Power 1997:7).

3.5.3.2 Social Life Cycle Assessment

Another tool designed to facilitate business sustainability, but unusual in that it focuses on businesses' social impacts, is the Social Life Cycle Assessment (S-LCA). S-LCA adapts the procedures of Environmental Life Cycle Assessment (E-LCA) to include social attributes (Benoit and Mazijn 2009; Smith and Barling 2014). It enables businesses to identify the potential social impacts of a product throughout its life cycle, with a view to benchmarking and improving these impacts, though agreement on methodologies is still at an early stage (Benoit and Mazijn 2009; Smith and Barling 2014). As with several other tools and scholarly contributions reviewed here, there is as yet no strong consensus on which social impacts should be included – and this may always vary depending on the nature and scale of the product being assessed (Smith and Barling 2014). Benoit and Mazijn (2009) designated as 'impact categories' human rights, working conditions, health and safety, cultural heritage, governance and socio-economic repercussions. Developing a simplified S-LCA for small and medium-sized food businesses in the EU, Smith and Barling (2014) used criteria on compliance with ILO labour standards; documentation of terms and conditions; working hours; wages; health and safety; and the business's community impacts.

3.5.4. The Triple Bottom Line

The Triple Bottom Line (TBL) has emerged as an important tool in the governance of corporate sustainability.

The TBL was an application of the three pillars of Sustainable Development to business reporting. It was devised by Elkington (1997), with the pillars translated as economic prosperity, environmental quality and social justice. The innovation of the TBL was that it incorporated the social pillar (Brown *et al* 2009), and called on businesses to quantify and

account for their social impacts in reporting their activities. Elkington noted that the sustainability agenda was at the time understood by business as an attempt to harmonise the traditional financial bottom line with emerging thinking about an environmental bottom line. The proposition became 'even more complicated' as firms realised they had to take into account social justice, 'the element which business has tended to overlook' (Elkington 1997*:* 2). Exploring contemporary views on the topic, Elkington found the 'social bottom line' to be 'still controversial' (Elkington 1997: 5), with some arguing that Sustainable Development had nothing to do with social, ethical or cultural issues – a sustainable world could equally be more or less equitable than the current one, the real issue being resource efficiency. (This reflected concurrent debates in the wider field of sustainability, as reported in Chapter 2.)

The TBL brought to social sustainability the ideas of accountability that were coming to be accepted in relation to environmental impacts. Accountability makes the claim that a company owes a responsibility to account for its impacts to a wider range of people than just its owners or shareholders. To the extent that companies are granted a 'licence to operate' by wider society (Blowfield and Murray 2011; Wilks 2013), accountability is owed to social stakeholders (Henriques and Richardson 2004) – in sustainability terms, Eckersley's community of the affected (Eckersley 2004). However, the ways in which accountability is codified (e.g. by the TBL) are themselves normative, inscribing values and goals selected by the accountants (Power 1997).

The TBL is now enshrined in UNEP sustainability benchmarking exercises and is widely cited in discussions of business sustainability (Milne and Gray 2013). However, it is criticised for seeming to make a complex domain seem manageable without interfering too much with business as usual or displacing the primacy of the financial bottom line (Henriques and Richardson 2004; Zadek 2007; Milne and Gray 2013). Critics also contend that the elements of the TBL are incommensurable: even where it is possible to account for the three elements separately, they 'are not and cannot be mutually supportive' (Milne and Gray 2013: 8), so an appearance of reconciling them implies a false 'rigor and objectivity' (Brown *et al* 2009: 225). Another problem is that as social reporting has become more widespread, excellence in reporting has become conflated with excellence in sustainability, so that the best-reporting companies are hailed as the most sustainable ones (Milne and Gray 2013).

The TBL's main achievement was to put the social dimension of sustainability on the business radar: the idea that sustainability included social issues 'became real for most companies … only after the triple bottom line terminology became prominent in reporting discourses' (Brown *et al* 2009: 226).

3.5.5 Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)

The final governance method discussed here, Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is sometimes seen to be synonymous with Sustainable Development in a business context. There is no single definition, but CSR generally refers to the responsibility a business has for its impacts on the environment and society, and the actions (beyond legal obligations) it takes to enhance or mitigate these (Blowfield and Murray 2011). Alternate terms include Corporate Responsibility, Corporate Sustainability, ESG (Environmental, social and governance), business ethics and corporate citizenship (Van Marewijk 2003; Blowfield and Murray 2011; Benoit and Vickery-Niederman 2010; Underwood *et al* 2012). CSR is sometimes defined explicitly as 'the responsibility enterprises can assume in order to contribute to Sustainable Development' (Benoit and Mazijn 2009: 25), or Sustainable Development is specified as the overarching goal of CSR (Ward 2012), which is the approach enshrined in ISO Guidance Standard 26000 on organisational social responsibility. CSR has been endorsed by the UN, the EU and the UK government as being a key means by which business can contribute to the Sustainable Development agenda.

Commentators identify several levels of business responsibility: economic (the duty to make a profit for owners); legal (the duty to fulfil all legal obligations); ethical (the idea that companies should be concerned about how they make their profits); and discretionary (which includes optional acts such as philanthropy) (Blowfield and Murray 2011). The idea that companies should go beyond the first two was robustly refuted by the economist Milton Friedman (1970), who argued that 'the business of business [was] business', and that companies did not have the authority to act as social benefactors: their proper function was to maximise profit within the law and pay due taxes, which could then be distributed by democratically accountable authorities. This idea has been countered by the 'stakeholder theory of the firm' (Blowfield and Murray 2011), which contends that a company has responsibilities beyond its owners to stakeholders who may be affected by its activities. More instrumentally, it is argued that firms need to be socially responsible in order to

maintain their 'social licence' to operate (Blowfield and Murray 2011; Fleming and Jones 2013). The rise of the multinational firm, which has circumscribed the governing powers of nation states, has led some commentators to posit CSR as 'a new system of global governance that sits alongside the democratic model of national government' (Blowfield and Murray 2011: 118; Zadek 2007; Jones and Nisbet 2011).

Companies' motives for pursuing CSR may be moral (driven by values) or material (driven by the view that CSR can enhance business performance by increasing profitability, the 'win-win' in which both business and society benefit (Blowfield sand Murray 2011). But doubts have been raised about the capacity of CSR to contribute meaningfully to Sustainable Development. Once again, an important criticism is that the selection of issues to address is 'selective and patchy' (Jones and Nisbet 2011: 290). More fundamentally, critics argue that it is too deeply embedded in the structures and values of business to be able to transform it on the scale necessary, and that rather than transforming it, it reproduces and legitimises business-as usual (Blowfield and Murray 2011). Fleming and Jones also argue that there is a pervasive cynicism (an 'inbuilt cynical distance', Fleming and Jones 2013: 6) among businesses and others, in which there is tacit acknowledgment that if corporations *really* put their CSR aspirations into practice, then they wouldn't be able to exist. (Hawken, 2010, comments that for some firms, doing the right thing would put them out of business.) Critics also make the case (supporting Friedman, 1970) that CSR cannot legitimately tackle distributional issues because firms do not have any democratic basis or competence to choose how to use resources to improve wellbeing (Fuchs 2007; Fleming and Jones 2013; Wilks 2013).

3.6 Concluding comments

This chapter has reviewed the interpretation of the social pillar in the sustainability literatures of food and business, and presented a framework for looking at social sustainability as a governance issue in the conventional food supply.

Sustainability was found to have become prominent in food discourse from the 1980s, with food quickly identified as both a contributor to and mitigator of many sustainability challenges. There is no single definition of a sustainable food supply, and social dimensions are often entangled with other dimensions, making extrapolation difficult. Moreover,

descriptions rarely deal with sustainability aspirations for the conventional food supply. From the array of definitions, an aspirational depiction of a socially sustainable food supply emerged as one with the overarching goal of feeding everyone adequately, equitably and healthily, and which would address availability, affordability and accessibility, provide decent livelihoods, satisfy the cultural demands made on food, would safeguard the skills necessary for future generations, and would accomplish all of this using transparent and democratic procedures, and without compromising the resource base on which food production depends. Where food studies have used the term social sustainability, it has been used opportunistically to cover attributes and procedures such as labour rights and livelihoods, health, safety, accountability, democratic processes, human rights, the quality of trading relationships, animal welfare and community impacts. Sustainable diets were an example of a genuinely integrated sustainability initiative, but had proved difficult to operationalise. Businesses, including food businesses, were identified as both a cause and potential solution to many sustainability problems, and the focus of many sustainability programmes, though scepticism about business's potential to transform itself persists.

Sustainability has been described as the most challenging policy concept ever developed (Omann and Spangenberg 2002:2). Very broadly, the identification of a range of issues, from the 1970s, increasingly seen to contribute to a problem of 'unsustainability', and the emergence of Sustainable Development as a programme for governing the problem, fits a classic pattern of policy problematisation and response. However, most commentators now recognise that governance involves not just the policy-making activity of high-level authorities, but also the actions and interactions of actors of many sorts, in both public and private settings, often acting collaboratively to achieve (at least in appearance) a greater degree of consensus and consent around complex or 'wicked' policy problems. In this context, states have adapted their strategies to enrol or respond to a range of other governance actors, but retain a key role as legal enforcers, suppliers of resources and providers of metagovernance. Conceptions of governance as a form of discourse, and the concepts (borrowed from governmentality) of rationalities and technologies of government, contributed to the conceptual framework. A number of governance measures were identified which have been used to govern sustainability and social sustainability which, the

literature suggested, were likely to be relevant to, or encountered in, the specific context of the empirical research.

Chapters 2 and 3 have established that while sustainability has become an important idea and objective in the food supply and a site of much governance activity, social sustainability remains an elastic concept, variously defined and applied and poorly theorised. There have been no investigations focusing on how the term has been interpreted by the UK state in relation to food, or on how the concept is being interpreted and operationalised in the conventional food supply itself. This is the gap this project set out to fill. The next chapter explains the methods that were chosen to conduct the research, and describes the research process.

Chapter 4: Research design and methods

4.1 Introduction: research objective and research questions

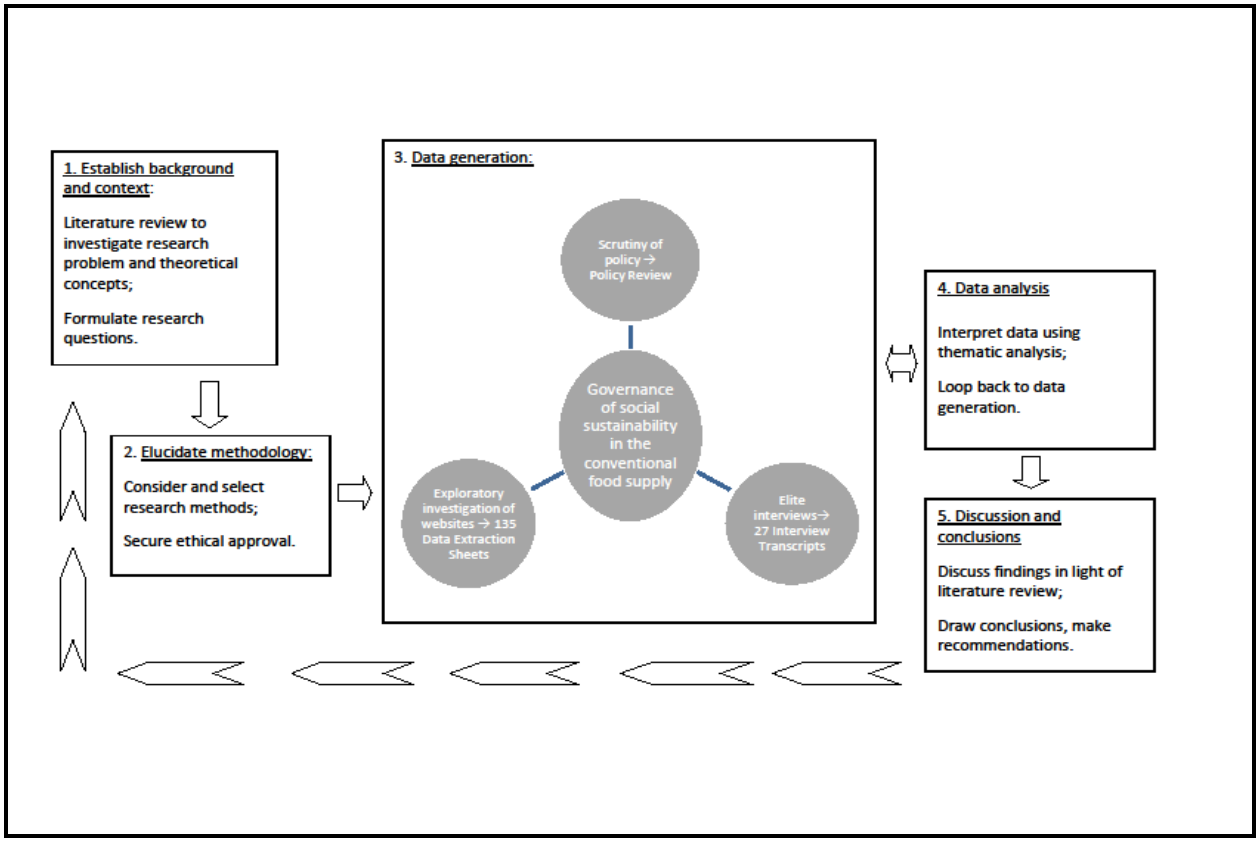
The formulation of the Research Questions, which guided the investigation, was shaped by the literature review. The starting proposition of the research, in lay terms, was, 'What is being done about this thing called social sustainability in the conventional food supply?' As has been shown, the reading presented social sustainability as both a variously defined concept, and also as a governance problem. Governance was depicted as both emanating from the state but also drawing in other actors – a contested process that involved constructing definitions of the problem, deciding what could or should be done about it, and then operationalising responses. In other words, the governance process both illustrated and helped constitute the definition of the problem. The objective of the research then became to investigate how social sustainability was being construed, defined and operationalised as a governance problem in the UK conventional food supply, by the state, and by other actors.

This research objective translated into the following Research Questions:

> **RQ1:** How is social sustainability defined and discussed in UK food governance, both at the level of public policy and by others involved in this area of governance? In what ways is it construed as a problem to be acted on?
>
> **RQ2:** Apart from the state, which entities are active in social sustainability governance, what sort of entities are they?
>
> **RQ3:** How (if at all) are these non-state actors operationalising social sustainability? What sort of governance approaches and techniques are they using, with what effects, and with what implications for public policy?

To find answers to these questions, the inquiry used the methods of qualitative social research. Fig. 4.1 provides a diagrammatic summary of the research process.

Fig. 4.1 Diagram of the research process



Source: The Author

4.2 Research approach

Social research employs 'controlled enquiry' to 'locate, describe, understand, explain, evaluate or change' aspects of social life' (Blaikie 2009: 36). In this case, the object was to probe meanings, interpretations and constructions, as well as to elicit information about practices and processes. It therefore used a qualitative approach. A hallmark of qualitative research is that it emphasises words (or texts) rather than quantification in the collection and analysis of data (Bryman 2001). It is used to build explanations of complex social activities, through the accumulation of qualitative data (Mason 1996; Bryman 2001; Blaikie 2009). It is open-ended and flexible, allowing the research trajectory to be determined by the unfolding data. Consistent with the understanding of governance described in Chapter 3, the approach was constructionist and interpretivist, seeing the process of governance, the production of meanings and the translation of meanings into actions as being dynamic, constructed, negotiated activities (Bryman 2001; Silverman 2006). Qualitative research typically begins with a set of questions (the Research Questions, above) and goes on to

collect relevant data, from which explanations or 'empirical generalisations' can be built (Bryman 2001: 11).

Mason (1996) stresses the need for 'active reflexivity', a process of constant re-evaluation, in qualitative research. The importance of this approach was affirmed during the study, which threw up unanticipated areas for investigation and called for new skills (such as the acquisition of some knowledge of company law) on the researcher's part. Beyond this, as Mason points out, the researcher inescapably brings subjectivity to the project. In this inquiry, the topic guide framed the interviews; semi-structured interviewing involved personal interaction with informants; and the websites yielded such diverse data, presented so inconsistently, that subjectivity was inevitably involved in deciding which data to capture and how to systematise it. Mason's term 'data generation', which acknowledges that the researcher plays an active rather than a merely receptive role, therefore seemed a more accurate term than 'data collection'.

4.3 Choosing the research methods

Social sustainability in the conventional food supply had not been much studied. The research was therefore exploratory and prospective. It set out to discover both how the state, as the hierarchical authority (Bell and Hindmoor 2009), was framing and acting on social sustainability in the food supply, and also which other entities (or governance actors) were active in governance, and how they were interpreting and operationalising the issue. Methods were needed that would illuminate the range of organisations and issues involved, as un-prescriptively as possible, within the time available, and also allow for deeper probing.

Various approaches were considered. It would have been possible to look at a single sector, such as seafood, or more broadly at an economic sector such as retail, or more narrowly at a single complex entity, such as the manufacturer Unilever. However, it was felt that to focus in this way in an initial, prospective study such as this might preclude or pre-empt relevant topics. It should be emphasised that at the outset of the study, social sustainability in the industrial food supply was seen as an emergent and dynamic phenomenon. The ambition was to form an overview of what was going on, both at state and non-state levels.

To cover this broad territory, it was judged best to use a mixture of qualitative methods, which provided the leeway to investigate both widely and deeply. Documents and websites

(different types of pre-existing texts) were critically examined to collect relevant data, and interviewing was used to generate original (textual) data, as follows:

1. To investigate the interpretations and implementations of social sustainability that had emanated from the state, a critical review of selected UK public policy documents was undertaken.

2. To find out which other governance actors were involved, and to investigate their interpretations and implementations of social sustainability, a broad investigation of company (or organisational) websites was undertaken. The ubiquity and accessibility of organisational websites, where the content is generated or 'owned' by the organisations themselves, allowed relevant data to be harvested on a wide range of entities.

3. Concurrently with the web research, a series of in-depth, semi-structured interviews was carried out. These allowed the inquiry to probe more deeply into organisational processes and practitioners' understandings, and provided a different perspective on the type of data also generated from websites. The objective was to find out how the interviewees understood social sustainability, how it fitted into their work, how they acted on it, what their motivations were, and what they saw as their organisations' drivers and objectives in acting on social sustainability.

This combination of methods led to three complementary datasets: policy data, website data and interview data.

4.4 Selection of data sources

The research focused on the conventional food supply, from primary production to the point of purchase by the consumer, within the time frame of 1994 (the date of the first relevant document examined) to 2015 (when the empirical research concluded).

Within this defined field, the investigation was exploratory, which meant that the 'universe' from which the data sources were to be selected was undefined at the outset. In these circumstances, the most appropriate method of selecting data sources is considered to be theoretical sampling (Blaikie 2009), supplemented by (opportunistic) snowball sampling. Both methods allow prospective study of a little-known terrain, with the research process itself guiding the scope of the investigation. In theoretical sampling, the ongoing data

collection process suggests to the researcher new data sources to be examined, and gives rise to possible explanations, which again lead to new lines of enquiry (Bryman 2001; Blaikie 2009). In snowball sampling, interviewees themselves suggest other possible interviewees, again allowing chains of connections to lead into unknown areas (Bryman 2001). Both methods attempt to seek out data sources that are relevant and theoretically useful, without foreclosing options or prejudging relevance, in an iterative process. Statistical representivity is less important than the exploration of the scope of information, and decisions about sample size can be made progressively (Bryman 2001; Blaikie 2009). The selection of data sources is purposive (Blaikie 2009) in that it always seeks sources that help to answer the Research Questions.

These methods proved extremely informative, disclosing a wide range of governance actors and activities, and allowing continual probing and testing of new ideas.

4.4.1 Selection of policy data sources

There is no UK policy specifically on *social* sustainability, so using the sampling methods just described, in which one policy document led to others, the research traced the evolution of UK policy for sustainability from the emergence of sustainability as a concern in environmental policy in the 1980s, followed by the appearance of the first strategy for Sustainable Development in 1994, through an arc during which policy proliferated in the early 2000s, to a decline after 2010. The focus was on interpretations of the social pillar, with the sampling chains leading, for example, to an unexpected cascade of policies from 2003-2012 on sustainable communities. Similarly, in relation to food, there is no policy for *social* sustainability, so policies on sustainability were reviewed from 1994 onwards for the attention they paid to food. Then food sustainability policies were reviewed from 2002, when the first policy that explicitly addressed sustainability appeared (Defra 2002). Again, the focus was on interpretations of the social pillar, and activities proposed to implement it.

The main documents reviewed were produced between 1994 and 2015. They emanated from public authorities such as UK government departments, agencies or non-departmental public bodies, and parliamentary committees. (The devolved administrations were all found to have policies for Sustainable Development, and for sustainable food and agriculture, but time did not permit these to be studied in detail.)

4.4.2 Selection of website data sources

The objective here was to use website research to discover which actors were involved in governance activities, and to build a picture of what sort of actors they were and what sort of activities they engaged in. From some starting conceptions of which actors might be relevant based on past research and arising from the literature review (Blaikie 2009), websites of, for example, food companies, civil society organisations (such as the Fairtrade Foundation) and standards organisations (such as the Marine Stewardship Council) were investigated. Because the focus was on the conventional, or large-scale, food supply, the food companies investigated met the UK definition of a medium-sized or large enterprise, having 250 or more employees (BIS 2013). They came from categories such as producers, manufacturers, retailers and caterers, which are the components of many simple maps of the food supply (e.g. Defra 2015a).

The websites proved to be highly cross-referential, with many links to other relevant sites, confirming the usefulness of the theoretical sampling technique. Always seeking out meaning and actions associated with social sustainability, the technique led in long chains from starting points in the webpages of, say, a manufacturer or civil society organisation to the websites of other entities, including input suppliers, logistics providers, trade associations, standard-setters, certifiers, consultants, ratings agencies, research organisations, and advocacy groups. Many of these were also companies, not all were large, some worked mainly on food, some only partially on food, but all were engaged in different ways and to different degrees in acting on social sustainability in the conventional food supply.

As the research progressed, explanatory theories began to emerge, and data sources were chosen to pursue these theories. For example, organisational structure came to seem increasingly relevant, which had not been foreseen at the outset, so the web research was expanded to record this information where it was available. Interviewees suggested that working for privately owned (rather than public) companies made socially sustainable behaviour easier in various ways, so the websites of some privately owned companies (e.g. Cargill and Waitrose) were included in the web research. The literature had suggested that complex company structures could militate against coherent policies on social sustainability (Fuchs *et al* 2009), so some organisations with very complex structures were investigated

(e.g. Moy Park, which linked to the websites of several related companies). The research led to the discovery of previously unknown actors (e.g. the investigation of Oxfam led to the Dutch Advocacy Organisation SOMO (Stichting Onderzoek Multinationale Ondernemingen), which had done the research for Oxfam's Behind the Brands campaign on food companies' sustainability, so SOMO was also investigated).

The sampling process led to the investigation of 135 discrete 'data sources', listed alphabetically in Table 4.1 (they are listed by category in Chapter 6, where the process of classifying the actors is described). While it was found that theoretical saturation had been reached by this point within categories (i.e., additional investigations were not yielding new information), it was also realised that other categories could have been investigated, if time had permitted (such as media companies or even the ICT companies on which food companies depend). Other websites were scanned but discounted, mainly because the entities seemed inactive (e.g. FARM, an organisation purporting to represent sustainable farming in the UK), or because the activities proved not to be relevant to the UK food supply (e.g. the FEEM index of sustainability[6]). In a very few cases (e.g. Manor Fresh, a supplier of vegetables to supermarkets), the websites were too rudimentary to supply any relevant information, highlighting a limitation of this research technique.

Table 4.1 Websites investigated, with web addresses and dates accessed (135)

Name of entity (with commonly used abbreviation, if applicable)	Websites accessed	Dates accessed
3663	http://www.3663corporate.co.uk/about-us/who-we-are/the-3663-family	4.11.13
ABF	http://www.abf.co.uk/	3.5.13
Accenture	https://www.accenture.com/gb-en	21.2.14
Access to Nutrition Foundation (ATNF)	http://www.accesstonutrition.org	10.12.13
Accountability	http://www.accountability.org/	12.12.13
ActionAid	http://www.actionaid.org.uk/	20.9.13
Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board (AHDB)	http://www.ahdb.org.uk	27.9.13
Asda	http://your.asda.com/about-asda	23.10.13
Bakers, Food and Allied Workers Union (BFAW)	http://www.bfawu.org/	18.9.13
Bakkavor	http://www.bakkavor.com	14.10.13
Benchmark Holdings	http://www.benchmarkplc.com/	21.11.13
Best Foot Forward	http://www.bestfootforward.com/	13.11.13

[6] http://www.feemsi.org/, 10.12.13

Name of entity (with commonly used abbreviation, if applicable)	Websites accessed	Dates accessed
Bonsucro	http://www.bonsucro.com/	9.5.13
Booker	http://www.bookergroup.com	4.11.13
BPEX	http://pork.ahdb.org.uk/search/?q=AboutBpex	7.10.13
British Frozen Food Federation (BFF)	http://bfff.co.uk/	28.9.13
British Hospitality Association (BHA)	http://www.bha.org.uk//	28.9.13
British Meat Processors Association	http://www.bmpa.uk.com/Content/home.aspx	30.9.13
British Retail Consortium (BRC)	http://www.brc.org.uk/brc_home.asp	8.10.13
British Soft Drinks Association (BSDA)	http://www.britishsoftdrinks.com/	10.10.13
Brook Lyndhurst	http://www.brooklyndhurst.co.uk/	13.11.13
British Standards Institution (BSI) and BSI Group	http://www.bsigroup.com/en-GB/	9.12.13
Bureau Veritas	http://www.bureauveritas.co.uk/wps/wcm/connect/bv_couk/local	9.12.13
Business for Social Responsibility (BSR)	http://www.bsr.org	27.11.13
Business in the Community (BITC)	http://www.bitc.org.uk	7.10.13
Cargill	http://www.cargill.co.uk/en/index.jsp	11.10.13
Coca-Cola	http://www.coca-cola.co.uk/	15.10.13
Compass	http://www.compass-group.co.uk/	4.11.13
Compassion in World Farming (CIWF)	http://www.ciwf.org.uk/about_us/default.aspx	27.11.13
Consensus Action on Salt and Health (CASH)	http://www.actiononsalt.org.uk/	9.1.14
Consumer Goods Forum (CGF)	http://www.theconsumergoodsforum.com/index.aspx	20.11.13
Corporate Citizenship	http://www.corporate-citizenship.com/	11.12.13
Corporate Register	http://www.corporateregister.com/	13.11.13
Corporate Watch	http://www.corporatewatch.org/?lid=52	24.4.13
Covalence Ethicalquote	http://www.ethicalquote.com/index.php/about-us/	9.12.13
Dairy Crest	http://www.dairycrest.co.uk/who-we-are/our-business.aspx	16.10.13
Dairyco	http://www.dairyco.org.uk/about-dairyco/what-is-dairyco/	16.10.13
Dairy UK	http://www.dairyuk.org/	9.10.13
Dovecote Park	http://www.dovecotepark.com/index.php?id=5	12.11.13
Eblex	http://www.eblex.org.uk/about	18.10.13
Ecumenical Council on Corporate Responsibility (ECCR)	http://www.eccr.org.uk/AboutUs	11.12.13
EIRIS	http://www.eiris.org	23.9.13
Environmental Practice at Work (EPAW)	http://www.epaw.co.uk/aboutus.html	28.11.13
Ergon Associates	http://www.ergononline.net/about-us	8.1.14
Ethical Consumer Research Association (ECRA)	http://www.ethicalconsumer.org/aboutus.aspx	10.12.13
Ethical Tea Partnership (ETP)	http://www.ethicalteapartnership.org/	7.10.13
Ethical Trading Initiative (ETI)	http://www.ethicaltrade.org/	9.10.13
Fairfood International	http://www.fairfood.org/about-us/sustainability-agenda/	27.11.13
Fairtrade Foundation	http://www.fairtrade.org.uk/default.aspx	3.7.13

Name of entity (with commonly used abbreviation, if applicable)	Websites accessed	Dates accessed
Farmers for Action	http://www.farmersforaction.org/21.html	18.9.13
First Milk	http://www.firstmilk.co.uk/default.html	23.4.13
Food and Drink Federation (FDF)	http://www.fdf.org.uk	29.9.13
Food Ethics Council (FEC)	http://www.foodethicscouncil.org/whoweare	2.12.13
Foreign Trade Association (FTA)	http://www.fta-intl.org/	20.11.13
Forum for the Future	http://www.forumforthefuture.org/	2.12.13
Fresh Produce Consortium (FPC)	http://www.freshproduce.org.uk/about-us/	20.10.13
Friends of the Earth (FOE)	http://www.foe.co.uk/index.html	2.12.13
Fruitjuice CSR Platform	http://juicecsr.eu/csr-platform	5.2.15
FTSE Group	https://www.ftse.com/Indices/FTSE4Good_Index_Series/index.jsp	10.12.13
General Mills	http://www.generalmills.com/en/Company.aspx	16.10.13
Global Initiative on Sustainability Ratings (GISR)	http://ratesustainability.org/about	23.11.13
Global Reporting Initiative (GRI)	www.globalreporting.org	23.09.13
Global Seafood Sustainability Initiative (GSSI)	http://www.ourgssi.org/	5.2.15
GlobalGAP	http://www.globalgap.org/uk_en/who-we-are/	7.10.13
Greggs	http://www.greggs.co.uk/about-us	16.10.13
Home Grown cereals Authority (HGCA)	http://www.hgca.com/content.template/0/0/Home/Home/Home.mspx	24.10.13
Horticulture Development Company	http://www.hdc.org.uk/about-us	25.10.13
IDH: The Sustainable Trade Initiative	http://www.idhsustainabletrade.com/	21.11.13
IGD	http://www.igd.com/Who-we-are/	8.10.13
Iglo	http://www.iglo.com/en-gb/forever-food/homepage/ http://www.permira.com/	15.10.13
International Institute for the Environment and Development (IIED)	http://www.iied.org/about-us	26.11.13
ISEAL Alliance	http://www.isealalliance.org/	11.12.13
ISO Working Group on Social Responsibility	http://www.iso.org/iso/home/standards/iso26000.htm	13.12.13
Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF)	http://www.jrf.org.uk/	5.12.13
Kuehne & Nagel	http://www.kn-portal.com/locations/europe/united_kingdom/	12.11.13
Lidl	http://www.lidl.co.uk/cps/rde/www_lidl_uk	24.10.13
Living Wage Foundation	http://www.livingwage.org.uk/home	8.01.14
Marine Stewardship Council (MSC)	http://www.msc.org/	5.12.13
Marks &Spencer (M&S)	http://corporate.marksandspencer.com/aboutus	27.10.13
McDonalds	http://www.mcdonalds.co.uk/ukhome.html	6.11.13
Monsanto	http://www.monsanto.com/global/uk/Pages/default.aspx	14.10.13
Moy Park	http://www.moypark.com/about-us/ http://www.keystonefoods.com/ http://www.mclarnonfeeds.com/profile.htm http://www.marfrig.com.br/	22.10.13
National Association of British and Irish Millers (NABIM)	http://www.nabim.org.uk/	24.10.13

Name of entity (with commonly used abbreviation, if applicable)	Websites accessed	Dates accessed
National Farmers Union (NFU)	http://www.nfuonline.com/home/	19.9.13
New Economics Foundation (nef)	http://www.neweconomics.org/	26.11.13
Oxfam	http://www.oxfam.org.uk/	5.12.13
Partner Africa	http://www.partnerafrica.org/about	11.12.13
Potato Council	http://www.potato.org.uk	23.10.13
Premier Foods	http://www.premierfoods.co.uk/	17.10.13
Produce World	http://produceworld.co.uk/	21.10.13
PwC	http://www.pwc.co.uk/	19.1.14
Rainforest Alliance	http://www.rainforest-alliance.org/	5.12.13
Red Tractor Assurance	http://assurance.redtractor.org.uk/	7.10.13
Robertsbridge Group	http://www.robertsbridgegroup.com/	25.11.13
Roundtable on Responsible Soy (RTRS)	http://www.responsiblesoy.org/index.php?lang=en	14.12.13
Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO)	http://www.rspo.org/	17.12.13
Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB)	http://www.rspb.org.uk	8.12.13
Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA)	http://www.rspca.org.uk/home	5.12.13
Sainsbury	http://www.j-sainsbury.co.uk/	25.04.13
Seafish	http://www.seafish.org	11.10.13
Supplier Ethical Data Exchange (Sedex)	http://www.sedexglobal.com/	8.10.13
SGS	http://www.sgs.co.uk/en-GB.aspx	11.12.13
Social Accountability International (SAI)	http://www.sa-intl.org/	5.12.13
Soil Association	http://www.soilassociation.org/	6.12.13
SOMO	http://www.somo.nl/	7.12.13
Starbucks	http://www.starbucks.co.uk/	11.11.13
Stobart Group	http://www.stobartgroup.co.uk/	12.11.13
Supply Chain Initiative	http://www.supplychaininitiative.eu/	4.11.13
Sustain: The alliance for better food and farming	http://www.sustainweb.org/about/	8.12.13
SustainAbility	http://www.sustainability.com/	25.11.13
Sustainable Agriculture Initiative Platform	http://www.saiplatform.org/	8.12.13
Sustainable Agriculture Network	http://san.ag/web/	6.2.15
Sustainable Food Lab	http://www.sustainablefoodlab.org/about-us	17.12.13
Sustainable Restaurant Association (SRA)	http://www.thesra.org/	9.10.13
Tea 2030	https://www.forumforthefuture.org/project/tea-2030/overview	17.12.13
Tenant Farmers Association	http://www.tfa.org.uk/	19.9.13
Tesco	http://www.tescoplc.com/	23.10.13
Tetley	http://www.tetley.co.uk/	17.10.13
The Co-operative (Co-op)	http://www.co-operative.coop/corporate/	12.04.13
The Natural Step	http://www.naturalstep.org/	22.11.13
The Sustainability Consortium (TSC)	http://www.sustainabilityconsortium.org/who-we-are/	17.12.13

Name of entity (with commonly used abbreviation, if applicable)	Websites accessed	Dates accessed
Trades Union Congress (TUC)	http://www.tuc.org.uk	19.9.13
Tragus Group	http://www.tragusgroup.com/	14.3.14
TwentyFifty	http://www.twentyfifty.co.uk/	25.11.13
Two Tomorrows	http://www.twotomorrows.com/	25.11.13
Unilever	http://www.unilever.co.uk/	18.10.13
Union of Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers Union (USDAW)	http://www.usdaw.org.uk/aboutus.aspx	18.9.13
Unite the Union	http://www.unitetheunion.org/	18.9.13
Waitrose	http://www.waitrose.com/	25.10.13
Warburtons	http://www.warburtons.co.uk/	17.10.13
Whitbread	http://www.whitbread.co.uk/homepage.html http://www.costa-business.co.uk/	5.11.13
World Business Council for Sustainable development	http://www.wbcsd.org/home.aspx	27.11.13
Worldwide Fund for Nature (WWF)	http://www.wwf.org.uk/	6.12.13
Youngs	http://www.youngsseafood.co.uk	21.10.13
Yum! Brands	http://www.yum.com/	6.11.13

Source: The Author

4.4.3 Selection of interviewees

Within the emerging governance terrain, interviewees were sought on an iterative basis, whose work involved acting on sustainability within relevant organisations, who had a level of seniority that enabled them to have a good understanding of their organisation's activities and feel authorised to speak about these topics.

Potential interviewees' names were gleaned from websites or conference attendance lists, or past contacts were used. In some cases, organisations were contacted by phone and email details were requested for the person responsible for sustainability within the organisation. If the nominated person was judged a suitable interviewee (i.e. likely to be sufficiently knowledgeable in a relevant area), they were emailed on that basis; alternatively, they were asked (by email) to suggest appropriate interviewees, who were then emailed. On some occasions, the targeted interviewee referred the researcher to another possible interviewee considered either more appropriate or more available. In these instances, the substitute was assessed by the researcher to ensure she or he met the research requirements. The study planned to include 25 qualitative interviews. Past research had suggested that this would yield saturation, and would avoid generating more data than could be used in the study (Sharpe *et al* 2008). To achieve the final number of interviewees, 70 targets were approached.

In this type of study, where the terrain being explored is expanded by the inquiry, judgement must be used on a continual basis to ensure meaningful coverage and penetration of the area under investigation (Bryman 2001; Blaikie 2009). The range of interviewees was repeatedly checked against the categories emerging from the web research. Two extra interviewees were sought, to improve coverage, with clearance from the research supervisors, taking the total number to 27. This ensured that interviewees were drawn from all of the final analytical categories described in Chapter 6. However, the interviewees were not necessarily drawn from specific entities whose websites were also investigated, partly because this was not always possible to arrange, and partly to extend coverage. Where interviewees did come from organisations whose websites were also investigated, this has been concealed to protect anonymity.

One set of governance actors was somewhat reluctantly excluded from the interview process. These were the officials involved in formulating the public policies examined. As discussed in Chapter 3, public policy making in contemporary governance involves and is influenced by other governance actors (indeed, this is the objective of many non-state governance actors). In the current study, however, it was judged that tracking down officials who had been involved in formulating what was, by the time of the research, quite old policy, and who were able to speak about what was in many cases only a subsidiary element of it (social sustainability), would be disproportionately time consuming (though undoubtedly interesting). Consequently, the public policy discussed here appears mainly in its 'sacred' version, as 'what governments decide to do' (Colebatch 2002: 62), providing a framework for the activities of the more 'profane' non-state governance actors. This expedient decision does not imply that the policies described may not have been the result of wrangling among state and other actors.

Table 4.2 lists the 27 interviewees with anonymised job titles.

Table 4.2 Interviewees by number with anonymised job description

No.	Anonymised job description
1	Policy director, trade association (standard-setting / audit)
2	Technical director, retail
3	Sustainability policy officer, trade association (manufacturing)
4	Head of sustainability, retail
5	Sustainability policy officer, trade association (retail)
6	Head of sustainability, manufacturing
7	Food sustainability consultant
8	Sustainability director, food service
9	CSR officer, food service
10	Policy officer, advocacy organisation (business sustainability)
11	Producer (fruit)
12	Financial analyst, company rater
13	Producer and trade association (livestock)
14	Sustainable and ethical sourcing manager, retail
15	Ethical sourcing manager, manufacturing
16	Senior executive, manufacturing
17	Sustainability manager, food service
18	Senior executive, retail
19	Compliance officer, audit organisation
20	Ethical trading manager, retail
21	Sustainability consultant
22	Policy officer, audit organisation
23	Producer / processer (vegetables)
24	Sustainability consultant
25	Policy officer, trade union
26	Sustainability officer, audit organisation
27	Policy director, advocacy organisation (food sustainability)

Source: The Author

4.5 Data capture and handling

As data sources were identified, data was 'captured' (i.e., noted in an organised and retrievable form) in various ways. The compilation of policy data took place between September 2012 and January 2013, and was updated in 2015. The generation of website and interview data took place mainly between October 2012 (pilot interview) and February 2015.

4.5.1 Public policy data capture and handling

Documents were located using online search engines, retrieved and assessed for relevance. The most relevant were stored electronically and / or in hard copy. The policy documents were scrutinised, and relevant data captured in the form of detailed descriptive notes.

These were stored electronically on a password-protected computer and backed up on a password-protected memory stick.

4.5.2 Website data capture and handling

Bryman (2001: 525) notes that the use of websites as a source of data is still relatively new, and that this fact, combined with the 'flux' and diversity of websites themselves, means that there are as yet no fixed rules for capturing website data. He also warns that website data should be treated with some caution, given that websites are ephemeral and dynamic, and may constitute a less permanent and verifiable source of information than printed documents. In the event, the websites investigated were found to present varying amounts of information in an inconsistent manner. To compensate for these factors, efforts were made to capture the data as consistently as possible.

A Data Extraction Sheet template was prepared (Mason 1996), designed to elicit information that would answer the Research Questions (Fig. 4.2). A Data Extraction Sheet was filled in and stored electronically for every website investigated (samples at Annexes A and B). Each website was accessed via a web address that often acted as a gateway to other, internally linked webpages. The gateway address is cited on the data sheets. The data for each entity was collected on the dates shown. The sheets therefore capture a snapshot of the entity's website presentation of its activities on that date. These sheets, rather than the live and ephemeral websites, became the documentary artefacts on which the analysis was based. Table 4.1 lists the entities investigated, with the gateway web addresses used and the dates on which the data was captured.

The topics on the Data Extraction Sheet reflect both the Research Questions and the way information was presented in the websites. The topics are deliberately open-ended, using the phrases 'how discussed' and 'in what ways' because the organisations investigated were diverse, and the information found in the websites was extremely varied, both in content and presentation. Too narrow or prescriptive an investigative tool would not have been applicable to all the organisations, and might have excluded valuable information that was presented idiosyncratically (e.g. in unusual areas of the website) by only a few entities.

Fig. 4.2 Data Extraction Sheet

Name of organisation:
Data source:
Date accessed:
Type of organisation:
Why am I investigating this organisation?
How prominent is sustainability in this source and how discussed?
What social themes, concerns or aspirations are mentioned, in what ways?
Examples of activities being undertaken to implement or otherwise act on the social concerns?

Source: The Author

An initial assessment of how prominent sustainability was as a concern for the entity was based on whether it appeared as a term, tab or link on the Home Page or other introductory page, such as an 'About Us' page. Deeper digging into the often labyrinthine websites produced data on how the entities saw the scope of the terrain (i.e. what areas were seen as relevant and actionable sites for activity) by looking for social themes, concerns and aspirations mentioned; and on how these concerns were operationalised by looking for examples of activities. Some of the websites contained a plethora of information, from which data had to be selected using judgement, guided by careful reading with reference to the Research Questions and emerging themes. However, the Data Extraction Sheets proved a successful tool for investigating organisations' websites: by the end they could be applied quickly to any potential data source, helping to sift and order large amounts of diffuse information.

It is important to note that the websites were not viewed as transparent descriptions of organisations' activities, but rather as presentations that reflected decisions on the part of unknown authors about what information to include and exclude.

All the information in the Data Extraction Sheets came from the websites cited, but it was sometimes cross-checked against two other sources. The question, 'what type of

organisation is this?' could be difficult to answer. Websites did not always indicate whether the organisation was, for example, a public company, a private company limited by guarantee, a charity, etc. To clarify this, cross reference was made to two free, government-maintained websites with which companies and charities are obliged by law to register details, the Register of Companies held by Companies House[7] and the Charity Register held by the Charity Commission[8].

The website data consisted of 135 named Data Extraction Sheets, stored electronically on a password-protected computer and backed up on a password-protected memory stick.

4.5.3 Interview data capture and handling

Interview candidates were contacted by means of an introductory email, briefly outlining the topic and the request (these varied and were personalised depending on the interviewee's job, but a version is attached at Annex C). Either with the introductory email or as a follow-up, an Information Sheet was supplied as an email attachment (Annex D), which provided information on the context of the study; the purpose and scope of the interview; the procedures to be followed; confidentiality and anonymity; and the university's complaints and withdrawal procedures. If the interviewee was still willing to go ahead, a date and time were set for the interview, all but four of which were conducted in person. The remainder were done by phone using an intercept recording device (with the interviewees' permission).

The interviews were semi-structured, to allow a controlled but open-ended discussion that could develop in a relatively natural way. The aim was to cover the ground deemed important by the researcher, but also to allow interviewees to raise topics or talk at greater or less length about different topics as they felt appropriate. The researcher used a Topic Guide (Fig. 4.3).

Like the Data Extraction Sheets, the Topic Guide was intended to elicit information relevant to the research questions. It began by asking about the sort of organisations the interviewees worked for, what the nature of their works was, what their routes into their current jobs had been, and how the interviewees had come to be responsible for acting on

[7] https://www.gov.uk/government/organizations/companies-house
[8] https://www.gov.uk/government/organizations/charity-commission

social sustainability. The objective here was to find out what sort of actors were acting on social sustainability and food, and how this work fitted into wider work – whether on the food supply or on other things. The second topic prompted the interviewees to provide their own definitions of social sustainability, and asked them what had shaped these interpretations, seeking to find out what the references and framings were for their social sustainability work. The third topic asked them about activities: it sought to find out what actions they identified as being implementations of social sustainability. The final topic asked for their reflections on the motivations, difficulties and satisfactions of their work.

The interviews lasted in most cases for around an hour, and were digitally recorded. Two Consent Forms (Annex E) were co-signed, one to be retained by the interviewee and the other by the interviewer. (For the telephone interviews, Consent Forms were emailed to the interviewees, who returned them in a stamped, addressed envelope or with electronic signature.) To protect the anonymity guaranteed in the Ethical Approval (discussed below), the digitised interviews were uploaded onto a password-protected computer, labelled only by number. They were transcribed shortly after the interviews took place, and the transcriptions, too, were identified only by number. The transcriptions were also held on a password-protected computer. (The anonymised interviews and transcripts were backed up on a password-protected memory stick.) A document stored separately linked interviewees to numbers. Interviewees were not given the opportunity to view the transcripts, and no interviewees withdrew from the process.

The data set from the interviews consisted of 27 numbered interview transcripts (Table 4.2).

Fig. 4.3 Topic Guide

Preliminaries (before tape switched on):

- Confirm interviewee has read background information – any questions?
- Read through Consent Form: opportunity to withdraw. Sign two copies, retain one.

TAPE ON

Topic 1: Work background & context

- Briefly, what does your job involve?
- How does sustainability fit into the work of this organisation?
- How long have you done this job?
- How did you come to be in this job?
- Who do you report to?

Topic 2 The social dimension: interpretations and influences

- How would you define the social aspect of sustainability?
- How did you arrive at that meaning?
- Who do you discuss this with?
- How do your colleagues view this topic?

Topic 3: Putting it into practice

- How do you / this organisation put social sustainability into practice?
- What sort of activities?
- Are there difficulties in putting it into practice?

Topic 4: Reflections / motivations

- What are the difficulties and satisfactions of doing this?
- What is driving this agenda?
- What are the challenges ahead?
- Anything to add?

Source: The Author

4.6 Data analysis

The three methods of data generation resulted in three data sets: the description of policy for social sustainability in the food supply, plus 135 Data Extraction Sheets and 27 interview transcripts. The task then was to analyse the material in ways that respected the nature of the data sources, related the information to the Research Questions, and led inductively to 'descriptive explanations' (Mason 1996: 137) of the phenomena being studied.

Theoretical sampling is closely linked methodologically to grounded theory (or theorising), where explanatory theories arise from the data and are refined in an iterative process as data collection progresses (Bryman 2001; Corbin and Holt 2011). This approach seemed attractive. According to Hammersley and Atkinson (2007), it rejects both a model in which ideas are taken from the literature and then tested against data, and also the contrasting conception of research as 'dredging through an inert mound of data to produce descriptions of what is there' (Hammersley and Atkinson: 159). In practice, the analysis did proceed in tandem with data generation, in a recursive way, and theories arose that could be explored by more data collection.

However, grounded theorising is heavily dependent on the application of consistent codes or categories across the whole body of data (Blaikie 2009). This was problematic, given three very different bodies of data. It also felt reductive, and it was feared that if strict coding was applied to all the data, the result would lack coherence.

As an alternative, thematic analysis was used to analyse all three types of data. Thematic analysis also uses coding – or indexing, in Mason's phrase (1996) – but more flexibly. Data are scanned for striking ideas, repetitions and patterns, and these form the basis of the themes that guide the analysis (and inform ongoing data generation). The approach was chosen partly because of the researcher's background in literature as well as policy, and was based on careful, critical reading, re-reading and cross-checking (a version of 'close reading', Empson 1961 [1930]) of the three types of texts collected: policy documents, Data Sheets and transcripts. No analytical software was used, for two reasons. The first one concerned the time and logistical difficulties presented by mastering and accessing the relevant software. The second was that apart from the interview transcripts, the documentary data used the researcher's own language, with quotations from the websites and policy

documents. It was feared that analytical software might not yield consistent and dependable results when applied across the three data sets, and only applying it to the interviews would be distortive. The researcher had in the past conducted thematic analysis (of both policies and interview transcripts) by the methods used, and was confident they would be dependable.

The analysis also made use of elements of Discourse Analysis, which pays attention to (among other things) texts. All of the data finally took the form of texts, and the websites and policy documents pre-existed as texts that were not produced by the researcher. Beyond this, the thesis takes the approach that governance itself is a form of discourse, as discussed in Chapter 3. Texts such as policy documents and websites are discursive tools of governance, both reflecting and shaping social practice (Fairclough 1992). Close attention to the use of language (terms and words chosen or avoided, recurrent phrases, narratives and arguments) formed part of the analysis process.

Guided by the Research Questions, in all cases, the data was scanned for:

- Definitions of social sustainability, within and separately from sustainability;
- Interpretations (other than explicit definitions) of social sustainability;
- Attributes, themes and concerns associated with social sustainability;
- Attributes, themes and concerns elsewhere associated with social sustainability but not so labelled in this data source;
- Other labels and headings under which these concerns were addressed;
- Actions to implement social sustainability (policies, practices, interactions, tools, initiatives, etc.)

The policy documents were thematically analysed, but the data was not broken down into separate thematic documents. Rather, the themes were highlighted in a single descriptive document, which maintained the chronological order in which the policy was published.

The websites were thematically analysed initially at the point of investigation, with the researcher collecting information relevant to the themes identified in the Data Extraction Sheets. The Sheets themselves were then thematically analysed, and the thematic data collated, and eventually integrated with the thematically analysed interview data. To assist

the process, the 135 Data Extraction Sheets were summarised into Data Tables. This process involved considerable compression of the information, with the selection again guided by careful reading of the Data Extraction Sheets in relation to the Research Questions and emerging themes. Table 4.4 provides some examples of the data summaries used in the Data Tables. The website entities were organised into categories as part of the analysis process, in order both to better understand their activities and interactions, and to help monitor the scope of the terrain and the coverage of interviewees in relation to websites. This was an iterative process, with categories merging and splitting as new types of actor were identified. The categories are described in detail in Chapter 6, which discusses the nature of the governance actors. The Data Tables were also organised into these categories, and are presented in full in Annex F.

Analysis of the interviews began as they were transcribed. Recurrent ideas, linguistic patterns, patterns in reported activities and omissions were noted in a separate file, with a tag indexing their location in the data. Themes were partly thrown up by the data and partly determined by the Research Questions. Repeated reading and cross-checking of the transcripts led to more thematic tagging, with relevant passages electronically cut and pasted into thematically organised documents. These were progressively consolidated, and the thematic documents eventually integrated with the themed analysis of the website data.

Table 4 4 Examples of website data summaries included in Data Tables

Actor	Type of organisation	Prominence of sustainability	Scope of activity: Examples of social themes / concerns / aspirations	Operationalisation: Examples of how social themes were acted on
Iglo Group	Manufacturer of branded frozen food products – in UK, mainly Bird's Eye. Private company (UK), owned by private equity group Permira	Sustainability tab to Forever Food Together programme	Nutritional value of products; Educating consumers to make sustainable choices; Ethical trading (not engaging in practices detrimental to workers' rights)	Provided labelling to enable healthy choices; Counted the supply of frozen vegetables as a social benefit on the grounds of their healthiness; Required suppliers to register with Sedex, using 3rd party auditing; Required suppliers to comply with Iglo Group Code of Practice
Lidl	Discount retailer, 600+ stores in UK. Part of one of largest European food retail chains. Family-owned private company (Germany)	Not prominent	Respectful treatment of customers, employees and business partners; The 'Fairglobe' scheme addresses workers' livelihoods in supplier countries	Had Codes of Conduct to operationalise commitments to staff, customers and business partners; Had its own fair trade designation, Fairglobe, 'to allow customers to help producers in Africa, Asia and Latin America ... and help raise awareness of sustainable production'; Supported a children's cancer charity
Compass	Contract foodservice (and facilities management) company. Operated several businesses and brands catering for different sectors, such as Eurest (business and industry), Medirest (hospitals) and Chartwells (education). Public company (UK)	Not prominent	'Our people'; Sustainable sourcing; Health and wellbeing; Nutritional value of products; Community; Charity; Animal welfare; Worker safety and development; The Purchasing Policy said the company had a 'moral responsibility to consider the social impacts of our activities'	Provided apprenticeships; Provided training via Chefs Academy and Services Management Academy; Disseminated nutrition and healthy eating information via packaging and an online platform; Promoted healthy options and reformulated foods to improve nutritional profile; Used UK and Irish products where possible; Avoided animal products from sources that did not observe the 'Five Freedoms'; 100% of sugar and bananas were Fairtrade; Had its own Development charity, Eatfair, which supported projects in Uganda
Unite the Union	Union for workers in food retail, food service, manufacturing, horticulture and farming	Not prominent	Equity; Pay; Discrimination at work; Worker and workplace rights	Organised protest against food logistics company Kuehne & Nagel over proposed restructuring and relocation of workforce; Campaigned against zero-hours contracts
Benchmark Holdings	Group of food supply chain sustainability consultancies operating under different	Prominent: ambition 'to build a profitable business based on	Ethics (not specified); Animal welfare; Farmers' livelihoods	Developed a food supply sustainability framework based on '3Es' -- environment, economics and ethics; Ran the Food Animal Initiative, promoting sustainable food

	company names). Public company (UK)	the growing need to create a sustainable and ethical future for global food production'		animal production, with commercial research farms in UK, Brazil and China; Conducted livestock farm modelling, e.g. for McDonald's Europe and Chinese government
GlobalGAP	Standard-setting organisation for global agricultural production. Non-profit membership organisation for retailers and producers. Managed by FoodPLUS GmbH, a German non-profit company owned by the EHI Retail Institute, a German research organisation for the retail industry	Prominent: objectives included 'safe, sustainable agricultural production worldwide'	Core standard covered: Worker health and safety; Worker welfare; Communication with workers; Site facilities; Worker accommodation; GRASP 'control points' covered: Workers' rights based on ILO criteria; Procedural issues such as provision of payroll records; Training	Ran a voluntary (but widely required) standard for agricultural production, with some social criteria; Since 2011, ran GRASP (Risk Assessment on Social Practice) as an optional add-on to the main standard
Business in the Community (BITC)	UK 'business-led charity' focusing on businesses' impacts on society. Private company, part of the Prince of Wales's Charities, a group of non-profits of which the Prince is president	Prominent: aimed to secure 'a fairer society and a more sustainable future'; also championed 'marketplace sustainability'	Communities affected by businesses; Employee welfare; Working conditions; Fair pay; Education; Youth employment; Rural livelihoods; Help for socially disadvantaged groups.	Promoted 'marketplace sustainability' (where businesses prosper by producing goods or providing services that contribute to high-quality, sustainable lifestyles; Disseminated the above idea through networking, sharing best practice, toolkits (e.g. 'Sustainable Business Toolkit'); Ran the CR Index, a framework enabling companies to benchmark their responsibility performance; Ran awards for CSR and a Community Investment standard; Ran a grant-giving body to support sustainable rural livelihoods
Bonsucro (2008)	Membership organisation for cane sugar supply-chain stakeholders. Non-profit private company (UK)	Not prominent by name, but aimed to improve 'economic, environmental and social' impacts of cane sugar production	Labour rights; Pay and working conditions; Human rights; Staff training; Participatory processes; Negotiated agreement among stakeholders	Developed and ran a standard for production and primary processing of cane sugar; Helped suppliers / processors to meet criteria

4.7 Some limitations of the chosen research methods

A caveat has already been mentioned about the use of websites, which are ephemeral and dynamic, and where the information is often unsourced or unverifiable (although this may also be true of other textual sources). It is also the case that basing research on websites necessarily limits it to entities that have websites; however, in the chosen area this did not seem to be a serious problem, as only one of the entities targeted for information proved to have too basic a website to sustain examination.

A strength of theoretical and snowball sampling is that because they are open-ended and prospective, they help avoid the pitfall of definer bias, identified in the literature as a hazard in studies of social sustainability, where the researcher in effect sets out to look for a pre-defined phenomenon and then either does or does not find it (McKenzie 2004). However, a risk of the methods is that they may lead off in tangents, resulting in misleading observation. For example, because the chains of inquiry lead from one entity to another, there may be a danger that entities not in any way linked to those being investigated might be missed. Hence, although the research found many organisations dedicated to facilitating business sustainability, it is possible that it missed organisations entirely hostile to this activity. To guard against this, the data sources were continually checked for relevance, categorised and re-categorised (to form an evolving map of the terrain under investigation), and efforts were made to be open-minded in seeking and checking data sources.

Another inherent feature of the methods is that the research can seem endless. Although theoretical saturation was reached within categories, new categories and sub-categories could have been further investigated if more time had been available.

It is also the case that the theoretical sampling method led the research away from areas well understood by the researcher, into terrain that called for new expertise. This was useful – one of the lessons of the study was that some knowledge of the business 'mentality' is essential to understanding business practice on sustainability; but it was also challenging, requiring the researcher to acquire basic knowledge of company law.

The selection of interviewees was necessarily opportunistic. Although the researcher assessed the suitability of each potential interviewee, in some cases first preference interviewees were unavailable and had to be substituted. Overall, though, it was felt that good coverage of the terrain had been achieved.

However, beyond this, the selection of interviewees may also colour the nature of the findings. Interviewees with some seniority were chosen because they were expected to provide (and did provide) detailed and confident assessments of their organisations' activities. But the point of view of more junior staff members might have been different, and is not expressed. It is also possible that the selection of interviewees from within the branches of organisations that worked on sustainability may have given a 'pro-sustainability' bias to the discussions. A different view might be gained from interviewing employees in the same organisations responsible not for sustainability but for finance (several interviewees pointed out that this is where much decision-making power lies). As noted at the end of the thesis, it would be interesting to repeat the interview component of the study, talking to financial officers.

With these limitations, the methods were found to provide an abundance of relevant data that yielded answers to the Research Questions.

4.8 Ethics

Ethical approval for the research was granted by City University's Senate Research Ethics Committee (Annex G).

To avoid risk, the interviews were conducted in a variety of public or semi-public settings, such as university offices, the interviewees' places or work, or cafés. All interviewees were advised of procedures for withdrawing from the process, and gave written consent to be interviewed, recorded, and for the data to be anonymised, stored and used as part of this thesis.

All documentary data was collected from public, online sources, so no copyright issues arose.

The main ethical issue that was anticipated concerned confidentiality. In some cases, the interviewees were senior members of organisations that were commercial rivals, so the

attribution of commercially sensitive information (e.g. about sourcing practices) was a cause for concern. Other interviewees came from organisations that could be termed 'governance rivals' – they had hostile or competing agendas (such as meat processors and animal welfare campaign groups, or sugary drinks manufacturers and healthy eating campaigners). To allay interviewees' fears that they might be identifiable, anonymity was guaranteed and was strictly observed, as described in section 4.5.3 above.

In keeping with the requirements of the Ethical Approval, the digitised interviews and transcripts will be stored securely for seven years, then destroyed.

4.9 Presentation of the findings

This chapter has described the methods used to investigate the research problem set out in Section 4.1 above. The next six chapters present the findings of the research. They are organised broadly around the themes of the research questions, beginning with Chapter 5, which presents government thinking and action on social sustainability in the food supply, as it emerged from the policy documents analysed. Subsequent chapters describe the non-state governance actors (Chapter 6), their constructions and interpretations of social sustainability (Chapter 7), the various methods and tools they used to implement their interpretations (Chapters 8 and 9), and finally, from the interviewees, some reflections on the motives, objectives and effects of these governance efforts (Chapter 10).

In all of the following chapters, the data sources are identified as follows:

Policy data refers to the policy documents, identified by short citations in the text (e.g. HM Government 2005), with full references at the end of the thesis.

Website data refers to the relevant Data Extraction Sheet, referred to by the short name of the entity described (e.g., Unilever or Ethicalquote), as listed in Table 4.1.

Interview data refers to the relevant transcript*,* identified by the abbreviation 'I.' followed by the number of the interview, as indicated in Table 4.2 above, e.g. I.6.

Chapter 5: The rise and fall of social sustainability in UK public food policy

5.1 Introduction

One objective of this study was to investigate how the social dimension of sustainability has been conceptualised and operationalised by the UK state in its efforts to address the policy challenge of sustainability. The findings of this strand of the research (which addressed RQ1) are presented in this chapter, where the policy is discussed chronologically to show how meanings changed over time.

Sustainable Development did not feature in UK policy until 1990, when an environmental White Paper provided an early definition. By 2001, when a Policy Commission on the Future of Farming and Food was convened, the idea had gained enough currency for England's food supply to be seen as 'unsustainable in every sense of the term' (PCFFF 2002: 109). Sustainability thereafter became an idea that was invoked very frequently in food policy: *Food 2030*, the strategy produced in 2010 (by the outgoing Labour Government), used the words 'sustainable', 'sustainability' and 'sustainably' 191 times in 84 pages (HM Government 2010). In Defra's Business Plan for 2012 (produced by the Coalition Government), the first of three priorities was still to encourage sustainable food production (Defra 2012a). By 2015, however, the Single Departmental Plan for Defra (produced by the Conservative Government) used the word only once, in connection with fisheries. The objective now was to achieve a 'cleaner, healthier environment, benefiting people and the economy', a phrase in which the ghosts of three pillars of sustainability were still visible (Defra 2016). The rest of this chapter examines how the idea of sustainability invaded and then apparently receded from UK policy making for food between 1994 and 2015, looking in particular for formulations and implementations of the social pillar.

5.2 The social dimensions of UK sustainability policy

5.2.1 From nebulous beginnings to sustainable communities: 1994-2005

Mirroring developments at the global level described in Chapter 2, sustainability policy in the UK grew out of environmental policy. Awareness of the adverse environmental effects

of industrial activity and intensive agriculture led to an expanding body of environmental policy during the 1980s, consolidated in the Environmental Protection Act of 1990, and set out more fully in a 1990 environmental White Paper *This Common Inheritance* (its title echoing the Brundtland report three years earlier). This provided the UK's first (notably economistic) definition of Sustainable Development: 'Living on the earth's income, rather than eroding its capital' (DE 1996: 1).

This earlier work influenced the UK's first strategy for Sustainable Development, published in 1994 (making the UK one of the first nations to respond to the UN's call to produce them). The strategy asserted that the UK would 'make Sustainable Development the touchstone of its policies' (HM Government 1994: 5), and defined Sustainable Development as the need to reconcile economic development with environmental conservation. There was no mention of the three pillars or a separate social dimension, but its goal (improved living standards) reflected the social underpinnings of Sustainable Development, as did its aspiration to conserve healthy, habitable human environments, and (in an early manifestation of a procedural dimension) the need to enlist citizens and businesses alongside governments in putting sustainability into practice. The strategy was accompanied by the first set of indicators for Sustainable Development (DE 1996) (indicators were identified in Chapter 3 as a common tool in sustainability governance). As with the strategy, there was no specifically social category among the 120 indicators.

It fell to the Labour government elected in 1997 to meet a commitment to produce a new strategy five years after the first. The 1999 version defined Sustainable Development more expansively, as 'a better quality of life for everyone, now and for generations to come' (HM Government 1999: par 1.1). It looked at how to create a sustainable economy, how to support better communities for people to live and work in, and how to protect the environment. This conceptualisation seems to reflect the three-pillar framework, with the social pillar translated as 'better communities for people to live and work in'. The expression of the social pillar as some version of community health, strength or stability was to become a persistent theme in UK policy (and the same association was being made elsewhere, e.g. Beckley and Burkovsky's work in Canada (1999) and Barron and Gauntlett's in Australia (2002).)

In the 1999 strategy, sustainable communities were associated with strong local economies, employment opportunities, good access to services, attractive and safe surroundings, reduced fear of crime, reduced poverty and social exclusion, and promotion of community involvement (HM Government 1999). It is hard to see why these social aspirations (and not others) should have been selected to be part of sustainability policy. They conspicuously lack the 'green filter' that distinguishes social sustainability policy from run-of-the-mill social policy (Bostrom 2012). This, too, was to be a persistent feature of formulations of social sustainability. For example, the rising percentage of houses with central heating was cited as a measure of greater social sustainability (HM Government 1999, par 10.1), but this pits a goal of social progress (more central heating) against a goal of environmentalism (reduce carbon emissions from fossil fuels). The 1999 strategy was accompanied by an expanded set of indicators (GSS 1999), which included social indicators for poverty, skills, health, housing and crime. Whereas in the Strategy, social goals were discussed first, in the Indicators, the economic indicators were described before the social ones.

Between the years 1999-2005, the state was very active in sustainability governance. Policy was reviewed, local and regional indicators were developed (e.g. DETR 2000a; DETR 2001; HM Government 2002; Defra 2003a), sectoral reviews appeared (e.g. for construction, DETR 2000b), and from 2004 Defra annually produced *Sustainable Development Indicators in Your Pocket* (Defra 2004). In particular, the theme of sustainable communities took flight, beginning with a Sustainable Communities Plan (ODPM 2003), followed by a review of the skills needed to build sustainable communities (Egan 2004) and a Sustainable Communities Act (UK Parliament 2007). Sustainable communities were defined as providing people with a decent home, a congenial community, the chance to develop their skills and interests, access to quality jobs and services, and a chance to engage and 'make a difference' (ODPM 2005).

This definition reflects several themes of social sustainability encountered in the literature, including meeting a basic need and providing opportunities for work, self-fulfilment and participation. The skills review, too, came up with a comprehensive set of skills deemed to be necessary to build and sustain worthwhile communities, including:

> *'The ability to create a vision, leadership to achieve buy-in to the vision, communication, team-working, project management, process re-engineering,*

> *understanding sustainable development, effective financial management, understanding the economics of development, and the processes of local democracy … greater delegation skills, particularly from national to local government [and] high quality brokering skills' (Egan 2004)*

This is interesting because it places so much emphasis on the (social) procedural dimensions sustainability. But overall the policy was criticised for concentrating on mass, low-cost house-building programmes which did not pay attention to wider sustainability concerns (CAG 2006). It is also notable that the policies made almost no mention of food provisioning, seemingly not considered relevant to sustainable communities.

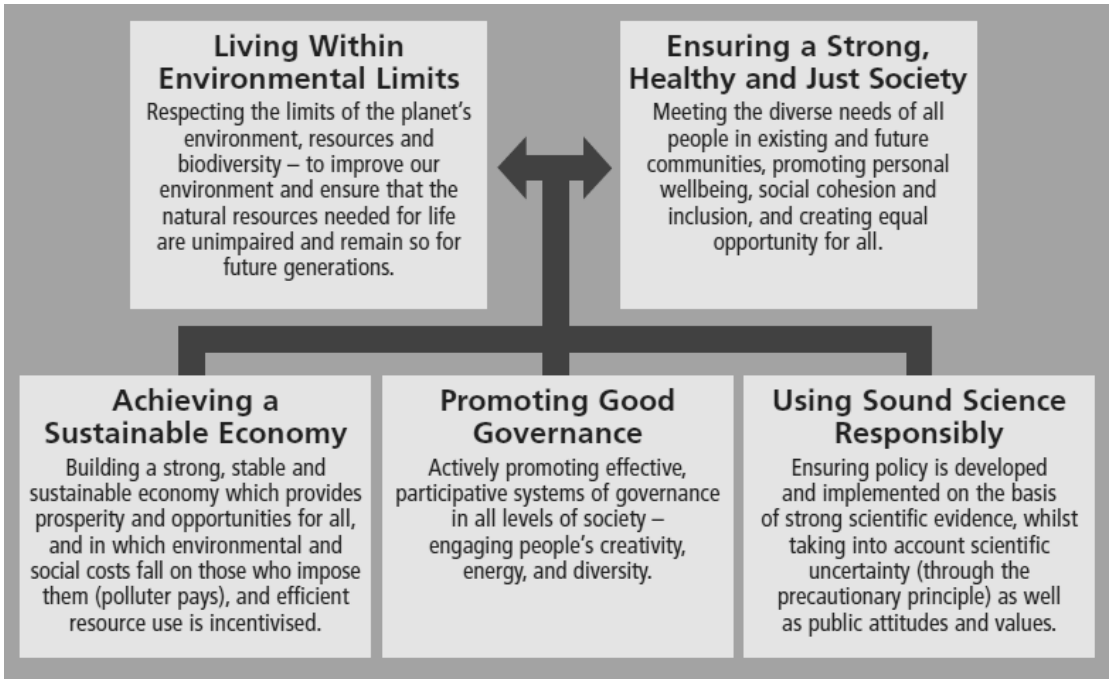
Two important state governance actors for sustainability emerged during this period. One was the Sustainable Development Commission (SDC), a non-departmental public body (NDPB), established in 2000 and in 2006 given the role of 'watchdog' for Sustainable Development (SDC n.d.). The other was the Environmental Audit Committee (EAC), established in 1997 as a Select Committee of the House of Commons with powers to investigate and review policy across all government departments for its impacts on Sustainable Development. It produced more than 120 reports between 1997 and 2015, and following the abolition of the SDC in 2011 became the principal scrutineer of government's performance on sustainability (EAC n.d.) After the re-election of the Labour government in 2001, responsibility for Sustainable Development in government was given to the new Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra).

5.2.2 The current framework: A 'strong, healthy and just society'

By 2005, it was thought necessary to consolidate sustainability policy into a new strategy and take account of developments at global level (e.g. WSSD 2002). *Securing the Future* (HM Government 2005) duly appeared, and although it was 'refreshed' by the Coalition government in 2011 (see below), in principle it still stands, and has been widely referenced. It was intended to mark the end of the period spent 'getting to grips with the concept of sustainability' and provide a framework for action (HM Government 2005: 4). The five guiding principles (Fig 5.1) gave equal priority to living within environmental limits and 'ensuring a strong, healthy and just society'. This remains (in 2016) the clearest articulation by the government of the social pillar. Prominence was also given to the ideas of social inclusion, personal wellbeing and 'a more equitable world'.

Also notable was the first appearance in UK policy of the concept of Sustainable Consumption and Production (HM Government 2005), identified as a key issue at the 2002 UN summit (WSSD 2002: par 11). Sustainable communities remained a policy focus, with the attributes of accessible public services and transport, well-designed buildings, participatory leadership, environmental sensitivity and flourishing local economies. Another focus was social inequalities, including in health, education, housing, employment, transport and crime (HM Government 2005: 135-6). The 2005 strategy also introduced a new set of 68 consolidated SD indicators (HM Government 2005), with social indicators for crime, employment, workless households, childhood poverty, pensioner poverty, education, health inequality, mobility, social justice and wellbeing. In both the strategy and the indicators, the integration of social and environmental concerns proved elusive. It looked as though the government was using the banner of sustainability to advance its social welfare plans – particularly its flagship housing and regeneration programme, badged as 'sustainable communities'. However, sustainability was firmly seen to have a social dimension.

Fig. 5.1: The five 'guiding principles' of UK sustainable development policy, 2005



Source: HM Government 2005: 16

Revision of the national strategy provided an opportunity to correct an anomaly raised by the devolution process that followed the 1997 election. The 1994 and 1999 strategies had applied to the whole of the UK, but many of the policy areas addressed, such as health and

agriculture, were devolved to the national legislatures, and the devolved administrations had developed separate sustainability policies. To co-ordinate this activity, when the 2005 strategy was produced by the Westminster government (applicable only to England), it was accompanied by an overarching 'Shared Framework', setting out the guiding principles (Fig 5.1) agreed by all four governments (HM Government *et al* 2005). (The separate policies of the devolved nations are not explored here.)

From 2005 onwards, several background papers were commissioned by the UK government which seemed to signal a desire for deeper understanding of the social dimension of Sustainable Development. They included research papers on wellbeing (Dolan *et al* 2006a; 2006b), and on the role of 'cultural capital' in behaviour change (Knott *et al* 2008).

5.2.3 'Mainstreaming' or downgrading? 2010-2015

Momentum was interrupted by the May 2010 general election. The new Coalition Prime Minister quickly pledged that his government would be 'the greenest ever' (Prime Minister's Office 2010). One of its first acts, however, was to end funding for the Sustainable Development Commission. Announcing the changes, the Secretary of State for the Environment said that the government was determined to 'mainstream sustainability' by putting 'joined-up' processes in place across government, and that she was 'not willing simply to delegate this responsibility to an external body' (Defra 2010a). Despite assurances that all policies would be 'sustainability-proofed' (Defra 2011a), the abolition of the SDC was widely seen as a sign that Sustainable Development was sliding down the policy agenda (Porritt 2010; EAC 2011).

The Coalition's main statement of sustainability policy appeared in 2011, in the document *Mainstreaming Sustainable Development,* which 'refreshed' (rather than replaced) the 2005 strategy (Defra 2011b). Unlike the earlier strategies, it was published by Defra rather than by the government as a whole, and was only seven pages long (compared with the 2005 strategy's 186 pages). It upheld the five guiding principles of the 2005 strategy, though with an important change in emphasis. The definition of Sustainable Development was now re-phrased to prioritise economic growth, and the social pillar was represented by the notion of 'maximising wellbeing ... without negatively impacting the ability of future generations to do the same':

> *The coalition government is committed to Sustainable Development. This means making the necessary decisions now to realise our vision of stimulating economic growth and tackling the deficit, maximising wellbeing and protecting our environment, without negatively impacting the ability of future generations to do the same (Defra 2011b: 2).*

Elsewhere, the social pillar was represented along with the environmental pillar as being subordinate though instrumentally important to the economic pillar: 'our long-term economic growth relies on protecting and enhancing the environmental resources that underpin it, and paying due regard to social needs' (Defra 2011b: 2). In 2012, the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) set Sustainable Development as a goal, but defined it in a way that enabled it to badge a new set of priorities:

> *'Sustainable means ensuring that better lives for ourselves don't mean worse lives for future generations. Development means growth... So sustainable development is about positive growth – making economic, environmental and social progress for this and future generations' (DCLG 2012: i).*

In 2013, the Coalition government produced a new set of Sustainable Development Indicators, in the categories of economy, society and environment. The four headline Society indicators (illustrating what the state at this point saw as both desirable and actionable social aspects of Sustainable Development) were healthy life expectancy; social capital (defined as 'the pattern and intensity of networks among people, and the shared values which arise from those networks'); social mobility in adulthood; and housing provision (Defra 2013b: 28).

The year 2015 saw the replacement of the Coalition Government by a Conservative one. The newly constituted EAC decided to devote its first inquiry of the new parliament into the Government's approach to Sustainable Development. Announcing this, the committee said, 'Promoting Sustainable Development – which for the purposes of this inquiry includes protecting the environment, supporting the low carbon economy and improving wellbeing – could be worth billions of pounds to the UK economy.' This statement provided a current, capsule definition of Sustainable Development, with the social pillar summed up as wellbeing; it was also significant that it sought to justify work on Sustainable Development in economic terms (EAC 2015).

5.2.4 The social pillar as 'wellbeing'

The contraction of the social dimension of sustainability into the notion of 'wellbeing' is significant. Having made a low-key appearance in the 1999 strategy, by 2005 wellbeing was

embedded in the five guiding principles, and by 2011, the phrase 'maximising wellbeing' had come to encapsulate the social pillar. But the question then arises of what is meant by wellbeing. Since 2005, a number of government-commissioned studies have investigated this (McAllister 2005; Dolan *et al* 2006a, 2006b; SDRN 2007; Harper and Price 2011). A working definition emerged, with considerable overlap with definitions of social sustainability:

> *Wellbeing is ... understood to be a positive physical, social and mental state; it is not just the absence of pain, discomfort and incapacity. It requires that basic needs are met, that individuals have a sense of purpose, that they feel able to achieve important personal goals and participate in society. It is enhanced by conditions that include supportive personal relationships, strong and inclusive communities, good health, financial and personal security, rewarding employment, and a healthy and attractive environment. (Defra 2009: 119).*

This definition is reminiscent of Sen's conception of Development as an emancipatory and empowering process (Sen 2001, discussed in Chapter 2). Wellbeing is seen to be multifaceted, with both objective components (such as income) and subjective ones (such as self-reported levels of fulfilment or anxiety) (Defra 2009; Stiglitz *et al* 2009). Although subjective measures raise concerns about validity, there is now an established view that survey data reporting, for example, self-assessed life satisfaction is reliable and useful (SDRN 2007). Measures covering various aspects of wellbeing have appeared in annual updates to the Sustainable Development Indicators. Separately, the Office for National Statistics launched its National Wellbeing Programme in 2010, to develop a set of statistics for wellbeing. The government's intention was that the ONS wellbeing measures and Defra's revised Sustainable Development Indicators should sit alongside each other to provide a rounded picture of 'how society is doing' (Self *et al* 2012: 1; EAC 2012). In 2012, ONS published its first report on national wellbeing, which discussed the topic under the three headings of the economy, people and the environment, clearly echoing the pillars of sustainability. Themes listed under the 'People' heading covered the labour market (i.e. employment), education, 'individual wellbeing', health, relationships, governance and 'where we live' (Self *et al* 2012) (Table 5.1).

Conspicuously, the measures of wellbeing do not include any assessments of inequality, although this had been identified in government documents (e.g. Defra 2011b) and other research (Wilkinson and Pickett 2009) as an important component of wellbeing. This

highlights a risk in using wellbeing as a summation of the social pillar, which is that it can exclude the distributional concerns (expressed as justice or equity) that have elsewhere been seen as fundamentally important to Sustainable Development. In this guise, social sustainability becomes less a matter for collective action and more a quest for individual fulfilment.

