Original publication: Burton, R. J. F., Forney, J., Stock, P., & Sutherland, L.-A. (2021). *The Good Farmer. Culture and Identity in Food and Agriculture*. London/New York: Routledge, p. 1-18.
which should be used for any reference to this work

Chapter 1

The 'good farmer': cultural dimensions of farming and social change

Throughout the world, farmers gather in groups large and small to discuss the weather, crop prices, the government, and a host of other factors affecting their farms and daily lives. Around formica or oak tables, leaning against a piece of old farm machinery, or wherever they happen to be, these same farmers share anecdotes, jokes and apocryphal stories about what happened to the farmer down the road, whose crops are full of weeds, whose tramlines are crooked, who sold their sheep for the highest price, who bought a new tractor, and so on. Within these settings the topic invariably turns to who is a good farmer – and who is not. In the daily lives of farmers, the act of calling someone a 'good farmer' is an acknowledgment of appreciation and status within the community. It is not a title given lightly. Rather it bestows on the individual recognition of the cultural competences that make a farmer worthy of being sought out by others for assistance – knowledge, skills, or material assistance – the provision of which, in turn, forms bonds of mutual obligation within farming communities. It is the centre of the farming culture. The concept of being a good farmer is global, with a good farmer being recognisable across different regions and over generations – providing the understandings of what it is to be a good farmer are shared.

While rural social scientists and extension agents throughout the world speak in the language of this everyday usage of what and who is a good farmer, it is only within the past 15 years that social scientists have taken the concept of the "good farmer" seriously as a category important in and of itself. Rob Burton's article "Seeing Through the 'Good Farmers' Eyes: Towards Developing an Understanding of the Social Symbolic Value of 'Productivist' Behaviour" published in *Sociologia Ruralis* in 2004 helped establish an intriguing and inviting space for reinvigorating a lapsed engagement for agri-food scholars. By following the lead of the farmers, rural social scientists have hit upon a cultural and political category important not only to the farmers themselves, but to extension agents, policy makers, environmental and development NGOs, non-farming neighbours, and increasingly, farmers with multiple, often

Original publication: Burton, R. J. F., Forney, J., Stock, P., & Sutherland, L.-A. (2021). *The Good Farmer. Culture and Identity in Food and Agriculture*. London/New York: Routledge, p. 1-18.
which should be used for any reference to this work

contested perspectives on who is a good farmer. The 'good farming' literature has grown steadily in the past 15 years, signifying important changes both to the rural social sciences and agri-food studies as well as to the worlds of farming.

At the time Burton's (2004) paper was published, agri-food studies and rural studies of farmers' decision-making strategies were still strongly influenced by rational models of decision making although a gradual move away from these models had been occurring. In particular, Wolpert (1964) had argued that farmers did not make economically rational decisions. They were not interested in maximising outcomes, only reaching a satisfactory solution. Later, Gasson (1973) contended that economically optimal outcomes were not reached because farmers' decisions were not always driven by economic goals, but that sometimes farmers sought to optimise social, intrinsic and/or expressive goals. The development of a reliably predictive attitude-behaviour model by Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) saw the interest turn to attitudes to explain non-economically rational behaviour – enabling agricultural studies to identify what it was farmers were prioritising (e.g. Ilbery, 1983) – and, by the mid-1990s, the "behavioural approach" was being widely employed. This was outlined in Morris and Potter (1995) as being based

> on the motives, values and attitudes that determine the decision-making processes of individual farmers'', the 'behavioural approach' refers to a broad range of studies that employ actor-oriented quantitative methodologies to the investigation of decision-making. (p. 55)

Of course, farmers were not able to simply do what they wanted. Rather, the decisions made were governed by structural factors that were seen to constrain, facilitate and reflect the motivational preferences of the farmer or farm family.

Beginning in the 1990s agricultural studies pushed beyond the economic/attitudinal approaches and began looking at the notions of identity and culture as a potential factor in understanding farmer behaviour. To some extent this represented the continuation of a tradition of exploring role and identity emanating from gender studies – for example, the role of women as business managers (Hastings, 1988), the subordinate nature of women's roles in agriculture (Stebbing, 1984; Gasson and Winter, 1992), the gendered division of labour roles and decision-making (Sawer, 1973; Berlan Darqué, 1988; Whatmore, 1991), the role of drinking in establishing masculine rural identities (Campbell, 2000), and the construction of masculine farmer identities

(Saugeres, 2002). However, despite the realisation of its importance to gendered behaviour in agriculture as early as the 1970s it was not until the turn of the century that researchers thought of applying these same concepts to what were still generally perceived as the 'rational', 'economically oriented' male decision-makers managing farms.

Some mention had been made of the good farmer in the 1990s. Fairweather and Keating (1994), for example, briefly observed the social importance of being recognised as a good farmer. Phillips and Gray (1995) in an Australian study examining sustainability in agriculture, observed that there were a number of competing definitions of what it meant to be a good farmer within the farming community. They offer one of the earliest recognitions of the social importance of being a good farmer as they note:

> farmers are constantly engaged in strategic farm practice to gain the community recognition required to define their farming practice as 'good farming'. The social relations of farming are thus both enabling and constraining to farming practice. (p. 131).

Harrison et al. (1998) also noted how recognition as a good farmer was important and identified distinctions between what farmers and non-farmers viewed as a 'good famer'. Throughout the decade references to the 'good farmer' increasingly came to acknowledge the term as a cultural construct. Perhaps the first paper to outline this as part of a cohesive theory was Tsouvalis et al. (2000). In seeking to understand moral conflict between different knowledge-cultures (i.e. "socially negotiated structures of meaning that enable and constrain social actions" p. 912), Tsouvalis and colleagues observed that the boundaries between cultures were determined by notions of what it meant to be a 'good farmer'. Knowledges that fell outside cultural definitions of the good farmer were contested on that basis, e.g.,

> 'good' farmers are supposed to know their land; 'the public' and 'politicians' don't understand 'us'; 'scientists' and 'manufacturers' should come and talk to 'us'; 'we' know the land, 'we've' farmed for years. (p. 922).

While Tsouvalis' work addressed the introduction of precision farming, we argue it was the introduction of multifunctionality objectives to the Common Agricultural Policy in the 1980s and 1990s that provided the impetus for a new focus on culture and identity in farmer studies. Prior to this, farmers had been entreated to produce as much as possible as a post-war civic

duty. However, with oversupply of food products and environmental degradation policy-makers – in Europe in particular – began an attempt to coax farmers away from ever-increasing production through the introduction of agri-environmental and diversification schemes.

