

## 15. What to conserve and how? Exploring how dairy farmers in contrasting socio-ecological contexts frame biodiversity

Vincent J. Oostvogels<sup>1\*</sup>, Bertrand Dumont<sup>2</sup>, Hanneke J. Nijland<sup>3</sup>, Imke J.M. de Boer<sup>1</sup>, R. Ripoll Bosch<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Animal Production Systems group, Wageningen University & Research, The Netherlands

<sup>2</sup> UMR Herbivores, INRAE, France

<sup>3</sup> Institute for Science in Society, Radboud University, The Netherlands

\* Corresponding author. E-mail: [vincent.oostvogels@wur.nl](mailto:vincent.oostvogels@wur.nl)

Biodiversity has become a key topic in the debates around agricultural sustainability. However, biodiversity is a broad and complex concept, which can be understood in many different ways. Related to this, people express different ideas about 'which' biodiversity matters and which courses of action should be taken, using different arguments. In other words, they frame biodiversity differently. This diversity of frames is often not made explicit. Especially, there is little insight how biodiversity is framed among those who are directly involved, such as farmers themselves. Furthermore, it is unclear how socio-ecological context – consider, for instance, regional differences in environmental conditions, agricultural practices, farmer collective dynamics, and wider cultural and economic context - influences the framing of biodiversity. Therefore, we are conducting a study to explore how farmers frame biodiversity and how this framing relates to socio-ecological context. We focus on biodiversity in relation to dairy farming, in four contrasting case study areas in the Netherlands and France. Our research centres around four questions: 1) How do dairy farmers in our case study areas conceptualize and value biodiversity?; 2) Which links between dairy farming and biodiversity do they emphasize?; 3) How do they frame (drivers of) biodiversity change?; and 4) Which courses of action do they propose? We follow a qualitative approach, based on interpretative analysis of in-depth interviews. In our analysis, we use the frame-of-reference model (consisting of behaviours, values, norms, feelings, interests, and knowledge and convictions) to systematically organize the content of the frames that the farmers brought forward. We then look for patterns of symbolic convergence across these individual frames and their possible relation to geographical context. We can report on the first results from two case study areas, which already reveal diverse frames on 'which' biodiversity is relevant in a dairy farming context and why; how this biodiversity influences dairy farming and vice versa; and how this biodiversity should be conserved, managed, or used. We argue that better understanding and more explicitness about this diversity of understandings can benefit the debate around biodiversity in agriculture.