5.2.5 Changing interpretations of the social pillar

As Table 5.1 indicates, policy interpretations of the social pillar have changed over time, moving from a rather cursory (or implicit) status to a proliferation of attributes and associations, before being contracted into wellbeing. In the first UK strategy, which focused on limiting the environmental impacts of economic activity, the social aspect was not explicitly mentioned, though it was implicit in the goal of prosperity and recognised as a necessary ingredient in transformative action. By 1999, an explicitly social goal was the leading priority of the strategy, though not of the accompanying indicators. It was enshrined as an overarching goal in the 2005 strategy. The 2011 framework then seemed to push social aspects down the agenda. However, the renewal and maintenance of the Sustainable Development Indicators and the development of wellbeing measures suggest that the dimension remains a presence (if not a priority) in sustainability policy.

In terms of attributes, a variety of aspirations and issues has been associated with the social pillar – often failing to integrate an environmental angle, and sometimes seeming simply to present the government of the day's social agenda. Persistent themes have included poverty and social in/exclusion; social cohesion; levels of work and skills; health and health inequalities; housing quality and homelessness; crime levels and fear of crime; access to basic services, and mobility. Communities have been seen as important sites for policy intervention. Wellbeing (dissociated from ideas of equity) has emerged as an important theme, subsuming many others.

Table 5.1 Selected aims and attributes associated with the social pillar, 1994-2013

Strategy:	1994 strategy	1999 strategy	2005 strategy	2011 'refresher'	2012 Measuring National Wellbeing programme
Aim:	Improved standards of living	Social progress which recognises the needs of everyone	Ensuring a strong, healthy and just society	Maximising wellbeing	Measuring intergenerational wellbeing
Attributes:	**Attributes from 1996 Indicators**	**Attributes from 1999 indicators**	**Attributes from 2005 indicators**	**Attributes from 2013 indicators**	**2012 'domains'**
	No explicitly social indicators	Poverty and social in/exclusion; Skills; Health; Housing; Crime and fear of crime;	Personal wellbeing; Social cohesion and inclusion; Equal opportunities; Volunteering; Crime and fear of crime; Employment; Poverty; Education and skills; Health and health inequality; Housing and homelessness; Mobility and access; Environmental quality	Healthy life expectancy; Social capital; Social mobility in adulthood; Housing provision	Labour market; Education; Individual wellbeing; Health; 'Our relationships'; Governance; 'Where we live'

Source: Government 1994; DE 1996; HM Government 1999; GSS 1999; HM Government 2005; Defra 2011b; Defra 2013b; Self et al 2012.

5.3 Social sustainability in UK food policy

As Sustainable Development took root as a policy concern, it was incorporated into sectoral policy in several areas, including food. Again, this led to a variety of formulations of the social pillar.

5.3.1 Moving beyond 'adequacy': 1994-2001

The UK's first (1994) strategy for Sustainable Development included chapters on agriculture and fisheries. According to Whitby and Ward (1994), these chapters represent the first statement from central government of what the implementation of Sustainable Development policies might mean for these sectors. (It would be several years before the

focus widened to include the whole food supply.) At this stage, the perspective was primarily an environmental one. Agriculture and fisheries were identified as having high environmental impact and being critically dependent on the resource base, and were thus highly relevant to the new policy focus of sustainability. The 1994 strategy provided the UK's first framework for sustainable agriculture (Table 5.2), of which the goal was 'to provide an adequate supply of good quality food and other products in an efficient manner' (HM Government 1994: 106). Adequacy has remained an overarching social objective of sustainable food policy.

The next significant application of the sustainability lens to food production came in 2000, in the form of a provisional set of indicators for sustainable agriculture produced by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (MAFF 2000). In 2001, when MAFF was replaced by Defra, these indicators lapsed (MAFF 2000: 9). However, they included a new, expanded definition of sustainable agriculture with a strongly social perspective (Table 5.2). Food was to be not just adequate, but varied, wholesome, reasonably priced and responsibly produced; the importance of agriculture to rural society and livelihoods was mentioned, along with animal welfare.

In 2001, the SDC produced its first report on food, with its own set of goals for a sustainable food supply (Table 5.2). They were more stringent than the Government's, specifying that food provisioning must take place 'within biophysical constraints' (thus raising the contentious issue of limits), and highlighting the need to safeguard provision 'now and in the future'. The SDC also argued that sustainability needed to be applied to the whole food sector, not just to agriculture. But the SDC seemed aware of a need to make compromises: alongside the need to confine production within environmental limits was the need to respond to 'market demands', and animal welfare was to be as high as was consistent with 'society's right to food at a fair price' (SDC 2001).

Table 5.2 Goals of sustainable agriculture / food, 1994-2002

	HM Government 1994	MAFF 2000	SDC 2001	Defra 2002
1.	Provide an adequate supply of good quality food and other products in an efficient manner;	Ensure the continuing availability to the consumer of adequate supplies of wholesome, varied and reasonably-priced food, produced in accordance with generally accepted environmental and social standards;	Produce safe, healthy food and non-food products in response to market demands, now and in the future;	Produce safe, healthy products in response to market demands, and ensure that all consumers have access to nutritious food, and to accurate information about food products
2	Minimise consumption of non-renewable and other resources, including by recycling;	Maintain a competitive and flexible industry which contributes to an economically viable rural society;	Enable viable livelihoods to be made from sustainable land management, taking account of payments for public benefits provided;	Support the viability and diversity of rural and urban economies and communities;
3	Safeguard the quality of soil, water and air;	Ensure effective protection of the environment and prudent use of natural resources;	Operate within biophysical constraints and conform to other environmental imperatives;	Enable viable livelihoods to be made from sustainable land management, both through the market and through payment for public benefits;
4.	Preserve and, where feasible, enhance biodiversity and the appearance of the landscape, including the UK's archaeological heritage.	Conserve and enhance the landscape, wildlife, cultural and archaeological value of agricultural land;	Provide environmental improvements and other benefits that the public wants – such as re-creation of habitats and access to land;	Respect and operate within the biological limits of natural resources (especially soil, water and biodiversity;
5.		Respect a high level of animal welfare.	Achieve the highest standards of animal health and welfare compatible with society's right to food at a fair price;	Achieve consistently high standards of environmental performance by reducing energy consumption, by minimising resource inputs and use renewable energy wherever possible;
6.			Support the vitality of rural economies and the diversity of rural culture;	Ensure a safe and hygienic working environment and high social welfare and training for all employees n the food chain;
7.			Sustain the resources available for growing food and supplying other public benefits over time, except where except where alternative land uses are essential in order to meet other needs of society.	Achieve consistently high standards of animal health and welfare;
8.				Sustain the resource available for growing food and supplying other public benefits over time, except where alternative land uses are essential to meet other needs of society.

Sources: HM Government 1994: 106; MAFF 2000: 5; SDC 2001: Box 1; Defra 2002: 12

Also in 2001, after a decade in which British farming had been buffeted by a series of crises (such as the epidemics of BSE and Foot and Mouth Disease), a Policy Commission on the Future of Farming and Food was appointed. Its remit was to advise the government on how to create 'a sustainable, competitive and diverse farming and food sector' in England, marking the first formal recognition that sustainability was a priority for food policy. The commissioners took 'Sustainable Development as [their] guiding principle' (PCFFF 2002: 6), and acknowledged that sustainability had environmental, social and economic dimensions, but seemed to struggle to define or suggest operationalisations of the social pillar. Often, the term sustainability was used narrowly, to refer to the economic viability of the farming sector. However, a key theme, which seems intrinsically social, was 'reconnection' among the various people involved in or affected by farming. Animal welfare and health impacts were included as concerns, but the latter were broadened to include a distributional issue – health inequalities resulting from uneven food access.[9]

The year 2000 also saw the creation of the Food Standards Agency, as an arm's length body to deal with problems connected with food safety and diet. Sustainability was not mentioned in the agency's initial remit (UK Parliament 1999), but in 2005 it reported that it would 'take Sustainable Development into account in all of its activities and policy decisions' (FSA 2005: 29). By 2008, a draft statement had been published which noted the interconnectedness of the three pillars and set the objective of achieving policies that did not impact adversely on any of them. Foreshadowing later work on sustainable diets, the FSA reviewed its work and found some areas of conflict – e.g. fish consumption, pesticide use, and meat and dairy consumption were areas where benefits to consumers and environmental concerns were at odds (FSA 2008). Although it did not explicitly define the social aspects of sustainability, the focus was on the nutritional quality of foods.

5.3.2 Strategies for sustainable farming: 2002-2006

In 2002, following the report of the Policy Commission, the Government published a *Strategy for Sustainable Farming and Food* (Defra 2002), the first UK strategy explicitly focussing on sustainability in the food sector. It broadened the scope of sustainability policy to the whole food supply (although a separate strategy would be needed to deal with issues

[9] Interviewee 13 in this study had participated in the PCFFF, and recalled that the social pillar of sustainability had been the most difficult for commissioners to grasp and make recommendations on.

post-farm-gate) and aimed to address economic, environmental and social elements of sustainability. The tone of the report was businesslike. Farming was depicted as part of the industrial process of food production and distribution, and the challenge was to be 'flexible, entrepreneurial and close to markets, suppliers and customers', paying heed in doing so to environmental responsibilities and 'corporate social responsibilities' (Defra 2002: 13).

A paragraph summarising the social aspects of the 'sustainability challenge' described these as the linkages between agriculture and the wider economy, in terms of jobs (for example in farming and food processing) and costs (for example to the NHS of diet-related ill health) (Defra 2002: 11). The definition of 'sustainable farming and food' now had eight key principles (Table 5.2), which visibly draw on the preceding documents (e.g. the SDC document is reproduced verbatim in places). Consistent with the market orientation noted above, the aim of providing adequate, wholesome food became providing 'safe, healthy products in response to market demands' (Defra 2002: 12). Social themes now included support for livelihoods (both urban and rural), the safety and welfare of food supply workers (newly crystallised here, this later became a dominant theme), and the welfare of farm animals. The strategy also emphasised the importance of providing information, reflecting Government (and neoliberal) elevation of the role of the informed, decision-making, individual consumer.

In 2006, the Government updated its strategy for sustainable farming and food in a document called the *Forward Look*, which marked a 'new stage in the pursuit of a sustainable farming and food sector (Defra 2006a). It streamlined policy objectives and added cross-cutting themes that acknowledged the multifaceted nature of the problem. The three long-term policy goals stressed the need for the farming and food sector to be 'profitable and competitive', to make a 'net positive contribution to the environment' and to contribute to the 'long-term sustainability of rural communities' (Defra 2006a: 3). As often, these priorities echo the three pillars of Sustainable Development, but the term sustainability is only applied directly to the issue of the continuity of rural communities, while the priority goals for food and farming are profitability and competitiveness.

5.3.2.1 Public sector food procurement

One of the most enduring outcomes of the 2002 *Strategy for Sustainable Farming and Food* was a rather obscure policy strand, the Public Sector Food Procurement Initiative (PSFPI), which successive governments have used as a way of operationalising their goals for sustainable food. The public sector spends around £2bn a year on food. By specifying criteria for sustainability in the contracts suppliers must meet in order to supply this food, the state can both create a market for food produced in this way, and exemplify and define quality parameters for sustainability (Morgan and Sonnino 2008).

The criteria have been through a number of iterations, the latest of which appeared in 2011, under the new name of Government Buying Standards. They apply to central government departments, NDPBs, the armed services and prisons, but not the NHS or schools. The standards follow the five guiding principles of the 2005 Sustainable Development strategy, and they cover (among other things) nutrition (levels of salt, sugar, saturated fat and fibre in the food supplied), animal welfare and ethical trading. The standards set targets and make use of third-party standards to assure sustainability. For example, a stipulated amount of the tea and coffee procured must be certified as fairly traded. The Buying Standards do, therefore, specify some aspects of social sustainability into publically purchased food, but they are hedged with provisions upholding EU principles protecting free trade and non-discrimination, and also WTO regulations on international sourcing[10]. They also stress that no extra cost must be incurred as a result of sustainable sourcing (Defra 2015d).

5.3.3 A sustainability strategy for the food industry: 2006

Not until 2006 did Defra produce a policy document formally recognising that what happened to food after it left the farmers' fields affected its sustainability and was in need of sustainability policy. The Food Industry Sustainability Strategy (FISS, Defra 2006b) applied to food and drink manufacture, wholesaling, retailing and food service. This strategy remains the only UK policy document focused on sustainability and the food industry.

The development of the FISS – as a collaborative venture prompted by Government but involving industry stakeholders (Defra 2006c: 1) – exemplified the kind of public-private governance approach discussed in Chapter 3. Its goal was to 'help achieve Sustainable

[10] These regulations will have to be revised in the light of the UK's decision to leave the EU.

Development' through the sharing and widespread adoption of best practice (Defra 2006c: 1). It was a strategy for *both* Government and industry. Priorities and measures were to be determined by 'Champions' Groups' from the industry; with the support of quasi-governmental or industry-led bodies such as the Waste and Resources Action Plan (WRAP) and Business in the Community (BITC). The choice of collaboratively designed, voluntary measures over regulation was justified partly on the grounds of the Government's preference for self-regulation; but crucially, also (as the Risk Assessment put it), because the Government had 'few legislative powers, if any, at present' which it could apply to the food industry in relation to the issues covered in the FISS (Defra 2006c: 6) — a startling admission of constraint in relation to the sustainable food agenda. With respect to the social pillar, the FISS was intended to complement the 2005 national sustainability strategy, of which the main social goal was summarised in the FISS as 'a just society that promotes social inclusion, sustainable communities and personal wellbeing' (DEFRA 2006c: 1).

The FISS adopted a deferential tone towards food industry participants. The Foreword laid out the challenge for 'captains of the food industry', who needed to continue to achieve economic success 'whilst improving environmental and social performance' (Defra 2006b: *iii*): Frequent use of the verbs 'encourage', 'help', 'promote' and 'support' create the impression that the strategy was intended to be seen as highly collaborative, with jointly agreed policy outcomes dependent on non-confrontational activity by government and industry.

The strategy divided the terrain into six thematic sections, three of which followed the pillars of sustainability, with cross-cutting sections on Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP) and Corporate Social Responsibility (identified in Chapter 3 as an important tool in sustainability governance for business, and described here as 'essentially the business contribution to Sustainable Development', Defra 2006b: 26), and a final theme focusing on 'better regulation', explained as the desire to reduce regulatory compliance costs. The Social section identified five themes: nutrition and health; food safety; equal opportunities; health and safety; and ethical trading. Given the collaborative nature of the process, these can be taken to be the social themes judged by the food industry to be both relevant to the social pillar of sustainability and also amenable to intervention (i.e., governable, Miller and Rose 2008). The strategy then proposed actions (or areas for action)

considered appropriate to each theme (Table 5.3). In other words, the FISS provides an illustration of how social sustainability was construed by the food sector as a governable issue, and also what were considered to be relevant and feasible operationalisations.

Table 5.3: Themes & activities relevant to social pillar of sustainability for the food industry, 2006

	Theme	Areas for action
1.	Overarching commitment to a just society that promotes social inclusion, sustainable communities and personal wellbeing	
2.	Nutrition and health	Promotion of healthy eating; provision of information; food composition (including targets levels for various nutrients); labelling; portion size; promotion of food to children; infant nutrition; nutritional standards for publically funded meals and school meals
3.	Food safety	Action on foodborne disease; information and training on food hygiene for homes and businesses; reporting of food safety incidents; control of chemical contaminants
4.	Equal opportunities	Promotion of equality and diversity; avoidance of discrimination based on gender, race or disability; work-life balance; fair pay
5.	Health and safety	Promotion of workplace health and safety issues; reduction of accident rates and occupational ill-health; training;
6.	Ethical trading	The business case for ethical trade; duplication of schemes; audit quality; encouragement for corporate membership of ETI;
7.	Sustainable Production and Consumption	Measures to inform and enable consumers to make sustainable food choices; sustainability guidance for public procurement
8	Corporate Social Responsibility	Promotion and adoption of CSR practice across the food industry

Source: Defra 2006b

The FISS's presentation of social sustainability problems and remedies illustrates some of the limitations of collaborative policymaking, notably a lack of ambition. For each theme, a 'challenge' was presented, and these were uncontentious and non-specific. For example, on Nutrition and Health the challenge was, 'For the food industry to work in partnership with Government and other stakeholders, over the coming years, to help bring about lasting improvements to the nutrition and health of the people of England'. (Defra 2006b: 57). Extensive descriptions of what was already being done to tackle problems were followed by 'action points' (e.g. a target to be reached by a specified date), but there was often a considerable gap between the (extensive) scope of the problem as described, and the (limited) scope of the action points. For example an expansive discussion on the theme of 'Equal Opportunities', taking in discrimination, equal pay, parental leave, childcare and the work-life balance, led to an action point that covered only the under-representation of

women, ethnic minorities and disabled people in certain roles in food processing and manufacturing.

5.3.4 Social sustainability eclipsed

By 2007, references to sustainability had become routine in policy documents on the food supply. For example , the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Efra) Select Committee, responsible for scrutinising the work of Defra, published numerous sectoral reports which included reference to sustainability (e.g. fishing (2005), the pig industry (2008) and dairy farming (2010)). In the early 2000s, however, the constellation of concerns that had begun to be grouped together under the label of sustainability began to be discussed (or rather, discussed again, Barling *et al* 2010) under the heading of food security. As noted in Chapter 3, food security, when used to focus on security of supply or national self-sufficiency, can have a much narrower meaning than sustainability, neglecting or omitting the social dimension. The Government's decision to bring this term to the fore was consistent with its commitment to free trade. Food security, which concentrated on safeguarding adequate and affordable supplies of foods, was more compatible with a free trade agenda than sustainability, where the emphasis on local production and consumption, and on relatively costly animal welfare and worker protection measures, was construed as being damaging to the competitiveness of UK food producers (HM Treasury & Defra 2005; Defra 2006d; Defra 2008).

When Gordon Brown became Prime Minister in 2007 he commissioned a comprehensive review of food policy (Cabinet Office Strategy Unit 2008a, 2008b). A new strategy appeared in 2010 (HM Government 2010), accompanied by a set of sustainable food indicators (Defra 2010b), along with a separate discussion paper on food security (Defra 2008) and a set of food security indicators (Defra 2009). Taken together, these documents represented a new phase in policy, in which sustainability was still asserted as a goal (sometimes in the limited form of environmental sustainability), while other goals were given equal prominence. The new strategy, *Food 2030* (HM Government 2010), was peppered with references to sustainability, but it appeared as one of three linked challenges, along with security and health. This splitting of the term into separate components implies it was no longer taken to subsume these other meanings, and suggests a re-fragmentation of what had been intended to be a grand, unifying policy concept. *Food 2030* did not use the pillars of

sustainability, but was instead structured around six core issues (Table 5.4). Nutrition (the only issue that clearly echoes earlier expressions of the social pillar) appeared as the top priority, with the onus for achieving 'healthy and sustainable' diets again placed on informed consumers. The food sustainability indicators followed the six themes of the strategy (Defra 2010b). At the time of writing, however (2016), both the food sustainability indicators and the food security indicators have fallen into abeyance.

Table 5.4: Six core issues for a sustainable and secure food system, 2010

	Issue
1	Encouraging people to eat a healthy, sustainable diet
2	Ensuring a resilient, profitable and competitive food system
3	Increasing food production sustainably
4	Reducing the food system's greenhouse gas emissions
5	Reducing, reusing and reprocessing waste
6	Increasing the impact of skills, knowledge, research and technology

Source: HM Government 2010

Sustainable diets were mentioned in Chapter 3 as a rare example of an approach to sustainable food governance that genuinely integrates social and environmental dimensions. *Food 2030* recognised them for the first time as a policy goal, but only tentatively. The strategy noted that public debate on the subject was still a 'niche interest', and that the issue was fraught with trade-offs, for example among health, nutrition, access, affordability, carbon footprint, production methods, sustainability of supplies, transport, water use, animal welfare and support for growers in developing countries (HM Government 2010: 15). This non-committal approach diluted a more specific policy proposal from the SDC (SDC 2009b), which had argued that both environmental and health gains could be achieved by lowering consumption of meat, dairy, and fatty and sugary foods; increasing consumption of vegetables, where possible seasonal and field grown (as distinct from the imports favoured by Defra); and restricting fish consumption to sustainable sources.

5.3.5 Contested definitions of the social pillar: 2010-2015

The cluster of policy documents that appeared from 2008 to 2010 represents the last major activity to date by the UK Government on food policy. After the 2010 general election, the impetus for a 'joined up' policy for a more sustainable food supply stalled (SDC 2011: 34), *Food 2030* was shelved, and the SDC itself was an early victim of the cuts. However, four

state policy initiatives appeared during this period which elucidate policy thinking on themes associated with the social pillar.

5.3.5.1 The SDC framework for a socially sustainable food supply

One of the SDC's final acts was to publish a review of sustainability and the food system, which included a framework for a sustainable food system (SDC 2011, Table 5.5).This abandoned the three pillars for six aims, which included, alongside the now familiar goals of protecting the environment, supporting human health, providing good quality food (the latter re-appearing from the 1994 strategy) and providing decently rewarded work, the new (and ambiguous) aim of 'embody[ing] appropriate social values, such as fairness and animal welfare', along with the aim of supporting all of the ambitions by means of good governance. Synergies, rather than trade-offs, were to mediate differing interests. Strikingly, rather than 'wellbeing', which had come to encapsulate the social dimension in Government sustainability policy, the SDC identified fairness (a relational concept implying a distributive element, as 'key to the social dimension of sustainability in food policy' (SDC 2011: 42).

The 'appropriate social values' were specified in a comprehensive matrix of 'multiple values for a sustainable food system' (Table 5.6). They established a new set of criteria for social sustainability (including, for example, 'pleasure' and 'identity').They also illustrate again the tendency for different definers to allocate attributes to different headings, with several attributes elsewhere listed under the social heading, such as health, affordability and transparency, allocated differently here. Nevertheless, the framework and values represent one of the most comprehensive policy depictions to date of what a socially sustainable food supply might look like.

Table 5.5 Framework for a sustainable food system, SDC 2011

	Aim
1	**Address environmental impacts** such as greenhouse gases and climate change, biodiversity, water use, land use and other infrastructure on which food depends
2.	**Contribute to human health** nut just by preventing food-borne diseases associated with poor safety but also non-communicable diseases due to under- as well as over- consumption
3.	**Deliver good quality food**, fit to meet consume and cultural aspirations
4.	**Embody appropriate social values** such as fairness and animal welfare
5.	**Provide decently rewarded employment** across the supply chain, with skills and training
6.	**Improve the above through good governance**

Source: SDC 2011: 13

Table 5.6 Multiple values for a sustainable food system, SDC 2011

Quality	Social values	Environment	Health	Economy	Governance
Taste **Seasonality** **Cosmetic** **Fresh (where appropriate)** **Authenticity / provenance**	Pleasure Identity Animal welfare Equality and justice Trust Choice Skills (for food citizenship)	Climate change Water Land use Soil Biodiversity Waste reduction	Safety Nutrition Equal Access Availability Social status / affordability Information and education	Food security and resilience Affordability (price) Efficiency True competition and fair returns Jobs, skills and decent working conditions Fully internalised costs	Science and technology evidence base Transparency Democratic accountability Ethical values (fairness) International aid and development

Source: SDC 2011: 14

5.3.5.2 The Foresight report: 'sustainable and equitable'

The year 2011 also saw the publication of the final report of an investigation by the Government Office for Science Foresight Programme into the challenges facing the global food system through to 2050. The report found an urgent case for 'nothing less than a redesign of the whole food system to bring sustainability to the fore' (Foresight 2011: 12). A key recommendation was for 'sustainable intensification' of food production, defined as producing more food from the same amount of land, with less environmental impact, an idea which the Coalition Government took forward through the Green Food Project (discussed below). Unlike the SDC, Foresight argued that trade-offs would be inevitable as conflicting parties and objectives came into collision – for example between biodiversity and the needs of the poor (Foresight 2011).

From the perspective of the current study, the report was interesting because of the way it used the term sustainability. A shorthand definition expressed it in terms of resource efficiency: 'sustainability implies the use of resources at rates that do not exceed the capacity of the earth to replace them' (Foresight 2011: 9). This definition, which excludes a social dimension, is reminiscent of the natural-sciences-based approaches that led to early criticisms of the sustainable agriculture movement, as discussed in Chapter 3. It suggests a policy approach that is backing away from the complexities inherent in integrated sustainability, and is trying to boil the issue down to its measurable, biophysical aspects. However, the report also insists that ending hunger and feeding the world's population

equitably are also vital to the goal of achieving a sustainable food system. So the social goals are emphasised, but not seen as *implicit* in the term or idea of sustainability. The food system needs to be sustainable *and* equitable – the two words are often used together.

5.3.5.3 The Green Food project

The Green Food project was one of the Coalition Government's main actions on food sustainability, although it is noteworthy that it was called a 'green' not a 'sustainable' food project. Its remit was to address the challenge of producing more food while reducing harmful environmental impacts – the process described in the Foresight report as 'sustainable intensification'. As with the FISS, the process was one of stakeholder consultation, involving food, farming, retail, hospitality, environmental and consumer interests. The project's final report used the words sustainable and sustainability often, without defining them (Green Food Project Steering Group 2012). The policy problem was presented in a diagram outlining a compromise between environmental output and economic output: the social aspect of sustainability was not mentioned.

This approach was criticised in a report entitled *Sustainable Food* from EAC in 2012, which re-asserted sustainability, including its social aspects, as a priority (EAC 2012). The report argued that sustainable intensification risked damaging 'the environment and society' (EAC 2012: 3). Specifically, it focused too much on increasing yields at the expense of delivering a more equitable food system. The report noted that the five principles of the 2005 strategy for Sustainable Development still underpinned UK policy, and endorsed the SDC's 2011 framework for sustainable food. The committee concluded by calling for a new food strategy that would take into account the 'health, environmental, social and economic consequences' of the food supply (EAC 2012: 31).

5.4 A patchwork of policy measures

Thus, by 2015, it seemed that policy-makers were divided over what constituted a sustainable food supply. What had seemed in 2010 to be a reasonable consensus around understandings and actions had disintegrated. Social sustainability had no clear, settled 'meaning' in food policy, and seemed to be in danger if being 'defined out' of food sustainability discourse, as the latter concentrated on clean, resource-efficient production of increasing quantities of food.

Contributing to this ambiguity was the fact that a patchwork of policy measures had appeared that seemed to act on sustainability issues but were not brought forward in the name of sustainability. Four examples are described here, addressing the themes of fairness, the nutritional quality of food, and the livelihoods and safety of food workers. All of these had previously been identified in policy as being important social ingredients a sustainable food supply. The fact that they were not presented as contributions to a more sustainable food supply, or as parts of any coherent sustainability strategy, suggests that although sustainability was still cited as an overarching goal, in practice it was no longer deemed to have the weight or 'halo' that it had, for example, in 2003-2005, when the Government of the day judged that by presenting its social policies on crime and housing as steps towards a more sustainable society, it enhanced their importance and timeliness.

5.4.1 Fairness in supplier relationships: the Groceries Supply Code

The Groceries Supply Code of Practice (GSCOP) was set up to improve fairness and transparency in dealings between the main multiple retailers and their direct suppliers, after the second of two investigations by the Competition Commission (CC) found that existing arrangements had adverse effects on competition (CC 2009). The policy problem it recognises is a lack of fairness in transactions between large retailers and their suppliers. The Groceries Supply Code of Practice that came into force in 2010 placed an obligation of 'fair dealing' on 10 named retailers (those with a turnover of more than £1bn), attempting to outlaw some of the commercially discriminatory practices identified by the CC (BIS 2009; GCA 2016). For example, the 'listing fees' and 'position fees' charged by retailers were mostly outlawed, and suppliers were to be compensated for retailers' forecasting errors that led to produce being rejected. A Groceries Code Adjudicator (GCA), to monitor and enforce the code, was appointed in January 2013 (UK Parliament 2013), and in 2015 the adjudicator was given the power to fine retailers found to be in breach of the Code by up to 1% of their total annual UK turnover. (GCA 2016).

5.4.2 Food quality: the Public Health Responsibility Deal

The Public Health Responsibility Deal, launched in 2011 by the Department of Health (DH), recognised a problem with the corporate behaviour of food manufacturers and retailers, to the extent that it was not supporting public health. Food businesses were encouraged to act more responsibly, as employers, food providers and members of communities (DH 2011).

Though instigated by the Government, the Deal is entirely voluntary – another manifestation of the public-private governance discussed in Chapter 3. Food companies choose whether to sign up and which commitments to endorse. The Deal covers alcohol, food, health at work and physical activity. Signatories subscribe to five core 'pledges' (Table 5.7) plus optional supporting pledges, including five specifically on food, addressing calorie labelling, salt, transfats, obesity, and fruit and vegetable consumption. Proposed actions involve promises to reformulate products to meet targets, promote healthier options, and provide public information and staff training. Signatories include manufacturers, caterers and retailers. The names of signatories and the pledges they have signed up to are published on the DH website[11].

Table 5.7: Five core pledges of Public Health Responsibility Deal

	Pledge
1	We recognise that we have a vital role to play in improving people's health
2	We will encourage and enable people to adopt a healthier diet.
3	We will foster a culture of responsible drinking, which will help people to drink within guidelines
4	We will encourage and assist people to become more physically active
5	We will actively support our workforce to lead healthier lives

Source: DH 2011: 5

5.4.3 Farm workers' pay: Abolition of the Agricultural Wages Board in England

Pay in the agricultural workforce was affected by the Coalition Government's decision to abolish the Agricultural Wages Board in England (the devolved authorities decided to retain their Wage Boards). The Boards had existed since 1948 to set levels of pay and other protections for agricultural workers. The policy problem that the regulation addressed was the Wage Board's interference in the market's ability to set wages. From 1 October 2013, agricultural workers in England came within the scope of the National Minimum Wage (from 2015 the National Living Wage). The predicted impact was that the wage bill to farmers would be reduced: the Regulatory Impact Assessment accompanying the order predicted that it could result in losses to workers of up to £140.5 million in pay, up to £97.8 million in annual leave payments; and up to £8.7 million in statutory sick pay, with commensurate gains to farm businesses (Defra 2012b).

[11] https://responsibilitydeal.dh.gov.uk/partners/

5.4.4 Farm working conditions: The Gangmasters Licensing Authority

The Gangmasters Licensing Authority (GLA), a non-departmental public body which regulates the use of temporary workers by food production companies in the UK, was set up in 2004, following pressure from unions and trade associations, and in response to several cases of harm to undocumented foreign workers involved in food production. It recognises the problem of widespread labour abuses in agricultural and horticultural supply chains. Its objective was to protect workers from abuse by enforcing existing UK employment, tax and immigration law. It required labour suppliers ('gangmasters') to be licensed, and labour users (such as farms or processing plants) to use licensed labour suppliers. The GLA licensing standards cover health and safety, accommodation, pay, transport and training, and the GLA also checks that tax, NI and VAT requirements are met. 'Labour' covers temporary and permanent workers. Sectors covered include all aspects of agricultural and horticultural production, as well as the processing and packaging of food and drink products containing an agricultural component (GLA 2016).

5.5 Concluding comments

This chapter has presented the findings of research that looked for interpretations of the social pillar of sustainability, first in UK policy for Sustainable Development and then in food policy. Once Sustainable Development had been crystallised on the global stage (e.g. by the UN) as a policy problem, the UK became one of the first nations to produce a strategy. Policy attention then rose in an arc, peaking in the mid-2000s, and thereafter declining in prominence – either because it had been displaced by other policy concerns (such as the need for global competitiveness), or because it had become so embedded that it no longer needed to be highlighted (or a mixture).

The first Sustainable Development Strategy of 1994 had the improvement of living standards as its overarching goal, and emphasised the need for collective action to achieve sustainability, but these social elements were not explicitly labelled as such. By 1999, the social pillar was explicitly prioritised, and over the following years was expansively defined. It came to encompass quality of life, work, health, equity, the built environment, levels of education and crime, and access to public services. Communities were often construed as important sites and conduits of social sustainability. Conspicuously, the 'green filter', which would distinguish these policies as socially sustainable rather than simply social, was lacking.

At the time of writing (2016), the 2005 strategy, with its twin goals of living within environmental limits and ensuring a strong, healthy and just society, still stands, but there is a some evidence that sustainability *per se* has slipped down the policy agenda. The social pillar is often conflated with the more individualistic 'wellbeing' – which itself is acquiring elaborate meanings, but tends in policy to omit the relational quality of fairness, although this has been identified in research as a determinant of wellbeing.

Agriculture featured in Sustainable Development strategies from 1994, and since then a succession of strategies and indicator sets has specified attributes for a sustainable food supply. By 2000 a pilot definition of sustainable food had been produced that covered social concerns such as availability, quality, adequacy and animal welfare. The first formal policy for food sustainability problematised the issue mainly as a challenge for agriculture, and social concerns appeared somewhat fuzzily as supply chain 'connections' plus rural livelihoods. It was 2006 before a sustainability strategy appeared for the food industry post-farmgate, developed with strong involvement of the industry itself, an example of government 'steering rather than rowing', as discussed in Chapter 3. This policy identified relevant and actionable social concerns for the food industry as nutrition and health, food safety, equal opportunities, health and safety, and ethical trading.

From 2006, food security appeared alongside sustainability as a goal for the food supply, perhaps because it better accommodated a government agenda for free trade. Sustainability was often used in the narrow sense of 'environmental sustainability', alongside a parallel priority to maintain a secure supply of healthy foods. A new national food strategy appeared in 2010, which prioritised the provision of adequate, healthy food, but put the onus on consumers to make appropriate choices. Thereafter, tensions became apparent among policy-makers over definitions and routes to sustainable food and diet. In this landscape, a number of separate measures were introduced to address what had previously been deemed social aspects of sustainability, but were not badged as sustainability measures.

This is the context of state policy for social sustainability in the conventional food supply – proactive and prescriptive in some ways, but lacking clarity and conviction in others. Within this policy terrain, a number of other actors were also busy trying to understand what social

sustainability could or should mean in the food supply, and were acting on the basis of their own interpretations, in various ways. These are the subjects of the next chapters.

.

Chapter 6: Identifying the governance actors

6.1 Introduction

Having established the public policy context, the next step was to find who else was working on social sustainability in the conventional food supply, and what sort of actors they were (addressing RQ2). This chapter describes the actors identified and investigated during the research. It is based on the website and interview data. The sampling methods described in Chapter 4 eventually led to a list of 135 separate entities (Table 4.1, p. 91). These entities are referred to as 'governance actors'.

6.2 Categorising the actors

As the research progressed, the entities were assigned to categories, partly to keep track of the terrain being explored, and partly to help understand the actors' roles and activities – to answer the question, 'What sort of actor is this?'

One way of categorising them, which emerged early on and remained useful, was to distinguish between those that were directly involved in producing and distributing food, and those that were not. These were respectively described as acting '*in*' and '*on*' the food supply:

- Actors '*in*': organisations directly involved in producing and distributing food and also involved in efforts to govern social sustainability in the food supply;
- Actors '*on*': organisations not directly involved in producing and distributing food, but nevertheless involved in trying to affect the governance of social sustainability in the food supply.

For the actors 'in' the food supply, categorisation seemed straightforward. For the actors 'on' it could be more ambiguous. Some were indispensable to, and in effect did the work of, the food companies. Other entities, such as the Trade Associations, seemed to sit between the actors 'in' and 'on'. These ambiguities are discussed in more detail below. But the broad 'in'/'on' distinction proved workable, and is used to organise the presentation of the findings in Chapters 8 and 9.

Within this broad categorisation, the actors were assigned to narrower categories based on what they did, in an iterative process that saw categories created and merged as the research progressed. The final arrangement consisted of 10 categories:

1. Primary producers, processors and suppliers of inputs and logistics;
2. Manufacturers;
3. Retailers;
4. Food service operators;
5. Trade associations and Levy Bodies;
6. Trade unions;
7. Consultancies;
8. Audit organisations;
9. Advocacy organisations;
10. Multistakeholder Initiatives (or Multistakeholder Platforms).

Tables 6.1 and 6.2 list the 135 entities investigated, allocated to these categories.

The Website Data Summary Tables presented in Annex F are organised by category. (Column 2 in these tables describes the types of entities identified, illustrating the diversity of types and structures.)

This categorisation provided a serviceable way of keeping a grip on what the different entities did, but it is not definitive. More research time would have allowed it to be more finely grained – several of the categories (such as Category 4, Foodservice) lump together organisations doing very different things (such as caterers and wholesalers). And categories 7-9 , which at an early stage comprised a single category of 'actors on', was later divided up (for reasons of both manageability and analytical clarity) into the current categories, which describe what these entities did in terms of their governance of social sustainability, as determined by the researcher. In other words, the main ways in which the actors 'on' were found to govern was through *consultancy, audit and advocacy* – as discussed in more detail below and in later chapters.

Table 6.1 Entities by category

Primary producers, processors, inputs, logistics	Manufacturers	Retailers	Food Service	Trade Associations (TA) & Levy Bodies (LB)	Trade Unions
Cargill	ABF	Asda	Booker	Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board (AHDB) (LB)	Bakers, Food and Allied Workers Union (BFAWU)
Dovecote Park	Bakkavor	The Co-operative	Compass	BPEX (LB)	Farmers for Action
First Milk	Coca-Cola	Lidl	McDonald's	British Frozen Food Federation	National Farmers Union (NFU)
Kuehne & Nagel	Dairy Crest	M&S	Starbucks	British Hospitality Association	Tenant Farmers Association
Monsanto	General Mills	Sainsbury's	Tragus Group	British Meat Processors' Association	Trades Union Congress (TUC)
Moy Park	Greggs	Tesco	Whitbread	British Retail Consortium	Unite the Union
Produce World	Iglo Group	Waitrose	Yum! Brands	British Soft Drinks Association	Union of Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers (USDAW)
Stobart	Premier Foods		3663	Dairyco (LB)	
Young's	Tetley			Dairy UK	
	Unilever			Eblex (LB)	
	Warburtons			Food and Drink Federation	
				Fresh Produce Consortium	
				Home Grown Cereals Authority (LB)	
				Horticulture Development Company (LB)	
				National Association of British and Irish Millers	
				Potato Council (LB)	
				Seafish (LB)	

Table 6.2 Entities by category (cont'd)

Consultancies	ıudit organisations (standard-etters, certifiers, raters)	Advocacy organisations (pressure groups, advisories, NGOs)	Multistakeholder Initiatives
Accenture	Access to Nutrition Foundation	ActionAid	Bonsucro
Benchmark Holdings	AccountAbility	Business for Social Responsibility	Ethical Trading Initiative
Best Foot Forward	BSI and BSI Group	Business in the Community	Fruitjuice CSR platform
Brook Lyndhurst	Bureau Veritas	Compassion in World Farming	Global Initiative on Sustainability Ratings
Ergon Associates	Consumer Goods Forum	Consensus Action on Salt and Health	Global Reporting Initiative
Forum for the Future	Corporate Citizenship	Corporate Register	Global Seafood Sustainability Initiative
Robertsbridge Group	Covalence Ethicalquote	Corporate Watch	ISO Working Group on Social Responsibility
SustainAbility	EIRIS	Ecumenical Council on Corporate Responsibility	Living Wage Foundation
TwentyFifty	Ethical Consumer Research Association	Environmental Practice at Work	Roundtable on Responsible Soy
Two Tomorrows	Ethical Tea Partnership	Food Ethics Council	Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil
	Fairfood International	Friends of the Earth	Social Accountability International
	Fairtrade Foundation	IDH – the Sustainable Trade Initiative	Supply Chain Initiative
	Foreign Trade Association	IGD	Sustainable Agriculture Network
	FTSE Group	IIED	Sustainable Food Lab
	GlobalGAP	Joseph Rowntree Foundation	Tea 2030
	ISEAL Alliance	New Economics Foundation	The Sustainability Consortium
	Marine Stewardship Council	RSPB	
	Oxfam	SOMO	
	Partner Africa	Sustainable Agriculture Initiative Platform	
	PwC	Sustain: the alliance for better food and farming	
	Rainforest Alliance	The Natural Step	
	Red Tractor Assurance	World Business Council for Sustainable Development	
	RSPCA	WWF	
	Sedex (Supplier Ethical Data Exchange)		
	SGS		
	Soil Association		
	Sustainable Restaurant Association		

6.2.1 The actors in more detail

The first four categories of actors represent the main channels through which industrial food is produced and distributed – these actors' governance activities were thus based within the food supply, hence the term actors 'in'. Category 1 included farmers and growers (often with some basic processing such as cleaning and packing occurring at the production site), and also the suppliers of inputs and logistics. Category 2 comprised manufacturers of branded or private-label goods. Category 3 covered multiple retail chains. Category 4 represented a large category of entities that supplied prepared food to be eaten out of the home, including chain restaurants, fast-food outlets, contract caterers, and the wholesalers that supplied this sector.

Category 5 included trade associations and the main sectoral Levy Bodies. Their position on the 'in-out' spectrum was somewhat less clear-cut than for the preceding categories. Although these organisations were not directly involved with the production of food, their member organisations were. Their governance activity therefore seemed to be embedded 'in' the food supply. But then again, although the member-funded Levy Bodies' websites tended to proclaim their 'independence' (e.g. AHDB), the bodies have statutory status, so are quasi-public actors, communicating both the state's policy preferences to the sector and sectoral interests to the state.

Category 6 consisted of trade unions with members working in the food supply. The unions' members are directly involved in the production and distribution of food, and the unions work with and through the food companies, but this relationship often seems oppositional, and their position as influencers from within or outside is ambiguous – perhaps they are both. Categories 5 and 6 could be seen as actors 'in between'.

The next three categories, consultancy, audit and advocacy, comprised governance actors that were acting 'on' the food supply: their objective was to influence its conduct in ways they variously thought desirable. As mentioned, these entities were at one stage grouped together, and could possibly have been allocated to other categories or divided in different ways. The chosen classification categorises them according to the main governance method they used to work on social sustainability in the food supply (although there was some overlap).

Category 7 comprised entities that supplied consultancy services. They pursued their objectives by working closely with the food companies that employed them. Their methods were mainly discursive and advisory: they strategised more sustainable ways of doing things that worked with the grain of the food companies' goals. In some cases (e. g Ergon Associates, which worked on human rights), their activities were similar to those of some of the advocacy groups, whereas others seemed like part of the companies they worked for (e.g. Accenture, which is a 'business process outsourcing company', so does not just advise but actually takes over some roles from its clients).

The entities in Category 8 are described as auditors: they primarily used methods that *measured* food companies' performance, using standards, reporting frameworks, indices or ratings systems. The term 'audit' is taken from Power (1997), who used it as an umbrella term for various techniques of assessment, measurement and 'rituals of verification'. The entities in this category were very heterogeneous, with various orientations and legal forms. For example, the Access to Nutrition Foundation, which ranked the world's 25 largest food companies on criteria including product formulation, affordability and marketing, was a privately funded non-profit based in the Netherlands. AccountAbility, which ran a widely used standard for assuring sustainability reporting, was a non-profit, UK-based 'think tank and advisory firm'. GlobalGap, which ran a social standard for agricultural production, was a membership organisation for food retailers and producers. SGS and Bureau Veritas were global commercial inspection and certification companies, auditing social standards alongside other food standards and standards covering other sectors such as aviation; both were publically owned companies, listed in Switzerland and France respectively. Oxfam, which ran the Behind the Brands campaign ranking 10 multinational food companies on criteria including fair pay for workers and fair prices to farmers, was a UK-based campaign group and charity perhaps better known for its advocacy work, but in relation to the industrial food supply using an audit method to achieve its objectives. The organisations thus differed in that some came from within (GlobalGap) and some from outside (Oxfam) the food supply, but they resembled each other in that they used audit methods to achieve their governance objectives.

Category 9 comprised entities that were primarily advocates: their main governance tools, at least in relation to social sustainability, were again discursive, but rather than aligning and

embedding with the companies (as the Consultancies did), they worked to advocate and influence from a distance, through research, publication, persuasion and argument. They included organisations which described themselves as campaign groups, NGOs or civil society groups, as well as research or training organisations, again with various legal forms.

Category 10 comprised multistakeholder initiatives (MSIs), sometimes also described as 'platforms' or 'roundtables'. These were governance entities that had been specifically created to bring together actors 'in' and 'on' the food supply in an attempt to reach consensual governance arrangements across national, sectoral or internal supply-chain boundaries (thus embodying some of the tenets of contemporary governance already discussed, namely that it is multilevel and involves many diverse actors). In some cases they also bridged the public-private divide – for example the Fruitjuice CSR platform was seed-funded and initially facilitated by the EU. They mainly used audit methods, but seemed to constitute a distinct group within the auditors, because of their multistakeholder approach. However, the MSIs were quite diverse. The 'multi' referred to different types of plurality, with the organisations themselves defining the stakeholder groups to be involved. For example, the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO) focused on a single supply chain, and involved producers, traders, manufacturers, retailers, banks, investors and advocacy organisations. Other MSIs (such as ETI and Social Accountability International) had memberships that cut across sectors.

6.2.2 Ambiguity and interdependency

Categorisation brought clarity about how the entities were participating in governance, but was sometimes difficult, for various reasons. In some cases, organisations' activities spanned more than one category (e.g. retailers' detailed specifications for manufactured goods sold under their own labels made them seem like *de facto* manufacturers; and the consultancies, standard-setters and advocacy groups sometimes performed similar-looking activities). Some organisations were difficult to classify – e.g. the World Business Council on Sustainable Development and Business in the Community, which are both classified as advocacy groups, might equally accurately be described as trade associations.

Nor are the categories exhaustive. As the research unrolled, it challenged the notion of the food supply as a somewhat self-contained set of arrangements, primarily if not exclusively

concerned with producing and distributing food. Several of the organisations found to be active on social sustainability in the food supply were *not primarily concerned with food-related activities*. Examples included actors 'in', such as the logistics company Stobart or the trade association the British Retail Consortium, and many of the actors 'on,' including several of the consultancies, certification companies, research organisations, advocacy groups and MSIs, for which food was just one aspect of their activity. It also became clear that there were other potential categories of actors, which could not be investigated because of lack of time. These might include lawyers, urban planners, advertisers, and providers of the IT/data management systems on which the conventional food supply depends.

The broad division of entities into actors 'in' and 'on' the food supply was often useful as a way of grouping actors together, but it was not watertight. As noted, some actors sat between categories. More strikingly, the extent to which activities were outsourced blurred the distinction. For example, food companies often contracted out the research or strategising which shaped their sustainability activities – e.g. the consultancy Benchmark Holdings modelled sustainable livestock farming for McDonald's Europe, and the consultancy SustainAbility strategised for Coca-Cola. This meant that the organisations acting 'on' were in effect acting 'in'. Finally, some acting 'on' categories of activity, such as standard-setting and certification, seemed so enmeshed in the activities of food companies that they seemed *constitutive* of that activity. They affected both the processes by which foods were produced or traded (for example through social standards such as SAN or Fairtrade) and the conduct of the companies (for example through reporting frameworks such as GRI or indexing by FTSE4Good). Yet these organisations were 'external' to the direct supply of food: indeed, this distance underpins the validity of the 'third party audit', and the word 'independent' was used often in the website self-descriptions of the actors 'on'.

These overlaps and ambiguities show the complexity of the governance terrain and the extent of interconnectedness, illustrating the tendency, discussed in Chapter 3, for new policy problems to give rise to assorted loose or entrenched policy networks, in which actors form pragmatic alliances to achieve specific goals. Across and within categories, diverse entities used the same techniques to achieve different ends, or different techniques to work towards similar objectives.

6.3 The interviewees

This section describes the 27 interviewees in more depth. As the research proceeded, 27 interviews were conducted, aiming to cover the range of the terrain as it emerged. Talking to the interviewees about their work revealed more about how the sorts of entities already described approached social sustainability: where they put it in organisations, for example, or how they fitted it into pre-existing work. It also showed what sort of workers took on (or were given) responsibility for acting on social sustainability in organisations. Table 6.3 allocates interviewees to the categories described above, and Table 6.4 allocates them to the categories of actors 'in' and 'on'. (Table 4.2 lists the interviewees with anonymised job titles.)

Table 6.3 Distribution of interviewees by category (some appear in more than one category)

Category of activity	Total interviewees in category	Relevant interviewees, by number
Production, Processing, Inputs, Logistics	3	11, 13, 23
Manufacturing	4	3, 6, 15, 16
Retail	6	2, 4, 5, 14, 18, 20
Food Service	3	8, 9, 17
Trade Unions	1	25
Trade Associations & levy bodies	4	1, 3, 5, 13
Consultancy	3	7, 21, 24
Audit organisations (standard-setters, certifiers, indexers, raters)	5	1, 12, 19, 22, 26
Advocacy organisations	2	10, 27
MSIs	5	1, 4, 19, 22, 27

Table 6.4 Interviewees allocated to categories of actors 'in' and 'on'

Interviewees acting 'in'	Interviewees acting 'on'
2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 11, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 20, 23, 25	1, 7, 10, 12, 19, 21, 22, 24, 26, 27
Total: 17	Total: 10

6.3.1 Interviewees' jobs, job titles and routes to current work

Given that the interviewees all agreed to be interviewed on (and presumably felt qualified to speak about) the topic of social sustainability, it was notable how many different types of worker the research led to. They were involved with food procurement, technical operations, supply chain management, campaigning, consultancy, human resources, CSR, research, policy and senior management. None of their job titles contained the term 'social sustainability', but acting on social sustainability was part of all their jobs.

The interviewees' job titles suggested that in some cases social sustainability work fell within the remit of organisations or departments dedicated to sustainability (such as Director of Global Sustainability at a manufacturing company or Head of Food and Sustainability at an advocacy organisation). In other cases, social sustainability work had been allocated to, or taken up by, teams or individuals looking after other things, such as ethical or responsible sourcing, CSR, environmental management, food technology, food chain management, policy, public affairs, or the overall operational direction of the company.

The interviewees were asked about their routes into their current jobs, to see how social sustainability had evolved as a field of work and what sort of skills were seen to be relevant. These routes proved to be very varied. Interviewees had reached their current work via catering, human resources, buying teams, technical work in supply chains, the civil service and overseas development. They had academic and professional qualifications in catering, economics, engineering, environmental science, food science, geography, mathematics and philosophy. Several interviewees described having started working in other areas (such as human resources (I.4), CSR (I.9), environmental management (Is. 1 and 7), or food technology (I.2), and having then had to learn how to take on responsibility for sustainability as this became a business concern – first the environmental and later the social aspects. This had happened relatively recently. I.18 (retail) was only 'triggered' to take an interest in sustainability in 2006, although I.23 (producer) felt that by 2006 social aspects of sustainability (mainly in his case labour issues) were 'core' to the business. I.8 (food service) had begun working for a company more than a decade earlier as catering manager, took on environmental management, then in 2011 became head of sustainability, with CSR more recently rolled into his job.

No comparable information on workers in other fields has been consulted to determine whether this range is unusual. In person, though, the interviewees were a strikingly varied group, and this may reflect the newness of social sustainability as an area that organisations, and individuals in them, need to learn to deal with. Social sustainability was not consistently seen to belong to any area of activity, and did not have a professional specialism of its own. Consistent reports that the interviewees had had to learn about social sustainability as an adjunct to the job they had started out doing reinforced the impression that governance in this area was fluid, still a work in progress.

6.3.2 Interviewees as individuals within organisations

The extent to which interviewees expressed their own views, or felt constrained to stick to a prescribed organisational line (or a combination) can only be guessed. All used the term 'we' when describing their organisations' activities. In a few cases, interviewees seemed careful to present views that could be associated with their organisations (I.14, retail, in particular). In most, however, interviewees seemed to speak freely and even passionately. Several of the interviewees (e.g. Is.2 (retail), 11 (producer), 13 (producer), 16 (manufacturing), 18 (retail) and 22 (audit)) were senior decision-makers in their organisations.

It was noticeable that several interviewees were keen to identify themselves as being 'on the side of' social sustainability, and to want to ally themselves with the interviewer, who was assumed to be in this camp. These interviewees would sometimes use the term 'we' to refer to themselves and the interviewer. There was a sense from some interviewees that their work was marginalised in their organisations. I.8 (food service) said his employers sometimes said the company was already 'ticking the green box', and resisted his efforts to extend its sustainability activities. I.15 (manufacturing) said sustainability was something he and fellow sustainability workers in his company had so far 'got away with', implying a sense that someone elsewhere in the company might notice and put a stop to it. I.9 (food service) said she had found it important, at least when she began working on it, to associate with sustainability practitioners from other companies, who were working on the same sort of issues. A consultant (I.21) described some tension within her organisation between the advocates of a strongly environmental interpretation of sustainability, and her own orientation towards the social aspects. On the other hand, others said they encountered no resistance in their work (e.g. Is. 2 and 4, both retail). The desire of some interviewees to ally

themselves with an interviewer perceived to be sympathetic to their work may reflect their position as proponents of something (social sustainability) not seen as centrally important to their organisation's objectives or possibly even counterproductive.

Some interviewees discussed their own role – or the role of individuals within organisations – as agents with differential scope for bringing about change. For example, I.1 (trade association) commented that the seniority and skill level of the individuals 'doing' social sustainability within companies varied, and this affected the scope and quality of the work done. Their position in an organisation would also determine their power to be 'agents of change'. This interviewee reflected that implementing change across the whole range of sustainability concerns might require 'the capacity of a CEO' (I.18, who was a CEO, agreed, and the website data pointed in the same direction – at Sainsbury, for example, ultimate responsibility for sustainability rested with the CEO, then Justin King). I.5 (retail) reflected that sustainability practitioners within organisations might not have decision-making power:

> 'Whether or not you're really throwing out the resources will be dependent on the 'C-suite' kind of people, you know, the CFO, the CEO the COO, those people, because those people make the decisions'.

This leads to the possibility that where organisations 'put' social sustainability, and the level of expertise and authority made available to it, may (intentionally) affect the scope and effectiveness of activity. The interviewees answered variously to heads of Human Resources, Brand, Commercial, CSR or the CEO. I.20 (retail) discussed the importance of these lines of accountability in some detail, explaining why he felt it was important to be part of a 'commercial' team (ie, involved in procuring food and setting standards), rather than, say, CSR or Corporate Affairs, which were more remote from day-to-day procurement and quality control:

> *We have our [sustainability] strategy, which is owned by the Corporate Affairs director ... [and] to a large extent by the CEO because it's closely owned at the top. But ... (t)he responsibility for what we do if you like day-to-day in our supply chain sits within Commercial, and the ethical trading bit, the labour standards in the supply chain, is firmly part of Commercial. [So] my part of the [sustainability] agenda … goes up to the Commercial Director of the business. There's a lot of benefits, to be fair, for me, because what we're doing needs to involve every supplier, if you're not mainstreamed in Commercial that's very challenging, and I know, I've obviously had a lot of contact with peers in this sector broadly, and if you're sat in Corporate Affairs it's far harder to make those strong links into Commercial. Which is where the money is, if you like' (I.20).*

6.3.3 The interviewees as interviewees

The interviewees had agreed to be interviewed on the topic of social sustainability, so it is perhaps unsurprising that most of them seemed interested in the topic. Their level of knowledge of sustainability was variable, with the social aspects sometimes eliciting hesitant responses. However, many interviewees showed a thoughtful understanding of the topic, and also a knowledge of the policy context set by Government or multilateral organisations, although little was known of any academic work on the subject.

The interviewees generally seemed committed to the objectives of sustainability and recognised its social dimensions. They felt their efforts 'made a difference', though they also expressed doubts about how effective these efforts could be. They were both dedicated and sceptical. A sample quotation from I.22 (from a standard-setting organisation) sums up a common tone of resignation:

> *'I think there are bright, smart, forward-thinking ethical people in every business. I think there is progress … [but] is it the norm now for food category buyers of supermarkets to be incentivised by social and environmental impacts as opposed to margin increases? No.'*

The overall impression of the interviewees was of thoughtful individuals aware of both the constraints and the opportunities of their work, who were both sceptical and supportive of the organisational settings that channelled their activities. They emerged as actors in their own right in the world of social sustainability: they implied they had agency and used it. In the words of I.6 (manufacturing), 'People make decisions. You know, when you hear about something in organisations, you see it in the press, somebody has made that decision'.

6.4 The diversity, scale and complexity of the governance actors

6.4.1 Diversity

Stepping back from the interviewees to look again at the entities involved in governance, one of the most striking observations was their variety. The activities encompassed within the modern conventional food supply (represented by the first four categories) was already large, ranging from the production and supply of seeds and agricultural chemicals (e.g. Monsanto), trade (Cargill) and long-distance transportation logistics (Stobart) to manufacturing (Unilever), catering (Compass) and retail (Sainsbury's), as well as industrial-scale food production (Produce World) and processing (First Milk). Around these activities and underpinning them were the activities of the sectoral trade associations, Levy Bodies

and unions, variously involved in and advocating for e.g. the dairy sector (Dairyco), hotel and restaurant caterers (the British Hospitality Association) or retail workers (USDAW). Working on and among them were the consultants (e.g. on management in the case of Accenture, or sustainability for Two Tomorrows), standard-setters (the Marine Stewardship Council), certifiers (SGS), financial indexers (Covalence Ethicalquote), and pressure groups with different agendas (e.g. campaigning on the environment for Friends of the Earth, dietary salt reduction for Consensus Action on Salt and Health).

There was also great variation *within* categories and even within single entities. Certification against social standards, for example, was carried out by small, non-profit organisations such as Partner Africa and large, multinational public companies such as Bureau Veritas. Within food service, activities ranged from delivered wholesaling to highly differentiated catering. As already noted, many of the entities carried out more than one type of activity, and many also worked in other sectors as well as food. For example Associated British Foods (ABF), which manufactured foods under different brand names, also made animal feed, ran an enzyme production company and an environmental audit company, and owned the budget fashion retail chain Primark. The inspection and certification company SGS, which audited a number of social standards in the food supply, also certified to standards in the aviation, chemical, construction, energy and mining sectors. Compass, known mainly in the UK for contract catering, was a global facilities management company, and even in the UK operated under different names in different market segments, such as Medirest (in hospitals) and Chartwells (in schools). The logistics supplier Stobart operated road and rail freight, warehousing facilities and port facilities in the UK food supply, but was also active in biomass fuel, property development and civil engineering.

This variety is relevant because it formed the terrain within which work for social sustainability was carried out, or to put it another way, this was the (very variegated) terrain that the governance actors were trying to govern. The actors all had to make the social sustainability agenda work *for them*. Whether a company was primarily involved in growing vegetables, or retailing groceries, or selling consultancy services to food companies, or using church investments as a campaign tool to leverage more responsible behaviour among food businesses (as does the Ecumenical Council on Corporate Responsibility), or campaigning on slavery in food factories (which the Joseph Rowntree Foundation and ActionAid did from

different perspectives) – these contexts would affect how they construed the social aspects of sustainability in the food supply, and how they chose to act on them.

6.4.2 Size and scale

As noted, the definition of a 'large' company is one with 250 or more employees (BIS 2013). All of the actors 'in' and some of the actors 'on' fell into this category, and some were much bigger. Wrapped up with size was scale – the range of countries in which the entities operated. The websites routinely included large numbers to demonstrate different aspects of their size and scale. For example, the Foodservice Operator Compass employed 500,000 people in 50 countries, and served 4 billion meals a year. Retailer Tesco employed 310,000 people in the UK. Trader Cargill's revenues in 2014 were more than $130bn. Manufacturer Coca-Cola was among the world's top purchasers of sugar, fruit, tea, coffee, sugarcane, corn and oranges. The Audit Organisation Bureau Veritas employed 48,000 people in 140 countries. The MSI Ethical Trading Initiative's members included 68 companies with 'leverage' over nearly 35,000 suppliers, which collectively covered around 9.4 million workers across the globe. The Consultancy Accenture had 293,000 employees, operated in 56 countries and in 2013 had net revenues of $28bn. Advocacy Organisation ActionAid presented itself as a 'global movement'. The Trade Union Unite had 1.4 million members, and Trade Union USDAW's website offered guidance in 71 languages as well as English. Illustrating scale from another angle, the financial analyst interviewee I.12 said that the monetary value of UK investments moving through the food system amounted to 'hundreds of millions of pounds a day, and there will be days when it's billions across the universe of major retailers and manufacturing.' A retail interviewee, I.20, described how his organisation sourced products in 25 countries and recognised 800 competent auditors to certify them to various standards.

In terms of location, besides the UK, entities were headquartered, based or listed in the Netherlands (Access to Nutrition Foundation, Fairfood International, Somo), Germany (Lidl), the US (General Mills, Business for Social Responsibility), India (Tetley), France (Bureau Veritas), Switzerland (SGS) and South Africa (3663).

In the literature, the large size and global scale of food corporations were often seen as factors in the unsustainability of the conventional food supply (e.g. Hinrichs 2010; Murphy

et al 2012). However, as the findings above show, many of the actors 'on' were also large and global. In their websites, the large organisations tended to present their size and scale as positive characteristics. In fact Tesco focused on this, stating that one of its goals for improving social impacts was 'using our scale for good'. Oxfam said that large corporations could be 'a powerful force for good', while Coca-Cola saw itself as having the power to address global social challenges because of its presence 'at local level' in more than 200 countries. Retail interviewee I.14 shared the view that scale can amplify impact:

> *'We have an own-brand range of about 12,500+ products, with a value of about £10m, we source from about 1,000 suppliers across a couple of thousand production sites, [drawing on] tens of thousands of farms, and our supply chains run across about 80 countries in the world. The impact we have is potentially huge, both in terms of our resource draw as a business and the thousands and thousands of people involved in making our products… we are like a big oil tanker, it can take quite a bit of time to change direction but it has a serious impact in scale' (I.14).*

Operating on this scale has implications for the governance of social sustainability. On the positive side, it may be possible to amplify positive impacts large numbers of sites, products, suppliers and workers. It may also be possible to impose relatively high UK social standards in supplier countries with lower standards. More negatively, it may be difficult to harmonise policies among sites or territories, either for organisational reasons, or because of cultural or legal differences between territories. It is also possible to 'game' rules in different jurisdictions (such as tax rules or worker protection regulations) to the advantage of individual organisations and possible detriment of employees or national authorities, and this may be difficult to trace or scrutinise from the outside.

6.4.3 Complexity

It was also striking that many of the large, multinational entities had very complex structures. An example was Moy Park, a vertically integrated poultry company which supplied fresh and processed products, at various quality levels (including budget, locally farmed, organic, free-range and corn-fed), to British retailers and food service operators. Moy Park was based in Northern Ireland, operated 14 main sites in the UK, France and the Netherlands, owned hatcheries and feed mills, and had 800 farms in its supply chain. It was owned by an American protein products group, which in turn was owned by the Brazilian food processing company Marfrig Group, based in Sao Paolo. Marfrig had facilities in South America, Asia, the USA, Europe and Australia. Marfrig was the largest poultry producer in the UK and the largest private company in Northern Ireland. This information was gleaned

from the company's webpages, but the connections between companies were often not clear, or were masked. For example, McLarnon Feeds was a feed company linked to Moy Park, but this was only apparent because the website was listed in small type on the Moy Park webpage. The McLarnon website said the company was 'independent', but also part of the O'Kane Group. O'Kane, which said it was a 'family business', was listed under 'our Brands' on the Moy Park page.

Other examples of complexity included UK-based corporate sustainability consultancy Two Tomorrows, which was owned by DNV-GL, a global provider of risk-management services which originated as a Norwegian shipping classification society. DNV-GL described itself as 'an independent foundation that aims to safeguard life, property and the environment', but DNV-GL was (in 2013) partly owned by a private company. The Advocacy Organisation IDH: the Sustainable Trade Initiative described itself as a private-sector initiative funded by the Dutch, Swiss, and Danish governments, matched by corporate clients. The Auditor GlobalGap was a non-profit membership organisation managed by a German non-profit owned by a by a German retail research organisation. Manufacturer Coca-Cola operated through many subsidiaries, which respectively manufactured syrups, converted syrups into bottled drinks, or controlled marketing. These various companies, which comprised the 'Coca-Cola system', were distributed around the world. In the UK, they did not form 'a single entity from a legal or a management point of view'.

As a group, the MSIs had particularly elaborate structures. An example was the Roundtable on Responsible Soy (RTRS), which developed and ran several standards for soy production. It had three types of membership with different levels of power (such as being able to elect board members), and ran a General Assembly as well as ad hoc working groups and technical committees.

The structures and ownership of companies were also dynamic. The food sector is highly active in terms of acquisitions and mergers, and websites summarised some of the changes in ownership. An example was Premier Foods, which began as a holding company in 1975 and over the years acquired and divested itself of brands, businesses and segments of businesses (e.g. Cadbury's Drinks, the Colman's division of Unilever, Oxo, RHM and Kraft Foods' ambient desserts business). In 1999, the company was bought by a US private equity

group which specialised in leveraged buyouts, and in 2004 was floated on the London Stock Exchange. 'Restructuring' at various times led to plant closures and layoffs. This example illustrates how readily food companies and fractions of food companies change hands, and how investors (such as private equity firms) with no specialist interest in the food supply have become owners of food supply companies. The restructuring that follows a change of ownership can involve reductions in the number of sites and size of workforce (the projected profitability of takeovers, on which borrowing depends, is often contingent on these rationalisations). In these arrangements, the nature of the industrial products being produced – soup, beverages, pies, desserts – seems irrelevant to the process.

These complexities in company structure and the related difficulty of tracing ownership have been connected by other authors (Clapp and Fuchs 2009; Burch and Lawrence 2013) with adverse social impacts (such as the elimination of jobs), as well as disruption to lines of accountability. Another significant result of the complexity is that scrutiny by non-specialists is made much more difficult.

6.4.4 For profit or not for profit?

Whether organisations are aiming to make a profit from their activities, or have other motives, is likely to affect priorities and decision-making processes, and the profit motive has been identified as an obstacle to prioritising sustainable business practice (Danielsen 2005; Fleming and Jones 2013; Wilks 2013). This, therefore, seemed a potentially useful way of categorising the entities investigated.

For-profit organisations have the objective of making a profit to be distributed as a dividend to owners (whether private owners/investors or shareholders) or members (in the case of some co-ops and partnerships) (Roach 2013). All of the organisations involved in the direct production and supply of foods (the actors 'in') fell into this category, as did some of the audit organisations and consultancies. Not-for-profit organisations do not have the objective of making a distributable profit. Most of the advocacy organisations, some of the audit organisations and consultancies and all of the MSIs fell into this category. There was therefore a distinction between the actors 'in' as profit-seekers, and the actors 'on' as mainly non-profits.

However, this method of slicing the data also presented difficulties. For one thing, many of the not-for-profit organisations conducted some commercial (paid-for) activities such as consultancy, certification or research. These activities were indistinguishable from the activities of for-profit companies. For example, the Soil Association (a non-profit) ran a commercial certification business, Soil Association Certification, operating along the same lines as the commercial certification company Bureau Veritas. Forum for the Future's consultancy work was paid-for but not for profit, whereas Benchmark Holding's consultancy work was for-profit because the company was part of a publically traded plc. FTSE4Good was a for-profit sustainability indexer of companies, whereas Covalence Ethicalquote did the same thing on a not-for-profit basis. Another significant difficulty was that it was sometimes difficult to tell from the websites whether entities were for- or non-profit. Several of the advocacy organisations (e.g. Compassion in World Farming and the Food Ethics Council) were also charities, which is a 'halo' used by organisations meeting the requirements of the Charities Act, but is not a legal company form.

Beyond this, it was often not clear how non-profits were funded. It seems possible that funding sources might influence the selection of activities (including those relevant to social sustainability), so this was relevant. But only a minority of non-profits were transparent about their funding arrangements. An example was the Netherlands-based, non-profit rating organisation Access to Nutrition Foundation, which said it was wholly funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and the Wellcome Trust. It is perhaps also worth noting that where non-profits sell products or services, any 'surplus' (which is not called profit) must stay in the company. It cannot be distributed to shareholders (because there are none), but it can be used to fund high salaries for directors.

This opacity about organisational structure and funding makes scrutiny more difficult. It is also inconsistent with the goal of transparency, which is often cited as a necessary feature of governance appropriate to sustainability. To the extent that these are aspects of corporate governance, the question arises whether this corporate governance is facilitating or obstructing efforts to govern the food supply in ways that are socially sustainable.

6.4.5 So what is a food company?

The answer to this question became more ambiguous as the research progressed. All of the entities in the first four categories were at the outset viewed as food companies. But it has been shown that many were not only or even mainly involved in food-related work. Is Primark a food company? (It is owned by Manufacturer ABF). Is Logistics Supplier Stobart? (It performs a vital function in warehousing and transporting food, but services many other sectors as well.) Then again, many of the actors 'on' were also companies, of different sorts. Is the food-focused campaign group Sustain a food company? (It is legally a private company limited by guarantee, a common form for non-profits.) In the literature of food sustainability, food companies are often discussed in pejorative terms, as shown in earlier chapters. Their very nature is seen to be inimical to the practices and ethos of sustainability. But what is this very nature? The generic term 'company' (or 'corporation', which Wilks (2013) says is an alternative term for the same thing), cannot be used as a portmanteau label for actors deemed to be opposed to sustainable food provisioning. Using the term in this way deters deeper analysis of the aspects of 'companyhood' that work for or against different social sustainability (or other) goals.

A number of aspects of companyhood (the fact of being a company) seemed relevant to the current study. (The researcher did not have prior knowledge of company or business law; the following summary is based on Roach (2013), Wilks (2013), the Companies House website (Companies House n.d.). and the Companies Act 2006 (UK Parliament 2006)). A company is a legal structure that allows groups of people to engage in business activity. Companies are formed by a process called 'incorporation', which literally means 'giving a bodily form to', and which endows the company with a legal personality in its own right, with privileges and obligations defined (in the UK) by the most recent version (2006) of the Companies Act. The company thus becomes a social actor. The privileges of its 'fictitious personhood' include the right to own property and enter into contracts, and limit the liability of its owners to the extent of their stake in the company (a protection known as the 'corporate veil'). The obligations entail the capacity to be sued, and the requirement to fulfil certain legal responsibilities, including filing financial accounts regularly with Companies House. A company can be prosecuted, but cannot be jailed (because its 'body' does not exist). The legal principle of limited liability, which has been credited both with unleashing

companies' wealth-generating capacity and also with allowing companies to distance themselves from responsibility for any exploitation, inequality, or environmental destruction that their activities may cause, only dates back to the Joint Stock Companies Act of 1856. It is not an ancient or inevitable feature of capitalist markets. Companies can be either public (designated by the suffix plc) or private (designated by the suffix Ltd). Public companies can sell shares to the public (though they do not have to), and can thus marshal large amounts of capital. To facilitate trade in shares, they may 'list' shares on a stock exchange. A consequence of this structure is that ownership may be diffuse, and the managers or directors of a company may not know in detail who its owners (the shareholders) are. Private companies, which are defined in law as companies that are not public companies, may be 'limited by shares' or 'limited by guarantee'. Private limited companies are a very common vehicle for business activity. Private companies limited by guarantee are usually set up to be not-for-profit. Companies can own other companies, in complicated chains of ownership often spanning several countries (as illustrated by the examples cited above). These companies may trade and transfer assets among themselves. Reporting requirements differ for different types of company and different jurisdictions.

As noted, among the entities researched, the actors 'in' the food supply were predominantly companies distributing profit, either to private owners (e.g. retailer Lidl, infrastructure firm Cargill, manufacturer Mars or restaurant-chain owner Tragus Group) or public owners (e.g. retailer Sainsbury, manufacturer Unilever, wholesaler Booker, fast food chain McDonalds). Exceptions were Waitrose, which was employee-owned, and the retailer the Co-op and the milk processor First Milk, which were co-ops. The trade associations, Levy Bodies and unions were mainly associations, with their own legal structures.

However, the majority of the actors 'on' were also companies. A few were plcs (including consultancies Accenture, Benchmark Holdings, Corporate Citizenship and Best Foot Forward, which during the course of the research was bought by the Anthesis Group), the certification companies Bureau Veritas and SGS, and the indexer the FTSE Group. The majority were private companies limited by guarantee – non profits. Where entities were based overseas, it could be hard to determine their legal structure.

It became clear that the business context – the world of company law, business 'know-how' and legal protections (such as limited liability) – framed not just the activities of the actors 'in' the food supply but also the activities of many of the actors 'on'. This may mean no more than that they co-exist within the same legal framework. But it may also normalise this context, rendering invisible the conventions that frame activity, and also limiting scope for objective or disruptive critique.

6.5 A 'sustainability sector' within an industry

It became clear from both the websites and the interviews that a new sector addressing sustainability had been called into existence by the advent of sustainability as a governance problem for the food supply, and that social sustainability was often but not always part of its remit. The industry comprised individual specialist practitioners – some of whom had adapted other types of expertise, as described by the interviewees – as well as the specialist consultancies, standard-setters, certifiers and advocacy groups investigated here.

One of the earliest examples was the consultancy SustainAbility, founded in 1987 (the year that the Brundtland report appeared), to catalyze business action on Sustainable Development via the Triple Bottom Line, of which (according to SustainAbility's co-founder, John Elkington), the most important contribution was inclusion of the social pillar (Elkington 1997). Benchmark Holdings, another sustainability consultancy, was set up in 2000 when its three founders acted on 'their vision to build a profitable business based on the growing need to create a sustainable and ethical future for global food production'. The auditor Partner Africa was created to conduct the social audits required by European standards. Other examples of entities that existed specifically to address sustainability-related concerns included the business advisory group Forum for the Future; the business indexer FTSE4Good; the advocacy organisations IDH: the sustainable trade initiative, Sustain: the alliance for Food and Farming and The Natural Step; and the standard-setter the Sustainable Restaurant Association. Giving some indication of the scale of the sector, there were 140 certification bodies accredited to certify to GlobalGAP standards. The certification company Bureau Veritas reported year-on-year growth averaging 14% between 1996 and 2013.

6.6 Social sustainability as part of a bigger job

While it was true that a cadre of specialists and specialist entities had emerged to address sustainability, for many actors, whether organisations or individuals, working on social sustainability in the food supply was *just one of a range of things* they did. This might affect the expertise and time these actors chose or were able to devote to the issue, as well as how the issue was framed.

Typically, *social* sustainability was part of a broader sustainability remit. This was the case for the specialist consultancies Robertsbridge and Two Tomorrows, standard-setters such as SAN and Rainforest Alliance, and advocacy organisations such as Sustain: the alliance for Better Food and Farming, all of which tackled all aspects of sustainability. It was also the case for several of the interviewees, such as Is.3 (manufacturing), 4 (retail), 8 (food service), 21 (consultant), and 26 (audit), who worked on all aspects of sustainability at their respective organisations.

Alternatively, sustainability as a whole might be just one aspect of a job or organisation that focused on other things. This was self-evidently true for supply-chain organisations such as food manufacturers or retailers, where sustainability was just one aspect of their operations. For some interviewees, too, sustainability was part of a job that was mainly about something else (e.g. Is. 11 and 13, producers of fruit and meat respectively.)

At a greater remove, for several organisations, not only was sustainability just one aspect of its activities, but so was the food supply. This was the case, for example, for the certifiers SGS and Bureau Veritas, which certified to social and sustainability standards alongside safety, environmental and quality standards, in food sectors alongside aviation, minerals and others. The logistics provider Kuehne & Nagel supplied specialist services to the food industry as well as the forest products, emergency and healthcare sectors. The Advocacy Organisation Business in the Community covered a range of issues (including sustainability) in a range of sectors (including the food supply). The trade association the British Retail Consortium covered the whole of retailing, not just food retailing. And the pressure group IIED researched and published on a range of Development issues, but had a prominent work stream on sustainable food supply chains. I.12, the financial analyst, saw food businesses as entities performing well or badly in the market, no differently from others he dealt with.

And I.17, who had responsibility for policy on social aspects of sustainability as part of the commercial team of a large food service operator, said her job could involve everything 'from supporting the window cleaning to supporting the purchase of chicken'.

This 'de-foodifying' of food (reflected in the common practice of describing it as 'product') challenges the exceptionalism sometimes attributed to food, especially in the food sustainability literature; it may even capture some of the essence of *un*sustainability that the proponents of alternatives seek to avoid.

6.7 Concluding comments

This chapter has described the entities found to be active alongside the state in the governance of social sustainability in the UK food supply – the governance actors.

The actors were found to be diverse, going beyond starting concepts of categories that might be relevant. They included organisations that produced and distributed food or contributed directly to this by providing agricultural inputs or logistics (actors 'in'); organisations that acted within and across sectors, such as trade unions and trade associations; and a host of organisations that acted 'on' the food supply, in ways categorised as consultancy, audit or advocacy. Most of the entities investigated had the legal form of companies: most of the actors 'in' were for-profit companies, whereas many of the actors 'on' were non-profits, placing the majority of the participants within the ambit and idiom of the business world. However, the structures involved were various and complex, and the complexity was compounded by the size and scale of many of the entities. Provision of information in websites was uneven and there was a lack of transparency on matters such as structure, relations between entities, lines of accountability, and funding arrangements of some of the non-profits. These features, which contextualise the organisations' work on social sustainability and affect purposes, decision-making processes, priorities and reporting requirements, have the potential to affect the scope, nature and effectiveness of work on social sustainability.

The interviewees occupied a range of roles and had varied backgrounds, implying that social sustainability was not (yet) a settled specialism. However, the interviewees were found to be informed participants in the process of governing sustainability. They came from diverse backgrounds, often having added first sustainability then social sustainability to pre-existing

responsibilities. They saw their work as constructive, though they had some scepticism about the impact of their work.