Although some farmers took to these changes willingly, for others the resistance was considerable. New roles as conservation managers and providers of services to the public led many farmers to question the very essence of who they were. In the case of attempts to promote tree planting, in particular, the concern was frequently expressed that they were "farmers, not foresters" … and "farmers farm" (Williams et al., 1994; Allison, 1996; Burton, 1998). Lowe and colleagues noted as early as 1999 that participation in agri-environmental schemes for a decade should have led to "discernible changes" in farming attitudes and culture (Lowe et al., 1999), but over a decade later there was still little evidence of a broad cultural shift. It was in an attempt to understand the role of identity resistance to adopting the forestry and recreation provision roles promoted by the UK "Community Forest" scheme at Marston Vale, Bedfordshire that lead Burton (1998) to look at the importance of identity to farmer decision-making and through this work the social symbolic importance of farming behaviours was first described in detail.

The initial study was an application to 60 farmers of a quantitative survey based on the identity theory of Sheldon Stryker (1994) – itself a 'social structuralist' interpretation of Mead's (1934) symbolic interactionist perspective (see Chapter 4). During the conducting of the survey the theme of the 'good farmer' emerged repeatedly as farmers sought to explain why it was that forestry was not farming. This led to follow-up series of 13 qualitative re-interviews conducted to specifically address the issue of the "good farmer" by asking questions such as: When does a farmer adopting new roles cease to be a farmer? When can a newcomer to farming be considered a proper farmer? What symbolises belonging to the farming community? Can a woodland be viewed as a crop? How are symbols of good farming transferred along the roadsides? (see Burton, 1998). The publishing of the core of this PhD thesis in 2004 in the "good farmer" paper was at the forefront of a wider cultural turn that occurred in both English (e.g. Cloke, 1997) and non-English (e.g. Billaud, 1991; Droz and Miéville-Ott, 2001; Mallein and Cautrès, 1993; Sylvestre, 2002) rural studies in the 1980s and 1990s – and thus was well-positioned to become an important text.

Figure 1 shows the citations of the paper year on year up to the end of 2019 and illustrates how the paper has gradually been established as a seminal text amongst international researchers, with over 60 citations of the work in 2018 alone – 14 years after the publishing of the original paper.

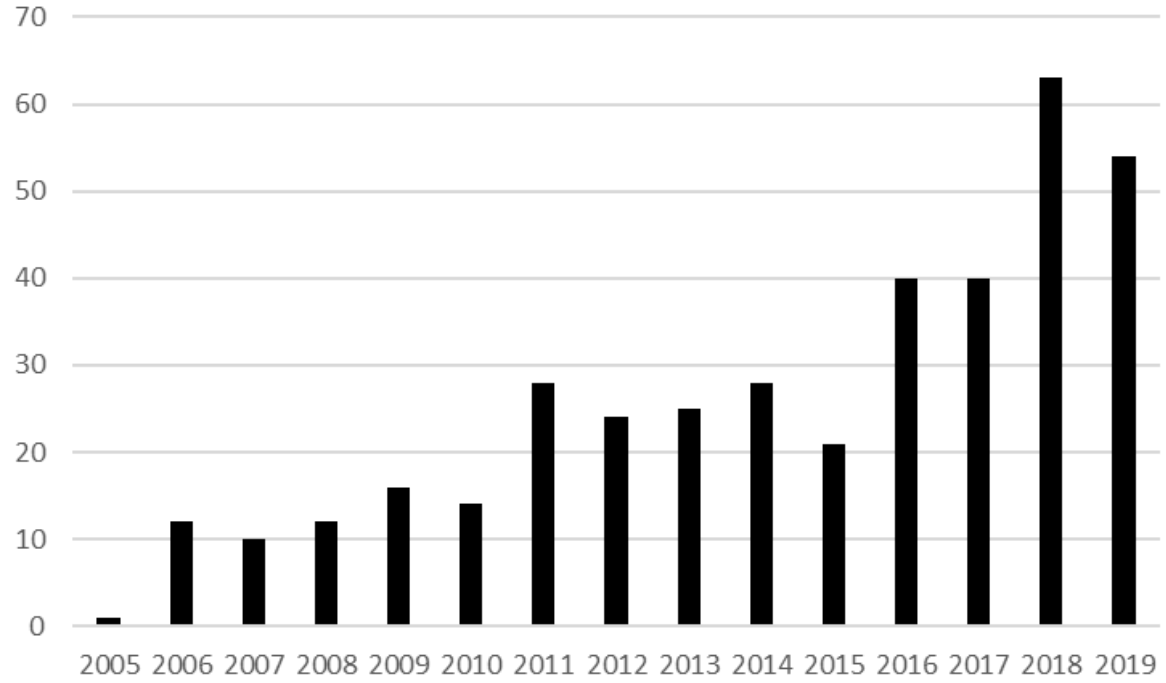

Figure 1: Citations of the "good farmer" paper (Burton, 2004) by year according to Scopus

We argue that this growth in usage reflects the quality of the concept and its increasing relevance for the challenges faced by today's farmers. It is interesting to observe where the good farmer has been applied. For the most part citations appear in social science publications related to rural and agricultural issues, often addressing the complex relations between farmers and environmental management. These papers refer to the paper in a very general and succinct way – citing it in order to mention the identity dimension of farming rather than engaging with development of the concept itself. Further, they often highlight only one aspect of the good farmer approach. For example, some point to the social pressures exerted on individual behaviours (Chan et al., 2017; Isgren, 2016) while others mention the tension with government action and policies (Caputo and Butler, 2017; Collins et al., 2016; Hansson et al., 2012).

A further group of papers reference Burton (2004) to confirm presumptions about farmers' identities or relations to the environment. These authors again do not engage with wider

theorisation of farming cultures, but rather refer (often only briefly) to the paper as a proof of the existence of a farming culture. Sometimes, these patterns are applied to farmers as a very general and uniform category across time and space, generations, and geographies. Burton (2004) also represents a significant reference illustrating the strength of productionist behaviour in western farming (how it has become part of the culture – McGranahan, 2014; Van der Wal et al., 2014), its relation to the valuation of tidy landscapes and crops (Cardoso et al., 2016; Pouta et al., 2014; Tautges et al., 2016), and farm succession (Brown, et al., 2014). While the paper certainly illustrates the importance of production behaviours for defining the farmer identity, production roles were the only aspect of farming the paper addressed – thus it should not be used as an illustration that production is the only thing that matters to farmers.

