A Planet for Life 2012 focuses on agriculture and its relation to development, food and the environment. At the end of the 2000s, a consensus has emerged and points to the urgent need for massive investment in the agricultural sector, which is (once again) viewed as one of the prime engines for development and food security, as well as for poverty reduction. But what exactly does this consensus cover? While the idea of investing in agriculture is gaining ground and although several countries or regions appear to be offering opportunities for investment in agricultural land, debates are going on as to which agricultural models to choose and how agricultural policies should be implemented.

A Planet for Life called on many highly specialized authors from different countries and perspectives, and invites the reader to discover the sector in all its complexity, upstream and downstream of agricultural production.

At the crossroads of the challenges posed by development, food security and the environment, the transformation of the agricultural sector is at the heart of the global stakes of sustainable development. To help steer these changes towards greater sustainability, this book makes us aware of how crucial it is to also change our representations of agriculture, change the visions that guide projects for change and the policies regulating this sector.

- Papers by leading international experts and scholars
- New perspectives from across the planet
- Multiple maps, charts, timelines and thematic focus essays
- A wealth of ideas for specialists and non-specialists alike (policy makers, administrators, concerned citizens, development professionals, entrepreneurs, journalists, students and others)
The market is not only a place for setting the price, nor is it merely a location for commodity exchange. It is a power field where farmers, as relatively passive agents of trade, encounter the “production” of price. This article seeks to analyze the interaction between fields and markets from the vantage point of cotton farmers.

AN ETHNOGRAPHY OF COTTON PRODUCTION AND EXCHANGE IN A TURKISH VILLAGE

This ethnography describes the universe of cotton production and exchange in Pamukköy, the largest cotton-producing village in the Söke Plain of western Turkey. It documents how farmers mobilize resources, interact with agricultural workers, obtain credit and sell their product. In contrast to the cotton field, where farmers perceive themselves as active and formative agents in the rural political economy, cotton growers view the market as dominated by traders and various mercantile tools that weaken their agency.

STUDYING AGRICULTURAL MARKETS:
A HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Late 19th and early 20th century perspectives on agriculture, especially those inspired by Marx, regarded farmers as a transitory class doomed to disappear as a result of rapid industrialization and modernization. In the post-World War II period, this perception of agriculture expanded to encompass the economic motivations of the peasantry, modes of production, relations between farmers and the state and other classes, and their role in rural transformation and development. A vast literature gradually accumulated, which included: articulation theories, looking at the ways in which urban actors (such as the state and capitalists) extract surpluses from farmers; persistence theses, explaining the survival strategies of farmers against worldwide market expansion or capitalism; and differentiation theses that focus on the pace of proletarianization and internal variation among rural producers. In these works, capitalist relations and markets are, in general, implicitly considered to be outside...
factors that impact on the lives of farmers, and it is the task of the social scientist to study the process and consequence of that impact.

Polanyi’s *Great Transformation* reinterpreted the meaning of markets, emphasizing the role of the state and politics in the making of markets in the modern period, and the formative role of social relations in pre-modern societies (Polanyi, 1944). The challenge now is to carry out research that empirically analyzes the processes through which prices are made in concrete market settings.

There is no commodity other than cotton that gives us a better vantage point to study the interaction between the field and the market. Cotton is located at the intersection of industrial, financial and agricultural relations of exchange/production that connect more than a billion people to each other through agriculture, trade and textile manufacture. Every year, more than 50 million farmers from 81 countries produce around 90 million bales of cotton. Compared to other cash crops that farmers rely on – excluding crops for the farmers’ direct consumption, such as wheat – cotton covers the largest production area in the world, followed by sugar cane, sunflowers, coffee and tobacco. In terms of trade volume, no other agricultural commodity comes close to the circulation of cotton. Every year, more than one third of cotton produced all over the world crosses national boundaries and is consumed in a country other than where it was originally produced. This is the largest share of any agricultural market in the world. Historically, too, cotton trade has put its mark on world trade, with a total value of twice as much as gold and silver combined in the late nineteenth century.

**COTTON PRODUCTION IN PAMUKKÖY**

This essay investigates cotton growing and exchange in and around the Turkish village of Pamukköy. It examines the ways in which farmers encounter the cotton market as they sell their produce to private merchants or TARIS (Union of Agricultural Co-Operatives for the Sale of Figs, Raisins, Cotton, Olives and Olive Oil), the only cooperative that deals with cotton trade in western Turkey. Farmers do not see the cooperative as a merchant. Because they have an organic relationship with the cooperative, its cotton purchase is seen as endogenous to their production process. In contrast, cotton traders and their offices are considered exogenous to farmers’ fields. As one farmer put it, “things happen there,” referring to the trading tools and manners that traders deploy to gain powerful bargaining positions. The article analyses this power relationship and argues that prices should not be seen as a mere exchange tool set by the supply and demand of cotton. Serving as a social and financial interface between the field and the market, the price is also a tool utilised by merchants, which – together with other specific ways of trading – limits the farmers’ agency.

