

‘Sustainable’ Food Corporations and Sustainable Food Systems:
On the Possibilities of Engagement for Food Systems Change

by

Ericka Carlson

Department of Food Systems and Society

Marylhurst University

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Jessica Spayde, Ph.D. – Thesis Advisor



Thesis Approval

Student Name: Ericka Carlson
Degree: Master of Science in Food Systems and Society
Thesis Title: 'Sustainable' Food Corporations and Sustainable Food Systems: On the Possibilities of Engagement for Food Systems Change
Thesis Committee:

Thesis Advisor

Thesis Advisor

Patricia Allen, Ph.D.
Department Chair, Food Systems and Society

Date Approved

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

AFI	Alternative Food Initiative
CAFO	Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations
CSA	Community Supported Agriculture
GMO	Genetically Modified Organism
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NPO	Non-Profit Organization

ABSTRACT

The topic of private actors, particularly retail grocers, as agents in sustainable food systems has been given much attention in agrifood scholar literature. However, much of this attention has focused on large transnational corporations and the detrimental effects they have on sustainable food systems. There are other private actors in the food system, actors who position themselves as “sustainable” food companies and promote their efforts to contribute to sustainable food systems. This study problematizes that agrifood scholars are not considering the role of self-identified “sustainable” food companies in creating sustainable food systems. Using discourse analysis, I examine agrifood scholar perceptions of retail supermarkets and food service companies. Then, I narrow to two examples, Whole Foods Market (WFM) and Bon Appétit Management Company (BAMCO) to explore agrifood scholar characterizations of these companies. Finally, I turn to the discourse of WFM and BAMCO to study how they characterize their engagements in building sustainable food systems that prioritize social justice and environmental sustainability. In this research, I find that 1) Agrifood scholars clearly identify unprecedented levels of power and control by private actors, including retail supermarkets; 2) As retail supermarkets assume a role of influencing production and consumption beyond their historic role in distribution, they play a critical role in agrifood system transformation; and 3) In studying company engagements, I find that companies are engaging in some activities identified by scholars as crucial for building food system sustainability. This study concludes that there exists an opportunity for additional agrifood research into the role “sustainable” food companies might play in creating sustainable food systems.

Keywords

Corporations, Sustainable Business, Sustainable Food Systems, Social Movements, Whole Foods Market, Bon Appétit Management Company

Chapter 1: Introduction

A debate plays out in food systems discourse that divides those who think that corporations are the root of food system problems (Monbiot, 2000) and those who think that corporations are essential to building food systems grounded in principles of environmental and social justice (Porritt, 2005). Non-governmental organizations (NGOs), for example, Food and Water Watch, and popular magazines, for example, *The New Yorker*, also contribute to the conversation and hone in on the role of supermarkets. Some, share Monbiot's (2000) view:

While Walmart's sustainability campaign has done wonders for its public image, it has done little for the environment. In fact, Walmart's environmental impact has only grown over the last seven years. Its business practices remain highly polluting, while its relentless expansion and consolidation of the market have come at the expense of more sustainable enterprises and systems of production and distribution. (Food and Water Watch, 2012, para. 2)

Others consider both negative and positive impacts that some corporations may have:

To the likes of Wal-Mart and Costco, [Whole Foods Market] has been an impetus to carry healthier, more judiciously sourced food. To small neighborhood natural- or gourmet-food shops, it has sometimes been an impetus to go out of business. It has enabled organic and artisanal producers to scale up, and put pressure on the giants to at least pretend that they are scaling down. It has less than a one-per-cent share of the American grocery market, yet it has unquestionably transformed the way Americans produce, buy, and eat food. Its name, justifiably or not, is shorthand for a food revolution. (Paumgarten, 2010, para. 1)

Is one side right and the other wrong? Or, is there middle ground between the two? Agrifood scholars have extensively researched the role that Walmart has played in the current food system.¹ What about actors like Whole Foods Market and other companies who position themselves as “sustainable” food corporations? Has Whole Foods Market “unquestionably transformed the way Americans produce, buy, and eat food” as Paumgarten (2010) suggests or has their sustainability campaign also done wonders for their public image as Food and Water Watch (2012) suggests about Walmart? How do we know? Further, why is it important?

The social, environmental and economic challenges facing the 21st century global food system are well documented. From the environmental stresses on our natural resources—water, soil, air, aquatic ecosystems and biodiversity to social justice issues around population growth, labor and public health that incorporate race, class and gender inequality, it is evident that our current food system is unsustainable. Agrifood scholars, Lang and Barling (2012) point out something obvious, yet radical, in a timely article on food security and sustainability. That is, that the only *secure* food system is a *sustainable* food system. They explain that, “the route to food security is by addressing sustainability” and that the term “food security” may eventually be replaced by a more inclusive term such as “sustainable food system” (p. 322). Yet, this raises the questions: who is to address sustainability? How is sustainability defined? And, what is the best path forward to achieve this sustainable food system? These questions inspire this research.

In this research, in order to highlight my agreement with Lang and Barling’s (2012) assessment of the limitations of the term “food security”, I choose to move beyond that debate and here, I utilize the term sustainable food system. In this study, I explore agrifood scholar perceptions of the role that retail supermarkets and food service companies play in creating sustainable food systems. Further, I am interested in how these companies portray their own

¹ See Table 2. Walmart Subject Classification (p. 37).

engagement in food system change. The ultimate goal of this research is to create further opportunities for discourse in agrifood scholarship around the potential role of “sustainable” business actors.

In the Background and Significance section, I situate the topic of agrifood scholar perceptions of retail supermarkets and food service companies within food regime theory (Friedmann and McMichael, 1989) and I define the corporate food regime (McMichael, 2005; Friedmann, 2005). Then, I identify alternative food movement strategies for countering the hegemony of the corporate food regime and delineate four dominant food systems change frameworks: “Voting with your fork”, food security, food justice, and food sovereignty. Following that, I review in detail one of those frameworks, food security, and the conceptualizations of that framework provided by agrifood scholars Lang and Barling (2012).

In the Results, Analysis and Contributions section, I review current agrifood scholar discourse on retail supermarkets and food service companies. Then, I turn to two examples of “sustainable” food businesses, Whole Foods Market and Bon Appétit Management Company and examine how these companies appear in agrifood scholarship. To follow that, I review agrifood scholarship on Walmart. Finally, I turn to the discourse of Whole Foods Market and Bon Appétit Management Company to explore how the companies promote themselves as food systems change agents acting to increase food system sustainability. In the final section, I compare the Whole Foods Market and Bon Appétit Management Company discourse with the Lang and Barling (2012) food system sustainability framework.

In this research, I find several key points. One, agrifood scholarship on retail supermarkets clearly identifies unprecedented levels of power and control by these actors (Burch & Lawrence, 2007; Clapp & Fuchs, 2009; Burch, Dixon, & Lawrence, 2013; Fuchs, Kalfagianni, Clapp, & Busch, 2011). Two, as retail supermarkets assume a role of influencing production and

consumption beyond their historic role in distribution, they play a critical role in agrifood system transformation (Burch & Lawrence, 2007). Three, little company segmentation has occurred in agrifood scholarship on this topic with transnational corporations like Walmart, national U.S. chains like Meijer and “sustainable” retailer, Whole Foods Market, all considered equally in the category of “retail supermarket”. In recognizing this, scholars have called for research into individual actors highlighting the fact that they have differing agendas and motivations (Henson, 2011; Burch & Lawrence, 2007). Four, there is a lack of attention to the food service category in agrifood scholarship. With regard to Whole Foods Market and Bon Appétit Management Company, actors who self-identify as “sustainable”, I find limited research. Walmart, on the other hand, has been studied extensively. Finally, a comparison of company discourse showing the ways that Whole Foods Market and Bon Appétit Management Company address food system sustainability reveals that both companies engage in a wide array of initiatives that appear designed to address economic, environmental and social justice in the food system. In comparing these initiatives against the Lang and Barling (2012) food system sustainability framework, I find that the companies address eight out of the ten tenets that Lang and Barling (2012) recommend. Based on these findings, it appears that these “sustainable” food companies are addressing some components necessary to building sustainable food systems. There are other components that they could address in a more significant way.

More importantly, the limitations of this study which uses discourse analysis to identify what companies are saying, are that in looking only at what companies are saying, not conducting a study which looks at what they are doing, we are unable to draw any conclusions about the efficacy of these efforts. Therefore, this research finds an opportunity for additional agrifood scholar research into the role “sustainable” food companies might play in creating sustainable food systems. It particularly points to the need for segmentation in the retail

supermarket category but also points to the need for further research into the food service market. This suggests the need for research with companies like Whole Foods Market and Bon Appétit Management Company that position themselves as actors working to build sustainable food systems.

Chapter 2: Background and Significance

In 2006, John Mackey, co-founder and CEO of Whole Foods Market, wrote food systems journalist, Michael Pollan, a letter responding to criticisms that Pollan had levied at Whole Foods Market in his book, *The Omnivore's Dilemma*. What ensued was a lively open debate both in print and at an event at UC Berkeley. Pollan, while continuing a critique of Whole Foods Market, also allowed that market-based solutions and some initiatives pursued by Whole Foods Market were fostering positive food system change. Both Pollan and Mackey emphasized the important nature of discourse among differing voices to system change and Pollan (2006) addressed Mackey in saying:

I hope you will take my remarks in the spirit in which they are offered as constructive criticism of an important institution [Whole Foods Market] that can do much to advance what you call the “reformation” of the American food system, something we both want.
(para. 2)

The well-publicized debate between these two food system actors frames an interesting problem—whether business has a role to play in solving social and environmental problems. Business scholars undergo extensive analysis on this subject, referencing a variety of models, from Corporate Social Responsibility (Lindgreen & Swaen, 2010) to new corporate forms like B-corporations (benefit corporations) (Reiser, 2011; Clark Jr. & Babson, 2011). John Mackey, Whole Foods Market CEO, co-authored a book, *Conscious Capitalism*, describing a vision for business that serves the interests of all major stakeholders—customers, employees, investors, communities, suppliers, and the environment. The notion that business can create both profits and societal benefits is not uncommon in business literature (Reiser, 2011; Clark Jr. & Babson, 2011.) Agrifood scholars take a more skeptical stance (Clapp & Fuchs, 2009; McMichael &

Friedmann, 2007; Fuchs et al., 2011). A predominant discourse among agrifood scholars on the role of business in food system change centers on the corporate food regime. The corporate food regime is characterized as the enemy of sustainable food systems. Many corporations appear to be automatically aggregated into this general category of “corporate food regime” by agrifood scholars and food systems practitioners, regardless of various corporate engagements in sustainability initiatives. Therefore, it is worth examining food regime theory and the corporate food regime.

2.1. Food Regime Theory and the Corporate Food Regime

The injustices rampant in the global industrial food system have been well documented in academic and mainstream literature. Concentration and consolidation (Bell, 2004; Magdoff, Foster & Buttel, 2000) have focused profit and power in the hands of the few while society faces ever-greater environmental, economic and social challenges. Food regime theory as identified by Friedmann and McMichael (1989) laid out the contours of a new frame for defining agrifood power relations. As McMichael (2009) succinctly states, “It is not about food per se, but about the relations within which food is produced, and through which capitalism is produced and reproduced” (p. 281). Food regime theory explains stable historical periods that allowed capitalist accumulation supported by a complex arrangement of power relationships. The first food regime (1870–1930s) was defined as the imperial regime where the new world colonies supplied Europe with grain, livestock and tropical imports as Britain outsourced staple food production. In the second regime, the World War II/Fordist regime, (1950s–70s) food stocks flowed from the U.S. to postcolonial states in the developing world to industrialize select countries, attempting to secure markets and arrest the spread of communism. The third, and current regime, is often identified as the corporate food regime (McMichael, 2009). McMichael (2005) defined the corporate food regime in terms of global expansion by agrifood companies,

dispossession of farmers and reorganization of supply chains to give ultimate power to capital. Friedmann (2005) further linked the corporate food regime to the food retail sector and their increasing power to restructure agrifood supply chains. Predominantly, agrifood scholars reference major retail players like: Tesco (UK), Walmart (US), Ahold (Netherlands), and Carrefour (France) when discussing the corporate food regime (McMichael, 2009; Burch & Lawrence, 2009).

Discussions of the corporate food regime in relationship to finding solutions to food system sustainability is summed up best by McMichael (2009), “The institutional mechanisms of the corporate food regime are unlikely to provide solutions to its socio-ecological contradictions... Sustainable solutions will come from elsewhere, in the food sovereignty interstices and on the margins, where the food and ecological crises meet” (p. 293). In this quote, McMichael suggests that actors contributing to the corporate food regime are not the actors who will provide sustainable solutions. This invites the question of whether all corporate actors contribute to the corporate food regime evenly or if “sustainable” food companies fall somewhere else on the spectrum and may, in fact, have the ability to create sustainable solutions?

According to Holt-Gimenez and Shattuck (2011) the corporate food regime is characterized by:

The unprecedented market power and profits of monopoly agrifood corporations, globalized animal protein chains, growing links between food and fuel economies, a “supermarket revolution”, liberalized global trade in food, increasingly concentrated land ownership, a shrinking natural resource base, and growing opposition from food movements worldwide (p. 111).

Burch and Lawrence (2009) note that in the corporate food regime, supermarkets are predominant actors. In discussing pathways to social change in the food system, Holt-Gimenez

and Wang (2011) present a food regime/food movement matrix (Table 1) that includes NGOs and NPOs, particularly those working in community food security, food justice and food sovereignty as the main institutions positioned to challenge the corporate food regime. The chart includes a row labeled *Main Institutions* and segments these actors by politics as neoliberal, reformist, progressive or radical. It is notable that, with few exceptions, such as CSAs and fair trade, Holt-Gimenez and Wang (2011) include business and food retail actors in the neoliberal, corporate food regime section only, which is positioned as a part of the problem and not as a part of the U.S. food movements section positioned as constructing solutions. Holt-Gimenez and Wang (2011) include only large corporate players (Safeway, Kroger and Walmart). The corporate food regime is relevant to my argument because it appears to dominate the agrifood scholar discourse on corporate actors in the food system. Corporate food regime discourse allows an assumption that all corporations and private food governance actors are a part of this corporate food regime, an entity seen as the enemy of a sustainable food system. Later sections of this study show that segmenting out “sustainable” business actors from other business actors, may provide additional allies to food movement agents opposing the corporate food regime.