In addition to the social science papers, we found a significant number of references by researchers from other disciplines (around 44 papers in Scopus prior to late-2019), generally again related to environmental issues in farming. A first group of papers engage seriously with the good farmer approach and seem to integrate part of the more theoretical developments and sometimes later publications, although never in great depth. This is understandable as they are not primarily addressing social science issues. The good farmer approach appears here as a way to question rational choice theorisations of farmers' behaviours (Jakobsen, 2017; Kristensen and Jakobsen, 2011a; 2011b), to include in the analysis the impact of the social and cultural context (Lankester, 2013; White and Selfa, 2013; Barnes et al., 2015), and to demonstrate the concept of social control, notably through the idea of "roadside farming" (Sandberg and Jakobsson, 2018; Seabrook et al., 2008).

What drew us to writing this book is that, while there is now an abundance of literature looking at or using the concept of the good farmer, there has been little attempt to develop some of the key concepts. Two omissions stand out. First, most of Burton's work has focused on understanding the symbolic importance of the practice of farming (in particular, raising crops) – rather than other non-production roles associated with being seen as a good farmer. As a result, the concept as Burton outlines it, is restricted to a relatively small (albeit significant) aspect of the construction of good farmer identities. Second, neither Burton (2004) nor any of his later publications attempt to explain *how* behaviours in agriculture become more or less symbolically important. While it is implicit in the good farmer concept that the symbolic value of behaviour *must* change as technologies, management approaches, crops and so on, change, the issue of how and why this occurs is not outlined in Burton's paper. This left a significant

hole in the theoretical construction of the good farmer, but, despite the existence of a few papers that have dealt with changing constructions of the good farmer (e.g. Sutherland and Darnhofer, 2012), the issue of symbolic change has yet to be adequately addressed.

As a result of the broad range of uses and users of the good farmer concept the literature is rather dispersed. One of our objectives here is to draw this literature together into a single volume for researchers and all those interested in the good farmer concept, as well as to address some of the significant gaps in the concept. The increasing use of the seminal paper on the good farmer shown in Figure 1 reflects how the 'good farmer' is increasing in relevance due to increasing urgency in addressing agriculture's role in climate change (e.g. through 'climate smart agriculture'), continued biodiversity loss in Europe, the loss of traditional ecological knowledge, the increasing mechanisation of farming roles, and the return of food security to the political agenda, prompting reflection on whether farmers are heading towards 'neoproductivism' (Wilson and Burton, 2015). In the remainder of this chapter we review the use of the concept in the literature, observe the value of the 'good farmer' approach as more than a form of 'resistance' to new policy approaches, and outline the content of the book. Before reading on, we ask that scientists of any discipline referring to the good farmer as an explanatory concept should do it with a strong theoretical understanding while recognising both that there is (as yet) neither a 'theory of the good farmer' nor a single definition of what a 'good farmer' is or is not.

Multiple uses of the 'good farmer' term

With its use in a broad range of disciplines as well as academic and non-academic usages, the term 'good farmer' has been employed in multiple – often somewhat overlapping – ways. It is difficult to discern distinct categories of use for the term, but they broadly fall into those employed by farmers themselves, those employed by agricultural/natural scientists and policy-makers seeking to change agricultural practices, and those employed by social scientists in order understand cultural influences on farmer behaviour.

Farmer-based use definitions

a) A common sense category used by farmers to refer to a farmer whose farming behaviours reach a certain level of competence.

b) An emic category used by farmers to describe the social significance of other farmers' work. Emic perspectives focus on how intrinsic cultural distinctions are meaningful to members of a social group. The concept of the 'good farmer' has emic origins in the academic literature as a reporting of farmer's own accounts of the symbolic significance of productivist behaviour – with a focus on shared symbolic understanding and the transfer of information on who is a good farmer between members of the community.

Agricultural/natural science and policy-based use definitions

c) A standard assessed by agricultural/natural scientists or industry members about the productivity and/or environmental impact of a particular farmer's practices (i.e. who is objectively a 'good farmer' on the basis of the fit between their farming practices and expert scientific knowledge or industry/policy goals).
d) A pre-scientific agriculture (mainly 18th Century and early 19th Century) means of asserting the validity of one's own experimental practices without presenting evidence. In this case the term was by describing anecdotal visits by generally unnamed 'good farmers' from the neighbourhood who, invariably, proclaimed the success of the approach.
e) A rhetorical means of laying claim to a particular approach to agriculture as the 'right' approach by those seeking change. This use of the 'good farmer' was employed by the agricultural improvers of the 18th and 19th Centuries to aid their attempts to move agriculture away from traditional towards scientific practices. More recently the phrase 'good farmer' has arguably been replaced by other terms such as "entrepreneurial", "innovative" or "sustainable" in accordance to scientific knowledge, or the political definition of a desirable agricultural future.

Social science based use definitions

f) An academic conceptualisation of the symbolic capitals and cultural scripts that are generated or promoted in farming practices, most often in relation to understanding farmers' apparent resistance to attempts by policy-makers to introduce change through voluntary payment mechanisms. Here the good farmer concept (via e.g. Goffman or Bourdieu) offers a theoretically supported means of explaining the lag effect in policy adoption as a form of cultural preference.

g) A commonplace reference amongst social scientists for social norms in agriculture. While this can reference the theoretically informed literature mentioned above, this is not necessarily the case (i.e. it can be used in a common sense manner) and where the theoretical literature is referred to it is not developed.

h) A methodological tool used by social scientists in research to elicit responses relating to social norms (e.g. what would a good farmer do?) The notion of "good farmer" or "good farming" also appears in the literature as a methodological means of eliciting responses relating to social norms. Asking a study participant to identify and describe a good farmer in their locale is a methodologically useful way into descriptions of normative expectations, in way that is comfortable for farmers – they can relate to the idea of 'good farming' quite naturally, whereas asking specifically about norms or social expectations would be more challenging.

i) A moral/ethical standard where two or more concepts of who is a good farmer are in conflict with one another – derived through 'grounded' academic analysis of empirical research. This is particularly evident when multiple moral positions are possible. For example, the responsibility to future generations of addressing climate change through reducing the intensity of agriculture can be countered by arguments that producing as much as possible is necessary in order to feed the world today. Both arguments involve a relatively high level of abstraction and have valid moral foundations.