Such were the actors found to be ‘doing’ social sustainability in the food supply. The next chapter looks at how these actors interpreted and construed the idea of social sustainability.

.

Chapter 7: Building meanings: how the governance actors defined social sustainability

7.1 Introduction

This chapter describes how the non-state governance actors defined and construed social sustainability. It therefore complements Chapter 5 in addressing RQ1. The investigation looked at websites to see how (in what terms, under what headings, with what attributes) social sustainability was treated; and asked interviewees what they understood by the term, and how their understandings had been formed.

The website research found that even where entities prioritised sustainability within their activities, *social* sustainability was rarely defined separately or highlighted by name as an area of work. But this did not mean that companies were not trying to act on social themes they saw as appropriate and actionable – on the contrary, the websites were full of descriptions of these themes and activities, which were sometimes linked to sustainability, and sometimes referred to by other names. The interviewees described a process of building and borrowing meanings for social sustainability over a relatively short period of time, drawing on their previous experience of working on related topics, from their peers and trade associations, and from other sources.

Overall, a variegated picture emerged, with the inclusion of themes (or the attribution of social themes to sustainability) seeming opportunistic and sometimes arbitrary. But from the miscellany some consensus emerged, and patterns were visible that showed how the actors were making sense of the idea, making it relevant to themselves and their interests, and mapping out a terrain for action.

The chapter proceeds by presenting meanings gathered from the website research, and then meanings and comments from the interviewees; it then discusses themes that arose from both sets of data.

7.2 The elusive pillar: social sustainability in the websites

Looking for social sustainability in the websites was not straightforward. The sites presented information in a variety of ways, using different combinations of hyperlinks and tabs to guide the user to different topics. None of the gateway websites investigated had a hyperlink or tab explicitly labelled 'social sustainability', suggesting that the topic was not deemed sufficiently important or well established to warrant this treatment. The investigation then became a process of following links for sustainability, to see what social themes were addressed, or following links for social themes (such as work or nutrition) which the literature, and the ongoing research itself, flagged as social aspects of sustainability, to see how they were labelled. The objective was to get some sense not only of what the entities saw as social sustainability, but also of the extent to which they associated their social concerns or responsibilities with sustainability.

7.2.1 Social sustainability within sustainability

In the absence of direct links to social sustainability, a first step was to look for links to sustainability. The Data Extraction Sheets recorded how the websites treated sustainability – whether it was 'prominent', i.e. whether there was a clear hyperlink or tab from the gateway site to a sustainability section, or whether it was flagged in some other way, such as by a motto or aim (Column 3 in the Website Data Summary Tables, Annex F, records some of this information). Just under half (62 out of 135) of the websites treated sustainability prominently by these criteria.

There was some variation by category – for example, among the actors 'in', the retailers had more prominent coverage than the manufacturers or the primary producers, and the food service operators gave the topic least prominence. Of the actors 'in between', the Trade Associations and Levy Bodies gave the topic little prominence and none of the trade unions gave it prominence. Among the actors 'on', the degree of prominence was much higher, but this may be an artefact of the theoretical sampling process (which led to entities acting in some way on social sustainability). On the basis of the data collected, it can be said that sustainability is not universally presented as an overarching goal for actors in the food supply. However, as will be seen, the prominence with which sustainability was flagged on gateway sites was not a reliable indicator of the extent to which social sustainability-related themes would be addressed. It seems more likely that sustainability is not universally seen

as the heading under which entities pursue the range of activities that sustainability was intended to bring together.

It is important to say, though, that for entities that *did* give sustainability prominence, it was often flagged as an important goal, or formed part of the entity's mission statement. For example, Inputs Supplier Monsanto summed itself up as a 'sustainable agriculture company', Manufacturer Tetley aimed to supply 'sustainable hydration', and Retailer M&S wanted to be 'the world's most sustainable retailer'. Consultancy Best Foot Forward said its aim was 'inspiring and enabling social, environmental and economic sustainability', Audit Organisation AccountAbility aimed 'to mainstream Sustainable Development into organisational performance', Advocacy Organisation IDH aimed 'to drive sustainability from niche to norm', and the MSI the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil aspired 'to make sustainable palm oil the norm'. For a substantial proportion of actors, therefore, across the breadth of the food supply, sustainability was seen as a useful label or vehicle for certain themes and activities.

However, not all of the entities that prioritised sustainability linked it with social themes, and conversely some of the entities most eloquent on what looked like social sustainability did not label it that way. These observations are discussed in later sections.

7.2.2 Selected definitions from the websites

The websites did not provide capsule definitions of social sustainability, but many websites had definitions for sustainability which illustrate how (and which) social themes were being included (Table 7.1).

These conceptualisations all recognise a social dimension in sustainability, whether it is expressed in general terms like 'improving lives' (Inputs Supplier Monsanto); more cursorily as 'social effects' or 'issues' (Audit Organisation SGS, Consultancy Accenture); as more specific social concerns such as 'fair working conditions' (Retailer Tesco) or fair payment (Advocacy Organisation Business in the Community); or the comprehensive array of social benefits attributed to sustainable food by the by the Advocacy Organisation Sustain. They are underpinned by a recognition of responsibility towards people affected by the workings of the food supply.

Table 7.1 Examples of social sustainability themes in websites

Definition	Actor, category
Sustainable agriculture means 'Growing more, conserving more and improving lives'	Monsanto (Inputs Supplier)
Sustainability means operating 'in a responsible way which meets the needs of people and business – without compromising the needs of future generations'	Young's Seafood (Processor)
'Sustainable, equitable growth is the only acceptable business model. The Unilever Sustainable Living Plan ... has a social and economic dimension – our products make a difference to health and wellbeing and our business supports the livelihoods of many people'	Unilever (Manufacturer)
A sustainable supply chain is 'one which is underpinned by fair working conditions for all those involved in the manufacture and supply of our products'	Tesco (Retailer)
'Treating our colleagues and suppliers more fairly, cutting down on energy use in stores, and helping [customers] find healthy, affordable products. These actions are good for people and for the planet. While some call it sustainability – we just call it better business'	Asda (Retailer)
Sustainable Development involves 'business development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs' [but given that there are absolute limits to development] 'any business activity that exceeds these limits is, by definition, unsustainable in the long term and will need to be reconstituted'	The Co-op (Retailer)
'Sustainability is about managing a long-term profitable business while taking into account all the positive and negative environmental, social and economic effects we have on society''	SGS (Audit Organisation)
Sustainability is 'how an organisation creates value for its shareholders and society by maximising the positive and minimising the negative effects on social, environmental and economic issues and stakeholders'	Accenture (Consultancy)
For sustainability, 'We need business models that achieve commercial success by delivering social value within natural limits'	Forum for the Future (Consultancy)
A sustainable world is one 'in which everyone can lead a prosperous and dignified life within the boundaries of the Earth's natural resources'	Business for Social Responsibility (Advocacy Organisation)
Sustainable production involves 'taking a holistic view of a product or service's lifecycle, to address social, economic and environmental issues (such as employee working conditions; fair payment; and resource use) throughout the supply chain'	Business in the Community (Advocacy Organisation)
A sustainable diet is one that optimises environmental impact, supports a resilient and progressive farming and food industry and ensures that foods available are acceptable to consumers while enabling them to meet their nutritional requirements without compromising the ability of future generations to meet theirs	IGD (Advocacy Organisation)
Sustainable food should be produced, processed and traded in ways that: contribute to thriving local economies and sustainable livelihoods – both in the UK and, in the case of imported products, in producer countries; protect the diversity of both plants and animals (and the welfare of farmed and wild species), and avoid damaging natural resources and contributing to climate change; provide social benefits, such as good quality food, safe and healthy products, and educational opportunities'	Sustain: the alliance for better food and farming (Advocacy Organisation)
'Sustainable palm oil production is comprised of legal, economically viable, environmentally appropriate and socially beneficial management and operations'	Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (MSI)

Source: The author

The definitions often invoke the three pillars, either explicitly (Manufacturer Unilever, MSI RSPO), or implicitly (Advocacy Organisations IGD and Sustain). Other recurrent ideas include the need to safeguard resources for future generations (Processor Youngs, Audit Organisation SGS, Advocacy Organisation IGD); the importance of supplying adequate, affordable, safe, nutritious foods (Retailer Asda, Advocacy Organisations IGD and Sustain); the importance of providing livelihoods involving decent, fairly paid work (Manufacturer Unilever, Retailer Tesco, and Advocacy Organisations Business in the Community, IGD and Sustain); and the need to attend to the welfare of farm animals (Advocacy Organisation Sustain).

What is striking about several of these definitions, however, is their framing of sustainability in the context of business. Five of the definitions (Manufacturer Unilever, Processor Young's, Retailer Asda, Audit Organisation SGS and Consultancy Forum for the Future use the word 'business'. Young's expands (or limits) the Brundtland definition to 'meeting the needs of people and business'; Asda conflates its own idea of 'better business' with sustainability; and Forum for the Future implies that sustainable outcomes can only be achieved through commercially successful business models. Consultancy Accenture defines sustainability as being about 'how an organisation creates value for shareholders', while Advocacy Organisation IGD says that a sustainable diet 'supports a resilient food industry'. Two of the definitions (from Inputs Supplier Monsanto and Manufacturer Unilever) link sustainability to growth – an important idea for businesses, but a contentious one in sustainability discourse, as discussed in Chapter 2. Retailer the Co-op, on the other hand, recognises that if business development exceeds natural limits, it is 'by definition' unsustainable.

7.2.3. A profusion of labels for social sustainability

The websites used a confusing array of labels to refer to similar themes. For example, where some used the term 'sustainability' as an umbrella heading for various social themes, others discussed similar issues under headings such as 'responsibility' (Foodservice Operators Yum!, Starbucks and Booker); 'social responsibility', (Manufacturer General Mills, Retailer the Co-op, Advocacy Organisation Business in the Community); 'corporate social responsibility' or CSR, (Trader Cargill, Foodservice Operator Tragus, Consultancy Corporate Citizenship); 'corporate responsibility' or CR (Foodservice Operator Whitbread,

Manufacturer Greggs, Advocacy Organisation Corporate Register); 'corporate social and environmental responsibility' (Foodservice Operator 3663); 'quality, safety, health and environment' or QSHE (Audit Organisation Bureau Veritas); and 'environmental, social, governance' or ESG (Audit Organisations Covalence Ethicalquote and EIRIS).

Strikingly, these alternatives often mentioned, echoed or paraphrased sustainability. To take one from many possible examples, the Trader Cargill said, describing its approach to CSR, 'we don't have all the answers to the complex environmental, economic and social issues the world faces … we focus on meeting today's needs without impairing the world's capacity to serve future generations', thus invoking the three pillars and the idea of futurity. The repeated references to the three pillars often gave the impression that the entities were taking account of sustainability concerns but avoiding using the term. On the other hand, just as Sustainable Development was devised to encompass a wide range of the impacts of human endeavour, it may be that these three categories were also seen by other actors to denote comprehensive coverage of possible concerns – 'all of human life'. But the question arises (as it had in the sustainability literature) as to why other concerns – political, for example –are omitted. A possible explanation is that the three pillars of sustainability – environmental, economic and social – have become a kind of shorthand by which entities can summarise certain activities, which perhaps usefully excludes some issues that might be contentious (Prudham's 'win-win-gloss, 2009: 738).

Another source of ambiguity arose from the fact that several entities used the term 'sustainability' alongside another label. For example, both Manufacturer Coca-Cola and Foodservice Operator McDonald's used the label 'corporate responsibility and sustainability'. It seemed significant that several entities felt the need to list social concerns in addition *to* the term sustainability, or to specify environmental sustainability and then add social concerns (this was also encountered in the policy documents, e.g. Foresight 2011). For example, the Advocacy Organisation Business for Social Responsibility was 'working with business for a just and sustainable world' and the Advocacy Organisation Ecumenical Council on Corporate Responsibility talked about environmental sustainability alongside economic justice and human rights. The Audit Organisation ISEAL addressed 'ecological sustainability and social justice'.

In the end, it was hard to tell whether the use of so many parallel or interchangeable terms in the websites was accidental, inclusive or obfuscatory (or a combination). If anything, there seemed more of a desire to cover all bases than signs of deliberate avoidance. Several of the entities (such as the Audit Organisations GRI and EIRIS, and the MSI the ISO Working Group on Social Responsibility) commented on the proliferation of labels, and concluded that they were synonymous or mutually constitutive. For example, the ISO Working Group on Social Responsibility said, 'the objective of social responsibility is to contribute to Sustainable Development', echoing the assertion in the *Food Industry Sustainability Strategy* that CSR was 'essentially the business contribution to Sustainable Development' (Defra 2006b: 26). However, this approach in itself seems instrumental: the organisations wished to advance Sustainable Development by co-opting alternatives as synonyms.

Rather, the proliferation of terms suggests a persistent lack of certainty on what social sustainability means or could mean – the phenomenon viewed in the literature as either a vexing distraction (Atkinson 2009) or a kind of protean strength (Kates *et al* 2005). The use of so many labels, and the splitting and paraphrasing, inescapably suggested that the status of term sustainability *in its holistic sense* was insecure. In particular, the fact that entities felt the need to specify social themes (such as social justice) alongside sustainability suggested that the users of the terms did not see the two as being inextricably linked. Sustainability was not (or perhaps, given the arc of salience outlined in the public policy review in Chapter 5, had ceased to be) a self-standing concept that inevitably denoted, without the need for qualification, a set of issues that included social themes. In other words, the integrating impetus behind the original concept of Sustainable Development had not succeeded in fusing the separate sets of issues the term covered.

7.2.4 The scope of the terrain: social themes identified in the websites

Whatever label they chose to use, the websites identified a plethora of issues as being legitimate, actionable (or governable) social concerns for the conventional food supply. Again, they were grouped in different ways under cascades of subheadings. For example:

- Primary Producer Produce World had a '4Life Sustainability Strategy' that covered Responsible Sourcing, Environmental Stewardship, Community Impact and Workplace Culture;

- Retailer Tesco used the overarching label 'Tesco and Society' to cover programmes on Health, Responsible Trading, Job Creation, Waste Reduction and Environmental Impact;
- Foodservice Operator Yum Brands! saw 'Responsibility' as covering CSR, World Hunger Relief, Diversity and Nutrition, with the CSR agenda in turn covering Food, People, Community and Environment;
- Consultancy TwentyFifty used a Venn diagram with overlapping circles labelled Organisational Development, Sustainability Dialogue and Human Rights Approach, where the intersection was labelled Social Sustainability.

Once more, the variety of themes and inconsistent grouping suggested that there was no standard formula (or, as identified in the literature, any theoretical basis, e.g. Littig and Griessler 2005) for deciding what was and was not an appropriate concern. There were patterns, as discussed in later sections, but the entities could clearly choose for themselves which concerns to include and exclude.

Not surprisingly, therefore, the concerns listed were compendious, from animal welfare and accountability to worker safety and youth employment (Column 4 in the tables in Annex F provides examples). There was no consistent connection between whether an entity highlighted sustainability prominently on its website and the extent of references to social themes elsewhere in the same website. For example, none of the websites of the food service operators made prominent reference to sustainability, but they contained extensive discussion of social concerns and commitments, covering (in Foodservice Operator McDonald's case) nutrition and wellbeing, supply chain ethics, employee experience, community impacts, animal welfare, worker health and safety; food affordability and equitable trade. Some of the social themes were expressed in homely terms, such as 'Being involved in the communities where we are' (Foodservice Operator Starbucks), 'Doing things the right way' (Manufacturer Bakkavor), or 'Taking care of our people'(Manufacturer ABF). Some were lofty, such as 'Building mutually beneficial relationships and acting in the interests of society' (Retailer Waitrose) or having 'Moral responsibility to consider the social impacts of our activities'(Foodservice Operator Compass). Some were abstract, such as 'economic justice' (Advocacy Organisation ActionAid), 'transparency' (Advocacy Organisation SOMO) or 'accountability' (Audit Organisation AccountAbility). Others were more practical and context-specific, such as 'the responsible formulation, marketing and labelling of food products' and 'obesity' (Consultancy Two Tomorrows).

The extent of coverage of social themes in the websites varied, suggesting the entities had differing conceptions of how much intervention they could or should make on social matters. Some listed relatively few (and where just a few were mentioned they tended to cover worker health and safety, worker wellbeing, community impacts and philanthropy, e.g. Logistics providers Keuhne & Nagel and Stobart). Retailer Lidl, with fairly cursory coverage, mentioned 'Respectful treatment of customers, employees and business partners', as well as workers' livelihoods in suppler countries. Other entities (such as Manufacturer ABF and the Audit Organisation the Soil Association) provided extensive and nuanced discussion of social themes. Retailer Waitrose included concerns not mentioned by others, such as 'Responsible development', which entailed considering the social impacts of new store development. The Audit Organisation Covalence Ethicalquote, a financial indexer, had one of the most comprehensive presentations of the social scope of sustainability, with multiple assessment criteria on themes including corruption, lobbying, executive pay rates, and local hiring.

As a category, the Trade Associations and Levy Bodies made least mention of social themes in their websites. In fact the Levy Bodies for the pig sector (BPEX), the red meat sector (EBLEX), the horticulture sector (the Horticulture Development Company) and the cereals sector (the Home Grown Cereals Authority) made no mention of any social themes, and the Levy Body for the dairy sector, Dairyco, mentioned only farm viability. Given the attention paid in the literature of food sustainability, and in the critiques of the conventional food supply cited in Chapter 1 (e.g. Rogaly 2008; Lang et al 2009; EHRC 2010), to the shrinking supply, low-paid status and often precarious and exploitative quality of work found in primary production in the food supply, it was surprising that these bodies were so silent on social issues. The implication was that they did not see the social concerns of their sectors as issues they wanted to highlight as sites for remediable action by them.

Overall, the miscellany of social themes cited as relevant and actionable showed, first, that actors saw extensive scope for the governance of social issues within the food supply and, second, that there was little agreement about whether or not these issues, and the process of governing them, were facets of sustainability.

7.2.5 Defining the social out of sustainability

In some cases, though, sustainability was so sketchily linked to social themes that the treatment of the social pillar seemed tokenistic. For example, it was quite common for environmental concerns to be given more prominence than social ones. The Consultancy Benchmark Holdings was set up specifically to help food companies operationalise sustainability: its aim was 'to build a profitable business based on the growing need to create a sustainable and ethical future for global food production'. This organisation mainly focused on modelling livestock production (its clients included McDonalds Europe and the Chinese government), advising on farm animal breeding and genetics, pharmaceuticals and vaccine use, and supplying expertise on 'sustainability science'. The social aspect of its work was covered under the heading of 'ethics' (one of the pillars of its '3E' model of sustainability), with cursory mentions of animal welfare and farmers' livelihoods. This actor, while acknowledging that sustainability had a social dimension, concentrated on environmental work because that was the area of its own organisational expertise.

In other examples, the Trade Association for the dairy supply chain, Dairy UK, produced a *Dairy Roadmap*, said to outline its 'unique approach to sustainability', which exclusively covered environmental impacts (as did the *Soft Drinks Sustainability Roadmap*, produced by the Trade Association the British Soft Drinks Association). Again, the fact that these actors had chosen to frame sustainability in mainly environmental terms is striking in view of the critical attention paid in academic and popular discourse to the social impacts of the dairy sectors (e.g. Lang 2010a; PA 2015), and to the adverse nutritional impacts of soft drink consumption (e.g. MacGregor and Hashem 2014; *Telegraph* 2015); the soft drinks industry is also a major purchaser of sugar (as the Coca-Cola website attested) and sugar supply chains were publically exposed by the Advocacy Group ActionAid as being sites of worker exploitation as well as tax avoidance (ActionAid 2013). Given these controversies, the actors may have been acting strategically when they framed sustainability as a primarily environmental issue, focussing on problems which they could (and could be seen to) act on, and defining out more challenging problems, or issues they did not wish to highlight.

Another fairly common way of presenting sustainability was to highlight economic, or more accurately financial, issues. This was a complex area, because in the literature a case had been made that the economic pillar should be seen as a subsection of the social pillar (e.g.

Dillard *et al* 2009). In the websites, economic and social themes were often grouped together or fused. Farmworkers' and food workers' 'livelihoods' often appeared as a social theme, fusing social and economic objectives, and occasionally this was the main nor only social theme listed. The only social theme referred to by the diary sector Levy Body, Dairyco, was farm viability. Again, the decision to frame sustainability narrowly as financial viability, or to conflate the social and economic aspects, may either indicate what the entity feels it has the capacity to act on; or (or in addition) it may exclude issues the entity does not wish to address.

7.2.6 Social activity not linked to sustainability

While some entities discussed sustainability but downplayed social themes, others were eloquent on what looked like social sustainability but did not call it that. Most conspicuous in this group were the unions. The food sector unions' websites mentioned labour issues such as pay rates, pay differentials, workers' rights and working conditions, workplace health and safety, and worker protections. They also addressed broader social issues affecting workers, such as equality, discrimination, the ways in which work interacts with caring responsibilities, the protection of livelihoods (especially for farmers) and the right to adequate safety-net benefits for those unable to work. But although the unions were discussing what were widely seen in the literature and by other actors to be important aspects of the social sustainability of the food supply, the unions did not present their work in that light.

Other entities notably active on themes seen by others as relevant to social sustainability, without using the label themselves, included the Audit Organisation the RSPCA (active on animal welfare, food safety and food affordability), the MSI Social Accountability International (whose work covered various aspects of labour in supply chains) and the Advocacy Organisation the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (eloquent on the themes of exploitative work in food factories). Consultancy Ergon Associates was consulted by several actors 'in' on social aspects of sustainability (to do with labour and human rights), but did not highlight social sustainability as one of its areas of expertise.

The fact that so many organisations conducting work relevant to social sustainability in the food supply did not use the label reinforces the idea that the term does not have universal

recognition. These entities either did not see their work as being related to sustainability (and vice versa); or, possibly, they saw the term as unhelpful to their work.

7.3 Interpretations from the interviewees

Unlike the websites, the interviewees could be asked directly what they understood by the term social sustainability, so their responses provided a less ambiguous picture.

7.3.1 Social a less familiar 'pillar'

The interviewees agreed that sustainability was widely viewed in terms of the three pillars, one of which was social, but several commented that the social pillar was less prominent in discussions than the environmental pillar, partly, they said, because it was harder to grasp and act on. For example, I.1 (trade association) said:

> *'In my experience, when people or organisations talk about sustainability, invariably, or 80% of the time, the coverage is environment.'*

I.7 (Consultancy) said:

> *'If I'm honest I think we're stronger on the environmental sphere than the social – so we are probably pushing harder on the environmental stuff, partly because that's where we've got more expertise. We don't forget the social stuff but we probably push harder on the environmental. The environmental argument is easier to articulate'.*

I.21 (consultancy) said 'For me [sustainability] is about people, I'm a social justice person', but added that her colleagues tended to focus on environmental aspects; she also said that the social pillar could sometimes be 'defined out' of sustainability by a client's brief, and gave the example of a piece of work for Defra on soft drinks, where nutrition had not been included in the brief, despite (in the interviewee's view) nutrition being an important component in the social sustainability of the soft drinks sector.

7.3.2 Some capsule definitions and key ideas

Table 7.2 provides some definitions from the interviewees. They show that the interviewees interpreted the idea of social sustainability quite broadly, echoing many of the themes from the literature, policy and websites. They mentioned equity within and between generations (I.7, consultancy, I.22, audit), and both livelihoods and communities were widely associated with the term (Is 15, 10, 11). Most pervasively, though a concern for the people affected in various ways by the conduct of the food supply shaped the responses – in fact, 'people' was probably the keynote of the interviewees' constructions of social sustainability. It was

expressed in terms of the responsibility for supplying consumers with safe, nutritious and in some cases affordable food (I.s 3, 11), but even more strongly in terms of employment, which was a dominant theme. Social sustainability was seen to be about 'the responsibility companies have ... to their employees [and] broader in terms of the communities where they operate (I. 13, producer), and also in terms of being a 'fair partner' (I. 4, retail) in supply chains. I. 15 (manufacturing) used the term 'sustainable livelihoods' as a synonym for social sustainability, encompassing both the continuing wellbeing of producers and the ability of entities such as his to be able to continue to buy the materials they needed. Interestingly, the interviewees included both substantive and procedural aspects in their definitions. They talked about health, decent work and nutritious food, but also about the processes by which a sustainable food supply should be achieved and conducted – by 'making decisions' (I. 22, audit), acting responsibly, caring, providing, being aware – in sum, the social processes by which 'people and collections of people com[e] together to try and meet their needs' (I.7, consultancy).

Interviewees' interpretations were noticeably shaped by their work (illustrating the problem of 'definer bias' identified in the literature, e.g. Beckley and Burkovsky 1999). For example I.10 (advocacy), who was working on rural development, saw social sustainability in terms of helping hill farmers and regenerating market towns. I.19 (audit), who worked extensively in India, saw the provision of facilities such as maternity clinics and schools as a priority for social sustainability. However, there were no consistent differences in interpretation between categories of actor, and nor was there was any clear distinction in the definitions from actors 'in' and 'on', beyond a tendency for the actors 'in' to see the issue in more practical terms (for I.16, manufacturing, social sustainability was about having enough people to do the work) and the actors 'on' to take a more expansive and abstract view (e.g. Is. 7 and 10 quoted in Table 7.2.) The apparent consensus across categories may reflect the fact that the interviewees were sustainability practitioners, or specialists within their organisations.

Table 7.2 Definitions of social sustainability from the interviewees

Definition	Interviewee
'Delivering long-term value to society, without harm to the environment, in a profitable way'	I.1 (Trade Association)
The social aspect of sustainability consists of 'supply[ing] consumers with safe, nutritious appetising and affordable food on a secure basis for the future'	I.3 (Trade Association)
'Minimising environmental impact and maximising social impact'; also 'health and being a fair partner'	I.4 (Retail)
'Social sustainability is about equity, between and within generations. It captures issues like labour standards, human rights, lots of issues in the sphere of social justice, I guess it's around the whole equality of opportunity agenda. For me social sustainability is all the issues that are raised by people and collections of people coming together to try and meet their needs'	I.7 (Consultant)
' I suppose [it is] around having a food supply chain that supports those people that are involved in it in a way that means they can continue to operate, minimising the negative impacts that there might be on society and communities'	I.10 (Advocacy)
'I think social sustainability is where you can argue that what you are doing doesn't detract from people's experience of either eating the products of the industry or working within the industry or indeed living in the community in which the industry is based'	I.11 (Producer)
'The responsibility that companies have not just to their employees but broader in influencing the communities where they operate, I think is a critical part of social sustainability'	I.13 (Producer)
'People talk about 'sustainable livelihoods' when they talk about the social aspects of sustainability, which is kind of an umbrella term to say, making sure those farmers can earn a living, live a happy life, continue to do what they do, in order for us to be able to benefit from buying their product and also for them to obviously have a worthwhile life and for us to feel we are buying ethically'	I.15 (Manufacturing)
'I think social sustainability for the food and drink industry is having enough people to do all the jobs we want to do, to some extent, because if you don't have the people you can't sustain the industry, can you?'	I.16 (Manufacturing)
'I think sustainability is about the decisions that you make today, making it possible for future generations to live a decent life, broadly. So in social terms I guess it's making decisions today that provide decent work, help build more equitable societies and tackle imbalances within society between workers, to help lift up people who have been marginalised and ensure people's rights are met and work is decent'	I.22 (Audit)
'A more socially sustainable supply chain would be one which individuals at any point were alert to and more caring about the other human beings at other points in the chain'	I.24 (Consultancy)

Source: The author

7.3.3 A relatively recent concern

Corroborating the literature, social sustainability was seen by interviewees to be a relatively recent concern, for which meanings had had to be assembled in the recent past. They commented on a growth over a decade or so in business awareness of environmental sustainability, with more recent awareness of the social aspects. I.22 (audit) said she saw 'a huge amount' more activity than formerly, and had seen business catching up with advocacy groups and others in terms of their understanding of the issue: 'in some cases, big business

sustainability [practitioners] know more than some of the NGOs who previously would have been bringing evidence to them'.

Several interviewees described how social matters previously covered under other headings were now wrapped up in sustainability, suggesting more of a change in terminology than in practice. I.3 (trade association) said that before a sustainability post was created at his organisation in 2006, what was now seen as sustainability had been viewed simply as 'business issues'. Environmental concerns were then recast as aspects of sustainability, with social aspects now 'coming along', as topics such as affordability and security of supply were included, although diet and health were still kept separate in his organisation. I.5 (trade association) said that what was now considered to be social sustainability had previously been dealt with as CSR or ethical issues. She also shed light on the contingency of governance approaches when she said her brief had been framed to avoid overlap with the work of the Ethical Trading Initiative, because many members of her organisation were also ETI members. I.8 (food service) had previously been Head of Environment at his organisation, and from around 2005 had 'brought in the fact that it was not just about the environment, it was about sustainability, the three pillars, blah, blah, Triple Bottom Line and all that'.

Several interviewees said that sustainability was now an accepted idea, and this generally included social aspects, although these might be differently interpreted or given less priority. I.4 (retail) said that while companies were at different stages of acceptance of sustainability, 'they are all driving in the same direction'. I.9 (food service) reported:

> *'I did a board presentation last year, and it was, you know, well, why do we do it? The normal, devil's advocate stuff. And I said, well, it's like health and safety, now, it's not an option, it's expected of a responsible business, that we actually look after the communities we work in and that we really look after the people, you know, the world's in a bit of a mess, we've all got to get stuck in and help with this. And nobody fights that.'*

7.3.4 Accumulating meanings

The interviewees drew on a range of sources to build definitions of social sustainability. The sources mentioned included colleagues, professional peers, sectoral bodies, the Government, the UN, other organisations, competitors, advocacy organisations, audit organisations, customers, the internet and internal sources. I.23 (producer) said his main sources of reference were internal: he consulted the CSR department of his company's

much larger parent company. I.11 (producer) said she learned a lot from the major retailers, her customers. I.9 (food service) mentioned 'Business in the Community [a business-led advocacy organisation], suppliers, competitors, Google'. I.10 (advocacy) said she paid attention to 'some of the more, what's the word, the more, I don't mean aggressive but more traditional NGOs that are really campaigning on issues'. The impression was of an eclectic and pragmatic process. There was clearly no agreed definition for social sustainability, with the result that interviewees took relevant information from wherever they could find it.

7.3.5 A variety of terms

As in the websites, interviewees used a range of terminology. I.14 (retail) said, 'We've always seen sustainability as environmental, economic and ethical' – substituting ethical for social (as did some of the websites). I.20 (retail) said his company did not use the term 'social sustainability' (though he understood what it meant); the company preferred the term 'ethical trading', probably, he thought, because of a long association with the ETI. He felt that while it could be a mistake to read too much into the terminology used by companies, because this might be accidental, his company's preference for thinking of 'ethical trading' limited the recognition of broader aspects of sustainability and impeded a more coherent approach. For I.5 (manufacturing), everything was 'wrapped up in resilience now'. I.6 (manufacturing) said she found it hard to separate social and economic aspects: 'Internally, I've made an agreement, even if we just say the word social, we mean and think socio-economic'. I.9 (food service) felt the term 'Corporate Responsibility' (CR) was 'less confusing' than sustainability. However, she went on to define CR as covering health and wellbeing, employee welfare, community and environment, which she thought in sum was synonymous with sustainability: 'You could actually say that I'm in charge of sustainability'. As with the websites, the implication was that social sustainability, though easily understood, was not widely used as a term, and could be interpreted flexibly.

7.3.6 'Work' as a key element of social sustainability

Themes to do with work played a prominent part in the interviewees' discussions of social sustainability. These themes often implied a socio-economic understanding of the term, covering the role of the food supply in providing employment for large numbers of people,

the viability of farming livelihoods, working conditions and workers' rights in food enterprises and food supply chains, and the need to attract and retain workers.

For the actors 'in', especially, social sustainability was tied up with ideas of their responsibilities as employers or managers; a separate concern was the need to be able to recruit and retain appropriately qualified workers into the future. For I.16 (manufacturing) the social sustainability of the food supply centred on the continuing supply of workers. I.13 (producer) talked about the same issue in terms of skills – he was concerned that appropriate skills were not being cultivated for an increasingly mechanical and technical industry, and also that the use of migrant labour meant a loss of skills in the UK workforce. I.4 (retail) said that the food sector's poor reputation as an employer (lacking glamour and status) was a threat to the sustainability of the sector.

I.11 (producer) was an outstanding example of someone whose interpretation of social sustainability was framed by her ideas of herself as an employer, family member and community member. I.11 ran a fruit farm, which she had taken over from her father. She had a strong sense of her farm as an entity long embedded in a local community, where it created direct and indirect employment but also had an impact on neighbours (for example some had objected to her large-scale use of polytunnels, on the grounds that they spoiled the view). She reflected on how the farm's relations with the community had changed from the time when seasonal labour was locally sourced and mothers used to take turns minding the children while they worked in the fields (she still met people in the village who had been to the farm as children in this way). She also spoke about her sense of responsibility for the 450 seasonal migrant workers who now came to the farm each year (mainly from Eastern Europe). She employed staff who spoke the migrants' languages to help them adjust to life in the UK, and worried about accommodating them in trailers that did not have hot showers. She was proud of the fact that many of the workers came for more than one year. She felt that her farm business was helping to sustain her local community.

I.8 (food service) also spoke about social sustainability in emotional and personal terms, as both an employee and (through his responsibility for managing procurement contracts) an indirect provider of work. Social sustainability was thus about both providing and

experiencing work in a 'good company to work for', one of the indicators of which was longevity of service:

> *'One of the metrics you could use for that is that we have a low turnover. I've been here for 12 years and I'm not senior management by a long stretch, so from a middle-management point of view I've given the company 12 years, so that sort of represents that it's a nice, a good company to work for.'*

In relation to the people who worked for the supplier companies he contracted with, he used imagery that implied he saw his role as a way of 'doing good':

> *'Keeping people in employment, keeping people in a certain level of lifestyle quality… supporting and making sure that kids aren't involved, so that they can go to school instead of holding a rifle, keeping businesses going, so people who've been fishermen for years out of fishing ports in Cornwall, who've been fishermen all their lives, can stay as fishermen, and not they're not forced out of business by huge multinationals.'*

Overall, the interviewees reinforced the impression from the websites that the use of the term 'sustainability' was inconsistent and somewhat haphazard, with other terms seen as synonymous and used interchangeably. Social sustainability was easily understood as a term but not always used as a label. Nevertheless, there was some consensus around the range of social issues – relating to nourishment, work, livelihoods, fair dealings, and an awareness of the claims of future generations – that were associated with sustainability and relevant to the food supply.

7.4 Deciding what social themes to act on

Governance, it has been argued, involves making choices about which concerns it is appropriate and feasible to act on (Miller and Rose 2008). Definitions, or constructions of meaning, reflect these decisions (Fairclough 2001; Fischer 2003). The following sections look at some of the ways in which actionable concerns were being selected. In other words, they look at how social sustainability was being constructed as a governable terrain by the various actors.

7.4.1 Instrumental defining

In the absence of an agreed meaning for social sustainability, there was evidence in both the websites and the interviews that actors construed meanings, and delineated the scope for social activity, in ways that favoured their interests. In other words, their definitions were pragmatic and instrumental.

There was considerable evidence in the websites of a tendency to bend meanings to accommodate established objectives and agendas. For example, the World Business Council for Sustainable Development (a business-led Advocacy Organisation) envisaged 'a sustainable future for business', where the goal of 'living well' included 'access to consumer goods'. The Retailer Asda (which promoted its low prices) stressed food affordability as a key component of sustainability, and the Trade Association the British Soft Drinks Association defined social aspects (such as nutrition or worker welfare) out of its Sustainability Roadmap. Manufacturer ABF devoted a whole section of its webpage on Responsibility to sugar (one of its most important products), rebutting the notion that sugar was a culprit in obesity and citing 'recent scientific reviews' to argue that sugar plays a part in a in 'a balanced and healthy diet by providing a natural source of energy'.

For several of the Consultancies and Audit Organisations, sustainability offered a new area of profitable business, and social sustainability was construed as a business issue on which these entities could provide help. For the Audit Organisation SGS, for example, which certified against a wide range of standards, the social aspect of sustainability was about 'managing social impacts while supporting business growth', and these impacts were elaborated in terms of issues (such as the risk of corruption and the need for worker fulfilment) that could (and according to SGS should) be managed by food businesses. For some of the Advocacy Groups, the relatively new discourse on sustainability could present a new vantage point from which to pursue a pre-existing agenda. For example the Fairtrade Foundation had incorporated sustainability into its definition of fair trade, which it presented as a 'strategy for sustainable development'.

The interviewees also showed some tendency to define social sustainability instrumentally, in ways that suited their organisations' objectives. For example, I.3 (manufacturing) highlighted the fact that the food supply's main sustainability impacts are often associated with the primary production sector (i.e. not his own), and also framed the social aspects in terms of the 'necessity to feed a larger population' affordably (i.e. emphasising the need for more cheap food) – thus framing social sustainability in terms that did not conflict with the remit of his organisation.

I.17 and I.9 (both food service) reported that their work involved reframing their clients' perceptions of sustainability. For example, it was common for clients to request that 'local' food should be supplied, on sustainability grounds, but this conflicted with the practices of the large-scale food service operators for which the interviewees worked, which supplied standardised goods sourced through centralised buying desks, coming from possibly distant suppliers. I.9 said:

> *'Sometimes we have to educate [clients], for example in how a whole network of little suppliers isn't necessarily the right solution for them, so trying to help them to understand, because obviously you've got to balance out the commercial side. One of my team does quite a clever thing of saying well, you know, if you're in Kent it might be better to bring stuff in from France than from Scotland. All that good stuff.'*

7.4.2 Ripples of responsibility

As has been shown, a common summation of the social dimension of sustainability was as 'people', or as a responsibility towards people affected by the food supply. Interviewees often spoke in these terms, and the approach was made explicit in the 'triple bottom line' definition of sustainability as planet, profit and people promoted by the Consultancy SustainAbility.

But these 'people' were often conceptualised in a specific way, which allocated them to categories for which different levels of concern were appropriate: customers, employees, suppliers, wider society, with shareholders or other stakeholders more rarely mentioned. Responsibility rippled out from the entities to these various categories of people. One version of this model was disseminated by the Advocacy Organisation Business in the Community (BITC), which was cited as a source of reference by several interviewees and cross-referenced by other websites. BITC suggested that the appropriate spheres of social concern for businesses were 'workplace, marketplace, supply chain and community', where the workplace comprised employees, the marketplace comprised customers, the supply chain comprised suppliers and the community comprised the people who lived near sites or were otherwise affected by business activity.

In various adaptations, this way of making governable a potentially infinite universe of objects of concern was very widely used by the entities investigated, especially by the actors 'in', for whom it seemed to provide a ready-made approach. Trader Cargill's approach involved: 'operating responsible supply chains, enriching our communities and working to

feed the world'. The logistics group Stobart saw relevant groups as 'shareholders, customers, employees and local communities'. Processor Moy Park addressed 'company colleagues, customers, communities and suppliers'. Manufacturer Warburtons, which emphasised its family ethos, saw itself as having responsibilities towards 'the family of owners, the family of employees, the families we feed'. I.2 (retail) said his company saw its responsibilities as 'internal to the business, in relation to the supply chain, and in relation to consumers and the communities we serve'. Manufacturer Coca-Cola summed the idea up as 'Me, we, world'.

7.4.3 Materiality as a guide to actionable social themes

Another important guide in establishing how social sustainability would be framed and governed was the idea of 'materiality'. The term derives from financial reporting, where it determines what should be reported in formal company accounts and financial reports (IFRS 2015)[12]. Material concerns are concerns which potentially influence the financial fortunes of the company. In financial reporting, the idea has quasi-legal force, tied to the idea that the managers of companies are the custodians of the company's assets and proceeds, and have a duty to use these in ways that will serve the interests of the owners and other direct beneficiaries, including employees. Even in financial reporting, which has international conventions of good practice, materiality is a flexible concept, often seen to be specific to the context of the reporting entity (IFRS 2015). The scope of non-financial reporting (which covers sustainability) is even more fluid, making this an important forum where meanings and practices on business sustainability are being hammered out (in this research, the Audit Organisations Accountability, GRI and PWC were found to be active in this area).

As used by the entities investigated, materiality seemed to mean 'relevant, legal and operationalisable'. Crucially, it tied social aspirations to the practical competences and legal responsibilities of companies. Inputs Supplier Monsanto explained it as the process of 'defining what's important socially, environmentally and businesswise to both our internal and external stakeholders'. Thus Retailer Tesco decided that as a global food retailer and major provider of entry-level employment, the social areas where it could 'make a difference' were 'global youth unemployment, diet-related health and food waste'.

[12] The International Financial Reporting Standards Foundation guidance states that 'information is material if omitting it or misstating it could influence decisions that the primary users of general purpose financial reports make on the basis of financial information about a specific reporting entity' (IFRS 2015: 28).

Some entities described how they did extensive materiality analysis, for example by consulting stakeholders or conducting internal reviews. Retailer Sainsbury had produced a complex materiality graph, to help determine which social issues it would act on, with 'potential business impact' and 'stakeholder concern' as the two axes. Materiality analysis could also be outsourced: it was one of the services offered by some of the Consultancies and Audit Organisations investigated. Other actors 'on' (such as the Consultancies Forum for the Future and SustainAbility) used the idea of materiality as one of their tools for leveraging change, seeking to persuade food companies that specific sustainability concerns were 'material' to the business in question.

However, the pursuit of materiality led food companies into some strange places and could expose them to charges of cynicism, or simply triviality. When Manufacturer Tetley gave tea to the charitable organisation Crisis at Christmas, it was no doubt welcome to the recipients, but could also look self-serving in promotional terms. On a larger scale, Manufacturer Coca-Cola's 5 x 20 programme aimed to 'empower' (by supplying training, finance or assets) five million female entrepreneurs by 2020, targeting 'women who are or potentially could be connected to the company value chain'. From one point of view, this represents five million vulnerable women enmeshed in the distribution of water-guzzling, obesity-stoking soft drinks; from another, it represents five million impoverished women given independent incomes. Perhaps the oddest example was Dairy Crest's Utterly Butterly Ukulele Orchestra, a musical project giving 70,000 children a chance to learn a musical instrument, in the form of ukuleles made from empty margarine tubs.

7.4.4 Social sustainability understood as 'the right thing to do'

The framing of social sustainability in terms of ethical or moral conduct was conspicuous in both the websites and the interviews (reminiscent of the 'moral economy' mentioned in the literature). Ethics and morality describe the frameworks within which people try to determine how they 'should' behave, and how they choose between doing right and wrong (Honderich 1995).

In the websites, 'values' were frequently cited as a way in which organisations decided which social concerns to recognise and act on:

- Vegetable grower Produce World's conduct was guided by a 'wheel of values' listing 'trust, learning, being customer-led, innovative, responsible and collaborative';
- Retailer the Co-op tied its social responsibility policies to the values of 'self-help, self-responsibility, democracy, equality, equity and solidarity';
- Retailer Sainsbury's founded its 20x20 Sustainability Plan on the company's five values: Best in food and health; Sourcing with integrity; Respect for the environment; Make a positive difference to the community; Great place to work.'
- Consultancy Twenty-fifty described itself as 'values-led', specifying 'integrity, leadership, performance, respect for human rights and sustainability';
- Auditor and advocacy group the Soil Association listed its values as 'health, ecology, fairness and care'.

Although values were often cited as an important guide, these examples show that the term 'values' itself was susceptible to instrumental use. Although values (such as trust or integrity) were often cited as guiding principles, objectives such as '[being] best in food and health' were included as values, apparently for the halo effect the moral connotation of values imparts. In some cases, the usage was more cynical, with Foodservice Operator McDonald's citing as values 'believing in the McDonald's system' and **'**staying profitable, to benefit shareholders'. Tesco, launching a plan called 'Using scale for good', said 'Scale is our new value', and one of logistics company Stobart's values was 'sustainable profits growth'. So although moral values were frequently mentioned, they were open to distortion to fit organisational agendas.

Values were also cited by the interviewees as guides for decision-making. I.2 (retail) said his company's responsible social behaviour was 'enshrined in our operating principles'. I 15 (manufacturing) said:

> *'What I like about my work is that there's that history, they are doing it for its own sake ... we have a few values within the company, one-sentence kind of things, like "consumers are our heartbeat", and "doing good" is precisely one of them.'*

Values were often said to pre-date the advent of sustainability or CSR. For example, Retailer Waitrose said, 'Corporate social responsibility is a modern term, but one which encapsulates the ideals and principles of our founder', and Retailer Sainsbury referred to its 'new-fashioned values'. (Ihlen and Roper (2014) have argued that by identifying sustainability concerns with how they already do business, companies create an impression that they do not need to make any further changes.)

As well as values, several organisations also mentioned ethics as a way of determining appropriate themes for social activity. The Retailer the Co-op described the social pillar as sustainability's 'ethical component'. The Audit Organisation Covalence Ethicalquote, MSI Ethical Trading Initiative and the Advocacy Organisation the Food Ethics Council used the word in their names. The Consultancy Benchmark Holding's sustainability model had Ethics alongside Economic and Environmental pillars, where Ethics substitutes for the social pillar (this model was used by Processor First Milk and Foodservice Operator McDonald's). Several of the food supply companies had ethical sourcing policies (I.20 said this was synonymous with social sustainability), and 'Ethical Excellence' was a strand of retailer M&S's Plan A.

Reflecting this connection with ethics, entities' programmes for social sustainability and responsibility were very often explained as 'doing the right thing' (e.g. Processor Young's, Manufacturers Dairy Crest, First Milk, Premier Foods and Warburton's, Retailers M&S and Sainsbury, and Food Service Operator Whitbread). But while the phrase could seem glib in the websites, the interviewees' references to the moral case for taking action on social sustainability seemed sincere, and personally important.

Discussing sustainability, I.2 (retail) simply said it was 'the way we should do business'. I.15 (manufacturing) said, 'I personally believe in it and that's why I do it.' I.8 (food service) said:

> *'A big satisfaction is that I'd like to think I'm making a difference. That's my ultimate goal is to make a difference, is to make things better'.*

I.22 (audit) said:

> *'Being able to do something that is actually going to result in somebody somewhere having an opportunity to improve their life in a way they might not have otherwise done … the opportunity to expose real injustice and try and get some action, that's what keeps me going'.*

Some commentators (e.g. Fleming and Jones, 2013) have made the point that an aim of corporate sustainability strategies is to motivate employees, by encouraging them to believe (especially in the face of public cynicism about corporate motives) that they are part of an organisation that is 'doing the right thing'. The interviewees supported this, without seeing it as a cynical ploy on the companies' part. I.20 (retail), said staff wanted 'to believe they are part of something good, want to do the right thing'. I.9 (food service) said:

> *'From an employee perspective, they feel better knowing it's not just about the bottom line, it's all the other elements that come into it.'*

7.4.5 The (sacred) shadow of the FISS

One striking finding was the extent to which the areas designated as appropriate for action by the conventional food supply, by both the actors 'in' and the actors 'on', echoed the areas highlighted in the Food Industry Sustainability Strategy (FISS, Defra 2006b). This was interesting partly because the FISS dates from 2006, and in policy terms much water and several governments have flowed under the bridge since then; and also because when asked about the relevance of state policy to their work, the actors tended to dismiss it as irrelevant, or say they were ahead of government policy (this is discussed further in Chapter 10). But the FISS, which as noted in Chapter 5 was developed with the involvement of the food industry, identified five social themes as being relevant and actionable by the food industry: nutrition and health; food safety; equal opportunities; health and safety; and ethical trading. Although none of the websites or interviewees cited the FISS as a source or guide, in various guises, these themes were often encountered in the websites and discussed by the interviewees. This suggests either that the food industry succeeded in influencing a supposedly normative policy so that that in fact it simply described what was already happening; or (more charitably) that the collaboratively agreed concerns of the FISS did indeed capture a consensus around what social sustainability might mean for the conventional food supply. In any case, it provided an example, in Colebatch's terms (2002), of the 'sacred' presence of policy looming behind the 'profane' activity of other governance actors.

7.5 Social sustainability as the process of 'getting it'

The literature argued that social sustainability encompassed not just social attributes to be sustained, but also the social processes by which they should be decided and perpetuated. The research showed that this procedural dimension was also important in how social sustainability was understood in the food supply. It was described as a necessary process of 'engagement' that had to precede action, often discussed in terms of 'getting it' or 'mindsets'.

Manufacturer Coca-Cola talked of the need for 'embedding' ideas, in order to be able to effect change 'deep in the supply chain'. The Audit Organisation the Foreign Trade Association, referring to its standard for labour practices (the BSCI), said its goals 'were only achievable through a strong commitment from participants to implement the system'. The

Consultancy Best Foot Forward said it taught clients how to 'build capacity internally so that your staff can "own" [sustainability] and put it into practice'. The Audit Organisation BSI's Guidance Standard on Social Responsibility included as one of its two fundamental principles 'recognising social responsibility', glossed as understanding its history and characteristics and its relationship with Sustainable Development. The Advocacy Organisation The Natural Step said that 'sustainability mindsets' were a cornerstone of its approach, and the MSIs the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil and the Roundtable on Responsible Soy both stressed the importance of stakeholder engagement. Advocacy Group Business in the Community, outlining environmental challenges facing business, said 'the social challenges lie in persuading people to go along with this' – in other words, the social dimension of sustainability referred to the social process of persuading people of the need for environmental sustainability. In Audit Organisation Oxfam's Behind the Brands sustainability campaign, 'awareness' was one of the criteria companies were assessed on.

The phrase 'getting it' cropped up often in the interviews to convey the sense that people came to a point where they grasped the implications of sustainability without needing further persuasion. I.14 (retail) expressed this when he said:

> *'I would say an awful lot of the people in our division don't see their job, what they do, as work. None of us would put in the amount of effort we put in if it was a job. If I look at our key people, none of us switch off. Because it isn't a job, this is what we do and who we are.'*

I.21 (consultant) said 'It has to be attitudes that change', I.6 (manufacturing) talked about 'people getting it a bit more now' and I.15 (manufacturing) said suppliers were 'getting the mindset'. There was a strong sense that sustainability was something that had to be 'got' as well as 'done'. For I.4 (retail), the social process of engagement was a prerequisite for all action on sustainability:

> *'To drive the kind of environmental performance that you want, you have to engage people. To drive a more productive, efficient factory, you have to engage people. If you don't treat people well, they won't be motivated, they won't have the capability and the skills to drive sustainability into the heart of what you're doing. To drive real change you need the people element.'*

Most interviewees agreed that to some extent mindsets had already changed, and the case for sustainability was becoming accepted – although social sustainability still lagged behind. I.3 (manufacturing) said:

> *'I think now, and at the risk of overstating it, it's probably true to say that these sustainability issues, certainly the more core of them, are now embedded. A lot of people will have sustainability in their job descriptions if not in their title, because it will be part of what they do. That has been a change in the last few years. I think it's no longer seen as an add-on, and for all that NGOs and people from the sidelines talk about greenwash and CSR and whatever, for most business this is real, it is a reality, it is the way they do business.'*

7.6 Concluding comments

This chapter has explored meanings of social sustainability encountered in the websites and interviews. Although the term 'social sustainability' was rarely used in the websites, sustainability was widely presented as having social themes; however, themes that were labelled as 'sustainability' in some websites were elsewhere not associated with sustainability. Interviewees easily understood the term and offered definitions, but did not see the term as being well-used. Some interviewees and websites mentioned concerns such as social justice or equity alongside sustainability, implying that sustainability alone did not inevitably include these ideas. Overall, the implication was that there is no single definition for social sustainability in the food supply. Interviewees' comments suggested that in the absence of an agreed definition, and also because of the relative newness of the term as something that was part of their work remit, meanings were being built by drawing on familiar, related concepts, borrowing from other actors' definitions, and adapting meanings in ways favourable to their own situations, agendas or outlook. It was a cumulative, cross-referential, selective and opportunistic process, not unlike the process observed in literature and policy.

Despite so much ambiguity, though, some consensus emerged on the themes that were relevant social aspects of sustainability for the food supply. These encompassed food safety, quality, adequacy and affordability; the quality of work involved in the food supply; the quality of relationships among participants in the food supply; the welfare of farm animals; notions of fairness (in the distribution both of food and the impacts of the food supply); notions of accountability; and the importance of engagement as a prerequisite and enabler of sustainable innovation.

Some patterns emerged in the way the actors constructed meanings for social sustainability. These were found to be instrumental, furthering organisations' pre-existing agendas, and also to include a model in which responsibility for people affected by food provisioning

arrangements rippled out to various categories, such as employees, customers, suppliers, etc. They also included use of the notion of 'materiality', borrowed from financial reporting, which determines what businesses can legitimately be expected to act on; as well as conceptions of 'the right thing to do'. The themes designated as relevant were found to echo the concerns identified in the 2006 FISS, though his was not acknowledged by the actors.

Having identified the governance actors and reviewed the meanings they bring to the concept of social sustainability, the next chapters look at what the actors did about social sustainability – how they operationalised governance on the themes they had identified.

Chapter 8: The scramble to act: doing social sustainability in the food supply

8.1 Introduction

This chapter and the next use data from the websites and interviews to address RQ3, which asked what the various actors were doing to operationalise social sustainability. It describes the activities through which the actors were putting their understandings of social sustainability into practice.

A basic difference identified at the outset (and described in Chapter 6) was between actors '*in*', which were directly involved in supplying food, and actors '*on*', which were not involved in supplying food, but nevertheless sought to influence the conduct of the food supply. This distinction significantly shaped operationalisations, so Chapters 8 and 9 make use of it. The remainder of this chapter looks at how social sustainability was operationalised by the actors 'in' the food supply; Chapter 9 then focuses on the actors 'on'. In both chapters, though, because of the dense interactions between the two sets of actors, there is some cross-reference.

The actors 'in' comprised the companies that provided inputs or other logistical support; produced food; or processed, transformed and distributed it. Their websites provided many examples of activities through which they operationalised the social themes discussed in the previous chapter. The activity was prolific: many of the actors 'in' clearly saw it as a necessity to do something (or be seen to be doing something) about these themes. Patterns were discernible, and some types of action were very common, suggesting a kind of 'standard response'. Overall though, reflecting the confusion over labels and attributes described in Chapter 7, the main impression was not of systematic adherence to an accepted framework, but more of an opportunistic (and sometimes ad hoc) process of scrambling to identify and enumerate activities that could be seen as plausible signs of appropriate action. The interviewees supported this interpretation, describing how they set about implementing the new agenda for social sustainability by drawing on their own and

their organisations' resources, and borrowing from other sources, thus cobbling together programmes that met the new requirements while also fitting with company priorities.

The following sections present descriptions first from the websites then from the interviewees. Then, drawing on both interviewee and website data, the chapter discusses what the activities reveal about the governance approaches being used by the actors 'in'.

8.2 A miscellany of activities in the websites

The activities described in the websites were diverse and in some cases idiosyncratic. (More examples of the activities described in this chapter can be found in Column 5 of the Data Summary tables in Annex F.)

In some cases the lists were extensive, imaginative and ambitious. (Prominent examples included the Manufacturer Unilever, the Foodservice Operator Booker and the Retailer the Co-op). In other cases (such as the Processor First Milk, the Logistics Provider Stobart and the Retailer Lidl) they were rudimentary. There was no consistent difference between categories of food companies – there were active and inactive entities in all categories. However, there was a tendency for public companies to report more extensive activities than private companies.

Reflecting the importance of the idea of materiality[13], the activities were often related directly or obliquely to the entity's main activity. For example Logistics Supplier Keuhne & Nagel funded professorships in logistics at several universities; the Manufacturer General Mills ran a non-profit enterprise to help improve expertise in food processing in Africa; the Manufacturer Coca-Cola enabled staff to volunteer on water-related projects, such as Thames21, which clears waterways in the UK; and the Foodservice Operator Booker supported the charity GroceryAid, which looks after the welfare of food chain workers. In Porrit's words (2004: 61), 'materiality is a hard taskmaster', and companies could be seen to be straining to find operationalisations that were consistent with business concerns.

The activities could seem random (Asda enacted its commitment to support women in its supply chains by funding two female agricultural PhD students in Kenya, and Manufacturer

[13] Chapter 7 explained that material concerns are those which potentially influence the financial fortunes of a company, and that materiality is used to tie companies' activities to their core business purposes.

General Mills operationalised a commitment to education by running a floating classroom on a canal near its UK head office in Uxbridge). They also seemed pragmatic, as though companies were looking at their existing resources or activities to see how they could be presented as parts of a programme of positive social actions (thus Tesco ran an outreach programme in which staff visited their former schools in Poland, and Foodservice Operator Starbucks cited 'creating a coffee-drinking culture' to boost the footfall on high streets as part of its contribution to social wellbeing). In extreme cases, companies simply recast their main activity as a social impact or benefit – for example the Manufacturer Iglo, supplier of frozen foods, said that it operationalised its commitment to support healthy lifestyles by supplying frozen vegetables; and the Inputs supplier Monsanto counted 'using the market' to make its products widely available as a social benefit. Companies donated to charities, food banks, pet rescue centres and flood relief efforts, trained tapioca farmers in Thailand (Trader Cargill), avoided mechanically separated meat (Foodservice Operator Booker) and organised teams of litter-pickers (Foodservice Operator McDonald's). However, the observation that the activities seemed self-serving or ad hoc is not to say that they were trivial: giving five million women the chance to set up small businesses selling drinks (Manufacturer Coca-Cola), donating a cumulative total of £17m to breast cancer charities (Retailer Asda), or even giving music lessons to 70,000 schoolchildren using instruments made from margarine tubs (Manufacturer Dairy Crest) are projects that could have large-scale, beneficial social impacts.

Although, as noted above, the overall impression was of an unsystematic but pragmatic assembly of activities, patterns did emerge that suggested some companies had a kind of 'standard response', which they could use – albeit selectively.

8.3 A standard response?

The main pattern that emerged grouped activities into categories broadly relating to the food, the workforce, suppliers, and wider society. (Within these groups, it also became clear that some types of people attracted particular attention, specifically women; youth, and especially young people deemed hard to employ; British farmers; and smallholders.) This way of organising activities can be seen to reflect the conceptualisations outlined in Chapter 7, targeting activities at different groups of people (workplace, marketplace, supply chain

and community). The following sections give a (ruthlessly edited) sample of the operationalisations discovered, to give some idea of the diversity and particularity of the data. (Common types of operationalisation are italicised.)

8.3.1 'Nourishing the world'

The act of *providing food and drink*, often described as nourishing or healthy (the quotation above is from Trader Cargill), was widely presented as an operationalisation of commitments on food, health and wellbeing. In practice, this operationalisation was shaped by the industrial nature of the sector, and often took the form of '*reformulation*' (i.e., the industrial alteration of a food's composition), so that foods fitted better with various conceptions of healthy eating (e.g. by reducing salt, sugar, fats or calories). For example, Trader Cargill was developing food ingredients with 'appetite modulating properties' to combat obesity. Several of the manufacturers (ABF, Dairy Crest, Greggs, Premier Foods, Unilever) and all of the retailers except Lidl mentioned reformulation as a way of operationalising healthy eating. Several of the Manufacturers, Retailers and Foodservice Operators operationalised commitments on food and nutrition via the voluntary *Responsibility Deal*, introduced by the Department of Health in 2011 (outlined in Chapter 5 and Table 5.7).

Another important operationalisation was the use of *labelling* (sometimes backed up by websites or phonelines) to communicate information about food composition (e.g. ABF, Premier Foods, Sainsbury's). Several companies also mentioned that by *providing a wide choice* of food options they were fulfilling a social responsibility (E.g. Yum! Brands) while others provided a choice between healthy and less healthy versions of the same products (e.g. Manufacturer Coca-Cola offered a 'choice of hydration' that included low- and no-calorie drinks, and Manufacturer Greggs provided sandwiches with and without mayonnaise). Other actors claimed that they operationalising a social commitment by *limiting choice* (e.g. by choice editing to provide only MSC fish or Fairtrade tea (Waitrose) or Fairtrade bananas (Foodservice Operator Compass).

Some companies (e.g. Manufacturer Coca-Cola, Retailer Asda), noted that *providing affordable food* was a way of operationalising social commitments. To ensure that affordable food was also of high quality, Retailer the Co-op committed to produce *value*

lines equivalent in nutrition to premium lines, operating its own animal welfare standard to ensure higher-welfare meat products were available in all price brackets. Some companies presented *marketing strategies* as operationalisations of healthy eating themes: they mentioned promotions on fruit and vegetables (e.g. the Co-op) or said they avoided marketing to children in some circumstances (e.g. Coca-Cola committed not to show children drinking any of the company's products outside the presence of a parent or caregiver). The theme of animal welfare was operationalised by *using an external standard, such as the Freedom Foods Standard*, or a *company policy*. For example Manufacturer Unilever's exceptionally detailed policy on animal welfare covered housing, hygiene, feeding, health management, water supply, transport, traceability and slaughtering methods.

8.3.2. 'A great place to work'

Employment was an important site for operationalising social themes, both in terms of the food sector's role in *providing jobs*, and in terms of providing a *congenial working environment*, or 'great place to work'(a phrase used by Retailers Sainsbury and Waitrose and Foodservice Operators 3663 and Yum!). Even companies that reported little activity on social themes (e.g. Retailer Lidl and Logistics Supplier Stobart) mentioned some activity in relation to employees. Foodservice Operator 3663 said, 'Our strong emphasis on sustainability is evident in our "*people policies*"[e.g. on flexible hours and home-working], which both improve work-life balance and reduce mileage' – thus providing an extremely rare example of social and environmental aspects being combined. Manufacturer Premier Foods cited the creation of employment as 'one of the most significant impacts' of the business, contributing not only to the wellbeing of individuals and communities but also to national prosperity through income tax – one of the few companies to mention the latter.

Apart from the provision of jobs, numerous firms mentioned the *creation of apprenticeships* (e.g. Retailer Tesco provided 5000, and Food service Operator Compass was the tenth largest provider of apprenticeships in the UK) and the *provision of education, training and career development* as implementations of social commitments for existing staff. Food service Operator Compass provided training via a Chefs Academy and a Services Management Academy, and Food service Operator Yum! supported a degree programme in restaurant management at de Montfort University. Other implementations included

measures to prevent accidents at work (Primary Producer Produce World used KPIs to monitor progress on accident frequency), while *staff retention and absentee rates* were monitored as indicators of worker satisfaction (Foodservice Operator Compass used KPIs to track progress on absence, staff turnover and expenditure on training). The food industry's *capacity to provide low-skill, 'entry-level' jobs, accessible to young people or people judged hard to employ, and also its willingness to offer flexible working hours,* were presented as positive social contributions. For example, Tesco guaranteed one third of jobs in some stores to long-term unemployed, while Sainsbury's included measures to track the number of employees with 20 years or more service, and targeted recruitment at both under-25s and over-60s.

8.3.3 'The workers who touch our supply chain'

As responsibility rippled outwards, 'suppliers' (the providers of raw materials or intermediate goods to the food companies, often personalised as 'farmers' or 'growers') were also identified as relevant sites for activity on social themes. One of Foodservice Operator McDonald's 'Signature Sustainability Programmes' covered relationships with suppliers, involving, e.g., a target for all beef to be 'verified sustainable' by 2016, which included achieving 'positive workplaces in the beef industry' and economic viability for its beef suppliers. Operationalisations here usually included the use of company *Codes of Conduct or third-party standards and auditing services* (supplied by Audit Organisations, discussed in the next chapter). For example, Young's Seafood used the ETI Base Code and the labour standard SA 8000 (run by the MSI Social Accountability International) to assure itself that suppliers were treating their workers fairly. Several entities (e.g. Manufacturer Bakkavor, Retailer M&S) required suppliers to lodge data about their workplace practices on the platform maintained by the Audit Organisation Sedex. Manufacturer Dairy Crest required suppliers to meet its Supplier Corporate Responsibility Policy, covering labour standards and human rights. Manufacturer Greggs 'planned' to incorporate ETI into its supplier contracts, but did not currently do so (Greggs was one of very few companies to acknowledge that its position as a cheaper brand limited capacity for action on ethical issues); however, it had signed up to a Prompt Payment Code. The Retailer Asda used the standard of the MSI RSPO to assure its palm oil supplies.

The notion of 'fair trade' was important, with entities *using both their own schemes and the certification scheme of the Audit Organisation the Fairtrade Foundation* to operationalise the idea. The Retailer the Co-op had converted many of its own brands to Fairtrade and ran its own Sound Sourcing Code. Retailer Lidl ran its own fair-trade designation, Fairglobe. Compass noted that it was the largest UK foodservice supporter of Fairtrade.

The entities also *provided training and 'capacity building'* to help suppliers meet the required standards (again, this support was in practice often supplied by external organisations). For example Manufacturer Tetley, which had set a target date for sourcing all tea from Rainforest Alliance-certified suppliers, was helping growers comply with the standard.

Small-scale suppliers, women and ethnic-minority suppliers were singled out in operationalisations. Unilever had made 'Enhancing the livelihoods of people across the value chain' a key element of its Sustainable Living Plan, and one way in which it put this into practice was by *recruiting small-scale farmers and processors into the supply chain* and *providing training* to increase yields and thus security.[14] To inform itself better about its own supply chain, Unilever had *commissioned a two-year research project* from the Audit Organisation Oxfam on labour rights in its supply chains. Foodservice Operator McDonald's operationalised a commitment to diversity by *selectively sourcing from woman- and minority-owned enterprises*.

Some operationalisations focused on UK suppliers, often referred to as 'British farmers'. Several of the retailers ran '*Producer Groups'* – organisations for selected farmers who could enjoy longer contracts and favourable trading terms in return for adopting specified husbandry practices (Waitrose had them in 30 categories). Manufacturer Premier Foods cited *'Buying British*' as a key way of operationalising sustainability: in 2012 it 'consciously' spent 82% of its £1.2 bn procurement budget with UK producers and suppliers, including sugar beet from 4,500 growers. Retailers Asda and Sainsbury's had set targets for UK

[14] In an interview published on the Sustainable Brands website, Unilever's Head of Sustainability, Gavin Neath, explained that the company originally set a target of linking 500,000 smallholders into its supply chain, but on investigation discovered it was already sourcing from 1.3 million smallholders. 'We've always known the livelihood section of the Sustainable Living Plan was the weakest, and would require the most work', Neath said. http://www.sustainablebrands.com/news_and_views/articles/unilevers-head-sustainability-, accessed 26.4.12.

sourcing, and Foodservice Operator 3663 had a 'regional sourcing policy' to *support local economies*.

It was notable that implementations relating to direct employees (described in the preceding section) differed from implementations affecting 'suppliers' (workers not under the direct control of the companies). However, some companies had taken steps to harmonise their actions, recognising that differentiated policies implied different valuations of workers. Booker had a single Ethical Code to cover both employees and external business partners and Foodservice Operator McDonald had a *unified set of global workplace standards* 'for all workers who touch our supply chain'.

8.3.4 'Making a positive difference to the community'

'Communities' were a widely mentioned site of activity. The term usually referred to the physical settlements near sites of operation in the UK, and the implementations mainly took the form of *charitable initiatives*. They involved *donations to local causes*, either in *cash or in the form of goods* (such as the donation of food to foodbanks), in *time* (via employee volunteering or mentoring), or in *resources* (when companies allowed community groups to organise activities on their premises). Several companies undertook *educational work*. The charities supported tended to be either local to the targeted community, or relevant to the company according to materiality considerations (or both).

Illustrative examples include Trader Cargill's support for five 'Cargill Care Centres' in the UK, where activities included support for a school breakfast programme in Lincolnshire, a vegetable garden at a homelessness shelter in Manchester, and food science workshops in Salford. Cargill also committed more than £500,000 to food poverty projects in northwest England (FareShare Merseyside and Fare Share Northwest), where employees also volunteered. The Manufacturer Coca-Cola supported sporting activities, reinforcing its emphasis on the importance of physical activity alongside diet as a contributor to health. Retailer Asda's 17-year association with two breast cancer charities had raised £17 m. 'Making a positive difference to the community' was one of Retailer Sainsbury's five 'new-fashioned values', operationalised by corporate donation, facilitation of fundraising by employees and customers, employee volunteering, donation of food to FareShare, and sponsorship of Comic Relief and the 2012 London Paralympics. Retailer the Co-op enacted

its commitment to 'keep communities thriving' by maintaining at least one Co-op in every UK postal area. It also funded individuals who wanted to start community projects, campaigns or co-ops; it had valued its support to community activities across the UK in 2013 at £14.8 m. Food service operator Booker said it supported local communities 'primarily through improving the support and service we provide to our customers', and through providing employment; it also donated food to charity and pet food to animal rescue centres.

8.3.5 'Scaling for good'

The food companies also operationalised commitments targeted at wider society. Activities here included setting up *philanthropic foundations*, making *donations to various humanitarian, educational or cultural cause*s, in the companies' home territories and in supplier countries, or *using their organisational resources and expertise to benefit society*. For example, the Logistics supplier Kuehne & Nagel maintained two philanthropic foundations in Germany (one educational, the other cultural) and funded research in 'humanitarian logistics'; and Retailer Waitrose ran a development charity in southern Africa (the Waitrose Foundation) to support farm workers, their families and communities. Retailer Tesco's 'Scale for Good' initiative involved using the company's global scale to 'create opportunity' in all the countries where it operated: it included a mentoring programme for students in South Korea, an online retail business game for university students in the Czech Republic, and a programme in which UK Tesco staff visited their former schools in Poland. Foodservice Operator McDonald's system for providing fast meals in large quantities was used in the emergencies that followed 9/11 in the US and the 2004 Asian tsunami.

8.3.6 The missing 'green filter'?

The objective in detailing these activities has been to illustrate their existence, extent and diversity. Far from being concerned only with the fulfilment of their commercial activities and compliance with the law (Friedman 1970), the evidence is that the food supply companies see themselves as having extensive social obligations, often linked to ideas of sustainability, that apply to the products they provide, the people they employ, the localities where they operate, and to wider society.

Various criticisms of these programmes of activity have been made (e.g. Jones and Nisbet 2011; Fleming and Jones 2013), on the grounds that they are selective, patchy, undemocratic and self-serving. But another criticism, more relevant in the context of this thesis, is that almost none of them attempts to combine environmental and social (or socio-economic) concerns. They are s*ocial* programs: like much of the policy discussed in Chapter 5, they lack a 'green filter' that would turn them into sustainability programs. The widespread failure to operationalise sustainability in an integrated way could betoken a lack of commitment on the part of practitioners and / or a genuine, intrinsic difficulty in achieving integrated implementation. This question is discussed further in Chapters 10 and 11. The following section turns to the interviewees, who describe their experience of putting social sustainability into practice.

8.4 The 'boring stuff', and the sustainability of food work

Given the extent of the activities reported in the websites, it was surprising to hear several interviewees from actors 'in' comment that these entities were in fact doing more than the websites suggested —or were doing things behind the scenes that not being commuicated via websites. I.14 (retail) said that public communication of his organisation's work on sustainability (which seemed extensive) was in fact 'the tip of the iceberg': he felt little could be communicated because of 'consumers' limited time, attention and interest'. I.17 (food service) said customers were not interested in hearing, 'by the way it's Red Tractor, blah blah blah, and we've done an internal audit, and everything's traceable, etc.'

8.4.1 Doing what was expected

When interviewees from the food supply companies were asked how their companies put social sustainability into practice, they often reeled off a list of activities relating to customers, employees, suppliers and communities – again using the idea that social concerns were envisaged as affecting different categories of people. They gave examples of activity similar to those listed in the websites – on nutrition, staff training and community charity, for example. I.2 (retail), in a fairly typical reply, said his company acted 'in relation to employees, in relation to the supply chain, and in relation to consumers and the communities we serve'. He then said , 'we do what you would expect supermarkets to do', which involved making use of selected social standards (such as ETI), providing on-pack nutritional information and confectionery-free checkouts, sponsoring research, fostering

long-term relationships with suppliers, doing 'a lot of community giving' at branch level, and running a charitable foundation.

The implication was that there was some notion of standard procedures for dealing with the social sustainability agenda. Moreover, there was a sense that the sorts of activities described in the websites were considered routine and mundane. I.17 (food service) summed it up as 'all of the dull stuff that they sort of expect us to do'. I.20 (retail) said his company had departed from 'the old-fashioned thing' of saying 'which bog standard charity project should we back, shall we do cancer or shall we do World Food Programme'. His company's new approach was to try and forge more meaningful relationships with the people affected by its activities. I.5 (from a food supply sector trade association) said: 'So they [i.e. a supplier community] get a new soccer pitch, who cares? Is that what we're really aiming for here?'

8.4.2 Putting it into practice

Interviewees described how their organisations had set about tackling the social sustainability agenda (usually as part of a wider sustainability agenda) when it presented itself as a new challenge that they had to act on. They were spurred to take action by developments within their organisations, pressure from external actors (e.g. audit and advocacy organisations, their own clients, customers, the public), and also by regulation.

For example, I.9 (food service) explained how her company was first prompted to take action by a piece of public policy, the Public Sector Food Procurement Initiative (discussed in Chapter 5), launched in 2003, which laid out sustainability criteria for organisations wishing to bid for public-sector catering contracts. Her description provides an illuminating picture of 'profane' or street-level governance in operation. Having recognised the need to comply with the new regulatory requirement, the company embarked on an iterative process of assessing what it was already doing that would fit the new agenda, engaging suppliers to find out what they were doing that could be useful, determining what was important, feasible and 'commercially viable', overcoming suppliers' reticence at sharing commercially sensitive information, then putting the necessary data systems and targets in place. The process was pragmatic and collaborative, making use of what was already available,

tailoring programmes to fit commercial and organisational constraints, and devising new systems to meet the new governance requirement:

> *'If I go back right to the early days… I would say this was when the Public Sector Food Procurement Initiative kicked off, that's when we started because the Government started asking us for information. So we initially say, where are we currently at, because quite often we were doing things but we weren't doing it for sustainability causes, we were just doing it, so we were buying lots of British product and we were already buying FairTrade, etc. So we sat down and did a benchmark, where are we at now, what are we buying that fits into this broader arena, where have we got the gaps … where do we need to go, accepting that it has to be commercially viable. And then I would work closely with our supply chain team ... we actually created a supplier forum at that point, and I used to have about 30 suppliers coming in quarterly and start to share, it took a while to get them settled, because they were sharing information, and [we started] to say, what are you doing that we don't know about that fits in with this broader agenda, and then from that we put together a plan of what's important to us ... so we targeted buy British … and we also looked at the whole fair trade piece … looked at seafood, for example, what was important to us, was it MSC, was it MCS, how were we going to tackle it. And from that we started on some targets, for how we were going to improve ... One of the challenges we had was data collection so we set up a good database so we can pull all that information in so we can measure it.'*

I.8 (food service) also mentioned the PSFPI, but was finally prompted to take action by a different spur – the chivvying of the Advocacy Organisation Business in the Community, which encouraged his company to take part in an indexing scheme it ran:

> *'One of the things that crystallised this whole thing for us … was we are members of BITC. And our HR person said, they keep ringing me and saying we should do the CR index. So I said OK, and I had a look at it, and actually, I found there was no way we could do this. The environment section, no problem, I've got all the records, stats, information. The thing is it requires evidence, and rightly so. But there's the whole section on child labour, for example. Now we don't advocate child labour, clearly, and we haven't really considered it because we buy most of our stuff from the UK, so it's not really an issue. But I can't write that in there and expect to score. You've got to be able to show that you do this, the reason you do it, and evidence it.'*

Again, the process described is reactive, incremental and opportunistic. In this case, the criteria specified by an index can be seen to have shaped a company's behaviour, at least in terms of how it collects and shares data.

The process of scanning company activities to see what was relevant to a new governance requirement, adapting what was relevant from a previous one, and then coming up with a new approach, was said by I.4 (retail) to be happening in many companies:

> *'Every business is going through a process that goes from "do this because it's a CSR requirement" to "I've got a whole load of disparate activity [on sustainability]", to "I'm bringing that disparate activity together and I'm coming up with a holistic plan".'*

8.4.3 A great place to work?

Whereas the interviewees dealt relatively briefly with the 'routine' aspects of implementing an agenda for social sustainability, they spoke at length about work. As Chapter 7 noted, the interviewees saw work as a key social meaning of sustainability, and flowing from this, work was discussed as an important site for operationalisations. But whereas the websites presented this in positive ways – through the provision of apprenticeships, or practical measures to enhance the nature and experience of work, the interviewees had much more ambiguous and conflicted views on this topic. Their comments often depicted the conditions of food work as social symptoms of the unsustainability of the food supply.

This is not to say the interviewees were discontent with their own working conditions – those who mentioned this, such as I.8 (food service), and Is. 14 and 20 (retail), gave the impression that they enjoyed their work. But there was a wide acknowledgment that the food industry in the UK was facing a labour crisis. It had an aging workforce, was unable to recruit appropriately skilled workers, or workers with the right attitudes to work, and was consequently dependent on migrant labour. Added to this were problems of poor management, corporate restructuring, and the unglamorous image of the food industry as a place to work. Playing through several interviews was a regretful sense that food work had changed in ways that made it more efficient, in terms of productivity, but also less rewarding and less sociable. These observations are discussed next.