Table 1. Food Regime/Food Movement Matrix

	Corporate Food Regime		U.S. Food Movements	
	NEOLIBERAL	REFORMIST	PROGRESSIVE	RADICAL
POLITICS				
<i>Discourse</i>	<i>Food Enterprise</i>	<i>Household Food Security/Anti-Hunger</i>	<i>Community Food Security/ Food Justice</i>	<i>Food Justice/ Food Sovereignty</i>
Main Institutions	USDA (Vilsak), Farm Bureau, Safeway, Kroger, Wal-Mart, Cargill, Monsanto, ADM, Tyson, big philanthropy capital	USDA (Merrigan), Mainstream Fair Trade, some Slow Food, some Food Policy Councils, medium-sized philanthropy, many food banks & food aid organizations	Many CFS organizations, many Food Policy Councils & youth and food justice movements, Community Supported Agriculture, some farm worker & labor organizations, Alternative Fair Trade, many Slow Food chapters.	The U.S. Food Sovereignty Alliance, many Food Justice and rights-based movements, Some CFS organizations and Slow Food chapters
<i>Orientation</i>	<i>Corporate monopoly/ technological fixes/ global markets</i>	<i>Self-regulated corporate development/ food aid</i>	<i>Community empowerment/ right to food/ human rights/ labor rights/</i>	<i>Liberation/Entitlement/ Redistribution/Antiracism</i>
MODEL	Overproduction, Corporate consolidation, Unregulated markets and monopolies, Monocultures (including organic), GMOs, Agrofuels, mass global consumption of industrial food	Mainstreaming large, low-end retail expansion into underserved neighborhoods, using public resources to extract surplus from the local economy, channeling of commodity surpluses into food aid programs and school lunch, certification of niche markets (e.g., organic, fair, local, sustainable), maintaining northern agricultural subsidies, "sustainable" roundtables for corporate self-regulation, microcredit, conscious consumerism, dietary health education, reliance upon food stamp and food bank programs to alleviate food insecurity	Agro-ecological local food production, economic support for smallholder farms, urban agriculture, alternative business models and community benefit packages for production, processing & retail, solidarity economies	Agroecological family and community-managed agriculture and food systems, regionally-based food systems, dismantling of corporate agri-foods monopoly power, parity, redistributive land reform, community rights to water & seed, democratization of food and agricultural policy, sustainable livelihoods, protection from overproduction and corporate extraction of food dollars, radical inclusion in organizational decision-making processes

Source: Holt-Gimenez & Wang, 2011

Table 1, continued

		Corporate Food Regime		U.S Food Movements	
POLITICS	NEOLIBERAL	REFORMIST	PROGRESSIVE	RADICAL	
	<i>Food Enterprise</i>	<i>Household Food Security/Anti-hunger</i>	<i>Community Food Security/Food Justice</i>	<i>Food Justice/ Food Sovereignty</i>	
Racial/ Ethnic Dimensions	Exclusion of people of color from access to and ownership of land, credit, and public entitlements; lack of access to healthy, affordable food in “food deserts,” exploitation of immigrant labor along the entire food chain, disparities in prevalence of diet-related diseases, displacement and dispossession of indigenous peoples in global south, creation of racial/ethnic tensions, creation of immigration laws in global north targeting people of color	People of color comprise a large portion of beneficiaries of food assistance programs, corporate retail expansion into food deserts provides unstable low wage employment for people of color while precluding the establishment of local minority owned-businesses, failure to address structural racism	Practitioners (predominantly white) work to improve access to healthy and affordable food within underserved communities (comprised predominantly of people of color) by providing vegetables, garden space and knowledge; practitioners often express widespread mentality of “bringing good food to others” in efforts to include non-whites in the alternative food movement and invoke essentialist constructions of race/ethnicity; reproduction of racial hegemony through domination of spaces by privileged whites; anti-racist/diversity training provided within some organizations	Development of local non-white-owned food businesses by removing barriers of structural racism such as commercial and mortgage industry redlining and exclusion of non-whites from access to public resources; transfer of organizational leadership to members of underserved communities; strengthening of economic ties between local minority-owned businesses and minority farmers; legal protection of indigenous and peasant livelihoods in global south	
Class Dimensions	High concentration of oligopoly wealth within food system; marginalization of small, medium, and family farms and of locally-owned food retailers; low-wage farm and food sector jobs; destruction of peasant livelihoods in global south; maintenance of global surplus labor through concentration of wealth and of control over productive resources	Public subsidies compensate for low wages in the corporate agrifood sector through food assistance programs like SNAP, EBT, & WIC; differentiated ability to consume certified organic and fair trade products on the basis of income; failure to address class inequities and skewed distribution of wealth	Higher wages and more stable employment for agricultural and food workers; cooperative ownership structures; ability to participate in and engage in leadership roles dependent on possession of cultural and social capital associated with class privilege	Progressive redistribution of wealth and control over resources; restoration of economic viability of small and medium-sized farms and food businesses through restructuring of agricultural and food policies; strong labor rights	

Source: Holt-Gimenez & Wang, 2011

2.2. Alternative Food Movement Strategies and Change Frameworks

If the corporate food regime is situated as the problem, the alternative food movement presents a variety of food movement strategies that are positioned as the solution to transforming the food system (see Holt-Gimenez and Wang, 2011). The emerging U.S. food movement is positioned in direct opposition to the corporate food regime and promotes a re-structuring of the food system that prioritizes sustainable agriculture and social justice. The growth of organic agriculture and alternative food initiatives (AFIs) like farmers' markets, Community Supported Agriculture (CSA), and Farm to School programs create supply chain options outside of industrialized agriculture and aid in empowering communities to take control of their food system (Allen, 2004). This leads to the question of whether these alternatives hold the power and resources capable of challenging the corporate food regime that drives the conventional food system? Further, is this the most effective and expedient food movement strategy for systemic and structural long-term change? As Campbell and Dixon (2009) note, systemic change, particularly as it relates to food regime theory requires a complete re-configuration of economic, social and political relationships whereby key relationships in the existing regime are "inverted, subverted or restructured" (p. 263).

The dominant food movement change strategy (Alkon and Agyeman, 2011) popularized by writers such as Michael Pollan and documentaries that feature issues related to diet-related disease (*Supersize Me*, 2004), industrial food production (*Food, Inc.*, 2008), and local, sustainable food communities (*Fresh*, 2012) invites consumers to pursue consumptive-based solutions and infers that eating is a political act by suggesting consumers "vote with their fork". Critiques of this change strategy point to the fact that it prioritizes neoliberal market-based solutions that are targeted to a white, middle class audience that create a "good" food system for some and not for all (Alkon, 2012; Allen & Guthman, 2006; Slocum, 2007). As an alternative,

food system scholars forward theories of food system change emerging from the field in the last decade that include the food security, food justice and food sovereignty movements. These strategies address structural inequity, incorporating race, class and gender issues. The most cited definition of food security (according to Lang and Barling, 2012, p. 313) is the FAO's definition: "a situation that exists when all people at all times have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life". Hinrichs (2013) points out that a food security frame provides an alignment point for institutions with differing agendas and power that would previously have had little engagement. Food justice is the need for food security placed in the context of institutional racism, racial formation, and racialized geographies (Alkon and Norgaard, 2009). Sbicca (2012) further defines it as incorporating a focus on racial and economic inequality into the alternative food movement. Food sovereignty is the right of people to determine their own food and agriculture policies. According to Schiavoni (2009), "[Food sovereignty] involves restoring control over food access and food production from large corporations and international financial institutions back to individual nations/tribes/peoples- and ultimately to those who produce the food and those who eat it" (p. 682).

2.3. Food Regime/Food Movement Matrix

As noted in section 2.1., Holt-Gimenez and Wang (2011) developed a matrix that maps the corporate food regime and the major change frameworks reviewed above (see Table 1. Food Regime/Food Movement Matrix). The matrix organizes food system change strategies along a political spectrum from neoliberal to reformist, progressive and radical. The neoliberal and reform models are organized as a part of the corporate food regime. The progressive and radical models are positioned as part of the U.S. food movements, poised to challenge the corporate food regime. The neoliberal model is grounded in free-market ideologies that promote unregulated

expansion of global markets with large corporate monopolies providing technological solutions (Holt-Gimenez and Shattuck, 2011). The reform model utilizes a discourse of household food security and seeks moderate reforms to existing market structures prioritizing social and environmental benefits (Holt-Gimenez and Shattuck, 2011). The progressive model utilizes a discourse of community food security and food justice promoting community empowerment with an emphasis on local food production, economic support for smallholder farms and urban agriculture (Holt-Gimenez and Wang, 2011). The radical model utilizes a discourse of food justice and food sovereignty calling for structural redistribution of wealth and power (Holt-Gimenez and Wang, 2011). Holt-Gimenez and Wang (2011) suggest that an alliance between the progressive and radical camps is the best strategy to fight corporate food regime hegemony and create *transformative* food system change rather than *reform* based food system change.

In this research, I consider another avenue, the role that “sustainable” food business may play along this spectrum. This raises the question as to what role “sustainable” businesses play in challenging the corporate food regime hegemony. Is it possible that companies have a role to play in reformation or transformation that prioritizes social justice and environmental sustainability? I define social justice to mean a situation where every individual regardless of race, class or gender, has equal access to economic, political and social benefits. Environmental sustainability refers to a situation where policies and actions incorporate ecological boundaries and prioritize a generative, not extractive ecological model.

2.4. Role for “Sustainable” Food Business in Food Regime Change?

Holt-Gimenez and Wang (2011) omit most “sustainable” food business from the food regime/food movement matrix. While they specifically call out large transnational companies on the corporate food regime side and mention co-operative ownership structures and ownership of small and medium-sized farm and food businesses in relation to race and class dimensions, the lack of business actors is notable. Further, their omission on this chart raises the question of how food businesses are viewed overall in agrifood literature on food system social change.

This provides a good starting place to ask if business overall, and more specifically “sustainable” retail supermarkets and food service businesses, hold the power and resources to challenge the structure of the corporate food regime and build a food system that prioritizes sustainable agriculture and social justice? Because of their high levels of economic power and influence relative to smaller-scaled, dispersed AFIs, could “sustainable” food businesses have a broader role to play in influencing a wide and diverse audience thus providing greater leverage for systemic change? Could “sustainable” food businesses find a place on the Holt-Gimenez and Wang (2011) chart in the reform or progressive models?

“*Good Food for All*” has become the rallying cry of many advocates working for a sustainable food system. Critiques of AFIs (Allen, 2004) suggest that these alternatives mirror the inequalities found in conventional systems. Further, while these AFIs play a critical role in creating innovative new solutions that inspire change and illustrate possibilities, many business actors in niche markets of the conventional food system (e.g. organic) engage in discourse and action designed to build sustainable food systems that benefit all by creating broader food access and building new economic models. With the reach, resources and power these entities hold, it invites the question of the role that these actors might play in building sustainable food systems.

The following are the research questions for this study. These research questions explore perceptions of businesses' role in creating food system sustainability.

1. How do agrifood scholars characterize the role of consumer food access points (specifically, retail supermarkets and food service companies) in creating food system sustainability?
 - a. Sub-question one: How do agrifood scholars characterize alternative/natural markets (specifically, natural category leader, Whole Foods Market) as compared to the supermarket category generally?
 - b. Sub-question two: How do agrifood scholars characterize “sustainable” food service companies (specifically, self-identified “sustainable” food service company, Bon Appétit Management Company) as compared to food service companies more generally?
 - c. Sub-question three: How do agrifood scholars characterize major conventional retail supermarkets like Walmart and how they are creating food system sustainability?
2. How do two selected food access points—one, the largest natural foods retailer, Whole Foods Market, and the other, self-identified “sustainable” food service company Bon Appétit Management Company— present themselves in terms of engagement in food system sustainability? How does the way in which these companies present themselves on their company websites compare to Lang and Barling’s (2012) food system sustainability definition?

2.5. Food Security/Food System Sustainability

In previous sections of this research, I have identified the corporate food regime as the stated enemy of sustainable food systems, reviewed leading food movement change strategies to counter corporate food regime hegemony and begun to query whether there is a role for “sustainable” food business. In the next section, I identify a solution framework put forth by agrifood scholars Lang and Barling (2012). This is of critical significance to this research as it identifies areas where “sustainable” food companies may engage in creating food system change. In later sections (see 4.2.2. Companies and food system sustainability) I compare Whole Foods Market and Bon Appétit Management Company engagements in food system sustainability to the Lang and Barling (2012) food system sustainability framework. Therefore, it is important to provide a detailed definition of the Lang and Barling food system sustainability tenets.

The most commonly cited definition of food security is by the UN’s Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). It reads: “[. . .] a situation that exists when all people at all times have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life” (FAO 2009, p. 8). It is because agrifood scholars have since articulated this concept in more specific terms that I chose a focus on food security for this research. Throughout much of the 20th century, the concept of food security was tied to increasing food production. Lang and Barling (2012) review an emerging discourse that they term a food systems, rather than agricultural, approach to meeting food security needs. They posit that the term food security is limiting, suggesting instead the use of the term sustainable food systems. This research uses Lang and Barling's (2012) definition of food system sustainability that encompasses broader social and ecological aspects linking food security to food sustainability and recognizing the direct link between production and

consumption. Lang and Barling (2012) advise considering the tenets below in addressing food system sustainability.²

Table 2. Food System Sustainability Tenets

Food System Sustainability Tenets
1. To address the mismatch between production, consumption and policy
2. To redesign the food system for sustainability using social, environmental and economic criteria
3. To develop short-term and long-term plans for reorienting food supply and consumption to align environment, health and social inequalities
4. To broaden health conceptions to include a wide range of non-communicable diseases including malnutrition
5. To address environmental concerns throughout the supply chain
6. To address waste throughout the system, particularly at consumption
7. To incorporate consumer issues including over-, under- and mal-consumption
8. To address carbon emissions throughout the food chain
9. To incorporate an economic approach that internalizes full costs
10. To examine the locus of power between government/private governance

In order to define these tenets, Lang and Barling (2012) offer recommendations for an “emerging” food security analysis as contrasted against the “old” food security analysis. To help give dimension to these tenets, I also draw from previous work by the authors.

The first tenet is to address the mismatch between production, consumption and policy. Lang and Barling (2012) situate this tenet in relationship to the “old” food security analysis that took under-production as the core concern. They remark on the limitations of the farm focus of the 19th and 20th centuries and suggest that what is needed is a supply chain approach encompassing systems thinking. In particular, they note, “Policymaking processes are more used to addressing single issue problems, not the connections of, for example, the production sphere with its environmental, natural resource and ecosystem impacts, or the impact of consumption on waste or public health impacts” (Lang & Barling, 2012, p. 318).

The second tenet is to redesign the food system for sustainability using social, environmental and economic criteria. Lang and Barling (2012) point out that in the “old” food security analysis,

² Lang and Barling include 13 total tenets, I omit three that do not lend themselves to this comparison of initiatives undertaken by private actors. These are: Analysis of 2007-2008 crisis, geographic hotspots and role of science.

the route to food security was focused on producing more food. In describing the “new fundamentals” for food security Lang (2010), recommends a systems approach that includes the following factors:

...food (and agricultural) policy needs other aims: to deliver sufficiency of production only on ecological terms, with sustainable food systems at the heart of international development; to judge food not just by price but meshing embedded carbon, water and land use with calories – a new set of heuristics; to factor in all diet-related ill-health, not just hunger; to draw on all the sciences, not just the “natural” sciences, to help create resilient food systems; to focus on entire food chains, not just agriculture, to transform how food is produced, distributed and consumed; to re-frame consumer aspirations to engage them in lowering food’s impact on the environment; and to deliver the above through democratic means, building movements that hold food systems to account and shape needs appropriately. (p. 94-95)

As Lang and Barling (2012) imply, social criteria include all diet-related health, a focus on social inequities along the food chain, transforming how food is produced, distributed and consumed with people factored in to the equation, re-drawing the links between consumers and the environment, and prioritizing democratic means that incorporate social justice. Environmental criteria include production systems that recognize ecological boundaries and incorporate factors related to carbon, water and land. Economic criteria include policies that internalize rather than externalize social and environmental costs of production.

The third tenet is to develop short-term and long-term plans for reorienting food supply and consumption patterns to align environment, health and social inequalities. Lang and Barling (2012) observe that the preferred action in the “old” food security analysis was improved coordination among international food bodies. As stated in tenet two above, the “emerging”

route to food system sustainability is, “to transform how food is produced, distributed and *consumed*; to re-frame consumer aspirations to engage them in lowering food’s impact on the environment” (Lang, 2010, p. 95). Or, as Oshaug and Haddad succinctly state, “food policy is about resolving the linkage of people, nutrition and environment” (as cited in Lang, 2010, p. 94). These two definitions are critical in that they place people, rather than international food bodies, back at the center of food systems. They recognize that transforming how food is consumed is a key part of the solution. To distinguish this tenet from tenet two, *redesign the food system for sustainability using social, environmental and economic criteria*, for the purposes of this analysis, I focus primarily on issues of production that deal with food system redesign in tenet two and I focus primarily on issues of alignment between production and consumption in tenet three.

The fourth tenet is to broaden health conceptions to include a wide range of non-communicable diseases including malnutrition. To define this tenet, Lang (2010) references Popkin’s (2009) research on diet and health. As Popkin (2009) observes, our modern diets of highly processed foods containing high levels of fat, sugar, and sodium have led to an epidemic of diet-related non-communicable diseases. Lang (2010) states that our current public policies are still based on 1930s era programs where malnutrition and hunger were the primary problems. He suggests that we need to broaden health conceptions to address a broader range of current problems including over, under and mal-consumption. In this tenet, Lang and Barling (2012) identify the need to consider diet-related non-communicable diseases as a public health issue.

The fifth tenet is to address environmental concerns throughout the supply chain. Lang and Barling (2012) note that in the “emerging” sustainable food systems analysis, addressing environmental concerns throughout the supply chain is recommended instead of only on-farm where the “old” analysis focused. Environmental concerns include: 1) Climate change (effects on

agriculture and effects from agriculture include the oft-cited statistic of the contribution of meat production toward 4-12% of global warming) (Tukker et al., as cited in Lang, 2010, p. 90); 2) Water, “*Agriculture is the greatest user of water worldwide, accounting for an estimated 70 per cent of potable water use, with livestock playing a significant part in that*” (Clarke & King, as cited in Lang, 2010, p. 90); 3) Biodiversity and ecosystems support including fish stocks; 4) Energy and non-renewable fossil fuels; 5) Land (including recommendations to consume less meat and eat more local seasonal unprocessed food); and 6) Soil, including degradation from conventional agriculture (Lang, 2010).