It is notable that whether used by farmers, natural/agricultural scientists, or social scientists, the essential meaning of the term remains the same – the 'good farmer' term is used to refer to the extent of cultural competency/morality in farming either by those within the peer group, those seeking to influence the peer group, or those studying the cultural construction and functioning of the peer group. Attaching the term 'good farmer' to specific practices within agriculture (both implicitly and explicitly) enables the transfer of an evaluation of the practices along this axis of cultural competency/morality from good to bad. The term 'good farmer' rather than 'good farming' (commonly used to refer to good farm management) is used as it refers to both the production roles and the wider social and moral roles of the good farmer. Participation in local community events or raising children to take over the farm may not be described as 'good farming' but they can be an integral part of the 'good farmer'. Further, good farming may refer to practices performed in a single year – whereas it can take a lifetime to establish (and a lifetime to disestablish) oneself as a 'good farmer' as each year offers new challenges that must be met with a similar level of proficiency. Any farmer can invest in the

best new machinery and buildings and farm at a loss, but it is maintaining the family name and reputation on the land over generations that demonstrates one is a 'good farmer'.

The good farmer as a form of resistance

As noted above, the term 'good farmer' was used historically as a means for those concerned with the future of agriculture to lay claim to a particular form of farming as virtuous while, at the same time, denigrating existing or customary farming methods. Whether in the form of agricultural improvers seeking to professionalise and industrialise agriculture in the 18th and 19th Centuries, Seaman Knapp and the demonstration farm movement in early 20th Century America, or attempts to create Community Forests through voluntary tree planting in late 20th Century England, farmers have always been faced with competing visions of what it is to be a good farmer. This has helped agriculture serve the changing needs of society over the centuries. However, these changes often led to conflict with established notions of what it is to be a good farmer as symbols of good farming associated with the new forms of agriculture arose to challenge the old (see Chapter 3). Since WWII European agriculture (as well as other agricultures to a lesser extent and/or during particular periods – even neoliberal New Zealand) has been heavily subsidised which has allowed the state to play a critical role in determining what a good farmer is and is not. 'Good farmers' as determined by the state are financially rewarded, whereas 'bad farmers' are not. As notions and symbols of the 'good farmer' are deeply embedded within farming cultures, these new definitions of good and bad farming have not always been immediately accepted by farmers and, where this occurs, the embedded notion of the 'good farmer' is often employed as a form of resistance to role changes.

It is important to clarify that resistance need not only refer to activist social movements or political lobbying. In many respects, farmers' resistance happens at the level of social and moral norms and everyday practices, for example, to modernist conceptions of development that perceive progress as equivalent to the extinction of peasants and farmers. The idea that farmers (or some of them) resist change is evident in the normative uses of the 'good farmer' (or other terms referring to the cultural dimension of farming) as a common sense category which promotes and defends a specific interpretation of farming practices and denigrates others. It is also often present in analytical approaches, where the cultural dimension is generally used to explain why farmers do not behave as other – often more powerful – actors, want them to behave.

Original publication: Burton, R. J. F., Forney, J., Stock, P., & Sutherland, L.-A. (2021). *The Good Farmer. Culture and Identity in Food and Agriculture*. London/New York: Routledge, p. 1-18.
which should be used for any reference to this work

While, in many cases, the cultural dimension is used as an analytical and neutral concept, it can also incorporate a moral inclination in its implicit relation to change. This moral tone can follow two different inclinations. On the one hand, it endorses the acceptance of the fundamental good in the change that is promoted (e.g. more environmental farming practices supported by the state) and the cultural dimension of farming is used to explain and understand the mechanisms producing resistance among farming communities. One of the implicit and underlying foci is therefore on how to facilitate the acceptance of change, and, in the longer term, to provoke adaptation of the cultural definition of farming. On the other hand, a more critical approach describes farmers' cultural resistance as a questioning of the "good" lying within the change promoted by the governing agents, and a fight against the power of hegemonic forces. Arguably, this perspective tends to side with farmers in contesting the value of change and highlighting its negative social or environmental impacts.

In this book, we engage with a third option that integrates the inevitability of cultural change while acknowledging the structuring role played by symbols and cultural values in farming communities. The good farmer framing has generally been used to highlight the gaps between competing definitions of what is good in farming. Often, it opposes an "insider" culture of farming, embedded in a social context, processes of identifications and hierarchies, to an alternative definition promoted and supported by new state policies and evolving economic dynamics (Lowe et al., 1997). This opposition points to processes of governance and power.

What characterizes the scholarship on the cultural dimension of farming is this double focus on the articulation of change and power in a general movement that produces a new moral definition of good in farming and aims to make farming and farmers "better", according to this new moral order. This "will to improve" (Li, 2007) is typical of a modernist and developmentalist approach, where elites (urban, white, educated) and institutions of power (state, industries, agricultural schools) consider it their right and duty to change and correct lower classes' habits and cultures. The origin of the good farmer approach thus lies in the question of changing farmers' culture. However, the idea of change is not neutral, nor obvious: it implies (a) an underlying cultural and moral definition of the good in farming and (b) a set of power relations that allows the imposition of this definition as "the good" for farming.

In such a perspective, there is a high risk of forgetting that change is constant. The backwards or conservative farmer or peasant remains a classical stereotype for many agronomists and developmentalists. The logical conclusion would be then that if change is needed it has to be promoted by pushing or forcing farmers to change, through external interventions: regulations, financial incentives, education and knowledge transfer, etc. This perspective is impregnated by an understanding of top-down systems of knowledge, where experts provide evidence to decision makers who have to implement this knowledge by convincing practitioners to obey. In such a framing there is little room left for freedom or reflexivity in given contexts about the right to govern one's own land.

The good farmer approach, when based on sound theoretical and conceptual basis, has contributed to nuance and critiques classical interpretations of farmers' resistance to change. As expressed by Haggerty et al. (2009), the theorizations of the 'good farmer' allow us "to move beyond simple narratives that locate farmer reluctance to change within tropes of 'tradition' or agrarian conservatism" (p. 769) by showing how they are involved in struggles for identification and social competition. Highlighting the role of farming cultures is important if we are to understand the rationality of farmers' behaviours. Within the environmental management literature, it is increasingly accepted that changing farmer's attitudes to conservation behaviours provides temporary change (often linked to payments) whereas cultural change – changing socially embedded understandings and symbols of good farming – provides a much more long-lasting solution (Burton and Pargahawewa, 2011).

