

## Chapter 1

### Introduction: Globalization and Agricultural Governance

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The impact of globalization on agri-food industries has received significant attention by scholars in the social sciences in the last fifteen years. Drawing upon what has been termed ‘agri-food globalization theory’ (Buttel 2001), there is a broad recognition that the regulatory dynamics underpinning agriculture in Western nations have shifted dramatically. Where, previously, the nation-state exercised considerable control over the regulation of agriculture, the rise of transnational corporations (TNCs) in the agribusiness industries, and global governance agencies – such as the World Trade Organization (WTO), International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank – has resulted in a reconfiguration of political power in which the state is no longer the predominant actor. Much excellent work has been conducted in the fields of agricultural sociology, geography and anthropology attempting to identify the key actors and processes behind this shift (see, for example, Bonanno et al. 1994; Burch et al. 1996; Goodman and Watts 1997; Le Heron 1993; McMichael 1994, 2004; Marsden et al. 1990). However, surprisingly little is known about *how* these actors and processes exercise an influence over production and consumption.

This book seeks to move beyond the existing literature on agri-food regulation by exploring the variety of techniques and practices that make possible agricultural regulation in a globalizing world. What is significant about these forms of governing is that they are not necessarily state-based, but comprise a mix of private and public regulation. Such techniques and practices, as a consequence, are frequently represented as non-political and therefore a more accurate and objective means for regulating agriculture than simply through the state. As the title of the book suggests, we believe that a conceptually coherent way of explaining and understanding these new arrangements is through the notion of governance. Not only does this concept have sensitivity to the diversity of actors involved in governing processes, but it highlights also the important role played by seemingly 'non-political' agents, using an array of new practices, in attempts to govern.

To appreciate the applicability of the concept of governance to studies of agri-food regulation it is first necessary to review what is meant by the term. The discussion is necessarily brief since reviews of the literature on governance can be found in Jessop (1995) and Stoker (1998), and applied to the rural sector in Goodwin (1998). The concept of governance is further developed in the works of scholars such as Kooiman (1993; 2003) and Rhodes (1997).

### **WHAT IS GOVERNANCE?**

Governance is, according to Pierre and Peters (2000), a notoriously slippery term. It has become an umbrella concept for a wide variety of phenomena including

policy networks, public management, coordination of sectors of the economy, public-private partnerships, corporate governance and 'good' governance as reflected in the objectives of global regulatory bodies such as the World Trade Organization (WTO) and World Bank (Pierre and Peters 2000: 14). Nevertheless, while the term governance is used in a variety of ways, and from a number of different theoretical perspectives, most scholars are united on at least one point: that it refers to a shift in regulatory arrangements where governing is not confined to a single domain such as, for example, the state. As Jessop (1995: 310) argues, 'the various approaches to governance share a rejection of the conceptual trinity of market-state-civil society which has tended to dominate mainstream analyses of modern societies'. Frequently viewed as distinct from one another, the insight of governance approaches is that they examine the alterations to the boundaries between these spheres of activity. Thus, where an analysis of governing might once have focused purely on the formal mechanisms of government within the state, it is now increasingly necessary to look at actors and mechanisms beyond the state. This shift in focus is summarized succinctly by Stoker (1998: 17) who notes that:

...governance refers to the development of governing styles in which the boundaries between and within the public and private sectors have become blurred. The essence of governance is its focus on governing mechanisms which do not rest on recourse to the authority and sanctions of government.

Thus, *government* is no longer as central to governing processes as it once was. The activity of governing is now shared between state-based institutions and agents that extend beyond the formal boundaries of government.

Changes in mechanisms of governing might be studied, Stoker (1998) argues, by adopting a governance perspective. Rather than developing a theory of governance, he outlines five propositions that provide a concise starting point 'for understanding changing processes of governing' (1998: 18). These propositions are:

1. Governance refers to a set of institutions and actors that are drawn from, but also beyond, the state.
2. Governance identifies the blurring of boundaries and responsibilities for tackling social and economic issues.
3. Governance identifies the power dependence involved in the relationships between institutions involved in collective action.
4. Governance is about autonomous self-governing networks of actors.
5. Governance recognises the capacity to get things done which does not rest on the power of government to command or use its authority. It sees government as able to use new tools and techniques to steer and guide.