The sixth tenet is to address waste throughout the system, particularly at consumption. Lang and Barling (2012) refute the notion that waste should be addressed only at farm and distribution, as was the focus in the “old” food security analysis. In the “emerging” sustainable food system analysis, Lang and Barling (2012) recommend addressing waste throughout the supply chain with a focus at the point of consumption. It is estimated that consumers in the U.S. and U.K. throw away 30-40% of food purchased (USDA, 2013; Lang, 2010). This has significant implications for climate change due to the greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) released, along with water and land wastage (FAO, 2015). The FAO (2015) reports that, “the total volume of water used each year to produce food that is lost or wasted (250km³) is equivalent to the annual flow of Russia's Volga River...similarly, 1.4 billion hectares of land - 28 percent of the world's agricultural area - is used annually to produce food that is lost or wasted” (para 3-4). Further, the FAO (2015) states that in developing countries, food waste is primarily found at production but in the developed world, the problem is found at retail and consumer level. Overall, economic losses attributed to food waste are estimated at \$750 billion a year (FAO, 2015).

The seventh tenet is to incorporate consumer issues including over-, under- and mal-consumption. Lang and Barling (2012), identify that in the “old” food security analysis, the primary focus related to consumer issues was on under-consumption. In the “emerging” analysis, Lang (2010) describes:

After decades in which policy was predicated on the case for increasing output to feed hundreds of millions of underfed people, now it seems that a more complex picture needs to be addressed: a triple burden of over-, under- and mal-consumption, all coexisting, often within the same region and country. (p. 89)

As noted above in tenet four, our modern diets of highly processed foods containing high levels of fat, sugar, and sodium have led to an epidemic of diet-related non-communicable diseases (Popkin, 2009). In this tenet, Lang and Barling (2012) suggest that instead of focusing on under-consumption of food, we need to think of the broader category of “mal-consumption” of food, which includes over and under-consumption. Mal-consumption is when individuals are primarily exposed to a diet with an abundance of foods high in fat, sugar, and sodium in lieu of foods with a proper nutritional balance. Over-consumption is defined as individuals eating an excess of calories and nutrients and is linked to adverse health effects. On the other hand, under-consumption describes a situation where individuals do not receive enough calories and nutrients in their diet to maintain a proper nutritional balance and optimum health. All three of these situations lead to diet-related diseases that impact the ability of an individual to live a healthy and productive life. Thus, a focus on consumer issues related to over, under and mal-consumption is seen as critical to the “emerging” sustainable food system analysis.

The eighth tenet is to address carbon emissions throughout the food chain. Lang and Barling (2012) point out the significant GHG emissions from agriculture and food production. As noted in tenet five, meat is the largest contributor of all consumer products to global

emissions accounting for 4-12% (Tukker et al., 2006 as cited in Lang, 2010). In addition, Lang and Barling (2012) observe that large food companies are engaging in initiatives to address their carbon emissions via changing their own emissions at store level, working with their supply chains and influencing consumer purchasing patterns (including a now abandoned plan by Tesco to place carbon labels on the 70,000 items they stock (Vaughan, 2012)). Thus, Lang and Barling (2012) recommend an approach to food system sustainability that addresses carbon emissions throughout the food chain.

The ninth tenet is to incorporate an economic approach that internalizes full costs. Lang and Barling (2012) note that in the “old” food security analysis the primary economic approach was to generate efficient supply with a focus on reducing prices. In the “emerging” sustainable food systems analysis Lang and Barling (2012) include the importance of incorporating costs that are currently externalized. They point out the range of externalities in the current system—from water, soil, biodiversity and other environmental impacts to labor and the economic and social cost of diet-related disease (Lang, 2010; Lang and Barling, 2012; Lang, Barling and Caraher, 2001). They highlight the challenges, stating “if climate change, water stress, pressures on land use, social justice and so on were integrated into food systems, they would change dramatically, and probably become more expensive” (Lang and Barling, 2012, p. 319).

The tenth tenet is to examine the locus of power between government and private governance. Lang and Barling (2012) identify that now more than at any previous time, power and control over food systems is split between governments and the private sector.

Chapter 3: Methodology and Methods

3.1. Epistemology

In order to explore the complexity inherent in social organization, this research is rooted in the epistemology of social constructionists. Grounded in the work of Berger and Luekmann (1967), *The Social Construction of Reality* and Lincoln and Guba's (1985) *Naturalistic Inquiry* (Creswell, 2014; Denzin & Lincoln, 2008), constructionists believe that there are multiple realities and that reality is a constructive process co-created by researched and researcher. It is an inductive method that begins with specific observations leading to broader generalizations and theory development with the overarching goal to listen to participant views, understanding that these are shaped by historical and cultural forces (Creswell, 2014). Individuals make meaning of the world in their day-to-day experience and they are also imprinted with a set of meanings based on their specific cultural, political and economic situation in the world. Denzin and Lincoln (2008) define qualitative research as rooted in social constructionism. They state, "qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive and material practices that make the world visible" (p. 4). Social constructionists also take a critical stance towards taken-for-granted knowledge and understanding (Burr, 1995 as cited in Rapley & Flick, 2008). This is highly relevant to this research, because as a food systems scholar and practitioner, I have observed two opposing conceptualizations of the role of businesses in creating sustainable food systems. Agrifood scholars take a skeptical stance of the role that business might play (McMichael & Friedmann, 2007; Fuchs et al., 2011). Food movement practitioners, Michael Pollan, for example, in returning to the quote at the beginning of this thesis, appear more open to the role that business might play. Though this research primarily takes a constructionist frame, as a researcher working on social justice and social

change, my epistemology is also transformative, prioritizing issues of politics, power and justice, collaboration and social change (Creswell, 2014). As a practitioner and a scholar, my aim is to review the roles played by various actors and to invite consideration of collaborative pathways forward to create social justice in the food system. I strongly identify with Rose's (1997, p. 316) statement that "researcher, researched and research make each other". That is to say that I view research as a collaborative process. While this study is not about collaboration, per se, I hope that in examining actors who may be perceived in different "camps" to identify the strengths (and weaknesses) of different actors who may be working toward common aims. My long-term goal is to elicit further discourse on ways that government, industry (specifically "sustainable" food businesses), NGOs and citizens can work together in building a sustainable food system.

3.2. Methodology and Methods

This research utilizes an exploratory design method (Lynn University, 2011) in order to achieve greater understanding of the perceived role of "sustainable" food business in food system social change. The research questions in this study lead to a literature review and discourse analysis as the primary methods for exploring the research problem. This study problematizes that agrifood scholars are not considering the role of "sustainable" food businesses in creating a sustainable food system. In order to explore this problem, I asked the research questions below.

3.2.1. Research question one.

My first research question is: How do agrifood scholars characterize the role of consumer food access points (specifically, retail supermarkets and food service companies) in creating food system sustainability?

Using Google Scholar, I conducted a search of agrifood journal *Agriculture and Human Values*. I limited my study to this journal because it is a primary venue where social scientists are

examining issues related to agriculture and food system sustainability. I searched first for the term “supermarket” (155 results) then for the term “food service” (53 results). I limited the sample size by selecting for articles that take as their topic the role that retail supermarkets and food service companies play in building sustainable food systems. This was determined by reading through each abstract to see how central a role business held in the article. In each case, I asked, does the article analyze businesses or just merely mention them? While I included other articles, this method led me to four primary sources which appeared to be those most commonly cited in reference to this topic: 1) *Supermarkets and agri-food supply chains: Transformations in the production and consumption of foods* (Burch & Lawrence, 2007); 2) *Corporate power in global agrifood governance* (Clapp & Fuchs, 2009); 3) *An Agriculture and Human Values*, Vol. 28(3), special symposium titled, Global Private Agrifood Governance in 2011 (see introduction, Fuchs et al., 2011); and 4) *An Agriculture and Human Values*, Vol. 30(2) special symposium titled, From Seedling to Supermarket: Agri-food Supply Chains in Transition in 2013 (see introduction, Burch et al., 2013). When reviewing the sampled articles, I looked specifically at answering the following questions: 1) How are retail supermarkets and food service companies referenced in agrifood literature? 2) What are the main concepts that appear in agrifood scholarship in relation to retail supermarkets and food service companies? 3) What biases and assumptions about retail supermarkets and food service companies are embedded in the literature? I organized the data into a spreadsheet and analyzed it using thematic analysis. As defined by Saldana (2014, p. 35), thematic analysis is a way of categorizing and organizing material into broad themes that emerge from a pattern of ideas.

To further specify the first research question, I asked three sub-questions. The first sub-question is: How do agrifood scholars characterize alternative/natural markets (specifically,

natural category leader, Whole Foods Market) as compared to the supermarket category generally?

Using Google Scholar, I searched agrifood journal *Agriculture and Human Values* for the term Whole Foods Market (9 results). I limited the sample size by selecting for articles that specifically focus on Whole Foods Market as the subject rather than just making mention of the company. This was determined by scanning each article for the search term to see how the term was used within the article. In each case, I asked, does the article analyze Whole Foods Market or just mention them? When reviewing each article, I asked: Where and how is Whole Foods Market mentioned in agrifood literature? What are the main concepts that appear in agrifood scholarship in relation to Whole Foods Market? What biases and assumptions about Whole Foods Market are embedded in the literature? I organized the data into a spreadsheet and analyzed it using thematic analysis.

The second sub-question is: How do agrifood scholars characterize “sustainable” food service companies (specifically, self-identified “sustainable” food service company, Bon Appétit Management Company) as compared to food service companies more generally?

Using Google Scholar, I searched agrifood journal *Agriculture and Human Values* for the term Bon Appétit Management Company (0 results).

The third sub-question is: How do agrifood scholars characterize major conventional retail supermarkets like Walmart and how they are creating food system sustainability?

Using Google Scholar, I searched agrifood journal *Agriculture and Human Values* for the term Walmart (15 results) and the term Wal-mart (41 results). I then removed duplicate articles that were classified under each category. When reviewing each article, I asked: Where and how is Walmart mentioned in agrifood literature? What are the main concepts that appear in agrifood scholarship in relation to Walmart? What biases and assumptions about Walmart are embedded

in the literature? I organized the data into a chart and analyzed it using categorical analysis.

According to Saldana (2014), categorical analysis is organizing data into key groupings based on similarity.

3.2.2. Research question two.

My second research question is: How do two selected food access points—one, the largest natural foods retailer, Whole Foods Market, and the other, self-identified “sustainable” food service company Bon Appétit Management Company—present themselves in terms of engagement in building sustainable food systems? To further specify the second research question, I asked the following sub-question: How does the way in which these companies present themselves on their company websites compare to Lang and Barling’s (2012) food system sustainability definition?

Using the Whole Foods Market website I examined the *About Whole Foods Market* and *Mission and Values* web sections. Using the Bon Appétit Management Company website I examined the *About* and *Sourcing* web sections. When reviewing the websites, I looked specifically at answering the following questions: What initiatives do Whole Foods Market and Bon Appétit Management Company promote as building food system sustainability? How do these compare to the sustainable food system tenets defined by Lang and Barling (2012)? I organized the data into a spreadsheet and analyzed it using thematic analysis.

3.3. Data Analysis

Discourse analysis provides the best analytical tool to examine the data set. As Rapley and Flick (2008) point out, “documents...are central to coordinating, constraining and enabling our actions and interactions” (p. 98). In this research, I use discourse analysis to interrogate how language is used to construct meaning and how the constructs of meaning aid or hinder our ability to see sustainable business as an actor building sustainable food systems. The primary limitation of the methods employed (literature review, company website review) include the inability to make broad conclusions about the results and their applicability to other cases. Instead, the research focuses on assertion development (Saldana, 2011, p. 120) asking “what is happening here and what does it mean?” And, more importantly, by relying on discourse analysis, it takes an exploratory look at “what specific version of the world, or identity or meaning is produced by describing something in this way over that way? What is made available and what is excluded” (Rapley & Flick, 2008, p. 2) to consider the role of “sustainable” food business in food system social change. As Fairclough and Wodak (1997) illustrate, critically-oriented discourse analysis addresses not just “what is made seen” but how relationships of power are created and held which I use in this analysis of private actors and their engagements in social change. Specifically, I utilize discourse analysis in this study to examine agrifood scholar characterizations of retail supermarkets and foodservice companies as compared to the discourse that these companies use to describe their own engagements in food system sustainability. First, I review the ways that agrifood scholars characterize retail supermarkets and foodservice companies. Then, I review a selected retailer, Whole Foods Market, and foodservice company, Bon Appétit Management Company, to see how they characterize their food system sustainability engagements. Third, I compare each of the company engagements against the Lang and Barling (2012) food system sustainability tenets. Using thematic analysis (Saldana, 2014), I

identify several recurring themes in the agrifood scholar discourse. Analyzing the company engagements against the Lang and Barling (2012) tenets using categorical analysis (Saldana, 2014) revealed areas where the companies engaged strongly in a particular tenet and where they fell short. In this study, discourse analysis proved to be a useful tool to reveal areas of discrepancy with both agrifood scholars and “sustainable” food company discourse and hopefully identify opportunities to bring nuance to the conversation of private actor engagement in developing sustainable food systems.

Chapter 4: Results, Analysis, and Contribution

This section presents the findings of agrifood scholar characterizations of retail supermarkets and food service companies' role in creating sustainable food systems. To examine "sustainable" food company engagements in building sustainable food systems, I use the sustainable food system definition proposed by Lang and Barling (2012) that moves beyond the definition used throughout much of the 20th century of food security primarily as related to increasing food production. Lang and Barling's (2012) definition of food system sustainability encompasses broader social and ecological aspects linking food security to food sustainability and recognizing the direct link between production and consumption. To review, they state that the primary tenets in creating food system sustainability are: 1) To address the mismatch between production, consumption and policy; 2) To redesign the food system for sustainability using social, environmental and economic criteria; 3) To develop short-term and long-term plans for reorienting food supply and consumption to align environment, health and social inequalities; 4) To broaden health conceptions to include a wide range of non-communicable diseases including malnutrition; 5) To address environmental concerns throughout the supply chain; 6) To address waste throughout the system, particularly at consumption; 7) To incorporate consumer issues including over-, under- and mal-consumption; 8) To address carbon emissions throughout the food chain; 9) To incorporate an economic approach that internalizes full costs; 10) To examine the locus of power between government and private governance.

This section answers the research questions: 1) How do agrifood scholars characterize the role of consumer food access points (specifically, retail supermarkets and food service companies) in creating food system sustainability? 1a) How do agrifood scholars characterize alternative/natural markets (specifically, natural category leader, Whole Foods Market) as

compared to the supermarket category generally? 1b) How do agrifood scholars characterize “sustainable” food service companies (specifically, self-identified “sustainable” food service company, Bon Appétit Management Company) as compared to food service companies more generally? 1c) How do agrifood scholars characterize major conventional retail supermarkets like Walmart and how they are creating food system sustainability?

4.1. Agrifood Scholar Conceptualizations

4.1.1. Retail supermarkets.

4.1.1.1. Supermarkets as actors with unprecedented power and control.

Three primary themes emerged from the literature for retail supermarkets/food service companies and food system sustainability. The first of these is the emergence of supermarkets as private food governance actors with unprecedented power and control (Burch & Lawrence, 2007; Clapp & Fuchs, 2009; Fuchs et al., 2011). Fuchs et al., (2011) observe that “it is these [private] actors who create and implement rules and standards today and thereby strongly influence the sustainability of the global agrifood system” (p. 335). This implies that private actors have a significant role to play in food system sustainability. Further, they suggest:

One could argue that private agrifood governance simply mobilizes additional resources in the pursuit of public objectives in times and cases where states either cannot or will not commit to public governance due to the limits of their jurisdiction, a lack of resources, or conflicting interests. (Fuchs et al., 2011, p. 336)

This signifies that private actors may not all be perceived as “bad” actors. In fact, in closing remarks to the *Agriculture and Human Values Private Agrifood Governance Symposium*, Henson (2011) says:

Evidently it is not possible to say that private governance of agri-food systems is a “good” or “bad” thing per se, or that a particular private governance initiative is

illegitimate a priori. Indeed, in many cases such initiatives have had at least some positive outcomes, for example augmenting available resources...or promoting improved food safety... (p. 444)

Scholars point out, however, that there are many concerns with private governance of the food system (Burch & Lawrence, 2007; Clapp & Fuchs, 2009; Fuchs et al., 2011; Henson, 2011). Chief among these concerns are issues of democratic legitimacy with regard to participation, transparency and accountability (Burch & Lawrence, 2007; Clapp & Fuchs, 2009; Fuchs et al., 2011). This is important as it recognizes the need to look beyond initiative outcomes to the processes and people involved.

In short, this suggests the importance of additional examination of private actors. We know the power that these actors hold and that they have potential to be either “good” or “bad” actors in food system sustainability. From this, the question arises as to whether there are incremental changes that these private actors could engage with now in order to foster food system sustainability.