As farmers produce and exchange cotton, they are affected by several markets, but the two in which they participate directly are the labour and cotton exchange markets. As demonstrated below, there is no single price for cotton, as it is reflected in the index of world cotton prices. Rather, different price forms are experienced, produced and deployed by farmers, merchants, the state and the world market’s big players. Hence, prices are made in fields of power, and the market is one such power
field, where farmers encounter price production as relatively powerless agents of trade.

Slightly more than 10% of Turkey’s total production comes from the Söke Plain, Turkey’s second-largest cotton-growing plain. Located in the province of Aydın, the plain is in the administrative boundaries of the town of Söke, an agro-industrial city 155 km west of Izmir. Cotton is the single most important cash crop of the plain. Looking down from the hills of the Samsun Mountains in August, the plain looks like a green sea of cotton, encircled by Lake Bafa, the Beflparmak Mountains and the Aegean Sea. Depending on the source quoted, between 4,010 and 6,152 farmers grow cotton in the plain and live in villages and towns encircling this green sea which provides cash revenue not only to cotton growers, but also to thousands of migrant agricultural workers who arrive in the plain every year to work in the cotton fields.

According to the village headman, until 20 years ago the population of Pamukköy was around 1,700. The neoliberal reforms of the early 1980s increased migration to cities, thus decreasing Pamukköy’s population to 734 by 2001. The 250 households of Pamukköy own 249.5 hectares of land, an average of about one hectare per household. 71% of households own land in the village (see Table 1). Half of the remaining households rent land for cotton production, usually no more than half a hectare. The rest do not grow cotton, but have household members who work in cotton-related jobs; they work in others’ fields and drive their tractors. Those who do not reside in the village own fourteen percent of the village land. Farmers who reside in Pamukköy use almost all of this land in exchange for either rent or cotton. Land use patterns follow land distribution patterns in the village.

### THE HARVEST

The sale of cotton is the only major cash revenue for Pamukköy farmers, the harvest of which occurs between late September and mid-November. Harvesting is the most labour-intensive part of the cotton-growing process and there are three distinct groups of farmers that deploy three distinct ways of concluding the growing seasons:

- Those who have a large enough labour supply in their households and relatively less land to work on, by and large draw on non-monetary forms of labour exchange during the harvest. It is safe to assume that a family can rely on household labour if it has less than 0.2 hectare of land per working household member. Even then, these families usually borrow labour. However, a land/household member ratio above this level requires some sort of monetary or non-monetary labour exchange in the village.

- Those families who own more than 0.2 hectares per working household member, but do not have enough money to hire labourers, tend to employ labour-pooling where a few families come together to work on each other’s land. Farmers use

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complex methods of labour control in such arrangements, known locally as an Ödek. Families of different sizes come together to pool their resources but because all have different capacities to contribute, the surplus or shortage is covered by cash. These complex cooperatives are common in many developing countries where the majority of farmers rely on unpaid domestic labour for survival. Their flexibility is striking in the sense that these informal cooperatives can form a workshop in a couple of hours and dissolve it even quicker.

- those that depend solely on hired labour. Compared to the first and second groups, these farmers use less complex means of labour control in the field. Workers are paid according to the weight of cotton they pick. The poverty of workers and their lack of union power facilitate labour control for those who have enough means to hire them. If a worker loses her job, she cannot make it to the next harvest without borrowing money.

The speed of picking cotton depends on dexterity, determination and wealth. Those who work on their own fields can work at a gentler pace. Those who work for friends and relatives can choose not to work in difficult muddy conditions. The neediest and most impoverished workers, who are mostly Kurdish seasonal migrants, are obliged to work in any conditions.

A family of four working members can hand-pick their cotton in two months or less for a field not exceeding 2 hectares. With four seasonal workers, the same amount can be hand-picked in 12 to 15 working days. On average, workers pick 85 kg of seed cotton per day.

Most Pamukköy cotton farmers barter labour and settle the difference with cash or cotton in various labour-pooling mechanisms. Those with larger fields hire workers to carry out production. Whether they use money or not, all these labour exchange processes include market performances composed of various resources and tactics. These performances are shaped through power contestations and social positions. The amount of land one has, the degree of dispossession of a worker, the farmers’ and workers’ relations with labour gang leaders, the farmers’ indebtedness and the power asymmetries between farmers and workers at the moment of exchange, all play a dynamic part in shaping the labour market. As the size of land increases, farmers tend to rely more on monetary exchange. As the level of dispossession increases, farmers find themselves in a weaker position vis-à-vis those who hire them as workers. Yet, even the most powerful farmers in these village-level exchanges experience disempowerment and poverty once they enter the market for cotton exchange. To analyze this market and the ways in which fields and cotton markets connect in Pamukköy, we need to examine the dynamics of commodity exchange on the ground.