However, there is always a risk of focusing on the cultural resistance without questioning the rationality and good of the action of the governing or factors that are related to the wider agri-food system. A shallow understanding of the good farmer framing can lead to the assumption that the problem lies in the farmers' minds. A deeper sociological theorization, to the contrary, contradicts such shortcomings. First, it points to the relational and systemic nature of the resistance to change, by showing that the cultural definition of farming reflects a history of power relations, where a multitude of actors intervene and interact – not only the farmers. In other words, the good farmer framing helps to demonstrate how farmers' resistance to change reflects, in fact, the resistance to change of the whole agri-food system. Therefore, policies or others' actions that aim to change farming cultures without impacting on how farmers are positioned within the system are likely to fail. As we will indirectly show in this book, cultural changes never happen alone. While understanding the cultural dimension of farming is

Original publication: Burton, R. J. F., Forney, J., Stock, P., & Sutherland, L.-A. (2021). *The Good Farmer. Culture and Identity in Food and Agriculture*. London/New York: Routledge, p. 1-18.
which should be used for any reference to this work

necessary for building efficient action for transforming agri-food systems, to focus on farmers' cultural resistance alone is a dead-end.

Moreover, 'cultural resistance' to change is not a bad thing *per se*. Put bluntly, it is useful to remember that cultural definitions of farming exist in part because they provide solutions to social needs. In Chapter 4, for example, we describe how farmers in 18th Century Buckinghamshire (UK) resisted the levelling of anthills on meadows for over 100 years despite pressure from landlords to "improve" fields because the reeds that grew in the hollows between the anthills were needed to thatch rooves. Cultural definitions set moral limitations on individual behaviours through social control (e.g. limiting greed, unfairness, and/or amoral behaviours). They constitute collective forms of knowledge and cultural capital that strengthen the resilience of communities. They also create a buffer against rapid changes that might also be misleading or erroneous in the longer term. Cultural resistance also allows a cautious and gradual integration of new practices in the community. In addition, the stable nature of farming communities – often related to the intergenerational dimension of farms – means that networks of social relationships become strong and complex (intertwined) because they are based on mutual obligations developed through exchange of cultural (and possibly economic) capital. The maintenance of these networks has an important role in agriculture. This is particularly the case in the current environment where economic returns are often low relative to those of non-agricultural occupations. In this framing, "resistance" is evident when farmers act – maybe subconsciously – to protect developed capital systems by seeking to continue the production of existing symbols of 'good farming' in the face of externally imposed threats.

The 'good farmer' can serve also as a mirror reflecting the imperfections of the transformations promoted by powerful agents, such as state agencies, international organization, influent NGOs, or dominant corporations. As demonstrated in the literature (e.g. Forney 2016; Haggerty et al., 2009.), when farmers resist the logics of specific agri-environmental schemes, often they do not criticize the fundamental necessity of caring for the environment. Rather, they point to the imperfections of the specific means to reach this goal such as the loss of autonomy resulting from structural dependency on public money or the excesses of bureaucratization. Often farmers claim to be the "true environmentalists", because it is not in their interest to allow the environment to degrade and, somewhat erroneously, that their predecessors have always taken care of the environment. Exploring these resistances is useful

Original publication: Burton, R. J. F., Forney, J., Stock, P., & Sutherland, L.-A. (2021). *The Good Farmer. Culture and Identity in Food and Agriculture*. London/New York: Routledge, p. 1-18.
which should be used for any reference to this work

not only to find ways of overcoming them, but also to reflect critically on the practices of governance developed by actors that have the power to influence the future of food systems.

This combination of perspectives implies a move away from an implicit understanding of cultural values, as opposed to rational thinking, and as an obstacle to change that is still largely present and reflects a modernist and developmentalist paradigm. We contend that this reflects a misunderstanding of what culture is. One of the authors of this book worked for a short period within an agricultural research organization that maintained significant industry connections, where success in agriculture was viewed as a matter of survival of the fittest (most productive). In this environment, culture was something only indigenous populations possessed and was customary, primitive, and non-scientific. Rather than part of farming, culture was seen as antagonistic to good, efficient, modern, agriculture. An alternative conception of the 'good farmer' acknowledges the inescapable presence and influence of the cultural dimension and aims at integrating it in the construction of better food futures. This does not mean that current definitions of the 'good farmer' will not evolve. On the contrary, they have to and do so constantly (see Chapter 3). As recalled by Emery (2010), culture is used and manipulated, and continuously re-made and re-interpreted. But culture also rests on elements of continuity, of a sense of belonging to something that goes beyond the self and connects to the past and future. This means that current cultural definitions of the good farmer serve as a basis for developing new interpretations, hopefully interpretations that are better adjusted to the challenges that agri-food systems will face in the future through the combination of old and new values.

What you will and will not find in this book

In a book about the 'good farmer' readers might reasonably expect to find an answer to the question: "who is a good farmer?". The premise that there is a single 'good farmer' who can be defined and replicated in order to optimise the environmental, economic, and productive capacity of the food system is one that doubtless appeals strongly to policy-makers seeking to build a resilient food system. However, we contend that there are two reasons this is not the case. For one, uniformity could come at a cost. A universal good farmer focused on symbols of environmental management might not produce sufficient food, a universal production oriented good farmer might lead to the loss of biodiversity, a universal good farmer who always economically optimises could cause dramatic swings in commodity prices, while a universal good farmer focused on community development and maintaining younger people in

Original publication: Burton, R. J. F., Forney, J., Stock, P., & Sutherland, L.-A. (2021). *The Good Farmer. Culture and Identity in Food and Agriculture*. London/New York: Routledge, p. 1-18.
which should be used for any reference to this work

agriculture alone could struggle to make agriculture profitable. It is diversity in agriculture that creates a resilient food system, not uniformity of farmer types. Second, as any farmer will tell you, each farm is different and faces a unique set of challenges due to factors such as topography, farm size, location, and so on. Although some of the roles (such as caring for the land and passing the farm onto the next generation) and some symbols (such as tidy farming) of the good farmer are more or less universal, each farmer needs to adapt to the specific context within which the farm is located such that a good farmer in one region may not be a good farmer in another. Instead of building a picture of a universal good farmer, this book should leave the reader with an impression of how contested the definition of a 'good farmer' is.