4.1.1.2. Move from influencing distribution to influencing production and consumption.

Retailers have expanded their traditional role of influencing distribution to influencing production and consumption (Burch & Lawrence, 2007; Burch et. al., 2013). Through standards setting, private label and initiatives that promote ethical consumption (Burch et. al., 2013; Johnston, 2008), they exert great control over both production and consumption concerns. This is, of course, of critical importance to a sustainable food system. It invites the question of what these companies could be doing to influence sustainability in the supply chain and with consumers.

While pointing out that reorganizing supply chains to satisfy ethical and green concerns

may not resolve global food system issues, McMichael and Friedmann (2007) suggest that climate change will soon drive three critical issues—a refocus on local sourcing, triple bottom line accounting including a incorporation of currently disregarded carbon emissions and reversing trends in animal protein consumption (p. 312-313). They also point out that supermarkets are discussing ecology and health in relation to food and agriculture in a way that has not happened previously.

Burch et al., (2013) agree in noting that supermarkets directly and indirectly influence health particularly via fat, sugar and salt contents in their private label foods and in standard setting around agrichemical use. Further, they note that corporate initiatives have an important role to play in “reengineering supply chains to remove environmentally harmful processes, and in the greening of business practices” (p. 221). Finally, while calling for a return to public regulation, and prioritizing the solutions of food sovereignty and fair trade groups, McMichael and Friedmann (2007) mention that ethical consumer allies are also a positive part of the solution. This implies that ethical consumption does have a role to play in changing the food system.

If supermarkets have this role of influencing production and consumption in significant ways, it bears looking more closely at the initiatives that various actors pursue. This calls for more research, as presented here, into individual company actors and their initiatives influencing production and consumption.

4.1.1.3. Supermarkets – unsegmented.

Lawrence, Lyons and Wallington (2010) note that “supermarkets” are the cause of negative environmental impacts on the food system and they go no further to segment or define the supermarket category. As they do not define the term, this is problematic, and further leads to

the potential for all retail markets, indeed all business to be viewed as a part of the problem, when in reality as noted above, some might be contributing to solutions. As is well documented (see Lawrence & Burch, 2007; Clapp & Fuchs, 2009), supermarkets increasingly hold the power in the agri-food supply chain and a few major corporations dictate what, where and how food is produced and consumed around the globe. Burch et al. (2013) report that, “supermarket dominance of the agri-food supply chain has, for some time, been the most compelling force altering the relationships between farmers, processors, retailers and consumers in many developed and, more recently, developing countries” (p. 216). At the same time, as Hattersley and Dixon (2010) write, “supermarkets have been criticized for externalizing the social, economic and environmental costs of their operations and ultimately adversely affecting the health and wellbeing of many communities worldwide, particularly those most vulnerable. These concerns have prompted supermarkets to place increasing importance on their role as leaders in corporate responsibility and as trusted authorities on diet and lifestyle” (p. 189). Importantly, Hattersley and Dixon (2010) mention that not enough research has been done into the relevance and appropriateness of this role that supermarkets are taking.

In addition, several scholars (Henson, 2011; Hattersley & Dixon, 2010, Burch & Lawrence, 2007) have called for more research into the role of individual private actors, what I refer to in my recommendations as segmentation. In terms of private actors, should Walmart and Whole Foods Market be considered in the same category of actor with regard to their potential to influence food system sustainability? They hold different power and resource positions in the U.S. marketplace. They also appear to pursue different initiatives aimed at food system sustainability. To begin to answer this question, I turn to agrifood scholar conceptions of Whole Foods Market.

4.1.2. Alternative/natural markets (specifically, natural category leader, Whole Foods Market).

Johnston (2008) writes that, “industry analysts consider Whole Foods Market the industry giant of natural foods” (p. 229). Whole Foods Market reports that they are the largest retailer of natural and organic foods in the U.S. and the 12th largest food retailer overall based on 2012 sales rankings from Progressive Grocer (Whole Foods Market, 2013a). Whole Foods Market reported 2013 revenues of 12.9 billion, an increase from the prior year of 10.4%. Earnings per share increased 16.5% from 2012. The total number of employees was 78,400, an increase from the prior year of 7%. There are 362 U.S., Canada and U.K. store locations with over 7 million customer visits per week (Whole Foods Market, 2013a).

A Google scholar search of agrifood journal *Agriculture and Human Values* finds 9 articles that mention Whole Foods Market. Only 4 feature more than a mention of the retailer. In the first two of these, Whole Foods Market is explored as a site for development of the citizen-consumer and a site for engendering ethical consumerism (Johnston, 2008; Johnston & Szabo, 2011). The idea of a citizen-consumer hybrid where consumers can “vote with their dollar” to fulfill their role of engaged citizen in community or state affairs, specifically in improving social and environmental conditions has received much attention in activist and academic literature (Johnston, 2008; Gabriel and Lang, 2005; Stolle et al., 2005; Lockie, 2009; Gunderson, 2014).³ Ethical consumption suggests that consumers can help shape political and social issues with, for example, a fair-trade banana or organic cotton purchase (Johnston, 2008). While recognizing that Whole Foods Market is known as an ethical market actor and that ethical consumer discourse is actively used in their retail stores, Johnston (2008), finds that a balanced citizen-consumer is

³ Scholars use different terminology to reference this concept as “ethical consumption (Johnston, 2008), “alternative consumption” (Lang and Gabriel, 2005), “ethical consumerism” (Hilton, 2003), and “political consumerism” (Stolle et al., 2005).

hard to achieve in a growth-oriented corporate setting. Johnston (2008) states that her focus is not to evaluate Whole Foods Market as a transformative actor but the role that it plays as a site for ethical consumers. In addition, Johnston (2008) notes that Whole Foods Market as a site for ethical consumer discourse today reflects the interplay between activists and corporations throughout the 1970's and 1980's and identifies the challenges of assigning a fixed position to corporate actors (opportunistic marketing strategists/movement co-option on the one hand or progressive corporate actors working with consumer movements/activists on the other.) Specifically, in the case of Whole Foods Market, Johnston (2008) recounts that the company developed their animal welfare policies after animal rights protesters rallied at their annual meeting in 2003 and that CEO John Mackey, after criticism from Michael Pollan, pledged to support more locally-produced foods in their stores. These examples appear quite different from the general characterizations of supermarkets in agrifood literature. This suggests that Whole Foods Market is doing something different than traditional supermarkets.

In the third article, Whole Foods Market is mentioned as an industry player in the development of the Non-GMO project (NGMOP) a third-party certification (Roff, 2009).⁴ Roff (2009) reviews the history of the NGMOP noting that it grew out of the grocery retail community as a project of The Natural Grocery in Berkeley, CA in part in reaction to repeated failure of attempted GMO labeling legislation. While observing that the employees/activists did not set out to create a certification but that their goals were to use the power of retail buyers to eradicate GE⁵ crops from the food supply, Roff (2009) notes that retailer engagement can be a successful strategy as seen in the elimination of GE foods from Europe after retailer boycott.

⁴ It is worth noting here that in 2013, Whole Foods Market made headlines in announcing in a separate anti-GMO initiative, that they would be the first national grocery chain to require mandatory labeling of products containing GMO ingredients in their stores by 2018.

⁵ GE (Genetically Engineered) and GMO (Genetically Modified Organism) are used interchangeably in the literature.

Ultimately, Roff (2009) finds, however, that in this case NGMOP founders believe that the certification was co-opted by industry involvement and that weakened standards primarily create a label that serves the PR needs of the companies involved rather than challenging the dominant agri-food system by eradicating GMO crops from the food supply. This mirrors the findings of scholars who critique industry-led certification programs (Renard, 2005; Raynold et al., 2007) noting that their primary impact is simply to create alternative markets.

In the final article, Whole Foods Market's local food sourcing goals are explored in relation to operationalizing local food (Cleveland, Carruth, Mazaroli, 2014). While the authors critique the lack of standardization around the definition of local for Whole Foods buyers, they do offer evidence from research conducted with growers in Hawaii of Whole Foods Market providing a stable income source for local growers.

4.1.3. Food service companies (specifically, Bon Appétit Management Company).

While describing the primary role of supermarkets in the third food regime particularly with regard to control and influence over the supply chain, Burch and Lawrence (2009) mention the need to not ignore other new actors. They state, "It is clear, for example, that the food service sector—including... the companies which supply foodstuffs to schools, hospitals, prisons, airlines and other public and private institutions...—competes strongly with the supermarkets, in terms both of supplying final foods to consumers and of exerting influence over the supply chain." Therefore, Burch and Lawrence (2009) indicate that more attention should be paid to food service companies. One such company is Bon Appétit Management Company.

Bon Appétit Management Company is an on-site restaurant company offering full food-service management to corporations, universities, museums, and specialty venues. They operate more than 500 cafes in 32 states. In 2014, they had 14,500 employees (Bon Appétit Management

Company, 2014). Bon Appétit Management Company reported \$700 million in revenue in 2011 (7x7, 2012).

A Google scholar search of agrifood journal *Agriculture and Human Values* finds zero articles that mention Bon Appétit Management Company. The same search returns one article each for larger food service companies, Sodexo and Aramark. A total of 51 articles result from a Google scholar search of the term “food service” yet upon cursory examination, only two take as their primary topic food service companies as actors in building sustainable food systems (Friedmann, 2007; Heiss et al., 2015).

However, a general Google scholar search not limited to *Agriculture and Human Values*, reveals that agrifood, sustainability, and public health scholars are discussing Bon Appétit Management Company initiatives in their research: Carbon calculator (Kim & Neff, 2009; Amani & Schiefer, 2012); seafood eco-labeling (Sutton and Wimpee in Ward & Phillips, 2008); social and environmental efforts of US food system businesses (CASFS/Thistlethwaite & Brown); local/sustainable purchasing (Brady & O’Brady in Lyson, Stevenson, & Welsh, 2008); Eat Local Challenge event (Melone, 2006). In addition, this search revealed that agrifood scholars have active research partnerships with Bon Appétit Management Company. For example, the University of California’s Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Program (SAREP) and University of California, Davis partnered with Bon Appétit Management Company in a “low-carbon diet” initiative and international symposium (Brodt, Tomich & Feenstra, 2007). The outcome of this study and a second study performed at the same time on institutional purchasing led Brodt, Tomich and Feenstra (2007) to recommend multidisciplinary research and outreach efforts including partnerships among institutions of higher education, industry and nonprofit community groups to ensure the relevancy of research.

4.1.4. Conventional retail supermarkets (specifically, Walmart).

Walmart is the largest North American food retailer overall based on 2014 sales rankings (Supermarket News, 2014). In Walmart's 2014 fiscal year, annual sales in U.S. locations were \$279.4 billion from 4,987 stores with an estimated 67% of sales (\$218.7 billion) coming from groceries and other consumables (Supermarket News, 2014).

A Google scholar search of agrifood journal *Agriculture and Human Values* finds 47 articles that mention Walmart. While not all of these articles focus on the role of Walmart as an actor in shaping food systems, many articles do with subjects ranging from the impacts related to Walmart selling "local" food (DeLind & Howard, 2008; DeLind, 2011; Jaffee & Howard, 2010), their role in the conventionalization of organic (Lockie, 2009; Harvey, 2012; Guptill, 2009), and the varied socio-economic impacts on communities where Walmart stores are located (Dixon & Isaacs, 2013). The chart below identifies the primary topics found in the Walmart related articles and in some cases includes a quote to further illustrate the subject and tone.

Table 3. Walmart Subject Classification⁶

Walmart - Subject Classification
Leading Global/US Food Retailer (company mention only) (11)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Feenstra (2002); Schwartz and Lyson (2007); Harvey (2012); Konefal, Mascarenhas, and Hatanaka (2005); Guptill (2009); McMichael (2009); Richards et al. (2013); Dixon and Isaacs (2013); Anderson (2008); Guptill and Wilkins (2002); Martinez-Gomez, Aboites-Manrique, and Constance (2013)
Organic Food (7)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Hinrichs (2014) ▪ Undermining the principles on which growth in the organic sector has been based (Lockie, 2009) ▪ Lengthening and intensification of organic supply chains (Lockie et al., 2006) ▪ Conventionalization (Lockie, 2009; Harvey, 2012; Guptill, 2009) ▪ "Consumer demand may sensitize corporate agriculture to environmental and community concerns" (Alkon, 2008, p. 489)
Supermarket/Food Retailing Power (6)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Schwartz and Lyson (2007); Busch (2009); Burch and Lawrence (2009); Richards et al. (2013); Constance (2009); Burch, Dixon, and Lawrence (2013)
Local Food (4)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ "When the term "local" is tied in this manner to conventionalizing, scale-inducing, structural inequity...it easily morphs into a commodity attribute" (DeLind, 2011, p. 277). ▪ DeLind and Howard (2008); Jaffee and Howard (2010); Cleveland, Carruth, and Mazaroli (2014)

⁶ Articles either take Walmart as their primary subject, include them as an example or merely include a mention of the company.

Table 3, continued
Ethical Consumer Behavior (2)
▪ Conner (2004); Gillespie (2010)
“Wal-Mart Effect” (2)
▪ Dixon and Isaacs (2013); Anderson (2008)
Community/Union mobilization (2)
▪ Pothukuchi et al. (2008); Dixon and Isaacs (2013)
Sustainability (1)
▪ O’Sullivan (2010)
Fair Trade (1)
▪ Jaffee and Howard (2010)
Lack of Female Board Representation (1)
▪ Schwartz and Lyson (2007)
Retailers Move into Banking/Finance (1)
▪ Burch and Lawrence (2009)
Food Safety (1)
▪ Stuart and Worosz (2012)
Global Benchmarking and Certification (1)
▪ Richards et al. (2013)
Socio-Economic Impacts (poverty, small business closure, supplier impact, social capital) (1)
▪ Dixon and Isaacs (2013)
Anti-Unionization (1)
▪ Anderson (2008)
Technology Development (RFID) (1)
▪ Busch (2008)
<i>The American Way of Eating</i> (McMillan, 2012)/Walmart chapter (1)
▪ Dixon (2014)
Private Standards (1)
▪ Nelson and Tallontire (2014)
Shopper motivations - Location/Price (1)
▪ Kate and McKinney (2014)
CSR/GRI reports
▪ Fuchs, Kalfagianni, and Clapp (2011)

4.1.5. Comparing the models.

These data were able to answer the question of how agrifood scholars characterize the role of consumer food access points (specifically, retail supermarkets and food service companies) in creating food system sustainability in some ways and not in other ways. With the exception of Walmart, the findings revealed that scholars appear less interested in specific actors than in theoretical concepts. It was difficult to answer the question of how agrifood scholars characterized the role a company might play in creating food system sustainability as most scholars appeared to view retail supermarkets and food service companies as one broad category.

The implications of this are significant in that this indicates that agrifood scholars do not separate out actors like Walmart, who are often referenced as being “bad” food system actors, from national U.S. chain companies like Meijer, who appear to pursue little in the way of food system sustainability initiatives outside those at store level, from Whole Foods Market who appear engaged in a variety of supply chain sustainability initiatives. While further empirical study is needed to know the effects of Whole Foods Market initiatives, one could posit that engaging in some supply chain sustainability initiatives is better than continuing “business as usual”. This raises the question of whether agrifood scholars should bring more attention to segmentation of corporate actors to identify those who, via their discourse at least, appear to be pursuing a less extractive model of capitalism and perhaps, making contributions to a sustainable food system. Little segmentation appeared in the research to separately consider companies like Whole Foods Market or Bon Appétit Management Company. When scholars did take a closer look at Whole Foods Market, the analysis focused on the consumer as actor (ethical consumers) rather than the company as actor. As noted above, however, the examples that scholars examined for Whole Foods Market suggests that they are doing things differently than the traditional supermarket. It is for this reason that I suggest below that agrifood scholars pursue further evaluation of perceived industry leaders, Whole Foods Market and Bon Appétit Management Company to identify contributions that they may be making to sustainable food systems.

4.1.5.1. Critical reflection.

In sum, it appears that scholars use the topic of private actors in the food system to frame their argument on the limitations of neoliberal capitalism and its reliance on market-based solutions. The argument follows that market-based actors support neo-liberalism’s push for less direct regulatory intervention in the case of third-party certification (Roff, 2009), a “cultural-ideology of consumerism, a political-economic denial of class inequality, and a political-

ecological message of conservation through consumption” (Johnston, 2008, p. 261) and further that notions like “ethical consumerism” act as a distraction for consumers and activists who might otherwise pursue direct action and other political engagements while supporting the neoliberal agenda of unceasing economic growth and consumer choice. They argue that it transfers the traditional role of protector of the commons from the state and public regulation to corporations who have competing agendas. In at least one of these examples—neoliberalism and the push for less direct regulatory intervention, the select companies, Whole Foods Market and Bon Appétit Management Company refute this assumption. As I identify below, Whole Foods Market via strong engagement for GMO regulation and organic standards and Bon Appétit Management Company via their calls for more regulation in concentrated animal feeding operations (CAFOs) tied to the public health implications of antibiotic overuse, call for increased regulation. This is an explicit example of a general theory, “corporations want less regulation” being incorrect. Regardless of company motivations for this engagement, they have a strong stance on increasing regulation, or at least government interference in the market, a non-neoliberal tendency. On the other hand, scholars make a strong argument that companies are deeply entrenched in promoting an ideology (and practice) of unfettered consumerism and that companies engage in initiatives targeted at building sustainable food systems more assertively when it stands to positively impact their bottom line.