I.16 (manufacturing) felt that the labour problem was critical, was not being addressed by Government, and could even warrant the use of fiscal policy to move labour into the food system (he suggested special tax rates in 'protected' employment). A common observation was that food work had become both more technical and more isolating (especially for farmers) as it had become more automated. I.4 (retail) said:

> *'With the kind of equipment you've now got in a factory or on a farm, it's just so much more complicated than it used to be. So how do we enable people to have those skills when previously maybe food and farming attracted people who had lower education levels, but increasingly the kind of science and precision that we're looking for potentially requires different education levels. How do we meet that kind of skills gap in a way that means we've got the right kind of people who will see that job as meaningful for the future?'*

A source of tension arose from the fact that automation was seen as both a cause of and solution to social problems in the food industry. It eliminated the need for human beings

(who could be unreliable), but also put people out of work. It made work more demanding, but also made it cleaner and easier. I.16 (manufacturing) encapsulated some of this:

> *'If you go to [our] factory, we pack and box the chocolates completely robotically, so we've taken out cheap labour from getting the boxes and putting them in by hand, so I don't think you should ever get in your mind that this is an industry full of people slaving, in fact if anything you might argue that a core driver of our competitive advantage is automation, and automation puts people out of jobs. So you can argue that's socially irresponsible unless those people are redeployed to do other things.'*

I.23 (producer) said, 'we now look for as many automated opportunities as possible, to reduce [our] labour demand. Because a machine doesn't care, I can work the machine longer during the harvest period.' I.11 (producer) spoke wistfully of the days of her childhood, when 'local ladies' picked the fruit while their children played in the open fields, but was clear about the benefits that had come with technological developments and also the innovation of having 450 mainly East European workers temporarily housed on the farm during the picking season. Having the fruit in polytunnels meant there was always a crop to be picked, varietal improvement meant the crop was more uniform, and having the workers on site meant there were always 'young, strong, fit people' available on-site to pick as needed.

There were other fault lines. I.16 made reference to the closures and mergers that frequently affect the food industry, and led to plant closures and job losses, which he said were often attributable to poor leadership and management. I.9 (food service) raised an issue often in the press during the course of the research – the use of zero hours contracts, which she defended:

> *'We prefer to have people on zero hours contracts [rather than use agency staff], which means you are not actually committed to any set hours for the worker but they are on call, so you phone them and say, we've got two functions next week can you work them. Or holiday cover. Which suits certain groups really well, who don't really want full time work, it could be students, could be mums, could be people who are happy to have a bit of flexibility.'*

This need for flexibility was an important factor, seen to be inherent to the food industry. While I.13 (producer) argued that 'we ought to be seeing this as a professional industry, with long-term career opportunities,' and I.4 (retail) felt that the food industry needed to make a concerted effort to improve the quality of the jobs it offered, the prevailing view was that food work was, and had long been, precarious and casual – and that this was not only in some way inevitable, but was the sort of work some people wanted. I.23 (producer)

said: 'If you take a student for example, it doesn't matter if you give them a six-hour week because that's all they want.'

The interviewees acknowledged that pay was low, but they seemed to see this as an inescapable feature of the market: raising wage levels would make the UK food industry uncompetitive. I.13 (producer) made the case for maintaining a permanent, core workforce, but acknowledged that paying above minimum wage would 'have an impact on the wage bill and therefore on competitiveness'. I.16 (Manufacturing) agreed that paying more would make it easier to hire people, 'But the only problem then is, you probably won't have a business to employ anybody with anyway'.

Comments on pay tended to be entangled in discussions about the nature of food work and the qualities required in food workers. I.16 (manufacturing) raised the issue of UK workers' 'work ethic' (implying readiness and disposition to work in the way required), and pointed to factors outside the food supply as playing a part:

> *'I think there's a dilemma with the work ethic in the UK. I think we have developed a culture where people genuinely don't want to do dirty or difficult agricultural jobs or food industry jobs, in fish factories, on fields, and yes, so we let those jobs go to people that do. I don't think it's just the food industry that's failed, I think it's a social issue associated with allowing people's expectations to create a situation where they don't feel they have to do that, where we've provided them socially with the alternative of being on welfare, which I personally think is unfortunate'.*

I.23 (producer) also made this point, explaining that one of his full-time employees working a 35-hour week on just above the minimum wage earned not much more than half the amount which the Coalition Government had recently set as the maximum claimable in welfare benefits by a family (which was £26,000). I.11 (producer) protested against a 'public perception' that agricultural workers were poorly paid: the statutory agricultural wage[abolished after the interview] had been higher than the national minimum wage, so 'the shelf stackers in the supermarkets earn less than the people who pick the fruit'.

The use of migrant labour was presented as a necessity, given the shortage of willing or able UK candidates for jobs. Is. 23 and 11 were horticultural producers who employed migrant workers seasonally. Both gave the impression of being concerned employers – I.23 had intervened to protect a worker from traffickers who were extorting her wages and I.11 worried about not knowing all her seasonal workers by name. Both defended their use of

migrant workers, saying they were well-educated and disciplined, and said efforts to recruit local British workers were usually unsuccessful (e.g. there were few applicants or they were not prepared to do outdoor work). Both spoke resignedly about pressures from their food industry customers that made the current arrangements necessary, such as the pressure for volume and reliability of supply, and the pressure on margins. I.11 said farmers were 'price-takers'. The price of fruit had not gone up to reflect costs, so her farm could only break even by increasing productivity, in both yield and picking. In her early days, a good picking speed was around 12 kg an hour, allowing for the fact that 'in those days people accepted a more misshapen strawberry so you could put more in'. Now, even though the quality specification was much tighter so there was more 'grade-out', pickers averaged 30 kg an hour, through a combination of having easier-to-pick fruit and 'more focused', more motivated and more practised workers.

Both these interviewees described how local labour had gradually been displaced from their fields by a succession of social and regulatory changes outside the world of food. I.23's labour was at one stage bussed in from neighbouring mining areas, where pit closures had led to high unemployment. Then there had been a crackdown on benefit fraud, and this source of labour dried up. The shortfall was filled with foreign nationals, and a previous partial reliance on agricultural students who came temporarily to the UK on exchange programmes turned into a necessary dependence on foreign labour. I.11 outlined a similar progression. Twenty-five years earlier, local workers had been paid cash in hand at the end of every day, with minimal record-keeping. Then came a change to accounted wages, 'and the supply began to dry up – people had liked the cash-in-hand aspect because quite a lot of them were on benefits'. The main change, though, had been women moving into the permanent workforce, accompanied by an extension of the picking season beyond school holidays. Like I.23, she had witnessed a shift in the Seasonal Agricultural Workers' Scheme, from a 'constructive' programme' which enabled agricultural students to travel and learn, 'to people saying that this is our workforce, and the Government should be providing it through this scheme'. In other words, the supply of cheap, temporary labour had become institutionalised and the learning objective eclipsed. In both accounts, the producers describe a somewhat regretful process of adaptation to external social and regulatory change; but in both cases the need for low-paid labour is seen as a normal factor in the UK

food supply. This view, which was widespread among the actor 'in' interviewees, was at odds with the sense they otherwise projected of being proactive decision-makers within their organisations. This paradox is discussed again in Chapter 10.

8.4.4 Fair dealing: from transactions to social relations

The interviewees' comments also filled out the portrait presented in the websites of supportive and amicable relationships between the food companies and their suppliers. Although these were often referred to in the websites as 'farmers' and 'growers', I.14 (retail) pointed out that the retailers tend not to deal directly with farmers, preferring to conduct business with a small number of 'tier one' suppliers who coordinated supplies from other producers as well as supplying themselves (and this was also said to be the case by foodservice interviewees 8 and 17). I.14 gave a flavour of the unrelenting nature of these relationships:

> *'The closest relationships we have are with our direct suppliers. They're much closer relationships than those we have with our farmers. We're working with those guys on a constant basis, every single day, 24/7, 365 days a year. They will be the packers, processors, food manufacturers.'*

For the retailers, an important way of coordinating and simplifying their dealings with farmers was to organise them into Producer Groups. The websites listed Producer Groups as instances of responsible or sustainable behaviour. I.14 (retail) supported this view:

> *'We fund and run as a business for them a scorecard and benchmarking activity looking at all of their inputs and input costs, yields ... benchmarking them against subgroups of like-sized farms, like-type farms, to then show them where they rank and stand. [His company was] from our business point of view, investing our resource – time, money and expertise – to support those businesses to become better businesses'.*

It was not, he insisted, 'about a team of suits from [the retailer] working with them … it's about experts from their field'. The company had waiting lists of farmers wanting to join the groups, because those that were in them 'had saved millions of pounds'.

However, I.11 (producer) had been on the receiving end of these activities. She felt that the retailers did not understand the pressure they put suppliers under, which was driving some to leave the sector:

> *'I do see some growers thinking, hold on, is this really worth it? And a lot of that is from a lack of understanding, perhaps, by [the retailers], that they want to take costs out of the chain, they want to have a complete understanding of the production costs, so they'll sort of try and restrict any profitability, any upside.'*

Asked whether the retailers had access to details about her costs, she said, 'They would like to, but I wouldn't share them'. I.25 (union) agreed that many farmers were glad to join Producer Groups, but felt that this was a result of their lack of bargaining power, not a cure for it: 'Why should they open their books if retailers aren't going to open theirs, or processors aren't going to open theirs?'

Nevertheless, it was probably the attention invested in behind-the-scenes relationships between the food companies and their suppliers that prompted some interviewees to comment that the websites did not provide a full picture of what was happening on social sustainability. The quality and longevity of such relationships were cited as illustrations of positive social sustainability. For example, I.14 (retail) said:

> *'We are a business that believes in and is founded upon the idea of having long-term relationships, and that's about those businesses and all those people involved in those businesses having a sustainable future … We have very long, stable relationships with our suppliers … and the people who supply those suppliers… If you take something like milk, where we have 326 farmers who produce all of our milk, we have a dairy development group that they're all members of, nobody has left that group in five years, there's a waiting list of people who would like to come into it. We want to create sustainable businesses for everybody in our supply chain.'*

But a concern that emerged unprompted in several interviews –perhaps suggesting a debate underway in the sector – was that relationships in supply chains were currently too 'transactional' (meaning impersonal and utilitarian) and needed to become more 'collaborative' (implying a more caring, mutually considerate approach). I.25 (union) said:

> *'My view of transactional is just doing a transaction, so a retailer to a supplier is saying essentially these are my specs and this is the price I'm going to pay for it. It needs to be more collaborative, to be much more about, this is what I need short term, this is what I need longer term, how do we achieve those common goals together. A transaction is just, here's the money for the product' (I.25).*

I.20 (retail) said:

> *There is a very significant shift commercially going on in this company … We are trying to become more flexible and a better partner for our suppliers, trying to make sure that we're being a really good customer and therefore people have got a stake in working with us and giving us their products. [We are] still quite a transactional culture … [But] we've actually suddenly discovered, you've been working with someone for a long time and you've never really sat down and tried to build that relationship with them.'*

These comments imply that a transition might be underway – or at least be under consideration – to more socially attentive and less calculatingly commercial supply chain

arrangements. From the outside, this looks like an increasing emphasis on the social sustainability of supply chains – but the interviewees themselves did not discuss the change in those terms.

8.5 Governing social sustainability in the food supply

The previous sections have described how, in practical terms, social sustainability was operationalised and implemented by the entities acting 'in' the food supply, as presented in the websites and described by the interviewees. Cutting across these activities, some common governance approaches (or techniques) could be discerned. These are discussed next.

8.5.1 Re-labelling existing activities

It was clear from both the websites and the interviews that an important early step in governing the new terrain of social sustainability was to review existing activities to see whether any could be carried over into the new programme. I.9's description (in 8.3.3 above) of the process by which she devised a strategy for her foodservice company makes this explicit. In other examples, many of the websites listed activities that were inherent parts of the company's activities (such as providing employment or providing food) as implementations of social sustainability. Manufacturer Premier Foods mentioned the contribution it made to society through tax and National Insurance payments. Logistics provider Kuehne & Nagel said it 'fulfilled its entrepreneurial responsibility with regard to the three pillars of sustainability by its integrated management in the areas of quality, safety, health and environment' – in other words, it was already doing it. Other examples included Foodservice Operator Booker's comment that its main act of support for the community was through the service and employment it routinely provided, and Foodservice Operator Compass's claim that 'responsible wealth creation is the most fundamental contribution that any business can make'. The process of carrying on existing activities under a new label can look cynical – like 'greenwash', in fact, as though no significant change is intended; on the other hand, associating new practices with old, familiar ones may make the new ways of doing things more palatable to those who have to implement or accommodate them. This was the rationale supplied by I.9.

8.5.2 Dis-integrating social sustainability

Another common approach was to fragment social sustainability into smaller components. This was evident in the food companies' practice of directing different activities towards different sets of people (employees, communities, etc), and the use by some entities of different operationalisations in different divisions of the company. For example, the Foodservice Operator Whitbread had operationalisations mainly directed at work and recruitment in the hospitality sector, whereas its subsidiary, Costa Coffee, had a commitment to source from Rainforest Alliance-certified suppliers, ran a development charity to support coffee growers, and sourced milk from a designated group of farmers with whom it aimed to have a long-term relationship.

The tendency to fragment the topic seemed to be allied to the goal of making it measurable (this is discussed further in the next chapter). Social sustainability was often operationalised through the use of targets (e.g. Sainsbury's target for the sale of low-alcohol drinks) or Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) (e.g Producer Produce World's use of KPIs to track accident frequency), or the simple process of counting things (such as staff absences or apprenticeships supplied) and publishing the totals. A very clear illustration of this approach was provided by Retailer M&S's implementation of its sustainability plan (Plan A). This was based on a detailed breakdown of sustainability into qualities that could be attributed to products (e.g. having an ingredient coming from a certified Fairtrade source). The Plan then set targets for the percentage of products to have specified proportions of 'Plan A' attributes by specified dates – e.g., by 2013, 45% of products were reported to have at least one.

Fragmentation was also apparent in the production of goods – such as chicken, in the case of the Processor Moy Park – with different welfare aspects (representing different levels of social concern) embedded in different product lines, whether Value, Organic or Premium; alternatively, entities could supply Fairtrade alongside non-Fairtrade products. In these cases, animal and worker welfare, respectively, became product attributes, which the consumer could select or ignore. The websites' fragmentation of social sustainability had a reductive effect, in which high aspirations (such as those in M&S's's Plan A) dispersed into an array of separate, sometimes small, concerns that could seem incoherent or trivial.

For the interviewees, fragmentation meant that different elements of social sustainability were distributed among different posts, departments or individuals. The allocation was acknowledged to be haphazard, depending on pre-existing arrangements or personal competence, but the organisational separation seemed to correlate with a cognitive fragmentation of the issue, which in turn affected interpretations of responsibility and the scope for action.

I.2 (retail) described how three people in his company had responsibility for different aspects of sustainability: one looked at technical aspects of the food sold, one at 'operations' (energy use, etc), 'and from a social perspective, the HR director'. I.3 (trade association), said although he was director of sustainability, a different department worked on diet, health and reformulation, which was 'not in my area'. I.5 (trade association) said the organisation split sustainability between environmental sustainability and what the interviewee described as 'issues that were in the press a lot, that were emotional-sustainability type issues'. Interviewees also commented on the separation between people involved in planning for sustainability and the people with control over financial decisions. I.7 (advocacy) said there was 'a big disconnect between sustainability departments and procurement departments', with the latter saying 'everything comes down to costs'.

The fragmentation led to confusion over lines of accountability and sources of policy, especially when companies worked in several countries. I.15, from a multinational manufacturing company, was uncertain who was responsible for providing sustainability content for the website, and described how arrangements in the company were changing:

> *'It's just changed, because we've moved our head office [out of this country]. We used to have a sustainability manager [and] a sustainability director in the UK, and they would look after the corporate approach … Those two have left since the head office has moved, and they have just recruited a global sustainability manager, who sits in [the new head office, in a different country]. Again, his role will be to look at the strategic approach… I personally haven't had much contact with [the new manager] but there is a person within the [UK] company who has that contact with others and we have a newsletter which does talk about sustainability. I must admit it's not day-to-day contact, but I do have some awareness [of what is going on elsewhere in the company].'*

Interviewees were sometimes unable to answer questions about issues which, although the interviewees agreed they were integral to sustainability, were handled by other individuals or departments. For example, I.8 (food service), was unsure of pay rates ('I think we do pay

more than the minimum wage as a whole … I don't get involved with that'). I.17 (food service) did not know what happened to employees when a contract changed hands – she thought they were 'TUPE'ed' across[15], but 'it's not my area'. I.20 (retail) commented that the 'broader concept of sustainability' had been slow to take root at his company because environmental issues had been seen as a different sort of problem from labour issues.

In relation to the issue of labour, as on the websites, there was a distinction between activity relating to direct employees of food companies, who tended to be looked after by Human Resources departments, and workers indirectly employed by suppliers, who came under the aegis of the sustainability or sustainable sourcing officers. I.6 (manufacturing) said that employees' living conditions and wellbeing, wherever they were, were relevant to the company's approach to social sustainability, but that whereas for workers in supplier countries this would be part of her remit, for UK workers responsibility would fall to HR: 'they're internal and we're external, that's how we're structured'.

The compartmentalisation of responsibilities allowed interviewees to detach themselves from certain responsibilities, and meant that disconnected thinking could go unchallenged. For example, several interviewees were resistant to choice-editing because, they said, it was not part of their companies' role to dictate what people should eat. On the other hand, interviewees did not question the reformulation of products, although this is a form of choice editing.

I.4 (retail) recognised that sustainability was unhelpfully fragmented, and saw it as part of her role to overcome this sort of thinking:

> *'It's trying to make it easy for people to say, when I think about developing that product, how am I going to think about putting sustainability into it, rather than [thinking] there's that team on the 9th floor and they do sustainability and I don't have to worry about it'.*

8.5.3 Using Company Codes and Policies

The importance of ethics and values in shaping understanding of social sustainability was discussed in Chapter 7. Flowing from this, a number of entities operationalised social commitments by producing normative frameworks, often referred to as Policies or Codes of Conduct, to sum up the company's ethical stance or aspirations, and guide the behaviour of

[15] That is, given the right to work for the new contract holder, under the 2006 Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations.

its staff. These can be distinguished from standards (also widely used), which specify a set of criteria for a product or process, and involve some verification process by internal (first- and second-party) or external (third party) organisations (Busch 2011). Codes and Policies generally contain guidelines for behaviour, and although they were often said to be based on external codes or devised in consultation with partners (as discussed below and in the next chapter), their provisions were entirely under the control of the company in question.

Some entities had many different policies and codes, and some used both internal codes (i.e., codes produced within the company) and codes produced by external organisations (such as the non-auditable Ethical Trading Initiative's Base Code on labour standards in supply chains). For some entities (such as Retailer Lidl), the use of internal codes and policies was the main way of operationalising sustainability commitments. Again illustrating a tendency to fragment issues, entities had Codes for different aspects of sustainability, or different products or raw materials, or divisions of the company.

Examples included Manufacturer ABF's Twinings Ovaltine Code of Conduct' (based on the ETI Base Code); Manufacturer General Mills's Workplace Standards, Ethical Sourcing Policy and Supplier Code of Conduct; and Foodservice Operator Yum's policy for employee support and training, and supplier Code of Conduct. Manufacturer Premier Foods had a 20-page Code of Conduct (called *Doing the Right Thing*) covering fairness, honesty, workplace safety, respect for the environment and supply chain relations. Retailer Tesco had a 24-page Code of Business Conduct, a Trading Fairly Policy, and separate policies for different raw materials (such as soy and seafood) and different aspects of conduct (such as human rights and anti-corruption). Retailer Lidl had codes covering the company's conduct, management conduct, and conduct regarding employees, customers and business partners.

Interviewees attested that these Codes of Conduct were used and found helpful. For example, I.14 (retail) said that when alternative courses of action with different sustainability implications were being discussed, the company's codes and values were referred to:

> *'When you're having complicated conversations about what we might do, they are a very, very easy way to check.'*

The Codes also carried weight for instrumental reasons, because they were felt to support the company's competitive advantage: 'our values absolutely differentiate us' (I.14).

I.2 (retail) said that having elements of social sustainability inscribed in the company's operating principles made a difference to how employees throughout the company spoke and acted. He said, 'It makes some conversations easier' – for example arguments about quality *v* cost, where buyers would change an ingredient on ethical grounds even if it cost more money.

8.5.4 Collaboration

As shown in Chapter 2 (on the genesis of the idea of sustainability) and Chapter 5 (on UK policy), the idea that the broad nature of sustainability problems calls for concerted action by individuals, organisations and governments has run through sustainability discourse since its advent. This need for socially agreed problematisations and responses has contributed to the argument that the social dimension of sustainability is procedural, as well as concerning substantive social goals. Entwined with this, Chapter 3 showed that there has been a trend towards understanding policymaking and governance as collaborative activities, involving interactions, alliances and networking among individuals, organisations and public authorities. For all of these reasons, social sustainability is an arena where governance might be expected to be highly collaborative, and this was strongly borne out by the findings of this study.

Among the actors 'in', collaboration was widely presented in both the websites and interviews as an important element in implementing sustainability. This collaboration often involved, and indeed had in some instances called into existence, the entities that acted 'on' the food supply. (The operationalisations of the actors 'on' are discussed in more detail in the next chapter.) The food supply companies reported collaborations with Advocacy Organisations, Audit Organisations, Consultancies, Multistakeholder Initiatives, philanthropic organisations, academic institutions, multilateral bodies and each other. They also described collaborations with public authorities.

The Foodservice Operator McDonald's listed 'Collaboration' as one of its 'Signature Sustainability Programmes', describing alliances with a range of partners forged over a period of more than 20 years. In other examples, Trader Cargill collaborated in an EU-

sponsored nutrition research project called SATIN; and Manufacturer Coca-Cola listed collaborations with WWF, the UN Development Programme, USAID and the Gates Foundation. Retailer M&S collaborated with Consultancy Accenture and Advocacy Organisation Business in the Community on a report on the business opportunities presented by sustainability. Foodservice Operator Booker participated in a sectoral sustainability group facilitated by the Advocacy Organisation IGD. Foodservice Operator Starbucks developed its Buying Guidelines with the help of the Advocacy Organisation Care International. Retailer Tesco said 'We can't go it alone'. Retailer Waitrose noted that it was a member of the working group of the UK Equality and Human Rights Commission's meat and poultry processing enquiry, looking at employment practices. Inputs Supplier Monsanto participated in the 2012 G8 summit, where it announced a $50 m, 10-year commitment to support agriculture in sub-Saharan Africa. Manufacturer Unilever participated in the 2012 Rio+20 UN Conference on Sustainable Development, and Unilever's CEO was a member of the UN Secretary General's High Level Panel on the post 2015 Development Agenda.

Reciprocally, the Trade Associations, Consultancies, Audit and Advocacy Organisations frequently reported collaborations with the actors 'in' and with each other. Consultancy Forum for the Future's Global Grain Initiative involved traders, processors, retailers, governments, advocacy organisations, growers and users of grain. Audit Organisation Oxfam said it was 'working in partnership [with companies] wherever possible and challenging whenever necessary'; it conducted research for Unilever, while the Advocacy Organisation SOMO conducted research for Oxfam. The Audit Organisation the RSPCA described how its Freedom Food standard was born from the realisation that 'the only way to make significant improvements in animal welfare was to engage with the [food] industry', with which it had previously been at odds. Some organisations existed specifically to promote collaboration, such as the Advocacy Organisations IDH, which operated by forging public-private partnerships, and Business in the Community, which 'convened' groupings of businesses to enable them to work together. Above all, the MSIs embodied and extolled collaboration between food companies and other organisations. The Roundtable on Responsible Soy said its main instrument was 'dialogue between different interests', the Global Reporting Initiative mobilised the 'power of a multi-stakeholder process and inclusive network', and

Social Accountability International used the multistakeholder process to develop consensus based standards.

The interview data showed how food companies and trade associations collaborated to develop sectoral approaches, and how actors 'in' and 'on' collaborated to plan strategies and implement commitments. In addition, all the actors used collaboration as a means of finding out what other actors were doing, to inform their own approaches and, in the case of organisations with limited resources, to avoid duplication. Collaboration was presented as a way of improving effectiveness and increasing 'buy-in' from a range of stakeholders, and as a cost-effective way of accomplishing objectives for which there was no internal expertise.

For example, I.15 (manufacturing) said an important way of implementing social commitments was through partnerships with organisations including IDH (a fair trade Advocacy Organisation) and the Ethical Tea Partnership (an Audit Organisation operating in the tea sector). I.14 (retail) explained how his company collaborated with 'NGOs, government departments, with third-party standards and academic centres'. I.6 (manufacturing) described collaborations with 'development institutions and agricultural colleges' in order to 'carry out work on the ground':

> *'We don't have teams in every origin [country], and we're not – that's not the most effective way to do it, it's much more effective to partner with people rather than start employing people.'*

I.10 (advocacy) said that 'being able to bring [other organisations] together to make things happen' was one of her own organisation's main strategies.

From a different perspective, I.26 (audit) described the collaborative process by which they had developed the social element in a standard:

> *'The system was devised and has been refined really through an advisory board of experts from across the industry representing the whole range of both commercial and NGOs that are known to be active in the area and are known to have expertise and skills to offer.'*

I.25 (union) said her organisation worked with retailers 'So we get to understand what their drivers are'. I.27 (advocacy) said she found that food companies were quite keen to meet with her organisation because 'they want to know what the landscape of criticism is' – there had been a time when 'it almost looked like good practice' for corporations was 'to meet

with the NGOs that were criticising them'. She said that 'without doubt' her organisation's decisions about which issues to act on were influenced by what other advocacy groups were doing: 'Whether something is [our] job or not depends if anyone else has picked it up'. But as well as ensuring that their efforts complemented, rather than duplicated, other organisations' work, this organisation also acted by mobilising collaboration: 'Our issues ideally should be ones that individual groups can't make progress on singlehanded, and where a broad range of voices can add weight to arguments.' Working in this way amplified their effectiveness:

> *'We don't necessarily hire specialists ourselves to run campaigns or do policy activities, but we wouldn't move without making sure that we have consulted very widely on what the appropriate measures to be taken are.'*

The impression from all this was that governance was being negotiated on an ongoing basis by people working together (or 'networking', in policy terms) in a range of formal and informal ways, knowing each other or knowing *of* each other, and acting resourcefully to steer events in directions that met their organisational interests. Collaboration was a central tool for the governance of social sustainability, and opened the door to the activities described in the next chapter.

8.5.5 Outsourcing

Collaboration (denoting some form of joint working) could blur into outsourcing (meaning obtaining services from an outside contractor), and it is perhaps revealing of the ingrained nature of collaborative governance that the interviewees did not always distinguish between the two. For example, I.15 (manufacturing) described his organisation's collaboration with the Audit Organisation the Ethical Tea Partnership (ETP) as a form of outsourcing:

> *'A lot of ... problems come to me, at least I'll be aware of them, but the ETP are the people on the ground, they are our sustainability experts. I'm a tea person, with a sustainability hat. Those guys are the experts, they are our outsourced sustainability department, in a way'.*

By making use of external organisations' standards, by commissioning investigations, reports and strategies from advocacy groups and consultancies, and by using third-party auditors to ascertain whether suppliers were meeting standards, the food companies were in effect outsourcing (to varying degrees) both the process of deciding *which* concerns to act on, and responsibility for ensuring that concerns *were* acted on. In other words, what they

outsourced was governance. For example, the companies that stipulated goods must meet Fairtrade or Soil Association standards, and then specified that third party organisations must certify that the standards were being met, were delegating to these organisations responsibility both for deciding on criteria and verifying compliance. Many of the actors 'on' existed to facilitate this process, accepting the responsibility outsourced to them either for profit (in the case of the commercial organisations) or in order to implement their own aspirations for social sustainability. Outsourcing allowed the actors 'in' to maintain a Pontius-Pilate like distance from the actuality of the activities being initiated or monitored. However, it also offered actors 'on' opportunities to intervene in the food supply to achieve their respective goals.

8. 5.6 Doing 'engagement'

Chapter 7 found that an important element in food supply actors' understanding of social sustainability was the procedural element of 'engagement' or 'getting it'. The food supply companies – as well as several of the actors 'on' – could be seen to be actively operationalising this aspect of sustainability, as a necessary prelude or enabler of other activity. For example, Retailer M&S organised Plan A supplier conferences to inform and engage its suppliers in support of the sustainability programme. Foodservice Operator 3663 had a network of 65 internal, voluntary 'sustainability coordinators' to communicate to staff on sustainability issues. Foodservice Operator Booker had a 'Green General Manager' to promote sustainability ideas and initiatives in each region, supported at branch level by 'green champions'.

Some of the actors 'on' existed specifically to help promote engagement for sustainability in the food supply. The Advocacy Organisation Environmental Practice at Work educated workers to equip them to tackle sustainability issues in their workplaces: engagement was its main tool, and it could be said to be using social sustainability to achieve environmental sustainability.

Interviewees described at some length the processes by which they helped colleagues or clients to 'get' sustainability. Working on engagement was clearly an important (social) aspect of their work on sustainability. I.10 (advocacy group) described taking executives from food companies on farm visits to help them 'get it':

> *'We take them out to see a hill farmer and how he's surviving on £6,000 a year, working all the hours God sends, and those visits are really interesting because you see the, kind of, the switch flick.'*

I.18 (retail) had taken a sustainability road show around the whole company, asking for staff comments. I.17 described the slightly artificial experience, spread over several months, of:

> *'Sitting with colleagues that I sit with on a daily basis, but saying, "today I want to talk about sustainability, what's important to you, etc."'*

I.9 (food service) said:

> *'When we first launched our [sustainability] programme, and I was doing my tour of conferences, I decided employee engagement was the most important thing.'*

She then devised an elaborate scheme, lasting two years, in which employees received 'points' for 'green' behaviour at home or at work:

> *'The points system got very complicated, but it worked … they went and started buying Red Tractor products at home, and they used to send me in receipts and things, so you got a real team programme going, it was great, it worked really well. I remember somebody sent me a FairTrade wine label and said can I get point for this, and we went, Yes. I didn't over-manage it, because I wanted to encourage anything, people bought bags for life, they did all sorts of things, it was great. Then we gave the winning team £5,000 to spend on projects in their local community, so they could support things that were personal to them and their teams. So it worked really well, but after a couple of years, we got the message out there, and we moved away from it because it wasn't necessary anymore.'*

Once the staff had 'got' the message, the incentives scheme was no longer necessary.

8.5.7 People making decisions

It has already been noted that there was a markedly ad hoc quality to some of the operationalisations described by the interviewees and websites. The interviews shed some light on why this was so. Actions were triggered or shaped by, for example, public policy initiatives (such as the PSFPI), requirements of external organisations or schemes (such as the BITC Responsibility Index), the interacting experience and knowledge of the interviewees' and their colleagues, the structure and ethos of the companies, external events such as funding cutbacks, and interactions among the various food companies and external actors. There was a sense that when confronted with the need to act, the interviewees looked around to see what bits of their own organisations, and other organisations, were doing, to see if any of it could be useful. The resulting governance looked opportunistic, messy and contingent, but also resourceful, cooperative and dogged. Although the need to transform business models was sometimes extolled in the websites, in

practice governance was reformative rather than transformative. It also depended to a considerable extent on the determination and personal resources of the people who decided, or were delegated, to put social sustainability into effect. It was the result, to paraphrase I.6 (manufacturing), of people making decisions.

The results were often piecemeal. In one example, I.8 (food service) described the personal (and somewhat arbitrary) process by which he was introducing sustainability measures:

> *'I am in the throes of getting the company to sign up to the Global Compact. Because I think it's a stake in the ground: ... you say, this is where we stand. It gives us an opportunity, it's a bit like when I brought in ISO 140001 in 2007, it's a launch pad, and from that you then bolt on other things'.*

It was shown in Chapter 6 that where sustainability practitioners sat within companies – in 'commercial' or Human Resources departments, for example – could affect the scope of activity undertaken. Several interviewees also made the point that the commitment of senior individuals within companies made a big difference to the nature and effectiveness of action on social sustainability, because of both 'passion' and control over finances and other resources. I.20 (retail) said his company's previous focus on carbon (at the expense of a more holistic approach to sustainability) had been:

> *'because, and I do believe this happens in a number of organisations, the previous CEO was personally passionate about the climate change agenda, understood the challenge, and I think personal passion makes a difference and [he] drove that through the organisation.'*

I.15 (manufacturing) said his work was made easier because the new CEO and deputy were both 'very positive about sustainability'. I.26 (audit) said it was rare for companies to undergo audit 'where there isn't some sort of personal commitment to it, someone in the business'. I.13 (producer) described how a co-op he chaired for 20 years fell apart when he stood down – his personal commitment had held it together.

I.27 (advocacy) acknowledged both the gradual and haphazard nature of progress and the importance of individuals. Organisations cut their clothes according to their cloth, and built on existing knowledge and practice. A dedicated person or team could snatch opportunities, make connections, innovate, take risks or experiment, she said. But she added: 'this is all a very piecemeal way of saving the world'.

8.6 Concluding comments

This chapter has focused on how the actors 'in', the companies directly involved in supplying food, operationalised social themes associated with sustainability agendas. An array of activities that included some idiosyncratic examples was broadly found to coalesce around the themes of food provision, employment, concern for distant suppliers, and activities focussed on communities and wider society. Operationalisations included providing healthy, nourishing and in some cases affordable food products and using reformulation to align products' composition more closely with nutritional guidance. The actors 'in' depicted their provision of employment as an operationalisation of social sustainability, along with the provision of training, apprenticeships and supportive workplaces. Social commitments towards suppliers were mainly operationalised by means of Codes or external standards. Communities near the sites of food companies were the targets of philanthropy and charitable work, with cash, facilities and employees' time made available. Wider society benefited from the provision of educational facilities, cultural initiatives or development work in supplier countries. Implementations were often tied to core company activities by the idea of materiality.

In choosing and using these operationalisations, the entities used a number of governance approaches. They relabelled existing activities; fragmented the issue into separately manageable elements; devised normative codes to guide their behaviour; collaborated; and outsourced tasks or whole strategies.

The interviewees explained the opportunistic process by which they assembled new programmes from existing activities, taking inspiration or expertise from many sources. It was found that there was something approaching a 'routine response' to implementing social sustainability, but the process and outcomes were reliant on the knowledge, contacts, personal capacities, role and resources of practitioners, their place within organisations, and the extent to which the ethos of their organisations was supportive. The interviewees described how they worked to engage colleagues, employees and suppliers as a prelude to other sustainability work. The result of this scramble for activity was reformative rather than transformative; it was pragmatic and resourceful, but reactive and ad hoc.

Work was a central element of social sustainability for the interviewees, or rather, they saw the social sustainability of the industrial food supply to hinge, to a large extent, on the continuity, quality and satisfaction of its workforce. Problems included a looming labour shortage, an aging workforce, inappropriate skills, and problems with British workers' 'work ethic'. Despite the strong sense that the interviewees projected of being proactive decision makers within their organisations, the precarious and badly paid nature of food work, as well as the dependence on migrant labour which had come about within the working lives of several interviewees, were seen to be inescapably linked to market forces, and thus somehow beyond the control of the food companies themselves.

It has become clear from the discussion in this chapter that the governance of social sustainability in the food supply is highly collaborative. The operationalisations by companies directly involved in supplying food (the actors 'in') entailed, and sometimes depended on, interactions with other organisations that themselves used various methods to encourage or impose social sustainability in the food supply. These activities – the ways in which the actors 'on' the food supply governed sustainability – are the subject of the next chapter.

Chapter 9: Carrots and sticks: projecting social sustainability onto the food supply

9.1 Introduction

This chapter continues to address the question (RQ3) of what was being done about social sustainability in the food supply by looking at the activities of the entities collectively referred to as actors 'on'. These diverse actors all sought to influence the food supply, without themselves being directly involved in supplying food. They used a variety of methods to chivvy, coax, collude with, persuade or embarrass the food companies into behaving in ways more consistent with their own objectives. When categorising the actors, these activities were summed up as Consultancy, Audit and Advocacy, but a more colloquial way of describing them would be as the 'carrots and sticks' of this chapter's title.

Chapter 8 described how many of the actors 'in' governed social sustainability by turning for help to other organisations: they collaborated, consulted on our outsourced strands of work (or in some cases entire sustainability strategies). This activity was facilitated by, and indeed depended on, the work of the kinds of actor discussed in this chapter: the consultants, advocates and auditors. The resulting governance terrain appeared densely networked, with formal and informal borrowings and exchanges of knowledge and 'best practice' (itself a manipulable term). It was also highly contingent – on available personnel, knowledge, resources, contacts, and opportunities for funding (in the case of funded organisations) or for earning (in the case of commercial ones).

The first part of the chapter describes the sorts of activities through which the various categories of actor 'on' operationalised social sustainability (and more examples can be found in Column 5 of the relevant Data Summary Tables in Annex F). The second part of the chapter looks in detail at the use of standards (a form of Audit). Standards were flagged in the literature as a governance tool widely used in the field of food sustainability, and this study found that they were also being used to govern social sustainability. However, the 'standards' were found to be less uniform than might be expected; and although the

interviewees used standards routinely, they saw them as imperfect instruments for furthering social sustainability.

9.2 The trade associations, levy bodies and unions

Based on their websites, these organisations appeared to be least active in operationalising social sustainability in the food supply. As the Data Summary Tables in Annex F show, the websites of the Trade Associations and Levy Bodies were sparse in their discussion of social aspects of sustainability, and recorded few activities that could be seen as operationalisations. What operationalisations there were consisted mainly of the supply of practical advice, and the use of advocacy (such as publishing or online communications), and reported involvement in public policymaking.

For example, among the Levy Bodies, the Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board (AHDB) (the overarching group for the primary producers' levy boards), operationalised its concern for farm viability through activities to raise schoolchildren's awareness of where food came from; and worked with sectoral bodies to ensure that appropriately skilled workers were being trained and recruited. The stated aim of DairyCo, the dairy sector body, was to improve the sustainability of British dairy farming, but the only operationalisation mentioned was the provision of online advice on aspects of farm management, such as accounting and employment rights.

Among the Trade Associations, the British Hospitality Association (representing the hotel sector) ran a Responsible Hospitality programme that supported the provision of healthy food options by issuing guidance on the Responsibility Deal pledges. The British Frozen Food Federation, which identified sustainability as a priority, operationalised this by building an online database of best-practice case studies involving donation of 'surplus' food to charities. The British Retail Consortium published on ways for retailers to help customers make healthy eating choices, e.g. through labelling and reformulation; it also argued for 'caution' on raising the National Minimum Wage, because this would push up employers' the wage bills. Fending off a potential criticism of its members, the British Soft Drinks Association published a Briefing Paper called *Soft drinks are not a cause of diabetes*. The Food and Drink Federation (FDF), representing manufacturers, had a flagship sustainability initiative, the 'Five Fold Environmental Ambition', which (as the name implies) until 2012 did

not include any social concerns. The FDF also said it had engaged in 'co-creation in policymaking' with Government on the Green Food Project. The Foreign Trade Association ran the Business Social Compliance Initiative, a Code of Conduct on labour rights and working conditions in 'labour intensive supply chains'. The National Association of British and Irish Millers had a policy to help members manage their businesses 'to the benefit of society', and also produced guidance on terms of trade between farmers and millers, e.g. requiring written contracts.

These activities seem slight, random, and inconsistently linked with sustainability. Based on the websites, working to achieve greater social sustainability in the food supply does not seem to be a priority. This was not supported by the Trade Association interviewees, however, who proved to be articulate and informed on the topic. Although the interviewees were not asked why the organisations' websites were such poor showcases for the levels of concern and knowledge that clearly existed, a probable explanation is that these organisations conducted much of their work behind the scenes: they engaged, collaborated and influenced behind closed doors. They lobbied, in other words, although this word rarely appeared in websites and only occasionally came up when interviewees were asked how their organisations implemented social sustainability. I. 5, from a trade association, described how her organisation would assess a new issue 'from a lobbying perspective', asking ' how can we fix this, what are the potential inroads …. can we send letters to the Government, what's the ILO doing?' This was intended to be a way of solving problems before they became public.

The unions have already been identified as a category of actor that almost more than any other was active on a set of issues (namely pay, working conditions and worker's rights) that many commentators see as a defining social component of sustainability in the food supply. However, the food unions researched did not present their activities as being part of sustainability. Examples of activity included the protests by the Bakers', Food and Allied Workers Union (BFAWU) against Premier Foods' cuts in the hours and pay of the permanent workforce and the substitution of agency workers; and by Unite against the logistics company Keuhne & Nagel over the relocation of workers' jobs; and by Farmers for Action over prices paid to milk farmers. BFAWU also published reports critical of pay differentials and instigated a day of action on 'justice' for workers in the fast food sector, focusing on

zero hours contracts. The Union of Shop, Distribution and Allied Workers (USDAW) campaigned for union recognition at M&S by highlighting the company's support for 'fair trade' principles among suppliers. These activities might be highlighted by others as protests against socially unsustainable aspects of the industrial food supply; but the unions themselves did not present them in that way.

This may be an insignificant difference in terminology, or it may reflect the fact that the unions have been active on these issues since before they were associated with sustainability (although other organisations, such as the Advocacy Organisation the Fairtrade Foundation, can be seen to have adapted their pre-existing remit to include sustainability). But is also the case that sustainability presents a dilemma for the trade unions which in a way symbolises the conflict between the social and environmental pillars. In a 2008 report called *A green and fair future*, the TUC stressed that jobs must not be put at risk in a transition to a more sustainable economy, and it reiterated these concerns in a report prior to the 2015 Paris climate talks, which stated that unions might not support global climate change legislation if it failed to protect jobs.

9.3 Strategising social sustainability: the consultancies

The consultants, by definition, offered consultancy services, which were varied and in some cases comprehensive. I.24, a consultant, said his consultancy was awarded contracts because it was capable 'of seeing the bigger picture, of doing all the dialogue with all the various constituencies, of doing the background research, of drafting the thing … the whole nine yards'. With two exceptions[16], the consultancies investigated were specifically dedicated to furthering sustainability in business (though not exclusively food business). I.7, also a consultant, said, 'the *raison d'être* of this organisation is promoting sustainability to businesses'. The consultancies were thus examples of the kinds of entity that have sprung up to meet other organisations' need to 'do something' about sustainability – including, though not always prominently, social sustainability. It was notable that several of the consultancies reported working for the same large food companies, and also that they advised not just food companies but also advocacy groups and government. The impression was of a very cross-referential group of advisers and clients.

[16] The exceptions were Accenture, which was a general management consultancy, and Ergon Associates, which specialised in human and labour rights.

The consultancies appeared to operationalise their objectives by aligning their own language and services with the requirements of their clients. They used the language (and jargon) of business and presented sustainability as a business opportunity – for example Accenture said it was 'committed to helping forward-thinking organisations position sustainability as a key lever to long-term success and, ultimately, high performance'. They both facilitated food companies' sustainability practices and proposed new ways of doing things.

The consultancies advised on, or in some cases produced, sustainability strategies. I.7 said his organisation purveyed a 'change model', and I.24 said his organisation didn't just implement sustainability strategies, 'sometimes we write them'. Benchmark Holdings had modelled sustainable livestock regimes for McDonald's Europe and the Chinese government; Robertsbridge Group contributed strategies to Coca-Cola, Pepsi, Cargill, Nestle, Danone, Sainsbury, Rainforest Alliance, Unilever and Waitrose. The consultancies could thus take responsibility for making decisions about social sustainability from companies which outsourced it to them. But the process was also about recruiting external expertise. I.24 described how organisations needing to do something about social sustainability found 'having a dialogue with people who had immersed themselves in this content was a useful part of their thinking'.

The consultancies provided various services that facilitated the food supply companies' governance of social sustainability, sometimes occupying quite specific niches. For example among other activities, Corporate Citizenship ran the London Benchmarking Group Model, which was a standard for quantifying corporate community investment: companies could use it to put a monetary figure on the kinds of social activity described in Chapter 8. Ergon Associates advised food companies, MSIs and advocacy groups on the how to incorporate human and labour rights into business practice. Several consultancies helped food supply companies to meet social standards, and / or helped them with social reporting. TwentyFifty advised companies on the use of social criteria in sourcing policies, trained food companies' buyers and helped suppliers meet the food companies' standards. SustainAbility helped Nestle prepare its reports to GRI standards. Two Tomorrows assured the sustainability reports of Danisco, the Co-operative Group and Morrisons.

The consultancies claimed to be influencing discourse, and indeed 'delivering' sustainability, and not simply facilitating their clients' pre-existing programmes. For example, Forum for the Future used scenarios to encourage long-term thinking and said it argued within companies for transformational change. SustainAbility said it helped to 'define' as well as tackle challenges, and had worked with Nestle to develop a set of 'strategic, commitment-aligned' KPIs. However, there was some evidence that the consultancies' capacity to impose their own interpretations of sustainability on their clients was limited. For example, Best Foot Forward, whose stated aim was to enable 'social, environmental and economic sustainability', advised Defra and the soft drinks industry on the Soft Drinks Sustainability Road Map, which omitted any social elements.

While the websites offered slick packages, the consultancy interviewees depicted a more haphazard process of pitching for business through competitive tenders, then devising ways to help companies or government departments to meet challenges, a process that was, in the words of I.24, both messy and 'small-p political', involving both collaboration and critique. For example, he described a tricky situation in which he was privately invited to comment on other applicants' tenders for a contract. He said the process of pitching shaped strategies, because consultancies and clients chose each other on the basis of what they already knew about each other, and although pitches might try to introduce new thinking, they were tailored to clients' stated requirements, and trying to move clients 'from A toP', rather than 'A to C' (in other words, to suggest change that was too radical) was unlikely to succeed. The services provided were contingent, according to I.21, another consultant, on the in-house capacities of the consultancy and the priorities of the people who worked there. This interviewee described how her consultancy had recently begun to offer a social sustainability assessment: they had devised a framework, and applied it by having two consultants each make a rating, then compare them, then take results to a wider group, to try to ensure validity and overcome danger of subjectivity. It was an improvisational approach.

9.4 Campaigning for social sustainability: the Advocacy Organisations

These organisations operationalised social sustainability through advocacy, using mainly discursive methods to persuade others to support and adopt the changes they advocated.

Their methods included research, publication, communication, 'naming and shaming', and organising public campaigns. In the words of I. 27, from an Advocacy Organisation, 'I'll do anything that works', and this opportunistic approach was borne out by the array of operationalisations found in the websites.

Although all the advocacy organisations worked on issues relevant to social sustainability in the food supply, they were not all advocating the same things – they used advocacy for different ends. They ranged from the anti-corporate organisation Corporate Watch to the pro-business World Business Council for Sustainable Development. Corporate Watch saw its research as 'a vital resource for campaigns looking to target particular companies', whereas IGD, a research body for food and other companies, saw its work as 'equipping' the industry and its employees. Some were confrontational in their approaches, some conciliatory. To achieve change, some used the tactic of exposure of poor performance (e.g. Consensus Action on Salt and Health's challenge to food companies to reformulate products to reduce salt 'hidden' in processed foods). Other organisations, less antagonistic, took on the role of 'critical friend', sympathising with business objectives but suggesting alternatives (e.g. the Food Ethics Council).

Confirming the point that the categories are not watertight, some of the advocacy organisations also used audit methods to pursue their sustainability objectives – for example, Business in the Community ran the CR Index, which allowed companies to benchmark and improve their sustainability performance (mentioned in Chapter 7 as having prompted one interviewee to push more strongly on social sustainability); and the New Economics Foundation had developed a system for calculating 'social return on investment' which had been used to evaluate food projects.

Research-based publications were common operationalisations. Examples (from numerous, diverse possibilities) included Friends of the Earth's 2010 report *Factory farming's hidden impacts* (2010) or the Joseph Rowntree Foundation's 2012 report *Experiences of forced labour in the UK food supply* (2012). These highlighted social 'scandals' (respectively poor animal welfare and worker exploitation) in the industrial food supply. Taking a different approach, the New Economics Foundation operationalised its understanding of social sustainability by publishing a succession of reports building definitions and measurements

for wellbeing, which fed into others' interpretations of social sustainability (e.g. *Measuring wellbeing*, 2012, *Talking wellbeing*, 2014). IIED drew attention to the poor trading and labour conditions among workers in Developing countries supplying foodstuffs to the UK by running a research project called 'Shaping Sustainable Markets'. Other organisations produced more practical publications, such as IGD's Fact Sheet on Sustainable Sourcing, or Business in the Community's 'Sustainability Toolkit'. WWF published and promoted an innovative 'Livewell' framework that attempted to integrate social (health) and environmental aspects of sustainability into dietary advice.

ActionAid operationalised its objection to what it saw as the exploitative and unfair nature of certain food supply chains from Developing countries (and more generally to 'tax-dodging corporations') by initiating an investigation of the tax-avoiding activities of Zambia Sugar, a subsidiary of ABF. The investigation culminated in the 2013 report *Sweet Nothings*, which illustrated the depth and tenacity of some of the Advocacy Organisations' work. The report analysed the tax practices of Zambia Sugar over several years, with correspondence between company lawyers and ActionAid researchers published online. The detailed report indicated a high level of financial knowledge on the part of the researchers – for example, 'management fees' paid to an Irish sister company were tracked down and it was discovered that while the Irish company had no physical presence in Ireland and claimed to have no employees, it had been providing Zambia Sugar with 'management services' worth more than $2m a year for several years. ABF later acknowledged that its accounts had been in error on this.

As well as exposing or critiquing companies, many Advocacy Organisations said they 'worked with' them to advocate change. The impression from the interviewees was that this was the norm: I.27 said setting up meetings with people from food supply companies was rarely problematic, though it tended to be with 'CSR or sustainability people', and I.10 worked with an organisations whose *raison d'être* was business engagement. Among the websites, Business for Social Responsibility said it provided advice on sustainability for Cargill, M&S and McCain. The Food Ethics Council ran a bimonthly 'business forum' where executives from the food industry met each other and external speakers in a 'safe' environment to discuss issues relevant to FEC's goal of a 'fairer food system'. The Ecumenical Council on Corporate Responsibility, which used church shareholdings as a basis

for negotiating for 'justice, human rights and environmental sustainability', held 'dialogues' with companies, including Sainsbury's and Tesco. IDH: the Sustainable Trade Initiative forged public-private partnerships to improve the sustainability of food commodity supply chains. The main method of Business in the Community was to 'convene' business leaders in order to share and disseminate best practice. WWF said it was 'working with and influencing key players in the UK food industry, including retailers, producers, food processors, governments and charities, to transform the way UK food is produced'. In all these instances and more, engagement and dialogue were used as persuasive tools to operationalise social aspects of sustainability.

Another operationalisation involved the use of online platforms for sharing information. CorporateRegister's main method of implementing its objective of driving up standards of sustainability reporting was to collate and share companies' reports via a free online platform. The Sustainable Agriculture Initiative Platform was an industry initiative (its members were food supply companies) that shared best practice on sustainable agriculture via a website. Award schemes were another operationaisation: Corporate Register ran an awards scheme, as did Compassion in World Farming (which made awards to companies committing to raise standards for animal welfare) and Business in the Community.

The interviewees from Advocacy Organisations confirmed that approaches tended to be opportunistic – looking for openings – but also dependent on available resources. I.27 described how her role was 'to marshal the forces of [her organisation]', and said 'tactics' varied depending on the issue and context (e.g. campaigns targeting retailers needed to be different from campaigns targeting contract caterers, because they worked in different ways). Activities depended on funding, and on the knowledge of staff and volunteers. I.10 described using the influence of patrons and big companies to spread a chosen message: a lot of the work was about arranging meetings, getting people to talk, and was dependent on being able to call on the financial resources of large food companies to finance the work. These interviewees stressed the importance of dialogue and collaboration, and also the contingency of what could be achieved.

9.5 The army of auditors

A large number of the actors 'on' operationalised their social sustainability objectives through some form of audit. For example, the Soil Association said it regarded its standards as 'the practical expression of our guiding philosophy'. Audit activities included all three elements of Loconto and Busch's tripartite standards regime (standard-setting, certification, and the accreditation of the certifiers, Loconto and Busch 2010). However, they also included a range of other instruments for rating, ranking or assessment, representing a variety of so-called 'standards' that were not in practice very standard. These efforts to standardise social sustainability are discussed in more depth in the second part of this chapter: this section provides an overview of the organisations and operationalisations discovered during the research.

Like the Advocacy Organisations, the Audit Organisations formed a heterogeneous group. They ranged from specially constituted non-profit organisations (e.g. AccountAbility, which ran a standard for the assurance of sustainability reporting, or the Sustainable Restaurant Association, which ran a sustainability rating for restaurants), to privately funded foundations (e.g. the Acccess to Nutrition Foundation), to national standard-setting bodies (e.g. the British Standards Institution), to plcs (e.g. the FTSE Group or the certifier SGS), to sectoral associations (e.g. the Consumer Goods Forum) to campaigning charities (e.g. Oxfam). It was also notable that some of the standard-setting organisations had evolved into what were in effect complex, non-state global governance entities, such as GlobalGAP or the Fairtrade organisation.

While for some of the audit organisations (e.g. Fairfood International), the use of a standard to improve social sustainability in the food supply was their main purpose, for others it was just one strand of what they did – i.e., *using a standard* was just one strand of what they did (e.g. Oxfam), or *applying standards to food* was just one strand of what they did (e.g. the financial rater EIRIS or the certifier Bureau Veritas). Thus, the governance actors involved in the audit of the social aspects of the food supply were diverse, with different specialisms and priorities.

Finally, although the audit organisations were so labelled because audit was an important method for them, they did not 'just' do audit: many of the audit organisations also worked

with food companies to help them achieve compliance, and many also used advocacy methods to champion the use of standards to further sustainability objectives (and their own formulations in particular). For example, the financial services company PWC championed the use of its sustainability reporting tool, Total Impact Management and Measurement (TIMM). The consultancy AccountAbility, whose headline activity was maintaining and disseminating the AA1000 standards for sustainability reporting and assurance, also aimed both to influence sustainability standards and 'to raise the credibility of organisational public disclosure on sustainable activity'. For this organisation, accountability was essential to the process of making business more sustainable. Its standards were designed to facilitate this (i.e. they standardised accountability), and it also advocated for their wider use. Partner Africa, which audited suppliers in the developing world to social standards required by Developed world customers, also trained suppliers to achieve and maintain compliance, noting that 'Businesses and individuals would struggle to meet their sustainability goals without support'. And the Fairtrade Foundation, which implemented the Fairtrade Labelling Association's standards in the UK, also worked to expand the market for Fairtrade goods, to raise awareness of 'the need for Fairtrade' and to advocate for the growers and workers in its networks. The strong finding here was that although standards are often seen to be fixed, objective and impersonal (indeed, their authority depends on these qualities), the culture in which they operated was more flexible and more social, involving recognition of individual circumstances, negotiation and discretion. In some cases, the standards were an instrument for advancing an argument as well as an instrument for measuring.

The Audit Organisations sought to influence and shape the behaviour of companies involved in supplying food by measuring their performance against different sets of social criteria. They produced many of the frameworks and standards which the actors 'in' used to operationalise their social concerns. Thus, like the consultancies, the auditors took on a responsibility delegated (or outsourced) to them for specifying and assessing action on social issues.

Some standards focused on social concerns (such as the BSI's Guidance Standard 26000 on Social Responsibility or the Fairtrade standard). Others covered social issues along with other concerns (e.g. GlobalGAP Grasp, the social component of a standard for agricultural

production, or the Sustainable Restaurant Association's standards, which included social criteria). Some standards set standards for other social standards (such as ISEAL's standards or AccountAbility's AA1000 standards for assuring sustainability reporting). While some organisations set standards, others (or other divisions of the same organisations) certified compliance. These included Bureau Veritas, a global inspection company, the Soil Association's certification subsidiary SA Certification, and Rainforest Alliance, which certified against the Sustainable Agriculture Network's standard.

Other organisations compiled ratings and indices to guide investment (e.g. EIRIS or the FTSE4Good index), or ranked companies to incentivise improvement (e.g. Access to Nutrition Foundation's index or Oxfam's Behind the Brands Campaign) and /or to influence consumers (e.g. the comparative tables produced by the Ethical Consumer Research Association). Sedex – the Supplier Ethical Data Exchange – was used by many of the food companies investigated as a way of assessing the social performance of existing or potential suppliers, which were required to upload data on labour standards and worker health and safety to an online platform. Sedex had also developed 'best practice' framework for ethical auditing (SMETA).

The interviewees testified to the widespread use of standards, in particular, as a useful 'off the peg' tool for addressing social concerns – in fact they spoke about them at length. Both the actors 'in', who used them, and some of the actors 'on', who devised and applied them, saw them as useful but flawed instruments. Because standards are discussed in the second part of this chapter, the interviewees' comments on their use are presented there.

9.6 Institutionalised collaboration: the MSIs

The Multistakeholder Initiatives (MSIs) were collaborative organisations that had been set up to bring together a range of stakeholders to influence the sustainability of some aspect of the food supply (such as a specific commodity, sector or process). They exemplified the shift to private modes of governance discussed in Chapter 3, and were, in the words of I.1, from a Trade Association, who had participated in the ISO Working Group on Social Responsibility, 'very political, with a lot of competing agendas'.

In most cases, the MSIs operationalised their objectives by developing some form of audit tool such as a code or standard. Examples included the standards for the production and

primary processing of cane sugar, run by Bonsucro; or the standards for sustainable agricultural production in Developing countries run by the Sustainable Agriculture Network. Even more than the Audit Organisations, however, many of the MSIs also engaged in advocacy to promote and entrench the use of sustainability standards – and their own standards in particular. For example the Global Reporting Initiative promoted the use of its sustainability reporting framework, but also advocated for the use of sustainability reporting as a way of making business more sustainable. The ETI promoted its Base Code on supply chain labour standards, but was also a prolific communicator on issues such as 'modern slavery', the Living Wage and ethical trade.

Only three of the MSIs investigated did not run any form of code or standard, instead using operationalisations that resembled those of Advocacy Organisations. The Fruit Juice CSR Platform facilitated collaboration and had produced guidance in the form of a Roadmap. The Sustainable Food Laboratory (SFL) pursued its goal of accelerating 'market-driven progress toward a sustainable mainstream food system' by means of mentoring, strategising, 'leadership' and 'collaborative learning'. Tea 2030, a coalition of tea companies and advocacy organisations, had commissioned research to identify problems in the tea supply, and was developing 'scenarios' for remedial action.

9.7 Standardising social sustainability

The preceding sections summarised and provided examples of the various ways in which actors 'on' the food supply operationalised social sustainability in the food supply. The following sections focus in more depth on what are here termed Audit methods (following Power, 1997), but which some authors wrap up together as standards (Busch 2011b; Ponte *et al* 2011). These methods are based on formalised processes of measuring, recording and checking (Power 1997). In the research, they emerged as a prominent means of governing social sustainability (as the literature had suggested would be the case, e.g. Hatanaka et al, 2005; Henson and Reardon, 2005; Loconto and Busch 2010; Fuchs *et al* 2011b; Ponte et al, 2011). In Miller and Rose's terms (2008), standards are a 'technology' of governance – part of the array of tools and techniques that enable governance actors to act on the conduct of others.

Audit methods were an important part of what the websites presented as, and the interviews confirmed to be, a 'routine response' to the governance of sustainability, including its social aspects, although the interviewees offered many qualifications about their usefulness. The research found a variety of audit methods in use, ranging from those explicitly described as standards (such as FairTrade's) to other quantifying and comparative tools, such as ratings and indexes.

Audit methods posit a framework of characteristics – the criteria – against which the product or process to be audited is assessed. The framework – which may comprise a formal standard, an index, a rating, or some other form of checklist – is thus a standard: it prescribes an ideal type of the aspect of the product or process being assessed. The standard specifies how the standard-setter thinks this aspect of the product or process should (or should not) be, and this prescriptive power explains the contentious and collaborative nature of standard-setting (Busch 2011b). Commentators have pointed out that agrifood standards are not neutral, technical devices, but are normative, and have become an important way in which diverse actors influence the agrifood system (Hatanaka *et al* 2005). Audit also entails the processes of verifying compliance with standards (certification), and assuring the accuracy, consistency and reliability of the verifiers (accreditation). These processes have given rise to elaborate networks of standard-setting and conformity assessment. Loconto and Busch have described them as Tripartite Standards Regimes (TSR) (Loconto and Busch 2010), although it became clear from the research that the interdependencies extended to the users of standards (which included many of the food supply companies investigated), and to the various organisations that exist to help other entities reach compliance (such as the consultancy Ergon Associates). The regime might thus be depicted as having five rather than three parts.

The following sections first discuss what the websites said about the various audit methods – the types and ways they were used, the multiplicity of social criteria, the impulse to standardise (or 'harmonise') standards, and the emergence of complex, international organisations for 'governing through standards' (Ponte *et al* 2011). It then draws on the interviewees' comments to show how the use of standards, which is now routine and entrenched, is nevertheless felt to be problematic, with a wish expressed to move 'beyond audit' – possibly to a more social, relational form of governance.

9.7.1 Different types of standards

The research found that different types of standard were being used to operationalise different social concerns at different points in the food supply. Table 9.1 provides a range of examples, from a public index ranking 25 large food companies on their contribution to improving nutrition (the Access to Nutrition Index), and a rating of companies' sustainability performance to guide investors (Covalence EthicalQuote's rating) to a set of standards for agricultural produce with an optional social component (the Globalgap Risk Assessment on Social Practice, GRASP) and a framework for sustainability reporting by organisations (the Global Reporting index). (Other examples can be found in the Data Summary Tables for the Audit Organisations and MSIs, in Annex F.)

Table 9.1 Ways of standardising social sustainability: 10 examples

Name	Type of 'standard'	Details	Criteria and assessment
Access To Nutrition Index (ATNI)	A public index ranking food companies on their contribution to improving nutrition	ATNI produced a Scorecard of 25 of the world's largest food manufacturers, assessed on the basis of their policies, practice and performance. Companies included Campbell's Soup, ConAgra, Danone, General Mills, Heinz, Unilever and others.	•Assessed on seven topics: Governance, Products, Accessibility, Marketing, Lifestyles, Labelling, Engagement; •Topics divided into 19 indicators; e.g. Accessibility had two indicators, for Pricing and Distribution. The website did not make clear how these indicators were assessed; •The Scorecard presented the scores as a number for each topic, an overall score and a ranking. For example, in 2013 Campbell's soup came 12th on obesity and 14th on undernutrition – 12th overall, with a score of 1.9 out of 10; •There was also a more qualitative assessment of the company's performance – in Campbell's' case, providing the information that it was one of a handful of companies surveyed to link the CEO's salary to nutrition objectives.
Covalence Ethicalquote	A rating of companies' sustainability performance, to guide investors	Rated companies against a range of criteria based on those of the Global Reporting Initiative, expanded by the 'accumulated experience' of Covalence	•50 criteria divided seven themes: Governance, Commitments and Engagement; Economic; Environmental; Labour Practices and Decent Work; Human Rights; Society; Product Responsibility; •Under the 'Society' theme, criteria covered impacts on local communities, humanitarian actions, corruption, lobbying activities, contributions to political parties, anticompetitive behaviour, and compliance with social laws and regulations; •Other themes contained criteria on working conditions and practices, wages (including those paid to executives), local sourcing, local hiring, diversity, equal rights, and human rights.
Ethical Consumer Research Association (ECRA)	A rating of products' and companies' sustainability performance, to guide consumers	Rated and ranked products and companies, based on its own criteria	•300+ criteria in 19 areas and five categories •Five overarching categories were: Animals; Environment; People; Politics; and Sustainability; •Sustainability category had areas on Company Ethos and Product Sustainability •Product Sustainability area had topics on organic, fair trade, energy efficient, and vegan & vegetarian products; •Animals category had an area on factory farming; •People category had areas on human rights, workers' rights,

Name	Type of 'standard'	Details	Criteria and assessment
			supply chain management, irresponsible marketing, and arms and military supply; •Workers' rights area had 18 topics
Ethical Trading Initiative (ETI) Base Code	A public, non-auditable code on working conditions and worker protection in supply chains	Widely used and referenced framework suggesting minimum standards for labour rights, 'especially in countries where workers' rights are not safeguarded by local law'. Based on the UN and multilateral frameworks, e.g. UN Declaration on Human Rights, ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises	•Nine principles (expanded into 24 specific requirements): •Employment freely chosen; •Freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining respected; •Working conditions safe and hygienic; •Child labour not to be used; •Living wages paid; •Working hours not excessive; •No discrimination practised; •Regular employment provided; •No harsh or inhumane treatment allowed.
Fairfood International Framework	A framework for revealing problematic social 'hotspots' in global commodity chains	Conducted research to highlight social 'hotspots' by assessing commodity chains against its own set of criteria	•26 cross-cutting issues, organised into six themes, two each for social, environmental and economic pillars; •Social themes were Human Rights and Labour Rights; •Human Rights covered forced labour, discrimination, child labour, lack of freedom of association, violation of land rights, and restricted access to natural resources; •Labour Conditions covered unhealthy and unsafe working conditions, unreasonable working hours, insufficient income and income insecurity, and precarious work
Fairtrade Foundation standards	A set of standards to guarantee minimum prices and working conditions for standards-compliant producers in the Developing world	The Fairtrade Foundation licensed the use of the Fairtrade marque on products in the UK. The marque was based on a number of related standards – for producers, hired labour and specific commodities. Each standard had social components, aimed at ensuring a guaranteed minimum price to producers, improving growers' living and working conditions, and entrenching fair	•Social criteria were detailed, with generic standards for different types of producer and specific standards for different commodities; •E.g., generic standards for producer organisations specified that farmers' organisations must have a democratic structure and transparent administration to enable effective control by their members; •E.g.product-specific standard for dried fruit produced by small farmers required that appropriate measures should be taken over time to increase the percentage of registered women growers and promote their active role in decision-making

Name	Type of 'standard'	Details	Criteria and assessment
		trading practices along supply chains	
GlobalGAP and GRASP (GlobalGAP Risk Assessment on Social Practice)	A set of standards for agricultural produce with an optional social component	GlobalGAP operated a widely used standard for agricultural produce, to which a social assessment (GRASP) was added in 2011. This did not count towards certification	•The standards divided criteria into 'major musts' (essential) and 'minor musts' (less important); •The GlobalGAP standard for all farms included social criteria on worker health, safety and welfare (e.g the wearing of protective clothing a 'major must'). It also specified that accommodation for workers should be 'habitable' and have basic services, clean food storage areas, hand-washing facilities, rest areas and drinking water – all 'minor musts'; •GRASP had 11 control points, specifying, e.g. that employees should have a recognised representative; that Sound documentation should be kept; that children of employees had access to schooling; working hours met legal requirements and did not exceed 48 hours a week or during harvest 60 hours a week; •Recognising that local cultural and legal conditions vary, 16 National Interpretation Guidelines for GRASP had been developed to adapt the standard to local circumstances.
The Global Reporting Initiative	A framework for sustainability reporting by organisations	The Global Reporting Initiative developed and updated the world's most widely used template for sustainability reporting. It defined a sustainability report as an organisational tool providing information on economic, environmental and social performance and governance, in a way similar to financial reporting. Launched in 2002, it was in its 4th iteration (G4), with a Food Processing Supplement launched 2010	•G4 indicators were grouped into Economic, Environmental and Social categories, then divided into subcategories and 'aspects', with up to five indicators per aspect.; •In the Food Processing supplement, the Social category was divided into the subcategories of Labour Practices and Decent Work; Human Rights; Society; Product Responsibility; Animal Welfare and Sourcing; • Examples of indicators included: Percentage of employees covered by collective bargaining agreements; Total number of incidents of discrimination and action taken; Percentage of total sales volume by product category that were lowered in saturated fat, trans fat, sodium and added sugars; Percentage of animals raised and / or processed, by breed and housing type; Percentage of purchased volume verified as meeting internationally recognised production standards; Proportion of spending with locally based suppliers.

Name	Type of 'standard'	Details	Criteria and assessment
Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil standards (RSPO)	A set of standards for the supply chain of a single commodity (palm oil)	Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil had developed a standard for the production and processing of palm oil. It applied to the length of the chain and had four versions to accommodate different levels of commitment / ability to pay / appropriateness to business model. These were Identity Preservation (the strictest), Segregation, Mass Balance and Book and Claim, and were reflected in the different claims companies could make on products.	•The standards were based on eight Principles, broken down into numerous indicators (which were compulsory) and guidance (which was optional). •These covered, among other things: •A commitment to transparency in information sharing; •Compliance with applicable laws and regulations, including on labour and land use •Requirements pertaining to worker health and safety, for example that pregnant women should not apply pesticides; •The requirement that in order to assess impacts of plantations and mills on communities, social impact assessments should be undertaken, using culturally appropriate participatory methods.
Sedex Members Ethical Trade Audit (SMETA)	A framework for ethical auditing and reporting	Sedex ran a widely used online platform enabling suppliers to upload the results of ethical audits, and their customers (UK retailers and food service operators) to view them. Several different types of social audit could be uploaded (e.g. BSCI, SA 8000 and others), but there was a perceived need for a common methodology for auditing and reporting – which SMETA provided.	•The SMETA was designed to audit against the ETI Base Code with some additional requirements, and could be conducted in two 'strengths': •The 'two-pillar' version consisted of mandatory sections on labour and health and safety, plus elements on entitlement to work, subcontracting , home-working and a shortened section on the environment; •The 'four-pillar' version had expanded environmental and business practice pillars. •The 92-page SMETA Best Practice Guide specified how audits should be conducted, by whom, and what evidence of compliance (such as payroll information) should be checked.

It can be seen from these examples that the various types of standard focused on (and thus standardised) different social concerns – in other words, the Audit Organisations used standards to define and champion the social concerns with which they were respectively preoccupied. These included labour (e.g. ETI Base Code), the nutritional value of food (Access to Nutrition Index), animal welfare (the Freedom Foods standard), and more abstract notions such as fairness (Fairtrade) or accountability (GRI and AccountAbility). Some standards focussed on a single social concern – e.g. the ETI Base Code refers only to labour standards, Freedom Foods to animal welfare and the Living Wage Foundation focused on hourly wage rates. But standards often contained criteria on several social concerns, often alongside other concerns, such as environmental ones.

The standards also intervened in the food supply at different points. Several focused (vertically) on the supply chains of single commodities (e.g. the Roundtable on Responsible Soy or Bonsucro). Some looked (horizontally) at particular issues across an entire sector (such as the Fruit Juice CSR platform) or potentially the entire industrial food supply (e.g. the SA 8000 labour standard). The Fairtrade Foundation acted specifically on trade: it attempted to standardise prices paid to producers in developing countries according to production costs plus a premium. The Sustainable Agriculture Network standard focused on agricultural production. The Sustainable Restaurant Association standard only looked at restaurants and their suppliers. Some standards intervened at the level at which food companies are financed – either by advising potential investors about companies' sustainability performance (e.g. FTSE4Good), or by attempting to give sustainability and / or social criteria greater weight in company reporting (e.g. the Global Initiative on Sustainability Ratings, which aimed to produce a standardised rating system which would 'transform the definition of corporate value in the 21st century', so that sustainable performance would be visible and valued.

9.7.2 Social criteria in standards

The standards worked by setting out criteria which products or processes should meet (another illustration of the fragmentation discussed in the last chapter). The various standard-setters (or Standard Development Organisations, Busch 2011b) set the criteria (and also decided how the criteria should be set) – hence the observations mentioned above that the process is normative. The research found considerable variety in the social

criteria chosen, reinforcing the view that governance actors use standards to crystallise and disseminate both their (substantive) conceptions of social aspects of sustainability, and their (procedural) conceptions of how sustainability can be driven forward.

The criteria varied in number and scope, and were often very numerous and detailed, sometimes with several indicators for each criterion. In terms of number, the Ethical Consumer Research Association rated food companies or products using its framework of criteria which covered 300 topics in 19 areas in five categories. It had 18 criteria on workers' rights alone. EIRIS, the financial ratings agency, used 110 criteria. Access to Nutrition Index, by contrast, had just seven criteria, with 19 indicators. The criteria also varied in scope –i.e., in what they chose to measure. As a generalisation, they covered some combination of nutritional quality, workers' rights and protections, working conditions, community impacts, land rights, decision-making processes and some conception of responsible marketing. In their particulars, however, the criteria were idiosyncratic – indicative of a fluid conception of what was relevant and could be operationalised.

One unifying theme was that where they concerned labour standards, it was very common for the criteria to reference the core principles of the International Labour Organisation. These were enshrined in the 1988 ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work as:

- the right to freedom of association and the recognition of the right to collective bargaining;
- the elimination of all forms of compulsory labour;
- the abolition of child labour;
- and the elimination of discrimination at work (ILO 2002).

The ILO standards were replicated in standards from Bonsucro, the Consumer Goods Forum, the Fairtrade Foundation, FTSE4Good, the Foreign Trade Association, GlobalGAP and the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil. They were also echoed in the ETI's Base Code, which in turn was referenced as a source by other organisations, e.g. The Ethical Tea Partnership. In this case, an overarching policy from a multilateral organisation can be seen to have had a pervasive influence on the development of social standards for labour.

Beyond this uniformity around labour standards, the criteria were diverse, and could be very particular, as Table 9.1 and the examples on the Data Summary Tables (in Annex F) attest. It should also be noted that although the criteria were often published online, the scoring protocols were not – leaving it unclear how scores were arrived at.

9.7.3 Not-so-standard standards

The decision-making processes by which criteria were chosen was not clear from the websites (though the standards literature has looked at the topic, e.g. Djama *et al* 2011). The fragmentary picture that emerged suggested that the process of setting then applying criteria was complicated, and more subjective than the technical and uniform connotations of the term 'standard' might suggest. Corporate Citizenship, the consultancy that ran the London Benchmarking Group standard for quantifying companies' beneficial community impacts (which involved deciding which activities were admissible then devising ways to convert them to a monetary value), admitted that compiling the information was 'an art not a science'. The complexity and variability of standard-setting are attested by the emergence of organisations to standardise and verify these processes, such as ISEAL (which sets standards for setting social standards) or AccountAbility (which sets standards for assuring the credibility of sustainability reporting), adding further layers of scrutiny and surveillance to the complex process of governance through audit. [17]

Standards were often set using consultative or multistakeholder approaches. These were valued because they were seen to include a range of perspectives. (A multistakeholder approach was a prerequisite for a standard-setting organisation to be recognised by the standard-setters' organisation ISEAL.) Standard-setters also made use of pre-existing standards or guidance, which were presented as carrying authority, such as those produced by multilateral bodies or states. Examples included the ETI Base Code, described above, or the labour standard SA8000 (run by the 'multistakeholder NGO' Social Accountability International), which was based on 13 international human rights conventions, and the RSPCA's farm animal welfare standards, which were based on the UK Government Farm Animal Welfare Committee's 'Five Freedoms'. Some organisations simply applied standards set by other organisations (e.g. Rainforest Alliance, which used the SAN agricultural

[17] Ponte *et al* (2011: 290) describe the situation as a 'spaghetti bowl', a term they attribute to the economist Jagdish Bhagwati.

standard). Sometimes the legitimising sources were not specified: Fairfood International's framework was based on 'international conventions, agreements and norms', and the ratings organisation FTSE4Good said it used 'globally recognised corporate responsibility standards'. The consultation process could be complex. For example, the Marine Stewardship Council's standard for seafood traceability was said to be based on 'existing best practice traceability standards', which were then modified through an international consultation with stakeholders consisting of eight regional workshops and two expert drafting sessions, involving more than 300 organisations and individuals around the world. The process for revising the standard complied with the ISEAL Code of Good Practice for Setting Social and Environmental Standards, and revisions included at least two rounds of public consultation.

The process of assessing companies against criteria was also complicated and could be subjective. Reference has already been made to the extent to which the auditors (including the supposedly arm's-length third party auditors) saw it as part of their remit to help audited companies to reach and maintain levels of compliance. The ratings organisation Covalence EthicalQuote provided insight on how it compiled its scores. It assessed companies against its criteria based on a survey of published sources, using a combination of automated content-processing of texts in original languages and qualitative assessment by an international team of analysts. It said this combined use of 'Natural Language Processing' and human analysis allowed it to interpret large amounts of data quickly, but it was still a time-consuming and labour-intensive process: more than 500 intern analysts had contributed to the work since 2001. Covalence Ethicalquote acknowledged the possibility of subjectivity and variability: 'While relying on universally shared values, this methodology faces the characteristics of modern society such as cultural diversity, democratic debate and scientific uncertainty, and the challenges of defining objective ethical criteria and credible information sources'.

When it came to applying standards to complex industrial food production processes, the Manufacturer Unilever's efforts to convert its ice creams to Fairtrade showed that this process, too, was flexible and contingent. The process did not simply involve submitting existing products or procedures to a pass / fail test and then changing products or procedures to comply with the standard if necessary. Instead, it could entail a protracted

and negotiated process resulting in the differentiation of standards to suit products, and the selective use of standards on different ranges within companies.

Unilever first applied the Fairtrade standard to its premium Ben and Jerry's range. In Europe, the five key commodities (sugar, cocoa, coffee, vanilla and bananas) were converted to Fairtrade by the end of 2011. However, converting the rest of the 200 ingredients for nearly 90 flavours was a 'major undertaking'. The company found that Fairtrade ingredients were 'simply not available or [did] not meet our specifications' for a range of the ingredients (such as nuts and spices). Consequently, the company revised its target from 'all ingredients' to 'all flavours'. In 2012, Unilever worked with Fairtrade International to establish that by using Fairtrade ingredients for the five major commodities in all ice cream base mixes and for 'chunks and swirls', all ice cream 'flavours' could qualify for certification by 2013.