THE MARKET: EXCHANGING COTTON IN PAMUKKÖY

Neo-classical economists and sociologists describe markets as price-making contexts and explain prices as being made in markets. Aiming to break out of this circular reasoning, other researchers have sought to show that prices and markets are embedded and constructed in the very social and cultural contexts in which they
operate. Recently, however, new research in economic and social anthropology has begun to focus on markets as socio-technical universes from the vantage point of price-making. This literature shows that prices are produced in the specific geography of the markets where they emerge within relations of power. Despite a globally accepted price form (such as US dollars), each specific price is made in a multiplicity of power relations that go beyond a mere coming together of supply and demand (Callon, 1998; Muniesa, 2000). Each price is a tool produced and deployed in the specific context of an exchange relationship. The making of prices in the cotton markets of the Söke Plain is in line with the findings of the literature on the anthropology of markets. From the harvest to the final exchange of cotton, categorically different price forms emerge.

FROM THE HARVEST TO THE EMERGENCE OF PRICES

The end of the harvest marks the last stage of the cotton’s life cycle in villages like Pamukköy. Farmers sell their entire crop before the last day of October. There are two main buyers of cotton in the plain: the agricultural sales cooperative TARIS, and private merchants who also own ginning factories. Since cotton has to be ginned before it can be sold in the institutionalized market settings – such as the cotton-trading pit of the İzmir Mercantile Exchange (IME) – a vast majority of farmers (except for a few large landowners) are excluded from lint markets. For the farmers of Pamukköy, the exchange of their cotton takes place outside the exchange building. It is possible to keep their seed cotton and sell it to a trader later, but this possibility is realized only in a few marginal instances.

There are many reasons for the immediate selling of the crop. The primary reason is that growing cotton requires farmers to borrow heavily, thus creating an urgent need for cash after the harvest. Farmers who own more than two hectares hire labour and pay the daily wages in cash, usually by borrowing. Farmers have different means of finding money, for example Ibrahim, a farmer owning 1.8 hectares, borrowed money from a merchant who had a ginning factory in Söke. Although the terms were similar, he chose not to borrow from the state-owned Agricultural Bank (Ziraat Bankası) for several reasons. First, the bank required the farmer to have land under his name as collateral. Ibrahim’s land was not registered under his name. He owned the land, yet the land was formally registered as village property. Secondly, banks use formal written means of communication that can be seen by anyone who frequents the kahve (coffee house). To be known as someone with inadequate financial resources is shameful for many farmers and implies a decline in status.

Informal bankers generally apply high interest rates, at least five percent higher than bank rates. They manage to buy their clients’ cotton for less money, thus contributing to the temporary depression of prices during and immediately after the harvest. Moreover, when it comes to buying the cotton from the indebted farmer, it is not uncommon for them to overweigh the produce and downgrade the ginning outturn of the cotton. Farmers cannot resist selling their cotton to merchants, for they always sign a contract with these cotton-money merchants to pay their debt back on 31st October, immediately following the harvest. Without financial backing, it is not possible for
growers to keep their crop until the time comes to sell it under relatively better terms. The abundance of cotton and the urgent need for cash depress the prices between late September and early November. It would not make any difference, if they chose to sell to TARIS, since the cooperative pays the price of the day when cotton farmers bring their crop.

**TRADERS’ PRICE**

An analysis of monthly cotton prices reveals the large price differential between prices in October compared to other months. Between September 1993 and August 2004, the average of the Cotlook A Index, a price index commonly referred to as the world spot price of cotton, was 66.78 cents/lb. The October average was 63.78 cents/lb. This is a deviation of exactly 300 points, a difference vast enough for the New York Board of Trade (NYBOT) to formally enforce a halt in trading, because in NYBOT’s globally recognized cotton futures market a 300-cent deviation in a single trading session is an institutionally recognized sign of market crisis.

The Cotlook A Index only represents price deviation to a limited extent and possibly under-represents the variance as it incorporates traders’ price perceptions. The Izmir Mercantile Exchange reveals a more alarming difference. The average October price between 1993 and 2004, including the price of 2001, is 65.23 cents/lb, while the average for all other months is 73.19 cents/lb, making a vast difference of 796 points. This is approximately eight cents for each pound of cotton, easily enough to be considered as a market crisis if occurring in the world of merchants.