The section above examined agrifood scholar characterizations of retail supermarkets and food service companies. Now that we have established a baseline of information on scholar characterizations, it seems important to turn to company discourse to explore in what ways scholars might be right and where, perhaps, they might reconsider their assumptions.

4.2. Company Food System Sustainability Engagements

In this second portion of the Results, Analysis and Contribution section, I address my second research question which inquires about business self-conceptualizations of their practices and values: How do two selected food access points—one, the largest natural foods retailer, Whole Foods Market and the other, food service innovator Bon Appétit Management Company—present themselves in terms of building sustainable food systems? How does the way in which these companies present themselves on their company websites compare to Lang and Barling’s (2012) food system sustainability definition?

4.2.1. Companies.

4.2.1.1 Whole Foods Market.

Whole Foods Market presents themselves as the premier retailer of natural and organic foods. They engage in a wide variety of initiatives that they list as their commitment to society and the environment. These mission and values statements include: community giving, environmental stewardship, organic farming, seafood sustainability, *Whole Trade*, and animal welfare. Table four, below, displays the initiatives that fall under each category.

4.2.1.2 Bon Appétit Management Company.

Bon Appétit Management Company positions themselves as a role model for responsible sourcing in the food service industry. With “food service for a sustainable future” leading prominently on company materials, they identify as the “food service industry’s most socially responsible company” (Bon Appétit Management Company, n.d.,a). They engage in a wide variety of initiatives that have social, environmental and economic components. These are primarily organized under sourcing initiatives and include: sourcing philosophy, industry firsts, local food, seafood, animal welfare, food and climate change, and farmworkers’ rights. Table five, below, displays the initiatives that fall under each category.

Table 4. Whole Foods Market – Mission and Values Statements

Whole Foods Market – Mission and Values Statements
<p>Core Values</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educate customers about natural and organic foods, health, nutrition and the environment. • Employee focus including self-directed team approach, financial transparency including annual individual compensation report, and salary cap that limits the compensation of any team member to nineteen times the average total compensation of all full-time team members in the company. • Supplier partnerships - stated interest in supplier partnerships that share Whole Foods Market's concern for social responsibility and the environment. Supply chain transparency including a focus on eliminating production/distribution costs when possible to get best price to supplier. • Healthy eating education including focus on eliminating the consumption of refined, highly processed foods and foods void of nutrients, such as artificial flavors, colors, preservatives, sweeteners and hydrogenated fats.
<p>Mission</p>
<p>Community Giving</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Food donations to food banks and shelters in each community. Quarterly "5% days" with net sales donated to a local nonprofit. • Local Producer Loan Program - up to \$25 million in low-interest loans to independent local farmers and food artisans. • Whole Kids Foundation - NPO founded by Whole Foods Market to support schools and inspire families to improve children's nutrition and wellness. • Whole Planet Foundation - NPO founded by Whole Foods Market to alleviate poverty in developing-world communities where Whole Foods Market sources products. • Whole Cities Foundation - NPO founded by Whole Foods Market to support efforts that bring fresh, nutritious food and broader access to healthy eating education to underserved communities.
<p>Environmental Stewardship</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Green Mission - offset 100% of energy use with wind energy credits. Pursuing green building, solar power, company-wide recycling programs, internal green mission programs and support for organics. • Eco Scale - Whole Foods Market proprietary rating system for cleaning products, as no current regulations for listing ingredients on packaging. • Genetically Engineered foods - By 2018 every product in Whole Foods Market U.S. and Canadian stores will be labeled to indicate whether they include GMOs.
<p>Organic Farming</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Largest retailer of natural and organic food. Promotes and supports natural and organic food and farming.
<p>Seafood Sustainability</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seafood sustainability basics - Goal to move Whole Foods Market stores—and the seafood industry as a whole—toward healthier oceans. • Collaboration with Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) - first retailer to partner with the MSC, third-party certification for sustainable seafood. Goal to source as much MSC certified sustainable seafood as possible. • Wild-caught seafood sustainability ratings - third-party certification ratings for all non-MSC certified wild-caught seafood. Elimination of all red-rated seafood from stores. • Aquaculture - aquaculture standards that are the highest in the industry.
<p>Whole Trade</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whole Trade program is a commitment to ethical trade, the environment and quality products sourced from developing nations. • Whole Trade Certifier Partners: Fair Trade USA, Rainforest Alliance, Institute for Marketecology (IMO) Social and Fair Trade Certification, Fairtrade International • Whole Trade products: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Ensure better wages and working conditions including requirements for occupational health and safety, legal minimum wage, full rights and benefits and never any forced labor, discrimination or child labor ○ Practice environmental responsibility with criteria that include soil health management, restricted pesticide usage, integrated pest management and protection of water resources, natural vegetation areas and wildlife ○ Support community development--when you buy a Whole Trade product, you invest in the community that produced it with a portion of what you paid added to a development fund for that community ○ Donates 1% of sales to Whole Planet foundation

Table 4, continued**Animal Welfare**

- Animal Welfare Basics - Meat sold at Whole Foods Market contains no antibiotics, hormones or growth promotants. Third-party audits ensure strict farm animal and meat quality standards that address each producer's raising and handling practices, feed, facility design, environmental conditions, employee training and animal welfare at the farm, in transportation and throughout processing employed. Animal welfare standards designed by Dr. Temple Grandin.
- 5-Step™ Animal Welfare Rating - All beef, chicken, pork and turkey in fresh meat cases comes from producers who are Global Animal Partnership's 5-Step® Animal Welfare Rated. Global Animal Partnership's 5-Step Animal Welfare Rating program outlines specific husbandry and management practices that promote farm-animal welfare.

Source: [Whole Foods Market website: About Whole Foods Market, Mission and Values.]

Table 5. Bon Appétit Management Company - Sourcing**Bon Appétit Management Company - Sourcing****Sourcing Philosophy**

"Food service for a sustainable future"

Defined as: Flavorful food that's healthy and economically viable for all, produced through practices that respect farmers, workers, and animals; nourish the community; and replenish our shared natural resources for future generations.

Industry Firsts

First food service company to commit to:

- Supporting local agriculture companywide, since 1999
- Striving to serve only seafood that meets Seafood Watch sustainability guidelines, since 2002
- Reducing antibiotic use in farm animals, since 2003
- Switching to rBGH-free milk, since 2003
- Sourcing eggs from cage-free hens, since 2005
- Tackling food's role in climate change, since 2007
- Upholding farmworkers' rights, since 2009
- Switching to humanely raised ground beef, since 2012
- Phasing out pork raised with gestation crates, by 2015

Local Food

- Farm to Fork program — since 1999 forged direct relationships with local growers. Each year, Bon Appétit Management Company spends tens of millions of dollars on local purchasing.
- Annual Eat Local Challenge — since 2005 hosted event that uses a 100% local meal as a starting point to talk about sustainable agriculture with dining guests.
- Chefs strive to source at least 20% of their ingredients from small, owner-operated farms, ranches, and artisan producers within 150 miles of their kitchens.

Seafood

- First food service company to address sourcing challenges around wild fish and aquaculture.
- Bon Appétit Management Company has made the most comprehensive commitment to sustainable seafood of any national restaurant or food company to date.
- For all seafood purchases, wild and farmed, Bon Appétit Management Company serves only seafood that meets Seafood Watch sustainability guidelines.
- Proprietary Fish to Fork program with guidelines for traceability, size of boat or aquaculture operation, distance-at-sea limits for wild fish, and distance from the dock or farm distribution radius from Bon Appétit kitchens. 14 Bon Appétit chef/ fish foragers, charged with finding responsible fisherfolk and fish farmers in their area.

Table 5, continued
<p>Animal Welfare</p> <p>“At Bon Appétit, we believe that to be sustainable, the U.S. food system will require major changes in how the animals we eat are raised.”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Three-tiered animal product purchasing philosophy: Bon Appétit Management Company believes in supporting small farms, rewarding responsible mid-size ones, and using their market power to influence the big producers to improve their practices. • Offer vegetarian/vegan options every day • Milk and yogurt come from cows not treated with rBGH • Chicken and turkey raised without routine antibiotics in feed or water • Shell eggs certified cage-free (and by 2015, pre-cracked eggs also) • Ground beef from animals fed a vegetarian diet, never given antibiotics or artificial hormones, and from a third-party verified humane source • By 2015, pork raised without gestation crates
<p>Food and Climate Change</p> <p>“How we eat is affecting the planet, but a handful of simple dietary choices and practices can have the same impact as switching from driving a large SUV to a more fuel-efficient sedan. Greenhouse gases created by the food system — including production, distribution, and waste — are responsible for one-third of global emissions. At Bon Appétit, we see that as opportunity to make positive change.”</p> <p>INITIATIVES:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low Carbon Diet program (2007) the product of two years of research aimed at reducing Bon Appétit Management Company’s carbon “foodprint.” • Low Carbon Diet Day — first launched in 2008, annual educational event about food and climate change tied to Earth Day. • Low Carbon Diet calculator at EatLowCarbon.org, an educational website illustrating these principles. <p>ACTIONS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimize reliance on red meat and cheese, through menu choices and careful portioning. • Source 100% of meats, vegetables, and non-tropical fruit from North American farms. • Avoid air-freighted seafood (and reduce other flown-in items, including tropical fruit) <p>RESULTS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In 2012 reached five-year commitment to reduce company’s carbon footprint in the highest impact areas by 25 percent. In addition to the above actions, reduced tropical fruit use by half, shrank beef purchases by 33 percent and cheese by 10 percent, and food waste by one-third. These and other efforts achieved reductions of approximately 5 million pounds of carbon dioxide equivalent each month — and more importantly, have been incorporated into everyday menuing and practices.
<p>Farmworkers’ Rights</p> <p>“At Bon Appétit Management Company, we believe that farmworkers should not only be honored for their contribution to our food system, but enjoy the same rights and protections as employees in other occupations.”</p> <p>Bon Appétit Management Company:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protects tomato pickers in Florida (first food service company to partner with the Coalition of Immokalee Workers) • Educates consumers about conditions for farmworkers including publishing <i>The Inventory of Farmworker Issues and Protections in the United States</i> (2011), a groundbreaking report detailing the lack of laws and protections for crop farmworkers in the U.S. with the United Farm Workers of America and Oxfam America. • Empowers farmworkers and sets standards (as an early member of the Equitable Food Initiative)

Source: Bon Appétit Management Company website: About, Sourcing

4.2.2. Companies and food system sustainability.

Lang and Barling (2012) recommend ten tenets to those undertaking the task of building a sustainable food system. Therefore, a review of the initiatives that Whole Foods Market and

Bon Appétit Management Company pursue against the Lang and Barling (2012) tenets begins to lay the framework for examining these companies as sustainable food system actors.

The section below attempts to organize each of the company initiatives within the Lang and Barling (2012) tenet that it best represents. Analyzing each initiative by where it fits within the tenets provides an overview of the categories of initiatives pursued by “sustainable” food companies like Whole Foods Market and Bon Appétit Management Company. In the below analysis, I include an in-depth catalog of company initiatives in order to provide a comprehensive review of company sustainability engagements. In reviewing initiatives for categorization, the proxy used was issues that primarily dealt with supply chain issues and items more “upstream” that had potential to change the overall system were organized under tenet two, “redesigning food system for sustainability using social, environmental and economic criteria”, consumer-facing initiatives and those that appeared more “downstream” and had impacts primarily focused at the company and consumer level were organized into tenet three, “develop short-term and long-term plans for reorienting food supply and consumption to align environment, health and social inequalities.” Both companies had many initiatives targeting both ends of the issues and thus these were categorized in both places⁷. Table six, below, organizes the initiatives by tenet.

⁷ I recognize that there may be items that fit in multiple categories, but I have placed them in the category where they fit best, based on my research on these programs and initiatives.

Table 6. Food System Sustainability: Whole Foods Market and Bon Appétit

Food System Sustainability: Whole Foods Market and Bon Appétit	
Tenet 1: Address the mismatch between production, consumption and policy	
WFM	BAMCO
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Array of initiatives addressing links between production and consumption, further detailed in the 8 tenets below ▪ Policy engagements: educating customers on the importance of voting, GMOs and organic standards 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Array of initiatives addressing links between production and consumption, further detailed in the 8 tenets below ▪ Policy engagements on GMOs, and animal welfare/public health issues related to antibiotics ▪ Few policy engagements referenced overall
Tenet 2: To redesign the food system for sustainability using social, environmental and economic criteria	
WFM	BAMCO
<p>Initiatives targeted at food system redesign using social, environmental and economic criteria.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Largest retailer of natural and organic food ▪ HR and financial transparency ▪ Local Producer Loan Program ▪ Whole Planet Foundation ▪ Whole Trade Program ▪ Supplier partnerships that share social responsibility, environmental and transparency focus <p>Seafood</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ First retailer to partner with MSC ▪ Goal: source as much MSC certified seafood as possible ▪ Third-party certification ratings for all non-MSC seafood, elimination of all red-rated seafood ▪ Aquaculture standards that are the highest in the industry <p>Animal Welfare</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Global Animal Partnership’s 5-Step Animal Welfare ratings for beef, chicken, pork and turkey ▪ Proprietary animal welfare standards designed by Dr. Temple Grandin ▪ No antibiotics, hormones or growth promotants 	<p>Initiatives targeted at food system redesign using social, environmental and economic criteria.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Mission statement- “Food service for a sustainable future - flavorful food that’s healthy and economically viable for all, produced through practices that respect farmers, workers, and animals; nourish the community; and replenish our shared natural resources for future generations” (BAMCO, n.d.) ▪ Farm to Fork Program (local food sourcing) <p>Seafood</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The most comprehensive commitment to sustainable seafood of any national restaurant or food company to date ▪ Seafood Watch certification required for seafood served in cafeterias ▪ Proprietary Fish to Fork program with additional sustainability guidelines ▪ 14 dedicated “Fish Foragers” <p>Animal Welfare</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Reducing antibiotic use in farm animals ▪ Using rBGH-free milk ▪ Sourcing eggs from cage-free hens ▪ Switching to humanely raised ground beef ▪ Phasing out pork raised with gestation crates ▪ By the end of 2015, minimum 25% of total meat, poultry, and egg purchases from producers whose practices have been certified by Humane Farm Animal Care, Food Alliance, Global Animal Partnership or Animal Welfare Approved <p>Farmworkers’ rights</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Coalition of Immokalee Workers partnership ▪ Equitable Food Initiative members ▪ <i>The Inventory of Farmworker Issues and Protections in the United States</i>

