

## ***Introduction***

Agriculture has become one of the most debated topics when it comes to climate change and crisis. The agricultural sector counts to one of the largest producers of emissions. At the same time agriculture and farming practices also suffer directly of the consequences of global warming (IPCC 2021). This shows the importance of sustainable and ecological farming practices which are less energy intensive and resource-efficient. Organic farming has become the paradigm for sustainability (Mercati 2016). This is also reflected in the Germany's target of 20 percent organic farming in Germany by 2030 (BMEL 2020). This has led the Federal Government to grant funds to research project in the Länder to promote the development of organic farming. The state of Baden-Württemberg (Germany) established the "Organic Farming Research Program" with the goal to strengthen the ecological agricultural sector in the region (University of Hohenheim 2021).

One project which is under this program is "Oeko-valuation", a project that aims to enable understanding between farms, processors, retailers and consumers. This is the basis for new urban-rural relationships and cooperation that strengthen our regional food systems and make them fit for the future. Cooperation and network building among the different stakeholders is one key objective (Ökonsult GbR 2020).

"Which power leads to change, and which power prevents it?" (Partzsch 2015) are key questions that need to be addressed in order to understand how transformation towards ecological farming practices can be achieved.

Stakeholder engagement, creating space for a mutual exchange and discussions can lead to long-term cooperations. Change involves all actors in the system.

This research focuses on the specific structures in these organic model regions in order to gain insights that can be applied in fostering cooperations and networks on a local level. It is important to keep in mind to view the organic sector in Baden-Wuerttemberg not isolated from dynamics outside the region. Strengthening organic farming also means how to start on a regional/local level, how to connect regional actors and revealing structures that are region-specific. This research will be oriented on people within the system of the organic model regions. It is the people – here different actors and stakeholders – and the connections that might be lacking in order to promote an agriculture that works for everyone.