Stoker's five propositions might be considered a type of general sensitizing framework for this book that enables the range of actors and processes underpinning the governing of the agri-food sector to be identified. What is significant about these propositions is that they provide a useful point of reference

in analysing the unique features of modern mechanisms of agricultural governing, as well as how they operate. As Goodwin (1998) argues, the adoption of a governance perspective raises important research questions and offers new conceptual possibilities in rural studies. We believe that the focus in this collection on governance as a perspective will do the same for the field of agricultural regulation and restructuring. To avoid any conceptual confusion we follow Kooiman (2003) in making a distinction between *governing* and *governance*. Where governing refers to the ‘totality of interactions in which public and private actors participate’, governance refers to theoretical conceptions of governing (Kooiman 2003: 4).

### **CHANGES IN GOVERNING: THE ROLE OF GLOBALIZATION**

Globalization represents one of the key macro-social phenomena behind changes in governing mechanisms. Since globalization entered popular academic parlance from the 1980s, there has been substantial debate on whether this signals the end of the state as a form of sovereign authority, or the reconfiguration of state powers. While many academics have recently provided compelling evidence to suggest that the state does, in fact, remain a significant player in the rise of global relations (e.g. Hirst and Thompson 1999; Holton 1998; Scholte 2000; Weiss 1998, 2003), there is also widespread recognition that some of its main features have altered. According to Held (1991), the emergence of (1) a global economy; (2) transnational bodies; (3) international law; and, (4) hegemonic powers and power blocs contributes to changes in the role of the nation-state. These:

...combine to restrict the freedom of action of governments and states by blurring the boundaries of domestic politics; transforming the conditions of political decision-making; changing the institutional and organizational context of national politics; altering the legal framework and administrative practices of governments; and obscuring the lines of responsibility and accountability of nation-states themselves.

(Held 1991: 157)

As state sovereignty is further restricted, new forms of governing emerge that operate at both a sub-state and a supra-state level. According to Jessop (1998: 32) governing occurs increasingly through heterarchic<sup>1</sup> means that have become 'more significant than markets or hierarchies for economic, political and social co-ordination'. The growing complexity and interconnectedness of the world economy that has occurred with globalization, as well as the associated undermining of state autonomy, has resulted in various attempts, at both global and local levels, 'to impose some structure and order through resort to heterarchic coordination' (Jessop 1998: 33).

In the globalization literature, most attention is frequently devoted to transworld governance by global regulatory bodies, such as the World Bank and IMF. As (2004) argues, these bodies both facilitate a 'globalisation project' and are important agents of global economic governance. Transworld governance institutions such as the WTO, the IMF and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) have gained quite considerable regulatory

power and competence, particularly in the economic policy surveillance of national governments (Scholte 2000: 148-149). Meanwhile, the management of global environmental degradation, regional conflict, and human rights has also increasingly fallen under the ambit of transworld bodies such as the United Nations and special departments or programmes of the OECD, WTO and World Bank.

At the same time that transworld regulatory bodies have emerged, so too have a range of multilateral regional schemes. Dicken (2003: 147) identifies four types of regional trading blocs: (1) the free trade arena in which there is a strong preoccupation with the removal of trade restrictions between member states; (2) the customs union where there exists a common external trade policy towards non-members; (3) the common market in which there is free movement of factors of production between member states; and finally, (4) the economic union where there exists harmonization of economic policies under supranational control. The two most significant regional groups are the nations that have signed the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) (an example of a free trade region), and the European Union (EU) (which is the closest to full regional economic integration). In both cases, the regional economic blocs transcend the boundaries of individual nation-states and enable the freer flow of goods, services and information across national borders within these regions. As the situation in the EU makes clear, regionalism reconfigures national sovereignty. Thus, the EU now has its own transnational sovereignty through trade liberalization, product standardization, a common currency for most member-states, and a single

European market (see Holton 1998: 103). While regionalism is not simply a result of globalization, and can in fact be seen as part of a reaction against globalizing tendencies, it incorporates mechanisms of governing that extend beyond the state. For this reason, regionalism represents part of a broader shift in regulatory politics.