Table 6, continued	
Tenet 3: To develop short-term and long-term plans for reorienting food supply and consumption patterns to align environment, health and social inequalities	
WFM	BAMCO
<p>In addition to the initiatives highlighted above in tenet two--food system redesign for sustainability (which includes reorienting food supply), the below tie these production initiatives to efforts to address influencing consumption patterns to align environment, health and social inequalities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Commitment to educate customers about natural and organic foods, health, nutrition and the environment ▪ Food bank donations that contain foods that are minimally processed, lower in sodium and fat ▪ 5% days including supporting community organizations addressing food insecurity ▪ Whole Kids Foundation ▪ Whole Cities Foundation ▪ GMO labeling of all products by 2018 	<p>In addition to the initiatives highlighted above in tenet two--food system redesign for sustainability (which includes reorienting food supply), the below tie these production initiatives to efforts to address influencing consumption patterns to align environment, health and social inequalities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Eat Local Challenge ▪ Save Seafood Tour ▪ <i>Farming the Seas</i> documentary ▪ <i>TEDxFruitvale on Farmworkers</i> ▪ Vegan and vegetarian options promoted every day at each location with education on the environmental and public health benefits of these choices ▪ Healthy cooking initiative to get healthy menu items into all cafes ▪ Sodium and sugar reduction campaigns ▪ Low Carbon Diet Day ▪ Low Carbon Diet Calculator
Tenet 4: To broaden health conceptions to include a wide range of non-communicable diseases including malnutrition	
WFM	BAMCO
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Stated mission of educating customers about natural and organic foods, health, nutrition and the environment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Features statements about engaging their customers with regard to health issues interwoven in many of their initiatives
Tenet 5: To address environmental concerns throughout the supply chain	
WFM	BAMCO
<p>Seafood</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Goal: source as much MSC certified seafood as possible ▪ Third-party certification ratings for all non-MSC seafood, elimination of all red-rated seafood ▪ Aquaculture standards that are the highest in the industry <p>Animal Welfare</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Global Animal Partnership's 5-Step Animal Welfare ratings for beef, chicken, pork and turkey (including environmental conditions) ▪ Proprietary animal welfare standards designed by Dr. Temple Grandin (including environmental conditions) ▪ No antibiotics, hormones or growth promotants <p>Other</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Largest retailer of natural and organic food ▪ Supplier partnerships that share social responsibility, environmental and transparency focus ▪ GMO labeling of all products by 2018 ▪ Whole Trade Program ▪ Green Mission program including 100% energy offsets with wind energy credits, green building, solar, recycling and composting ▪ Eco-Scale 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Farm to Fork Program (local food sourcing) <p>Seafood</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The most comprehensive commitment to sustainable seafood of any national restaurant or food company to date ▪ Seafood Watch certification required for seafood served in cafeterias ▪ Proprietary Fish to Fork program with additional sustainability guidelines ▪ 14 dedicated "Fish Foragers" <p>Animal Welfare</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Reducing antibiotic use in farm animals ▪ Sourcing eggs from cage-free hens (air, water and soil implications) ▪ Switching to humanely raised ground beef (including environmental conditions) ▪ By the end of 2015, minimum 25% of total meat, poultry, and egg purchases from producers whose practices have been certified by Humane Farm Animal Care, Food Alliance, Global Animal Partnership or Animal Welfare Approved (including environmental conditions) <p>Food and Climate Change</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Low Carbon Diet program ▪ Low Carbon Diet Day ▪ Low Carbon Diet calculator
Tenet 6: To address waste throughout the system, particularly at consumption	
WFM	BAMCO
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The 3R's –Reduce, Reuse, Recycle program ▪ Composting, recycling, banning plastic grocery bags 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>Food Waste Reduction</i> campaign ▪ Composting, recycling and food recovery partnerships

Table 6, continued	
Tenet 7: To incorporate consumer issues including over-, under- and mal-consumption	
WFM	BAMCO
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Healthy eating education with a focus on eliminating the consumption of refined, highly processed foods and foods void of nutrients, such as artificial flavors, colors, preservatives, sweeteners and hydrogenated fats ▪ Food bank donations that contain foods that are minimally processed, lower in sodium and fat ▪ Whole Kids Foundation ▪ Whole Cities Foundation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Sourcing rBGH free milk and yogurt ▪ Sourcing chicken, turkey, and ground beef from animals raised without antibiotics ▪ Switching to non-hydrogenated canola oil in their fryers ▪ Healthy cooking initiative to get healthy menu items into all cafes ▪ Sodium and sugar reduction campaigns
Tenet 8: To address carbon emissions throughout the food chain	
WFM	BAMCO
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Promote composting, recycling and 100% energy offset with wind energy credits ▪ Few stated engagements in this area 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Low Carbon Diet program ▪ Low Carbon Diet Day ▪ Low Carbon Diet calculator
Tenet 9: To incorporate an economic approach that internalizes full costs	
WFM	BAMCO
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No direct discussion of incorporating an economic approach that internalizes full costs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No direct discussion of incorporating an economic approach that internalizes full costs
Tenet 10: To examine the locus of power between government and private governance	
WFM	BAMCO
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No direct discussion of examining the locus of power between government and private governance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No direct discussion of examining the locus of power between government and private governance

4.2.2.1. Lang and Barling (2012) food system sustainability tenets.

4.2.2.1.1 Tenet 1: Address the mismatch between production, consumption and policy.

Lang and Barling (2012) suggest a food security analysis that considers the mismatch between production, consumption and policy versus a past focus solely on under-production as the core issue. In this section, to avoid duplication with later sections, I specifically highlight company policy engagements.

4.2.2.1.1.1. Tenet 1: Whole Foods Market

Whole Foods Market initiatives focus on production and consumption issues with the inclusion of some policy work. The production and consumption initiatives are detailed within the ten listed tenets below. On the policy side, in particular, Whole Foods Market has taken a strong policy stand on statewide measures addressing mandatory GMO labeling. In 2013, Joe Rogoff, Pacific Northwest regional president stated, “Over the past year, we have poured

significant time, funding and resources into trying to educate customers about voting yes on 522” (Whole Foods Market, 2013b). YES on 522, was a 2013 Washington state campaign in support of mandatory labeling of genetically engineered foods. Whole Foods Market engaged in an online, radio, outdoor, print and social media advertising campaign in support of Yes on 522. They also created an outreach and education campaign for their employees and customers (175,000 transactions a week) about the importance of voting and encouraged employees to talk about the importance of voting with shoppers. The campaign included in-store information, signage, handouts, stickers, pins and bags. In addition, Whole Foods Market participated in events including business roundtables, media editorial boards and pop-up booths at farmers’ markets and summer concerts. Whole Foods Market is also involved with policy work in support of organic standards. They were involved with the USDA in creating the National Organic Standards, and served as the retail representative on the National Organic Standards Board from 1995 to 2000 and 2010-2015 (Whole Foods Market, 2009; 2011).

4.2.2.1.1.2. Tenet 1: Bon Appétit Management Company

Bon Appétit Management Company initiatives address production and consumption issues. They also have engaged in policy work around genetically engineered foods, specifically in joining the Genetic Engineering Policy Alliance, a network of organizations and individuals promoting precautionary policies on genetically engineered food and agriculture (Bon Appétit Management Company, 2006). In addition, Bon Appétit Management Company CEO Fedele Bauccio testified twice before Congress on animal welfare and public health issues related to antibiotics (Greenaway, 2012).

4.2.2.1.1.3. Tenet 1: Analysis

This section shows that both companies have engaged in the policy arena. Whole Foods Market and Bon Appétit Management Company are in a position to address the linkages between

production, consumption, and policy issues. They may not be as well positioned as government to address this mismatch but it appears that these companies support Lang and Barling's (2012) assertion that policy plays an important role in creating sustainable food systems. As Lang and Barling (2012) suggest, government policy changes are needed to align production and consumption. It is out of the purview of companies to step in and fill this public role, however, their position in the marketplace invites the question of whether there is opportunity for agrifood scholars and other food movement practitioners to consider how "sustainable" food companies might play a role in influencing policy that builds sustainable food systems? This position appears in direct opposition to the standard neo-liberal anti-regulation approach. This invites the question of whether these companies in acting as "sustainable" businesses should be considered as different actors than other supermarkets and food service companies who are typically considered together as one monolithic corporate actor in support of neo-liberalism and against the aims of building a sustainable food system. It brings up the idea that, perhaps, we should bring more nuance to the conversation and segmentation to the companies involved. On the company side, it invites the question of whether there is more that these companies could be doing to engage in policy initiatives. Particularly with the power that supermarkets hold to influence both production and consumption issues (Burch & Lawrence, 2007) and the numbers of consumers that both companies have the potential to reach who could engage in policy issues (Whole Foods Market, 7 million customer visits per week (Whole Foods Market, 2013a) and Bon Appétit Management Company, 155 million meals served annually (Bon Appétit Management Company, 2014), it would appear that opportunities for a wider variety of policy engagements exist.

As Lang and Barling (2012) observe, solutions to food system sustainability need to take a systems approach. While Whole Foods Market and Bon Appétit Management Company

promote their engagements with production, consumption and policy linkages in the arenas of voter registration, GMOs and organic standards (Whole Foods Market) and GMOs and animal welfare/public health issues related to antibiotics (Bon Appétit Management Company), they seem to fall short of meeting Lang and Barling's (2012) call in tenet one for promoting policy initiatives that take a full supply chain approach. That is to say that it appears from an analysis of their discourse that there are many more policy engagements these companies could make. As scholars have observed (Burch and Lawrence, 2007), corporations are primary actors in driving food systems transformation. And, as Allen (2010) has observed, "no social advances have ever been made without a combination of social movements and legislation" (p. 306). It would appear that these "sustainable" food companies could do more to take advantage of their unique position between producers and consumers to drive policy changes in support of sustainable food systems. This suggests an avenue for further research by social scientists on the role these types of companies are playing and could play in policy engagements.

4.2.2.1.2 Tenet 2: To redesign the food system for sustainability using social, environmental and economic criteria

4.2.2.1.2.1. Tenet 2: Whole Foods Market

Lang and Barling (2012) suggest the need to redesign the food system for sustainability using social, environmental and economic criteria. Whole Foods Market (2015a) emphasizes food system sustainability and uses social, environmental and economic criteria to define it. They feature initiatives that focus on social and environmental aspects such as promoting and supporting natural and organic food and farming via their position as the largest retailer of natural and organic food. Three Whole Foods Market initiatives highlight an economic and social focus. First, the human resource initiatives that include an employee focus with all employees organized in self-directed teams; commitment to financial transparency including the

annual individual compensation report; and a salary cap that limits the compensation of any team member to nineteen times the average total compensation of all full-time team members in the company [compared to the 319x that the standard S&P 500 CEO makes as compared to a production worker (Paumgarten, 2010)]. Second, the Local Producer Loan Program offers up to \$25 million in low-interest loans to independent local farmers and food artisans. Third, the Whole Planet Foundation – a non-profit organization founded by Whole Foods Market to alleviate poverty in developing-world communities where Whole Foods Market sources products. Whole Foods Market promotes two primary initiatives that have social, environmental and economic components. The first of these is their Whole Trade program. Whole Trade products ensure better wages and working conditions, practice environmental responsibility, support community development, and donate 1% of sales to Whole Planet foundation. The second program is a focus on supplier partnerships that share Whole Foods Market's concern for social responsibility and the environment. With these partnerships, Whole Foods Market also highlights supply chain transparency including a focus on eliminating production and distribution costs when possible to get the best price for suppliers. Finally, Whole Foods Market has a focus on several initiatives that are primarily environmental in impact. These include programs for seafood and meat that focus on supply chain issues and consumer education. The seafood initiatives include being the first retailer to partner with the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC), a third-party certification for sustainable seafood, with the goal to source as much MSC certified sustainable seafood as possible. They also include, wild-caught seafood sustainability ratings - third-party certification ratings for all non-MSC certified wild-caught seafood and elimination of all red-rated seafood from stores. Finally, the seafood program contains aquaculture standards that are the highest in the industry. On the Whole Foods Market web section, *seafood sustainability basics*, they state, “with these efforts, we are closer to our goal of

moving our stores—and the seafood industry as a whole—toward healthier oceans” (Whole Foods Market, 2015a, para 4). Whole Foods Market meat initiatives promote that all beef, chicken, pork and turkey in Whole Foods Market fresh meat cases comes from producers who are Global Animal Partnership’s 5-Step Animal Welfare Rated. In addition, animal science professor and animal welfare activist, Dr. Temple Grandin, designed animal welfare standards for Whole Foods Market. These include strict farm animal and meat quality standards that address each producer’s raising and handling practices, feed, facility design, environmental conditions, employee training and animal welfare at the farm, in transportation and throughout processing. Finally, Whole Foods Market has guidelines that meat sold in the stores contains no antibiotics, hormones or growth promotants.

4.2.2.1.2.2. Tenet 2: Bon Appétit Management Company

In company materials, Bon Appétit Management Company (n.d.,a) leads with their mission statement, “Food service for a sustainable future”. They define this as, “Flavorful food that’s healthy and economically viable for all, produced through practices that respect farmers, workers, and animals; nourish the community; and replenish our shared natural resources for future generations” (Bon Appétit Management Company, n.d.,a). They promote four primary initiatives focused on redesigning the food system for sustainability: Local food, seafood, animal welfare and farmworkers’ rights. In the local food program, *Farm to Fork*, chefs at each Bon Appétit Management Company location aim to purchase 20% of their ingredients from owner-operated farms, ranches and producers in their area spending tens of millions of dollars each year (Bon Appétit Management Company, n.d.,a). In the seafood program, Bon Appétit Management Company states that they have made the most comprehensive commitment to sustainable seafood of any national restaurant or food company to date (Bon Appétit Management Company, n.d.,a). They serve only *Seafood Watch* approved seafood in cafeteria locations, have a proprietary *Fish*

to Fork program with additional sustainability guidelines and have 14 dedicated “*Fish Foragers*” around the country tasked with finding sustainable seafood options. Bon Appetit has a range of programs under their animal welfare initiatives including: reducing antibiotic use in farm animals, using rBGH-free milk, sourcing eggs from cage-free hens, switching to humanely raised ground beef and phasing out pork raised with gestation crates (Bon Appétit Management Company, n.d.,a). They state, “At Bon Appetit, we believe that to be sustainable, the U.S. food system will require major changes in how the animals we eat are raised” (Bon Appétit Management Company, n.d.,a). They emphasize both environmental and public health impacts of the current food system that their animal welfare initiatives address. Finally, Bon Appétit Management Company has several initiatives dedicated to farmworkers’ rights: they were the first food service company to partner with the Coalition of Immokalee Workers, they empower farmworkers as a member of the Equitable Food Initiative and they published *The Inventory of Farmworker Issues and Protections in the United States* in 2011 which helped spotlight needed laws and protections for crop farmworkers.

4.2.2.1.2.3. Tenet 2: Analysis

This section identifies that Whole Foods Market and Bon Appétit Management Company engage in many initiatives that address social, environmental and economic issues. They have a variety of programs that appear focused on addressing food system redesign for sustainability.

An oft-cited critique of company interventions in food system change is that they pick and choose their engagements, often prioritizing environmental concerns over social concerns (Allen, 2010). In this analysis, both Whole Foods Market and Bon Appétit Management Company appear to pursue an array of programs focused on food system redesign using social, environmental and economic criteria as Lang and Barling (2012) recommend in tenet number two. One may critique the fact that companies prioritize initiatives that create economic benefits

in line with their primary capitalistic purpose. However, it is hard to refute the fact that, in addition, they lead on other initiatives, for example, Whole Foods Market as the first retailer to partner with MSC and Bon Appétit Management Company programs around farmworker rights, that have less direct financial benefit and appear more as a forward-thinking focus on food system sustainability. As food systems scholars, we appear to stop at the fact that these initiatives are things that may help the company bottom line and do not move beyond that to examine the program impact or to consider the many grocery retailers who continue in an extractive way without any of these additional programs in place. As Lang and Barling (2012) define it, food system redesign needs to focus on production within ecological limits and focus on the entire food chain.

4.2.2.1.3 Tenet 3: To develop short-term and long-term plans for reorienting food supply and consumption to align environment, health and social inequalities

Lang and Barling (2012) suggest a focus on developing short-term and long-term plans for reorienting food supply and consumption to align environment, health and social inequalities. In this section, to avoid duplication with previous sections, I specifically highlight those initiatives that focus on influencing consumption to address environmental, health and social inequality.

4.2.2.1.3.1. Tenet 3: Whole Foods Market

Whole Foods Market (2015) promotes many initiatives that engage in short and long-term planning to reorient food supply and consumption in support of either environmental, health or social issues. Eight of the initiatives featured above in the food system redesign section could also be included here as Whole Foods Market emphasizes both the production/supply-chain side and consumption side of these initiatives. These are: promoting natural and organic food and farming via their position as the largest retailer of natural and organic food (environment, health

and social); a goal to move Whole Foods Market stores—and the seafood industry as a whole—toward healthier oceans (environment); partnership with the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) (environment), a third-party certification for sustainable seafood, with the goal to source as much MSC certified sustainable seafood as possible (environment); third-party certification ratings for all non-MSC certified wild-caught seafood and elimination of all red-rated seafood from stores (environment); aquaculture standards that are the highest in the industry (environment); the Whole Trade program that seeks to ensure better wages, working conditions and environmental practices, support community development and donates 1% of sales to Whole Planet foundation (environment, health and social); Global Animal Partnership's 5-Step Animal Welfare Rating for beef, chicken, pork and turkey in the fresh meat cases; and Whole Foods Market proprietary animal welfare standards that address producer raising and handling practices and ensure that all meat sold at Whole Foods Market contains no antibiotics, hormones or growth promotants (environment and health). Other initiatives that address influencing consumption patterns around environment, health and social inequalities include a commitment to educate customers about natural and organic foods, health, nutrition and the environment (environment, health and social). In terms of community giving, Whole Foods Market provides food donations to food banks and shelters in each community (health and social). This aids in influencing consumption patterns by providing foods that are minimally processed, and lower in sodium and fat (Whole Foods Market, 2008). They also run quarterly "5% days" with 5% of net sales on a selected day donated to a local nonprofit or educational organization (possibility for environment, health or social depending on organization). Beneficiaries vary by community but have encompassed organizations addressing food security including school garden programs, food banks/pantries and health organizations (Whole Foods Market, 2015). In addition, Whole Foods Market created two foundations to address environment, health and social inequalities in the food system. The

Whole Kids Foundation focuses on supporting schools and inspiring families to improve children’s nutrition and wellness with engagement in all 50 U.S. states. They provide funding for school salad bars, school gardens, and training and support for teachers to live healthy lifestyles and model healthy behaviors. The Whole Cities Foundation prioritizes supporting efforts that bring fresh, nutritious food and broader access to healthy eating education to underserved communities. Finally, Whole Foods Market has stated that by 2018 every product in Whole Foods Market U.S. and Canadian stores will be labeled to indicate whether they include Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs).