9.7.4 The emergence of sustainability governance organisations

It was notable that some of the entities that had emerged in the audit sector were large and complex, and were in effect global, self-governing, private (i.e. non-state) governance organisations. Several of the MSIs, such as the Marine Stewardship Council and the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil, would fit this description. An outstanding example was provided by GlobalGAP.

GlobalGAP originated in 1999 as a scheme set up by 17 European retailers to establish a common standard for suppliers and a system for verifying compliance. The resulting scheme, EurepGAP, expanded to become GlobalGAP in 2007, describing itself as 'a worldwide partnership for safe and sustainable agriculture'. By 2014 there were more than 1,400 trained inspectors and auditors working for more than 140 accredited certification bodies certifying more than 112,600 producers in more than 100 countries. The standards and related documents were available in 28 languages. To police this effort, GlobalGAP. had developed, in a relatively short period, an elaborate governance structure for developing and setting standards, and for monitoring the quality of the auditors employed to assess suppliers' compliance.

GlobalGAP was a non-profit organisation, with an 'operational secretariat' provided by another non-profit (FoodPLUS GmbH), in Cologne, Germany. At the apex of GlobalGAP's

governance structure was a Board consisting of equal numbers of elected producer and retailer representatives, with an independent chair. The Board determined strategy, designed the standard-setting process and adopted the standards, as well as fulfilling legal duties. Beneath the Board sat a number of committees and programmes, including:

- Technical Committees, made up of 'industry experts responsible for developing and defining the criteria and setting the GlobalGAP General Regulations;
- Stakeholder Committees, made up of GlobalGAP members, non-members, NGOs, retailers and suppliers, to draft guidelines, review standards and advise the Technical Committees;
- The Certification Body Committee, which approved the activities of certification bodies, which in turn trained and employed auditors to assess compliance;
- Separate auditors from the Certification Integrity Program (CIPRO), which conducted 'integrity assessments' of certification bodies to ensure they were operating according to the General Regulations.

9.7.5 The Convergence of standards

The research confirmed that standards (including purely social standards, as well as sustainability standards with social components) have proliferated as governance tools in the food supply. This has led, according to several organisations, to confusion and duplication. As a result, there have been several efforts to consolidate and harmonise standards, or to benchmark standards against each other, so users could compare their criteria and procedures. In fact several current standards are themselves consolidations of earlier standards, developed to avoid duplication. Examples include the Business Social Compliance Initiative (a labour standard launched in 2004 by the Foreign Trade Association); the Red Tractor farm assurance standards (launched by the NFU in 2000); Sedex (set up in 2001 by a group of retailers and their first tier suppliers); the MSC fish standards (initiated in 1997 by WWF and Unilever); and the Sustainable Agriculture Network (SAN) standard (set up in 1997 by a coalition of non-profit conservation organisations). A work-in-progress was the Global Initiative on Sustainability Ratings, a global, multi-stakeholder project initiated in 2011 by two US sustainability advocacy groups, Ceres and the Tellus Institute, to design and run a sustainability ratings standard. This MSI stated that the quest for business sustainability would be helped by 'a generally accepted definition of what constitutes

corporate sustainability excellence, just as such norms have evolved the fields of human rights or labour practices'. The project's words illustrate how collaborative standard development seeks to establish norms and definitions for the concerns being standardised.

Other initiatives had set out to benchmark other sets of standards. Examples included the Global Seafood Sustainability Initiative, launched in 2013 by 17 global seafood companies to develop a common global benchmarking tool for seafood certification and labelling, and the Global Social Compliance Programme (GSCP), launched in 2006 to collate 'best practice' on labour standards.

9.8 The interviewees' experience of using standards

Standards emerged from the websites as tools used extensively and opportunistically by different organisations to achieve different ends. The interviewees also had wide experience of standards: both from the point of view of the food companies (the actors 'in'), and the external organisations that sought to influence their behaviour (the actors 'on). This section presents their experience as standard-users.

9.8.1 Routine use of standards

Most actor 'in' interviewees mentioned the use of standards when asked how they were implementing social sustainability, most often referring to formal standards such as the ETI, Fairtrade, Rainforest Alliance, Freedom Food and 'organic' (usually meaning the Soil Association organic standard). (The sustainability standards pertaining to investment and reporting were less well known to interviewees.) Many used multiple standards. For example, I.9 (food service) listed the Soil Association Catering Marque, Fairtrade and the MSC standard. Standards were seen as a convenient and routine way of acting on social concerns. I.2 (retail) said the company's first step was to 'to look for available standards, such as ETI'. I.20 (retail) said the ETI base code was 'effectively part of our terms and conditions'. I.14 (retail) said:

> *'Our goal in life is not to put an extra burden on our supply base. If there are existing standards, systems or approaches that work, we will look to use them.'*

Implying that the use of standards might be a phase or fashion, I.7 (consultancy) explained that standards were seen as a way of achieving 'scale':

> *'At the moment the standards and roundtables seem to be the route by which we try to take every issue to scale – let's have a roundtable, let's impose some kind of standard.'*

However, I.8 (food service) implied that although standards were desirable from a reputational perspective – hence the triple certification of some products -- they did not make much difference to company conduct because they were 'too easy' to achieve:

> *'We're a registered Fairtrade distributor, not that that means much, apart from our name's on the Fairtrade Foundation's website. [Researcher: Why do you say that?] Because it's too easy to do, you just submit your name and say, we use x, y, z suppliers to provide coffee, bananas, rice, chocolate, etc.'*

I.17 (food service), like other interviewees, indicated that her company used certification on a pick-and-mix basis, to meet the specifications of different customers. The various marques were:

> *'of importance to certain sectors and not others. We have products that will be Red Tractor, some that won't be Red Tractor but they'll be Farm Assured, some will be LEAF, Red Tractor and organic… Within the mix, there are choices.'*

The standards here are being used to differentiate product attributes (described by Busch and Leconto as 'standardised differentiation', 2010: 526).

9.8.2 Standards as drivers of change

Interviewees agreed that standards brought benefits. They were convenient and publically recognisable ways of operationalising (or being seen to do something about) social concerns, and were said to bring concrete benefits for the audited. I.19 (Audit Organisation), when asked whether standards brought improvements, said:

> *'Certainly. No doubt. You go and have a look at a [tea] estate which has [ethical certification], and you go to another one, the factories are, it's a shithole actually, it's heaven and hell.'*

I.11 (Primary Producer) had undergone ETI and other (environmental) audits at the behest of her supermarket customers. She conveyed frustration at some of the 'tick box' elements, leading to a temptation to 'make things up', but saw value in other aspects, which could bring about lasting changes:

> *'What you do is you either say, bloody audits, and just put it in a dusty drawer and do all the tick boxes and make things up and, well, not make things up but you know, oh, we'd better have a policy on this, I'll write it. Or, you say, and I'm not saying we do this 100%, or you say this is a good framework to organise our business on, so we'll, you know we've got to do it anyway, let's do it properly.'*

9.8.3 Drawbacks and limitations

However, despite their ubiquity, convenience and positive impacts, standards were seen to have several drawbacks. These ranged from doubts about the practicality of implementation and concerns about fraud, to questions about the desirability or feasibility of quantifying social attributes (the latter echoing a preoccupation of the sustainability literature).

Problems included the proliferation of standards, which according to I.7 (consultancy) had led to confusion and frustration; the cost of adapting to meet criteria, paying for audits and then paying for remedial work (Is. 5, 9, 27); and the view that that standards were not really stretching for food companies (Is. 2, 9, 23). The whole terminology of audit was seen as off-putting: I.26 (Audit Organisation) said his organisation avoided using the word audit 'because it's a bit of a disincentive' and referred to 'frameworks' not standards.

A common complaint was the emergence of a 'compliance culture', in which achieving certification had become an end in itself, rather than achieving change. I.2 (Retail) said:

> *'For many companies, the most important thing is to pass the audit and get the mark on the product. And at times I would question whether the standards are significantly different to the* status quo *that otherwise existed and whether they have made an awful lot of difference to the way the supply base is working. If all we're bothered about is putting a badge on a product, it doesn't matter whose badge it is, then we're not going to get the level of change that's necessary'.*

I.4 (Retail) reinforced this:

> *'A compliance-based model which says "I have this audit, I want to supply this customer, so I'll resolve the non-compliances", we know that model is flawed because it drives the wrong kind of behaviours.'*

I.19 (Audit Organisation) had seen the introduction of a European standard in India lead to two types of production: certified 'ethical' for export, non-certified for domestic consumption.

I.5 (Trade Association), who had worked for a social certification organisation, said that there was a lot of variation in quality between certification schemes, and also questioned their effectiveness in delivering benefit to farm-workers as distinct from farm-owners. Her main criticism, though, was that the large standards, including the MSIs, were cumbersome and impractical. Although she acknowledged the need for multistakeholder engagement for the sake of 'credibility and authority', the downside was a high degree of bureaucratisation,

a lot of duplication, and unwieldy organisations – such as the RSPO – which were like 'mini governments', resulting in inefficiency:

> *'It's just so silly the way they've gone about [RSPO]. In the factories, [her organisation has] our food safety audit, so you'd have auditors going to check food safety much more rigorously than any RSPO audit, because they're just checking traceability. Why can't [the food safety auditors] just check the palm oil while they're there? That conversation has been going on for three years now.'*

I.27 (Advocacy Organisation), who had collaborated with large standard-setting organisations, also worried about their power, and lack of transparency:

> *'I have lots of respect for certification, although there are lots of problems with it, cost being the big one. If they are prepared to admit they are wrong sometimes and put it right, that's OK. If they become too much like a brand, and won't disclose their processes and criteria, then problems arise.'*

I.2 (Retail) was concerned that the use of standards allowed food companies to outsource risk and responsibility to audit organisations. The marques, he said, were 'at risk of being naive about certain businesses' motivations':

> *'Big businesses predominantly want to be able to say, "Aren't we good? Go and criticise somebody else – here's an audit certificate that says it's OK", and [they thereby] outsource risk to the audit company, or the owners of the marque.'*

Fraud was also seen as a significant threat to the usefulness of standards. I.20 (Retail) said, 'in Asia in particular, there's a huge fraud culture around audit,' with suppliers 'keeping double books'.

As with the websites, it also emerged from the interviews that standards were malleable and contested, and that both standard-setting and scoring were subjective and variable processes. I.1 (Trade Association), who had participated the development of ISO 26000, despaired of the political hornets' nests it had stirred up, with 'all sorts of agendas' in play. I.26 (Audit Organisation) explained how judgements were sometimes used when 'scoring' clients, and also how the certification process varied depending on the individual structures or practices of a client organisation (in this case a restaurant):

> *'If it is a chain with centralised procurement, centralised management systems in place, standardised menu across every outlet, then they do it centrally. If it's a group of restaurants that have some variation within the system, then we would do a balance – those things that are centralised we do centrally, and then the variation is done at the site level.'*

I.26 presented the flexibility of his company's standard as an advantage, allowing multiple reasons for behaviours to be scored under different headings:

> *'With local sourcing, people want to source locally for all sorts of reasons, and there may be a feeling which isn't always borne out that food sourced locally carries fewer food miles, but one of the reasons we know that people support local sourcing is down to supporting local communities and local economies … So if [a food service operator] is sourcing locally, say milk and dairy for example, they get a potential score for sourcing 75% of their milk and dairy locally … and then of that score a proportion is diverted, through the system we use, to their score on Society rather than their score under Sourcing to take account of the fact that there is social element to local sourcing.'*

I.22 (Audit Organisation) also said her organisation (much larger than I.26's) took a flexible approach:

> *'If it's a very, very small company operating, with very, very small volumes of [certifiable] ingredients, we wouldn't necessarily be throwing the works at it. Where it's an enormous … supplier to several retailers … then yes, we take a proactive approach.'*

The interviews also confirmed that companies picked standards to suit their existing structures and procedures, rather than choosing a standard then adapting to its requirements. I.9 (food service) said standards were useful, 'and the easier they are, the better'. Red Tractor had been 'great' because it had fitted in with the company's structure, whereas the Soil Association Catering Marque and MSC were much more difficult to implement.

A criticism that went to the heart of standards as a tool of governance was that they were weak because voluntary, which had led I.4 (Retail) and I.23 (Primary Producer) to work for regulation, in the shape of the Gangmaster's Licensing Authority, a statutory body with enforcement powers. I.4 said:

> *'What we learnt, and we learnt it long ago, is that the difficulty with a voluntary audit … is that if you want to operate with criminal behaviour, you can get away with it. You can mislead a voluntary audit. And that was the reason why we set up the whole gangmaster licensing authority, because we knew that it had to be about enforcement.'*

For I.23 , a related shortcoming of 'consensus regulation or participator regulation is that often the people in the room aren't the people who need to be regulated'.

Finally, I.7 (consultancy) raised the question of whether social attributes and processes are amenable to meaningful measurement, and whether this was the best approach:

> *'We can either keep battering away and try and keep quantifying some of these social impacts. And / or we can say, is there another way we can make people appreciate value in these social issues without having to.'*

9.8.4 Beyond audit

Lack of faith in the practicability and value of standards was leading the Retail interviewees, in particular, to ponder alternative ways of assuring themselves about the integrity of their supply chains. From the point of view of this study, it was striking that this often meant a kind of re-socialising of supplier relations: a return to personal contact, rather than a reliance on impersonal standards.

I.4 (retail) commented that the 'audit culture' was losing its credibility, and I.20 (retail) said:

> *'Audit is limited as a way of getting verification … you know, if something is very important to you in the business I think there's a principle which is you want to have your own direct dialogue about it … if something's really important to you, you want to have that information and that dialogue with your own people because it builds into the overall business relationship.'*

For I.2 (retail), the danger was that standards bred complacency, 'that what has been done will be seen to be enough'. The next meaningful step, he felt, was that 'questions of equity and citizenship start to become a more powerful type of conversation, in terms of motivating people to change.' I.4 (retail) said that audit was 'only one tool in the box', and alongside it there was growing emphasis on 'awareness raising, solving root causes of problems, and capacity building'. I.5 (trade association) said future efforts might involve 'not really the audit structure that we're used to, but maybe more supplier engagement, more training kind of things'. I.14 (retail) said his company was still auditing suppliers, but starting to count different things, such as absenteeism, staff turnover or average lengths of service, on the premise that businesses that performed well on these indicators were likely to be 'better businesses'. But he too said that it wasn't just a case of recording a score: helping suppliers to reach the desired level of performance was part of the process:

> *'With all if these things, it is not about looking at suppliers, benchmarking and sort of leaving it to them, it's about working with them and supporting them.'*

9.9 Concluding comments

This chapter has used website and interview data to review the ways in which a host of actors, categorised as Consultancies, Advocacy Organisations, Audit Organisations and Multistakeholder Initiatives, ranging from small non-profits to global plcs, operationalised

social sustainability in the conventional food supply. Their objectives varied: some were seeking to profit from food supply companies' need for advice on sustainability strategy, or from food supply companies' desire to outsource cost or responsibility in this area. Others actors were seeking to impose their own agendas on food supply companies – for fairer trade, better labour standards, higher animal welfare, more respect for human rights or higher hourly pay rates. Their methods included strategising for the food supply companies, critiquing or collaborating with them using a variety of discursive methods, and employing a range of calculative tools collectively referred to as audit methods, which included the use of standards, ratings and indexes, along with the supportive apparatus of conformity assessment and accreditation. These audit methods were found to be more varied, and also less standard, than expected, intervening at different points in the food supply (whether at the level of agricultural production or financial investment) to operationalise different concerns (whether fair trade or nutritional content). Standard-setting, compliance and assessment processes were all found to be negotiable and flexible. The social criteria used were numerous and diverse.

It was found that the Trade Associations and Levy Bodies were, based on their websites, least active in terms of operationalising social sustainability, but this was not borne out by the interviews. The discrepancy was attributed to the fact that the Trade Associations and Levy Bodies saw their job as to settle many of the issues out of the public eye – or at least not on their websites. The case of the unions was more paradoxical. The unions were ostensibly centrally occupied with the labour issues and distributional issues that many see as key social sustainability concerns in the food supply – but they do not label these activities as sustainability. This may be accidental and insignificant; or it may reflect a tension within trade unionism, which sees a challenge to jobs in arguments for more sustainable ways of working.

Overall, the efforts of the actors 'on' to operationalise social sustainability in the food supply were found to be densely interconnected, reciprocal with the activities of the actors 'in', and incremental, involving borrowings, negotiations, contestations, consolidations of earlier efforts, formal and informal exchanges of knowledge, and many cross-references. Outsourcing, advocacy and audit were reported by interviewees to be routine features of

governance, although both were found to have drawbacks: they were piecemeal and contingent, and audit methods were seen to be both cumbersome and unreliable.

This and the three preceding chapters have explored the nature, interpretations and operationalisations of non-state actors in the governance of social sustainability. Before moving on to make some concluding comments on all the findings, the next chapter presents, in more detail than has been possible up to now, the interviewees' own reflections on their activities and the terrain they were involved in governing.

Chapter 10 Agency or complacency? The interviewees reflect

10.1 Introduction

Chapters 6-9 have drawn on the website and interview data to describe, respectively, which non-state actors are participating in the governance of social sustainability in the food supply (Chapter 6), the meanings these actors attach to the idea (Chapter 7), and the actions through which they operationalise their understandings (Chapter 8 and 9). But one of the objectives of the research – and a reason for choosing to use qualitative interviews as a research tool – was to find out what the individuals involved in 'doing' social sustainability thought and made of it. This chapter therefore draws exclusively on the interview data to describe the interviewees' own reflections on the topic under investigation.

The interviewees spoke at length on the themes discussed here: in some cases, they seemed to welcome the opportunity to delve more deeply, and perhaps more critically, than was possible in the daily run of their work. They emerged as people who often reflected on and re-evaluated their actions and their decisions; and who had confidence in their capacity to act but also had a pervasive sense of the constraints on their actions. In order to do the work of social sustainability, they drew not just on their (diverse) professional expertise but also their own values, personal experience outside work, relations within their organisations and connections with peers in other organisations. This highly reflexive process resonated with the comments of authors (e.g. Eckersley 2004; Stibbe 2009; Leach *et al* 2010), who stressed the role of reflexivity – the process of constant, critical re-assessment in order to incorporate new learning into action -- in achieving or maintaining the dynamic entities that sustainable societies would need to be (or the 'dynamic sustainabilities' called for by Leach *et al* (2010)).

The extent to which this approach was found to prevail in the conventional food supply, and the collaborative, imitative and opportunistic governance arrangements it has led to, are important findings of this research project. Another is the difficulty the actors reported in operationalising this particular aspect of sustainability; and also (and related to the

difficulty) the extent to which governance is constrained by the business context in which it takes place. This context was often commented on – but also at times it seemed to be so total, or normal, that it was invisible (as Gibson-Graham (2006) say is the case with capitalism more generally).

10.2 The 'social' aspect as inherently difficult to act on

One of the clearest messages to emerge from the interviews was that the issues understood as being part of social sustainability were difficult to grasp, act on or persuade others to act on – more difficult than environmental or economic sustainability. The social aspect of sustainability was seen to be the 'most challenging' (I.13, producer), for various reasons, summarised next.

10.2.1 Because already taken care of

Several interviewees commented that at least some of the issues associated with social sustainability (such as food safety or worker protections) were adequately addressed under UK law or by national law in supplier countries. For example, I.9 (food service), said, ' most of the companies we buy from in the UK are protected by laws anyway'. This may account for the rather cursory comments on food safety and worker health and safety in the interviews: in some sense, a 'baseline' for social sustainability was felt to be guaranteed by law.

10.2.2 Practical difficulties

Many interviewees described what they saw as unusual, in some cases prohibitive, practical difficulties involved in making policies or commitments on the social pillar workable in the context of the industrial food supply.

One difficulty was the wide scope of the activities that were potentially relevant. I.15 (manufacturer), said his company's research had revealed a wide range of social problems, 'a whole systems issue', not all of which could be tackled. I.4 (retail) said her company had had to invent a new sort of accounting, to build a valuation of social impacts into the firm's planning and reporting procedures.

Several interviewees commented on the work and time involved in conducting or complying with social audits. I.9 (food service) said compiling the information for the BITC CR Index was

'a huge amount of work', taking one person a whole month. I.9 also explained why her company was hesitating on whether to sign up to Responsibility Deal pledges:

> *'[It's] not so much the principles of the agreement, it's more how are we going to get all this information and how much time is it going to take to pull all that together.'*

I.5, who was from a trade association but had previously worked for a social certification organisation, said social audits called for different specialist skills from those required for environmental or technical audits (for example, they often involved worker interviews, rather than collecting documentary evidence). 'It's just a different way of auditing', she said, and this led to problems:

> *'What happens then is the worker interviews, if they are done, are done by people who don't know how to interview workers, and they will never get anything … social standards have often been derided, [as] kind of useless and waffle and feel-good, but they're really difficult to do and I don't think that that expertise is as valued as someone who can do a greenhouse gas check … it's a completely different set of capabilities.'*

Social audits were expensive to conduct, she said, and were therefore not very profitable for the certification companies; in extreme cases, they could be physically risky both for the auditor and the workers interviewed. The sensitivity of the issues, combined with the use of inappropriately skilled auditors, could produce unreliable information:

> *'And do you actually get the information you're looking for? Because [with] social issues, discrimination and harassment and things like that, that's almost impossible to pick up on unless somebody shows up with a big black eye and says this guy just beat me up, which never happens.'*

I.22 (audit) shared the view that social audit called for particular skills and presented particular problems. Her comments illustrated the difficulty of devising and applying standards that involve judgments alongside measurements (reminiscent of the mutual suspicion between natural and social scientific approaches cited as a tension within the sustainability literature):

> *'How do you calculate a "fair price" in a country where nobody's actually agreed what a living wage looks like for a banana worker, nobody's agreed how many sources of income a family needs to have and what role the banana worker should be playing within that family, or are you basing it on a small producer of typical farm size turning its entire production over to bananas, and therefore what they need to make per acre out of bananas, or are you basing it on the reality of small farmers, which is they're often very diverse farms and they might be growing a whole bunch of stuff for their own consumption, they might be growing a whole bunch of stuff for local markets, and they'll be growing bananas for export. How do you work all of those dynamics in, given that every farmer is making different decisions about that balancing act?'*

Interviewees from catering companies reported particular difficulties in implementing social commitments; one reason given was that the caterers were, in the words of I.8 (food service), 'guests in [their] clients' house', and could not impose their own social codes or principles. (Interestingly, I.27 (advocacy) said her organisation had adapted to this situation by adopting a policy of 'going after the clients', for example appealing to companies that commissioned contract catering to support Fairtrade or Living Wage and specify this in contracts.) This situation led to another illustration of the fragmentation and 'nichification' of social concerns, where they become optional attributes in certain product lines or brands. A caterer would typically service different types of client, e.g. schools, prisons, hospitals and private businesses, each requiring customised menus with different quality criteria, at different price points. These arrangements made common policies, or policies stemming from principle rather than expedience, difficult. I.17 (food service) said different sectors and clients could attach 'different levels of importance' to different attributes. She routinely bought to different 'buying specs' for different clients. But it also seemed to be the case that where foodservice operators' business models were based on efficiencies achieved through centralised buying and employing staff on flexible-hour contracts, they could not readily accommodate some of the changes that greater social sustainability might entail.

Finally, cost was often presented as a practical difficulty. I.15 (manufacturing) said the biggest objection he encountered from suppliers being required to meet social standards was the cost – of adapting business practices to meet standards, paying for certification, and then paying for any necessary remedial actions. I.22 (audit) also said that social aspects of sustainability were a 'harder sell' than environmental aspects because they did not bring immediate cost savings:

> *'Unlike the win-wins, say on energy, where making environmental improvements also saves money … lifting wage levels or paying more for raw commodities is a slightly harder sell, because that immediate cost saving may not be apparent, so it may lead you to more motivated, better quality supply chains in the long term, but it's an investment.'*

10.2.3 Difficult because hard to measure

The argument that the social aspects of sustainability were difficult to operationalise because they were hard to quantify was a recurrent theme in the interviews, where 'numbers' had an important bearing on decision-making. I.4 (retail) said it was a common perception that it was harder to 'put the numbers on' social sustainability, compared, for

example, with savings made on energy usage, but said she felt it was 'only a matter of time' till it became normal to collect data on social impacts. I.6 (manufacturing) said her biggest frustration was 'people not measuring things'. Her aspiration was to be able to say '*x* training drives *x* yield increase, drives *x* increase of income, drives *x* food security'. But:

> *'There aren't consistent ways of measuring it, so what's easy, in inverted commas, for greenhouse gases, is there's an agreed way of measuring that. When you look at socioeconomic you're going to be working beyond your own boundaries of your walls, and so it's all through partnerships, but then if nobody's measuring in the same way, how do you even know what you're driving at?'*

Several interviewees attributed the preoccupation with 'numbers' to colleagues in financial departments. For example I.7 (consultancy), said:

> *'One of the challenges with social sustainability as you'll know is that measurement is a long way behind or is arguably much harder, so … you'll have the average CFO [Chief Financial Officer] who likes to see numbers and targets and improvements…. [Where] it doesn't necessarily add to the bottom line, then most CFOs are still a long way away from where they need to be.'*

For I.21 (consultant), however, the biggest frustration was not the lack of metrics but the demand for them: she found herself having to explain that 'not everything is amenable to simple measurement or reduction to a number'.

10.2.4 Difficult because nebulous

Related, perhaps, to difficulties with measurement was the feeling that social sustainability was difficult to operationalise because it was nebulous – 'fluffy' as I.4 said. I.24 (consultant) said:

> *'On the environmental front at least you can actually count these absolutes, you can count the falling parts per million [etc]…But social, it's all kind of relative, it's all about status, it's all kind of belonging, are you willing to reach out in an emotive way to your fellow citizens?'*

I.14 (retail), however, saw ambiguity and uncertainty as inherent features of sustainability problems, which need not preclude action:

> *'The challenge is, in this territory, there is not a set of right answers. Everything we do there will be compromises and different versions of what we believe is the best solution available, but they won't be purely right, and the challenge is for us to work through these things with our suppliers and through supply chains and to understand what, again it's this question we constantly work towards, what's the most sustainable solution. And that's about the interdependencies of what we're looking at.'*

10.2.5 Difficult for cultural reasons

The final category of difficulties can be described as cultural, or perhaps philosophical. These referred partly to cultural differences between countries, which raised questions about the necessity or appropriateness of social actions; they also concerned the legitimacy of interfering in people's private decision-making.

I.5 (trade association) made the point that it should not be 'the role of a retailer based in England' to address social issues in supplier countries:

> *'This whole ethical monitoring thing has arisen because of lack of enforcement from the country we're sourcing from. So surely if the government were actually checking on whether people were getting the minimum wage or checking whether there was water in the community, that's the role of these governments not the role of a retailer based in England.'*

There was recognition of the fact that standards and other monitoring practices required by British food companies had an unpalatable, coercive element – I.15 (manufacturer) said bluntly that tea suppliers 'have to make the changes to become certified because otherwise they won't be able to sell their teas in future'. I.20 (retail) said his company had been supporting the South African fruit industry to develop its own tailored standard, 'because that's what South Africa wants, rather than some sort of imported foreign version.' Interesting insight was provided by I.19 (audit), who worked on tea plantations in India. He said, 'Absolutely, of course' there was resentment against western-imposed social standards, especially because there was no push from the domestic market:

> *'It's selfish, there's no doubt it's selfish. But then what they are doing brings a lot of benefit to [the supplier] country and people too.'*

I.6 (manufacturing) worried about whether it was appropriate for corporations to take on a quasi-governmental role in supplier countries:

> *'I mean if corporations from Developed countries suddenly start taking on public sector roles [in supplier countries], that creates impact on the organisation of that country and it also creates dependency. And then what happens is, the companies change their strategies and they're not going to be there.'*

I.12 (financial analyst) asked if it was better for companies to pull out of countries lacking social protections for workers, or stay and work 'with norms that aren't acceptable in the UK' but bring economic advantage to the people there. In the same vein, I.1 (trade association) asked, with reference to social standards:

> *'Whose expectations are you placing on that? We might not like the idea that children of the age of 14 go and work in some factories, but if that's the social norm, who are you to decide? Then you get into issues around cultural barriers. Who should decide whether [say] the water that's available in parts of Africa should be available for business growth –is it us or the people in those communities? … [For example] beans from water-scarce areas, the people might say they prefer to export beans and use the financial resources to invest in education.'*

10.2.6 Difficulties or excuses?

The fact that so many of the interviewees, including both actors 'in' and 'on' , mentioned these difficulties, and substantiated them with detailed examples, must indicate a genuine intractability about the issue. The responses also suggest that the fissures that have marked sustainability since its policy advent are still live issues for its practitioners. The technical difficulties may be partly explained by the relative newness of social sustainability as something interviewees had become involved with – if social audit has teething problems, then so did environmental audit, and indeed financial audit, when they too were new ideas. But the possibility cannot be discounted that some of the difficulties raised were excuses for not taking more action on what were agreed to be important concerns. This sense of self-justification is discussed in more detail below. But the notion of limitations on action leads to another preoccupying theme in the interviews – the implications of operationalising social sustainability in a business context.

10.3 Doing social sustainability with a 'business mindset'

It has already been observed that a defining characteristic of the industrial food supply is that it is conducted by businesses. As described in Chapter 6, the companies investigated that were involved in supplying food (the actors 'in') were all businesses (though with different structures), but so were many of the other organisations investigated. Many of the actors 'on' specifically existed, or had developed special programmes, to influence the conduct of businesses to make them more sustainable. Not surprisingly, therefore, the opportunities and frustrations of operationalising social sustainability in a business context were themes the interviewees often returned to. Their comments were pervasively framed by what I.24 (consultant) summed up as a 'business mindset'.

10.3.1 Acting 'within the business case'

Interviewees from many categories made it clear that any activity for social sustainability had to be justifiable in business terms: they had to 'make the business case', demonstrating that action taken to improve social sustainability would not jeopardise profitability or

competitiveness, and (contentiously within sustainability circles) could accommodate business growth, seen as a necessary concomitant of success.

For some interviewees this was axiomatic. At its most basic, it meant that any social benefits provided by food supply companies (such as provision of food, wages, welfare, jobs, community activities or benefits extended to suppliers) depended on the continuing financial viability of the companies (sometimes summarised as 'economic sustainability)': 'Ultimately, if we're not economically sustainable, we're not sustainable, it's that simple' (I.14, retail).

I.16 (manufacturing) was also unequivocal that sustainability had to be good for business as well as 'the planet' – reducing what he saw as a dilemma to almost comic duality:

> *'The dilemma on sustainability for businesspeople is ensuring that sustainability means making your business better. If it's merely a social cost, in other words, I'm doing this because I feel good about things, but actually it's making my business less competitive, it's a problem ... I'm not against saving the planet but I think the problem is, why should I save the planet, if he's not, right? Because I'll end up saving the planet and going bust, and he'll end up not saving the planet and he'll be making a fortune'.*

I.9 (food service) said: 'Because I come from an operational background it is in my genes. If it doesn't make business sense I know I won't get anywhere'. She talked about the constant need to 'balance out the commercial side', and said everything she did had to be 'within the business case'. I.14 (retail) vividly conveyed how business considerations (in this case targets and margins) dominated his daily work and framed his activity on sustainability:

> *'When you are trying to do big things as a business, and particularly in a retail business, a highly geared and very cash-driven business, what you can't do is take your eye off what you need to achieve every single day, every single month, every single quarter, to hit your numbers… [My job is] to ensure that we both achieve what we need to achieve from a pure sustainability point of view but in doing that meet the significant targets that we set ourselves as a business'.*

For other interviewees, however, both actors 'in' and 'on', there was a sense that business justifications had to be constructed or deployed in order to achieve sustainability-related (rather than business) goals. This seemed to be accepted as inevitable – part of 'doing' sustainability in the world of business. I.6. (manufacturing) said the necessity to 'identify the business case' was 'one of her biggest challenges'. I. 18 (retail), who felt that the business imperative to pursue growth was inimical to sustainability, nevertheless felt trapped by it, saying, 'if my competitors stop growing I don't have to grow, simple as that'. I.4 (retail), who

was strongly motivated by the idea that firms should have goals that were not purely financial (such as providing meaningful and fairly paid work), accepted that this attitude was not shared by all of her colleagues:

> *'Well, we're a retailer aren't we? We measure success in terms of how much we sold and what margin we made, and how small our waste is. If you can't talk about sustainability in that way, there's a whole group of people at [this company] who are never going to be engaged in it.'*

In the same vein, I.26 (audit) said:

> *'For us it is almost a given that economic lies underneath the whole thing. Philosophically we don't expect food service businesses to not have that at the core of what they do.'*

I 10 (advocacy), explained how she and her colleagues accommodated their business clients by speaking a kind of business language when dealing with food supply companies that was different from the language they used internally; this helped the organisation to gain the food companies' trust:

> *'I think we talk business language more than we talk charity language, and I think there are some people who come into the organisation expecting it to be a traditional charity, the Greenpeacey type thing, and it's not at all. I think that's actually why, over 30 years, we've been successful in influencing business, because I think they see us as sitting on their side of the fence, if you like, and sort of talking their language'.*

(Her reference to 'two sides of the fence' is interesting, implying – despite all the references to collaboration – an underlying antagonism between the pro-sustainability 'charities' and the businesses which are the objects of their activities.)

Within the business mindset, activities that brought business gains had more kudos, more credibility, than activities that 'just' brought sustainability gains. I.22 (audit) said the food businesses she worked with were not content to be seen to be acting simply from philanthropy:

> *'[Change] has to be presented as good for business. Stuart Rose [former Chief Executive of M&S] boasted that Plan A had saved M&S £50m. This is about being proud to say this isn't about philanthropy, or just the moral high ground, this is actually good business. That's the mantra now, that there has to be a business case.'*

10.3.2 A business opportunity

It should be emphasised that the business context was not always presented as an obstacle to achieving social sustainability goals. Some interviewees argued that sustainability could present businesses with new profit-making opportunities (a case made much more

forcefully in the websites, especially those of the Consultancies and Audit Organisations, which were often 'selling' sustainability services to businesses). For example, attention to the social aspects of sustainability could enhance business performance by making workers or suppliers more satisfied, committed and loyal, and could make the food industry more attractive to potential recruits. I.7 (consultancy) said:

> *'We always argue, and again you can debate the rights and wrongs of this, that doing the right thing doesn't necessarily need to be different from being commercially successful.'*

I.10 (advocacy) found a 'tension' between the goals of social responsibility or sustainability and 'hardcore capitalism', but said nevertheless felt companies with active sustainability programmes were more successful.

One thing the interviewees did agree about, however, was that big businesses could achieve commensurately big results. This was a reason why some of the advocacy groups engaged with large food companies, despite some doubts about the sincerity of their motives. I.7 (consultancy) said:

> *'The scope of business to make big change is part of our justification for working with lots of the main food businesses. We don't think they're perfect, but a small change, or medium change, or even a big change from a major business can have huge effects, not just within the company itself but down and along and with Government and elsewhere.'*

I.15 (manufacturing) said it made producers 'sit up' when a big, mid-market company such as his (rather than a niche company) decided to adopt a sustainable certification scheme for all its products (and suppliers), 'So yes, we have a big influence'. I.14 (retail) was clear that his company could drive large-scale change:

> *'We have this great ability to be this engine that drives sustainable consumption. That might be about how we specify products, it might be how we work with people to make things more sustainably, it might be what we do with regard to food waste … In all these things we have the ability to be a catalyst and a driving engine'.*

I.27 (advocacy) said 'I'm after scale', adding that for a small organisation with limited resources, 'the most effective tactic is to go after the big guns'. I.26 (audit) described how his organisation had attracted criticism for working with one very large food corporation ('not seen as a paragon of sustainability'), but that the project had resulted in a change of practice that made it worthwhile (from using imported to British veal, thereby benefiting both UK farmers and calves, which experienced higher welfare standards).

10.3.3 Precluding certain choices

On the other hand, interviewees often commented that the necessity to work within the 'business mindset' limited their capacity to act in the ways or to the extent they otherwise might have done. It precluded some options and courses of action.

I.20 (retail), who stressed the level of support for sustainability work throughout his company, nevertheless regretted that compromises sometimes had to be made for commercial reasons:

> *'Although the commercial support is very strong, in terms of if you ever talk to someone, what's the right thing to do, you get a very, very good answer, or we say this is our recommendation, it is very, very rarely challenged, and is never challenged on the basis of, why are we doing that or I don't care, the answer you might get is, "well, we've got to find a way of working with this supplier to help them stop doing this, because they are commercially important". But it doesn't have the sort of day-to-day level of awareness that inevitably someone like me would like. I think it should be fundamental to how we work'.*

I.8 (food service) admitted to being frustrated by the limitations imposed on him by the need to make the business case:

> *'There's lots of things I would like to do, and I've presented it all loads of times … The biggest frustration is for me to understand the reality of it, that there always has to be a business case.'*

Two (connected) features of the business 'mindset' that particularly irked interviewees were the dominance of the profit motive and the need to show short-term benefits. For shareholder-owned companies, this was driven by the need to produce quarterly reports, on which the company's fortunes could ride. I.25, from a union, said this short-termism was her 'biggest frustration', and was inimical to the longer time horizons of sustainability work. I.22 (audit) said she had admired Unilever (a plc) for tackling this by arguing for a longer reporting period, and commented:

> *'I think there's incredibly powerful people in the food industry whose day-to-day decision-making is being guided by the need to satisfy short-term shareholder interest'.*

This created downward pressure on prices along commodity supply chains, leading her to regret that there was:

> *'No deeper dive into whether higher prices for commodities are actually necessary for those commodities to be sustainable. So I think it's that frustration, the institutional mindset that sits around the food industry, which is about profit, pure profit'.*

I.24 (consultant) saw an intrinsic conflict between the imperatives of business and the aspirations of social sustainability. Speaking of large food corporations, he said:

> *'Generally we think of them as, for the benefit of the tape, evil. Their interests are overwhelmingly profit, and long-term or short-term shareholder return, which generally I think of as inimical to positive social outcomes.'*

I.7 (consultancy) commented that even 'progressive' companies (i.e. the ones which in his view had taken meaningful steps towards acting more sustainably) were still limited by their fundamental necessity as businesses to 'sell more stuff':

> *'Take an example, Unilever, which a lot of people talk about, which is one of the more progressive … they're trying to do it in a way that has a reduced impact on the environment, that delivers positive benefit in terms of sanitation, is improving people's livelihoods, etc. But it's fundamentally based on the premise of "let's sell more and more stuff"'.*

10.3.4 The effects of company structure and ethos

Mitigating against the above comments, it is relevant to note that several of the food company interviewees, some of whom had worked for different types of company, said that company structure and ethos had a strong determining effect on their own and their company's activity for sustainability. For example I.2 (retail), who had worked for a plc, a co-op and was currently at a mutual, said that operationalising social concerns was easier at the mutual (where all the employees had a say in how decisions were made) compared with a plc, 'where the shareholders can be very remote from the day-to-day activity of the business'. This echoes the comments from several interviewees reported in Chapter 7, where they described referring to companies' statements of values to guide decision-making. I.18 (retail) was adamant that his company's private structure allowed it to act more effectively on sustainability (for example by having a fairer salary structure) than it could have done as a plc. I.16 (manufacturing) agreed that:

> *'The only area where [the necessity to make the business case] can be modified is in private, family-owned businesses, [where] you will see a number of businesses spending money on things because they believe in it.'*

10.3.5 A disconnect from business performance

Following on from comments about the detrimental effect of quarterly reporting, it is interesting to note that while interviewees from commercial food-supply companies were very aware of the need to meet financial targets and show a profit (expressed as a constant concern for the 'numbers'), there was relatively low interest in company performance as

indicated by share price. Is.14 (retail), 15 (manufacturing) and 17 (food service) (all from plcs) said they were unaware of their companies' share price and did not follow its rises and falls. I.14 said:

> *'The vagaries of our share price versus what we are doing as a business, you could spend your life studying that and never quite work it out. What we obsess about is sales and profit.'*

This disconnect between what the interviewees did and companies' financial performance was reflected in the sense of distance that existed between food supply company interviewees located in technical, operational or Human Resources departments and another set of actors, referred to by I.6 (trade association) as the 'C-suite': the officers with Chief in front of their name (Chief Financial Officers, Chief Operating Officers, Chief Executives). These were the actors to whom, by implication, the 'business case' had to be made. With the exception of named, inspirational CEOs, they were presented as being more motivated by business priorities and possibly less receptive to arguments based on sustainability. Of the two CEOs interviewed, one (I.16) has been shown (above) to be rigorous in demanding a business case to be made for sustainability, while the other (I.18) said that his businesses priorities, even in a family owned company, circumscribed his scope for action.

Some interviewees argued that behind the C-suite, at least in investor-owned companies, were investors from whom pressure to act on social sustainability was weak. I.7 (consultant) said:

> *'Certainly CFOs and those in the investor relations world, external affairs directors and those people, they are not really getting to work on this, but they're not getting pressure from investors, investors aren't really asking many questions around social sustainability'.*

I.14 (retail) said:

> *'If you're trying to get a general sense of where our investors are on this journey, they are very, very, very, very slowly possibly starting to think that businesses that are more sustainable are more successful'.*

I.16 (manufacturing) said:

> *'The shareholders are even more cynical than the managers. I can tell you, if you go to the City and do a presentation you will never get a question about sustainability. And if you make a proposal about sustainability, everybody will ignore it. So if you think*

> *I'm extreme in terms of cynicism, they're not even on the scale. It's not even on the agenda. They're not interested.'*

I. 12 (financial analyst) also said sustainability, including social impacts, had not achieved much salience in his professional world. But this was belied by the number of Audit Organisations identified during the website research (and described in Chapter 9) that were developing tools to rate company performance on the basis of social criteria, or Advocacy Organisations trying to persuade investors to take these criteria into account. I.12's comments suggest that these efforts – which, as Chapter 9 showed, are relatively recent and in several cases still regard themselves as a work in progress – have not (yet) become mainstream.

The picture here is complex and contradictory. The business mindset was said to condition activities; but on the other hand, higher-level *financial*, as opposed to day-to-day *commercial*, considerations did not seem to preoccupy the interviewees. Meanwhile, financial officers and shareholders were said to be relatively uninterested in the sustainability agenda. There may be an element of buck-passing here, with actors saying they are prevented from taking action by senior decision-makers in companies, and senior decision-makers handing responsibility to shareholders. But it may also be the case that disconnects in the chain of responsibility (another form of fragmentation) serve to insulate decision-makers from the impacts of their decisions and thus allow workers in one part of an organisation to act in good faith in certain ways, while others in other departments(or taking a remote financial interest), may act in contradictory ways. This supports Fleming and Jones's (2013) argument that one purpose of businesses' social sustainability or CSR activity is to make workers feel better about their work; and justifies arguments (e.g. forcibly advanced by Banerjee 2007) that business sustainability programmes are a form of greenwash masking unsustainable activity.

But neither of these approaches explains the complexity of the governance activity uncovered during the research. It certainly seemed to be the case that there were two levels of activity and engagement – one for the 'street-level' sustainability practitioners in all the categories, who had been presented with or chosen an agenda of social concerns to act on; and another level (the C-suite and beyond), where these concerns did not (yet) have much purchase. It remains puzzling (and perhaps the object for further research) why

thoughtful actors with considerable expertise, who knew about greenwash and did not see themselves as dupes of profiteering executives, and whose detailed daily work involved trying to advance selected sustainability objectives, nevertheless operated in organisational silos and within a presiding business imperative which they seemed to see as pervasive and restricting, but also inevitable and beyond their control. These contradictions are discussed further in Chapter 11, and lead to the next point.

10.3.6 Self-justifying talk

As noted in Chapter 6, several of the interviewees said they were motivated by a desire to 'make a difference', and seemed to feel that to some extent they achieved this. I.8 (food service) said his 'ultimate goal' was to make a difference, 'to make things better'. I.6 (manufacturing) felt she could make a material difference to her company's products. When asked if, for example, she could object if she thought a product was detrimental to health, she said: 'Yes, absolutely. Absolutely. And I also believe that if it really was true, it would be changed'. I.22 (audit) described her satisfaction at being told about positive social outcomes that had resulted from her organisation's work:

> *'A young man said, "we have more motor scooters" – which was not trivial, as they had been very cut off before, including from medical treatment. But then a woman said, "the biggest difference is that I am at this meeting, as a woman, and have a say in how the money is spent".'*

I.7 (consultant) felt that, on balance, food companies were delivering 'social value':

> *'Some companies would argue they deliver nutrition, employment, developmental opportunities, they would at least argue that what they do add lots of economic and social value, not just in their business but with their customers and their supply chains. Some of that you can almost swat away as sort of PR spin, but actually the progressive major food businesses at least, and we shouldn't bracket them all in together, parts of them at least are delivering some sort of social value.'*

However, the sense of achievement was often tempered by a resigned acceptance that the scope for change was limited. At times this sounded like real frustration and at times like complacency. I.14 (retail) said, 'You can't change everything, you have to cut your coat accordingly'. I.17 (food service) said 'You want to do more than you can actually achieve'. I.6 (manufacturing) said:

> *'This is shifting completely how business models function, so it doesn't happen overnight, unfortunately'.*

I.9 (food service) described how the need to make compromises 'diluted' what she could do, but said:

> *'I think it's OK to not be able to do everything. I've got my head in quite a good place of, let's make a decision on what we do and as long as we can back it up, we can't do all things but that's OK.'*

More negatively, I.8 (food service), despite feeling he was 'making a difference', said his efforts amounted to making things the 'least worst' they could be:

> *'You want it to be as least bad as possible, and if you can do a bit of good on the way, a bit of positive, to offset the negative, then that's probably a good thing.'*

I.22 (audit) felt that the food industry was taking 'baby steps', but 'have we changed the core fundamentals? I don't know that we're quite there yet.' I.27 (advocacy) felt that the efforts of organisations like hers were thwarted by the nature of 'corporations':

> *'Until the law changes to make corporations into something that serves the public good, pretty much all our efforts until such a time will be an upward struggle'.*

This view was echoed by I.22 (audit), who described how competitive pressure in the banana chain had locked low pay into supply chains:

> *'You can't deliver a sustainable supply chain that pays living wages back to workers on plantations if your business model requires you to sell a kilo of loose bananas at 68p'.*

I.2 (retail), with long experience of trying to build social sustainability into retailers' supply chains, questioned whether 'the model' was being transformed, or the changes were more cosmetic:

> *'What we are doing is slightly improving on the status quo, but it was the status quo that led us to this crisis, and so what are we doing? We're fiddling around the edges'.*

Again, the question must arise why the very people employed to act on sustainability within businesses acknowledged that the most they could do was make things 'the least bad', or fiddle round the edges.

10.3.7 Why do businesses do social sustainability at all?

Interviewees mulled and probed on whether their own and their peers' motives in pressing for changes on the social aspects of sustainability in the food supply were pragmatic (to improve business performance), or whether there was a moral duty to act on known problems. The prevailing view among the interviewees seemed to be that activity was prompted by both instrumental and moral motives. I.2 (retail) said, 'Some [of these

activities] have business motivations, and some are motivated by how we should do business'.

The interviewees offered various instrumental reasons for acting on social sustainability. One objective, already discussed as 'engagement', was to secure employees' consent for sustainable change. I.4 (retail) said:

> *'The environmental element, those quick wins, are soon adopted. To drive the kind of real change, the step change in performance, you need the people element.'*

Related to this (as already discussed) was the idea that acting on sustainability made employees feel better about what they did. I.20 (retail) said:

> *'One of the reasons we get very strong support is that [employees] want to believe they are part of something good, want to do the right thing'.*

Avoiding reputational damage was another reason. Several interviewees said that increased attention to the social aspects of sustainability had been prompted by greater levels of scrutiny, not just by consumers, advocacy groups and the media, but also by aggrieved employees via social media. I.20 said 'customers don't want to feel they are complicit in exploitation,' and:

> *'Anyone can film with their smart phone in a shit factory and it will be on YouTube 30 seconds later, frankly'.*

Another objective was to secure the future workforce by providing for the welfare of workers, both in the UK and in supplier countries. I.3 (trade association) said, 'You need to make sure people will be able to go on growing what you need.'

Another reason was to retain markets. I.3 (trade association), referring to nutritional concerns around manufactured food and drinks, said:

> *'You don't want to be in the position of, I hesitate to even volunteer the analogy, but you don't want food to become the new tobacco. You don't want people having to buy it under the counter because they know it's not good for them but they're going to do it.'*

I.22 (audit) extended this argument to labour relations in supplier countries. Companies treated workers well out of 'enlightened self-interest' because not only the labour force but also, for many manufacturing companies, the fastest-growing markets, were in Developing countries, so reputation was important.

A final reason was to secure good relations with suppliers – emphasising the point that more social, relational supply chains were becoming a valued and potentially differentiating aspect of global food business. I.14 (retail) said:

> *'Fundamentally, if you look at global retail, broadly [it] shares, completely shares the same supply chains. To be sustainable and successful will be about, on the basis that we all share the same supply chains, it will be the quality of your relationships in those supply chains that are the difference between whether you're successful or unsuccessful.'*

I.20 (retail) agreed:

> *'15 years ago [this company] and other UK retailers wanted the best fruit from South Africa and we didn't have much competition for it. Now there's lots of competition [from emerging markets]. … The challenge we have … is that people will pay the same good money for the fruit but won't bother about any of the standards. [So] getting to know our suppliers better is also coherent from the point of view of trying to make sure that we're being a really good customer and therefore people have got a stake in working with us and giving us their products.'*

Alongside these pragmatic and business-focused reasons, several interviewees reaffirmed the point that their own or their company's values and ethos lay behind decisions on social sustainability. I.9 (food service), though strongly aware of the 'business case', also said:

> *'I think genuinely we do all have a responsibility to tackle this stuff, you know, the planet's in a bit of a mess … I think it's an absolute moral case, we have to morally do it, and everybody around me is in the same place, nobody fights that.'*

I.15 (manufacturer) said that although 'marketing' had something to do with his company's decision to shift to sustainability-certified supplies, it was mainly motivated by the company's ethos and the CEO's convictions – and this chimed with his own motivation. The business factor was less important, he said – as evidenced by the indifference of the 'marketing guys' to the change:

> *'It's quite simple, the CEO has mandated that we need to go RA certified, that it's important to be sustainable, and that's the company line. I personally believe in it and that's why I do it. … There's no denying that part of the reason will be to do with marketing ... [But] it's in my opinion a very small part, because in terms of the greenwash debate, our marketing guys, when I say I can change these blends now because we have sufficient tea, and I want to put this seal on the pack because it's RA certified, they shrug, because it's not something that consumers are bothered about'.*

10.3.8 Cynicism and greenwash

As is by now clear, the interviewees were aware that what they did was vulnerable to the criticism of 'greenwash'. They were generally not cynical about the efforts of their own organisations. For example, I.9 said 'Greenwash drives me mad, absolutely mad – at their

peril!' – meaning that if employees tried to 'greenwash' her, she would object; she also said that employees in general recognised and reacted against greenwash, 'which is good.' However, the interviewees *were* cynical about some practices they witnessed elsewhere in the sector. For example I.5 (trade association) drew attention to inconsistency between what companies put in their policies for overseas supply chains and how she saw them treating their UK staff:

> *'Internally, in their own companies, there's some substantial layoffs going on, and some things that I hear about , it's shocking really, and there's a disconnect there.'*

I.10 (advocacy) described what she saw as the retailers' hypocrisy in publically espousing sustainability and privately making it impossible for their suppliers to act sustainably by, for example, protecting jobs:

> *'We work very closely with [named dairy company]. They are just taking I think £5 million out of their head office costs, over the next few months, which they have to do to secure their contract with [named retailer], so you know they are cutting, cutting, cutting, and that's jobs … well that's not sustainable at all.'*

And I.22 (audit) questioned whether the underlying motive for some social initiatives was not the ostensible one of helping to raise suppliers' incomes but a hidden one of driving down prices:

> *'On my cynical days I question sometimes the sustainability initiatives in the cocoa industry… they say, "Well if we want to improve farmer income, let's look at the low yields and let's help them increase their yields. Because you can increase the price a little bit, but actually if they can double the amount they produce, then you can make a big difference". So there's something that's true in that logic. But at the same time, if you go round everybody with that same mindset and you just create an oversupply of cocoa, yes they will produce double the amount of cocoa, but will they be able to sell it? And at a fair price?'*

I.2 (retail), defending the need to stick to incremental change, also said:

> *'But there's a difference between incremental change and smokescreen CSR bullshit. And unfortunately there's an awful lot of the latter.'*

10.4 On the relevance of public policy

As explained in Chapter 4, this thesis described UK public policy on social sustainability (Chapter 5) to help set the study in context, but did not set out to investigate the interaction between public policy-makers and other governance actors, so the interviewees were not directly questioned about public policy. It was mentioned, though – in just a few cases, which may indicate that it was not seen as highly relevant to the topic under discussion.

Several of the food company interviewees referred to the Public Health Responsibility Deals, but rather cursorily, as part of the 'dull stuff' they all had to do. Where government targets were mentioned, they were said to be lower than the companies' own targets. For example, I.14 (retail) said that the Responsibility Deal commitments, like other voluntary standards, did not cover anything the company was not already doing:

> *'Very few of them that we're involved in would be anything that was ahead of what our own policy procedures are. [That would be] exceptionally unusual. We'll sign up to them and deliver the content via what we actually would deliver for our own goals.'*

In general, the comments on public policy tended to be that it was lacking, or not agile enough to track developments in the food supply. I.23 (producer) and I.4 (retail) had been involved in the development of the Gangmasters Licensing Authority to prevent worker exploitation by food growers. Both said it had been necessary and effective, but that labour suppliers had found ways to outwit it. Some interviewees commented on what they saw as a policy vacuum. I.3 (trade association) said the Government did not really have a sustainable food policy and needed one:

> *'Very much part of my job is actually saying to people in Government that we are now getting to a point with these various combinations of resource pressures, climate variation, the social agenda and everything else, that we need to have a more joined-up policy.'*

I.5 (trade association) was scathing. She said that the advent of a new Government in 2010 had meant that the 'the old policy' (meaning the *Food Matters* report (Cabinet Office, 2008) and the *Food 2030* document (HM Government, 2010)), which they had felt they could work with, had 'gone out the window'. The new Government was having:

> *'The same conversations that we've all been having but then they go through their own process in order to ultimately I imagine reach the same conclusion.[They] are just so far behind everybody else that it just seems irrelevant now'.*

I.7 (consultant) said that in the UK there seemed to be:

> *'low expectations of what Government will and can deliver around food ... businesses are not expecting a lot from Government'.*

Despite these dismissive comments, though, two of the food service interviewees said that their organisations had initially been spurred to take action on sustainability issues by the Government's Public Sector Buying regulations. And the fact that several of the interviewees

said aspects of social sustainability were in effect 'already taken care of'' by national laws indicates that they did not see those terrains as being in need of further governance.

10.5 Concluding comments

This chapter has presented the interviewees' reflections on their experience of 'doing' social sustainability in the industrial food supply. The interviewees made it clear that social sustainability was hard to operationalise – it was already taken care of by laws or regulation (a tacit acknowledgement of the power of public policy); it was technically difficult to implement, it was nebulous, hard to measure and culturally variable. The interviewees stuck to the view that they were 'making a difference', but the sense of achievement was tempered by a view that action was circumscribed by the business context. The business 'mindset', with its preoccupations with profitability, low costs, competitiveness and the need for short-term results, dominated the interviewees' discussions of social sustainability. It shaped the language in which it was conducted, put limits on activity, determined the nature of activity, and foreclosed some options. All of the interviewees acknowledged that at some level there was a conflict between the objectives of business and the objectives of social sustainability.

In the face of this conflict, there were signs of complacency – perhaps 'resigned acceptance' is a kinder term – but also of muddle and contradiction. There were day-to-day preoccupations with business priorities, but a lack of awareness of higher level business performance. There was commitment to action, but a lack of faith that transformational change was within the scope of business sustainability. There was acceptance that change would take time, that 'you can't change everything', that the best you could do was to aim for 'the least worst'. Inaction was justified on various grounds: because there were decision-makers elsewhere in the business (or shareholders) who didn't support such actions; or because some options were accepted as being too radical or disruptive to be accommodated in the business context. A sense of insulation from responsibility was reinforced by the fact that although the interviewees were not cynical about the efforts and activities of their own organisations, they were quick to point out the hypocrisies they saw in other organisations in their sector. Although the interviewees said moral reasons played a

part in programmes for social sustainability, instrumental reasons – such as retaining the support of suppliers, workers and customers – were also important.

Together, chapters 5-9 have presented the research findings on how and by whom social sustainability is being defined and operationalised in the context of the UK's conventional food supply. The next chapter pulls these findings together to reflect on the research and its implications for the governance of the food supply.

Chapter 11: Reflections, implications and avenues for further research

11.1 Introduction

This thesis set out to investigate social sustainability in the conventional food supply. It looked at how Sustainable Development came to have a social pillar, how that social pillar has been interpreted (or framed as a problem amenable to intervention) in relation to the conventional food supply, and what, if anything, was being done about it. It was thus a study of social sustainability and food governance.

To explore this problem, it reviewed the literature on sustainability and governance, from which arose the Research Questions, repeated in Fig 11.1. The questions were investigated using documentary policy research, website research and qualitative interviewing. The study yielded a large amount of information – more than 400 pages of reading notes, a policy review, 135 Data Extraction Sheets based on website investigation, and more than 130,000 words of transcripts from 27 semi-structured interviews. Organising and analysing this body of information, which comprised different types of data and spanned different topics, was challenging. The results, presented in the preceding chapters, offer a first examination of how UK state policy-makers, as well as a host of other actors involved in governance, have construed and operationalised social sustainability in relation to the mainstream food supply in the UK.

This chapter synthesises the findings to provide fuller answers to the Research Questions, reflects on the findings' implications for food sustainability governance and policy, and suggests some avenues for further research.

Fig. 11.1 The Research Questions

RQ1: How is social sustainability defined and discussed in UK food governance, both at the level of public policy and by others involved in this area of governance? In what ways is it construed as a problem to be acted on?

RQ2: Apart from the state, which entities are active in social sustainability governance, and what sort of entities are they?

RQ3: How (if at all) are these non-state actors operationalising social sustainability? What sort of governance approaches and techniques are they using, with what effects, and with what implications for public policy?

11.2 An abundance of governance, not much government

Bevir (2012) notes that there is a difference between governance *of* and *for* policy concerns. In the case of social sustainability, the former implies that it is a challenge that has to be (seen to be) managed; the latter, that the governance actors are motivated by a desire to achieve something they define as social sustainability. The first observation is that there was unquestionably an abundance of governance *of* social sustainability in the food supply; but the social sustainability that this was *for* was much more ambiguous. A wide array of activities was being conducted in its name by diverse actors, but the appearance from the policy and website data, which was substantiated by interviews, was that some of these activities were motivated by a requirement to respond to a policy agenda, rather than by a desire to achieve any coherent set of objectives. To use Bevir's term (2012: 4), one 'effect' of the governance activities was thus to make this policy arena look like a very busy space; but whether they collectively made the food supply more socially sustainable is a much harder question to answer. In any case, following Miller and Rose's (2008) conception of governance study, the research set out to examine the governance process (to notice its 'effects'), not to evaluate its effectiveness.

Nevertheless, the fact that so many entities were active in this sphere of governance is significant. The social responsibilities of the food supply which were diversely defined and were not always identified with sustainability (the implications of which are discussed below). But they were construed by many actors, in both the food supply companies and the cohorts of entities which try or are employed to shape their conduct, as legitimate

governance concerns. The flurry of activity illustrated the (optimistic) process by which perceived 'failures' of governance give rise to the problematisations that in turn lead to efforts to govern better (Miller and Rose 2008). The struggle to envision and articulate an alternative, more sustainable food supply, which was seen in the literature (e.g. Kloppenburg *et al* 2000; Pretty 2008; Lang 2010a and many others) was also visible in the Codes, guiding values, standards, indexes, critiques and scenarios discovered during the research. Thus another 'effect' of the governance was the generation, over the period of a couple of decades, of a discourse and area of practice where definitions of what social sustainability might mean for the conventional food supply could be threshed out.

From the point of view of governance study, the terrain was very rich – there was a real sense that social sustainability was in the process of being forged and contested. This process involved many different sorts of actors, including public authorities, academics and expert practitioners, various types of company involved in supplying food, and various types of organisation trying to influence the conduct of the food supply companies. In documentary terms, state and higher-level policies could be seen to borrow from one another and change over time. In practice, interviewees described how they drew on previous experience, consulted a wide range of sources, looked at what peers, clients and competitors were doing, and considered how existing practices could be adapted or simply relabelled, in order to construct actionable meanings that had both idealistic and instrumental referents. The process was reflexive, cross-referential, opportunistic and 'intertextual' (Atkinson and Coffey 1997: 55), but not very coordinated.

Meanwhile, the state was much less active. Government attention to social sustainability was found to have risen in an arc from the first strategy for sustainability, in 1994, which had implicit social goals but no explicit social themes; to reach a peak of prominence in the mid-2000s, when social themes were priorities in sustainability and sustainable food policies; and then to have declined, with social concerns contracting to the issue of personal wellbeing (shorn of relational and distributional aspects), so that by 2016 it barely appeared in the mission statement of the responsible government department, Defra (Defra 2016). Interviewees referred disparagingly to the fact that Government thinking lagged behind 'state of the art' knowledge and practice among the governance actors, and deplored a lack of direction. Meanwhile successive Governments introduced regulation to address issues

that are often seen as relevant to the social sustainability of the food supply (such as fairness in retailer supply chains or the poor nutritional quality of manufactured foods) in a piecemeal fashion, without connecting the measures to sustainability. In sum, the Government's recent policy on social sustainability in the food supply was incoherent, verging on invisible. But, as discussed below, this 'failure' of governance may in fact indicate that the Government had other governance objectives.

11.3 A highly dynamic issue

The meaning of social sustainability, in relation to food or anything else, is not – or not yet, or perhaps cannot be – fixed. The literature reported that social sustainability, from having been the least noticed of the three pillars, had attracted increasing attention over the past 15 to 20 years, with commentators trying in various ways to elucidate (or enumerate) meanings, leading to laundry-lists lists of attributes (e.g. Beckley and Burkovsky 1999; Colantonio 2007). Others tried (with limited success) to theorise the topic in a way that would provide a clinching distinction between social sustainability and other forms of sustainability, on one hand, and other forms of social policy, on the other (Littig and Griessler 2005; Larsen 2009; Murphy 2012). This work is ongoing –recent definers agree that the term is still 'fuzzy' (Bostrom and Klintman 2014: 85).

As noted above, the policy review conducted for this thesis found that in UK state policy social sustainability, as a sub-facet of sustainability, gained increasing importance as sustainability itself became a policy priority, then receded from view. During this process, it attracted increasingly elaborate definitions and came to encompass a wide range of policy aspirations – which then were compressed, consolidated or re-allocated to other agendas. In the empirical research, interviewees reported that sustainability had arisen as a professional concern within their working lives, with social sustainability coming along as an adjunct some time afterwards; they said they had had to expand their remits to accommodate it.

The point here is to highlight the term's dynamism. It has had different meanings in different times and contexts, and these are still changing. What was once the 'Cinderella pillar' went to the ball, and some commentators even found that the least understood and most overlooked dimension of sustainability was in fact central and even a prerequisite for

all the others. But if one reason for this dynamism is that the concept is still being thought through, another is that social sustainability – however much the Brundtland report may have tried to smooth this over – is inherently and inevitably political and negotiable, and this, as the interviewees attested, makes it hard to govern.

11.4 Social in substance and process

This study was prompted by a lack of understanding not just about what social sustainability meant for the food supply, but also about why sustainability had a social pillar at all. The literature review answered this question. Chapter 2 explained how, if the term 'social' is broadly defined as 'the ways in which people interact and organise' (Lockie *et al* 2014: 3), then from its earliest conceptions sustainability has been a pervasively social idea: a problem with social causes, requiring collective action to resolve, and often presenting social justice as axiomatic to its processes and outcomes (e.g. Meadows *et al* 1974; IUCN *et al* 1980; WCED 1987). Most fundamentally, once it has been acknowledged that there are bio-physical limits to economic growth, which is a central proposition of sustainability, then attention must be paid to how the available resources are to be divided up (Meadows *et al* 1974). To this extent, the social pillar of sustainability can be said to be its *distributional* pillar: it concerns not just what is to be sustained, but how it is to be shared (Dobson 1999).

While Sustainable Development has thus long been seen to have a social component, the social pillar has only relatively recently been studied in its own right. Lists of substantive attributes (such as adequate food supplies, or education) have been associated with it, in part inherited from the conceptions of capital-D Development that preceded it (Streeten *et al* 1981; Harris 2000). Fairness has been seen as central from the outset (the SDC said it was 'key to the social dimension of sustainability in food policy', SDC 2011: 42). Later, the processes by which Sustainable Development could or should be achieved (usually specified as participatory, transparent and democratic, to ensure equity of procedure as well as equity of outcome) were also recognised to be social ingredients. It has also been argued that social processes such as awareness-raising and engagement are instrumentally necessary to achieve agendas for environmental sustainability (Harris 2000). Sustainable Development is thus found to be social in conception, substance and process (Agyeman and

Evans 2004; Dillard *et al* 2009; Bostrom 2012), and hence unavoidably normative (Barry 1999; Leach *et al* 2010).

It has been argued that Sustainable Development was devised not to recognise these tensions, but to hide them (Prudham's 'win-win gloss', 2009: 738; also McMichael 2000; Banerjee 2003). Sustainable Development has been criticised for omitting political and cultural pillars (Littig and Griessler 2005). However, the origin of the ubiquitous, but also crude and limiting (Leach *et al* 2010; Psarikidou and Szerszynski 2012), depiction of Sustainable Development as having environmental, economic and social pillars may have pragmatic, rather than (or as well as) ideological, roots. In the absence of an explanation for why these three elements and not others were enshrined, this thesis suggests that the answer may lie in the organisational structure of the UN. In the 1970s, the UN, an early articulator of Sustainable Development, added environmental programmes to its pre-existing economic and social ones: three headings to encompass the besetting governance problems of humanity.

11.5 How social sustainability is defined in the conventional food supply

In the absence of an agreed definition, many meanings have been associated with the idea of social sustainability. As noted in Chapter 1, the most high-flown (such as the need to be 'communicative, proximate ... sacred ... [and] culturally nourishing'(Kloppenburg *et al* 2000: 17) have been put forward as desirable characteristics of 'alternative' provisioning systems. It is harder to find depictions of social sustainability applied to an industrial food system. Lang (2010a) provides a rare example: in his framework the overarching goal would be to feed everyone equitably and healthily, while care would be taken to protect ecological resources and build the skills necessary for future generations. Crucially, this framework would apply what Bostrom (2012) termed the 'green filter' that distinguishes socially sustainable policy from social policy that is not mindful of sustainability. On the other hand, it would also apply a 'social' filter (c.f. Raworth 2012), to embed social justice in, for example, plans to adapt farming to mitigate climate change, such as under 'sustainable intensification' (Foresight 2011).

The state has provided some definitions of social sustainability for food. The first social objective of a British sustainable food policy appeared in 1994: to provide 'an adequate

supply of good quality food ... in an efficient manner' (HM Government 1994: 106). The notion was subsequently expanded to include ideas that the food should be wholesome and reasonably priced (MAFF 2000), healthy, safe and supportive of viable livelihoods (SDC 2001), and widely accessible, and achieving high standards of animal welfare (Defra 2002). In 2006, the Food Industry Sustainability Strategy – still the only strategy applying sustainability specifically to the food industry beyond the farmgate – covered, under the social heading, nutrition and health; food safety; equal opportunities; health and safety; and ethical trading (Defra 2006b). This research found these topics to be reflected in many of the definitions and operationalisations used by food supply companies and the entities that interacted with them. Conspicuously, they lack a green filter, and they also skirt distributional issues (such as pay). (The FISS was developed in collaboration with industry, in a textbook example of public-private governance; the fact that its themes were found to be widely referenced by the food industry illustrates both the success of this method of state 'steering', and the danger that it can lead to relatively unchallenging policy goals.) By 2008, when sustainability was being diluted and fragmented as a state policy concern, the focus in food policy shifted to the narrower idea of food security (Barling *et al* 2010), with sustainability often used in the restricted sense of environmental sustainability. After 2010, references to social sustainability in food policy became rare: for example the 'Green Food' initiative concentrated on the environmental challenge of producing more food with fewer adverse impacts (i.e., no social filter) (Green Food Project Steering Group 2012). One of the few policy initiatives to have attempted to fuse social and environmental goals, namely the work on sustainable diets, has, if anything, illustrated the difficulty of the project (SDC 2009b; Macdiarmid *et al* 2011).

Among the various non-state actors investigated, as Chapter 7 describes, the research found a proliferation of social themes being discussed. In the websites, they ranged from supporting British farming (Processor Dovecote Park), to 'Taking care of our people' (Manufacturer ABF) to achieving 'a more positive social impact' (Consultancy Accenture) to improving prices paid to growers and workers (Audit Organisation the Fairtrade Foundation) to achieving a 'socially equitable soy chain (MSI the Roundtable on Responsible Soy). Some actors (such as the Audit Organisations the ECRA and Covalence Ethicalquote) had lengthy

and detailed lists of social themes and criteria: they had thought about the idea in detail and the definitions they had built up were pioneering.

Crucially, though, it was found that the various social themes were not consistently linked to sustainability. Sometimes they were explicitly designated as social themes within sustainability programmes, sometimes just as 'Social' themes, and sometimes sustainability itself was labelled as part of Corporate or Social Responsibility, with other headings also used. The conclusion must be that social sustainability does not have a settled meaning in the food supply. The governance space is indeterminate, with a wide range of social themes being advanced (perhaps tested) as relevant, actionable governance concerns.

The interviewees grasped the idea of social sustainability, but several said it was less familiar (and less comprehensible) than environmental sustainability. Asked to define it, they mentioned many of the terms encountered in the literature and the websites, ranging from fairness to community action. But the keynote of their responses was the idea of 'people' – social sustainability referred to the way sustainability affected the people who, variously, ate the food they produced, worked for their organisations, were affected by terms of trade in supply chains, or lived near the sites of the organisations they worked for. In both the interviews and the websites, there was evidence of a standard way of conceptualising social impacts as affecting different categories of people, rippling outwards from the workplace to the marketplace, to the supply chain, community, and wider society – as outlined by the Advocacy Organisation Business in the Community, or 'me, we, world' in Manufacturer Coca-Cola's formulation. The interviewees spontaneously included both substantive and procedural aspects in their definitions. They talked about health, decent work and nutritious food, but also about the processes by which a sustainable food supply should be achieved and conducted – by 'making decisions' (I. 22, audit), acting responsibly, caring, providing, being aware – in sum, the social processes by which 'people and collections of people com[e] together to try and meet their needs' (I.7, consultancy).

On one hand, the meanings were constructed in specific contexts, constrained by what Porritt (2004: 61) described as the 'hard taskmaster' of materiality: companies had to ensure that their activities were relevant to core business, hence constructs such as Tetley's 'sustainable hydration'. On the other, though, there was a professed moral component in

social sustainability: it was 'the right thing to do' in websites and ethically important for the interviewees personally.

From the array of themes and attributions, a summary would include food safety, adequacy, quality and affordability; the nutritional quality of food, often understood in the context of the industrial food supply as a technical function of its formulation; the availability and quality of work; the quality of relationships among participants in the food supply; the welfare of farm animals; notions of fairness (in the distribution both of access to food and the impacts of the food supply); notions of responsibility and accountability; and the importance of engagement as the prerequisite and enabler of sustainable innovation. But this summary does not do justice to the variety of the material or nuanced (and sometimes contradictory) interpretations encountered.

11.6 The non-state actors: a diverse group

The terrain jostled with governance actors. They included entities directly involved in the production and distribution of food, such as processors, retailers and foodservice operators (the latter itself a varied group), collectively referred to as actors '*in*' the food supply. These entities were initially thought of as 'food companies', but this term became increasingly ambiguous as the range of the companies' activities became clear, as well as the extent to which they depended on other sorts of companies (e.g. consultants, standard-setters or certification agencies) to facilitate or indeed execute their business. These other actors belonged to a group referred to as to as actors '*on*' the food supply: they were not directly involved in the supply of food, but they nevertheless sought to influence its conduct. The main ways in which they did this – i.e., the ways in which they participated in governance – were found to be through consultancy, audit and advocacy (though there were acknowledged overlaps). A separate category of actors, the multistakeholder initiatives (MSIs), was found to have been created explicitly to bring together different types of actors. The MSIs were mostly auditors, though some used advocacy as their main method.

The iterative effort to categorise the actors was partly to monitor the territory being explored, as part of the theoretical research process, but also became an important element of the analysis. One reason why categorisation was difficult was because many of the entities did lots of different things (the outstanding example being Cargill, classified here as

a Trader, but which accurately described itself as supplying 'the basic infrastructure of the world's food supply'). Another reason was because apparently very different entities (such as the campaign group the Soil Association, the global certification company Bureau Veritas and the non-profit fair pay coalition the Living Wage Foundation) were often doing similar things (in this case devising and enforcing social standards, and advising users on how to comply with them). Another important reason was that organisations proved to be highly complex in structure. This was true of some actors in all categories: actors 'in' such as Inputs Supplier Monsanto, Processor Moy Park, Manufacturer ABF, Retailer M&S, Foodservice Operator Compass; and also actors 'on' such as Consultancy Benchmark Holdings, Audit Organisation the Fairtrade Foundation , Advocacy Organisation Friends of the Earth, and MSI the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO). The websites of these organisations showed them to have complicated organisational structures, often consisting of multiple divisions operating in similar or different sectors, sometimes operating across several national or regional jurisdictions. Other scholars have found that complex structures can allow companies to fragment and conceal activities and shift liabilities between subdivisions (e.g. Fuchs 2007), and the difficulty of coordinating, or even being aware of, policy was confirmed by interviewees who worked for large and / or multinational entities. Complex structures also make it difficult (possibly intentionally) for outsiders to follow trails of accountability (illustrated by the forensic accounting practices used by the Advocacy Organisation ActionAid to highlight ABF's tax avoidance in Zambia).

The complexity was accompanied by a noticeable degree of opacity. Information was inconsistently and patchily supplied on websites, and even where data could be checked against the websites of Companies House and the Charity Commission, it was often difficult to answer the simple question 'what sort of entity is this?' For example, it was often unclear whether entities were for-profit or not-for-profit (which could potentially influence decisions relevant to social sustainability), and again, both types of organisation could be engaged in the same sort of activities. Among non-profits, funding sources were not always specified. Within entities, relationships between subdivisions and lines of ownership were often unclear. It was hard to see which policies for social sustainability applied to which bits of companies. On top of these considerations, transparency *per se* is frequently cited as an

important procedural ingredient of social sustainability. It was not always exemplified by the sustainability governance actors investigated.

The research explored the implications of 'companyhood' – a legal form which confers certain privileges and responsibilities on incorporated entities. Incorporation endows an organisation with a fictitious personhood that shields its owners from personal liability resulting from its activities. The research discovered that 'companyhood', as regulated by company law, enables and prohibits activities with a direct bearing on how organisations relate to society and discharge their social responsibilities (UK Parliament 2006; Roach 2013). Most of the entities investigated, both actors 'on' and 'in', were companies, of different sorts. On this level, they looked similar. Some, again in many categories, were very large. The image of large 'corporations' being held to account by shoe-string campaigners – the David and Goliath portrayal of some of the sustainable food literature – was not always accurate. The actors 'on' could be profit-driven global corporations.

One clear lesson of the research was that a study of the governance of the conventional food supply calls for some understanding of the structures and regulation of business. At present, in relation to the food supply, as other authors have observed, the political power and governance role of large companies is an understudied 'black box' (Fuchs 2007; Fuchs and Clapp 2009; Wilks 2013). Company structure has been shown to affect decision-making processes (Danielsen 2005), and also dictates reporting responsibilities, which vary for different types of company, as well as between jurisdictions. Interviewees attested that company structure had an effect on the scope of social operationalisations and the diligence with which they were pursued. Bell and Hindmoor (2009: 3) propose a 'state-centred relational' model of governance, in which the state occupies a pivotal position as enforcer of laws, but also needs to make strategic alliances in order to accomplish its ends. The scale, reach, complexity and interdependencies of the non-state entities involved in the governance of the conventional food supply, as uncovered during this research, illuminate the challenge presented to the state in its efforts to 'steer' policy and build alliances.

The category comprising Trade Associations and Levy Bodies had websites that described a surprisingly low level of activity on anything resembling social sustainability, despite the fact that interviewees from this category were as informed and articulate as the others. The

activities mentioned in the websites tended to be restricted to the provision of online advice or reports, and the conceptualisations tended to be less detailed and more instrumental than was the case in other categories. For example the British Meat Processors Association (representing a sector which has been criticised for its negative impacts on health and climate change (Garnett 2008; Sage 2012) and exploitative working practices (EHRC 2010), had published a strategy for a 'Sustainable Meat Industry' which focused on how meat products could contribute to a healthy diet. One explanation for this apparently low level of activity may be that the Trade Associations and Levy Bodies see themselves as working behind the scenes – one interviewee confirmed they would try to solve problems before they reached the public sphere. But the implication remains that these actors did not see social sustainability, or indeed sustainability in any sense, as a high priority, despite the elaborate descriptions of activity being described 'downstream' – nearer the public – by their member organisations.