Globalization has also encouraged participation by private organizations in governing processes. This trend is referred to by Scholte (2000: 151) as a *privatization* of governing where there is increased 'scope by private-sector agencies to become involved in regulatory activities'. The breakdown of what Held (1991: 152) calls the post-war 'liberal consensus' limited the capacities for states to pursue Keynesian strategies of national economic management. As states progressively accepted economic interconnectedness many – including Britain and the United States soon followed by Australia, New Zealand and Canada – adopted market-driven neo-liberal policies of privatization and deregulation. Part of this shift involved private-sector agencies assuming an increased influence in processes of governing.

At a sub-state level privatization has occurred in two inter-related ways. First, there has been an increase in the use of public-private 'partnerships' as a seemingly more efficient means of governing (see Pierre 1998). Partnership arrangements involve a number of tasks previously undertaken by government that are 'contracted out' to private or quasi-autonomous sub-state agencies. Second, the rationality underpinning government intervention has shifted from a



‘welfarist’ focus on encouraging national growth ‘through the promotion of social responsibility and the mutuality of social risk’ (Rose and Miller 1992: 192), to one where the state seeks to facilitate the conditions for entrepreneurial self-governing. Thus, the privatization of governing involves a focus on the individual rather than society *per se* as the legitimate site of regulation. Both partnerships and self-governance refigure the territory of governing since, as Rose (1999: 260) argues, ‘the social logics of welfare bureaucracies are replaced by new logics of competition, market segmentation and service management’.

At a supra-state level, the privatization of governing is evident through the growing influence of TNCs and international non-government organizations (INGOs). Even though TNCs and INGOs may not always be involved directly in policy-making, their ability to exert pressure on both state and supra-state agencies makes them significant agents of governing (Held et al. 1999). Transnational corporations, for instance, are argued to have no allegiance to any one state. This is viewed as leading to a massive re-organization of national economies on a global scale in which large and highly mobile corporations are forcing nation-states to liberalize their trade and social policies in favour of market-driven neo-liberal policies (McMichael 2004; Sklair 1995). If states resist this process their legitimacy is likely to be threatened as capital moves elsewhere in its search for optimum profitability. This means that states must create an environment conducive to capital accumulation, ensuring that trade and labour policies are geared towards the profit-making interest of TNCs. While states may have historically been characterized as ‘centralizing agents’, TNCs take a

different role as ‘globalizing’ agents given their role in binding together national economies on a global scale. INGOs, too, might be seen as globalizing agents. Including sociopolitical, human rights, professional and charitable bodies (see Holton 1998), the aims of INGOs are diverse, and not simply anti-globalization. For instance, some transborder associations have begun formulating their own regulatory instruments giving non-official bodies a significant role in governing (Scholte 2000: 154-156). These instruments cover such diverse areas as financial, food and environmental standards.

If, via globalization, new forms of governing are emerging beyond the traditional boundaries of government, how does this shape the politics of agricultural regulation? The approach taken in this book is to argue that the politics of agricultural regulation are altered in three important ways.

### **(RE)REGULATING SPACES**

For most of the middle part of the twentieth century, the state was the primary site through which ‘national’ agricultures were regulated. However, through globalization, state regulation is effectively restructured. While it is tempting to view these changes as part of a broader shift to deregulation and the rise of market rule over state rule, the contributions to Part 1 point to a greater complexity. Globalization, in fact, gives rise to new arrangements of regulatory space that are neither state nor market-based. Multi-level partnerships, devolved decision-making, and ‘joined-up’ institutional arrangements help to create a complex pattern of spatial reconfigurations (Karkkainen 2003). This point is developed in

Chapter 2 where Emelie Peine and Philip McMichael explore the mechanisms of governing that make 'market rule' on a global scale possible. The chapter examines current forms of agricultural regulation in the global economy, arguing that the international food market is politically created and managed. While appearing to be of benefit to both North and South, the implementation of the 1995 WTO Agreement on Agriculture creates asymmetries that favour the profit-making interests of agribusiness and sustain the often-substantial government support to farmers in developed nations. Thus, such supra-national institutional regulation of market relations politicizes the global economy, privileging Northern states and affluent consumers at the expense of a majority of the world's population.