4.2.2.1.3.2. Tenet 3: Bon Appétit Management Company

Many of the initiatives pursued by Bon Appétit Management Company have both a production (supply chain) and consumption (consumer facing) element. In addition to the local food sourcing initiatives described in the food system redesign section above, since 2005, Bon Appétit Management Company has hosted an *Eat Local Challenge* event where they use a 100% locally sourced meal to educate guests on sustainable agriculture. For seafood, Bon Appétit Management Company has pursued several educational initiatives aimed at influencing consumption patterns. In conjunction with Seafood Watch, they created the Save Seafood Tour to “educate people about the issues surrounding seafood and activate them to make sustainable choices” and co-sponsored the making of the Emmy-nominated documentary *Farming the Seas* (Bon Appétit Management Company, n.d.,a). In their animal welfare initiatives, they provide vegan and vegetarian options every day at each location promoting the environmental and public health benefits of these choices. Bon Appétit Management Company has several climate change initiatives targeted at reorienting food supply and consumption to align environment, health and social inequalities. These are covered in more detail below in the carbon emissions section below but the primary focus relevant to this section are two consumer facing efforts: the Low Carbon

Diet Day, an annual event on Earth Day every year where Bon Appétit Management Company focuses on education around food and climate change; and the Low Carbon Diet calculator, a consumer-facing website that educates people on the climate change impacts of their food choices. In addition, the menu changes, and associated reduction in carbon emissions, created from the Low Carbon Diet that have now become a standard part of menu practices company wide.

4.2.2.1.3.3. Tenet 3: Analysis

This section finds both companies engaged in consumer-facing activities targeted at reorienting food supply and consumption to align environment, health and social inequalities. Scholars report that these supermarket actors hold more power than at any previous time in history (Burch & Lawrence, 2007; Clapp & Fuchs, 2009; Fuchs et al., 2011). Scholars have also explored the potential for corporations to serve as places to engage in broader citizenship activities (i.e. things that promote the public good) and ethical consumption (Soper, 2004; Gabriel and Lang 2005; Johnston, 2008, 2011). This invites the question of whether these actors who self-identify as sustainable and engage in activities which appear designed to reorient food supply and consumption to align environment, health and social inequalities should be considered separately from other supermarket actors who do not appear to place as much emphasis in this area. Does a Whole Foods Market or Bon Appétit Management Company when engaging in these activities hold greater potential to create food system sustainability than a competitor such as Meijer or Aramark who may not engage in these sorts of activities influencing consumption?

Retail grocers and food service companies like Whole Foods Market and Bon Appétit Management Company are uniquely positioned between producers and consumers. There is a strong critique of the dominant food change strategy of “voting with your fork” and

consumption-based solutions, as reviewed earlier. However, the need for consumer engagement is necessary, as Lang and Barling (2012) point out in tenant three, to reorient food supply and consumption patterns. After all, all humans must consume in order to live. And, as Oshaug and Haddad (as cited in Lang, 2010, p. 94) argue, readdressing the linkages between people, nutrition and the environment is a critical component to food system reorientation. As identified by Johnson (2008), Whole Foods Market is a site that engages in promoting ethical consumption. They have a stated commitment to education on health, nutrition and the environment. Further, while some initiatives like Whole Foods Market food bank donations or community giving programs may be viewed as standard operating fare for supermarkets [though in theory, they may differ by providing products that are minimally processed, lower in sodium and fat, and organic. And, 5% day programs such as that pursued by a Whole Foods Market location in Portland, OR that describes, “we are currently committed to a three year plan to support healthy food security in Oregon, in the areas of access, empowerment and sustainability and are focusing all of our charitable giving in this area” (Whole Foods Market, 2015b, para 3) may refute this as well], several programs attempt to work at a systems level. The Whole Foods Market Whole Kids Foundation and Whole Cities Foundation work nationwide on healthy eating and in underserved communities to attempt to recreate linkages between people, nutrition and the environment. For their part, Bon Appétit Management Company pursues a diverse range of initiatives that appear targeted at engaging consumers. They are an interesting case for two reasons. One, as an “on-site restaurant company” as they call themselves, they have the opportunity to engage with consumers each and every day particularly in their corporate and university cafes. Two, as many of their cafes are at universities and colleges, they have the opportunity to engage younger consumers with their messages of environmental, health and social factors linked to food consumption. Finally, Bon Appétit Management Company, more so

than Whole Foods Market appears engaged in initiatives focused on influencing public perceptions outside of their store/café realm, particularly with their *Save Seafood* tour, *Farming the Seas* documentary and TEDx Fruitvale focused on farmworkers and labor movements. Again, this opens the possibility for further study to research the efficacy of these sorts of consumer engagement efforts.

4.2.2.1.4 *Tenet 4: To broaden health conceptions to include a wide range of non-communicable diseases including malnutrition.*

Lang and Barling (2012) suggest a focus on broadening health conceptions to include a wide range of non-communicable diseases including malnutrition. Whole Foods Market has a stated mission of educating customers about natural and organic foods, health, nutrition and the environment. Bon Appétit Management Company features statements about engaging their customers with regard to health issues interwoven in many of their initiatives.

As this tenet is closely tied to tenet number seven, *to incorporate consumer issues including over-, under- and mal-consumption*, more extensive treatment of this tenet is tied into the description of tenet number seven below. Tenet number four, *broadening health conceptions to include a wide range of non-communicable diseases including malnutrition*, approaches the issue more as a public health issue, which is why I include the general education statements the two companies make above. Tenet seven, on the other hand, appears to approach addressing malnutrition more as a direct consumer issue.

4.2.2.1.5 *Tenet 5: To address environmental concerns throughout the supply chain.*

4.2.2.1.5.1. Tenet 5: Whole Foods Market

Lang and Barling (2012) suggest a focus on addressing environmental concerns throughout the supply chain. Several Whole Foods Market initiatives reviewed above directly address environmental impacts: GMO labeling initiative; MSC partnership, wild-caught seafood

sustainability ratings with elimination of all red-rated seafood from stores and aquaculture standards; Global Animal Partnership's 5-Step Animal Welfare rating system which include environmental conditions, Whole Foods Market proprietary animal welfare standards which address environmental concerns and commitment that meat sold in the stores contains no antibiotics, hormones or growth promotants. The Whole Foods Market commitment to natural and organic food and farming, focus on supplier partnerships that share Whole Foods Market's concern for social responsibility and the environment and Whole Trade program all incorporate environmental considerations. In addition, Whole Foods Market promotes a Green Mission program that: offsets 100% of energy use with wind energy credits, pursues green building, solar power, company-wide recycling programs, and internal green mission programs. Finally, Whole Foods Market created a proprietary rating system, Eco-Scale, for cleaning products, as there are no current regulations for listing ingredients on packaging.

4.2.2.1.5.2. Tenet 5: Bon Appétit Management Company

Bon Appétit Management Company initiatives that incorporate a focus on environmental concerns throughout the supply chain include their Farm to Fork local food program, seafood program, animal welfare program and food and climate change program.

4.2.2.1.5.3. Tenet 5: Analysis

This section shows that both companies have many initiatives that address environmental concerns throughout the supply chain. As Lang and Barling (2007) illustrate, the negative environmental impacts of supermarkets are extensive. They also point out that addressing environmental issues are of material consequence to the companies themselves for their own business sustainability. Thus, it makes sense that supermarkets would have a variety of environmental programs. The critique lobbied at many of the company efforts speaks to this in suggesting that companies select sustainability issues that affect their bottom line like eco-

efficiency or recycling and leave the more challenging environmental issues (Fuchs et al., 2011). The variety of initiatives that Whole Foods Market and Bon Appétit Management Company pursue, from Whole Foods Market's seafood program with its stated aim of moving their stores—and the seafood industry as a whole—toward healthier oceans to Bon Appétit Management Company's animal welfare initiatives that they mention as aimed at changing U.S. food system sustainability invites the question of whether these two companies are addressing environmental issues in a different way than other supermarket actors.

Lang (2010) defines environmental concerns to include: climate change, water, biodiversity and ecosystem support, energy and non-renewable fossil fuels, land (including recommendations to consume less meat, and eat more local seasonal unprocessed food), and soil (including degradation from conventional agriculture). Whole Foods Market and Bon Appétit Management Company engage on many of these issues as described above. Critics (Burch & Lawrence, 2007) suggest that companies engage to create a niche market for themselves and further their own economic gains. However, Whole Foods Market and Bon Appétit Management Company do appear to engage in examination of the supply chain as Lang and Barling (2012) recommend. An analysis of company discourse reveals that companies could engage further in a few key issues with significant environmental impact such as encouraging a reduction in meat consumption. As Lang (2010) identifies, meat production impacts climate change, water and land issues. Additional company initiatives that encouraged consumers to lessen meat consumption could aid in addressing environmental concerns throughout the supply chain.

4.2.2.1.6 *Tenet 6: To address waste throughout the system, particularly at consumption*

Lang and Barling (2012) suggest addressing waste throughout the system, particularly at consumption. The data from Whole Foods Market identifies no direct initiatives aimed at addressing food system waste besides standard recycling and composting initiatives.

4.2.2.1.6.1. Tenet 6: Bon Appétit Management Company

In contrast, within Bon Appétit Management Company's food and climate change initiatives, their *Food Waste Reduction* campaign educates kitchen staff and consumers and has contributed to reducing food waste in their operations by one-third. This includes efforts that prevent waste from occurring in the first place by preparing food from scratch, small-batch cooking and trayless dining (Bon Appétit Management Company, n.d.,a). Finally, Bon Appétit Management Company has a variety of composting, recycling and food recovery partnerships.

This shows a greater focus by Bon Appétit Management Company on food waste management in keeping with the fact that they are an on-site restaurant company who likely generate more direct food waste than Whole Foods Market. Their initiatives show a focus on addressing waste at production and consumption sites and the variety of programs suggest that this is a key focus area for Bon Appétit Management Company.

4.2.2.1.6.2. Tenet 6: Analysis

Addressing waste throughout the system, particularly at consumption is critical to food system sustainability according to Lang and Barling (2012). Again, with their position on the front lines of consumption, grocery retailers and food service companies are well situated to have an impact on this tenet. As described above, Bon Appétit Management Company has a *Food Waste Reduction* campaign with metrics in place that include consumer engagement efforts. They use strong language to talk about their waste initiatives, "we hate food waste with a passion" (Bon Appétit Management Company, n.d.b, timeline section, para 1) and they design and communicate their efforts using a systems approach. Whole Foods Market published a Green Mission Report in 2012 detailing many of their food waste initiatives but communicating few metrics. They point out the challenge of each state having different regulations around items like recycling and composting as one of the major challenges. With retailers like Walmart (Walmart,

2015) stating ambitious zero waste goals, additional research into the programs that companies pursue and efficacy measures is warranted.

4.2.2.1.7 Tenet 7: To incorporate consumer issues including over-, under- and mal-consumption

4.2.2.1.7.1. Tenet 7: Whole Foods Market

For food system sustainability, Lang and Barling (2012) suggest that analysis incorporate consumer issues including over-, under- and mal-consumption. Whole Foods Market (2015) promotes three primary initiatives that address health and consumption issues. First, they have programs around healthy eating education with a focus on eliminating the consumption of refined, highly processed foods and foods void of nutrients, such as artificial flavors, colors, preservatives, sweeteners and hydrogenated fats. Second, their non-profit, the Whole Kids Foundation, supports schools and inspires families to improve children's nutrition and wellness. The Whole Kids Foundation has reached more than 3.5 million students in all 50 states with over 4,000 salad bars placed in schools and funding for nearly 3,000 school gardens awarded. In addition to school salad bars and school gardens, The Whole Kids Foundation also provides grants and tools to encourage teachers to live healthy lifestyles and model healthy behaviors for their students. Third, their Whole Cities Foundation, another non-profit endeavor, supports efforts that bring fresh, nutritious food and broader access to healthy eating education to underserved communities.

4.2.2.1.7.2. Tenet 7: Bon Appétit Management Company

Bon Appétit Management Company lists five initiatives that they have undertaken to address consumer health outcomes: sourcing rBGH free milk and yogurt; sourcing chicken, turkey, and ground beef from animals raised without antibiotics; switching to non-hydrogenated canola oil in their fryers; a healthy cooking initiative to get healthy menu items into all cafes and

sodium and sugar reduction campaigns. Bon Appétit Management Company has taken a strong stand against overuse of antibiotics in animals and banning rBGH milk due to concerns of linkages to an increase in certain types of cancer and to the public health threat from antibiotic resistance in humans.

4.2.2.1.7.3. Tenet 7: Analysis

This section illustrates the current focus that these companies have on consumer public health issues. McMichael and Friedmann (2007) point out that supermarkets are now discussing ecology and health, issues that were rarely attached to the topics of agriculture and food until the last 20 years. This brings up the question as to whether places that are on the front lines of food service have a role to play in discourse around public health and the role that food can play. Is this an appropriate venue for this sort of education necessary to public health? If not here, where?

As Lang and Barling (2012) identified, food system sustainability needs to incorporate consumer issues including over-, under- and malconsumption. Whole Foods Market and Bon Appétit Management Company are both well positioned to reach consumers with these messages. Whole Foods Market appears to be taking a more systemic view with their engagements particularly with the Whole Kids Foundation and Whole Cities Foundation. Bon Appétit Management Company's Healthy Cooking Initiative intervenes at both consumer and staff level to make menu and diet changes. In addition, Bon Appétit Management Company ran sodium and sugar reduction campaigns directly addressing two areas that Popkin (2009) argues contribute to diet-related non-communicable diseases. A critique of company engagements is that with the exception of Whole Foods Market's foundation initiatives, both companies primarily influence consumers within their own spheres. This suggests that companies may be primarily reaching a higher socio-economic audience and not sharing the message of the need for

the linkage between food and health more broadly in society.

4.2.2.1.8 *Tenet 8: To address carbon emissions throughout the food chain*

Lang and Barling (2012) suggest an approach that addresses carbon emissions throughout the food chain. Whole Foods Market data shows few direct initiatives that focus on carbon emissions.

4.2.2.1.8.1. Tenet 8: Bon Appétit Management Company

Bon Appétit Management Company recognizes the impact of carbon emissions in the food chain, stating, “Greenhouse gases created by the food system — including production, distribution, and waste — are responsible for one-third of global emissions. At Bon Appétit, we see that as opportunity to make positive change” (Bon Appétit Management Company, n.d.,a). Bon Appétit Management Company’s primary initiative addressing carbon emissions is the Low Carbon Diet program, the outcome of two years of research showing the ways the company could reduce carbon emissions in its operation. This led to changes such as: “Minimizing reliance on red meat and cheese through menu choices and careful portioning, sourcing 100% of meats, vegetables, and non-tropical fruit from North American farms and avoiding air-freighted seafood and reducing other flown-in items, including tropical fruit” (Bon Appétit Management Company, n.d.,a). The outcomes of this research, in addition to changes made company-wide that reduced carbon emissions by 25% in high impact areas, include two public-facing initiatives. These are the Low Carbon Diet Day, an annual event on Earth Day every year where Bon Appétit Management Company focuses on education around food and climate change, and the Low Carbon Diet calculator, a consumer-facing website that educates people on the climate change impacts of their food choices. Since 2007, Bon Appétit Management Company’s Low Carbon Diet program has limited tropical fruit use by half, reduced beef and cheese purchases by 33 percent and 10 percent respectively, and kept approximately 5 million pounds of carbon

dioxide emissions per month out of the environment (Bon Appétit Management Company, n.d.,a).

4.2.2.1.8.2. Tenet 8: Analysis

This section shows that Bon Appétit Management Company appears in agreement with Lang and Barling (2012) about the importance of addressing carbon emissions. Again, with carbon emissions from agriculture and food production having high environmental impacts (Burch and Lawrence, 2007; Fuchs et al., 2011) it makes sense that companies would engage in addressing carbon emissions even if only for their own financial sustainability. This raises the question of the efficacy and impact of the range of initiatives that Bon Appétit Management Company engages in especially as compared to other food service competitors. On the company side, it invites the question of why Whole Foods Market is not discussing carbon emissions and if there are other supermarkets engaging in effective carbon reduction initiatives that may provide useful data for the industry and food systems scholars.