There are two key features we would like readers to be aware of when reading this book:

First, the book does not advocate for any specific form, style, or type of farming practice. While there are significant challenges facing global agriculture that deserve policy attention, our answer, as social scientists is to defend the idea that discourses about good and bad farmers have to be considered not only as normative prescriptions, but also as a reflection of the cultural and identity dimension related to practices of agriculture. If we, as societies, want to find effective solutions to social challenges we need to take this dimension seriously, as a basis for moving towards more hopeful food futures. Rather than identifying a single good farmer, here we provide both historical and thematic overviews of the emergence of a significant umbrella concept – the good farmer – that bears academic scrutiny by virtue of the important role it plays in maintaining cultural farming traditions and their evolution over time in specific contexts. In the end we do not proclaim a good farmer the winner – as in who or what is the best kind of farming, but rather we offer a pathway to understanding how people come to make those kinds of declarations in specific times and places and what consequences are for the decision-makers, farmers, animals, land, watersheds, and places.

Second, we do not present a singular 'theory of the good farmer'. As authors we have each conceptualised the 'good farmer' differently – as have the many other authors who have employed the concept. Rather, we propose that conceptualisations should be selected on the basis of their utility for understanding the particular aspect of the cultural object/behaviour under investigation (see chapter 4). While we have all been involved in the development of the current conceptualisation of the good farmer, we come from different academic backgrounds – environmental sociology, rural geography, and the anthropology of food and agriculture –

and, as is fitting for a widely applied concept such as the 'good farmer', we hold different perspectives on how the good farmer concept is best operationalised. In reading the book, it is thus possible, in places, to notice changes in the style of writing that reflect different disciplinary approaches. We have aimed to make the book consistent, but as the content of the book represents the work and views of all four authors equally, there is a degree of variation within the book that may not be expected from a single authored monograph. We see this as a strength of the book, rather than a weakness.

Book and Chapter Overview

The question of what to include in a book on the good farmer is a vexing one. Almost all issues relating to agriculture that have been subject to research in recent years are of relevance to the concept of the good farmer. In addition, many different theories have been used in conjunction with the good farmer concept (see Chapter 4), and there is consequently much that could be discussed with regards to theoretical conceptualisation. In making our plan for the chapter content we decided to address issues where there is either a significant gap in the literature or a need to draw together the existing literature. This resulted in a book of eight chapters with the first, naturally enough, introducing the topic. The remaining seven chapters are as follows:

In Chapter 2 "The origins of the good farmer" we present an original analysis of the historical emergence of the good farmer in the literature on farming and agriculture. Exploring both the British (1500-1800) and the US (1700-1945) literatures, the chapter illustrates how normative discourses on what a good farmer (and/or husband) should be and do have evolved over time. This historical journey details how the good farmer (or good husbandman) as a family, community and godly man became the good farmer as a production-maximising food provider. The chapter explains how the view of the good farmer as a "productivist" is a more recent construction, and consequently, the focus of current uses on understanding production-oriented resistance to non-productivist policies is a product of our times.

Chapter 3 "How symbols of good farming develop: the historical development of 'tidy farming'" addresses a major gap in the conceptualisation of the good farmer by exploring how behaviours and objects of symbolic importance in agriculture gain and/or lose significance. To explore change in symbolic meaning an historical analysis is again employed – in this case focusing on the most critical period of change when farming moved from subsistence to

scientifically based commercial agriculture. By exploring the connection between historical developments in the agricultural sector and the emergence of the symbolic significance of straight lines, tidy farms and roadside farming the chapter pieces together a new understanding of how symbolic meaning evolves. In addition, by looking at historical literature on the features of a "good ploughman", the chapter identifies how innate (natural), embodied (through practice), and knowledge-based (through learning) characteristics combine to exhibit the symbols of a good ploughman.

Returning to contemporary research, Chapter 4 "Theorising the 'good farmer' – from a common sense category to an analytical construct" explores the use of good farmer approaches in contemporary research. Here we review the diverse range of theoretical framings. While these theorisations share a similar objective — to address the cultural dimension of farming — they have different implications in terms of how culture and social interactions are articulated and how social change is integrated. We contend that highlighting the strengths and weaknesses of the framings is a much needed development and should result in more reflexive uses of the good farmer approach. From the initial inspiration from symbolic interactionism, the theorisation of the good farmer has mostly settled within the Bourdieusian theories of capitals and habitus. However, other recent works offer alternative useful perspectives. The chapter reveals that two key dimensions are at stake in this discussion: cultural transmission and socialisation and the relation between farmers' identity and agricultural practices.

Continuing the theoretical discussion, Chapter 5 "Morality and the good farmer" addresses a largely ignored dimension of the literature's handling of the "good" in the good farmer. Goodness implies normative assumptions and, thus, moral implications. Indeed, most often, the good farmer literature, following a phenomenological inquiry, adopts a rather agnostic stance towards what is actually good or bad within competing definitions of the 'good farmer'. We argue, first, that the moral dimension is unavoidable in discussions over who is a good farmer, particularly in a time of environmental crisis; and second, that this integration strengthens the good farmer approach in three ways. First, we can more clearly distinguish between the connections within competencies (good at) and goodness (good). Second, as researchers we learn to be more reflexive about the tensions between the moral and the sociological. Third, we can more clearly map the relationship between cultural understandings of goodness and ecosystem measurements of sustainability, productivity, and health.

Chapter 6 "The gendered good farmer" draws on the literature on women in agriculture and on LGBTQ farmers to underline the strong gendered presumptions in typical definitions of the good farmer (e.g. implicitly understood in terms of heterosexual masculinity). Family farming is tied to a strongly gendered division of roles, which is well documented. Without opportunities to engage in professionally articulated masculine symbols, women have negotiated their own symbols of what it meant to be a good farm wife. However, the notion of the good farm woman, as parallel to the good farmer, has not yet been clearly articulated. In this chapter, we reassemble elements from the literature to identify those symbols of the good farm woman and describe their evolution through the modernisation process of agriculture that arguably led to its masculinisation. The integration of gender allows us to open a discussion on alterity in family farming and to ask if it is actually possible to be a "different" good farmer.

