

# Visual representations of sustainable agriculture

Dr Jane Glover

## A picture is worth a thousand words. But who's tale does it tell?

### How can we achieve a sustainable global food system when responsibility reporting is rarely questioned?

There are numerous challenges to achieving a responsible 'food chain'. Dr Jane Glover's previous research projects have found that there are issues in all parts of the food chain, which ultimately impact on other areas.

In order for any substantive change to happen, Jane argues that transformative change needs to happen systematically, rather than a series of disconnected incremental improvements.

Some key findings of this project suggest that when large food corporations report their ambitions towards sustainability, they often do so in ways that are difficult to measure. Carefully selected images are often used which pulls the eye from the text. It is difficult to assess whether these images, which often depict other organisations and individuals buying from or supplying the corporation, are valid representations of the business. This raises ethical questions about how entities are presented.

Jane takes a critical qualitative approach to making sense of multimedia business communications, exploring the interconnections and contradictions between the written words, photographs and visual images.

Jane's research draws on information on company websites, social media

and other forms of visual communications.

Her previous project (REACH, 2017) found that the actions by one part of the food chain will have implications for other areas. Her research revealed that difficult strategic decisions need to be made to improve the sustainability of food chains.

#### About the author

Dr Jane Glover is a Research Fellow and joined Birmingham Business School in January 2016. She is based in The Department of Management (Entrepreneurship and Local Economy) and the Lloyds Centre for Responsible Business. Jane's key research interests focus on small family firms with particular attention to family farming. Her work explores the relationships and representations of family business and the landscape in which they operate.



#### Farmer's rights and social justice

Dr Jane Glover's research into sustainable agriculture raises numerous questions and challenges many strongly held assumptions, such as the implications of the consumer's 'right to cheap' food (Sage, 2012).

The project extends the concerns and criticisms over the global food system in developing countries (Rosin et al. 2012), to farming families in the west, particularly in relations to farmers rights and social justice in food production.

Agriculture is recognised as key to the survival of the human race. Jane's research questions the current lack of awareness by governments and society of this fact, particularly given that the prices paid to producers are well below costs of production.

Large corporations report ambitions to improve sustainability in ways which are hard to measure or question. This could increase risks to society's ability to feed itself.

Please get in touch with Jane at the Centre for further information on this research.

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