The final category was the Unions, which were surprising for a different reason: their prolific activities on pay and working conditions focused squarely what many other actors and the literature identified as social sustainability, but the unions did not label it that way. The discovery that a group of actors that was ostensibly an important champion for social sustainability in the food supply did not see its work as part of sustainability was, in its way, as undermining of the term's authority as the omission of any social attributes by other actors. This point is taken up again later.

Cumulatively, however, the impression from the review of the actors involved was of a large assortment of entities that were in many ways very different – in their main business, in structure, in their objectives for social sustainability-related activity – but were in disconcerting ways quite similar. Collaboration – highlighted in the literature as a favoured component of sustainability governance – was evident, among entities and also between individuals. Wilks (2013: 524) sees a sinister side to this level of interaction, noting that the supposedly 'free' market is, rather, a place where large companies substitute 'hierarchy and collusion' for open markets and competition. This rings true: for example, the global standards development organisations (SDOs) such as ISEAL, RSPO and GlobalGAP, could be seen to wield great power in disciplining participants at every stage of the supply chain. A conclusion of this research was that some degree of the collusion Wilks refers to existed not

just among the food supply companies but also between these companies and the organisations whose ostensible purpose is to audit or critique them. The extent to which the actors shared a 'mindset' that constrained and conditioned their activities is discussed below.

But against this, the interviewees also provided evidence of a highly resourceful, reactive and responsive mode of governance. They attested that the programmes of the organisations they worked for could be (and were) shaped by the personal resources and capacities, enthusiasms and levels of commitment of individuals. A dynamic leader, or a practitioner with a particular area of experience, could drive an agenda. The resulting activities were ad hoc, haphazard or pragmatic, but they were also imaginative, personally fulfilling for the interviewees, and proactive. As I.6 (manufacturing) said everywhere she looked she could see 'people making decisions', reminiscent of Bevir's description of governance as 'always the products of people's actions' (Bevir 2012: 78).

11.7 Putting social sustainability into practice in the food supply

Operationalisations reveal how issues are being made amenable to governance (Miller and Rose 2008). Chapter 8 described how the actors 'in' devised operationalisations that built on existing programmes of activity and were tied to core business objectives (mindful of the requirement of materiality). Thus the Logistics Supplier Keuhne and Nagel ran a Logistics University, Manufacturer Coca-Cola enabled women in Developing countries to set up micro-businesses turning its syrups into drinks, and the Foodservice Operator Booker donated to the charity GroceryAid. The actors 'in' also classified aspects of their everyday business as contributions to social sustainability (or to their social agendas, if differently labelled). Common examples included the provision of food (sometimes qualified as safe, healthy or affordable), the provision of employment and training ('great places to work'), the provision of choice (e.g. between healthier and less healthy versions of similar products, or between products embodying higher and lower levels of animal welfare), or contrarily the restriction of choice (e.g. by 'choice-editing' non-Fairtrade versions from whole categories). They developed Company Values and Codes of Conduct to provide normative guidance on social obligations, and benchmarked their behaviour against targets, codes and standards provided by external agencies (such as the state's Public Health Responsibility

Deal or the Base Code of the MSI the Ethical Trading Initiative). The operationalisations were numerous and varied, in some cases ambitious, and by no means trivial in terms of sums donated to charity or numbers of beneficiaries. They fell into a recognisable pattern – 'me, we, world', as described above, and again consistently lacked the 'green filter': it was hard to see what made them quintessentially socially sustainable. But they were not disruptive or transformative. The issue was made governable by being made to fit within patterns of 'business as usual'. Fundamentally, what was being sustained were the social elements that would enable food businesses to continue to operate: viable livelihoods for suppliers, an amenable workforce, and an adequately nourished and receptive market.

Fleshing out this picture, the interviewees from the food supply companies provided vivid accounts of how they put social sustainability into practice: by reviewing existing activities; consulting peers, colleagues, experts, the internet; finding out what suppliers, clients and competitors were doing; and thus assembling programmes of activity that were partly old and familiar and partly innovative. Engagement was important, both to lay the ground for forthcoming change, enlist support, and to reassure colleagues they were 'doing the right thing'. It was an opportunistic process, again incremental and reformative, rather than transformative.

Meanwhile, the 'actors 'in' were advised, supported, policed, chivvied and held to account on their efforts by the actors 'on', as described in Chapter 9. Their methods were classified as Consultancy, Audit and Advocacy, and a whole sub-sector of actors existed to perform these tasks. Some of these actors 'did' social sustainability as part of other activities – for example, the financial ratings agency the FTSE had added to its other indexes a sustainability index, FTSE4Good, that included social criteria. But others existed specifically to operationalise a version of social sustainability – such as the Audit Organisations the Fairtrade Foundation or Partner Africa. In some cases, where whole strategies were outsourced to consultancies, or the social sustainability of whole product categories was outsourced to standard-setters and certifiers (as described by I.15), the food supply companies governed social sustainability by delegating it to other entities. This process allowed them to distance themselves from decision-making and accountability on topics such as labour standards in supplier countries (where adverse exposure could lead to reputational damage) and also to pass costs back up the chain.

The objectives of the actors 'on' varied. Some were seeking to profit from the food companies' need for advice or desire to outsource cost or responsibility. Others were seeking to impose their own agendas on the food companies – for fairer trade, better labour standards, higher animal welfare, more respect for human rights or higher hourly pay rates. Their methods included strategising for the food supply companies, critiquing or collaborating with them using a variety of discursive methods, using advocacy to persuade the companies to change (or to persuade the public to exert pressure on the food companies), and employing a range of calculative tools collectively referred to as audit methods. These included the use of standards, ratings and indexes, along with the supportive apparatus of conformity assessment and accreditation. These audit methods were found to be much more varied (less standard) than expected, intervening at different points in the food supply (whether at the level of agricultural production or financial investment) to operationalise different concerns (whether fair trade or nutritional content). Standard-setting, compliance and assessment processes were all found to be negotiable and flexible, involving social interaction and human judgement both to adapt standards to specific contexts or help users meet standards. Standardising the social was a complicated and social affair.

11.8 The governance of social sustainability

Miller and Rose (2008: 146) pose as the central question of governance, 'How can the few transform the many?' How can those with 'the will to govern' (Miller and Rose 2008: 71) change the ways of thinking, the criteria of judgement and the forms of conduct of others? They suggest four ways: regulation (enmeshing others in webs of rules and standards); captivation (seducing them with charm and charisma); education (which involves changing people's minds by persuading them to share the governance actors' reasoning and understanding); or conversion (which entails transforming their personhood). Of these, they say the latter is the most potent, because it 'removes the necessity to have to calculate every eventuality' (Miller and Rose 2008*:* 147).

The governance modes found in this study can be seen to be using all these approaches. Where it saw deficiencies, the state made rules and created organisations (such as the Gangmasters Licensing Authority and the Grocery Code Adjudicator) to enforce them. The

non-state entities also made rules (Codes, Standards) for themselves and for each other. They produced copious materials to persuade and influence others; the importance of charismatic leadership emerged in the interviews; and the activity summed up as 'engagement' or 'getting it', which both the websites and interviewees emphasised, fits the last category. I.6 (advocacy), who described taking food company executives to hill farms so they could see what it meant to live on £6,000 a year, was trying to bring about a change in the executives' subjectivity: they would need no further persuasion that the problem as presented needed intervention. If anything, on this last element (engagement), the least active entity was the state, which for all its early policy activity had not made energetic efforts to transform the consciousness of food businesses so that they saw sustainability (rather than, say, competitiveness) as a framing priority.

In terms of non-state governance activity, the strong impression, as conveyed above, was that it was ad hoc, opportunistic and relatively uncoordinated, although the degree of borrowing, outsourcing and consultancy meant that repeating patterns could be seen. It could be voluntarily collaborative or commercially contracted, but was often dependent on available resources, personal contacts, or past experience or practice. Even the grand programmes for intervention – the Fairtrade standards, M&S's Plan A or Unilever's Sustainable Living Plan – proved, in their development and execution (so far as this was visible), to be more contingent and negotiable, and less monolithic and standardised, than might have been expected. They were devised by actors in the ways described above, cross-referentially, opportunistically, making use of any available knowledge and resources; and they were pragmatically adjusted based on the needs of different actors i (illustrated, for example, by Unilever's experience in converting Ben and Jerry's ice cream to Fairtrade).

It seemed clear from the research that what Colebatch (2002: 33) describes as a 'policy collectivity' existed around food sustainability in the UK, by which is meant a relatively stable aggregation of people from various (public, commercial and civil society) organisations who found themselves 'regularly thrown together' to address policy questions they all saw as falling within their remit. It was much less clear that any coherent collectivity or issue group had coalesced around *social* sustainability in the food supply. In governance terms, it had not (yet) been definitively problematised. Although many actors were found to be active on the issue, practitioners looked after social sustainability as part of other work, a

variety of labels attached to the agenda, few organisations exclusively addressed social sustainability, and organisations that worked on relevant issues did not always see what they were doing as part of the sustainability '*problématique'* at all. So although a putative 'food social sustainability' collectivity would overlap to some extent with the 'food sustainability' collectivity, other, additional actors might involve themselves – and the collectivity might disagree about the nature of the problem, as well as about how to tackle it. For example, some might say there were not enough appropriately qualified workers with the right attitude to food work to supply the UK food industry, while others might say the food industry provided working conditions that were too badly paid, poorly supported, harsh or precarious to attract qualified, motivated workers.

Colebatch notes that policy making is not so much about deciding, but more about negotiating, and that the negotiations focus 'less on alternatives between which we must choose, and more on common ground on which we can converge' (2002: 33). This too was illustrated by the research. One result of the search for common ground among actors with disparate objectives and priorities was to limit the scope for action, and put some topics (examples would include tax, wage levels, pay ratios, the implications of the decision to supply different qualities of nutrition or different embodied levels of animal welfare, at different price points) beyond discussion. Certain issues (such as the inevitability that food work would be low paid) were presented by some actors as non-problems, as part of everyday business reality – in Fischer's phrase (2003), they were immunised against policy intervention.

But behind the profusion of expedient, empirical practices of governance, there was an adherence to the *idea* of grand plans. Encountering example after example of ambitious and comprehensive plans to make aspects of the food supply more sustainable, the researcher came to see a category of activities as 'As If' governance – deriving the name from teenagers' use of the phrase to denote a kind of complicity in pretence in relation to some proposed course of action.[18] Into the realm of 'As If' governance would go, for example, the 'vision' for a sustainable food system from the state's *Food 2030* strategy, with its informed consumers choosing and being able to afford healthy food, supplied by a profitable,

[18] Researcher: 'From now on I am only going to drink wine at weekends'. Teenage children: '*As if*!'.

competitive food industry providing well paid jobs for skilled workers (HM Government 2010). Many of the implausibly rosy and ambitious 'mission statements' found in the websites would also fit (e.g. the manufacturer Warburton's ambition to 'build a better society' through baked goods). So did several more substantive programmes, such as Forum for the Future's Global Grain Initiative, based on the assumptions that 'the global grain system is broken' and that a 'sustainable grain value chain' was achievable. Sustainable Food Lab's website asserted: 'There is an emerging recognition in all sectors of the food chain that humanity has yet to develop an optimal global system of food production and distribution,' implying that humanity had been focused on this objective, and might still achieve it.

The 'As If' factor obviously contributes to the perception that what I.2 (retail) called 'smokescreen CSR bullshit' abounds, and also to the profound cynicism encountered in the literature (though not so much in the fieldwork) towards CSR and corporate sustainability (e.g. Fleming and Jones 2013). But Colebatch (2002) argues that while governance practice is profane, and known by its practitioners to be seat-of-the-pants and often a case of muddling through, nevertheless, 'sacred', aspirational and normative policy frameworks are useful and necessary – to create a sense of shared order and purpose, and perhaps also to ward off feelings of futility. This is governmentality's hopeful assumption 'that reality is programmable', that things could be done better. The multiplicity of both sacred and profane governance activities encountered during the research attests to the fact that even if the world of food is not (yet) well governed, it is unquestionably 'traversed by the will to govern' (Miller and Rose 208: 71).

The effects of this governance activity are to shape and re-shape the policy terrain; to set the objectives of some actors (say, fair pay advocates) alongside the objectives of other actors (say, fruit producers operating with tight margins, and the state as a promoter of free trade), to see, in the dynamic and contingent confrontations and compromises that ensue, what version of the objectives emerges as goals or even accomplishments.

As noted in Chapters 1-3, many commentators are critical of the sustainability credentials of the conventional food supply. Its shortcoming could be presented as a failure of 'meta governance' by the state, which in this argument would be failing in its overarching duty to

ensure more sustainability. But this critique is only valid if the meta-objective of state policy is for some version of sustainability that the critics share. Whereas a few years ago, around the time of the publication of *Food Matters* (Cabinet Office Strategy Unit 2008b) and *Food 2030* (HM Government 2010), the food sustainability vision of the state and its critics could broadly be said to be in agreement; today, that cannot be seen to be the case. Sustainability, including social sustainability, has a low profile in the state's governance of the food supply. Trade, jobs and competitiveness are its priorities (Defra 2016). So the state must be presumed to be steering in that direction: it is responding to a different problematisation.

This had the consequence, shown clearly by the research, of leaving non-state governance actors to strive to realise a variety of different private interests. These were not necessarily (or not just) the profit-maximising objectives of commercial entities (whether actors 'in' or 'on'); they also included the miscellaneous, often idealistic and moral, activities of the food supply companies (the Foundations, donations and ukulele bands), and also the various agendas of the non-profit actors 'on', for fairer trade, better pay, etc. The absence of current, coherent direction from the state meant that no unifying, overarching (sacred) public-interest policy for social sustainability in the food supply had been articulated.

A separate reflection on the governance observed is that it is very disjointed – in fact there was a widespread tendency to fragment sustainability and social sustainability into sub-themes, and to divide it among departments, agendas, roles and individuals. An effect of this governance has been to perpetuate the divisions that the holistic idea and programme of Sustainable Development was intended to unify. This may have been, in different contexts, accidental or deliberate.

11.9 Conflicting rationalities

In Chapter 10, the interviewees reported that they found social sustainability extremely difficult to 'do'. There were various reasons for this: they judged it to be already taken care of by law (implying that it was therefore not in need of further governance); they found it 'fluffy', hard to grasp and measure, and culturally variably; and they also described a range of practical and technical difficulties attached to implementation, especially of standards, which undermined their faith in the effectiveness of these methods (and led some

interviewees to suggest that the pendulum might be swinging away from audit methods and back towards a 're-socialising' of supply chain relations).

Underlying some of these difficulties, and often described as a frustration or constraint on their work, was what many interviewees called the 'business mindset'. Both actors 'in' and actors 'on' spoke in these terms. For some, it was a kind of tyranny of 'hitting the numbers'; for others an anger at the short-termism imposed by quarterly reporting schedules, or the struggle to persuade business clients that social sustainability concerns were 'material'. All the actors agreed – with varying degrees of resignation – that 'the business' case' always had to be made for any sustainable innovation in the conventional food supply. This was acknowledged to limit the type and scope of activities. In the words of I.8, it was sometimes a case of making things 'the least worst possible'.

One way of looking at this is as a textbook case of the limitations of Ecological Modernisation (EM). Chapter 3 described EM as a prominent and business-friendly governance framework that presents Sustainable Development as a route to 'greener' profitability, through reduced costs and extended resource availability (Mol 2010). It has been also been widely criticised as a smokescreen for business as usual (e.g. Eckersley 2004; Redclift 2010). Although the term EM did not crop in the policies, interviews or food company websites, it was recognisably an approach being adopted by both the state and the non-state actors. But EM makes very scant provision for social aspects of sustainability, leaving these undetermined, to be struggled over, and EM's incremental and adaptive processes preclude transformative change (Eckersley 2004). The interviewees' frustrations seemed to reflect this limitation: although they wanted to 'do the right' thing', they also felt their efforts were inadequate.

Another way of interpreting the interviewees' sense of frustration is that it highlights a collision between two 'rationalities' of government. The research encountered many tensions between the objectives of business and the objectives of sustainability, leading to trade-offs arrived at with regret or resignation. There seemed to be two different mentalities in play, one steeped in the priorities and consciousness of sustainability, the other in the priorities and consciousness of business. Miller and Rose define 'rationalities of government' as 'ways of rendering reality thinkable in such a way that it [is] amenable to

calculation and programming' (2008: 16). The efforts of the food companies, and the supportive and enabling activities of many actors 'on', were dedicated to problematising social sustainability in such a way that it was amenable to calculation and programming that did not transgress the expectations, norms and indeed laws of business reality. In other words, actors 'in' and 'on' worked within the business rationality. The sustainability rationality threatened to disrupt this – in Hawken's words (2010), for some businesses doing the right thing might put them out of business.

The tension was apparent between and within organisations, and even perhaps within interviewees – several of the sustainability practitioners who worked for food companies were keen to ally themselves with larger, longer-term and more altruistic goals (the sustainability rationality) than could be reconciled with the business case (the business rationality). It was notable that both sustainability and business were referred to by interviewees as part of themselves (business was 'in their genes', sustainability had to be 'got'). The conflict of rationalities helps explain the observation made in Chapter 10 that two 'levels' of sustainability activity seemed to co-exist, with everyday practitioners working busily on the agenda, while elsewhere decision-makers or investors did not see it as so important. The conflicted interviewees stood on the fault line between two large and powerful sets of ideas.

The collision of rationalities also helps explain the paradox between the interviewees' sense of agency and simultaneous experience of powerlessness. Chapter 6 presented the interviewees as resourceful decision-makers, who felt that their work 'made a difference'. It was therefore surprising to find that they also had such a strong sense of the constraint the business framework put on their activities. A clear example concerned pay. Several interviewees worked for food companies; several were also employers; others worked on the issue of low pay. They all recognised that pay in the food industry was low, and that this was bad for the sector's image and a disincentive to recruitment. But low pay levels were perceived to be a result of market factors beyond their own or even their organisation's control, a prerequisite for a competitive industry.

Underlying these considerations is the question of the extent to which food businesses can legitimately engage in activity for social good – the question raised by Milton Friedman in

1970 and much debated since, including by interviewees. Websites and interviewees said that large companies had the power to achieve large-scale social change. But commentators (e.g. Fuchs et al 2011; Wilks 2013) have in effect echoed Friedman (1970) in pointing out that companies have no democratic means of choosing or prioritising which social activities to pursue. This thesis would add that the actors 'on' – the MSIs, Consultancies, Audit and Advocacy Organisations – do not have any democratic basis for their prescriptions and interventions either. For Zadek, the view of business as the 'legalised poacher' and the democratic state as the 'paternalistic gamekeeper' is no longer tenable (Zadek 2007: 1). The answer, for him, is to endow businesses with a new kind of legitimacy and accountability, arising from their embeddedness in society. The increasingly entrenched collaborations which this research has found between the actors 'in' and 'on' may be part of this process of socially embedding corporate activity, or the converse.

Two final observations arise here, with implications for social sustainability governance. One relates to the common complaint that social sustainability is so nebulous and difficult to measure that social (or integrated, or sustainability) reporting (as advocated in the Triple Bottom Line, Elkington 1997, and by the MSI the Global Reporting Initiative and the Audit Organisation PWC's TIMM model) will never have the authority of financial reporting. It was therefore salutary to discover that financial accounting practices have also had to develop settled ways of assigning a value to and accounting for things that are hard to measure. 'Goodwill', for example, is an 'intangible asset' that reflects the value a company has beyond its physical assets – such as from an existing circle of customers. 'Depreciation', 'impairment' and 'amortisation' are similarly hard-to-quantify qualities that have nevertheless been standardised and normalised in financial accounting. Although the intricacies of financial reporting (which is a legal requirement for companies) are beyond the scope of this research, it is relevant to note that: (a) broadly agreed standards have emerged to allow extremely diverse organisations to present complicated information in ways that make it reasonably transparent and comparable to external observers; (b) this process has taken many decades to evolve; (c) it is not fixed or uncontested and is in a process of ongoing refinement (UK Parliament 2006; Roach 2013; FRC 2016). It is therefore not unreasonable to think that social reporting may one day be equally routine. This is also

reminiscent of Murdoch's (1997) work on the normalisation of the compilation of agricultural statistics.

The other (related) observation concerns the argument that sustainability is flatly incompatible with capitalism – a contention at the root of many critiques of the unsustainability of the industrial food supply. A different way of thinking of this problem is to see sustainability as being in some key ways obstructed not by capitalism but by company law, as currently laid down, to the extent that (for example) it encourages (or necessitates) short-termism, competitiveness and secrecy, hinders some types of collaboration, and enables companies to pick-and-mix the topics they wish to act on. The efforts described by some of the entities and interviewees to push back the boundaries of what is judged 'pre-competitive' represent efforts to circumvent these problems – where they are construed as problems. A conclusion of this research was that, pending any large-scale conversion to a sustainability rationality, the specifics of company law (such as on reporting requirements, or pay ratios) might present a more actionable target for governance than the generality of capitalism.

11.10 A clash of ontologies

Rationalities of government are socially constructed. But in addition to the collision, posited here, between a rationality of sustainability and a rationality of business, there may be an underlying duality that continues to make Sustainable Development an intractable governance challenge, and on a more day-to-day level contributes to the difficulties the governance actors described in implementing social sustainability in particular. Although it is argued persuasively (e.g. by Woodgate 2010) that 'nature' and 'the environment' are also social constructions, there is a fundamental difference between a natural phenomenon such as gravity and a social phenomenon such as poverty. This rift runs through sustainability discourse, and means – as far as the food supply is concerned – that when actors struggle to agree on what social impacts they are supposed to be alleviating, or how to measure them, they are not (always) procrastinating or being obfuscatory, but are describing an uncertainty that has an underlying ontological validity. Social sustainability *is* more nebulous, more culturally contingent and harder to measure than environmental sustainability.

This ontological difference leads to another implication. The point was made in Chapter 2 that although fairness is often seen as the definitive social aspect of sustainability (its distributional pillar, ensuring equity of process and outcome), this association is normative rather than inherent. Dobson (1995, 2014) notes that it is not self-evident that fair societies would be more sustainable than unfair ones; or that sustainability would be better achieved by democratic means. To say that the social dimensions of sustainability for food are normative, or even optional, is not to say they are undesirable, but it acknowledges that they are moot, and that people will have legitimate disagreements about them. As Stirling (2014) puts it, 'the "merit rankings" produced may overlap or even be inverted under different, equally reasonable assumptions and value judgments' (Stirling 2014: 51). For him, this is a reason why processes of negotiation and decision-making should be transparent and democratic. If it is accepted that sustainability *should* involve an element of distributive justice (which, as noted, has been the almost universal contention of the scholars and actors encountered in this study), then this will always have to be made clear and fought for – and if supported by governments, then given the status of public policy.

This links back to the phenomenon observed in the research, in which social themes that were associated in the literature with sustainability were often not labelled this way by entities acting on them in the food supply. In other words, healthy diets, fair pay, decent livelihoods and so on were seen by some to be part of sustainability work, but by others not to be connected with it. This is different from the problem (articulated in the literature and encountered during the empirical research), that sustainability is often defined and operationalised in terms of its environmental pillar, to the exclusion of social elements. The tendency for actors not to label their work on social agendas as part of sustainability has two consequences. One is that they neglect the green filter, essential to social sustainability, which sees the social world as embedded in and constrained by a finite, physical environment. The other is that the ongoing democratic and transparent negotiations over sustainable futures, which Stirling argues are constantly necessary, are undermined, and missing some key actors.

11.11 Implications for public policy

Some of the implications for public policy have already become clear. One is the point just made that if sustainability is taken to be a holistic ideal, then its elements cannot be governed separately (although the veteran commentator Weale latterly concluded that 'policy integration', though desirable, was too difficult to put into practice (Weale 2009: 71). Another implication is that if social elements of sustainability such as fairness are accepted as normative and judged to be desirable, then they must be asserted in public policy and argued for and defended in governance. Approaches which privilege environmental interpretations and append social justice (such as Foresight 2011), or conversely advocate for a food supply that supports justice in the distribution of food and decent livelihoods but does not link this to sustainability (such as in work by the trade unions) are equally unhelpful in countering the idea that environmental sustainability can be achieved in the food supply while social injustice persists. The danger is that social justice in many forms could be 'immunised' against intervention and slip off the sustainability agenda.

Another implication is that sacred policies or ('As If' governance) are important. Governance was found to happen both within and despite frameworks of public policy. It was as though the other actors need these frameworks to demark the territory, to build on, critique and chafe against. Although interviewees were dismissive of public policy as a force shaping action (saying that it was either irrelevant, or lagged behind what companies were already doing, or had ceased to exist in any coherent form), they implicitly acknowledged its power when they said some of the social issues associated with sustainability were 'already taken care of' under national law. More specifically, food service interviewees acknowledged that whole programmes of activity had been prompted by the Public Sector Buying Guidelines. Similarly, the diverse actions described in the websites could be seen to echo the priorities outlined in the Food Industry Sustainability Strategy. In these instances, the state successfully depicted food industry practices in a range of areas as 'zones' in need of (and amenable to) governance – and governance was forthcoming. But the words of the FISS regulatory risk assessment are still pertinent: the Government has 'few legislative powers, if any, at present' which it could apply to the food industry in relation to the issues covered in the FISS (Defra 2006c: 6).

Sustainability lost prominence in public food policy from the mid-2000s onwards, leaving what interviewees saw as a policy vacuum. Into this vacuum, initiatives on nutrition (via the Responsibility Deals), on certain types of labour (via the Gangmasters Licensing Authority), and more recently on fairness in food supply chain transactions (via the Groceries Supply Code of Practice and Groceries Code Adjudicator) have been launched – all concerned with topics sometimes linked to social sustainability, but not connected by government into any coherent approach for food sustainability. Given the observed interaction between sacred and profane governance, it seems desirable that the Government should 'refresh' its visions and strategies for sustainable food, tying together initiatives that currently seem disconnected. But the collision of rationalities outlined in the previous sections applies to government as well as to non-state actors. At the time of writing, the business rationality, with its emphasis on profitability and competitiveness, dominates policy making.

At the level of 'street' or grassroots governance, there was more ambiguity. As noted, the two rationalities were clearly visibly, sometimes flowing through the conversations of individual interviewees. Though hemmed in by short-term, organisation-level exigencies, they did see longer-term perspectives, and they had a sense of agency that derived from their place in wider society, as well as from their role as professional actors. It is possible that the aggregation of incremental activities, cherry-picked by actors with a range of interests, might collectively bring about change that could disrupt or transform the business rationality of the conventional food supply. But that would be, as I.27 (advocacy) remarked, a piecemeal way to save the world.

11.12 Reflections on the research process

The research set out explore the breadth of an unknown territory and to delve into it in depth, in order to provide both an overview and some deeper understanding. The methods chosen – a policy review, a web-based investigation of a large number of known or potential actors, and in-depth interviews with selected actors – succeeded in supplying the desired information, and answering the research questions. If anything, they provided so much information that organising, analyzing and making sense of it took more time than anticipated.

One qualification concerns the method of theoretical sampling, which was chosen because it allowed the exploration of unknown territory, where one line of thought or possible explanation leads to the next topic for investigation. This method was fruitful, leading to the discovery of several unexpected (or unexpectedly influential) actors. But the researcher is aware that because the chains of inquiry lead from one entity to another, there may be a danger that entities not in any way linked to those being investigated might be missed. In other words, the method could lead to bias. Hence, although the research found many organisations dedicated to facilitating business sustainability, it is possible that it missed organisations entirely hostile to this activity.

One thing the researcher would do differently if starting again would be to compile the company data collected from websites into a database that could be updated on an ongoing basis. The Data Extraction Sheets provided useful 'snapshots' of website information. But a database could be a more useful tool for scrutinising the activities of governance actors.

11.13 Possibilities for further research

Several possibilities for further research have suggested themselves. One would be to repeat the interviews with members of the 'C-suite' in the food industry (the executives with 'Chief' in front of their title, Chief Executive, Chief Finance Officer, etc,), who were identified during the research as people with control of firms' financial resources or otherwise having senior decision-making power to most of the interviewees, who were engaged in sustainability work. This might provide a different picture of companies' efforts and approaches, and further illuminate the conflict of rationalities outlined above. For example it would be interesting to try to determine whether the different rationalities predominated in different organisations, or departments within organisations, or different professional disciplines, and investigate the markers that delineated them, and whether 'mindsets' changed as roles and levels of seniority changed.

Another complementary study would be to look at lobbying, which is presumably relevant to how and whether issues related to social sustainability are to be acted on, but was surprisingly absent from the websites (it was named as an activity only by some of the trade associations and sectoral bodies), and from the interviews. Investigating lobbying around social sustainability would involve setting off in pursuit of a different set of actors – the

lobbyists and their contacts in the food world, and again could provide another perspective on the same terrain.

Other work could pursue the idea that 'business literacy' is key to investigating the sustainability of the industrial food supply, which is enmeshed in the world of business. The research found that many of the companies supplying food (or involved in shaping the conduct of the food supply) were huge, multinational, multifunctional and structurally extremely complex. Other scholars had found some ways in which these traits confounded scrutiny and could undermine sustainability. But the research could not really answer the question of whether scale, complexity, and size were, *per se,* inimical to social sustainability, and if so in what ways.

A final, more specific area of research would hone in on the idea that social sustainability concerns *distribution* – including of economic returns. At present, the distribution of economic returns in the food supply is very unequal, as other research has demonstrated. The current study has thrown up some troubling and inconsistent findings in this area. As the websites and interviews attested, the British food industry sees itself facing a labour shortage of crisis proportions, and is taking steps to address this (as part of its social sustainability or responsibility programmes but also out of self-interest), through apprenticeship schemes, for example, and through efforts to create supportive workplaces. But interviewees also asserted that automation was a problem-free alternative to employing human beings --- leading to layoffs and potentially to the decline of skills. More fundamentally, the fact that the UK's food supply depends on a supply of low-wage, precarious labour *here in the UK* (in addition to the better-known dependence on low-paid workers in supplier countries) was accepted by all the food company interviewees and some others as a necessary and inevitable feature of a domestic food economy that was 'competitive' and supplied 'affordable' food. This proposition seems to demand more investigation. One useful first step would simply be to be to map and specify the wages of workers doing different work in the food supply, from executives (and non-executive directors) to seasonal employees or those working on zero-hours contracts. It would also be useful to find out what proportion of UK food workers were in receipt of benefits such as tax credit or housing benefit, and how much these amount to, as these are in effect subsidies

that allow food companies to pay low wages and charge ‘affordable’ prices. The cost of decent work is thus externalised to the state.

Tying these lines of research together, it would also be interesting to capture in one database the names of the directors and non-execs of, say, the biggest 10 or 20 companies in each of the data categories, to clarify links and ‘churn’ and to investigate how this tied to MPs’ interests.

Finally, all of these avenues – indeed, many of the issues covered by this research – will be thrown into turmoil by the negotiations that must now ensue, following from the UK’s decision to leave the EU. Monitoring the impacts of Brexit specifically on the social sustainability aspects of the UK’s conventional food supply would be an interesting and possibly lengthy project.

References

ActionAid 2013, *Sweet Nothings: The human cost of a British sugar giant avoiding taxes in southern Africa,* ActionAid, London.

Adger, W.N. & Jordan, A. 2009, "Sustainability: Exploring the process and outcomes of governance" in *Governing sustainability*, eds. W.N. Adger & A. Jordan, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, pp. 3-31.

Agyeman, J. & Evans, B. 2004, "'Just sustainability': the emerging discourse of environmental justice in Britain?", *The Geographical Journal,* vol. 170, no. 2, pp. 155-164.

Alkon, A.H. & Agyeman, J. 2011, *Cultivating food justice: Race, class and sustainability,* The MIT Press, Cambridge, Mass.

Allen, P. & Sachs, C. 1993, "Sustainable agriculture in the United States: Engagements, silences and possibilities for transformation" in *Food for the future – conditions and contradictions of sustainability*, ed. P. Allen, John Wiley, New York, pp. 139-167.

Allen, P. 1993a, "Preface" in *Food for the future: conditions and contradictions of sustainability*, ed. P. Allen, John Wiley, New York, pp *ix-xi*.

Allen, P. 1993b, "Introduction: Connecting the social and the ecological in sustainable agriculture" in *Food for the future: conditions and contradictions of sustainability*, ed. P. Allen, John Wiley, New York, pp 1-16.

Allen, P. 2004, *Together at the table: Sustainability and sustenance in the American agrifood system,* Pennsylvania State University Press, Pennsylvania.

Ambler-Edwards, S., Bailey, K., Kiff, A., Lang, T., Lee, R., Marsden, T. & Simons, D.T. 2009, *Food Futures: Rethinking UK strategy*, Royal Institute of International Affairs (Chatham House), London.

Anseeuw, W., Alden Wily, L., Cotula, L. & Taylor, M. 2012, *Land rights and the rush for land: Findings of the global commercial pressures on land research project*, International Land Commission, Rome.

Atkinson, P. and Coffey, A. 1997, "Analysing documentary realities", in *Qualitative research: Theory, method and practice*, ed. D. Silverman, Sage, London, pp 45-62.

Atkins, P. & Bowler, I. 2001, *Food in society: Economy, culture, geography,* Arnold, London.

Atkinson, G. 2009, *Sustainable Development and policy: A brief review of the literature and current practice. Final report to the Government Economic Service Group on Sustainable Development*, Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, London.

Bacon, C. M., Getz, C., Kraus, S., Montenegro, M. & Holland, K. 2012, "The social dimensions of sustainability and change in diversified farming systems", *Ecology and Society,* vol. 17, no. 4: 41.

Bain, C. & Hatanaka, M. 2010, "The practice of third-party certification: Enhancing environmental sustainability and social justice in the global south" in *Calculating the social: Standards and the reconfiguration of governing,* eds. V. Higgins & W. Larner, Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke, pp 56-74.

Baines, J. 2013, "Food price inflation as redistribution: Towards a new analysis of corporate power in the world food system", *New Political Economy,* vol. 19, issue 1, pp. 1-35.

References

Baldwin, C. (ed.) 2009, *Sustainability in the food industry*, Wiley-Blackwell, Ames, Iowa.

Balfour, E.B. 2006 [1943], *The Living Soil,* The Soil Association.

Banerjee, S.B. 2003, "Who sustains whose development? Sustainable Development and the reinvention of nature*", Organisation Studies*, vol. 24, issue 1, pp 143-180.

Banerjee, S.B. 2007, *Corporate Social Responsibility: The good, the bad and the ugly,* Edward Elgar, Cheltenham.

Barbier, E. 1987, "The concept of sustainable economic development", *Environmental Conservation,* vol. 14, no. 2, pp. 101-110.

Barling, D., Lang, T. & Sharpe, R. 2010, "The re-emergence of national food security on the United Kingdom's strategic policy agenda: Sustainability challenges and the politics of the food supply", in *Food security, nutrition and sustainability*, eds. G. Lawrence, K. Lyons & T. Wallington, Earthscan, London, pp. 61-78.

Barling, D., Sharpe, R. & Lang, T. 2009, "Traceability and ethical concerns in the UK wheat-bread chain: from food safety to provenance to transparency", *International Journal of Agricultural Sustainability,* vol. 7, no. 4, pp. 261-278.

Barrientos, S. & Dolan, C. 2006, "The transformation of global food: Opportunities and challenges for fair and ethical trade" in *Ethical sourcing in the global food system*, eds. S. Barrientos & C. Dolan, Earthscan, London, pp. 1-33.

Barrientos, S. & Kritzinger, A. 2004, "Squaring the circle: Global production and the informalisation of work in South African fruit", *Journal of International Development,* vol. 16, pp. 81-92.

Barron, L. & Gauntlett, E. 2002, *WACOSS Housing and Sustainable Communities Indicators Project.* Project reports *p*ublished online at http://www.regional.org.au/au/soc/2002/4/barron_gauntlett.htm (accessed 7.4.2011).

Barry, B. 1999, "Sustainability and intergenerational justice" in *Fairness and futurity: Essays on environmental sustainability and social justice*, ed. A. Dobson, Oxford University Press, Oxford, pp. 93-117.

Beardsworth, A. & Keil, T. 1997, *Sociology on the menu: An invitation to the study of food and society,* Routledge, London.

Beck, U. 1995, *Ecological politics in an age of risk,* Polity Press, Cambridge.

Beckerman, W. 1999, "Sustainable Development and our obligations to future generations" in *Fairness and futurity: Essays on environmental sustainability and social justice*, ed. A. Dobson, Oxford University Press, Oxford, pp. 71-92.

Beckley, T.M. & Burkovsky, T.M. 1999, *Social indicator approaches to assessing and monitoring forest community sustainability*, Natural Resources Canada: Canadian Forest Service Northern Forestry Centre.

Bell, S. and Hindmoor, A. 2009, *Rethinking governance: The centrality of the state in modern society*, Cambridge University Press.

Bell, S. & Morse, S. 2008, *Sustainability Indicators: Measuring the immeasurable?* 2nd edn, Earthscan, London.

Benoit, C. & Mazijn, B. 2009, *Guidelines for Social Life Cycle Assessment*, Lifecycle Initiative, UNEP-SETAC.

Benoit, C. & Vickery-Niederman, G. 2010, *Social sustainability assessment literature review*, The Sustainability Consortium, Arizona State University and University of Arkansas.

Benton, T. 1999, "Sustainable Development and accumulation of capital: Reconciling the irreconcilable?" in *Fairness and futurity: Essays on environmental sustainability and social justice*, ed. A. Dobson, Oxford University Press, Oxford, pp. 199-229.

Bevir, M. 2009, *Key concepts in governance,* Sage, London.

Bevir, M. 2012, *Governance: A very short introduction,* Oxford University Press, Oxford.

BIS 2009 *Groceries Supply Code of Practice Guidance*, available online at https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/groceries-supply-code-of-practice/groceries-supply-code-of-practice (accessed 4.12.13; 8.8.15).

BIS 2013, *SMEs: The key enables of business success and the economic rationale for government intervention*. BIS Analysis Paper 2, Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, London.

Bitsch, V. 2010, "Labor aspects of sustainability", paper presented at the 20th Annual World Forum and Symposium of the International Food and Agribusiness Management Association in Boston, Mass, June 19-22, 2010.

Blackmore, E. 2011, *Shaping sustainable markets: Research prospectus*, IIED, London.

Blackmore, J. & Lauder, H. 2011, "Researching policy" in *Theory and methods in social research*, eds. B. Somekh & C. Lewin, 2nd edn, Sage, London, pp. 190-197.

Blaikie, N. 2009, *Designing social research,* 2nd edn, Polity Press, Cambridge.

Blay-Palmer, A. 2010, "Imagining sustainable food systems" in *Imagining sustainable food systems*, ed. A. Blay-Palmer, Ashgate, Farnham, Surrey, pp. 3-15.

Blowfield, M. & Dolan, C. 2010, “Outsourcing governance: Fairtrade's message for C21 global governance”, *Corporate Governance,* vol. 10, issue 4 pp. 484-498.

Blowfield, M. & Murray, A. 2011, *Corporate responsibility,* 2nd edn, Oxford University Press, Oxford.

Bonanno, A., Busch, L., Friedland, W., Gouveia, L. & Mingione, E. 1994, *From Columbus to ConAgra : The globalisation of agriculture and food,* University Press of Kansas, Lawrence, Kansas.

Bourdieu, P. 1986 “The forms of capital” in J. Richardson (Ed.) *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education.* New York, Greenwood, pp 241-258.

Borras, S.M., Hall, R., Scoones, I., White, B. & Wolford, W. 2011, "Towards a better understanding of global land-grabbing: An editorial introduction", *Journal of Peasant Studies,* vol. 38, no. 2, pp. 209-216.

Bostrom, M. 2012, "A missing pillar? Challenges in theorising and practicing social sustainability: introduction to the special issue", *Sustainability: Science, practice and policy,* vol. 8, no. 1, pp. 3-14.

Bostrom, M. & Klintman, M. 2014, "Dilemmas for standardisers of sustainable consumption" in *Routledge international handbook of social and environmental change*, eds. S. Lockie, D.A. Sonnenfeld & D.R. Fisher, Routledge, Abingdon, pp. 81-91.

References

Brown, D., Dillard, J. & Marshall, S. 2009, "Triple bottom line: A business metaphor for a social construct" in *Understanding the social dimension of sustainability*, eds. J. Dillard, V. Dujon & M.C. King, Routledge, London, pp. 211-229.

Bryman, A. 2001, *Social research methods,* 3rd edn*,* Oxford University Press, Oxford.

BSI 2016, *What is a standard? And what is it for?* Available at https://www.bsigroup.com/en-GB/standards/Information-about-standards/what-is-a-standard/ (accessed 9.12.16)

Buck, D., Getz, C. & Guthman, J. 1997, "From farm to table: The organic vegetable commodity chain of northern California", *Sociologia Ruralis,* vol. 37, no. 1, pp. 3-20.

Buller, H. 2010, "Commentary: Palatable ethics", *Environment and Planning A*, vol. 42, pp 1875-1880.

Burch, D. & Lawrence, G. 2013, "Financialisation in agri-food supply chains: Private equity and the transformation of the retail sector", *Agriculture and Human Values,* vol. 30, pp. 247-258.

Burch, D., Dixon, J. & Lawrence, G. 2013, "Introduction to symposium on the changing role of supermarkets in global supply chains: from seedling to supermarket: agrifood supply chains in transition", *Agriculture and Human Values* vol. 30, pp 215-224.

Busch, L. 2011a, "The private governance of food: equitable exchange or bizarre bazaar", *Agriculture and Human Values,* vol. 28, pp. 345-352.

Busch., L. 2011b, *Standards: recipes for reality,* MIT Press, Cambridge, Mass.

Buttel, F.H. 1993, "The production of agricultural sustainability: Observations from the sociology of science and technology" in *Food for the future: conditions and contradictions of sustainability*, ed. P. Allen, John Wiley, New York, pp. 19-45.

Buttel, F.H. 2006, "Sustaining the unsustainable: agro-food systems and the environment in the modern world" in *The handbook of rural studies*, eds. P. Cloke, T. Marsden & P. Mooney, Sage, Thousand Oaks, pp. 213-229.

Cabinet Office Strategy Unit 2008a, *Food: An analysis of the issues*, Cabinet Office, London.

Cabinet Office Strategy Unit 2008b, *Food Matters: Towards a strategy for the 21st century*, Cabinet Office, London.

CAG Consultants, 2006, *In-Depth review of Sustainable Communities Policy: Report to the UK Sustainable Development Commission*, Sustainable Development Commission, London.

Cairney, P. 2012, *Understanding public policy: Theories and issues,* Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke.

Carson, R., 1962, *Silent Spring,* Fawcett Crest, New York.

Cashore, B. 2002, "Legitimacy and the privatisation of environmental governance: How non-state market-driven (NSMD) governance systems gain rulemaking authority", *Governance,* vol. 15, no. 4, pp. 503-529.

Casula Vifell, A. & Soneryd, L. 2012, "Organising Matters: How 'the social dimension' gets lost in sustainability projects", *Sustainable Development,* vol. 20, issue 1, pp. 18-27.

CC 2009, *The groceries (supply chain practices) market investigation order*, Competition Commission, London.

Chambers, R. 1986, *Sustainable livelihoods: An opportunity for the World Commission on Environment and Development*, Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex, Brighton.

Clapp, J. & Fuchs, D. 2009, "Agrifood corporations, global governance and sustainability: A framework for analysis" in *Corporate power in global agrifood governance*, eds. J. Clapp & D. Fuchs, MIT Press, Cambridge, Mass., and London, England, pp. 1-25.

Clapp, J. 2013, *Financialisation, Distance and global food politics.* Conference paper 5 at Food sovereignty: A critical dialogue, an international conference at Yale University, 14-15 September 2013.

Cohen, M., March, J. & Olsen, J. 1972, "A garbage can model of organisational choice", *Administrative Science Quarterly,* vol. 17, no. 1, pp. 1-25.

Colantonio, A. & Dixon, T. 2009, *Measuring socially sustainable urban regeneration in Europe*, European Investment Bank / Oxford Brookes University.

Colantonio, A. 2007, *Social sustainability: An exploratory analysis of its definition, assessment, methods, metrics and tools*, European Investment bank / Oxford Brookes University.

Colebatch, H. K. 2002, *Policy*, 2nd edn, Open University Press, Maidenhead.

Companies House n.d., available at https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/companies-house (accessed 1.5.15).

Constance, D.H. 2009, "The four questions in agrifood studies: a view from the bus: the 2008 AFHVS presidential address", *Agriculture and Human Values,* vol. 26, pp. 3-14.

Corbin, J. & Holt, N. 2011, "Grounded theory" in *Theory and Methods in Social Research*, eds. B. Somekh & C. Lewin, 2nd edn, Sage, London, pp. 113-120.

Crouch, C. 2004, *Post-Democracy,* Polity Press, Cambridge.

Crutzen, P. J. 2002, "The Geology of Mankind", *Nature* vol. 415 Issue 6867, p23.

CSDH 2008, *Closing the gap in a generation: health equity through action on the social determinants of health.* Final Report of the Commission on Social Determinants of Health, United Nations, Geneva.

Dahlberg, K. 1993, "Regenerative food systems: Broadening the scope and agenda of sustainability" in *Food for the future – conditions and contradictions of sustainability*, ed. P. Allen, John Wiley, New York, pp 75-102.

Daly, H. 1992, *Steady-state economics,* 2nd edn*,* Earthscan, London.

Danielsen, D. 2005, "How corporations govern: Taking corporate power seriously in transnational regulation and governance", *Harvard International Law Journal*, vol 46, issue 2, pp 411-425.

Dawson, T., Rounsevell, M., Kluvankova-Oravska, T., Chobotova, V. & Stirling, A. 2010, "Dynamic properties of complex adaptive ecosystems: Implications for the sustainability of service provision", *Biodiversity and conservation,* vol. 19, no. 10, pp. 2843-2853.

DCLG 2012, *National Planning Policy Framework*, Department for Communities and Local Government, London.

DE 1996, *Indicators of Sustainable Development for the United Kingdom*, London, HMSO.

References

De Schutter, O. 2010, *Food commodities, speculation and food price rises: regulation to reduce the risks of price volatility*, Briefing Note 2, United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food.

De Schutter, O. 2013 "Hunger is a taxing problem for the G8", Guardian blog at http://www.theguardian.com/global-development/poverty-matters/2013/jun/12/hunger-taxing-problem-g8, posted 12.6.13, viewed 23.11.15.

Defra 2002, *The strategy for sustainable farming and food: Facing the future*, Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, London.

Defra 2003a, *Achieving a better quality of life: Review of progress towards Sustainable Development.* Government annual report*,* Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, London.

Defra 2003b, *Changing patterns: UK government framework for sustainable consumption and production*, Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, London.

Defra 2004, *Sustainable Development indicators in your pocket,* Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, London.

Defra 2006a, *Sustainable farming and food strategy: Forward Look*, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, London.

Defra 2006b, *Food industry sustainability strategy*, Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, London.

Defra 2006c, *Food Industry Sustainability Strategy: Final regulatory impact assessment*, Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, London.

Defra 2006d, *Food Security and the UK: An evidence and analysis paper*, Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, London.

DEFRA 2008, *Ensuring the UK's food security in a changing world: A Defra discussion paper*, Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, London.

Defra 2009, *UK food security detailed assessment*, Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, London.

Defra 2010a, *Written ministerial statement on Defra's arm's length bodies,* published online at https://www.gov.uk/government/news/written-ministerial-statement-on-defra-s-arm-s-length-bodies on 22.07.2010, accessed 07.06.2011.

Defra 2010b, *Indicators for a sustainable food system*. Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, London.

DEFRA 2011a, *Embedding sustainability at the heart of government: Press release announcing 'Mainstreaming Sustainable Development', published 20 2.11*, Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, London.

Defra 2011b, *Mainstreaming Sustainable Development: the Government's vision and what this means in practice*, Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, London.

Defra 2011c, *The Natural Choice: Securing the value of nature* (White Paper), Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, London.

Defra 2012a, *Business Plan 2012-2015*, Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, London.

Defra 2012b, *Abolition of the Agricultural Wages Board. IA No Defra 1462*, Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, London.

Defra 2013a, *Sustainable consumption report: Follow up to the Green Food Project*, Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, London.

Defra 2013b, *Sustainable Development Indicators*, Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, London.

Defra 2015a, *Food statistics pocketbook 2014*, Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, London.

Defra 2015b, *Organic farming statistics 2014*, Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, London.

Defra 2015c, *Agriculture in the UK 2014*, Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, London.

Defra 2015d *Government Buying Standard for Food and Catering Services*, updated 2015, published online at https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/418072/gbs-food-catering-march2015.pdf, (accessed 8.8.15).

Defra 2016, *Single Departmental Plan 2015-2020*, available at https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/defra-single-departmental-plan-2015-to-2020/single-departmental-plan-2015-to-2020#a-world-leading-food-and-farming-industry (accessed 18.5.16).

Dempsey, N. 2013, "Book Review: Social sustainability in urban areas: Communities, connectivity and the urban fabric, by Manzi, T, Lucas, K., Lloyd Jones, T. and Allen, J. (eds), Earthscan, 2010", *Urban Studies,* vol. 50, pp. 1089-1092.

DETR 2000a, *Local quality of life counts: A handbook for a menu of local indicators for Sustainable Development*, Department for the Environment, Transport and the Regions, London.

DETR 2000b, *Building a better quality of life: A strategy for more sustainable construction*, Department for the Environment, Transport and the Regions, London.

DETR 2001, *Achieving a better quality of life: A review of progress towards Sustainable Development*, Department for the Environment, Transport and the Regions, London.

DH 2011, The Public Health Responsibility Deal, available online at https://responsibilitydeal.dh.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2012/03/The-Public-Health-Responsibility-Deal-March-20111.pdf (accessed 17. 03.13).

Diabetes UK 2015, *State of the Nation: Challenges for 2015 and beyond*. Diabetes UK, London.

Diamond, J. 2006, *Collapse: How societies choose to fail or survive,* Penguin, London.

Dillard, J., Dujon, V. & King, M.C. 2009, "Introduction" in *Understanding the social dimension of sustainability*, eds. J. Dillard, V. Dujon & M.C. King, Routledge, New York and London, pp. 1-12.

Djama, M., Fouilleux, E. & Vagneron, I. 2011, "Standard-setting, certifying and benchmarking: A governmentality approach to sustainability standards in the agro-food sector" in *Governing through standards: Origins, drivers and limitations*, eds. S. Ponte, P. Gibbon & J. Vestergaard, Palgrave-Macmillan, Basingstoke, pp. 184-209.

References

Dobson, A. 1995, *Green Political Thought,* 2nd edn, Routledge, London.

Dobson, A. 1999, "Introduction" in *Fairness and Futurity: Essays on environmental sustainability and social justice*, ed. A. Dobson, Oxford University Press, Oxford, pp. 1-18.

Dobson, A. 2014, "The politics of post-growth" in *The post-growth project: How the end of economic growth could bring a fairer and happier society*, eds. J. Blewitt & R. Cunningham, Green House Publishing, , pp. 153-170.

Dolan, C.S. 2010, "Virtual moralities: the mainstreaming of Fairtrade in Kenyan tea fields", *Geoforum,* vol. 41, no. 1, pp. 33-43.

Dolan, P., Peasgood, T. & White, M. 2006, *Review of research on the influences on personal wellbeing and applications to policy: Final report for Defra*, Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, London.

Dolan, P., Peasgood, T., Dixon, A., Knight, M., Phillips, D., Tsuchiya, A. & White, M. 2006, *Research on the relationship between wellbeing and Sustainable Development: Final report for Defra*, Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, London.

Dresner, S. 2008, *The principles of sustainability,* London, Earthscan.

Drummond , I. & Marsden, T. 1999, *The condition of sustainability,* Routledge, London.

DuPuis, E.M. & Goodman, D. 2005, "Should we go 'home' to eat?: Towards a reflexive politics of localism", *Journal of Rural Studies,* vol. 21, pp. 359-371.

EAC n.d. website of Environmental Audit Committee, http://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/environmental-audit-committee/role/ (accessed 28.12.16).

EAC 2004, *The Sustainable Development strategy: Illusion or reality?*, The Stationery Office, London.

EAC 2011, *Embedding Sustainable Development across government, after the Secretary of State's announcement on the future of the Sustainable Development Commission*, The Stationery Office, London.

EAC 2012, *Sustainable food: 11th report of session 2010-12*, The Stationery Office, London.

EAC 2015, *New Inquiry: The Government's approach to Sustainable Development*, published online at http://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/environmental-audit-committee/news-parliament-2015/the-governments-approach-to-sustainable-development/ (accessed 3.8.15).

Eckersley, R. 2004, *The green state: Rethinking democracy and sovereignty,* The MIT Press, London.

Ecologist, The. 1972, *A blueprint for survival,* 2nd edn, Penguin, Harmondsworth.

Efra 2005, *The future for UK fishing*, Sixth report of session 2004-05, The Stationery Office, London.

Efra 2008, *The English pig industry*, First report of session 2008-09, The Stationery Office, London.

Efra 2010, *Dairy farmers of Britain*, Fifth report of session 2009-10, The Stationery Office, London.

Egan Review 2004, *Skills for Sustainable Communities*, Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, London.

EHRC 2010, *Inquiry into recruitment and employment in the meat and poultry processing sector: Report of the findings and recommendations*, Equalities and Human Rights Commission, London.

Elkington, J. 1997, *Cannibals with forks: the triple bottom line of 21st century business,* Capstone, Oxford.

Empson, W. 1961 [1930], *Seven types of ambiguity*, Penguin Books, Harmondsworth.

Escobar, A. 1994, *Encountering development: The making and unmaking of the Third World,* Princeton University Press, Princeton, N.J.

ETP and Oxfam 2013, *Understanding wage issues in the tea industry: Report from a multistakeholder project,* Ethical Tea Partnership and Oxfam, London

Fabian Commission on Food and Poverty 2015, *Hungry for Change: Final Report of the Fabian Commission on Food and Poverty*, the Fabian Society, London.

Fairclough, N. 1992, *Discourse and social change,* Polity, Cambridge.

Fairclough, N. 2001, *Language and power,* 2nd edn, Pearson Education, Harlow, Essex.

FAO 2002, *The State of Food Insecurity in the World 2001*, Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations, Rome.

Feenstra, G. 2002, "Creating space for sustainable food systems: lessons from the field", *Agriculture and Human Values,* vol. 19, pp. 99-106.

Ferris, J., Norman, C. & Sempik, J. 2001 "People, land and sustainability: Community gardens and the social dimension of Sustainable Development", *Social :Policy and Administration*, vol 35, issue 5, pp 559-568.

Fine, B. 1999, "The development state is dead: long live social capital", *Development and Change,* Vol. 30, pp 1-19.

Fischer, F. 2003, *Reframing public policy: Discursive politics and deliberative practices,* Oxford University Press, Oxford.

Fleming, P. & Jones, M.T. 2013, *The end of Corporate Social Responsibility: Crisis and critique,* Sage, London.

Foresight 2011, *The future of food and farming: Challenges and choices for global sustainability. Final Project Report*, Government Office for Science Foresight Programme, London.

Foucault, M. 1991, "Governmentality" in *The Foucault effect: Studies in governmentality*, eds. G. Burchell, C. Gordon & P. Miller, University of Chicago Press, pp. 87-104.

FRC 2016, *Developments in Audit 2015/16*, available online at https://www.frc.org.uk/Our-Work/Publications/FRC-Board/Developments-in-Audit-2015-16-Full-report.pdf (accessed 12.9.16).

Friedman, M. 1970, "The social responsibility of business is to increase its profits", *The New York Times Magazine*, 13.9.70.

Friedmann, H. & McMichael, P. 1989, "Agriculture and the state system: The rise and decline of national agricultures, 1870-the present", *Sociologia Ruralis,* vol. XXIX, no. 2, pp. 93-117.

Friedmann, H. 1993, "After Midas's feast: Alternative food regime for the future" in *Food for the future – conditions and contradictions of sustainability*, ed. P. Allen, John Wiley, New York, pp. 213-233.

Friedmann, H. 2005, "From colonialism to green capitalism: social movements and the emergence of food regimes" in *New directions in the sociology of development*, eds. F.H. Buttel & P. McMichael, Elsevier, pp. 227-264.

FSA 2005, *Putting the consumer first: Departmental report,* Food Standards Agency, London.

FSA 2008, *Sustainable development in policy making: Draft statement of approach*. Available online at http://www.food.gov.uk/multimedia/pdfs/board/fsa080904a.pdf (accessed 18.03.13).

Fuchs, D. & Clapp, J. 2009, "Corporate power and global agrifood governance: Lessons learned" in *Corporate power in global agrifood governance*, eds. J. Clapp & D. Fuchs, MIT Press, Cambridge, Mass., and London, England, pp. 285-296.

Fuchs, D. & Kalfagianni, A. 2009, "Discursive power as a source of legitimation in food retail governance", *The International Review of Retail, Distribution and Consumer Research,* vol. 19, no. 5, pp. 553-570.

Fuchs, D. 2007, *Business power in global governance,* Lynne Rienner, London.

Fuchs, D., Kalfagianni, A. & Arentsen, M. 2009, "Retail power, standards and sustainability in the global food system" in *Corporate power in global agrifood governance*, eds. J. Clapp & D. Fuchs, MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England, pp 29-59.

Fuchs, D., Kalfagianni, A. & Havinga, T. 2011a, "Actors in private food governance: the legitimacy of retail standards and multistakeholder initiatives with civil society participation", *Agriculture and Human Values,* vol. 28, pp. 353-367.

Fuchs, D., Kalfagianni, A., Clapp, J. & Busch, L. 2011b, "Introduction to symposium on private agrifood governance: values, shortcomings and strategies", *Agriculture and Human Values,* vol. 28, pp. 335-344.

Gainsbury, S., Ford, J. & Houlder, V. 2013, *Pre-takeover Cadbury's 'aggressive' tax avoidance' exposed*, Financial Times, 20.6.13.

Garnett, T. 2008, *Cooking up a storm: Food, greenhouse gas emissions and our changing climate*, Food Climate Research Network, University of Surrey, Guildford, Surrey.

Garnett, T. 2012, *Climate change and agriculture: Can market governance mechanisms reduce emissions from the food system fairly and effectively?*, IIED, London.

Garnett, T. 2014, "Three perspectives on sustainable food security: Efficiency, demand restraint, food system transformation. What role for life cycle assessment?", *Journal of Cleaner Production,* vol. 73, pp. 10-18.

GCA 2016, *Groceries Code Adjudicator Annual Report and Accounts 2*015-2016, published online at https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/532700/Web-GCA-Annual_Report_2016_Web.pdf (accessed 15.12.16).

Gibson, R.B. 2006, "Beyond the pillars: sustainability assessment as a framework for effective integration of social, economic and ecological considerations in significant decision-making", *Journal of Environmental Assessment Policy and Management,* vol. 8, no. 3, pp. 259-280.

Gibson-Graham, J. K. 2006, *The end of capitalism (as we knew it): A feminist critique of political economy,* 2nd edn, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis.

Giddens, A. 1990, *The consequences of modernity,* Polity Press, Cambridge.

Giddings, B., Hopwood, B. & O'Brien, G. 2002, "Environment, economy and society: Fitting them together into Sustainable Development", *Sustainable Development,* vol. 10, pp. 187-196.

GLA 2016. *Who we are*, available at http://www.gla.gov.uk/who-we-are/ (accessed 15.12.16).

Goodman, D. & Redclift, M. 1991, *Refashioning nature: Food, ecology and culture,* Routledge, London.

Goodman, D., DuPuis, E.M. & Goodman, M.K. 2012, *Alternative food networks: Knowledge, practice and politics,* Routledge, London and New York.

Goodman, M.K., Maye, D. & Holloway, L. 2010, "Ethical foodscapes?; premises, promises and possibilities", *Environment and Planning A,* vol. 42, pp. 1782-1796.

Gordon, C. 1991, "Governmental rationality: An introduction" in *The Foucault effect: Studies in governmentality*, eds. G. Burchell, C. Gordon, & P. Miller, University of Chicago Press, pp 1-53.

Granovetter, M. 1985, "Economic action and social structure: The problem of embeddedness", *American Journal of Sociology,* vol. 91, no. 3, pp. 481-510.

Green Food Project Steering Group 2012, *Green Food Project Conclusions*, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, London.

Grober, U. 2012, *Sustainability: A cultural history,* Green Books, Totnes, Devon.

GSS 1999, *Quality of life counts: Indicators for a strategy for Sustainable Development for the United Kingdom, baseline assessment,* Government Statistical Service, London.

Gussow, J.D. & Clancy, K. 1986, "Dietary guidelines for sustainability", *Journal of Nutrition Education,* vol. 18, pp. 1-5.

Gussow, J.D. 2006, "Reflections on nutritional health and the environment: The journey to sustainability", *Journal of Hunger and Environmental Nutrition,* vol. 1, no. 1, pp. 3-25.

Guthman, J. 2007, "The Polanyian way? Voluntary food labels as neoliberal governance", *Antipode,* vol. 39, pp. 456-478.

Hammersley, M. & Atkinson, P. 2007, *Ethnography: principles in practice,* 3rd edn, Routledge, London.

Harper, G. & Price, R. 2011, *A framework for understanding the social impacts of policy and their effects on wellbeing.* Defra Evidence and Analysis Series Paper 3. Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, London.

Harris, J. 2012, 'Unilever row over pensions, profits and executive pay at Port Sunlight', *The Guardian*, 18.1.12.

Harris, J.M. & Goodwin, N.R. 2001, "Volume Introduction" in *A survey of Sustainable Development: social and economic dimensions*, eds. J. Harris, T. Wise, K.P. Gallagher & N.R. Goodwin, Island Press, Washington / Covelo / London, pp. *xxvii-xxxvii*.

Harris, J.M. 2000, *Basic principles of Sustainable Development*, Global Development and Environment Institute, Tufts University, Melford, Mass.

Harvey, G. 1998, *The Killing of the Countryside,* Vintage, London.

Hatanaka, M., Bain, C. & Busch, L. 2005, "Third-party certification in the global agrifood system", *Food Policy,* vol. 30, no. 3, pp. 354-369.

Hawken, P. 2010, *The ecology of commerce: A declaration of sustainability,* 2nd edn, Harper Business, New York.

Henriques, A. & Richardson, J. (eds) 2004, *The triple bottom line: Does it all add up?*, Earthscan, London.

Henson, S. & Reardon, T. 2005, "Private agri-food standards: Implications for food policy and the agrifood system", *Food Policy,* vol. 30, no. 3, pp. 241-253.

Higgins, V. & Larner, W. 2010, "Standards and standardisation as a social scientific problem" in *Calculating the social: Standards and the reconfiguration of governing*, eds. V. Higgins & W. Larner, Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke, pp 1-18.

Hilderink, H.B.M. 2004, *Towards human and social sustainability indicators: A multidimensional approach*, National Institute for Public Health and the Environment, the Netherlands, published online at http://rivm.openrepository.com/rivm/handle/10029/8981 (accessed 25.11.15).

Hill, M. 1997, *The policy process in the modern state,* 3rd edn, Prentice Hall / Harvester Wheatsheaf, Hemel Hempstead.

Hinrichs, C. 2010, "Conceptualising and creating sustainable food systems: How interdisciplinarity can help" in *Imagining sustainable food systems: Theory and practice*, ed. A. Blay-Palmer, Ashgate, Farnham, Surrey, pp. 17-35.

HM Government 1994, *Sustainable Development: The UK strategy*, HMSO, London.

HM Government 1999, *A better quality of life: Strategy for Sustainable Development for the United Kingdom*, The Stationery Office, London.

HM Government 2002, *Sustainable Development in government: First annual report*, The Stationery Office, London.

HM Government 2005, *Securing the future: delivering UK Sustainable Development strategy*, The Stationery Office, London.

HM Government 2010, *Food 2030*, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, London.

HM Government, Scottish Executive, Welsh Assembly Government & Northern Ireland Office 2005, *One future – different paths: The UK's shared framework for Sustainable Development*, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, London.

HM Treasury & DEFRA 2005, *A Vision for the CAP*, HM Treasury and Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, London.

Honderich, T. (ed) 1995 *The Oxford Companion to Philosophy*, Oxford University Press, Oxford

Horlings, L.G. & Marsden, T.K. 2010, *Towards the real green revolution? Exploring the conceptual dimensions of a new ecological modernisation of agriculture that could 'feed the world'.* BRASS Working Paper, University of Cardiff.

IAASTD 2009, *Agriculture at a crossroads. International Assessment of Agricultural Knowledge, Science and Technology for Development: Executive summary of the synthesis report*, Island Press, New York.

ICIDI 1980, *North-South: A programme for survival. The report of the Independent Commission on International Development Issues, under the chairmanship of Willy Brandt*, Pan, London.

IFRS 2015, *'Exposure Draft' of Conceptual Framework for financial reporting standards*, available at http://www.ifrs.org/Current-Projects/IASB-Projects/Conceptual-Framework/Documents/May%202015/ED_CF_MAY%202015.pdf

Ihlen, O. and Roper, J. 2014, "Corporate reports on sustainability and Sustainable Development: 'We have arrived'", *Sustainable Development* 22, pp. 42-51.

Ilbery, B. & Maye, D. 2005, "Food supply chains and sustainability: Evidence from specialist food producers in the Scottish / English borders", *Land Use Policy,* vol. 22, pp. 331-344.

ILO 1976, *Employment, growth and basic needs: a one-world problem*, ILO, Geneva.

ILO 2002, *The International Labour Organisation's Fundamental Conventions*. Published online at http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/@ed_norm/@declaration/documents/publication/wcms_095895.pdf (accessed 27.7.15).

ISSC 2013, *World Social Science Report 2013: Changing global environments*, OECD Publishing and UNESCO Publishing.

IUCN, UNEP and WWF 1980, *World conservation strategy: Living resource conservation for Sustainable Development*, IUCN; UNEP; WWF, Gland, Switzerland.

IUCN,UNEP and WWF 1991, *Caring for the Earth: A strategy for sustainable living*, IUCN/UNEP/WWF, Gland, Switzerland.

Jackson, T. 2009, *Prosperity without growth: economics for a finite planet,* Earthscan, London.

Jacobs, M. 1991, *The green economy: Environment, Sustainable Development and the politics of the future,* Pluto Press, London.

Jacobs, M. 1996, *The politics of the real world: Meeting the new century,* Earthscan, London.

Jacobs, M. 1999, "Sustainable Development as a contested concept" in *Fairness and futurity: Essays on environmental sustainability and social justice*, ed. A. Dobson, Oxford University Press, Oxford, pp. 21-45.

James Jr, H.S. 2006, "Sustainable agriculture and free market economics: finding common ground in Adam Smith", *Agriculture and Human Values,* vol. 23, pp. 427-438.

John, P. 1998, *Analysing public policy,* Continuum, London.

Jones, B. & Nisbet, P. 2011, "Shareholder value versus stakeholder values: CSR and financialisation in global food firms", *Socio-economic Review,* vol. 9, pp. 287-314.

Jordan, A. & Lenschow, A. 2008, "Integrating the environment for Sustainable Development: an introduction" in *Innovation in environmental policy: integrating the environment for sustainability*, eds. A. Jordan & A. Lenschow, Edward Elgar, Cheltenham, pp. 3-23.

Juniper, T. 2013, *What has nature ever done for us?: How money really does grow on trees,* Profile Books, London.

Kates, R., Parris, T. & Leiserowitz, A. A. 2005, "What is Sustainable Development? Goals, indicators, values and practice", *Environment: Science and policy for Sustainable Development,* vol. 47, no. 3, pp. 8-21.

Kendrick, J. 2009, "Commons Thinking" in *Handbook of sustainability literacy*, ed. A. Stibbe, Green Books, Dartington, pp. 51-57.

King, M.C. 2009, "An antidote to a partial economics of sustainability" in *Understanding the social dimension of sustainability* Routledge, eds. J. Dillard, V. Dujon & M.C. King, Routledge, New York and London, pp. 83-94.

Kingdon, J. 1995, *Agendas, alternatives and public policies,* 2nd edn Harper Collins, New York.

Klooster, D. 2011, "The local instrumentality of global standards: How Mexican indigenous communities use FSC certification to foster a furniture network", in *Governing through standards: Origins, drivers and limitations,* eds Ponte, S., Gibbon, P. & Vestergaard, J., Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke,pp 266-288.

Kloppenburg, J., Hendrickson, J. & Stevenson, G.W. 1996, "Coming in to the foodshed", *Agriculture and Human Values,* vol. 13, no. 3, pp. 33-42.

Kloppenburg, J., Lezburg, S., de Master, K., Stevenson, G.W. & Hendrickson, J. 2000, "Tasting food, tasting sustainability: Defining the attributes of an alternative food system with competent, ordinary people", *Human Organisation,* vol. 59, no. 2, pp. 177-186.

Kneafsey, M., Holloway, L., Dowler, E., Venn, L. & Toumainen, H. 2008, *Reconnecting consumers, producers and food: exploring alternatives,* Berg, Oxford.

Kneen, B. 2002, *Invisible Giant: Cargill and its transnational strategies,* 2nd edn, Pluto Press, London.

Knott, D., Muers, S. & Aldridge, S. 2008, *Achieving culture change: a policy framework.* Discussion paper by the Cabinet Office Strategy Unit, Cabinet Office, London.

Lang, T. 1997, *Food policy for the 21st century: can it be both radical and reasonable?* Paul Hamlyn Lecture Series 1996/97, Delivered at Thames Valley University, London, on 22 April 1997.

Lang, T. 2005, "What is food and farming for? The (re)emergence of health as a key policy driver" in *New directions in the sociology of development*, eds. F.H. Buttel & P. McMichael, pp. 123-144.

Lang, T. 2008, "Sustainable Development" in *Organising words: a creative thesaurus for social and organisation studies*, ed. Y. Gabriel, Oxford University Press, Oxford, pp. 292-294.

Lang, T. 2009, *Thoughts on the long dynamic of food democracy, food control & food policy in the 21st century.* Paper to conference 'Visible Warnings: the World Food Crisis in Perspective'. April 3-4, Cornell University, Ithaca NY, USA.

Lang, T. 2010a, "Conclusion: Big choices in the food system" in *Food security, nutrition and sustainability*, eds. G. Lawrence, K. Lyons & T. Wallington, Earthscan, London, pp. 271-287.

Lang, T. 2010b, "Crisis? What crisis? The normality of the current food crisis", *Journal of Agrarian Change,* vol. 10, no. 1, pp. 87-97.

Lang, T. 2010c, "From 'value-for-money' to 'values-for-money'? Ethical food and policy in Europe", *Environment and Planning A,* vol. 42, pp. 1814-1832.

Lang, T. Barling, D. & Caraher, M. 2009, *Food Policy: Integrating health, environment and society,* Oxford University Press, Oxford.

Larsen, G. 2009, "An inquiry into the theoretical basis of sustainability" in *Understanding the social dimension of sustainability*, eds. J. Dillard, V. Dujon & M.C. King, Routledge, New York, London, pp. 45-81.

Lawrence, G., Lyons, K. & Wallington, T. 2010, "introduction: Food security, nutrition and sustainability in a globalised world" in *Food security, nutrition and sustainability*, (eds) Lawrence, G., Lyons, K. & Wallington, T., Earthscan, London, pp 1-23..

Leach, M., Scoones, I. & Stirling, A. 2010, *Dynamic sustainabilities: Technology, Environment, Social Justice,* Earthscan, London.

Lehtonen, M. 2004, "The environmental-social interface of Sustainable Development: Capabilities, social capital, institutions", *Ecological Economics,* vol. 49, no. 2, pp. 199-214.

Lindblom, C. 1968, *The policy-making process,* Prentice-Hall, New Jersey.

Littig, B. & Griessler, E. 2005, "Social sustainability: A catchword between political pragmatism and social theory", *International Journal of Sustainable Development,* vol. 8, no. 1/2, pp. 65-79.

Lockie, S. 2010, "Neoliberal regimes of governance: Climate change, biodiversity and agriculture in Australia" in *The International handbook of environmental sociology*, eds. M. Redclift & G. Woodgate, Edward Elgar, Cheltenham, pp. 364-377.

Lockie, S. 2014, "Neoliberalism by design: changing modalities of market-based environmental governance" in *Routledge international handbook of social and environmental change*, eds. S. Lockie, D.A. Sonnenfeld & D.R. Fisher, Routledge, Abingdon, pp. 70-80.

Lockie, S., Sonnenfeld, D.A. & Fisher, D.R. 2014, "Socio-ecological transformations and the social sciences" in *Routledge international handbook of social and environmental change*, eds. S. Lockie, D.A. Sonnenfeld & D.R. Fisher, Routledge, Abingdon, pp. 1-12.

Loconto, A. & Busch., L. 2010, "Standards, techno-economic networks and playing fields: Performing the global market economy", *Review of International Political Economy,* vol. 17, no. 3, pp. 507-536.

Loconto, A. & Fouilleux. E. 2011, "Governing agrifood sustainability through private standards: The case of the ISEAL Alliance", Working draft presented at the European Society for Rural Sociology XXIV European Congress for Rural Sociology, Chania, Crete, 22-25 August 2011.

Lymbery, P. & Oakeshott, I. 2014, *Farmageddon: The true cost of cheap meat,* Bloomsbury, London.

MAC 2013, *Migrant seasonal workers: The impact on the horticulture and food processing sectors of closing the Seasonal Agricultural Workers Scheme and the Sectors Based Scheme*, Migration Advisory Committee, London.

Macdiarmid, J., Kyle, J., Horgan, G., Loe, J., Fyfe, C., Johnstone, A. & McNeill, G. 2011, *Livewell: a balance of healthy and sustainable food choices*, WWF.

MacGregor, G. A.& Hashem, K. M. "Action on sugar: lessons from UK salt reduction programme", *The Lancet* vol 383, No 9921, pp. 929-931.

MAFF 2000, *Towards sustainable agriculture: A pilot set of indicators*, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, London.

Magis, K. & Shinn, C. 2009, "Emergent principles of social sustainability" in *Understanding the social dimension of sustainability*, eds. J. Dillard, V. Dujon & M.C. King, Routledge, New York and London, pp. 16-44.

Malthus, T. 2004 [1798], *An essay on the principle of population,* Oxford University Press, Oxford.

Marsden, T. K. & Morley, A. 2014, "Current food questions and their scholarly challenges" in *Sustainable food systems: Building a new paradigm*, eds Marsden, T. K. & Morley, A. Earthscan, London, pp 1-29. .

Mason, J. 1996, *Qualitative researching,* Sage, London.

McAllister, F. 2005, *Wellbeing: Concepts and Challenges.* A discussion paper for the SDRN, SDRN, London.

McKenzie, S. 2004, *Social Sustainability: towards some definitions*, background paper, University of South Australia, Magill, South Australia.

McMahon, M. 2011, "Standard fare or fairer standards: Feminist reflections on agri-food governance", *Agriculture and Human Values,* vol. 28, pp. 401-412.

McMichael, P. 2000, *Development and social change: A global perspective,* 2nd edn, Pine Forge Press, Thousand Oaks, California.

Meadows, D., Meadows, D., Randers, J. & Behrens III, W.W. 1974, *The Limits to Growth,* 2nd edn, Pan, London.

Mennell, S., Murcott, A. & van Otterloo, A.H. 1992, "The sociology of food: Eating, diet and culture", *Current Sociology: Trend report,* vol. 40, no. 2, pp. 1-150.

Miller, P. & Rose, N. 2008, *Governing the present: Administering economic, social and personal life,* Polity, Cambridge.

Milne, M.J. & Gray, R. 2013, "W(h)ither ecology? The Triple Bottom Line, the Global Reporting Initiative and corporate sustainability reporting", *Journal of Business Ethics,* vol. 118, pp. 13-29.

Mintz, S.W. 1986, *Sweetness and power: The place of sugar in modern history,* Penguin, Harmondsworth.

Mol, A.P.J. 2010, "Ecological Modernisation as a theory of environmental reform " in International *handbook of environmental sociology*, 2nd edn, eds. M. Redclift & G. Woodgate, pp. 63-76.

Mol, A.P.J., Spaargaren, G. & Sonnenfeld, D.A. 2014, "Ecological modernisation theory: taking stock, moving forward" in *Routledge international handbook of social and environmental change*, eds. S. Lockie, D.A. Sonnenfeld & D.R. Fisher, Routledge, Abingdon, pp. 15-30.

Monteiro, C. 2010, "The big issue is ultra-processing (Commentary)", *World Nutrition,* vol. 1, no. 6, pp. 237-269.

Morgan, K. 2010, "Local and green, global and fair: the ethical foodscape and the politics of care", *Environment and Planning A,* vol. 42, no. 8, pp. 1852-1867.

Morgan, K. 2015 "The moral economy of food", *Geoforum* 65, pp 294-296.

Morgan, K. and Sonnino, R. 2008 *The school food revolution: Public food and the challenge of Sustainable Development,* Earthscan, London.

Morgan, K., Marsden, T. & Murdoch, J. 2006, *Worlds of food: place, power, and provenance in the food chain,* Oxford University Press, Oxford; New York.

Mortberg, C., Stuedahl, D. & Alander, S. 2010, "Why do the orders go wrong all the time? Exploring sustainability in an e-commerce application in Swedish public kitchens", *Information, Communication and Society,* vol. 13, no. 1, pp. 68-87.