In Chapter 7 "The good farmer in communities of practice" we return to the issue of symbolism, in this case exploring how farming identities are formed and shaped within dispersed communities (i.e. peer groups not constrained to neighbourhood relations). Here we are not looking at the development of symbolic meaning *per se*, but how these developments differ within different farming communities – the diversity of 'good farmer' meanings. We consider three specific communities of practice: organic farmers, new entrants to farming, and pedigree livestock producers. We then consider recent research into how non-farmers understand and utilise standards of good farming, particularly veterinarians and members of the public. In doing so, we delve deeper into the role of learning, and the associated implications for understanding of 'bad farming' within a contemporary rather than historical context.

In the final chapter, Chapter 8 "The good farmer of the future", we look of the future of the good farmer – both in terms of the future of the good farmer in agriculture him/herself given the changing nature of agriculture, and, alongside this, future developments of the concept of the good farmer and its application. Will the good farmer continue to be the centre of resistance to future agricultural developments? Can we use the concept of the good farmer to help build sustainable food systems? As technological developments render human skill and knowledge increasingly irrelevant, will there even be such a thing as a good farmer in the future? At the same time, we speculate on how we can advance the conceptualisation of the good farmer in the future, what research methods we should apply, and how we can extend the cultural reach of the good farmer to account for the greater diversity in agriculture today. In this way we sum up our perspective on the issues that arose throughout the book, lay out the key questions that

Original publication: Burton, R. J. F., Forney, J., Stock, P., & Sutherland, L.-A. (2021). *The Good Farmer. Culture and Identity in Food and Agriculture*. London/New York: Routledge, p. 1-18.
which should be used for any reference to this work

emerged or are likely to emerge in the future and, we hope, provide a trail for future researchers to follow in their applications of the good farmer concept.

Original publication: Burton, R. J. F., Forney, J., Stock, P., & Sutherland, L.-A. (2021). *The Good Farmer. Culture and Identity in Food and Agriculture*. London/New York: Routledge, p. 1-18.
which should be used for any reference to this work

References

Allison, L. (1996) On planning a forest: theoretical issues and practical problems. *Town Planning Review 67* (2), 131-143

Barnes, A. P., Moxey, A. P., Vosough Ahmadi, B., and F.A. Borthwick (2015). The effect of animal health compensation on 'positive' behaviours towards exotic disease reporting and implementing biosecurity: A review, a synthesis and a research agenda. *Preventive Veterinary Medicine, 122*(1-2), 42-52.

Billaud, J.-P. (1991). Les agriculteurs et leurs systèmes de représentation. In *L'agriculture familiale. Une réalité polymorphe* (Vol. 1, pp. 123-155). Paris: L'Harmattan.

Brown, I., Castellazzi, M., and Feliciano, D. (2014). Comparing path dependence and spatial targeting of land use in implementing climate change responses. *Land, 3*(3), 850-873.

Burton, R. J. F. (1998) *The role of farmer self-identity in agricultural decision making in the Marston Vale Community Forest*. Unpublished PhD Thesis (Leicester: DeMontfort University

Burton, R. J. F. (2004). Seeing through the 'good farmer's' eyes: toward developping an understading of the social symbolic value of 'productivist' behaviour. *Sociologia Ruralis, 44* (2), 195-215.

Burton, R. J. F., and Paragahawewa, U. H. (2011). Creating culturally sustainable agri-environmental schemes. *Journal of Rural Studies, 27*(1), 95-104.

Campbell, H. (2000). The Glass Phallus: Pub(lic) Masculinity and Drinking in Rural New Zealand*. Rural Sociology, 65(4), 562-581.

Caputo, J., and Butler, B. (2017). Ecosystem service supply and capacity on U.S. family forestlands. *Forests, 8*(10).

Cardoso, C. S., von Keyserlingk, M. A. G., and Hötzel, M. J. (2016). Trading off animal welfare and production goals: Brazilian dairy farmers' perspectives on calf dehorning. *Livestock Science, 187*, 102-108.

Chan, K. M. A., Anderson, E., Chapman, M., Jespersen, K., and Olmsted, P. (2017). Payments for Ecosystem Services: Rife With Problems and Potential—For Transformation Towards Sustainability. *Ecological Economics, 140*.

Collins, A.L., Zhang, Y.S., Winter, M., Inman, A., Jones, J.I., Johnes, P.J., Cleasby, W., Vrain, E., Lovett, A. and L. Noble (2016). Tackling agricultural diffuse pollution: What might uptake of farmer-preferred measures deliver for emissions to water and air? *Science of the Total Environment, 547*, 269-281.

Cloke, P. (1997). Country backwater to virtual village? Rural studies and 'the cultural turn'. *Journal of Rural Studies, 13*(4), 367-375.

Berlan Darqué, M. (1988). The division of labour and decision-making in farming couples: Power and negotiation. *Sociologia Ruralis, 28*(4), 271-292.

Droz, Y., and Miéville-Ott, V. (2001). *On achève bien les paysans. Reconstruire une identité paysanne dans un monde incertain*. Chêne-Bourg/Genève: Georg.

Emery, S. B. (2010). *In better fettle: improvement, work and rhetoric in the transition to environmental farming in the North York Moors* (Unpublished PhD.). Durham University, UK, Durham. Retrieved from http://etheses.dur.ac.uk/379/

Fairweather, J. R., and Keating, N. C. (1994). Goals and management styles of New Zealand farmers. *Agricultural Systems, 44*(2), 181-200.

Fishbein, M.; Ajzen, I. (1975). *Belief Attitude, Intention and Behaviour: An Introduction to Theory and Research*. Reading M.A.: Addison-Wesley.

Forney, J. (2016). Blind spots in agri-environmental governance: some reflections and suggestions from Switzerland. *Review of Agricultural, Food and Environmental Studies, 97*, 1-13.

Gasson, R. (1973). Goals and values of farmers. *Journal of Agricultural Economics, 24*(3), 521-542.

Gasson, R., and Winter, M. (1992). Gender relations and farm household pluriactivity. *Journal of Rural Studies, 8*(4), 387-397.

Haggerty, J., Campbell, H., and Morris, C. (2009). Keeping the stress off the sheep? Agricultural intensification, neoliberalism, and 'good' farming in New Zealand. *Geoforum, 40*(5), 767-777.