In Chapter 3 Lynda Cheshire and Geoffrey Lawrence explore the re-shaping of the state as a space of governing. Traditional political-economic analyses of agri-food restructuring have tended to focus on how globalization places constraints upon the state's capacities to regulate the activities of TNCs, and prompts the establishment of new structures of governing that cross-cut and override national boundaries. According to Cheshire and Lawrence, this understanding of power is linear and 'top-down' neglecting the horizontal relationships established between state agencies and other actors, and the capacities of farmers to shape and transform power relations 'from below'. Drawing upon insights from governmentality and early actor-network theory they argue that what is needed is a new way of conceptualizing agri-food governing that takes account of how power is exercised by local people and producers to reshape the state, its policies,

and its practices. Through the use of two examples, Cheshire and Lawrence assess how the Latourian notion of ‘networks of association’ might represent a more conceptually coherent way of examining how state agencies attempt to govern at the same time as taking into account the role of contestation in shaping programmes of rule. This approach, which focuses greater attention on the horizontal reconfiguration of state power, demonstrates how the state has not so much lost power, but governs increasingly through a loose network of state and non-state actors. In addition, the ‘network’ nature of power means that ‘local’ actors, such as farmers, have a more prominent place in governing processes: they are often able to counter-enrol state agencies to contest specific regulatory interventions and to advance their own goals and objectives in novel ways.

The significance of ‘the local’ is a theme taken up by Terry Marsden and Roberta Sonnino in Chapter 4. Focusing specifically on Europe, the authors explore the emergence of alternative forms of agri-food governing, in light of a reformed Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), and consider the implications for the development of a more sustainable rural development model. Of particular relevance for Marsden and Sonnino is the relocalization of food which stands in opposition to dominant modes of agri-food governing, but which also has recently begun to receive some EU support through the Rural Development Regulation (RDR). Drawing upon case studies from South West England and Wales, the authors compare the different ways in which regional and localized food systems operate, the actors involved, and the prospects for more sustainable production. Marsden and Sonnino argue that in both regional case studies an alternative

paradigm focused on local and regional strategies for food production has begun to emerge. Through the forging of alliances between rural development, environmental and agricultural networks there has been a re-evaluation of social, economic and environmental assets and hence a questioning of the dominant agri-industrial model. However, at the same time as an alternative approach to agri-food is emerging and receiving support, the development of a 'hygienic-bureaucratic' model – which focuses on accountability and the standardization of practices, and is led largely by corporate retailers – suggests the persistence of a neo-liberal belief in 'the market' as the most sustainable means of governing agri-food. This is a theme given sustained attention in Part 2 of the book.

### **(DE)POLITICIZING PRACTICES**

Global integration of the agri-food sector has given rise to new practices for governing food production that are not simply state-based. The increasing concern with food safety, quality, traceability, and the overall sustainability of agri-food production, has prompted concern that state regulatory measures alone are insufficient to deal adequately with the transborder flows that characterize contemporary food production and consumption. Equally, through the neo-liberal belief that markets are more efficient, and less political, vehicles for regulation than are states, certain practices are introduced to ensure that production is oriented to 'market requirements'.

Chapter 5, by Carmen Bain, Brady Deaton and Lawrence Busch, shows how food standards represent one of the most significant emerging practices in the

governing of food production. Prior to the formation of the WTO, standards for food safety, environmental quality, plant and animal health, and worker health and safety were largely the province of various government departments within nation states. However, as Bain, Deaton and Busch argue, since the formation of the WTO, international standard-setting bodies, NGOs, and the private sector have emerged as important agents, challenging the traditional forms of governing in the agricultural sector. For example, supermarket chains set standards for food safety that often exceed the standards promulgated by a country's government. Private standard-setting bodies play an increasingly significant role in agri-food regulation. Through the use of third-party systems of verification, standards are developed that enable harmonization of claims to food 'quality' and 'safety' along the entire supply chain. However, as Bain, Deaton and Busch point out, these types of structural changes are far from benign in their effects. The burden of standards differs among market participants with actors such as developing countries and smaller farmers often not having the capacity to comply. In these cases, far from universally beneficial as is frequently the claim, standards expand the capacity of some participants, while limiting the capacity of others, to re-shape social and economic relationships.