Addressing carbon emissions throughout the food chain is a key component to food system sustainability according to Lang and Barling (2012). Whole Foods Market initiatives appear focused more at store level with composting, recycling and energy offsets. Though they do state that with their investment in purchasing 100% energy offset credits in wind energy, they have contributed to research into wind-power as a renewable energy option. Bon Appétit Management Company, on the other hand, is engaged at the cafe level but also appears focused at the supply chain level. With the exception of the soil category, they appear to have programs in each of the environmental areas (climate change, water, fish stocks, energy, land, soil) that Lang (2010) references as needed engagement points. In particular their Low Carbon Diet initiatives that encourage lessening meat consumption reach across the climate change, water and land categories.

4.2.2.1.9 *Tenet 9: To incorporate an economic approach that internalizes full costs.*

Lang and Barling (2012) recommend incorporating an economic approach that internalizes full costs into food system sustainability analysis. There is no direct discussion of this topic in reviewing Whole Foods Market and Bon Appétit Management Company initiatives. This section reveals that companies may be engaging in an economic approach that internalizes full costs, yet they are not talking about it in their public discourse. Third-party certifications like Bcorporation may address this challenge and give companies an effective way to engage in and communicate triple bottom line approaches. The BCorps certification provides a way for companies to show that they meet rigorous standards of social and environmental performance, accountability, and transparency (B Lab, 2015). New Seasons Market, a supermarket chain with 15 locations in Portland, OR became the first retail grocer to become B Corps certified in 2013 (New Seasons Market, 2013).

4.2.2.1.10 *Tenet 10: To examine the locus of power between government and private governance*

Lang and Barling (2012) recommend examining the locus of power between government and private governance. There is no direct discussion of this topic in reviewing Whole Foods Market and Bon Appétit Management Company initiatives.

4.3. Discussion

As Fuchs et al. (2011) point out, retailers are in a position to strongly influence the sustainability of the agrifood system. In their discourse, both Whole Foods Market and Bon Appétit Management Company emphasize the role that market-based initiatives can play in creating sustainable food systems both on the production side and consumption side. Lang and Barling (2012) suggested ten tenets that they felt were important for actors interested in creating sustainable food systems to address. Whole Foods Market and Bon Appétit Management

Company address many of these same items. This research raises several key questions relating to these “sustainable” market actors. The first is in relation to the companies’ policy engagements. With both Whole Foods Market and Bon Appétit Management Company calling for more regulation in production issues such as GMOs, is it possible to consider them in the same neo-liberal category as other retail actors? In addition, both companies engage in many initiatives that address social, environmental and economic issues that appear focused on food system redesign. A critique levied at corporate actors is that they engage in sustainability issues driven only by meeting customer demand and potential for market gain – in fact that they are reactive rather than proactive in shaping the food system (Fuchs et al., 2011). In particular, one could argue that the meat and seafood standards developed by Whole Foods Market and Bon Appétit Management Company, and the farmworker initiatives from Bon Appétit Management Company appear focused on greater food system redesign rather than company gain. In *Grist*, a popular food system activist/practitioner magazine, Greenaway (2012) writes, in fact, that Bon Appétit Management Company is often more progressive than its consumers when it comes to food system changes. Another element that implies that these companies may be doing something differently than other retailers within food system redesign is their financial assistance to small farmers. Fuchs et al. (2011) write that in order for small farmers to benefit from new market opportunities provided by private governance, corporations will need to offer financial and organizational assistance. In making \$25 million in low-interest loans available to independent local farmers and food artisans, Whole Foods Market’s Local Producer Loan Program seems to meet this criteria. In 2014 to celebrate the 15th anniversary of their Farm to Fork program Bon Appétit Management Company distributed \$50,000 in grants to small farmers. Whole Foods Market and Bon Appétit Management Company also pursue a wide variety of programs focused on reorienting food supply and consumption to align environment,

health and social inequalities. They both appear to have a strong emphasis on consumer education and influencing consumption patterns to the benefit of the environment, public health and some social inequality. In addition, Whole Foods Market and Bon Appétit Management Company focus on pursuing initiatives that address environmental issues throughout the supply chain. The company emphasis beyond issues that impact their bottom line, such as the seafood and animal welfare initiatives, implies engagement beyond greenwashing in environmental issues impacting the supply chain. With regard to a focus on addressing waste throughout the system, particularly at consumption, the variety of programs Bon Appétit Management Company pursues indicates a strong commitment to this tenet. Whole Foods Market promotes standard initiatives focusing on waste (e.g. recycling, composting) which invites the question of what supermarkets like Whole Foods Market could do to more strongly engage in addressing waste. With the consumer reach Whole Foods Market has, a food waste reduction campaign in their stores could have significant impact. The incorporation of consumer issues including over-, under- and mal-consumption is a tenet that both Whole Foods Market and Bon Appétit Management Company appear engaged in addressing with a variety of initiatives. This brings up the question as to whether places that are on the front lines of food service have a role to play in discourse around public health and the role that food can play. Is this an appropriate venue for this sort of education necessary to public health? If not here, where? And, how do we measure the efficacy of these initiatives? With regard to addressing carbon emissions, Bon Appétit Management Company appears to take a stronger position than Whole Foods Market with both measurement of their carbon reduction and consumer promotion incorporated. The lack of attention Whole Foods Market gives to food waste initiatives related to carbon, for example, promotions encouraging lessening consumption of meat and animal products or consumer initiatives addressing food waste is notable. While they are addressing carbon emissions via their

renewable energy offset credits that invest in wind energy, there appears to be an opportunity for Whole Foods Market to more strongly incorporate tenet number eight, addressing carbon emissions throughout the food chain.

The above analysis of Whole Foods Market and Bon Appétit Management Company discourse with regard to engagement in building food system sustainability identifies ways in which they might be contributing to sustainable food systems. This suggests, perhaps, that agrifood scholars consider retailers in terms of their actions and values instead of size and shape (i.e. large and corporate). For example, this analysis implies a difference in the actions of these companies as compared to many of their competitors. Meijer, the closest supermarket competitor to Whole Foods Market on the Supermarket News Top 75 food retailers list (Supermarket News, 2014) does not mention the word sustainability or environment on their Our Values web section (Meijer, 2015). The only mention they make of social issues is a statement that, “We are committed to strengthening the communities we serve” (Meijer, 2015). However, in another area on Meijer’s website, they do have a Community web section where they state a commitment to local and organic growers, sustainable seafood and store-level energy efficiency initiatives, however, few metrics or third-party certifications are listed. Meijer also advertises a robust food bank donation program as an engagement to addressing hunger relief. This brief competitive analysis suggests that Whole Foods Market may be engaging on a more systems-based level than other grocery competitors.

Lang and Barling (2012) write that companies are recognizing challenges to their long-term sustainability and calibrating their business models accordingly. As reviewed above, my study identifies key priorities from several select “sustainable” businesses. It also illustrates the alignment that these appear to have with the range of concerns that Lang and Barling (2012) highlight as essential to building sustainable food systems. In particular, one consideration this

analysis highlights, is the number of initiatives that could be considered to engage at a systems and supply chain level rather than an individual company level. One could argue that Whole Foods Market engaging in any of the following initiatives: policy encouraging regulation around organic standards and GMOs, Whole Trade (Fair Trade), Whole Kids (salad bars, school gardens, healthy educators), Whole Cities (healthy food access/underserved communities), Whole Planet (global poverty alleviation/microcredit), promotion of organic food, animal welfare initiatives that require no antibiotics, hormones, or growth promotants, the Local Producer Loan Program, community giving/5% days (in particular, examples like the Whole Foods Market Portland store whose giving is targeted in a three year plan to support healthy food security in the areas of access, empowerment and sustainability) and MSC partnership is work that is redesigning the food system for the betterment of people and planet. On the other hand, one could also argue in most of these cases that these initiatives are in Whole Foods Markets' own financial best interest and serve only to divide and create a "good food system for some and not for all".

Thus, how does the analysis above of what I found in part two of this research compare to what I found in part one where I examined scholar discourse? First, while scholars identify that supermarkets hold unprecedented levels of power and control and that in influencing production and consumption beyond their historic role in distribution, they play a critical role in agrifood system transformation, I find that little company segmentation has occurred. Scholars appear to not look beyond the big companies as evidenced by the four articles on Whole Foods Market and no articles on Bon Appétit Management Company. Thus, as noted prior, it is hard to compare what scholars are saying about "sustainable" food companies against what these companies offer about themselves.

However, as Lang and Barling (2012) reference, the role of big business is one of the key

tensions in the debate around food system sustainability. As they describe, “companies, often depicted as the enemy of environmental and social justice, are now engaging. Some see this as “light green” or “greenwash”, others as essential (Monbiot 2000; Porritt 2005)” (Lang & Barling, 2012, p. 318). If it is true that this is one of the key tensions, why is it that we, as food system scholars, are not further exploring the role that smaller companies and companies who identify as “sustainable” may play? While we spotlight Danone, Nestle, Unilever, Kellogg’s, Kraft, McDonalds, PepsiCo and Sara Lee for participating in the collective Sustainable Agriculture Initiative (Lang and Barling, 2012, p. 318) and Safeway, Kroger, Walmart, and Tyson as contributors to the corporate food regime (Holt-Gimenez & Wang, 2011) names of “sustainable” food companies like Whole Foods Market and Bon Appétit Management Company remain virtually absent in the literature. Monbiot (2000) and supporters may consider all company engagement as “greenwashing” but it would appear that an examination of assumptions that making a profit and contributing to a sustainable food system are irreconcilable could be further considered in food systems scholarship.

4.3.1. Critical reflection. To be clear, this research does not mean to imply that private actors should be the only actors involved in food system change. The state, NGOs, NPOs and individuals organized in social movements all have critical roles to play. Nor does it mean to suggest that there are not tensions involved. Private actors are in pursuit of economic gain and unlike government or non-profit entities do not take as their *raison d’être* a mission of creating public good. However, scholars (Gregoratti, 2011; McMahon, 2011; Busch, 2011) observe that it is not a given that public actors will better serve the public good and drive sustainability initiatives. This research only attempts to suggest that as supermarkets and food service companies are influential actors with some pursuing initiatives claiming to enhance

environmental, social and economic justice, that we might direct more research attention to the topic.

One of the primary critiques scholars have for private actors is that their engagements in food system sustainability initiatives primarily serve their own marketing needs. One may critique these companies for prioritizing their own economic sustainability. It is a fair argument that these companies founded with profit as a core purpose are not likely to do anything that would interfere with their profit objectives. Whole Foods Market, for example, does not appear to promote lessening meat consumption in the same way that Bon Appétit Management Company does. They have different business models that lend themselves to different sustainability engagements. This invites several key questions. are company marketing agendas and food system sustainability initiatives mutually exclusive? Can companies “do good” while improving their bottom line? Are company engagements at supply chain/systems level that may benefit them but also aid in redesigning the system to benefit social justice and environmental sustainability inherently a bad thing? And, what about the notion of a “good food system for some and not for all”? Do Whole Foods Market engagements have any impact on what other players like Walmart do as suggested at the beginning of this thesis? How do we weigh the positive impacts versus the negative? How will we know unless we look more closely at these companies?

One consideration, to return to the Holt-Gimenez and Wang (2011) matrix (Table 1), is whether “sustainable” food companies might make an appearance within the table? Based on this research, I would posit that we could add them to the reformist category under the Corporate Food Regime section. Based on their engagements that support local food production, economic support for smallholder farms, engagements in food access and underserved communities (Whole Foods Market) and labor rights (Bon Appétit Management Company), I could argue that

they are approaching the U.S. Food Movements side of the chart, moving into the progressive category. However, this argument is impossible to make based on discourse analysis alone and thus, I suggest that agrifood scholars bring more nuance to the conversation of private actors in food system sustainability and undertake additional research into the potential role they may play.

4.4. Contribution

This topic contributes to food systems social change and social justice by identifying gaps in agrifood scholar coverage on the role that “sustainable” food companies may play in creating sustainable food systems. In addition, it may identify opportunities for supermarkets and food service companies to create additional food systems change engagements that address social, environmental and economic inequity. In particular, by creating a catalogue of Whole Foods Market and Bon Appétit Management Company initiatives and comparing them to the Lang and Barling (2012) food system sustainability tenets, I hope this work might prove as a springboard for future work.

There are many opportunities for this contribution to be applied. A key area for future research is an empirical study with Whole Foods Market or Bon Appétit Management Company to study the alignment between discourse and action. Another interesting area for future research is to consider competitive grocery retail players and identify who else is addressing sustainability and how they address it. For example, a Whole Foods Market and a Meijer store. Further study could also be undertaken to expand Johnston’s (2008) work with Whole Foods Market shoppers and ethical consumption to similarly explore the efficacy of several of their other consumer education initiatives. Finally, with the negative contributions that food and agriculture make to carbon emissions and waste, a study exploring the programs that companies pursue and efficacy measures may be a critical contribution.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

This research addresses the critical problem of how we, as practitioners and agrifood scholars can best create a sustainable food system. It takes the position that government, farmers, citizens, academics, NGOs, and companies all have a role to play. Further, it recognizes that agrifood scholars have an important role to play in developing the concepts and theories that can lead to deeper understanding and collaboration between various actors. As “sustainable” food businesses both hold the power and resources needed to create change and are already pursuing initiatives with the stated intent of creating a sustainable food system, this research prioritized studying agrifood scholar conceptualizations of these businesses.

The research opened by examining current agrifood scholar discourse on retail supermarkets and food service companies. Then, it explored two examples of “sustainable” food businesses, Whole Foods Market and Bon Appétit Management Company and how they appeared in agrifood scholarship. It then turned to a review of agrifood scholarship on Walmart. Next, it examined company discourse from Whole Foods Market and Bon Appétit Management Company to explore how the companies themselves promoted their actions as food systems change agents acting to increase food system sustainability. In the final section, it compared the company discourse with the Lang and Barling (2012) food system sustainability framework.

In this research, I find several key points. One, agrifood scholarship on retail supermarkets clearly identifies unprecedented levels of power and control by these actors (Burch & Lawrence, 2007; Clapp & Fuchs, 2009; Burch et al., 2013; Fuchs et al., 2011). Two, as retail supermarkets assume a role of influencing production and consumption beyond their historic role in distribution, they play a critical role in agrifood system transformation (Burch and Lawrence,

2007). Three, little company segmentation has occurred in agrifood scholarship on this topic with transnational corporations like Walmart, national U.S. chains like Meijer and “sustainable” retailer, Whole Foods Market, all considered equally in the category of “retail supermarket”. In recognizing this, scholars have called for research into individual actors highlighting the fact that they have differing agendas and motivations (Henson, 2011; Burch and Lawrence, 2007). Four, there is a lack of attention to the food service category in agrifood scholarship. With regard to Whole Foods Market and Bon Appétit Management Company, actors who self-identify as “sustainable”, I find limited research. Walmart, on the other hand, has been studied extensively. Finally, a comparison of company discourse showing the ways that Whole Foods Market and Bon Appétit Management Company address food system sustainability reveals that both companies engage in a wide array of initiatives that appear designed to address economic, environmental and social justice issues in the food system. In comparing these initiatives against the Lang and Barling (2012) food system sustainability framework, I find that the companies address eight out of the ten tenets that Lang and Barling (2012) recommend. Based on these findings, it appears that these “sustainable” food companies are addressing some, in fact most, of the components necessary to building sustainable food systems. Though, some of these components they could address in a more significant way. More importantly, the limitations of this study, which uses discourse analysis to identify what companies are saying, are that in looking only at what they are saying, not conducting a study which looks at what they are doing, we are unable to draw any conclusions about the efficacy of these efforts.

Therefore, this study concludes that there exists an opportunity for additional agrifood scholar research into the role “sustainable” food companies might play in creating sustainable food systems. It particularly points to the need for segmentation in the retail supermarket category but also points to the need for further research into the food service market. This

suggests the need for research with companies like Whole Foods Market and Bon Appétit Management Company that position themselves as actors working to build sustainable food systems.

There are limitations to this research and indications for future research studies. The limitations of studying company discourse invite critiques that scholars are not able to measure the effects the company initiatives have. How do we know these companies are not greenwashing or co-opting alternative food movement initiatives? In addition, by limiting the study to main agrifood scholar journal, *Agriculture and Human Values*, it is possible that agrifood scholar conversations on this topic have occurred in other venues and thus have not been catalogued in this research. It is a fair estimation that results would be similar with a wider sample but this is an avenue for future research.

In highlighting the scarcity of current agrifood scholar research on the potential role of “sustainable” food companies in creating food systems change, I encourage scholars to address the potential role of business actors in positive food system change. My hope is that in furthering the discourse, it will also engender collaboration among diverse food system actors and create transformative change.

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