Hansson, A., Pedersen, E., and Weisner, S. E. B. (2012). Landowners' incentives for constructing wetlands in an agricultural area in south Sweden. *Journal of Environmental Management, 113*, 271-278.

Harrison, C. M., Burgess, J., and Clark, J. (1998). Discounted knowledges: farmers» and residents» understandings of nature conservation goals and policies. *Journal of Environmental Management*, 54(4), 305-320.

Hastings, M. (1988). Farming wives as business managers. *Farm Management*, 6(8), 309-315.

Ilbery, B. W. (1983). Goals and Values of Hop Farmers. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 8(3), 329-341.

Isgren, E. (2016). No quick fixes: four interacting constraints to advancing agroecology in Uganda. *International Journal of Agricultural Sustainability, 14*(4), 428-447.

Jakobsen, M. (2017). Consequences of intensive use of non-financial performance measures in Danish family farm holdings. *Qualitative Research in Accounting and Management, 14*(2), 137-156.

Kristensen, E., and Jakobsen, E. B. (2011a). Challenging the myth of the irrational dairy farmer; understanding decision-making related to herd health. *New Zealand Veterinary Journal, 59*(1), 1-7.

Kristensen, E., and Jakobsen, E. B. (2011b). Danish dairy farmers' perception of biosecurity. *Preventive Veterinary Medicine, 99*(2-4), 122-129.

Lankester, A. J. (2013). Conceptual and operational understanding of learning for sustainability: A case study of the beef industry in north-eastern Australia. *Journal of Environmental Management, 119*, 182-193.

Li, T. M. (2007). Practices of assemblage and community forest management. *Economy and Society, 36*(2), 263-293.

Lowe, P., Clark, J., Seymour, S., and Ward, N. (1997). *Moralizing the environment: countryside change, farming and pollution.* London: UCL Press Limited.

Lowe, P. D., Ward, N., and Potter, C. (1999). Attitudinal and institutional indicators for sustainable agriculture. In F. Brouwer and B. Crabtree (Eds.), *Environmental indicators and agricultural policy* (pp. 263-278). Wallingford: CABI.

Mallein, P., and Cautrès, B. (1993). Les identités professionnelles des agriculteurs. In C. Courtet, M. Berlan Darqué, and Y. Demarne (Eds.), *Agricultures et sociétés; Pistes pour la recherche* (pp. 217-229). Paris: Association Descartes/INRA.

Mead, G. (1934) *Mind, self, and society: from the standpoint of a social behaviouralist*. Phoenix edition (1967), C.W. Morris ed. (London: University of Chicago Press)

McGranahan, D. A. (2014). Ecologies of scale: Multifunctionality connects conservation and agriculture across fields, farms, and landscapes. *Land, 3*(3), 739-769.

Morris, C., and Potter, C. (1995). Recruiting the new conservationists - farmers' adoption of agri-environmental schemes in the UK. *Journal of Rural Studies, 11*(1), 51-63.

Phillips, E., and Gray, I. (1995). Farming 'practice'as temporally and spatially situated intersections of biography, culture and social structure. *The Australian Geographer, 26*(2), 127-132.

Pouta, E., Grammatikopoulou, I., Hurme, T., Soini, K., and Uusitalo, M. (2014). Assessing the quality of agricultural landscape change with multiple dimensions. *Land, 3*(3).

Sandberg, M., and Jakobsson, S. (2018). Trees are all around us: Farmers' management of wood pastures in the light of a controversial policy. *Journal of Environmental Management, 212*, 228-235.

Saugeres, L. (2002). The cultural representation of the farming landscape: masculinity, power and nature. *Journal of Rural Studies, 18*(4), 373-384.

Sawer, B. J. (1973). Predictors of the farm wife's involvement in general management and adoption decisions. *Rural Sociology*, 38(4), 412-426.

Seabrook, L., McAlpine, C., and Fensham, R. (2008). What influences farmers to keep trees?. A case study from the Brigalow Belt, Queensland, Australia. *Landscape and Urban Planning, 84*(3-4), 266-281.

Stebing, S. (1984). Women's roles and rural society. In T. Bradley and P. Lowe (Eds.), *Locality and Rurality: Economy and Society in Rural Regions*. (pp. 199-208). Norwich: Geo Books.

Stryker, S. (1994). Identity theory: Its development, research base, and prospects. In N. K. Denzin (Ed.), *Studies in Symbolic Interactionism 16* (pp. 7-20). London: JAI Press INC

Sutherland, L.-A., and Darnhofer, I. (2012). Of organic farmers and 'good farmers': Changing habitus in rural England. *Journal of Rural Studies, 28*(3), 232-240.

Sylvestre, J.-P. (2002). Les usages de la campagne et la dynamique identitaire des agriculteurs français. In J.-P. Sylvestre (Ed.), *Agriculteurs, ruraux et citadins. Les mutations des campagnes françaises* (pp. 55-70). Dijon: Educagri/CNDP.

Tautges, N. E., Goldberger, J. R., and Burke, I. C. (2016). A Survey of Weed Management in Organic Small Grains and Forage Systems in the Northwest United States. *Weed Science, 64*(3).

Tsouvalis, J., Seymour, S., and Watkins, C. (2000). Exploring knowledge-cultures: precision farming, yield mapping, and the expert-farmer interface. *Environment and Planning A, 32*(5).

Van der Wal, R., Miller, D., Irvine, J., Fiorini, S., Amar, A., Yearley, S., . . . Dandy, N. (2014). The influence of information provision on people's landscape preferences: A case study on understorey vegetation of deer-browsed woodlands. *Landscape and Urban Planning, 124*, 129-139.

Whatmore, S., Marsden, T., & Lowe, P. (Eds.). (1991). *Rural Enterprise: Shifting perspectives on small-scale production*. London: David Fulton Publishers.

White, S. S., and Selfa, T. (2013). Shifting lands: Exploring Kansas farmer decision-making in an era of climate change and biofuels production. *Environmental Management, 51*(2), 379-391.

Williams, D., T. Lloyd, and C. Watkins, (1994) Farmers not Foresters: Constraints on the Planting of New Farm Woodland. Working Paper 27 (University of Nottingham, Nottingham)

Wilson, G. A., and Burton, R.J.F. (2015). 'Neo-productivist' agriculture: Spatio-temporal versus structuralist perspectives. *Journal of Rural Studies, 38*, 52-64.

Wolpert, J. (1964). The decision process in spatial context. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 54(4), 537-558.