Muller, C., Vermeulen, W.J.V. & Glasbergen, P. 2009, "Perceptions on the demand side and realities on the supply side: A study of the South African Table Grape Export Industry", *Sustainable Development,* vol. 17, pp. 295-310.

Murdoch, J. 1997 "Governmentality and territoriality: The statistical manufacture of Britain's 'national farm' " *Political Geography*, vol 16, Issue 4, pp 307-324.

Murphy, K. 2012, "The social pillar of Sustainable Development: a literature review and framework for policy analysis", *Sustainability: Science, practice and policy,* vol. 8, no. 1, pp. 15-27.

Murphy, S., Burch, D. & Clapp, J. 2012, *Cereal Secrets: The world's largest grain traders and global agriculture*, Oxfam.

Naess, A. 1991, *Ecology, community and lifestyle,* Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

Nef 2006, *Happy Planet Index*, New Economics Foundation, London.

Nef 2009, *National accounts for wellbeing*, New Economics Foundation, London.

Nestle, M. 2002, Food Politics: How the food industry influences nutrition and health, University of California Press, London.

OECD n.d. *OECD Better Life Index*, available at http://www.oecdbetterlifeindex.org/#/11111111111 (accessed 28.3.16)

ODPM, 2003, *Sustainable Communities: Building for the Future,* Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, London.

ODPM, 2005, Sustainable Communities: People, places and prosperity, Office of the deputy Prime Minister, London.

Omann, I. & Spangenberg, J.H. 2002, Assessing social sustainability: The social dimension of sustainability in a socio-economic scenario. Paper presented to the 7th biennial conference of the International Society for Ecological Economics in Sousse, Tunisia, 6-9 March 2002.

Oosterveer, P. & Sonnenfeld, D.A. 2012, Food, globalisation and sustainability, Earthscan, London.

PA 2015, "Farmers herd cows through aisles of Asda in protest at milk prices", *The Guardian*, published online 9.8.15, available at http://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2015/aug/09/farmers-herd-cows-asda-protest-low-milk-prices (accessed 25.11.15).

Parris, T. M. 2002, Book Review: 'The Wellbeing of Nations: A country-by-country index of quality of life and the environment, by Robert Prescott-Allen', in *Environmental Change and Security Report*, Issue 8, Woodrow Wilson Center, Washington D.C., pp. 184-186.

Partridge, E. 2014, "Social Sustainability" in *Encyclopaedia of Quality of Life and Wellbeing Research*, ed. A. C. Michalos, Springer, pp. 6178-6186.

PCFFF 2002, *Farming and food: a sustainable future*, The Policy Commission on the Future of Farming and Food, London.

Pepperdine, S. 2000, *Social indicators of rural community sustainability: An example form the Woady Yaloak Catchment.* Paper presented to the Future of Australia Country Towns Conference, Bendigo, 2000.

Polanyi, K. 2001 (1944), *The great transformation: The political and economic origins of our time,* Beacon Press, Boston, Mass.

Polèse, M. & Stren, R. (eds) 2000, *The social sustainability of cities: Diversity and the management of change*, University of Toronto Press, Toronto.

Pollard, D. 2006 "The gangmaster system in the UK: Perspective of a trade unionist" in *Ethical sourcing in the global food system*, eds. Barrientos, S. and Dolan, C., Earthscan, London, pp 115-127.

Ponte, S. 2012, "The Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) and the making of a market for 'sustainable fish'", *Journal of Agrarian Change,* vol. 12, no. 3, pp. 300-315.

Ponte, S. Gibbon, P. & Vestergaard, J. 2011 "Governing through standards: An introduction", in *Governing through standards: Origins, drivers and limitations*, eds Ponte, S. Gibbon, P. & Vestergaard, J., Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke, pp 1-24.

Porritt, J. 2004, "Locating the government's bottom line", in *The triple bottom line: Does it all add up?*, eds Henriques, A. & Richardson, J., pp 59-69, Earthscan, London.

Porritt, J. 2010, "The greenest government ever? Don't make me laugh", *The Guardian*, 23.7.10, available at https://www.theguardian.com/environment/cif-green/2010/jul/23/sustainable-development-commission-porritt (accessed 15.9.13).

Portes, A. 1998, "Social Capital: Its origins and applications in modern sociology", *Annual Review of Sociology,* vol. 24, pp. 1-24.

POST 2012, *Seeking sustainability*, Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology, London.

Power, M. 1997, *The Audit Society: Rituals of verification,* Oxford University Press, Oxford.

Pretty, J. 2002, *Agri-culture: Reconnecting People, Land and Nature,* Earthscan, London.

Pretty, J. 2008, "Agricultural sustainability: concepts, principles and evidence", *Philosophical Transactions B: Biological Sciences,* vol. 363, no. 1491, pp. 447-465.

Pretty, J.N., Ball, A.S., Lang, T. & Morrison, J.I.L. 2005, "Farm costs and food miles: An assessment of the full cost of the UK weekly food basket", *Food Policy,* vol. 30, no. 1, pp. 1-19.

Prime Minister's Office, 2010, Speech at DECC by David Cameron, P.M., 14 May 2010. Published online at: https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/pms-speech-at-decc, accessed 11.10.12.

Prudham, S. 2009, "Sustainability" in *Dictionary of human geography*, eds. D. Gregory, R. Johnston, G. Pratt, M.J. Watts & S. Whatmore, 5th edn, Wiley-Blackwell, Chichester, pp. 737-739.

Psarikidou, K. & Szerszynski, B. 2012, "Growing the social: alternative agrifood networks and social sustainability in the urban ethical foodscape", *Sustainability: Science, practice and policy,* vol. 8, no. 1, pp. 30-39.

Putnam, R.D. 2000, *Bowling alone: The collapse and revival of American community,* Simon and Schuster, New York.

Rathzell, N. & Uzzell, D. 2012, *Trade Unions in the green economy: Working for the environment*, Routledge, London.

Raworth, K. 2012, *A safe and just space for humanity: can we live within the doughnut?* Oxfam Discussion Paper, Oxfam.

Rayner, G. & Lang, T. 2012, *Ecological public health: Reshaping the conditions for good health,* Earthscan, London.

Redclift, M. 1987, *Sustainable Development: Exploring the contradictions,* Routledge, London.

Redclift, M. 2000, "Introduction" in *Sustainability: Life chances and livelihoods*, (ed) M. Redclift, Routledge, London pp 1-13.

Redclift, M. 2005, "Sustainable Development (1987-2005): An oxymoron comes of age", *Sustainable Development,* vol. 13, no. 4, pp. 212-227.

Redclift, M. 2010, "The transition out of carbon dependence: The crises of environment and markets" in *The international handbook of environmental sociology*, 2nd edn, eds. M. Redclift & G. Woodgate, Edward Elgar, Cheltenham, pp. 121-135.

Rhodes, C. 2015, *Manufacturing statistics and policy*, Briefing Paper Number 01942, House of Commons Library.

Roach, L. 2013, Company Law Concentrate, 2nd edn, Oxford University Press, Oxford.

Rockström, J., Steffen, W., Noone, K., Persson, A., Chapin , F.S., Lambin, E., Lenton, T.M., Scheffer, M., Folke, C., Schellnhuber, H., Nykvist, B., de Wit, C.A., Hughes, T., van der Leeuw, S., Rodhe, H., Sörlin, S., Snyder, P.K., Costanza, R., Svedin, U., Falkenmark, M., Karlberg, L., Corell, R.W., Fabry, V.J., Hansen, J., Walker, B., Liverman, D., Richardson, K., Crutzen, P. & Foley, J. 2009, "Planetary Boundaries: Exploring the Safe Operating Space for Humanity", *Ecology and Society,* vol. 14 (2), no. 32, n.p.

Rogaly, B. 2008, "Intensification of workplace regimes in British horticulture: The role of migrant workers", *Population, place and space,* vol. 14, pp. 497-510.

Rossman, P. & Greenfield, G. 2006, *Financialisation: New routes to profit, new challenges for trade unions. First Quarterly Review (No 142)*, ILO Bureau for Workers' Activities.

Sachs, J., Schmidt-Traub, G., Kroll, C., Durand-Delacre, D. and Teksoz, K. 2016, *An SDG Index and Dashboards – Global Report*., available at http://www.sdgindex.org/assets/files/sdg_index_and_dashboards_compact.pdf, accessed 9.9.16.

SAFA 2013, *Sustainability Assessment of Food and Agriculture Systems: Indicators.* Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations, Rome.

Sayer, A. 2007, "Moral economy as critique", *New Political Economy,* vol. 12, no. 2, pp. 261-270.

Sayer, A. 2011, *Why things matter to people: Social science, values and ethical life,* Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

Sage, C 2012, *Environment and Food*, Routledge, London.

Sayer, A. 2015, "Time for moral economy?", *Geoforum* 65, pp 291-293.

Schreck, A., Getz, C. & Feenstra, G. 2006, "Social sustainability, farm labor, and organic agriculture: Findings from an exploratory analysis", *Agriculture and Human Values,* vol. 23, pp. 439-449.

Schuller, T., Baron, S. & Field, J. 2000, "Social capital: A review and critique" in *Social capital: Critical Perspectives*, eds. S. Baron, J. Field & T. Schuller, Oxford University Press, Oxford, pp. 1-38.

Schumacher, E.F. 1993, *Small is beautiful: A study of economics as if people mattered,* Vintage, London.

SDC n.d. UK Government Web Archive – The National Archives, http://collections.europarchive.org/tna/20080530153425/http://sd-commission.org.uk/pages/who_we_are.html accessed 28.9.12

SDC 2001, *A vision for sustainable agriculture: Submission to the Policy Commission on the Future of Farming and Food*, Sustainable Development Commission, London.

SDC 2008, *Green, healthy and fair: A review of the government's role in supporting sustainable supermarket food*, Sustainable Development Commission, London.

SDC 2009a, *Food security and sustainability: The perfect fit. SDC position paper*, Sustainable Development Commission, London.

SDC 2009b, Setting the table: Advice to Government on priority elements of sustainable diets, Sustainable Development Commission, London.

SDC 2011, *Looking back, looking forward: Sustainability and UK food policy 2000-2011*, Sustainable Development Commission, London.

SDRN 2007, *SDRN Briefing Three: Wellbeing, Concepts and challenges*, SDRN, London.

Self, A., Thomas, J. & Randall, C. 2012, *Measuring national wellbeing: Life in the UK 2012*, ONS, London.

Sen, A. 2001, *Development as freedom,* Oxford University Press, Oxford.

Sharpe, R., Barling, D. & Lang, T. 2008, "Ethical traceability in the UK wheat-flour-bread chain" in *Ethical traceability and communicating food*, eds. C. Coff, D. Barling, M. Korthals & T. Nielsen, Springer, pp. 125-165.

Shekle, K., Van Wart, J. & Francis, C. 2009, "Social aspects of the supply chain" in *Sustainability in the food industry*, ed. C. Baldwin, Wiley Blackwell, pp. 145-158.

Silverman, D. 2006, *Interpreting qualitative data,* 3rd edn, Sage, London.

Simas, M., Golsteijn, L., Huijbregts, M.A.J., Wood, R. & Hertwich, E.G. 2014, "The 'Bad labor' footprint: Quantifying the social impacts of globalisation", *Sustainability,* vol. 6, pp. 7514-7540.

Smith, A., Stirling, A. & Berkhout, F. 2005, "The governance of sustainable socio-technical transitions", *Research Policy,* vol. 34, pp. 1491-1510.

Smith, J. & Barling, D. 2014, "Social impacts and life cycle assessments: Proposals for methodological development for SMEs in the European food and drink sector", *International Journal of Life Cycle Assessment,* vol. 19, no. 4, pp. 944-949.

Spangenberg, J. H. & Bonniot, O. 1998, *Sustainability Indicators – a compass on the road to sustainability.* Wuppertal Paper No 81. Wuppertal Institute for Climate, Environment, Energy.

Spangenberg, J.H. 2013, "Pick simply the best: Sustainable Development is about radical analysis and selective synthesis, not about old wine in new bottles", *Sustainable Development,* vol. 21, pp. 101-111.

Stapleton, L.M. & Garrod, G.D. 2007, "Policy preceding possibility? Examining headline composite sustainability indicators in the United Kingdom", *Social Indicators Research,* vol. 87, pp. 495-502.

Sterling, S. 2009, "Ecological intelligence" in *Handbook of sustainability literacy*, ed. A. Stibbe, Green Books, Dartington, pp. 77-83.

Stern, N. 2006, *Final report of the Stern review: The economics of climate change*, HM Treasury.

Stibbe, A. 2009, "Introduction" in *Handbook of sustainability literacy*, ed. A. Stibbe, Green Books, Dartington, pp. 9-16.

Stiglitz, J.E., Sen, A. & Fitoussi, J. 2009, *Report by the commission on the measurement of economic performance and social progress*, Commission on the measurement of economic performance and social progress, Paris.

Stirling, A. 1999, **'**The appraisal of sustainability: Some problems and possible responses', *Local Environment,* vol. 4, issue 2, pp. 111-135.

Stirling, A. 2014, "Making choices in the face of uncertainty: Strengthening innovation democracy" in *Annual report. Innovation: Managing risk, not avoiding it: Evidence and case studies*, ed. Government Chief Scientific Officer, Government Office for Science, pp. 49-62.

Strauss, K. 2013, "Unfree again: Social reproduction, flexible labour markets and the resurgence of gang labour in the UK", *Antipode,* vol. 45, no. 1, pp. 180-197.

Streeten, P., Burki, S., Ul Haq, M., Hicks, N. & Stewart, F. 1981, *First things first: Meeting basic human needs in the developing countries,* World Bank and Oxford University Press, New York and Oxford.

Stren, R. & Polèse, M. 2000, "Understanding the new sociocultural dynamics of cities: comparative urban policy in a global context" in *The social sustainability of cities: Diversity and the management of change*, eds. M. Polese & R. Stren, University of Toronto Press, Toronto, pp. 3-38.

Telegraph 2015, "11 reasons to renounce your fizzy drinks habit", published online in *The Telegraph*, 22.10.2015, http://www.telegraph.co.uk/food-and-drink/healthy-eating/11-reasons-to-stop-drinking-fizzy-drinks/ viewed 26.5.16.

Thompson, E.P. 1992, *Customs in Common: studies in traditional popular culture,* Norton & Co, London.

Thompson, P.B. 2007, "Agricultural sustainability: what it is and what it is not", *International Journal of Agricultural Sustainability,* vol. 5, no. 1, pp. 5-16.

Turner, K., Pearce, D. & Bateman, I. 1994, *Environmental Economics: An elementary introduction,* Pearson, Harlow, Essex.

UK Parliament 1999, *The Food Standards Act 1999 Ch 28,* The Stationery Office, London.

UK Parliament 2006 *The Companies Act 2006 Ch. 46*, The Stationery Office, London.

UK Parliament 2007, *Sustainable Communities Act 2007 Ch. 23*, The Stationery Office, London.

UK Parliament 2013, *Groceries Code Adjudicator Act 2013*, Ch 19, published online at http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2013/19/pdfs/ukpga_20130019_en.pdf (accessed 4.12.13, 8.8.15)

UNEP 1972, *Declaration of the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment* (Stockholm), United Nations Environment Programme.

UN n.d. *United Nations Main Organs*, available at http://www.un.org/en/sections/about-un/main-organs/index.html (accessed 30.9.11).

UN Global Compact n.d.a *Who We Are*, available at https://www.unglobalcompact.org/what-is-gc, (accessed 29.9.15).

UN Global Compact n.d.b. *Global Compact Self Assessment Tool*, available at http://www.globalcompactselfassessment.org/aboutthistool (accessed 28.3.12).

UN 1983, *Resolution A/38/161: Process of preparation of the environmental perspective to the year 2000 and beyond*, United Nations, New York.

UN 1993, *Agenda 21*, United Nations, New York.

Underwood, S., Blundel, R., Lyon, F. & Schaefer, A. 2012, "Introduction to social and sustainable enterprise: Changing the nature of business" in *Social and sustainable enterprise: Changing the nature of business.* Emerald, Bradford, pp *xi-xvi*.

Ungoed-Thomas, J. 2007, "British prawns go to China to be shelled", *Sunday Times,* 20.05.07, available at http://www.thesundaytimes.co.uk/sto/news/uk_news/article65017.ece (accessed 10.11.13).

Van Calker, K.J., Berentsen, P.B.M., Giesen, G.W.J. & Huirne, R.B.M. 2005, "Identifying and ranking attributes that determine sustainability in Dutch dairy farming", *Agriculture and Human Values,* vol. 22, pp. 53-63.

Van der Meulen, B.M.J 2011, "Private food law: The emergence of a concept" in *Private food Law: Governing food chains through contract law, self-regulation, private standards, audits and certification schemes*, B.M.J. van der Meulen ed., Wageningen Academic Publishers, Wageningen.

Van Marewijk, M. 2003, "Concepts and definitions of CSR and corporate sustainability: Between agency and communion", *Journal of Business Ethics,* vol. 44, pp. 95-105.

Vidal, J. 2011, "Whale war veteran goes back into battle against bolstered Japanese fleet", *The Guardian*, 19.10.11, p26.

Vorley, B., Cotula, L., Chan, M., 2012, *Tipping the balance: Policies to shape agricultural investments and markets in favour of small-scale farmers,* IIED and Oxfam, London.

Waas, T., Huge, J., Verbruggen, A. & Wright, T. 2011, "Sustainable Development: A bird's eye view", *Sustainability,* no. 3, pp. 1637-1611.

Ward, H. 2012, *ISO 26000 and global governance for Sustainable Development*, Shaping Sustainable Markets, IIED, London.

WCED 1987, *Our Common Future (The Brundlandt report)*, Oxford University Press, Oxford.

Weale, A. 1992, *The new politics of pollution,* Manchester University Press, Manchester.

Weale, A. 2008, "Foreword" in *Innovation in environmental policy: Integrating the environment for sustainability*, eds. A. Jordan & A. Lenschow, Edward Elgar, Cheltenham, pp. *xv-xvi*.

Weale, A. 2009, "Governance, government and the pursuit of sustainability" in *Governing sustainability*, eds. W.N. Adger & A. Jordan, Cambridge, Cambridge, pp. 55-75.

Whitby, M. & Ward, N. 1994, *The UK strategy for Sustainable Development: a critical analysis*, Centre for Rural Economy, University of Newcastle, Newcastle upon Tyne.

Whittaker, M. and Hurrell, H. 2013 *Low Pay Britain 2013*. Resolution Foundation, London.

Wilkinson, R. & Pickett, K. 2009, *The spirit level: why more equal societies almost always do better,* Allen Lane, London.

Wilks, S. 2013, *The political power of the business corporation,* Edward Elgar, Cheltenham.

Williams, C.C. & Millington, A.C. 2004, "The diverse and contested meanings of Sustainable Development", *The Geographical Journal,* vol. 170, no. 2, pp. 99-104.

Winson, A. 1993, *The intimate commodity: Food and the development of the agro-industrial complex in Canada,* Garamond Press, Toronto.

Winter, M. 2003, "Embeddedness, the new food economy and defensive localism", *Journal of rural studies,* vol. 19, pp. 23-32.

Wise, T. 2001, "Economics of sustainability: The social dimension -- Overview essay" in *A survey of Sustainable Development: social and economic dimensions*, eds. J. Harris, T. Wise, K.P. Gallagher & N.R. Goodwin, Island Press, Washington, pp. 47-57.

Woodgate, G. 2010, "Introduction" in *The international handbook of environmental sociology*, eds. M. Redclift & G. Woodgate, 2nd edn, Edward Elgar, Cheltenham, pp. 1-8.

Wrigley, N. & Lowe, M. 2002, *Reading retail: A geographical perspective on retailing and consumption spaces,* Arnold, London.

WSSD 2002, *Johannesburg declaration on Sustainable Development*, World Summit on Sustainable Development, Johannesburg, United Nations.

York, R., Rosa, E.A. & Dietz, T. 2010, "Ecological Modernisation theory: theoretical and empirical challenges" in *The international handbook of environmental sociology*, eds. M. Redclift & G. Woodgate, 2nd edn, Edward Elgar, Cheltenham, pp. 77-90.

Zadek, S. 2007, *The civil corporation,* 2nd edn, Earthscan, London.

‘A piecemeal way to save the world’

Investigating social sustainability
in the UK’s conventional food supply

ANNEXES

Rosalind Sharpe

Submitted for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy in Food Policy

Centre for Food Policy, City, University of London

December 2016

Annex A: Sample Data Sheet

Organization: Covalence Ethicalquote

Data sources

http://www.ethicalquote.com/index.php/about-us/

Date accessed

9.12.13

Type of organisation

Covalence EthicalQuote is a 'reputation index' tracking the world's largest companies on Environmental, Social, Governance (ESG), Corporate Social Responsibility, ethics and sustainability. Covalence is a company based in Geneva, Switzerland, founded in 2001; its shares are mainly owned by two individuals, with the rest owned by other Swiss individuals or groups. It is a subscription service, currently covering 2800 companies in 18 sectors.

Why am I investigating this organisation?

Mentioned in other data sources. Interesting method of assessment.

How prominent is sustainability in this source, and how discussed?

Not prominent, but sustainability is included in the list of things the index tracks.

How are social aspects discussed?

Social criteria are included in their ESG analysis.

In what way does this entity operationalise social sustainability in relation to food?

It provides ESG ratings (economic, social, environmental and governance), news and data. The ratings are used by companies (including food companies) to monitor their ethical reputation, benchmark against peers and to communicate internally and externally; finance professionals who use extra-financial information in their decision-making; and NGOs and others who wish to monitor these matters.

It compiles its rankings by integrating thousands of news items gathered online and classified according to 50 Environment, Social, Governance (ESG) criteria based on the Global Reporting Initiative. It uses a combination of automated content processing of texts in original language with qualitative assessment by an international team of analysts (more than 500 intern analysts have contributed to this work since 2001, in partnerships with many universities). Acknowledges the difficulties: 'While relying on universally shared values, this methodology faces the characteristics of modern society such as cultural diversity, democratic debate and scientific uncertainty, and the challenges of defining objective ethical criteria and credible information sources'.

Attributes / qualities 'counted':

Based on the Global Reporting Initiative 3.1 and its own cumulative experience, Covalence has defined 50 criteria, divided into 7 groups:

- Governance, Commitments, and Engagement
- Economic
- Environmental
- Labour Practices and Decent Work
- Human Rights
- Society
- Product Responsibility

Criteria in the 'society' group cover impacts on local communities, humanitarian actions, corruption, lobbying activities, contributions to political parties, anticompetitive behaviour, and compliance with social laws and regulations. Other groups contain criteria on working conditions and practices, wages (including those paid to executives), local sourcing, local hiring, diversity, equal rights, and human rights.

Other notes

Good summary of complexity: Devising ethical criteria is difficult (quotes Popper), because of the problem of subjectivity in open societies that value political pluralism, democratic debate, cultural diversity, social complexity, scientific uncertainty, and philosophical doubt. And also because information can be hard to find, or may not come from credible sources.

Annex B: Sample Data Sheet

Organization: Moy Park

Data sources:

http://www.moypark.com/about-us/

http://www.keystonefoods.com/

http://www.mclarnonfeeds.com/profile.htm

http://www.marfrig.com.br/

Date accessed:

22.10.13

Type of organisation:

Poultry producer / processor. Moy Park is Northern Ireland's largest private sector company with a turnover of £1.1bn, 12,000 people, 14 main sites in the UK, France and the Netherlands, accompanying mills and hatcheries and 800 farms in its supply chain. Founded 1943. Provides fresh,' locally farmed' poultry in the UK and Ireland, including organic, free range and corn fed. Supplies leading retailers and foodservice providers throughout the UK, Ireland and Europe with a range of fresh, coated and added value poultry products, ranging from value-for-money Castle Lea range to 'higher welfare' Jamie Oliver range. Owned by an American 'protein products' group, in turn owned by a Brazilian multinational, publically listed. Moy Park has been part of the Marfrig Group since 2008. Marfrig Group is Brazil's third largest food processing. It has facilities in Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay, Thailand, Malaysia and Korea, as well as USA, Europe and Australia. , based in Sao Paolo. It produces beef, pork, poultry and fish in 15 countries; they are available in over 110 countries. With approximately 46,000 employees, Marfrig Group is the largest producer of sheep products in South America, the largest poultry producer in the UK and the largest private company in Uruguay and Northern Ireland.

Why am I investigating this organisation?

Named in other data. Complex, opaque, multinational ownership structure. Example of how different welfare standards co-exist within a single company.

How prominent is sustainability in this source?

Not prominent, not on Homepage. Prominent tab and abundant info on for Corporate Responsibility. Defines CR as developing the company in a sustainable and ethical way; or to 'make a positive impact on society and the environment, through our operations and products and with key stakeholders such as company colleagues, customers, communities and suppliers. The business is doing this through locally based operations and sourcing locally through an integrated supply chain, operating to high standards.'

Four facets: Marketplace and supply chain, workplace, community and environment.

What social themes or aspects are mentioned, in what ways?

Stresses localism: sources locally, supports local communities through employment and other benefits.

Social relations within the company, along supply chains and between company and communities where it operates.

Supporting and enriching communities affected by the company's activities

Worker health and wellbeing, training, development, diversity, engagement, attendance, turnover

- Charitable giving
- Employee Volunteering
- Food safety and nutrition
- In what ways is this entity operationalising social sustainability in relation to food?
- Providing employment
- Financial and in-kind support for nominated charities
- Support for employee volunteering
- Involvement with local communities, including education, careers advice, development of employment skills, championing health and wellbeing
- Supporting young people into the food industry

Things 'counted' and reported include number of school pupils receiving careers education, total hours of employee training, hours of technical training, employee volunteer hours, number of employees supported in vocational qualifications, sore in employee satisfaction survey

Schemes mentioned: Uses Red Tractor scheme, Soil Association, Quality British Turkeys, supports Prince's Countryside Fund, Business in the Community

Notes

An example of fragmented and inconsistent interpretation and implementation of social sustainability. Signs that the UK company tries to align with parent company's objectives: Moy Park's 2013 CR report says: 'Moy Park supports Marfrig in its objective of demonstrating corporate responsibility'. On the website, a pillar of Moy's CR policy is simply called 'Marfrig', and entails supporting Marfrig's policy reporting on four specified environmental impacts.

McLarnon Feeds is a feed company that supplies Moy – this is only apparent because the website is listed in tiny type at the bottom of Moy Park's webpage. McLarnon website says it's 'independent', and the mission is to 'maximize farm profitability'. It has a prominent link to its Environmental Policy. No CSR mentioned. Says it's part of the O'Kane Group – an Irish brand that is listed under 'our Brands' at Moy Park. The O'Kane page says it is a 'family business'. It has a sustainability page. Nothing on O'Kane website to suggest it's part of a larger group.

Keystone Foods, part of the Moy Park / Marfrig nexus, is a A multinational originating and with HQ in US, one of the world's leading processors of animal protein. Products include Individually Quick Frozen (IQF) offerings, such as beef and pork patties; par-fried items, such as breaded

chicken nuggets and patties; fully cooked products, such as chicken wings, chicken breast filets, beef and chicken fajita strips, diced chicken and bone-in chicken pieces. Operating as Kitchen Foods, it has two sites in the UK, supplying coated veg and cheese products. Globally, Keystone employs more than 15,000 with 58 facilities in 13 countries, serving more than 52,000 quick-service restaurants, food service, manufacturers and retail outlets. It has what it describes as a world class Corporate CR programme; for sustainability it mentions energy, waste and water, and attaches high value to animal welfare. It has a link to the sustainability page of Marfrig.

Marfrig says it fosters corporate social and environmental responsibility in its commodity supply chain, in order 'to ensure the long-term sustainability of its business'. The whole company has a single Ethics Code -- this 'helps the Corporation to develop a single global culture, governed by the same set of social and environmental values' -- but different businesses within the group can develop locally appropriate actions.

Marfrig's sustainability strategy is defined as being about 'sustainable business management', ie 'the creation of value over the long term'. It has six pillars: Supply chain, technology, social, product, environment, economic.

Here, the social pillar is said to cover Social Responsibility, The Marfrig Institute, Diversity, and Health and safety.

Important 'causes and stances' listed by the Marfrig Goup include membership of national and international groupings or initiatives for sustainability, ranging from the National Pact for the Eradication of Slave Labor in Brazil to BITC, described as 'an international network of responsible corporations committed to the realization of a sustainable future for people and for the planet'.

Marfrig 'social responsibility programs' include:

The Marfrig Institute for Social Responsibility (Instituto Marfrig de Responsabilidade Social), founded in 2010 to promote social work, culture, education, health, food safety and sport, both for Marfrig staff and in the communities in which the Company operates, aiming to become an international reference for sustainable social development.

Partnership with Ronald McDonald Institute (the philanthropic wing of McDonald's)

Food and financial donations to charities, including food projects in Brazil and 15,000 tons of beef a year to a cancer hospital in Barretos.

Also in Brazil, helping employees to achieve home ownership

Annex C: sample introductory email

Dear [Name],

I am a PhD researcher at the Centre for Food Policy at City University, where I work on sustainability in the food supply. I spotted your name on the programme for the forthcoming Sustainable Brands conference, and thought of approaching you.

I'm obviously aware [named company] is a pioneer in sustainable sourcing and manufacturing, through the [named programme]. I am particularly interested in the activities that relate to the 'social' aspects of sustainability, and what this means in the UK food supply, and I am sure you will have thought about this. I would very much value your views, if you could find time to talk to me.

The interview would be entirely confidential, would last no more than an hour, and could be arranged at your convenience. (If you're in London I'd prefer to do it in person, but it could be done by phone if need be.) I am attaching an information sheet that provides more detail. I realise you must be extremely busy, and no doubt get many requests like this one. I can only stress how much I would appreciate it if you could fit me in.

Yours sincerely,

Annex D: Participant Information Sheet

Centre for Food Policy
School of Arts and Social Science
Northampton Square
London EC1V 0HB

I have contacted you to ask whether you would be willing to be interviewed for a study I am conducting at the Centre for Food Policy, at City University London, as part of my PhD research. This sheet provides you with more information about the project, and about what your participation would involve. If you would like more information, please contact me via the email or phone number below, or at the above address.

Project Title: Social sustainability in UK food supply chains

Principal Investigators: Rosalind Sharpe, Dr David Barling

Contact details for Rosalind Sharpe: Rosalind.Sharpe.1@city.ac.uk Tel: [number supplied]

Why you are being asked for an interview:

The purpose of the research is to explore how the social dimension of sustainability is being defined and implemented in UK food supply chains. As you probably know, sustainability is usually described as having three 'pillars', namely environmental, economic and social. Of these, the social pillar is the least clearly defined. As part of the Centre's work on governance in the food supply, we are interested to know both what is meant by the term 'social sustainability' and how it is being put into practice. The interview will cover questions about your organisation's activities in this area, and interviewees have been chosen because of their known interest or expertise in this field. We do not expect you to be the repository of definitive wisdom – we realise this is very much a work in progress, and are interested in your thoughts as an informed observer or participant. Nor are we seeking personal or commercially sensitive information.

Procedure

If you agree to be interviewed, please reply to this letter by contacting me by email or phone. I will then get in touch to arrange an interview, at a time and place to suit you. Interviews can be face-to-face, or by telephone. They will take no more than an hour, and will be recorded. Your participation is entirely voluntary and you may withdraw at any time should you change your mind. You will be asked to sign a consent form, agreeing to the terms of the interview, as outlined in this letter.

Confidentiality

Every effort will be made to ensure confidentiality. Interviewees' participation will not be made known to other interviewees. No identifying information will be attached to interview transcripts. No information that discloses your identity or your organisation's identity will be used in any project outputs (reports, articles, presentations) and all comments made in the interview will be used anonymously. The recorded data will be stored on a password-protected computer and will be transcribed by the researcher.

Transcripts and other data will be held securely. The data will be held for seven years, after which time it will be deleted / shredded.

Potential Benefits

This will be an opportunity for you to 'think aloud' and feed into debate about an important, emerging policy area. At the end of the research, I will compile a summary of the (anonymous) findings and my analysis, which will be made available electronically to participants.

University Complaints Procedure

If there is an aspect of the interview that concerns you, you may make a complaint. City University has an established complaints procedure. To complain about the study, contact the Secretary to the Senate Ethical Committee by phoning 020 7040 3040, or writing to the Secretary to the Senate Ethical Committee, City University, Northampton Square, London, EC1V 0HB, or emailing anna.ramberg.1@city.ac.uk. The name of the study is 'Social sustainability in UK food supply chains'.

Annex E: Consent Form

CITY UNIVERSITY LONDON

Centre for Food Policy

School of Arts and Social Sciences,

Northampton Square, London EC1V 0HB

Participant consent form

Project Title: Social sustainability in UK food supply chains

Principal Investigators: Rosalind Sharpe, Dr David Barling

Contact details for Rosalind Sharpe: Rosalind.Sharpe.1@city.ac.uk Tel: [number supplied]

Principal Investigators: Rosalind Sharpe, Dr David Barling

☐ I agree to take part in the above City University research project. I have read the Information Sheet and my questions have been answered to my satisfaction.

☐ I understand that my participation is entirely voluntary, and that I can choose not to participate in part or all of the project and can withdraw at any stage without being penalised or disadvantaged in any way.

I understand that agreeing to take part means that I am willing to:

☐ Be interviewed by the researcher .

☐ Allow the interview to be audio taped.

Data Protection

This information will be held and processed only for the purposes of the project.

I understand that any information I provide is confidential. I agree that the interview can be tape-recorded and I agree that verbatim quotations from the interview can be used anonymously in presentations, reports and other publications, on the understanding that no information that could identify me or my organisation will be presented or published in any reports on the project, or to any other party.

I have received a copy of this consent form for my own records.

Name	Signature	Date
Interviewee: (Print name)		
Interviewer: **Rosalind Sharpe**		

Annex F Data summary tables, by category

Website Data Summary Table Category 1: INPUTS, PRIMARY PRODUCERS, PROCESSORS, LOGISTICS

1. Actor (Inputs, etc)	2. Type of organization	3. Treatment of sustainability	4. Scope / framing of activity: Examples of social themes / concerns / aspirations	5. Operationalisation: Examples of how social themes / concerns were acted on
Cargill	Global trader & supplier in agricultural products, supply-chain logistics and finance. Food-related UK activities included manufacture of food and feed ingredients, grain and oilseed trading, ocean transportation and logistics, oilseed crushing and refining, poultry processing, primary cocoa processing, financial services. Private company (US)	Not prominent, though 'helping farmers produce food more sustainably' is an aim	Conducting business with integrity; Operating responsible supply chains; Enriching 'our' communities (expanded as 'employees, customers, suppliers and neighbours'); 'Nourishing the world'; Human rights; Farmers' livelihoods; 'Safe, wholesome food'; Animal welfare	Supported Flour Fortification Initiative to promote fortification of flour globally, to counter nutrient deficiencies; Supported Global Foodbanking Network to support foodbanks (including in UK) through cash donations and employee volunteering; Worked with ILO, NGOs and governments of Ghana and Cote d'Ivoire on use of child labour in cocoa supply chains; Provided training/ capacity building, eg training cocoa farmers in Africa and Asia to meet Rainforest Alliance standards; Provided humanitarian assistance eg in 2011 after frost damaged Mexico corn crop; Donated 2% of pre-tax profits to philanthropic causes; Operationalised workplace safety by e.g. collating injury and fatality data from all operating sites worldwide, and aiming to reduce incidences
Dovecote Park	Beef processor, sole beef supplier to Waitrose. Two UK abattoirs and one factory processed beef from the Waitrose-Dovecote Park Beef Producer Group, comprising around 900 UK farms. Private company (UK)	Prominent link to sustainability page	Support for British farming; Animal welfare; Communication; Partnership	Short supply chain said to underpin claims to sustainability; The Producer Group organised open days, field visits, 'direct two way communication with the factories', and newsletters – 'all reinforcing the importance of a genuine supply chain partnership between the farmer, the meat processor, and the retailer'; Emphasis on high standards of animal welfare.
First Milk	Farmer-owned milk	Prominent:	Worker welfare;	Launched a Sustainability Programme in 2012. Ethical aspect

1. Actor (Inputs, etc)	2. Type of organization	3. Treatment of sustainability	4. Scope / framing of activity: Examples of social themes / concerns / aspirations	5. Operationalisation: Examples of how social themes / concerns were acted on
	processing co-operative. Produced raw milk, cheese, butter, milk powders and dairy-based ingredients	'Sustainability' tab described '3E' model of sustainability – Economic, Ethical and Environmental	Worker safety; Animal welfare; Food safety; Farm incomes	linked to animal welfare, worker welfare and food safety. Programme geared to providing 'sustainable returns' to farmers.
Kuehne + Nagel Group	Air, sea and road logistics company: in UK, warehoused, imported and transported drinks and food service products for retail, leisure and catering outlets. Public company (Switzerland)	Not prominent (link from CSR pages to sustainability page)	Worker health and safety; The 'sustained further development' of staff; Education and training	Emphasis on staff training and development, including recognition of talent; Provided apprenticeships; Maintained two philanthropic Foundations, one supporting research and education (including the Kuehne Logistics University in Hamburg) and the other cultural projects; Funded professorships in logistics at several universities; Funded research in 'humanitarian logistics'
Monsanto	Supplier of agricultural inputs; UK activities included seed development, pesticide sales. Public company (US)	Prominent: summed itself up as 'A sustainable agriculture company'. Motto: 'We want to make the world a better place for future generations'	'Nourishing our world'; Helping farmers produce enough food to feed everyone; 'Improving lives'; 'Empowering famers'; Putting balanced meals 'within the reach of every family'; Supporting education; Farmer and smallholder livelihoods; Nutrition; Engagement with stakeholders and society; Human rights in the workplace	Counted using the market to make its products widely available as a social benefit; Donated cash and expertise, e.g. to development of crops 'important to hunger alleviation'; Funded scholarships in plant breeding; Developed ingredients that supported healthy eating guidelines, e.g. a soy oil lower in saturated fat than other cooking oils; Partnered with range of other organizations, e.g. with local NGOs to address market barriers for smallholders in Africa, or with the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the Howard G. Buffett Foundation and USAID to develop disease-resistant strains of cassava
Moy Park	Poultry producer-processor, operating feed mills, hatcheries, farms and processing	Not prominent, but Corporate Responsibility defined as	Animal welfare; Localism; Community impacts; Creation of employment;	Said it acted on CR goals through locally based operations and by sourcing locally through an integrated supply chain; Provided financial and in-kind support for nominated charities; Support for employee volunteering;

1. Actor (Inputs, etc)	2. Type of organization	3. Treatment of sustainability	4. Scope / framing of activity: Examples of social themes / concerns / aspirations	5. Operationalisation: Examples of how social themes / concerns were acted on
	plants. Private company, subsidiary of Marfrig Global Foods, a public company (Brazil)	'developing the company in an ethical and sustainable way'	Support for health and wellbeing of workers, customers, suppliers and communities	Community activity included provision of education, careers advice and health promotion, development of employment skills, and encouragement for young people to take jobs in the food industry
Produce World	Fruit and vegetable grower and packer (alliums, brassicas, roots and potatoes). Private company (UK)	Prominent: Link to '4Life Sustainability Strategy'	4Life strategy covered responsible sourcing, environmental stewardship, community impact and workplace culture (latter defined as providing ('a safe, stimulating, rewarding and collaborative working environment'); Staff engagement; Employee welfare; Contribution to local communities	Used non-financial Key Performance Indicators, e.g. on accident frequency and staff turnover, to operationalise goals for workplace culture; Used awards, reviews, sporting fixtures to encourage staff engagement; Offered staff training ranging from basic literacy to support for professional qualifications; Community involvement operationalised through donations, fundraising and staff volunteering; Maintained a company trust for charitable work, the Growing Trust; Used Sedex to implement goal of supply chain transparency; Suppliers required to undergo regular 'ethical audits' by Bureau Veritas
Stobart Group	Logistics and infrastructure services company. UK food-related activities included warehousing, port facilities and road and rail haulage. Public company (UK)	Not prominent.	Employee health and welfare; Engaging with and benefiting local communities	Charitable donations and community involvement at site level; Worker safety training and career development; Had policies for fair and non-discriminatory treatment of staff; Ran a staff 'health and wellbeing' programme, with a strand on nutrition in the workplace
Young's	Fish processor, supplied frozen and chilled products, branded and private-label. Private company (UK), part of Findus Group	Prominent: company's 'duty and interest to support sustainable fisheries'; sustainability defined as 'operating in a responsible way	Communication; Transparency; Engagement; Recognition of rights of diverse stakeholders; Responsible use of environment -- i.e. in a way that does not	Developed and implemented a sustainable sourcing policy called Fish for Life; Refused to trade with companies that were 'not mindful' of their ethical, social, environmental, financial and humanitarian responsibilities; Communicated sustainability information via labels Supported the ETI base code and SA 8000

1. Actor (Inputs, etc)	2. Type of organization	3. Treatment of sustainability	4. Scope / framing of activity: Examples of social themes / concerns / aspirations	5. Operationalisation: Examples of how social themes / concerns were acted on
		which meets the needs of people and business – without compromising the needs of future generations'	have detrimental impacts on 'livelihoods, social conditions and food security of local communities'	

Annex F: Website Data Summary Table Category 2: MANUFACTURERS

1. Actor (Manufacturers)	2. Type of organization	3. Treatment of sustainability	4. Scope / framing of activity: Examples of social themes / concerns / aspirations	5. Operationalisation: Examples of how social themes / concerns were acted on
Associated British Foods (ABF)	International food, ingredients and retail group, manufacturer of diverse food brands (including Kingsmill, Patak, Billingtons, Twinings) as well as food ingredients and enzymes. Public company (UK)	Not prominent (Responsibility tabbed –described as having social and environmental aspects)	Overarching principles: 'Taking care of our people'; Fostering ethical business relationships; Being good neighbours; Other themes: Workplace health and safety; Diversity; Equality of opportunity; Labour standards in supply chains; Prompt payment of suppliers; Safety and nutritional value of products; Responsible promotion of products	Used labelling to facilitate healthy food choice; Improved nutritional value of foods through reformulation (salt and fat reduction); Donated to UK charities via the philanthropic Garfield Weston Foundation; Varied by brand / business, e.g. Twinings-Ovaltine had its own Code of Conduct based on ETI code, and had a partnership with Save the Children to support the needs of tea communities in China
Bakkavor	UK's largest provider of chilled, prepared foods, mainly as private label to retail and food service (ready meals, desserts, soups, sauces, bagged fruit). Private company (UK)	Not prominent	'Doing things the right way' in relation to employees, customers, consumers, suppliers, local communities, shareholders and lenders	Implemented employee training and development schemes; Maintained open channels of communication between employees and management, and held regular employee forums; Used ethical auditing and SEDEX to assure supply chains; Donated to charity; Encouraged site-level community engagement
Coca-Cola	The world's largest manufacturer and distributor of non-alcoholic drinks and syrups, sold under various brand names	Not prominent (link via Environment tab to Sustainability page. 'True sustainability' defined as 'looking	People; Communities; 'Active healthy living'; Empowerment of women; Wellbeing; Human rights	Promoted 'active healthy living' by providing calorie labelling and low-calorie drinks, and by funding sporting activity and sporting charities; Benefited communities by providing employment; Supported an education programme with dedicated facilities at four UK sites;

1. Actor (Manufacturers)	2. Type of organization	3. Treatment of sustainability	4. Scope / framing of activity: Examples of social themes / concerns / aspirations	5. Operationalisation: Examples of how social themes / concerns were acted on
	(eg Schweppes, Sprite, Fanta). Public company (US)	beyond the concerns of our business' to help address global challenges		Supported employee volunteering at charities relevant to company activities, eg Thames21, which clears waterways; Globally, its 5x20 programme aimed to empower 5 million female entrepreneurs in its value chains by 2020
Dairy Crest	Manufacturer of branded milk products, cheeses, spreads and drinks (including Country Life milk, Cathedral City cheeses and Utterly Butterly spreads), plus dairy-based powders. In 2013 won BITC Sustainable Supply Chain Award. Public company (UK)	Not prominent	Responsibilities to 'our communities'; Healthy living; Education; Employment; Support for dairy farms	Supported healthy eating by reformulating products to remove saturated fat; Provided staff training, health checks, apprenticeships and work experience; First company to sign up to Voluntary Code of Practice for dairy processors; Developed a 'transparent' formula for calculating the price paid for milk; Supported the Prince's Fund rural charity; Supported community charities, e.g. the Utterly Butterly Ukulele Orchestra, in which children made ukuleles from margarine tubs; Required suppliers to meet its Supplier Corporate Responsibility Policy, covering labour standards and human rights; Staff given one paid day off work a year to volunteer
General Mills	Manufacturer of branded baked goods, cereals, ice cream, tinned vegetables (brands included Green Giant, Jus-Rol, Haagen-Dazs). Public company (US)	Not prominent	Commitment to 'doing well by doing good'; Nourishment (for body and spirit) - had trademarked the phrase 'Nourishing Lives';- 'Being a responsible social partner'; Young people's education and childhood literacy	Ran a 'nourishing communities' programme to fosters employee participation in charitable activity, e.g. educational outreach and mentoring; Donated food to foodbanks; Ran the Floating Classroom, converted from a narrow boat and used on the canals of Uxbridge, where the company based; Ran a non-profit organization to help improve capacity and expertise in food processing in Africa
Greggs	Manufacturer and retailer of baked goods and sandwiches - UK's largest bakery chain and largest fast-food chain by number of	Not prominent	Social Responsibility covered: 'Food you can trust' Community; People. 'Treating everyone with fairness, consideration and	Supported healthy eating by providing healthy choices, e.g. sandwiches without mayonnaise; Reformulated to reduce fat and salt in products, and had eliminated trans fats; Supported Responsibility Deals; Ethical sourcing policy to avoid exploitation of workers or animals

1. Actor (Manufacturers)	2. Type of organization	3. Treatment of sustainability	4. Scope / framing of activity: Examples of social themes / concerns / aspirations	5. Operationalisation: Examples of how social themes / concerns were acted on
	outlets. Public company (UK)		respect'; Emphasis on ethos of 'family'; Healthy eating; Animal welfare	in the supply chain; Planned to incorporate ETI principles in supplier contracts; Ran charitable foundation, the Greggs Foundation, which supported breakfast clubs and provided grants to charities and families in hardship in northeast England (where company HQ located)
Iglo Group	Manufacturer of branded frozen food products – in UK, mainly Bird's Eye. Private company (UK), owned by private equity group Permira	Prominent: Sustainability tab to Forever Food Together programme	Nutritional value of products; Educating consumers to make sustainable choices; Ethical trading (i.e. not engaging in practices detrimental to workers' rights)	Provided labelling to enable healthy choices; Counted the supply of frozen vegetables as a social benefit on the grounds of their healthiness; Required suppliers to register with Sedex, with third party auditing; Required suppliers to comply with Iglo Group Code of Practice
Premier Foods	UK's largest manufacturer of branded food products (brands included Ambrosia, Batchelor's, Bisto, Hovis, Mr Kipling, Oxo, Sharwood's). Public company (UK)	Prominent: aims to 'ensure sustainability in everything we do'	'Buying responsibly'; Diet & health; People (employees); Community involvement	Healthy eating commitments implemented through provision of choices, labels and reformulation; Supported Responsibility Deals; 'Buying British' cited as a key way of operationalising sustainability; Creation of employment; Used Sedex and SMETA to audit suppliers; Complied with GRI reporting guidelines; Supported national and local charities; Mentioned that by performing ethically it hoped to attract ethical investment 20-page Code of Conduct, 'Doing the Right Thing'.
Tetley	Manufacturer of UK's leading tea brand, and other beverages. Wholly owned subsidiary of Tata Global Beverages, a division of Tata Group, public company (India).	Prominent: aims to supply 'life-enhancing sustainable hydration'	Labour rights and working conditions; 'A socially just tea industry'; Improving the lives and livelihoods of tea growers and pickers; Providing healthy drinks	Had set a target date for sourcing all tea from Rainforest Alliance certified sources; Member of Ethical Tea Partnership; Helped growers to reach compliance with standards; Donated tea to Crisis at Christmas; Provided mentoring and work experience to promote employability

1. Actor (Manufacturers)	2. Type of organization	3. Treatment of sustainability	4. Scope / framing of activity: Examples of social themes / concerns / aspirations	5. Operationalisation: Examples of how social themes / concerns were acted on
Unilever	Manufacturer of diverse food products (brands included Ben and Jerry's, Bovril, Flora, Hellmann's, Knorr, Colman's Peperami, Magnum and PG Tips). Public company, Anglo-Dutch	Prominent: 'We are making sustainable living the driver of everything we do'	Nutrition; Smallholder livelihoods; Women's livelihoods; Health and wellbeing; Human rights; Labour standards; Integrity; Respect; Responsibility; Fairness	In 2010 launched a comprehensive sustainability programme, the Sustainable Living Plan; Contributed to better diets through reformulation (mainly to reduce saturated fats) and provision of information; Set targets for recruitment of small-scale producers and processors into supply chains and provided support to smallholders to help them enter supply chains; Used various schemes and codes to assure supply chains, eg Fairtrade, RSPO; Had codes governing relationships and rights of employees and supply chain partners; Ran a programme to improve the 'nutrition, fitness and mental resilience' of employees; CEO sat on UN High Level Panel on Post-2015 Development Agenda
Warburtons	Manufacturer of branded bread and baked goods (produced a quarter of all bakery products eaten in UK). Family-owned private company (UK)	Not prominent	Family ethos; A family-friendly work-life balance; Safe workplaces; Community support; Responsibility – the latter linked to sustainability, which involved 'building a better society'	Enabled healthy choices, e.g. by providing gluten-free options; Used RSPO to assure palm oil supply chain; Enabled flexible working and supported childcare and healthcare for employees; Ran health-promoting activities in communities where production sites were located; Donated to charity

Annex F: Website Data Summary Table Category 3: RETAILERS

1. Actor (Retailers)	2. Type of organization	3. Treatment of sustainability	4. Scope / framing of activity: Examples of social themes /concerns / aspirations	5. Operationalisation: Examples of how social themes / concerns were acted on
Asda	Retailer, 500+ stores in UK. Subsidiary of Walmart, private company (US)	Prominent	Food affordability; Nutrition; Fair treatment of staff and customers; Support for farmers in UK and supplier countries; Support for community charities	Emphasised that cutting waste, energy use, etc, has effect of reducing prices, with social benefit of affordability; Addressed nutrition through reformulation, labelling and Responsibility Deal pledges; Supported UK farmers by setting targets for local sourcing; Supported women's contribution to supply chains in Africa – sponsored two female agricultural PhDs in Kenya; Used RSPO to assure palm oil supply chains; Donated to charity via the Asda Foundation, e.g. during 2014 floods set up Flood Relief fund with £400,000
The Co-operative	Retailer, 2,800+ food stores in UK. Part of Co-operative Group, a co-operative business	Prominent (link to 'ethics and sustainability' page). Goal of ethical plan (explicitly linked to sustainability) was to be 'the most socially responsible retailer in the UK'. 2012 Sustainability Report called 'Building a better Society'	Socially responsible retailing; UK communities; Fairness; Human rights; Animal welfare; Diet; Health; Social inclusion; Diversity; 'Inspiring young people'; International Development;	Maintained stores in low-income neighbourhoods; Reformulated products to meet health guidelines; Ensured healthier options were no more expensive than standard versions, and that value lines were at least equivalent in nutrition to standard lines; Incentives such as money-off to purchase fruit and vegetables; Used Freedom Foods standard for meat and also operated its own 'higher welfare standard for pigs and poultry' - aimed to ensure that higher-welfare meat was available to shoppers in all price brackets; Used ETI and its own Sound Sourcing Code to assure supply chains; Supported Fairtrade, including by conversion of own-brand; Implemented Development goals by e.g. supporting Traidcraft project with a honey and blueberry producers' co-op in Chile; Funded / assisted individuals who wanted to start community projects, campaigns or co-ops; Supported community projects via a Community Fund
Lidl	Discount retailer, 600+ stores in UK. One of Europe's largest food retail chains. Family-	Not prominent	Respectful treatment of customers, employees and business partners; Workers' livelihoods in supplier	Had Codes of Conduct to operationalise commitments to staff, customers and business partners; Had its own fair trade designation, Fairglobe, 'to allow customers to help producers in Africa, Asia and Latin America ... and help

1. Actor (Retailers)	2. Type of organization	3. Treatment of sustainability	4. Scope / framing of activity: Examples of social themes /concerns / aspirations	5. Operationalisation: Examples of how social themes / concerns were acted on
	owned private company (Germany)		countries	raise awareness of sustainable production'; Supported a children's cancer charity
M&S	Retailer, 750+ outlets in UK. Division of Marks and Spencer, public company (UK)	Prominent (objective to become the 'world's most sustainable major retailer')	Being a 'fair partner' in supply chains, communities and within the company; Health and wellbeing, linked to diet and lifestyle; Engagement, described as essential in order to integrate sustainability into every aspect of operations	Major sustainability initiative, Plan A, launched 2007; Used ethical audits to assure supply chains; Provided training in ethics and human rights along supply chains;, Trained 'farmers for the future' via an education programme; Donated to a Unicef project for mothers and children in Bangladesh; Signed up to Public Health Responsibility Deals; Reformulated products; Enabling healthy choices via labelling; Provided 'healthier' ranges of manufactured foods; Provided calorie and healthier-choice information in customer cafes and staff canteens
Sainsbury's	Retailer, 1100+ stores in UK. Part of J Sainsbury, public company (UK)	Prominent (link to 20x20 Sustainability Plan)	Healthiness of food products; Responsible sale of alcoholic drinks; 'Sourcing with integrity' (covering animal welfare, support for British producers and fairness in supply chains); 'Making a positive difference to our community' Quality of workplace	Major 20x20 Sustainability Plan launched 2011, including targets, commitments on reporting and use of Key Performance Indicators; Used reformulation to improve nutritional profile of products; Used labelling to signal nutritional content of foods; Ran promotions to boost sales of fruit and vegetables; Signed up to Responsibility Deals; Set targets for sales of Fairtrade products; Set targets for sales of low-alcohol drinks; Set targets for sourcing from UK producers; Used ETI and Company Ethical Code to assure supply chains; Set targets for staff retention and training; Charitable activity involved corporate donation, facilitation of fundraising by employees and customers, employee volunteering, donation of food to FareShare; sponsorship of Comic Relief and 2012 London Paralympics; Ran programme to provide work for 'hard to employ' people;
Tesco	Retailer, 3300+ stores in UK. Public company (UK)	Not prominent (but had tab for 'Tesco & Society')	Three 'big ambitions': Trading responsibly; Being a great employer;	Had developed Codes of Conduct, e.g. for different commodities; Used ETI base code Appointed an 'expert advisory panel' to monitor and assess its

1. Actor (Retailers)	2. Type of organization	3. Treatment of sustainability	4. Scope / framing of activity: Examples of social themes /concerns / aspirations	5. Operationalisation: Examples of how social themes / concerns were acted on
			Supporting local communities; Other themes: Animal welfare Farmer livelihoods Creation of employment and economic opportunity, especially for young people; Health /obesity; Treating suppliers fairly; Workforce diversity; Workforce health and wellbeing; Engagement – 'we can't go it alone'	sustainability work; Organised Producer Groups of farmers, who received a guaranteed 'fair price' for their products; 'Regeneration Stores' guaranteed one-third of jobs to long-term unemployed, with training and support; Farm-to-Fork initiative taught children about food provenance -- involved farm, shop and factory tours + internet linkups with distant suppliers, aimed to reach 1 million primary school children during 2014; Donated in cash and kind; 'Scaling for Good' activities included: a mentoring programme for students in South Korea; an online retail business game for university students in Czech Republic; an outreach programme in which Tesco staff visited their former schools in Poland; provision of 5,000 places on apprenticeship programmes in UK
Waitrose	Multiple retailer, 280 branches in UK. Division of John Lewis, employee-owned company (UK)	Prominent ('Sustainability has been a cornerstone of our business right from the Partnership's establishment')	The objective of the company was 'the happiness and fulfilment' of the employees; 'Building mutually beneficial relationships and acting in the interests of society'; Responsibility towards communities, customers, employees, suppliers and future generations; Health and nutrition; Integrity in supply chains (defined as improving workers' lives, treating people fairly, building long-term relationships); 'Responsible development' (i.e. considering social impacts of	Distributed a portion of profits to all partners – in 2013 equivalent to nine weeks' pay; Ran a staff health service; Funded staff to take volunteering secondments of up to six months; Funded staff personal development unrelated to work, eg music lessons; Had a commitment to improve quality of work and recruitment in meat sector; 'Choice edited' to promote sustainable food purchases, e.g. by selling only MSC certified fish, converting own-label tea to Fairtrade; Operated Producer Groups in 30 categories, guaranteeing a 'fair price' to producers; 'Community Matters' scheme enabled customers to vote on which local charity would receive donation; 'Community Rooms' scheme provided space in stores for local causes and charities;

1. Actor (Retailers)	2. Type of organization	3. Treatment of sustainability	4. Scope / framing of activity: Examples of social themes /concerns / aspirations	5. Operationalisation: Examples of how social themes / concerns were acted on
			new store development); Employment creation; Positive impact in communities; Collaboration; Fairness ('central to our way of doing business')	Ran a development charity in southern Africa, the Waitrose Foundation

Annex F: Website Data Summary Table Category 4: FOOD SERVICE OPERATORS

1. Actor Food Service)	2. Type of organization	3. Treatment of sustainability	4. Scope / framing of activity: Examples of social themes / concerns / aspirations	5. Operationalisation: Examples of how social themes / concerns were acted on
Booker	UK's largest food wholesaler, providing both cash-and-carry and delivered services to stores, leisure outlets, pubs and restaurants. Public company (UK)	Not prominent	'Ethical' responsibility covered : Employee-related issues such as diversity; Community Impacts; Nutritional value of products; Social responsibility in sourcing	Had Ethical Code to cover employees and external business partners; Each of six regions had a 'Green General Manager' to promote sustainability ideas and initiatives; Participated in Responsibility Deals, Provided nutrition labelling; Supplied Fairtrade products; Supported local communities, 'primarily through improving the support and service we provide to our customers', and through providing employment; Each site had nominated local charity; Donated food to charity and pet food to animal rescue centres; Corporate charity was GroceryAid, which looks after the welfare of food-chain workers
Compass	Contract foodservice (and facilities management) company. Operated several businesses and brands, catering for different sectors, such as Eurest (business and industry), Medirest (hospitals) and Chartwells (education). Public company (UK)	Not prominent	' Our people'; Sustainable sourcing; Health and wellbeing; Nutritional value of products; Community; Charity Animal welfare; Worker safety and development; A 'moral responsibility to consider the social impacts of our activities'	Provided apprenticeships; Provided training via Chefs Academy and Services Management Academy; Disseminated nutrition and healthy eating information via packaging and an online platform; Promoted healthy options and reformulated foods to improve nutritional profile; Used UK and Irish products where possible; Avoided animal products from sources that did not observe the 'Five Freedoms'; 100% of sugar and bananas were Fairtrade; Had its own Development charity, Eatfair, which supported projects in Uganda
McDonalds	World's largest burger chain, c 1200 outlets in UK. Public company (US)	Not prominent	Nutrition and wellbeing; Supply chain ethics; Employee experience; Community; Animal welfare;	Operated a Supplier Workplace Accountability Program, 'a unified set of global workplace standards for all workers who touch our supply chain -ensuring they are treated fairly and provided with a safe and healthy work environment'; A Signature Sustainability Programme covered supply chain practices,

1. Actor Food Service)	2. Type of organization	3. Treatment of sustainability	4. Scope / framing of activity: Examples of social themes / concerns / aspirations	5. Operationalisation: Examples of how social themes / concerns were acted on
			Health and safety of workers; Affordable food; Equitable trade; Positive community impacts	e.g. the beef programme entailed a target for all beef to be 'verified sustainable' by 2016, covering 'positive workplaces in the beef industry', affordable products, high animal welfare, and economic viability for beef producers; Set target to increase number of Hamburger University-certified restaurant managers; A Signature Sustainability Programme involved collaboration with NGOs – described 20+ years of alliances, mainly with environmental and animal welfare groups; Sought diversity in supply chains by sourcing from women- and minority-owned enterprises; Acted on nutrition and wellbeing by offering customers 'quality, choice, and nutrition'; also by providing nutrition information on packaging and online; Community responsibility operationalised through Ronald McDonald children's charity, support for litter-picking and disaster relief
Starbucks	World's largest coffee-shop chain, 700+ outlets in UK. Public company (US)	Not prominent	Community—'being involved in the communities where we are, and backing young people nationwide'; Ethical sourcing – improving livelihoods for coffee, tea, cocoa and spice suppliers; Diversity -- 'human connections, community involvement and the celebration of cultures'; Social quality of UK highstreets; Employment; The Coffee Buying Guidelines covered: Economic accountability (transparency of payments along chain);	Claimed to 'seek out and engage [staff] who are as diverse as the communities we serve'; Had developed a set of Buying Guidelines for coffee (Coffee and Farmer Equity practices, CAFE) – aimed to have 100% coffee certified to this standard by 2015; Provided agronomic and financial support to coffee growers; Worked with World Cocoa Foundation to improve farmers' livelihoods; Through a 'supplier diversity program', sought to increase business relationships with minority- and women-owned suppliers; Had developed a tea programme, the CHAI initiative, which provided health and education to tea and spice-growing communities; Commissioned and published a report on the firm's contribution to the UK economy, which covered employment and other social impacts, eg increasing footfall and 'dwelltime' on highstreets

1. Actor Food Service)	2. Type of organization	3. Treatment of sustainability	4. Scope / framing of activity: Examples of social themes / concerns / aspirations	5. Operationalisation: Examples of how social themes / concerns were acted on
			Safe, fair and humane working conditions; Adequate living conditions; The CHAI initiative covered health and education;	
Tragus Group	One of the UK's largest 'casual dining' groups, providing mostly dine-in restaurants (chains included Belgo, Strada, Cafe Rouge and Bella Italia), c 299 outlets in UK. Private company (UK), majority owned by Blackstone Group, a (public) investment company (US)	Not prominent	Employees; Communities; Healthy eating	Differentiated by brand – eg Bella Italia had launched a community charity; Tragus Group had signed up to Responsibility Deal targets on salt reduction and removal of transfats and worked with suppliers to achieve these; Provided information to enable healthy choices
Whitbread	UK's largest hotel, restaurant and coffee shop operator (divisions included Costa Coffee, Premier Inns, Brewer's Fayre, Taybarns, Beefeater Grill). Public company (UK)	Not prominent	Team and Community (covering work experience & apprenticeships, Investing in team members and Investing in communities); Customer Wellbeing (covering sustainable sourcing, 'menu development', and customer engagement); Committed to being 'a force for good in all the communities we operate in'	Differentiated by brand / division; EG, for Costa: All coffee Rainforest Alliance certified; Ran a development charity, the Costa Foundation, to provide education and teacher training in coffee growing areas; Sourced milk from the same group of farmers for several years, with a price said to reflect production costs; Created 1500 jobs a year, and provided work experience and placements for young people from challenging backgrounds. Costa stores used by community groups after trading hours, for meetings. For Whitbread hotels: Participated in 'the Big Conversation in Hospitality', an initiative to attract workers into the sector; Provided employment for young unemployed;

1. Actor Food Service)	2. Type of organization	3. Treatment of sustainability	4. Scope / framing of activity: Examples of social themes / concerns / aspirations	5. Operationalisation: Examples of how social themes / concerns were acted on
				Provided literacy, numeracy training -- target: to deliver one apprenticeship at all 650+ hotels and 1000 'structured work placements' over the next five years; Participated in Responsibility Deals; Had encouraged reformulation / menu design to support healthy eating choices; For Taybarns: No mention of action on social themes, emphasis on choice and value
Yum! Brands	One of the world's largest 'system food' operators by number of outlets (c. 41,000 in more than 125 countries and territories). UK brands include KFC. Public company (US)	Not prominent	Nutrition; Employees; Communities; Hunger relief; Diversity	Had overarching policies for all brands, e.g. On nutrition: -Appointed Global Nutrition Officer in 2012; -Had a Nutrition Strategy focusing on offering more choice, more transparency and improving nutritional profile, e.g. global target for 2020: 20% of meal options to meet 1/3 of the Recommended Daily Allowance (RDA) established for the relevant country (or 1/3 of the World Health Organization RDA if a country has not established RDA's); -Provided information to support healthy choice; -Phasing out palm oil; -Provided food at affordable prices: 'we believe we can make the greatest contribution and impact by making food accessible to the less fortunate in the world', both customers and the needy helped through aid programmes; Operated a Supplier Code of covering working hours and conditions, child and forced labour, non-discrimination; Ran wellbeing programmes for staff; Provided apprenticeships, training and supported a degree programme in restaurant management at de Montfort University; Supported World Hunger Relief
3663	Wholesale distributor. Supplied prepared foods and ingredients to restaurants, schools, hospitals, businesses.	Not prominent	Healthy Eating; People; Communities; Supply Chain; Employee-related issues	Had appointed a network of 65 internal, voluntary 'sustainability coordinators' to communicate on sustainability within company; Employment policies included insurance, health care, eye care, flexible working arrangements, childcare vouchers; Supported Hospitality Action charity and was main foodservice

1. Actor Food Service)	2. Type of organization	3. Treatment of sustainability	4. Scope / framing of activity: Examples of social themes / concerns / aspirations	5. Operationalisation: Examples of how social themes / concerns were acted on
	'3663' a trading name of BFS group, a wholly owned subsidiary of Bidvest Group, an international services and distribution company. Public company (South Africa)		included: engagement, diversity, health and safety, training and family support; Charity; Information /transparency	stockist of 'One Water', a charity-run brand of bottled water, from which profits go towards building roundabout-powered PlayPump® water systems in Southern Africa; Provided nutrition labelling and 'healthy' ranges; Used certification schemes to assure supply chains; Supplied some Fairtrade products; Had a 'regional sourcing' policy to support local economies

Annex F: Website Data Summary Table Category 5 TRADE ASSOCIATIONS & LEVY BODIES

1. Actor (Trade Associations etc)	2. Type of organization	3. Prominence of sustainability	4. Scope / framing of activity: Examples of social themes / concerns / aspirations	5. Operationalisation: Examples of how social themes / concerns were acted on
Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board	Statutory levy-funded body for farmers and growers	Prominent: aimed to increase 'efficiency, productivity and sustainability'	Farm viability; Employment	Worked to raise schoolchildren's awareness of food and 'where it comes from'; Worked to ensure agriculture and horticulture industries could attract and develop workers with appropriate skills . As statutory body, ensured that 'proper account' taken of government priorities
BPEX	Statutory levy-funded body for pig meat producers and processors in England	Not prominent	No social themes mentioned	No actions mentioned
British Frozen Food Federation	Trade association for frozen food supply chain companies	Prominent: Sustainability identified as a 'key' and 'difficult' topic'	'Ethical and social issues'; Food waste	Was building online database of best- practice case studies involving distribution of frozen foods to the charity meal-provider Fareshare
British Hospitality Association	Trade association for hoteliers, restaurateurs and caterers	Not prominent	Employment; Food safety; Nutrition	Ran a 'Big Hospitality Conversation' aiming to create 300,000 jobs by 2020, 60,000 of them for 16-24 year olds; Supported members' efforts to meet labelling, Responsibility Deal and Government Buying Guideline commitments on salt reduction, transfats, calorie information and palm oil
British Meat Processors Association	Trade association for the meat and meat products sector	Not prominent	Health; Nutrition; Employment	Supported salt-reduction programmes in processed meat products; Produced a 2012 strategy document 'Towards a Sustainable Meat Industry' which recommended work on reducing trans fats and salt, and also encouraged 'more information on the importance of red meat as part of a healthy diet to be made available'; also recommended work to ensure appropriately skilled work force would continue to be available

1. Actor (Trade Associations etc)	2. Type of organization	3. Prominence of sustainability	4. Scope / framing of activity: Examples of social themes / concerns / aspirations	5. Operationalisation: Examples of how social themes / concerns were acted on
British Retail Consortium	Trade association for the retail trade, including food retailers	Not prominent	Food (diet, nutrition, health); Employment (opportunities, diversity, skills, wages); Communities	Published a report called *Commitment to health* covering labelling, marketing, portion sizes, reformulation and healthy eating – aimed 'to help customers make healthier and balanced choices'; Campaigned for 'caution' in approach to raising National Minimum Wage
British Soft Drinks Association	Trade association for producers and manufacturers of soft drinks, juices and bottled water	Prominent: link to Soft Drinks Sustainability Roadmap	Health and wellbeing (hydration, dental hygiene)	Published a Briefing paper: *Soft drinks are not a cause of diabetes* Developed an industry code-of-conduct covering labour standards in fruit juice supply chains; Supported campaign against litter; Soft Drinks Industry Sustainability Strategy, launched 2008, updated annually to 2013 then replaced by Soft Drinks Sustainability Roadmap, a 'route towards environmental success and resource efficiency' (no social themes)
Dairyco	Statutory levy-funded body for dairy farmers	Prominent: an aim was 'to improve the sustainability of British dairy farming'	Farm viability	Provided online advice on various aspects of farm management
Dairy UK	Trade association for the dairy supply chain	Not prominent	Prices paid to farmers; Transparency in pricing arrangements; Nutrition; Animal welfare; Food safety; Farmer livelihoods; Supply chain relationships	Published the 2013 *Dairy UK White Paper*; Worked on Dairy Industry Code of Best Practice on Contractual Relationships (Voluntary Code) Produced Dairy Roadmap, a unique approach to sustainability', but only covers environmental sustainability
Eblex	Statutory levy-funded body for English beef and sheep meat producers	Not prominent	None mentioned	None mentioned
Food and Drink Federation	Trade association for	Prominent: identified as a priority, defined as	Nutritional quality of food; Food affordability;	Published a guide to Sustainable Sourcing, which identified (unspecified) social impacts of supply chain as a risk;

1. Actor (Trade Associations etc)	2. Type of organization	3. Prominence of sustainability	4. Scope / framing of activity: Examples of social themes / concerns / aspirations	5. Operationalisation: Examples of how social themes / concerns were acted on
	the food and drink manufacturing sector	'achieving a better quality of life for everyone, now and for future generations'	Social impacts of supply chain; Employment	Engaged in 'co-creation in policymaking' with government on Green Food Project; Convened conference on 'Secure and sustainable food' ahead of Rio+20; Campaigned to attract workers into sector ; Campaigned on 'workplace wellbeing'; The FDF's 2007 flagship sustainability initiative, the 'Five Fold Environmental Ambition', did not include social themes. The 2012 update broadened the approach
Fresh Produce Consortium	Trade association for the fresh produce sector	Not prominent (one aim was to 'promote responsible and sustainable trading'	None mentioned	None mentioned
Home Grown Cereals Authority	Statutory levy-funded body for growers and processors of cereals and oilseeds	Not prominent (but an aim was to create an arable supply chain 'where all are able to profit from a sustainable sector'	None mentioned	None mentioned
Horticulture Development Company	Statutory levy-funded body for horticulture sector	Not prominent	None mentioned	None mentioned
National Association of British and Irish Millers	Trade association for flour millers	Not prominent	Health and safety; Training and staff development; Nutrition and obesity; Sustainable agriculture; Ethical trading; Food safety Terms of trade in supply chains; Use of child labour	In 2005 produced policy to help members manage their businesses 'to the benefit of society'; Produced guidelines on terms of trade in supply chains, requiring written contracts, stipulating dispute resolution procedures, and prohibiting use of child labour

1. Actor (Trade Associations etc)	2. Type of organization	3. Prominence of sustainability	4. Scope / framing of activity: Examples of social themes / concerns / aspirations	5. Operationalisation: Examples of how social themes / concerns were acted on
Potato Council	Statutory levy-funded body for potato producers	Not prominent (Business Plan 2013-16 called *Towards a sustainable and profitable potato sector*	Healthy eating	Produced a Business Plan to guide sector's development towards greater sustainability – included a target to increase awareness of potatoes' contribution to healthy diet
Seafish	Statutory levy body for UK seafood industry	Prominent: aim was 'a sustainable future for the seafood industry'	Crew safety; Crew hygiene; Engagement; Nutritional value of fish	Developed and ran the Responsible Fishing Scheme (RFS), a standard for the condition of vessels and the application of good practice by skipper and crew in their fishing operations; Promoted health aspects of seafood consumption; Promoted safety and training of workers.