In Chapter 6 Hugh Campbell and Annie Stuart focus too on the role of standards in agri-food production. They use New Zealand as a case study to explore the significance of standards in the constitution of 'organic' commodities as governable objects. Campbell and Stuart note that over the last 15 years, the New Zealand organic agriculture sector has – in a similar fashion to that which has

occurred in other Western nations – been transformed from a social movement into an industry. While the initial theorization of power in agri-food analysis suggested a conflict between corporate capital and the organic social movement – particularly centred on issues of contracting, control of supply, control of price, and increasing commoditization – the eventual terrain of conflict that emerged has been over the processes for organic standards development. At a national level, a series of processes involving companies, certifiers, the social movement and scientists negotiated each new revision of the standards. These efforts attempted to create an acceptable compromise between sustainability goals, commercial and trading needs and the requirements of certification mechanisms of audit.

However, as Campbell and Stuart argue, while harmonized organic standards are increasingly being negotiated to facilitate international trade in organic food, this has created several points of tension. EU and US organic standards are assuming prominence as the dominant standards for ‘disciplining’ the organic commodity, yet these have become abstracted from the localized sustainability issues within specific production spaces such as New Zealand. The tension between standardization and the local needs of growers diminishes the chances for organics to provide sustainable outcomes. Attempts to ‘re-localize’ the audit, certification and renegotiation of organic standards have not yet proven to be successful.

Agricultural biotechnology represents another area where tension is evident between the complexities of local and regional sustainability and attempts by state and corporate agents to promote standardized techniques for the governing of

agri-food production. Les Levidow takes up this issue in Chapter 7 where conflicts over ‘sustainability’ are explored with specific reference to the GM debate. Rather than examining the role of standards, Levidow is interested in the divergent views of sustainability that arise in conflicts over GM crops, and the different priorities within each over what to sustain and how to best sustain it. Focusing on the European Union during the 1990s he argues that early EU procedures favoured a view of the agri-environment as a homogeneous resource to be used in the interest of greater productivity – thereby enabling a broader range of potential effects from GM crops to be accommodated. Nevertheless, protest against agricultural biotechnologies from the late-1990s prompted a legitimacy crisis giving way to more diverse national frameworks for regulation of GM crops. Such changes involved much greater scope for critical voices to be accommodated in regulatory and decision-making processes. Levidow argues that while this might be seen as a positive change, its actual effects need to be considered within broader limits of EU governing. Thus, even though a broader range of voices now participates in processes of governing, the methodological difficulties in operationalizing diverse environmental values, and the focus in EU innovation policy on ‘economic competitiveness’, has the potential to place limits on the promotion of alternatives.

In Chapter 8 Vaughan Higgins explores a somewhat different, but nonetheless important, practice of agricultural governing that is coming to be regarded as crucial in the management and planning practices of farmers – calculation. While calculation has long formed a central part of farm management, only more



recently has it been linked to broader governmental rationalities seeking to improve the competitiveness and sustainability of national agricultures in an uncertain global market environment. Rather than a neutral means of responding to market pressures, calculation is viewed by Higgins as a key technology of modern agricultural governing that encourages farmers to reflect on their conduct in an advanced liberal way as ‘calculative agents’. To provide evidence for this point, Higgins focuses on a training course seeking to build the planning capacities of farmers in the Australian dairy industry. He explores the technologies of calculation that are deployed through the course and the effects that these have on how farmers reflect on their planning practices. Higgins notes that the calculative technologies in the planning course render some features of farming practices more technically visible. This encourages farmers to focus upon those aspects of the farming enterprise able to be represented and manipulated statistically. As a consequence, the managerial conduct of farmers is ‘configured’ and ‘responsibilized’ according to the statistical representations made possible by the technologies. In this ways, certain practices come to be constituted as more ‘truthful’ (and acceptable) than others in running a profitable dairy farm.

