

ESRS 2015 – Working Group 11: Neoliberalism, the “good farmer” and well-being: The effect of neoliberal policy reforms on the culture of family farming.

David Brédart (Unité SEED – Université de Liège, Campus d’Arlon)

### **Input self-sufficiency in livestock farming: a renegotiation between the farmer and its practices?**

Livestock farming is practiced in complex and uncertain context. Farmers have to explore flexible and multifunctional system’s designs to adapt to prices volatility, changing policies and strong citizens’ concerns about food production. Such an exploration is largely realized without the support of a consistent reference model. Increasing input self-sufficiency is one option that is developed by farmers testing and constituting frameworks in the margin of the conventional modernization. This option is discussed by several fields of research. Studies on livestock farming systems tend to objectivize that input self-sufficiency represents a relevant alternative towards environmental and economic sustainability. Furthermore, studies on farming trajectories insist on the importance of the transition process while studies on autonomy analyze the influence of farming cultures on the transition. Understanding farming redesign is then an issue notably by investigating farmers’ learning pathways and reconstruction of identity. We contribute to this reflection by questioning how livestock farmers interpret their trajectories of change. We conducted semi-directed interviews in family farms from west Belgium with collectively organized farmers who experiment input self-sufficiency. First, we describe individual trajectories with a focus on the process of change using the “triggering change cycle” conceptualization proposed by Sutherland et al. (2012). Second, we analyze the mechanisms of attachment to and detachment from sociotechnical entities according to the “innovation through withdrawal” framework from Goulet & Vinck (2012). The combination of these methods allows us to discuss pragmatically how these farmers redefine their relation with the environment, their professional responsibilities and the notion of performance.