Annex F: Website Data Summary Table Category 6: TRADE UNIONS

1. Actor (Trade Unions)	2. Type of organization	3. Treatment of sustainability	4. Scope / framing of activity: Examples of social themes / concerns /aspirations	5. Operationalisation: Examples of how social themes / concerns were acted on
Bakers', Food and Allied Workers' Union (BFAWU)	Union for workers in food manufacturing	Not prominent	Working conditions; Pay and pay differentials; Workers' rights and protections; Justice; Worker exploitation; Workplace discrimination	Published reports critical of pay differentials and replacement of permanent posts with agency work; Organised protest against Premier Foods cuts in hours and pay of permanent workforce, and use of agency workers; Instigated 'day of action' on 'justice' for those working in the fast food industry: focus on zero- hours contracts and low pay
Farmers for Action	Union for farmers 'disillusioned' with NFU	Not prominent	Wellbeing; Farmgate milk prices; Viability of dairy farms	Organised protest against Muller Wiseman dairies over milk prices paid to farmers; Protested to CEO of Morrisons over prices paid to dairy farmers
National Farmers Union (NFU)	Main farmers' union	Not prominent (where mentioned, usually in sense of environmental sustainability)	Farming livelihoods; Farmgate prices	'Advised and lobbied' MPs and MEPs to influence legislation; Provided technical and legal advice to farmers
Tenant Farmers' Association	Union for tenant farmers	Not prominent	Farming livelihoods; Viability and value of tenant farms	Provided advice and support to tenant farmers, including legal advice on land tenure and rent; Lobbied 'at all levels of government' on behalf of tenant farmers
Trades Union Congress (TUC)	Umbrella organization for UK unions	Not prominent	Jobs; Fairness; Workers' rights; Pay; Discrimination; Equality; Decent work; Adequate benefits for those not in work	Published reports on a wide range of social and labour-related issues; Ran a website called WorkSMART, a plain-English guide to workers' rights; Stressed importance of taking workers' livelihoods into consideration in transition to low-carbon economy (e.g. published 2013 report *A green and fair future)*; Published report prior to 2015 Paris climate talks stating unions might not support global climate change legislation if it failed to protect jobs
Unite the Union	Union for workers in food retail, food service,	Not prominent	Equity; Pay; Discrimination at work;	Organised protest against food logistics company Kuehne & Nagel over proposed restructuring and relocation of workforce; Campaigned against zero hours contracts

1. Actor (Trade Unions)	2. Type of organization	3. Treatment of sustainability	4. Scope / framing of activity: Examples of social themes / concerns /aspirations	5. Operationalisation: Examples of how social themes / concerns were acted on
	manufacturing, horticulture and farming		Worker and workplace rights	
Union of Shop, Distribution and Allied Workers (USDAW)	Union for food retail, factory & warehouse workers, drivers, dairy workers, butchers and meat packers	Not prominent	Workers' rights; Health and safety; Pay; Discrimination; Worker development; Quality of life	Campaigned for union recognition at M&S by highlighting the company's support for 'fair trade' principles among suppliers; Campaigned to protect workers' rights on Sunday shop opening

Annex F: Website Data Summary Table Category 7: CONSULTANCIES

1. Actor (Consul-tancies)	2. Type of organization	3. Treatment of sustainability	4. Scope / framing of activity: Examples of social themes / concerns / aspirations	5. Operationalisation: Examples of how social themes / concerns were acted on
Accenture	Global management consultancy and 'business process outsourcing' (BPO) company. Public company (US)	Not prominent	'A more positive social impact'	Advised on sustainability strategy (eg Diageo, Bonsucro); Conducted a survey of CEOs' attitudes to sustainability for UN Global Compact in 2010; Ran an online 'Sustainability Academy' for businesses, with research database and webinars
Benchmark Holdings	Group of food supply chain sustainability consultancies operating under different company names. Public company (UK)	Prominent: ambition 'to build a profitable business based on the growing need to create a sustainable and ethical future for global food production'	Ethics (not specified); Animal welfare; Farmers' livelihoods	Developed a food supply sustainability framework based on '3Es' -- environment, economics and ethics; Ran the Food Animal Initiative, promoting sustainable food animal production, with commercial research farms in UK, Brazil and China; Conducted livestock farm modelling, e.g. for McDonald's Europe and Chinese government
Best Foot Forward	Sustainability consultancy, since 2013 part of Anthesis Consulting Group. Public company (UK)	Prominent: aim was 'inspiring and enabling social, environmental and economic sustainability'	Staff and customer engagement	Helped organizations (e.g. Pepsico, M&S, Tesco) and government (eg Defra on Soft Drinks Road Map) with sustainability research and strategies; Advised on compliance with GRI framework; Helped organizations to build capacity internally so that [their] staff could 'own' sustainability and put it into practice
Brook Lyndhurst	Research and strategy consultancy. Private company (UK)	Prominent: aimed to 'build a more sustainable society'	Sustainable society; Social responsibility; Communities; Engagement; Awareness	Contributed to the London Food Strategy; Worked with WRAP on consumers' attitudes to food waste; Worked with Fairtrade Foundation on why people make ethical purchases; Worked with Defra on attitudes to animal welfare
Ergon Associates	Specialist consultancy	Not prominent	Decent work agenda; Labour rights;	Worked with companies, regulators, MSIs and pressure groups on labour and human rights in food businesses and along food supply

1. Actor (Consul-tancies)	2. Type of organization	3. Treatment of sustainability	4. Scope / framing of activity: Examples of social themes / concerns / aspirations	5. Operationalisation: Examples of how social themes / concerns were acted on
	working on labour and human rights. Private company (UK)		Human rights; Employment; Gender; Development	chains; Published report on 'modern slavery' on 10th anniversary of Morecambe Bay cocklers' deaths
Forum for the Future	Sustainability-focused business advisory group. Non-profit private company and charity (UK)	Prominent: slogan was 'Action for a sustainable world'	The requirement for the food system to meet the needs of all; Fairness in trading relationships	Sought to change the way businesses operate, to embed sustainability thinking and practice Advised businesses on sustainability strategy; Developed 'scenarios' to encourage long-term thinking and transformative change, e.g. called for a 'Global Grain Initiative', using scenario-building to 'future-proof' the grain value chain; Coordinated Tea 2030– an MSI to improve sustainability of tea supply chains
Roberts-bridge Group	Sustainability consultancy. Private company (UK)	Prominent: aimed to enable businesses to 'shift towards sustainability'	Environmental justice; Social wellbeing	Advised, coached and built capacity in businesses; Developed or contributed to sustainability strategies for clients including Coke, Pepsi, Cargill, Nestle, Danone, Sainsbury, Rainforest Alliance, Unilever, Waitrose
SustainAbility	Thinktank and 'strategic advisory firm'. Private company (UK)	Prominent: aimed to 'catalyze business leadership on sustainability'	In 'Triple Bottom Line', social represented as 'People'; Access (i.e. access for everyone to healthcare, nutrition, energy, shelter, mobility, education and economic opportunity); Accountability (covering business ethics, fair and inclusive markets and transparency)	Promulgated 'Triple Bottom Line approach', stressing importance of including social impacts in non-financial reporting; Advised companies on their sustainability strategies and reporting, helping to 'define and tackle' the challenges; Worked with Nestle on its first sustainability report, in conformance with the GRI framework; also worked with Nestle on annual 'stakeholder engagement' events; Worked with Coca-Cola on 'value-chain strategy'
TwentyFifty	A 'values-led' management consultancy. Private company (UK)	Prominent: 'we put ... sustainability at the centre of our business'	In a Venn Diagram with three overlapping circles representing organizational development, stakeholder dialogue and human rights, the area where they overlap is labelled 'social, sustainability'	Working with food supply chain companies sourcing in developing countries, it encouraged inclusion of social criteria in sourcing policies and supplier selection; Trained buyers; Advised on supplier audits and performance; Mediated between business and NGOs; Contributed to Mondelez / Kraft Foods development of a sustainability programme, 'Cocoa Life'

1. Actor (Consul-tancies)	2. Type of organization	3. Treatment of sustainability	4. Scope / framing of activity: Examples of social themes / concerns / aspirations	5. Operationalisation: Examples of how social themes / concerns were acted on
Two Tomorrows	Sustainability consultancy. Owned by DNV GL, an international ship classification, certification and risk management organization, non-profit foundation (Norway)	Prominent: provides 'sustainability advisory services'	Responsible sourcing; Fair trade; Impacts on workers and communities; Human rights; Responsible formulation, marketing and labelling of food products; Obesity	Assisted with or assured social reporting, e.g. assisted global brewer InBev to produce annual reports against the GRI G3 guidelines; Assured sustainability reports of ingredients manufacturer Danisco, the Co-operative Group, Traidcraft and Morrisons

Annex F: Website Data Summary Table Category 8: AUDIT ORGANISATIONS

1. Actor (Audit)	2. Type of organisation	3. Treatment of sustainability	4. Scope / framing of activity: Examples of social themes /concerns / aspirations	5. Operationalisation: Examples of how social themes / concerns were acted on
Access to Nutrition Foundation (ATNF)	Not-for-profit foundation promoting responsible behaviour by companies on nutrition. Funded by Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and Wellcome Trust	Not prominent	Supply of quality nutrition, judged by criteria on: Corporate strategy on nutrition; Product formulation; Product affordability &accessibility; Responsible marketing; Supporting healthy diets and lifestyle; Product labelling & use of health claims; Influencing policymakers and engaging g stakeholders; Other activities to combat undernutrition, e.g. fortification	Ran the Access to Nutrition Index, rating and ranking 25 of the world's largest food and beverage manufacturers' performance on aspects deemed to indicate commitment to improving nutrition
Account-Ability	Think tank and business advisory firm focusing on non-financial reporting. Private not-for-profit company (UK)	Prominent: mission to 'mainstream Sustainable development into organizational performance'	Accountability, defined as 'acknowledging, assuming responsibility for and being transparent about the impacts of ... policies, decisions, actions, products'. Responsible reporting should observe the principles of: Inclusivity, materiality and responsiveness	Developed AA1000 series of standards for sustainability reporting, sustainability reporting assurance, and stakeholder engagement; Trained organizations and individuals to implement the standards; Aimed to set and influence sustainability standards; Aimed to raise the credibility of organizational public disclosure on sustainability activity
BSI and BSI Group	BSI Group developed standards and was the world's largest certifier. BSI was the National Standards Body, representing UK government in international standard-setting. Non-profit Royal Charter company	Not prominent	Positive impact on communities and society; Indirectly, the social criteria of the standards it developed and certified against	Developed and certified against a range of technical food and organizational standards, some of which had social components, such as RSPO; Certified against social standard SA 8000 and non-financial reporting standard AA1000 Participated in MSI developing ISO Guidance Standard 26000 on Social Responsibility (q.v.); Advised on achieving and maintaining compliance

1. Actor (Audit)	2. Type of organisation	3. Treatment of sustainability	4. Scope / framing of activity: Examples of social themes /concerns / aspirations	5. Operationalisation: Examples of how social themes / concerns were acted on
	(UK)			
Bureau Veritas	Testing, inspection and certification company. Public company (France)	Not prominent	Social responsibility; Indirectly, the issues covered in the standards it certified against	Audited and certified food companies to Organic, GlobalGAP, RSPO, SA 8000, SMETA and UTZ standards, all of which have social components; Advised on reaching and maintaining compliance with the standards; 'Deliver[ed]' sustainability to clients by helping them build sustainability strategies, including KPIs
Consumer Goods Forum	International membership organization of senior business managers. Association constituted under French law	Prominent: sustainability was one of the organization's five 'pillars'; the GSCP aimed to help buyers and supplier to 'truly incorporate social sustainability' into management practices	GSCP covered: Forced, bonded, indentured and prison labour; Child labour; Freedom of association and right to collective bargaining; Discrimination, harassment and abuse; Health and safety; Wages, benefits and terms of employment ; Working hours	Initiated and ran the Global Social Compliance Programme (GSCP) and Reference Code, aiming to provide a single 'platform' to harmonise various social codes and standards, to avoid duplication and share best practice; GSCP 'Taskforce' included Tesco, Marks and Spencer and Starbucks
Corporate Citizenship	Corporate responsibility consultancy, division of Chime Communications, public company (UK)	Prominent: motto was 'Sustainability, simplified'	Corporate community investment; Corporate tax	Ran the London Benchmarking Group (LBG) Model, a standard for quantifying corporate community investment (CCI); In 2011, published 'Tax as a Corporate Responsibility Issue'

1. Actor (Audit)	2. Type of organisation	3. Treatment of sustainability	4. Scope / framing of activity: Examples of social themes /concerns / aspirations	5. Operationalisation: Examples of how social themes / concerns were acted on
Covalence Ethicalquote	Financial research and indexing organization. Part of Covalence SA, Private company (Switzerland)	Prominent: rated companies' sustainability performance	Criteria in the 'society' category cover: Impacts on local communities; Humanitarian actions; Corruption; Lobbying activities; Contributions to political parties; Anticompetitive behaviour; Compliance with social laws and regulations; Other categories contain criteria on: Working conditions and practices; Wages (including those paid to executives); Local sourcing; Local hiring; Diversity; Equal rights, human rights, indigenous rights; Decent work	Analysed and indexed c. 2800 companies' sustainability performance, based on 50 'environmental, social and governance' (ESG) criteria, drawn from GRI and international frameworks plus their own experience, divided into 7 categories; Provided information to enable investors to integrate sustainability criteria into investment decisions; Helped companies to use sustainability performance to attract investment
EIRIS	Organization promoting and facilitating socially responsible investment. Non profit private company (social enterprise) and charity (UK)	Not prominent	Criteria included: Human rights; Supply chain labour standards; Bribery and corruption	Provided research and ratings on c. 3,500 companies' performance against 110 criteria, covering environmental, social and governance performance; Provided information enabling investors (e.g. fund managers, brokers) to integrate sustainability criteria into investment decisions; Provided free ethical investment advice to consumers
Ethical Consumer Research Association	Consumer research, rating and campaign organization. Non-profit co-operative (UK)	Prominent: goal of 'making global businesses more sustainable through consumer pressure'	Workers 'rights (18 criteria); Irresponsible marketing; Land rights; Antisocial finance; Factory farming	Researched and published ratings of companies and consumer products, with criteria covering 300+ topics in 19 areas in 5 categories; Provided information enabling consumers to make purchase decisions based on sustainability criteria

1. Actor (Audit)	2. Type of organisation	3. Treatment of sustainability	4. Scope / framing of activity: Examples of social themes /concerns / aspirations	5. Operationalisation: Examples of how social themes / concerns were acted on
Ethical Tea Partnership	Non-profit membership organization for tea companies, UK-based	Prominent but qualified: 'working to create a tea chain that is socially just and environmentally sustainable'	Labour rights; Working conditions; Smallholders' livelihoods	Developed and disseminated the ETP Global Standard, incorporating social criteria based on ETI Base Code; Ran a collaborative platform to improve social and environmental standards in tea sourcing; Assisted producers to meet other standards, e.g. Utz
Fairfood International	Organization promoting fairer trade. Non-profit, Netherlands-based	Prominent: worked 'for a sustainable and fair global food system'	Human rights; Labour conditions; Fair terms of trade; Practices harmful to wildlife or livestock; Market-distorting subsidies; Tax avoidance; Unfair buying practices	Developed a framework of 26 sustainability criteria by which to identify 'hotspots' in food supply chains, eg shrimp industry in Thailand, vanilla in Madagascar Worked with food industry to tackle hotspots; Campaigned to raise awareness of issues
Fairtrade Foundation	UK member of Fairtrade Labelling Organizations International. Non-profit private company and charity	Prominent : saw fair trade as a 'strategy' for sustainable development'	Terms of trade; Prices paid to growers and workers; Workers' rights; Worker empowerment, including empowerment of women workers	Licensed use in the UK of the Fairtrade standard set by Fairtrade Labelling Organizations International, which aimed to improve the livelihoods of small-sale commodity growers in developing countries by setting a cost-based standard for prices paid to growers. Certified importers and companies in the UK using the standard; Advocated for fairer trade and wider use of the standard
Foreign Trade Association	Trade association for businesses and trade associations	Prominent: the motto is: 'Free trade, sustainable trade'	Compliance with national legal thresholds; Freedom of association; Freedom from discrimination; Prohibitions on child and forced labour; Engagement and capacity building	Developed and ran the Business Social Compliance Initiative(BSCI), a code of conduct on working conditions in global supply chains
FTSE Group	Financial services provider. Owned by LSE Group, public limited company (UK)	Not prominent (but aimed to advise investors 'wishing to capitalise on ... [companies']	Human rights; Countering bribery; Supply chain labour standards (covering forced labour, child labour, discrimination, worker representation)	Ran FTSE4Good, an index that rated companies against 'globally recognised corporate responsibility standards', to guide investors 2011 added ESG rating (Environmental, Social, Governance), covering more companies, with more

1. Actor (Audit)	2. Type of organisation	3. Treatment of sustainability	4. Scope / framing of activity: Examples of social themes /concerns / aspirations	5. Operationalisation: Examples of how social themes / concerns were acted on
		sustainability performance'		criteria
GlobalGAP	Standard-setting organization for global agricultural production. Non-profit membership organization for retailers and producers. Managed by FoodPLUS GmbH, a German non-profit company owned by the EHI Retail Institute, a German research organization for the retail industry	Prominent: objectives included 'safe, sustainable agricultural production worldwide'	Core standard covered: Worker health and safety; Worker welfare; Communication with workers; Site facilities; Worker accommodation; GRASP 'control points' covered: Workers' rights based on ILO criteria; Procedural issues such as provision of payroll records; Training	Ran a voluntary (but widely required) standard for agricultural production, with some social criteria; Since 2011, ran GRASP (Risk Assessment on Social Practice) as an optional add-on to the main standard
ISEAL Alliance	Membership organization for sustainability standard-setting and accreditation bodies. Private company (UK)	Prominent: 'Standards show the way to sustainability'	'Content-neutral' – did not specify criteria for individual standards	Set process standards for social standard-setters and accreditation bodies; Defined and communicated good practice; Advocated for social standards as a means to attain sustainability
Marine Stewardship Council	Non-profit standard-setting organization for seafood. Private company and charity (UK)	Prominent: motto was 'Certified sustainable seafood'	A sustainable fishery defined as 'socially fair and responsible'; Livelihoods; Engagement'	Developed and ran sustainability standards for capture fisheries and aquaculture
Oxfam	Anti-poverty and famine campaign group. Private company and charity (UK)	Not prominent: no tabs or links	Poverty alleviation; Fair prices to farmers and fair pay for workers in developing world; Land and water access; Rights of women food producers;	Ran the Behind the Brands campaign, which rated 10 multinational food companies across a range of social and environmental criteria; Published and campaigned on 'the broken global food system';

1. Actor (Audit)	2. Type of organisation	3. Treatment of sustainability	4. Scope / framing of activity: Examples of social themes /concerns / aspirations	5. Operationalisation: Examples of how social themes / concerns were acted on
			Transparency	Sought to operationalise social goals through engagement with business;
Partner Africa	Provided ethical auditing services and capacity building in Arica and Asia. Social enterprise (UK)	Not prominent (but noted that 'Businesses and individuals struggle to meet their sustainability goals without support')	Under the umbrella of 'ethical and socially responsible business', covered: Fairness in trading relationships; Workers' livelihoods; Reducing inequality; Indirectly, the social aspects of the standards against which it audited	Audited enterprises in Africa and Asia against social standards including SMETA, ETI, RA, Fairtrade and individual companies' standards and Codes of Conduct; Clients included Cadbury, Coca-Cola, Diageo, the Ethical Tea Partnership, the Fairtrade Foundation, Marks and Spencer, Sainsbury, Tesco; Trained organizations to achieve and maintain compliance with standards
PwC	Global financial services company: one of the 'Big Four' auditors. Limited liability partnership in UK	Not prominent (but stated that 'integrating sustainability strategies...[was] becoming the new norm for business')	Firms' 'value to society'; Employee engagement; Poverty; Human health; Trust; Inclusive economic and social development	Developed and promoted its own version of integrated reporting, Total Impact Management and Measurement (TIMM), designed to take a holistic approach to quantifying and monetising firms' impacts (including social impacts), to enable 'optimised' trade-offs; Advised companies on how to develop sustainability strategies; Advised on sustainability reporting; Assured social reporting
Rainforest Alliance	Eco-labelling and certification organization promoting biodiversity and sustainable livelihoods. Non-profit private company (UK)	Prominent: claimed its frog logo was globally recognised as symbol of environmental, social and economic sustainability	The social pillar of the SAN standard summed up as social equity; Other themes: Livelihoods; Poverty alleviation	Ran and promoted an eco-label for sustainably produced agricultural products. Certified against the standard set by the MSI Sustainable Agriculture Network (SAN), q.v.
Red Tractor Assurance	Standard setting organization. Non-profit private company (UK)	Not prominent	Animal welfare	Ran standards for the production, handling and storage of agricultural products in the UK
Royal Society for the Prevention of	Campaign organization focusing on animal welfare. Charity & non-	Not prominent: no tabs or links	Animal welfare; Food safety; Food affordability	Ran Freedom Food animal welfare standard and meat labelling scheme – intentionally not confined to 'premium' products to make high-welfare food affordable; (so e.g.

1. Actor (Audit)	2. Type of organisation	3. Treatment of sustainability	4. Scope / framing of activity: Examples of social themes /concerns / aspirations	5. Operationalisation: Examples of how social themes / concerns were acted on
Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA)	profit (UK)			assured indoor as well as outdoor raised poultry); Campaigned on the welfare of food animals
Sedex (Supplier Ethical Data Exchange)	Non-profit membership organization for food supply chain companies. Private company (UK)	Prominent: mission was 'empowering sustainable supply chains'	Labour standards; Worker health and safety; SMETA incorporated: ETI base code on labour standards; Plus additions to cover home-working and subcontracting	Ran an online database allowing members to upload, view and share social and ethical audit reports; Developed a 'best practice' framework for ethical auditing, SMETA (Sedex Members' Ethical Trade Audit); Provided training / capacity building in use of platform and ethical audit
SGS	Global inspection and certification company. Public company (Switzerland)	Prominent: aimed to 'make a real contribution to sustainable living' and help other companies operate more sustainably	'Managing social impacts while supporting business growth'; Minimising the risk of corruption and bribery; Developing a better working or social environment; Worker fulfilment People; Community; Indirectly, the criteria of standards it certified against	Audited and certified food businesses against a wide range of technical standards, including Bonsucro, RSPO, RTRS and UTZ, all of which have social components
Soil Association	Campaigning and standard-setting organization promoting organic food production. Private company and charity with wholly owned certification subsidiary (private company) (UK)	Prominent: campaigned for 'healthy, humane and sustainable food, farming and land use'	The principles of organic agriculture included fairness and care. Fairness defined as 'equity, respect, justice and stewardship of the shared world, both among people and in their relations to other living beings'. Organic practice should provide a good quality of life, contribute to food sovereignty, alleviate poverty and treat food animals fairly. Fairness also applied to future generations; The SA Ethical Trade Standards covered trading relationships, labour	Developed Organic Standards for food production and processing; Developed an Ethical Trade Standard; Promoted wider use of organic standards; Through wholly-owned subsidiary SA Certification , audited and certified to SA standards

1. Actor (Audit)	2. Type of organisation	3. Treatment of sustainability	4. Scope / framing of activity: Examples of social themes /concerns / aspirations	5. Operationalisation: Examples of how social themes / concerns were acted on
			rights and working conditions	
Sustainable Restaurant Association (SRA)	Standard-setting and certification organization for restaurants. Non-profit private company (UK)	Prominent in name and aim: 'helping restaurants become more sustainable and diners make more sustainable choices'	Social section of standard covered: Community engagement (e.g. through business, charity or employment); Treating people fairly (staff, suppliers and customers); Healthy eating (helping people make good choices); Responsible marketing (ban on 'greenwash', emphasis on transparency)	Ran a sustainability standard for restaurants; Built capacity; Audited and certified to the standard

Annex F: Website Data Summary Table Category 9: ADVOCACY ORGANISATIONS

1. Actor (Advocacy)	2. Type of organisation	3. Treatment of sustainability	4. Scope / framing of activity: Examples of social themes /concerns / aspirations	5. Operationalisation: Examples of how social themes / concerns were acted on
ActionAid	Anti-poverty organization, part of ActionAid International. Private company and charity(UK)	Not prominent	Poverty alleviation; Fairness; Economic justice; Food rights; Hunger / malnutrition Small scale farmers' livelihoods	2013 report 'Sweet Nothings' investigated human costs of tax avoidance by Sugar Zambia, a subsidiary of Associated British Foods; Produced a report called 'Tax responsibility: The business case for making tax a corporate responsibility issue'
Business for Social Responsibility (BSR)	Global membership organization for businesses. US-based non-profit	Prominent: aimed to 'work with business to create a just and sustainable world'	Stakeholder engagement; Community impacts; Incorporating human rights into business; 'Food, agriculture and beverages' work stream addressed workers rights, access to water, hunger, poverty, health and wellness	Provided advice to member companies including Cargill, M&S, McCain, Mondelez and Sodexo on strategy, 'materiality analysis' and reporting; Helped Starbucks 'connect' with stakeholders
Business in the Community (BITC)	UK 'business-led charity' focusing on business impacts on society. Private company, part of the Prince of Wales's Charities, a group of non-profits of which the Prince is president	Prominent: aimed to secure 'a fairer society and a more sustainable future; also championed 'marketplace sustainability'	Communities affected by businesses; Employee welfare; Working conditions; Fair pay; Education; Youth employment; Rural livelihoods; Help for socially disadvantaged groups	Promoted 'marketplace sustainability' (where businesses prosper by producing goods or providing services that contribute to high-quality sustainable lifestyles); Disseminated the above idea through networking, sharing best practice, toolkits (eg'Sustainable Business Toolkit'); Ran the CR Index, a framework enabling companies to benchmark their responsibility performance; Ran awards for CSR and a Community Investment standard; Ran a grant-making body to support sustainable rural livelihoods
Compassion in World farming (CIWF)	Food animal campaign group. Private company and charity (UK)	Not prominent	Food and farm animal welfare	Worked with retailers, manufacturers and food service companies to persuade and help them to 'to place farm animal welfare at the forefront of their corporate social responsibility agendas'; Contributed to standards and product design 'to to help raise baseline farm animal welfare standards;

1. Actor (Advocacy)	2. Type of organisation	3. Treatment of sustainability	4. Scope / framing of activity: Examples of social themes /concerns / aspirations	5. Operationalisation: Examples of how social themes / concerns were acted on
				Ran awards for companies demonstrating commitment to raising standards in specific sectors; Ran public campaigns exposing living conditions of factory farmed animals
Consensus Action on Salt and Health (CASH	Network of medics, academics and nutritionists. Charity (UK)	Not prominent	Nutrition – specifically health effects of excess salt consumption ; Responsibility of food manufacturers	Ran public campaigns on importance of salt reduction to health; Researched and reported salt levels in manufactured foods; Worked to persuade food manufacturers and food service companies to reduce salt levels in manufactured foods Advocated for clear food labelling
Corporate-Register	Organization working for higher standards of corporate responsibility and CR / sustainability reporting. Private 'self-funded' company (UK)	Prominent : aimed to be 'a register of steps towards sustainable business'	None specified	Promoted best practice in corporate responsibility / sustainability reporting Provided 'the world's largest' online directory of CR and sustainability reports; Ran global award scheme for corporate responsibility reporting (CRRA)
Corporate Watch	Research and publishing group focusing on activities of large companies. Non-profit, workers co-operative (UK)	Not prominent (but aimed to investigate 'the social and environmental impact of corporations and corporate power')	Equity; Exploitation; Democracy	Published critical profiles of, e.g. Asda, Nestle, FDF, NFU, Sainsbury; Published critiques of aspects of industrial food supply, e.g. supermarkets, 'corporate organics', industrial farming
Ecumenical Council on Corporate Responsibility (ECCR)	Christian church-based investor coalition. Private company and charity (UK)	Prominent but qualified ('Working for economic justice, human rights and environmental sustainability')	Pay ratios; Human rights	Used church shareholdings as a basis to negotiate for improved corporate practice: had 'dialogues' with e.g. Cadbury, Diageo, Morrison's Northern Foods, Sainsbury and Tesco; Produced a 2014 report urging investors to use their power to tackle wide pay ratios in companies
Environ-mental	Online publishing and training company.	Not prominent (but a goal was to	Education; Training;	Motivated and supported employees to improve environmental performance of businesses;

1. Actor (Advocacy)	2. Type of organisation	3. Treatment of sustainability	4. Scope / framing of activity: Examples of social themes /concerns / aspirations	5. Operationalisation: Examples of how social themes / concerns were acted on
Practice @ Work (EPAW)	Private company (UK)	'promote sustainable development for all, combining social, economic and environmental objectives)	Partnership working; Workplace wellbeing	Provided training; Published a 'Sustainable Food Guide' for procurement workers
Food Ethics Council (FEC)	Research and campaign group focusing on ethics in food supply. Non profit private company and charity (UK)	Not prominent	Fairness (in food access, pay and prices) Social justice; Wellbeing; Nutrition; Food producers' livelihoods and working conditions; Humane treatment of food animals	Engaged with the food industry to advocate for food ethics; Campaigned and published on ethical issues related to the UK industrial food supply, eg *Business collaboration for sustainability* and *Beyond Business as Usual*
Friends of the Earth (FOE)	Environmental campaigning organization. Part of FOE International. Private company and charity (UK)	Not prominent (but saw 'the wellbeing of people and planet' as inseparably linked)	Social justice & inequalities as causes of environmental degradation; Fair transition to sustainable economy; Falling numbers of farmers; Farm pay and livelihoods; Farm workers' conditions and safety Casualisation of food supply workforce Nutrition / health	Campaigned and published on social impacts of industrial food supply, e.g. reports called *Factory Farming's Hidden Impacts* and *Healthy and sustainable food for the public sector*
IDH: the sustainable trade initiative	Organization promoting fairer trade. Funded by Dutch, Swiss and Danish governments and by clients; based in Netherlands	Prominent in name and aim: 'Driving sustainability from niche to norm'	Poverty alleviation; Improved farm incomes; Improved market access for smallholders; Fair and transparent supply chains	Organized scoping, development and implementation of 'public-private, pre-competitive market transformation programs' in 18 sectors, including cocoa, coffee, tea, soy, spices, cashew – aimed to identify, disseminate and upscale successful initiatives through public-private collaborative working
IGD	Research and education organization for food and consumer goods businesses. Membership organization, private	Prominent: 'we ensure the industry and its employees are equipped to secure a sustainable future	Nutrition; Affordable and safe food; Sustainable diets; Supply-chain relationships; Social impacts of business;	Produced and published research and reference material on sustainability for food businesses, including definitions, glossaries and a quarterly newsletter; Ran a sustainable diets working group; Published factsheets on *Sustainable Development* and

1. Actor (Advocacy)	2. Type of organisation	3. Treatment of sustainability	4. Scope / framing of activity: Examples of social themes /concerns / aspirations	5. Operationalisation: Examples of how social themes / concerns were acted on
	company and charity (UK)	where everyone has affordable, safe and reliable food'	Community impacts; Livelihoods; Animal welfare; The viability of town centres	*Sustainable sourcing*
IIED (International Institute on Environment and Develop-ment)	Policy research and advocacy organization focusing on the 'environment-development interface'. Charity (UK)	Prominent: noted its founder, Barbara Ward, 'forged the concept and cause of Sustainable Development'	Environmental justice; Fair access to markets and food supply chains; Fair treatment of food workers; Fairness and inclusivity as hallmarks of sustainable supply chains	Published extensively on Sustainable Development generally and in relation to food supply chains, e.g. reports on beans, fish and cocoa, on agricultural investment in the developing world, on the agency and market access of small-scale farmers, on the status of informal markets in producer countries; Work stream on Sustainable Markets looked at 'market governance mechanisms' and assessed their impacts on 'people, the planet and the economy'; Participated in development of ISO Guidance Standard 26000 on social responsibility
Joseph Rowntree Foundation	Poverty-focused research and campaign organization. Charity (UK)	Not prominent	Poverty, Work / wages; Communities	Published reports on low-paid and exploitative work in the food sector, e.g. *Experiences of forced labour in UK food supply*, 2012
New Economics Foundation (nef)	'Think and do tank'. Private company and charity (UK)	Not prominent (but aimed to 'maximize well-being and social justice within environmental limits')	'Sustainable social justice'; Inclusivity; Wellbeing; Democracy; Participation; Equality	Pioneered UK work on measuring wellbeing (now often used to sum up social pillar of sustainability); Social Return on Investment methodology used eg by Soil Association's Food For Life programme to assess project value Published on its work in these areas, e.g. the *Happy Planet Index* reports
RSPB (Royal Society for the Protection of Birds)	Campaign group focusing on bird protection. Private company and charity (UK)	Not prominent	Food safety; Nutritional value of food; Food affordability; A 'fair deal' for farmers Farmer and community engagement for habitat protection	Campaigned on agricultural and land use policy
SOMO	Research organization	Prominent: worked on	Fairness;	Researched and profiled food companies, e.g. reported on

1. Actor (Advocacy)	2. Type of organisation	3. Treatment of sustainability	4. Scope / framing of activity: Examples of social themes /concerns / aspirations	5. Operationalisation: Examples of how social themes / concerns were acted on
(Centre for Research on Multinational Corporations)	focusing on corporations, based in the Netherlands. Non-profit	'social, ecological and economic issues related to sustainable development'	Distribution of power along supply chains; Inequality; Exploitation; Justice; Transparency	wages in Ahold's fruit and vegetable supply chains; Built research capacity in other organizations; Did the research for Oxfam's Behind the Brands campaign
Sustainable Agriculture Initiative Platform	Non-profit food industry organization formed by Danone, Nestle and Unilever in 2002 to promote sustainable agriculture. Non-profit association constituted under Swiss civil code	Prominent in name and aim: 'the global food and drink industry initiative for sustainable agriculture'	Labour rights; The health of communities, including access to and affordability of food; Food quality; Food safety; Animal welfare	Developed a 'platform' for 'defining' and building capacity on sustainable agriculture issues; Developed 'principles and practices' for sustainability for several sectors; Collected and disseminated good practice and research; Ran conferences and training events
Sustain: the alliance for better food and farming	Umbrella organization for UK food-related pressure groups . Private company and charity (UK)	Prominent in name and aim: the sustainability of the food supply is its *raison d'être*	The health and welfare of people and animals; The improvement of the working and living environment; The enrichment of society and culture The promotion of equity'; Food affordability; Livelihoods; Working conditions; Communities; Local economies	Provided an umbrella organization for other sustainability-oriented food companies or projects; Ran numerous campaigns and published reports critiquing industrial food supply and suggesting how it might be made more sustainable, e.g. *Too Much, Too Little*, on food waste; Campaigned for a levy on sugary drinks; Work covered food poverty, public procurement, food children's' diets, school and hospital food, fish supply chains
The Natural Step	International network of individuals and groups providing training in 'strategic sustainable development'. Non-profit, in UK a private company	Prominent: the FSSD aimed for a world where humanity flourishes within natural constraints: a 'sustainable society'	Method is based on and promoted engagement; The FSSD's 4th Principle addressed equity, requiring the elimination of 'conditions that systematically undermine people's capacity to meet their basic human needs (for example, unsafe working conditions and not	Developed, promoted and trained practitioners in its Framework for Strategic Sustainable Development (FSSD), described as 'the rules of the game'

1. Actor (Advocacy)	2. Type of organisation	3. Treatment of sustainability	4. Scope / framing of activity: Examples of social themes /concerns / aspirations	5. Operationalisation: Examples of how social themes / concerns were acted on
			enough pay to live on)'	
World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD)	A global association of company CEOs. Head office Geneva	Prominent in name and aim: to create 'a sustainable future for business'	The social role and duties of business; 'A standard of living where people have access to and the ability to afford education, healthcare, mobility, the basics of food, water, energy and shelter, and consumer goods'; Employee engagement	Articulated and advanced the business case for Sustainable Development, through advocacy, 'thought leadership', and the development of 'tools' and 'solutions'
WWF	Environmental campaign organization. In UK, non-profit private company and charity	Not prominent (but motto was 'people living in harmony with nature')	'Equitable conservation outcomes'; 'Pro-poor approaches'; Alleviating poverty; Promoting the long-term wellbeing of people; Engagement as prerequisite for Sustainable Development	Campaigned and published, e.g. on fish, soya, beef, palm oil; Was 'working with and influencing key players in the UK food industry – including retailers, producers, food processors, governments and charities – to transform the way UK food is supplied' Produced 'Livewell' sustainable diet model ; In 2009 produced a 'Palm Oil Scorecard', since updated, to show how many UK palm oil buyers buy from RSPO-certified sustainable sources

Annex F: Website Data Summary Table Category 10: MULTISTAKEHOLDER INITIATIVES (with date of inception)

1. Actor (MSIs)	2. Type of organisation	3. Treatment of sustainability	4. Scope of activity: Examples of social themes /concerns / aspirations	5. Operationalisation: Examples of how social themes / concerns were acted on
Bonsucro (2008)	Membership organization for cane sugar supply chain stakeholders. Non-profit private company (UK)	Not prominent (but aimed to improve 'economic, environmental and social' impacts of cane sugar production)	Labour rights; Pay and working conditions; Human rights; Staff training; Participatory processes; Negotiated agreement among stakeholders	Developed and ran a standard for production and primary processing of cane sugar; Helped suppliers / processors to meet criteria
Ethical Trading Initiative (ETI) (1998)	Membership organization for companies, unions and pressure groups, set up with backing of UK Department for International Development, promoting respect for workers' rights along supply chains. Private company (UK)	Not prominent	ETI Base Code criteria cover: Employment freely chosen; Freedom of association and right to collective bargaining; Safe & hygienic working conditions; No use of child labour; Payment of living wages; Working hours not excessive; No discrimination; Regular employment provided; No harsh or inhumane treatment	Developed and disseminated the ETI Base Code (a non-auditable standard) for working conditions and workers' rights in supply chains; Disseminated information on issues such as ethical trade, 'modern slavery', living wages
Fruit Juice CSR Platform (2013)	Organization for stakeholders in EU fruit juice supply chain. Run by EU-level fruit juice trade association (AIJN), with the consultancy Sociability, pressure groups UTZ and IDH, and Spanish technology institute AZTI; initial funding from EU	Prominent: set up as a 'sustainability initiative' for the fruit juice sector	Collaboration; Positive impact on society; Food security, health and nutrition; Sharing value along supply chains; Respect for human rights; including land rights; Equal opportunities; Creation of decent work conditions; Contributing to attractive, viable communities; Good governance and accountability; Access to and transfer of knowledge,	Identified issues of concern in supply chain; Collaboratively negotiated 'CSR Principles' for the sector; Developed a Roadmap, which elaborated and explained the Principles and outlined targets for remedial action

1. Actor (MSIs)	2. Type of organisation	3. Treatment of sustainability	4. Scope of activity: Examples of social themes /concerns / aspirations	5. Operationalisation: Examples of how social themes / concerns were acted on
			skills and technology	
Global Initiative on Sustainability Ratings (2011)	Multistakeholder organization launched by Ceres and the Tellus Institute (US-based sustainability non-profits) to develop a standard for sustainability ratings agencies	Prominent: slogan was 'moving markets to the advantage of sustainability leaders'	Standard still under development	Was developing a standard for criteria to be included in ESG / sustainability performance ratings, to make it easier for investors to recognise and reward sustainability performance
Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) (1997)	International multistakeholder network of pressure groups, businesses, unions, academics, promoting standardised sustainability reporting	Prominent: mission was 'to make sustainability reporting standard practice'	Labour practices and decent work; Human rights; Product responsibility; Animal welfare; Sourcing	Developed and ran a widely used, free, standard framework for sustainability reporting; Advocated for sustainability reporting as a way to make business more sustainable
Global Seafood Sustainability Initiative (2013)	Alliance of 17 seafood companies from different supply chain stages and nations, plus the German state development organization GIZ	Prominent	Social themes not specified: aimed to benchmark other schemes' criteria	Created to develop a common, consistent and global Benchmarking Tool for seafood certification and labeling programs, in order to measure and compare the performance of existing programs
ISO Working Group on Social Responsibility (2005-2010)	Comprised the ISO (global federation of national standards bodies) plus governments, private sector bodies, advocacy	Prominent: 'the objective of organizational social responsibility is to contribute to Sustainable	Organizational governance; Human rights; Labour practices; Fair operating practices; Community involvement	Developed the non-auditable ISO 26000 Guidance Standard on organizational social responsibility

1. Actor (MSIs)	2. Type of organisation	3. Treatment of sustainability	4. Scope of activity: Examples of social themes /concerns / aspirations	5. Operationalisation: Examples of how social themes / concerns were acted on
	groups, consumer groups and labour organizations	Development'		
Living Wage Foundation	Campaign group comprising advocacy groups, companies and academics, focusing on pay rates. Initiative of Citizens UK, a community development organization, private company and charity, (UK)	Not prominent	Fair pay; Living standards	Campaigned for payment of the Living Wage -- an hourly pay rate based on a the cost of living in the UK
Roundtable on Responsible Soy (2006)	Membership organization for stakeholders in soy value chain, comprising: producers, industry, finance and advocacy groups. Association established under Swiss Civil Code, Secretariat in Argentina	Not prominent (but aimed for a soy supply chain that was'environmentally correct, socially appropriate and economically feasible'	A 'socially equitable' soy chain; Good management practices; Fair and responsible work practices; Respect for land tenure claims; Responsible community relations; Decision making by consensus	Developed and ran a standard for soy production, processing and trading; Maintained a 'global dialogue' for the soy value chain
Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (2004)	Organization comprising palm oil producers, processors, traders, manufacturers, retailers, banks, investors and environmental and social pressure groups. Association established under Swiss Civil Code,	Prominent in name and aim: to 'transform markets to make sustainable palm oil the norm'	Labour rights and working conditions; Health and safety; Transparency and the right to be consulted; Respect for land rights; Community impacts;	Developed and ran a standard for the palm oil supply chain; The standard required social impact assessments to be undertaken, using culturally appropriate methods, with plans developed to mitigate negative impacts Helped companies meet criteria

1. Actor (MSIs)	2. Type of organisation	3. Treatment of sustainability	4. Scope of activity: Examples of social themes /concerns / aspirations	5. Operationalisation: Examples of how social themes / concerns were acted on
	HQ in Kuala Lumpur			
Social Accountability International (1997)	'Multistakeholder NGO' with representation from businesses, unions and pressure groups	Not prominent	SA8000 covered: Child labour; Forced labour; Health and safety; Freedom of association; Discrimination; Discipline; Working hours; Remuneration	Developed and ran SA8000, a voluntary standard for working conditions and workers rights; Ran an accreditation organization to train and approve social auditors
Supply Chain Initiative (2011)	Joint initiative by 7 EU-level trade associations and the EU High-level Forum for a Better Functioning Food Supply Chain (itself an MSI)	Not prominent	'Fair supply chain relationships', covering: Trust; Continuity; Respect for others' freedom to operate as independent economic actors	Set up to increase fairness in commercial relations along the food supply; Produced a framework of 'Principles of good practice' for 'vertical relationships in food supply chains'
Sustainable Agriculture Network (SAN) (1997)	Coalition of non-profit conservation organizations in America, Africa, Europe and Asia; non-profit organization established under Mexican law	Prominent in name and aim: 'Our concept of sustainability recognizes that the welfare of societies and ecosystems is intertwined'	Workers' rights; Working conditions; Worker health and safety; Community consultation; Contribution to community development	Developed and ran a set of standards for sustainable agricultural production in the developing world, based on overarching principles with integral social criteria; Ran an accreditation programme for certification bodies; Provided support to help growers meet standards
Sustainable Food Laboratory (2004)	A 'consortium' of businesses, universities and pressure groups	Prominent in name and aim: 'to accelerate market-driven progress toward a sustainable mainstream food	Poverty; Smallholder access to mainstream markets	Provided peer-to-peer mentoring and 'leadership'; Piloted innovation; Promoted collaborative learning; Advocated for its private-public approach, eg 2013 paper *Why Sustainable Food Needs Big Business, And Why*

1. Actor (MSIs)	2. Type of organisation	3. Treatment of sustainability	4. Scope of activity: Examples of social themes /concerns / aspirations	5. Operationalisation: Examples of how social themes / concerns were acted on
		system'		*Business Can't Do It Alone*
Tea 2030 (2013)	Collaboration of tea companies, the Ethical Tea Partnership and pressure groups	Prominent: aimed to identify and act on the main 'sustainability challenges' in the tea sector	The balance of power across the supply chain; The demand for labour; Competition for land	Working collaboratively to identify problems via extensive consultation; Planned to proceed via scenario building to develop remedial action;
The Sustainability Consortium (2009)	Organization comprising academics, pressure groups and supply-chain businesses	Prominent in name and aim: 'to build a scientific foundation that drives innovation to improve consumer product sustainability'	Social criteria not published (and may vary by product category)	Developed tools and methodologies to measure product sustainability impacts, based on life-cycle analysis, including for several foods, beverages and agricultural products; Developed 'category profiles', category KPIs and identified sustainability 'hotspots' in supply chains

Annex G Ethical Approval

CITY UNIVERSITY LONDON

Senate Research Ethics Committee

Application for Approval of Research Involving Human Participants

Please tick the box for which Committee you are submitting your application to

☐	Senate Research Ethics Committee
☐	School of Arts & School of Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee
☒	School of Community and Health Sciences Research Ethics Committee
☐	Learning Development Centre
☐	Optometry Research Committee

For **Senate** applications: return one original and 17 additional copies of the completed form and any accompanying documents to Anna Ramberg, Secretary to Senate Research Ethics Committee, City Research Development and International Relations Office, Northampton Square, London, EC1V 0HB.

For **School of Arts & School of Social Sciences** Research Ethics Committee submit a single copy of the application form and all supporting documentation to Andrea Tinson (Social Sciences) and Gail Marsom (Arts) by email..

For **School of Community and Health Sciences** applications: submit all forms (including the Research Registration form) electronically (in Word format in a single document) to A.Welton@city.ac.uk, followed up by a single hard copy with signatures.

For **Optometry** applications: submit A SINGLE COPY OF THE APPLICATION FORM AND ALL SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION to Ron Douglas by email.

Refer to the separate guidelines (for students) guidelines (for staff) while completing this form.

PLEASE NOTE

- Please determine whether an application is required by going through the checklist (for students) checklist (for staff) before filling out this form.
- Ethical approval **MUST** be obtained before any research involving human participants is undertaken. Failure to do so may result in disciplinary procedures being instigated, and you will not be covered by the University's indemnity if you do not have approval in place.
- You should have completed every section of the form
- The Signature Sections must be completed by the Principal Investigator (the supervisor and the student if it is a student project)

Project Title:
An investigation of how the social pillar of sustainability is being interpreted, negotiated and implemented in UK food supply chains
Short Project Title (no more than 80 characters):
Social sustainability in UK food supply chains
Name of Principal Investigator(s) (*all* students are require to apply jointly with their supervisor and all correspondence will be with the supervisor):
Dr. David Barling (Supervisor) Rosalind Sharpe (Student Researcher)
Post Held (including staff/student number):
Dr David Barling – Reader in Food Policy – 80008109 Rosalind Sharpe – PhD Research Student – Centre for Food Policy – 100050006

Department(s)/School(s) involved at City University London:
Centre for Food Policy, School of Health Sciences
If this is part of a degree please specify type of degree and year
PhD 2010-2013
Date of Submission of Application:
24 April 2012

1. Information for Non-Experts

Lay Title (no more than 80 characters)

How is 'social sustainability' being put into practice in UK food supply chains?

Lay Summary / Plain Language Statement (no more than 400 words)

Over the past 30 years, the notion of sustainability (defined in the 1987 Brundtland report as the ability to provide for our needs without compromising the ability of future generations to provide for theirs) has risen from obscurity to become a key policy idea, including in food policy. Food is central to sustainability discourse and planning, because food is fundamental

to life, and because the contemporary food supply is seen both to exacerbate and potentially mitigate problems including environmental degradation, biodiversity loss, climate change and health and socio-economic inequalities. Sustainability is widely interpreted as having three 'pillars', environmental, economic and social. Of these, the social pillar is by far the least clearly defined, with uncertainty about its meaning, scope and measurability.

Despite this lack of clarity, however, food sustainability agendas almost always include a commitment to address the social dimension, leading to activity by government, business and civil society. Definitions have proliferated, and attributes ranging from equity to hygiene have been associated with the idea. Definitions partly arise from theoretical analysis, but to a large extent they are being worked out through implementation. In other words, the term is being 'defined through practice', by means of initiatives and governance arrangements adapted or devised for the purpose.

This process is multi-faceted. It involves both 'alternative' movements (such as farmers' markets) which aim to 're-socialise' food systems, and initiatives (such as standards and codes of practice) which attempt to control procedures in conventional food supply chains to improve social outcomes. Collectively, these governance arrangements exemplify a wider trend away from top-down state regulation towards a more collaborative form of 'self-regulation' by stakeholders in food supply chains. Despite claims of inclusivity and neutrality, the literature suggests that these processes can privilege or crowd out certain issues, groups or viewpoints.

To date, research attention has been mainly directed at alternative food movements, and at the social impacts (especially on producers in the developing world) of governance mechanisms such as Fair Trade or GlobalGap (an industry quality standard). Less attention has been paid to the conventional food system within the UK.

Given that social sustainability is so prominent and so malleable a concept, the aim of this study is to explore how and where governance arrangements promoting social sustainability are at work in UK food supply chains; how they are shaping the concept, and what the implications and effects of this process are.

2. Applicant Details

This project involves:

(*tick as many as apply*)

☐	Staff Research	☒	Doctoral Student
☐	Undergraduate	☐	M-level Project
☐	Externally funded	☐	External investigators
☐	Collaboration	☐	Other
Provide details of collaboration and/or other			

Address for correspondence (including email address and telephone number)

(Principal Investigator)

Dr David Barling

Centre for Food Policy,
School of Community and Health Sciences,
City University London,
Northampton Square,
London EC1V 0HB.

tel: +44 (0)20 7040 8792

d.barling@city.ac.uk

Other staff members involved

Title, Name & Staff Number	*Post*	*Dept & School*	*Phone*	*Email*

Prof. Tim Lang	Professor of Food Policy	Centre for Food Policy, School of Health Sciences	+44-(0)20-7040-8798	T.lang@city.ac.uk

All students involved in carrying out the investigation

Name & Student Number	*Course / Year*	*Dept & School*	*Email*
Rosalind Sharpe 100050006	PhD Food Policy, 2010-2013	Centre for Food Policy, School of Health Sciences	Rosalind.Sharpe.1@city.ac.uk

External co-investigators

Title & Name	*Post*	*Institution*	*Phone*	*Email*

Please describe the role(s) of all the investigators including all student(s)/external co-investigator(s) in the project, especially with regards to interaction with study participants.

Rosalind Sharpe will review relevant literature and data and will manage and undertake all interactions (including interviews) with the study participants. She will also be responsible for data handling/ storage and for protecting the data for period following the research project.

If external investigators are involved, please provide details of their indemnity cover.

N/A

Application Details

2.1 Is this application being submitted to another ethics committee, or has it been previously submitted to an ethics committee? *This includes an NHS local Research Ethics Committee or a City University London School Research Ethics Committee or any other institutional committee or collaborating partners or research site.* (See the guidelines for more information on research involving NHS staff/patients/ premises.) **YES ☐ NO ☒**

If yes, please provide details for the Secretary for the relevant authority/committee, as well as copies of any correspondence setting out conditions of approval.

N/A

2.2 If any part of the investigation will be carried out under the auspices of an outside organisation, e.g. a teaching hospital, please give details and address of organisation.

N/A

2.3 Other approvals required – has permission to conduct research in, at or through another institution or organisation been obtained? YES ☐ NO ☒

If yes, please provide details and include correspondence

N/A

2.4 Is any part of this research project being considered by another research ethics committee? YES ☐ NO ☒

If yes, please give details and justification for going to separate committees, and attach correspondence and outcome

N/A

2.5 Duration of Project

Start date: October 2010 Estimated end date: October 2013

Funding Details

2.6 Please provide details of the source of financial support (if any) for the proposed investigation.

This is a PhD research project funded by a 3-year City University studentship

2.6a Total amount of funding being sought: N/A

2.6b Has funding been approved? **YES ☐ NO ☐**

If no, please provide details of when the outcome can be expected

N/A

2.6c Does the funding body have any requirements regarding retention, access and storage of the data? **YES ☐ NO ☐**

If yes, please provide details

N/A

3. Project Details

3.1 Provide the background, aim and justification for the proposed research.

This research is a requirement for the PhD in Food Policy. The research builds on prior work undertaken by the applicants, investigating governance in UK food supply chains, and in particular the emergence of voluntary and multi-stakeholder governance mechanisms. At this stage, relevant literature has been reviewed, and the methodology has been outlined.

The aim of the research is to understand:

- Which actors are participating in governance for social sustainability
- How these actors define social sustainability
- The methods being used to implement social sustainability
- The actors' objectives, interactions, perceptions and reflections
- How framings and procedures (inclusions and exclusions) shape outcomes
- How the picture of social sustainability that emerges compares with conceptualisations drawn from the literature.

It is hoped that this research will shed light on an important but poorly defined element of food sustainability policy, and also provide insight into the voluntary and often collaborative governance processes that are increasingly prevalent in UK food supply chains. It thus aims to illuminate both the substance and processes of social sustainability in the food supply.

Although there is a recent, growing body of literature on the social pillar of sustainability, and another body of literature on the development of voluntary governance mechanisms, little attention has been paid to social sustainability in relation to food (especially in conventional supply chains), or how voluntary governance is instrumental in shaping the concept. This research aims to contribute to scholarship in this area.

3.2 Provide a summary and brief justification of the design, methodology and plan for analysis that you propose to use.

The aim of this study is to explore how and where governance arrangements promoting social sustainability are at work in UK food supply chains; which actors are involved; how actors and activities are shaping the concept; and what the implications and effects of this process are.

The study will involve: a literature review (already done); a review of the policy context, to determine relevant drivers; scoping work to find out which actors and activities are currently engaged in the field (already in hand); a review of online sources to investigate the published objectives, procedures and discourse of selected governance participants identified in the scoping study; and a first-hand investigation of key actors' objectives and perceptions.

The research will focus on UK food supply chains, from primary producer up to the point of purchase by the end consumer. It will focus on food supplied via conventional rather than alternative channels.

Methods will include desk research and elite interviews. Publically available documents from state, non-state and academic sources will be studied to find out how (and by whom) social sustainability is being framed, implemented and discussed, and also to help identify potential interviewees. Purposive, elite stakeholder interviews will probe actors' interpretations, expectations, objectives, perceptions, interactions and reflections. Documentary and qualitative data will be collated and analysed.

Interviews will be conducted with actors involved in sustainability-related activities in conventional UK food supply chains. Target interviewees will be identified from desk research, networking, and through 'snowballing', where one interview leads to others. Interviews will be semi-structured, to ensure that while core questions are covered, there is latitude for interviewees to raise issues not anticipated in the interview guide. This is to avoid 'closing down' or pre-defining the subject under discussion. Ideally, interviews would be conducted face to face, but given that interviewees are likely to be busy and mobile, telephone interviews may have to be substituted.

Interviews will be digitally recorded and transcribed. They will last no longer than one hour. Confidentiality will be assured. All protocols relating to research ethics (covering informed consent, confidentiality, data handling, data storage and health and safety) will be observed, as described below.

The PhD thesis will include a thematic analysis of documentary and interview data to shed light on the research questions and set these within the context of theoretical debate. Other commentators have made use of notions of governmentality and versions of discourse analysis to theorise emerging governance arrangements, which may prove relevant in the current study. The data will primarily be used for the PhD study, but may also inform journal articles or presentations.

3.3 Please explain your plans for dissemination, including whether participants will be provided with any information on the findings or outcomes of the project.

The main output of this research will be the student researcher's PhD thesis. In addition, material may be disseminated in academic journals, conference presentations and lectures.

Interviewees will be asked whether they wish to receive feedback on the outputs of the research. Provision will be made for them to receive a short report based on the analysis of the research, which will be an abridged version of the analysis presented in the PhD thesis. This will be supplied electronically.

3.4 What do you consider are the ethical issues associated with conducting this research and how do you propose to address them?

Participants in this study will not experience risks greater than those they encounter in their daily lives. Interviewees will be workers in food supply chains, interviewed either at their workplace or in a mutually agreed public setting. They will be interviewed on issues relating to their professional, not their personal, lives.

Because interviewees are likely to include senior members of organisations which may take oppositional positions in the governance process, or which may be commercial competitors, anonymity and confidentiality of data are likely to be the most important ethical issues in this research. Given that many of the interviewees will probably be known to each other in what is

still a relatively small field, maintaining anonymity while providing a nuanced analysis of the data could prove challenging, but the study is similar in this respect to earlier studies which the researchers have conducted successfully.

Interviews will commence after informed consent is gained from the participants. Informed consent involves providing participants with relevant information regarding the aims and scope of the project. Contributions made by participants will remain confidential, and data will be made anonymous and will be stored securely.

Another concern relates to health and safety issues during the interviews. For face-to-face interviews, the researcher will ensure that the interview location, arrival and departure plans are known to a family member or colleague. This will ensure the safe travel and return of the researcher.

3.5 How is the research intended to benefit the participants, third parties and/or local community?

The research is intended to benefit participants in the governance process, and in the wider research community, by adding to knowledge on both the substance and process of social sustainability in the food supply.

3.6a Will invasive procedures (for example medical or surgical) be used?

YES ☐ NO ☒

3.6b If yes, what precautions will you take to minimise any potential harm?

N/A

3.7a Will intrusive procedures (for example psychological or social) be used?

YES ☐ NO ☒

3.7b If yes, what precautions will you take to minimise any potential harm?

N/A

3.8a In the course of the investigation might pain, discomfort (including psychological discomfort), inconvenience or danger be caused? YES ☐ NO ☒

3.8b If yes, what precautions will you take to minimise any potential harm?

N/A

3.9 Please describe the nature, duration and frequency of the procedures?

N/A

4. Information on participants

4.1a How many participants will be involved?

The final sample size will not exceed 25 interviews. If saturation is reached, the number may be smaller.

4.1b What is the age group and gender of the participants?

The participants will all be adults (18+) and will be both female and male.

4.1c Explain how you will determine your sample size and the selection criteria you will be using. Specify inclusion and exclusion criteria. If exclusion of participants is made on the basis of age, gender, ethnicity, race, disability, sexuality, religion or any other factor, please explain and justify why.

The multifaceted nature of the topic means the number of potential interviewees is large, but past experience has suggested that more than 25 in-depth interviews produce an amount of material that cannot be meaningfully analysed in a study of this scope and duration. Conducting interviews which generate material that cannot be used effectively is an unethical use of interviewees' time.

The sample will be purposive and drawn from actors in conventional UK food supply chains. Care will be taken to ensure the sample covers the span of the chain (primary production, processing, manufacture, distribution, food service and retail) and all sectors engaged in governance activities (state, industry, non-profit).

Relevance will be determined according to whether actors' jobs, job titles or job descriptions involve sustainability. They need to be senior or experienced enough to know and be able to articulate their organisation's goals and activities on sustainability.

There is no exclusion or discrimination based on gender, ethnicity, race, disability, sexuality, religion or age, with the exception of those under the age of 18 who will not be eligible to be interviewed.

4.2 How are the participants to be identified, approached and recruited, and by whom?

Initially, names of potential interviewees will emerge from desk research and networking. To avoid pre-definition, a snowball technique will allow the researcher to approach interviewees

who may not initially have been identified, but whose names emerge as the research progresses.

Interviewees will be contacted in the first instance by email, followed up by phone; or directly by phone where this is the only means of contact available; contact will be made by the researcher (Rosalind Sharpe).

4.3 Describe the procedure that will be used when seeking and obtaining consent, including when consent will obtained. Include details of who will obtain the consent, how are you intending to arrange for a copy of the signed consent form for the participants, when will they receive it and how long the participants have between receiving information about the study and giving consent.

The initial email contact will include a summary of the nature and purpose of the research, as well as a description of how the interview will be conducted and how the data will be used and stored. If the initial contact is by phone, arrangements will be made for this material to be supplied by email or post. Once candidates have agreed to be interviewed, the researcher will arrange the interview, at a time and place to suit the interviewee. It is anticipated that a few days may intervene between the arrangement and the interview.

Face-to-Face:

If the interview is face-to-face, the participants will be given a copy of the consent form and will read through it with the researcher. An opportunity for questions and refusal will be given. The participant will sign two copies of the consent form: one to be retained by the participant, one for the researcher. The researcher will keep all consent forms in a locked file separate from the data.

Phone:

If the interview takes place by phone, the consent form will be sent in advance by email, and at the start of the call, the form will be reviewed. An opportunity for questions and refusal will be given. Participants will be asked to tick the consent boxes, retain a copy of the completed form and return a copy of the completed form to the researcher as an email attachment. If the interviewee does not have computer access, the forms will be supplied by post, along with a

stamped envelope addressed to the researcher, so the signed form may be returned this way. The researcher will keep all consent forms in a locked file separate from the data.

4.4 How will the participant's physical and mental suitability for participation be assessed?

N/A

4.5 Are there any special pressures that might make it difficult to refuse to take part in the study? Are any of the potential participants in a dependent relationship with any of the investigators (for instance student, colleague or employee) particularly those involved in recruiting for or conducting the project?

No

4.6 Are there any issues related to the ability of participants to give informed consent themselves or are you relying on gatekeepers on their behalf?

No. All participants will be able to give informed consent by themselves.

4.7 Will the participant's doctor be notified? **YES ☐ NO ☒**

(If so, provide a sample letter to the subject's GP.)

4.8 What procedures are in place for the appropriate referral of a study participant who discloses an emotional, psychological, health, education or other issue during the course of the research or is identified by the researcher to have such a need?

N/A

4.9 What steps will be taken to safeguard the participants from over-research? (I.e. to ensure that the participants are not being used in multiple research project.)

The researcher will avoid re-interviewing people who are known to have been repeatedly interviewed. Given that the implementation of social sustainability in the UK food supply has received little attention, it is unlikely that participants will have been interviewed on the topic. However, the researcher will take care to avoid abusing the goodwill of contacts and potential participants.

4.10 Where will the research take place?

The research will take place in the UK. Interviews will be asked to designate a convenient meeting place, which may be their place of work or a mutually agreed public space which is suitable for interviews. Participants will also be able offered the opportunity to have the interview at City University, in which case a meeting room will be reserved by the researchers.

4.11 What health and safety issues, if any, are there to consider?

The main health and safety issues are the safety of the room where interviews are taking place, the personal safety of the researcher travelling to and from interview sites and general health and safety issues such as fire safety.

4.12 How have you addressed the health and safety concerns of the participants, researchers and any other people impacted by this study? Have you conducted a risk assessment?

As interviews are to be conducted at a convenient place nominated by the interviewee, it will not be possible to risk-assess these spaces in advance. Interview locations are likely to be either the interviewee's office, a public meeting room at their workplace, a convenient public space (such as a cafe), or a room at City University. In the latter case, rooms comply with university-wide safety policies, and the researcher will escort interviewees from reception to the interview room, check the rooms in advance for possible hazards, and inform interviewees of emergency exit routes.

For interviews conducted away from City University, the researcher will inform a family member or colleague of her travel plans and estimated interview timings.

The use of mobile phones will ensure contact can be maintained between the research student (Rosalind Sharpe) and the research supervisor (David Barling).

4.13 Are you offering any incentives or rewards for participating? YES ☐ NO ☒

If yes please give details

5. Vulnerable groups

5.1 Will persons from any of the following groups be participating in the study? (if not go to section 6) NO

Adults without capacity to consent	☐
Children under the age of 18	☐

Those with learning disabilities	☐
Prisoners	☐
Vulnerable adults	☐
Young offenders (16-21 years)	☐
Those who would be considered to have a particular dependent relationship with the investigator (e.g. those in care homes, students, employees, colleagues)	☐

5.2 Will you be recruiting or have direct contact with any children under the age of 18?

YES ☐ NO ☒

5.2a If yes, please give details of the child protection procedures you propose to adopt should there be any evidence of or suspicion of harm (physical, emotional or sexual) to a young person. Include a referral protocol identifying what to do and who should be contacted.

N/A

5.2b Please give details of how you propose to ensure the well-being of the young person, particularly with respect to ensuring that they do not feel pressured to take part in the research and that they are free to withdraw from the study without any prejudice to themselves at anytime.

N/A

5.2c Please give details of any City staff or students who will have contact with young people (under the age of 18) and details of current (within the last 3 years) enhanced City University London CRB clearance.

Name	*Dept & School*	*Student/Staff Number*	*Date of CRB disclosure*	*Type of disclosure*

5.2d Please give details of any non-City staff or students who will have contact with young people (under the age of 18) and details of current (within the last 1 year) enhanced CRB clearance.

Name	*Institution*	*Address of organisation that requested the disclosure*	*Date of CRB disclosure*	*Type of disclosure*

5.3 Will you be recruiting or have direct contact with vulnerable adults? YES ☐ NO☒

5.3a If yes, please give details of the protection procedures you propose to adopt should there be any evidence of or suspicion of harm (physical, emotional or sexual) to a vulnerable adult. Include a referral protocol identifying what to do and who should be contacted.

N/A

5.3b Please give details of how you propose to ensure the well-being of the vulnerable adult, particularly with respect to ensuring that they do not feel pressured to take part in the research and that they are free to withdraw from the study without any prejudice to themselves at anytime. You should indicate how you intend to ascertain that person's views and wishes.

N/A

5.3c Please give details of any City staff or students who will have contact with vulnerable adults and details of current (within the last 3 years) enhanced City University London CRB clearance.

Name	*Dept & School*	*Student/Staff Number*	*Date of CRB disclosure*	*Type of disclosure*

5.3d Please give details of any non-City staff or students who will have contact with vulnerable adults and details of current (within the last 1 year) enhanced CRB clearance.

Name	*Institution*	*Address of organisation that requested the disclosure*	*Date of CRB disclosure*	*Type of disclosure*

5.4 Will you be recruiting any participants who fall under the Mental Capacity Act 2005?

YES ☐ NO ☒

If so you MUST get approval from an NHS COREC approved committee (see separate guidelines for more information).

6. Data Collection

6.1a Please indicate which of the following you will be using to collect your data

Please tick all that apply

Questionnaire	☐
Interviews	☒
Participant observation	☐
Focus groups	☐
Audio/digital-recording interviewees or events	☒
Video recording	☐
Physiological measurements	☐
Quantitative research (please provide details)	☐
Other	☒
Please give details	Desk research – review of academic literature and other publically available material

6.1b What steps, if any, will be taken to safeguard the confidentiality of the participants (including companies)?

The researcher, Rosalind Sharpe, will not disclose the identity of the interviewees or their organisations to anyone other than her supervisors.

Identifying information will not be attached to recorded interviews or transcripts. All electronic data (audio files, transcripts, emails) will be held on a password protected computer. Once uploaded to the computer, interviews will be deleted from the recording device. Hard copies of anonymised transcripts and consent forms will be held in separate locked files. Interviewees will be asked to suggest the short description by which they wish to be identified (eg 'retail buyer').

Data will be recorded on Windows Media Audio (WMA) files and will be transcribed by Rosalind Sharpe.

The master record reconciling interviewees' identities, the date and place of interview, and occupation or other description, will be handwritten, and will be stored in a locked file

separate from other data.

Data will be stored for seven years.

6.1c If you are using interviews or focus groups, please provide a topic guide

Preliminaries (before tape switched on):
Confirm interviewee has read background information – any questions? Read through Consent Form: opportunity to withdraw. Sign two copies, retain one. Ask interviewee to suggest short form of job description to use as identifier (eg, 'retail buyer').
Switch tape on.

Sustainability and this organisation

(i) Please describe what sort of work your job (or the part of it that carries responsibility for sustainability) involves?
(ii) How long has this job existed in your organisation?
(iii) Who else in your organisation works on sustainability (positions, not names)? How are responsibilities allocated?
(iv) What are the main sustainability activities in this organisation?

Framings of sustainability and social sustainability

(i) What do you think sustainability means for this organisation?
(ii) Do you think it involves a social element?
(iii) How would you describe or define that?

Processes of (social) sustainability within the organisation

(i) What policies / strategies / activities does this organisation use to promote or realize social sustainability?
(ii) What are they intended to achieve?
(iii) How are they developed?
(iv) Who is involved in the process?
(v) What is the approval / signing off process?
(vi) What then happens to put the policies into practice?
(vii) What steps do you take to monitor the effects of these measures?

Processes involving other organisations

(i) Does your organisation participate in consultations or collaborations with other organisations about sustainability?
(ii) Which ones?
(iii) Can you describe the involvement, please? (prompt: who is involved, how the process works, what the objectives were and what the outcomes have been)
(iv) What are your (or your organization's) views on that process?
(v) What do you think these wider collaborations achieve (if anything)?

Broader picture

(i) Who or what do you think are the most important drivers of sustainability in the food supply at present?
(ii) Do you think that is also true for the social aspects?
(iii) How do you see social sustainability playing out at present, in a wider context?
(iv) What (if anything) could or should be done differently about this agenda?
(v) Is there anything you would like to mention that we haven't touched on?

Thanks, switch off recorder.

7. Confidentiality and Data Handling

7.1a Will the research involve:

• **complete anonymity of participants** (i.e. researchers will not meet, or know the identity of participants, as participants, as participants are a part of a random sample and are required to return responses with no form of personal identification)**?**	☐
• **anonymised sample or data** (i.e. an *irreversible* process whereby identifiers are removed from data and replaced by a code, with no record retained of how the code relates to the identifiers. It is then impossible to identify the individual to whom the sample of information relates)**?**	☐
• **de-identified samples or data** (i.e. a *reversible* process whereby identifiers are replaced by a code, to which the researcher retains the key, in a secure location)?	☒
• **subjects being referred to by pseudonym in any publication arising from the research?**	☐
• **any other method of protecting the privacy of participants?** (e.g. use of direct quotes with specific permission only; use of real name with specific, written permission only)	☐
Please give details of 'any other method of protecting the privacy of participants' is used	

7.1b Which of the following methods of assuring confidentiality of data will be implemented?

Please tick all that apply

• data to be kept in a locked filing cabinet	☒
• data and identifiers to be kept in separate, locked filing cabinets	☒
• access to computer files to be available by password only	☒
• storage at City University London	☒
• stored at other site	☐

If stored at another site, please give details	

7.1c Who will have access to the data?

Access by named researcher(s) only **YES** ☒ **NO** ☐

Access by people other than named researcher(s) **YES** ☐ **NO** ☒

If people other than the named researcher(s), please explain by whom and for what purpose

7.2a Is the data intended for reuse or to be shared as part of longitudinal research?

YES ☐ **NO**☒

7.2b Is the data intended for reuse or to be shared as part of a different/wider research project now, or in the future? **YES** ☐ **NO** ☒

7.2c Does the funding body (e.g. ESRC) require that the data be stored and made available for reuse/sharing? **YES** ☐ **NO** ☒

7.2d If you have responded yes to any of the questions above, explain how you are intending to obtain explicit consent for the reuse and/or sharing of the data.

N/A

7.3 Retention and Destruction of Data

7.3a Does the funding body or your professional organisation/affiliation place obligations or recommendations on the retention and destruction of research data?

YES ☐ **NO** ☒

If yes, what are your affiliations/funding and what are the requirements? (If no, please refer to University guidelines on retention.)

N/A

7.3bHow long are you intending to keep the data?

It is intended that the data will be kept for a period of seven years.

7.3c How are you intending to destroy the data after this period?

At the end of this period, all electronic records will be deleted and hard copies shredded.

8. Curriculum Vitae

CV OF APPLICANTS (**Please duplicate this page for each applicant, including external persons and students involved.)**

NAME:	David Barling
CURRENT POST (from) October 2010	Reader in Food Policy
Title of Post:	
Department:	Centre for Food Policy, School of Health Sciences
Is your post funded for the duration of this proposal?	Yes
Funding source (if not City University London)	

Please give a summary of your training/experience that is relevant to this research project
Long experience of conducting, collating and analysing elite semi-structured interviews and publishing findings – for a wide variety of public funded research projects and charitable funded consultancies. Currently PI on 3 EU 7th framework funded interdisciplinary projects Research outputs peer reviewed as world class and internationally significant by RAE 2008. Former member of SCHS research ethics committee.

CV OF APPLICANTS (**Please duplicate this page for each applicant, including external persons and students involved.)**

NAME:	Rosalind Sharpe
CURRENT POST (from) October 2010	Research Student (PhD)
Title of Post:	
Department:	Centre for Food Policy, School of Allied Health Sciences
Is your post funded for the duration of this proposal?	Yes
Funding source (if not City University London)	
Please give a summary of your training/experience that is relevant to this research project	
Prior to embarking on this PhD research study, I worked with Dr David Barling as a research assistant in the Centre for Food Policy for four years. During this period, I contributed to three research projects: (i) ethical traceability along food supply chains; (ii) the relationship between food sustainability and food security; (iii) the development of the Food Industry Sustainability Strategy. Each of these projects involved the collection of qualitative data by means of elite interviews with food supply actors. My responsibilities included identifying and approaching target	

interviewees; securing ethical approval for the research; planning appropriate arrangements for handling and storing data; preparing interview materials, including consent forms and interview guides; making and maintaining contact with interviewees; transcribing interviews; analysing data; and writing up reports.

The selection of my current research topic, as well as my choice of methods, arises from this past experience.

Before joining the Centre for Food Policy, I worked as a journalist, which also involved identifying interviewees, conducting interviews, data handling and writing.

I have an MA in Food Policy (Thames Valley University), and an MA in English Language and Literature (Oxford University).

8.1 Supervisor's statement on the student's skills and ability to carry out the proposed research, as well as the merits of the research topic (up to 500 words)

This research explores an important and under-examined area of food policy and governance. The proposal and the student are funded by a City University studentship obtained through a competitive application process. The proposed interviews are an important step in the data collection stage of the research project. The student has extensive experience of interviewing, and of observing relevant protocols concerning consent, confidentiality and data storage and handling. She has previously conducted elite interviews for three research projects for the Centre for Food Policy at City University, with findings contributing to various published papers. The student has recently successfully presented on her work to fellow PhD students and Masters students in food policy.

Supervisor's Signature	

Print Name	Dr. David Barling

9. Participant Information Sheet

Centre for Food Policy
Room C307, Northampton Square
London EC1V 0HB

Participant information sheet

I have contacted you to ask whether you would be willing to be interviewed for a study I am conducting at the Centre for Food Policy, at City University London, as part of my PhD research. This sheet provides you with more information about the project, and about what your participation would involve. If you would like more information, please contact me via the email or phone number below, or at the above address.

Project Title: Social sustainability in UK food supply chains

Principal Investigators: Rosalind Sharpe, Dr David Barling

Contact details for Rosalind Sharpe: Rosalind.Sharpe.1@city.ac.uk Tel: [number supplied]

Why you are being asked for an interview:

The purpose of the research is to explore how the social dimension of sustainability is being defined and implemented in UK food supply chains. As you may know, sustainability is usually described as having three 'pillars', namely environmental, economic and social. Of these, the social pillar is the least clearly defined, even though it is almost always mentioned in sustainability policies and strategies. As part of the Centre's work on governance in the food supply, we are interested to know both what is meant by the term 'social sustainability' and how it is being put into practice. The interview will cover questions about your organisation's activities in this area, and interviewees have been chosen because of their known interest or expertise in this field. We do not expect you to be the repository of definitive wisdom – we realise this is very much a work in progress, and are interested in your thoughts as an informed observer or participant. Nor are we seeking personal or commercially sensitive information.

Procedure

If you agree to be interviewed, please reply to this letter by contacting me by email or phone. I

will then get in touch to arrange an interview, at a time and place to suit you. Interviews can be face-to-face, or by telephone. They will take no more than an hour, and will be recorded. Your participation is entirely voluntary and you may withdraw at any time should you change your mind. You will be asked to sign a consent form, agreeing to the terms of the interview, as outlined in this letter.

Potential Benefits
This will be an opportunity for you to 'think aloud' and feed into debate about an important, emerging policy area. At the end of the research, I will compile a summary of the (anonymous) findings and my analysis, which will be made available electronically to participants.

Confidentiality
Every effort will be made to ensure confidentiality. Interviewees' participation will not be made known to other interviewees. Identifying information will not be attached to interview transcripts. No information that discloses your identity or your organisation's identity will be used in any project outputs (reports, articles, presentations) and all comments made in the interview will be used anonymously. The recorded data will be stored on a password-protected computer and will be transcribed by the researcher. Transcripts and other data will be held securely. The data will be held for seven years, after which time it will be deleted / shredded.

University Complaints Procedure
If there is an aspect of the interview that concerns you, you may make a complaint. If you would like to complain about any aspect of the study, City University London has established a complaints procedure via the Secretary to Senate Research Ethics Committee. To complain about the study, you need to phone 020 7040 3040. You can then ask to speak to the Secretary to Senate Research Ethics Committee and inform them that the name of the project is: 'Social sustainability in UK food supply chains'.

You could also write to the Secretary:

Anna Ramberg
Secretary to Senate Research Ethics Committee
City University London
Northampton Square
London
EC1V 0HB

Email:Anna.Ramberg.1@city.ac.uk

10. Participant Consent Form

Centre for Food Policy

Room C307, Northampton Square

London EC1V 0HB

Participant consent form: (Name)
Project Title: Social sustainability in UK food supply chains

Principal Investigators: Rosalind Sharpe, Dr David Barling

Contact details for Rosalind Sharpe: Rosalind.Sharpe.1@city.ac.uk Tel: [number supplied]

Principal Investigators: Rosalind Sharpe, Dr David Barling

- ☐ I agree to take part in the above City University research project. I have read the Information Sheet and my questions have been answered to my satisfaction.
- ☐ I understand that my participation is entirely voluntary, and that I can choose not to participate in part or all of the project and can withdraw at any stage without being penalised or disadvantaged in any way.

I understand that agreeing to take part means that I am willing to:

- ☐ Be interviewed by the researcher .
- ☐ Allow the interview to be audio taped.

Data Protection

This information will be held and processed only for the purposes of the project. The data will be retained for seven years.

I understand that any information I provide is confidential. I agree that the interview can be be tape-recorded and I agree that verbatim quotations from the interview can be used anonymously in presentations, reports and other publications, on the understanding that no information that could identify me or my organisation will be presented or published in any reports on the project, or to any other party.

I have received a copy of this consent form for my own records.

Name	**Signature** (unless returning by email**)**	**Date**
Interviewee: (Print name)		
Interviewer: Rosalind Sharpe		

11. Additional Information

12. Declarations by Investigator(s)

- I certify that to the best of my knowledge the information given above, together with any accompanying information, is complete and correct.
- I have read the University's guidelines on human research ethics, and accept the responsibility for the conduct of the procedures set out in the attached application.
- I have attempted to identify all risks related to the research that may arise in conducting the project.
- I understand that **no** research work involving human participants or data can commence until **full** ethical approval has been given

	Print Name	Signature
	David Barling	

Principal Investigator(s) (student and supervisor if student project)	Rosalind Sharpe	
Associate Dean for Research (or equivalent) or authorised signatory		
Date		

Researcher's checklist for compliance with the Data Protection Act, 1998

This checklist is for use alongside the *Guidance notes on Research and the Data Protection Act 1998*. Please refer to the notes for a full explanation of the requirements.

You may choose to keep this form with your research project documentation so that you can prove that you have taken into account the requirements of the Data Protection Act.

	REQUIREMENT	✓	
A	***Meeting the conditions for the research exemptions:***		
1	The information is being used *exclusively* for research purposes.	✓	Mandatory
2	You are not using the information to support measures or decisions relating to *any* identifiable living individual.	✓	Mandatory
3	You are not using the data in a way that will cause, or is likely to cause, substantial damage or substantial distress to any data subject.	✓	Mandatory
4	You will not make the result of your research, or any resulting statistics, available in a form that identifies the data subject.	✓	Mandatory
B	***Meeting the conditions of the First Data Protection Principle:***		
1	You have fulfilled one of the conditions for using personal data, e.g. you	✓	Mandatory

	have obtained consent from the data subject. Indicate which condition you have fulfilled here: All participants will sign consent forms and will have the opportunity to disassociate themselves from the research project at any time.		
2	If you will be using sensitive personal data you have fulfilled one of the conditions for using sensitive personal data, e.g. you have obtained explicit consent from the data subject. Indicate which condition you have fulfilled here:	N/A	Mandatory if using sensitive data
3	You have informed data subjects of: i. What you are doing with the data; ii. Who will hold the data, usually City University London; iii. Who will have access to or receive copies of the data.	✓	Mandatory unless B4 applies
4	You are excused from fulfilling B3 only if all of the following conditions apply: i. The data has been obtained from a third party; ii. Provision of the information would involve disproportionate effort; iii. You record the reasons for believing that disproportionate effort applies, please also give brief details here: _____ _____ _____ _____ N.B. Please see the guidelines above when assessing disproportionate effort.		Required only when claiming disproportionate effort
C	***Meeting the conditions of the Third Data Protection Principle:***		
1	You have designed the project to collect as much information as you need for your research but not more information than you need.	✓	Mandatory

D	***Meeting the conditions of the Fourth Data Protection Principle:***		
1	You will take reasonable measures to ensure that the information you collect is accurate.	✓	Mandatory
2	Where necessary you have put processes in place to keep the information up to date.	✓	Mandatory
E	***Meeting the conditions of the Sixth Data Protection Principle:***		
1	*You have made arrangements to comply with the rights of the data subject. In particular you have made arrangements to:* i. Inform the data subject that you are going to use their personal data. ii. Stop using an individual's data if it is likely to cause unwarranted substantial damage or substantial distress to the data subject or another. iii. Ensure that no decision, which significantly affects a data subject, is based solely on the automatic processing of their data. iv. Stop, rectify, erase or destroy the personal data of an individual, if necessary. Please give brief details of the measures you intend to take here: **i.** <u>All participants will be informed that no personal data will be included in the research and that efforts will be undertaken to protect their identities. At each phase of the research, participants will be informed of how the data is being used.</u> **ii.** <u>Participants may withdraw their participation from the study at any time. They will be made aware of this at the time of signing the consent form. If they choose with withdraw, none of the data collected through interviews will be used in the study.</u>	✓	Mandatory