### **(RE)CONFIGURING OBJECTS AND SUBJECTS OF GOVERNING**

The globalization of agri-food production contributes to the emergence of new sites of governing: the environment, consumers, animals and agri-food risks. In some countries, new hybrid organizational institutions (such as regional catchment management bodies) are being created that both constitute these sites as governable objects, and seek to address the range of social and natural resource

management issues to which these sites give rise. They are emerging in the spaces that the state vacates as it is ‘hollowed out’. Not surprisingly, therefore, the new institutions can be identified in regional socio-economic development, in agri-food regulation and in animal welfare legislation. An important question is: how do such sites emerge and what are the institutions that enable them to become governable in the face of the (apparently growing) risks associated with food security and with environmental destruction?

In Chapter 9, Jacqui Dibden and Chris Cocklin examine sustainability and agri-environmental governing. Focusing specifically on Australia, they argue that in spite of a sustainability discourse having been present for at least two decades, there is a continuing incompatibility between current patterns of agricultural production, and of rural sustainability. Importantly, it would appear that none of the present mechanisms of governing the environment is challenging – in any fundamental manner – the productivist agricultural regime established in Australia. Drawing upon a case study of dairy deregulation, Dibden and Cocklin highlight the dilemma faced by many farmers – that of responding to price signals from an increasingly competitive international marketplace, yet obeying more stringent regulatory regimes, where compliance costs must usually be absorbed by producers. A number of confusing (contradictory) messages are sent to dairy producers, along with an array of often-incompatible policy settings. Those in the dairy industry have experienced the economic consequences of deregulation – falling prices, increased feed costs, reduced access to resources such as irrigated water, and so on. Leaving the industry or increasing the size of the milking herd

have been the main options. Those staying in the industry have been placing major strains on the environment, literally working their farms (and themselves) harder to make a living from dairying. Against the background of drought, the attempt by the state to 'force' higher productivity from dairy farmers in the context of the re-regulation of the environment exposes a fundamental incompatibility between broader neoliberal settings for agriculture, and local demands for environmental security.

While Dibden and Cocklin examine agri-environmental governing from a production perspective, Stewart Lockie and Nell Salem in Chapter 10 focus on 'the environment' from a different angle – that of consumption. Lockie and Salem investigate the strategies that are used to enrol people as consumers in networks of commodity production and consumption involving genetically-modified (GM) and organic foods. Building on Lockie's (2002) earlier work on consumption, the chapter is concerned particularly with the 'technologies of the self' that are deployed, in the absence of the direct regulation of consumption practices, to influence the ways in which potential consumers are likely to understand GM and organic foods and their own relationship to them. For Lockie and Salem, media discourses, marketing and advertising, labelling laws and so on can each be seen to embody competing claims to expertise and knowledge that attempt to link the strategic goals of GM and organic proponents with consumers' self-identities, beliefs and practices. While attempts to shape consumption activities are unique neither to GM nor organic foods, these serve, according to the authors, as particularly useful examples given the challenges both face in mobilizing

consumers and their diametrically opposed approaches to the regulation of production and product labelling. In addition to the governmentality perspective, Lockie and Salem also draw upon arguments within the sociology of science and technology regarding the need to examine the role of non-humans in the networks of the social. Applying these theoretical insights, they note that attempts to enrol consumers are a contingent matter hinging on their understanding of how successful, or otherwise, these networks have already been in enrolling or excluding other organisms ranging from the creations of genetic engineering to pests and pathogens.

Mara Miele, Jonathon Murdoch and Emma Roe in Chapter 11 focus on issues surrounding the governing of one variety of these non-human 'Others' – animals. According to the authors, animal welfare has become of increasing concern to many producers and consumers of food; thus, governments have been forced to recognize that animals are be more than just 'machines' but may be living, sentient beings in need of protection against gross exploitation. Yet, at the same time as public concern about the conditions of animals has been growing, the use of animals in food production has been accelerating so that now billions of animals are consumed annually around the world. For Miele, Murdoch and Roe this acceleration has given the issue of animal welfare even more significance, forcing some governments to act. Focusing on the policy environment in the United Kingdom and, more broadly, in the European Union, they argue that an increasing recognition of animals as sentient beings may be contributing to a new governmentality of animal welfare with its own rationalities and technologies.

However, while animal welfare is moving closer to the centre of policy, problems remain concerning differing objectives and standards among the various scales of government. These ambiguities highlight more general cultural ambivalences over the status of animals.

Part 3 of the book concludes in Chapter 12 with Richard Le Heron examining the role of risk in agri-food governing, and particularly the rise of a ‘culture of riskification’. Over the past decade agri-food risks have been increasingly identified as objects of governing requiring new styles of management through modification of existing and the adoption of new governmental strategies. With a specific focus on biosecurity in New Zealand, the chapter explores from a post-structural political economy perspective the emergence of new practices of conception, calculation and competence in agriculture, business and government that underpin the multiple discourses of risk now associated with the agri-food sphere. The chapter situates the construction of ‘risk’ as a category in the context of agri-food restructuring, the rise of neo-liberal political rationalities and spatial imaginaries. Le Heron examines how a new generation of expertise has been mobilized to deal with local and international crises such as food scares, biosecurity breaches, market collapse and environmental imaging. The chapter argues that the commodification of risk, through discourses of ‘international competitiveness’, is a qualitatively different framing of the relations between agri-food producers and consumers. In this context, new constructions of individual behaviour and social outcomes are constitutive of a deepening of accumulation processes, which pose further political challenges for the state and citizenry.

## CONCLUSION

Throughout the world there has been a subtle but perceptible shift in the ways individuals, communities, natural resources and 'spaces' are being governed. As globalization has proceeded, so new groups of political actors, quasi-government authorities, private organizations, and regional entities have emerged both to contest current forms of governing, as well as to provide concrete alternatives. These cut across, and sometimes undermine, older forms of government. The more fluid arrangements that have subsequently arisen are part of a polyarchic 'mixed actor' system in which power is diffused, rather than centralized (Held et al. 1999). In terms of agriculture, the previous role of many nation states in protecting, subsidizing, and in various other ways directly and indirectly supporting rural producers has – under neoliberal rationalities – been altered in a manner that renders the political authority of the state much more limited.

Private regulations (devised in some circumstances without reference to state policies) have seen some commodity groups increase the share of domestic and world markets – a certain sign that market standards, taken on board by commercial operators, are part of the drive to change the current system of agri-food governing. New strategic arrangements between producer groups represent another way that the 'local' is dealing with the 'global'. An example here is the way in which some farmers have formed alliances across time and space (that is, beyond the nation state) to guarantee supply to the large supermarket chains, whose power has grown enormously during the past decade (see Burch and

Lawrence 2004). Yet another example is that of the private regulation of the public sphere, in which food retailers seek to surpass public food standards in their attempts to gain legitimacy from the public as the defenders of consumers' interests. The emergence of EUREP-GAP is a clear indication that changes at the global level are fostering the development of private regulatory entities that hold great sway over producers, literally forcing them to abide by the new rules of the food retail sector, or lose market share. Such re-regulation is totally consistent with WTO measures to expand the 'free trade' agenda.

Finally, we must recognize that regulation by, and other activities of, private capital is not going uncontested. Various NGOs and activist groups are targeting corporate capital, placing a great deal of pressure on firms to ban genetically-modified ingredients in foods, offer more health choices to the consumers of fast foods, and to source foods from sustainable production systems, and from areas around the world where social justice is a guiding principle in the hiring of agricultural workers. We are in agreement with Busch and Bain (2004) who argue that such initiatives as private labels, direct contracting, third-party certification schemes, and a host of other privately directed activities are leading to the establishment of new rules, institutions, networks and conventions and that the latter are part of a new system through which the agri-food system is governed.

The global re-shaping of the agri-food sector forces us to examine questions of governing and governance. The task has only begun. Indeed, this book does not attempt to devise a theory of agricultural governance. Rather, it seeks to use the

notion of governance as an heuristic starting point to investigate the multiple forms of governing that increasingly make up the regulation of the agri-food sector in Western nations. The focus is upon different modes and practices of governing, how they have emerged, the forms of knowledge on which they make their claims to truth, and the politics of regulation to which they give rise. We believe that the analyses of governing assembled in this book provide a crucial starting point in re-thinking the conceptualization of regulation in rural (and particularly agri-food) change.

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## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Heterarchy refers to self-organized, as opposed to hierarchical 'top-down', forms of governing. According to Jessop (1998: 29) its forms include 'self-organizing interpersonal networks, negotiated inter-organizational co-ordination, and decentred, context-mediated systemic steering'.