Farmers are excluded from lint markets because they do not have warehouses to store their cotton, the financial means to insure it, the means to follow prices on a daily basis or the political power to participate in price-making. These prices belong to the world of traders, merchants, brokers and a few large landowners. For example, cotton prices in the IME, Turkey’s cotton market centre, are produced in three main forms in four different market places (see box 1). Each of these price forms is produced in specific market geographies, almost all of which are designed to keep the farmers outside the exchange (Çaliskan, forthcoming). The market price of the IME is a price indicator used to set individual prices; the pit trading price is a rehearsal device that merchants produce to probe the market to see whether it is bullish or bearish; and postpit prices are the actual prices of cotton exchanged in the market, but because they are not posted, no one has certain knowledge of them. In short, the market as it takes shape in Izmir has multiple prices that work as “prosthetic” devices used by traders to pursue their mercantile interests. Prosthetic prices are developed to shape actual transaction prices, but cannot be used to exchange actual cotton; rather, they are used to set actual prices for cotton exchange.

Apart from the production and deployment of various price forms, traders also
affect the making of prices by negotiating each year's supply and demand estimates. These estimates are more effective in creating prices than their real levels, for the actual levels are known only after all the cotton is bought and sold on the market in late October.

Three main groups with three diverse motivations – merchants, the TARIS cooperative, and government representatives – attend the meeting of the Permanent Working Group on Cotton where supply and demand are estimated each year. Merchants dominate the meeting as they host the caucus in the trader-run exchange and also because they attend en masse, creating the absolute majority in the meeting room. They have an interest in depressed prices because lower prices make it possible for them to trade larger volumes. As a result, they work to prevent the meeting from underestimating the production level, since a forecast of decreasing supply pushes up prices. The cooperative representatives have a contrasting motivation as they benefit more from increasing prices as this translates into higher profit margins for the cooperative. Thus, they aim to prevent overestimation of the production level, because the expectation of a higher supply depresses prices. Government representatives, however, have a different focus. Their main purpose is to record the cotton supply levels as accurately as possible for the Minister of Agriculture.

The author's fieldwork suggests that merchants have the largest say in these estimates. Every year, traders manage to influence the meeting to produce a higher estimate than the actual levels and, thus, successfully depress prices before the harvest. These price forms disappear as the traders approach the countryside as they mean little to the vast majority of farmers, for a number of reasons:

First, the terms “merchant” or “trader” are used only in the singular form and in a pejorative sense. The widespread belief is that they protect the interests of yarn producers and themselves. Therefore, any price in any form associated with merchant houses is regarded with suspicion, as just another tool to obtain the farmer's produce at the lowest possible price. Second, whatever the price, a great majority of cotton farmers are either locked into debt relations with merchants, or pledged into selling their cotton to TARIS, as this is the only way they can get the credit needed to continue production. TARIS extends indirect credits – such as fertilizer, seed or pesticide – during the planting season and deducts their cost when the farmers sell their produce back to the cooperative.

If the merchants depress prices, they can buy more cotton and sell for less. Not only does the mark-up make the difference, but when the cotton price is depressed, more and more yarn factories switch from cheap, oil-based polyester inputs to cotton; they buy more cotton and thus contribute more to the merchants' income. Finally, as the price decreases in the countryside, merchants need less capital to purchase the commodity, so their carry-over increases in real terms. Paradoxically, the reason for the increase in merchant income can lead to the eventual loss of all profit. The more they depress prices, the more difficult it becomes for small farmers to grow cotton - not only because of the decreasing contribution of cotton to their income, but also because the farmers are selling their land to pay off their debt, thus losing the chance
BOX 1 MAPPING THE COTTON PRICES: COTTON TRADING IN IZMIR

The IME cotton price has three forms: Rehearsal Price, Transaction Price and Market Price. These forms are produced in four temporally and spatially specific places of the market: the Pit, during Post-Pit Trading, the Closing Price Committee Meeting and the Permanent Working Group on Cotton Meetings. Prices are best viewed as prosthetic devices to further various trading objectives. They are made, produced and challenged by multiple actors in a market process. Making such processes transparent can enable those affected by prices to participate more actively in price formation. Market intervention and maintenance are constant. Therefore, laissez-faireism acquires a new meaning since allowing some but not all to be involved in price formation, directly affects the livelihoods of those who make and consume the commodity, the price of which is produced amid power relationships.

Pit trading, the entry point for studying cotton trading in Izmir, is framed in temporal and geographical limits, bringing traders together for ten minutes between 12:20 and 12:30. It is here that “the theatre of the market” takes place. Market players in this theatre produce rehearsal prices, which are made to exchange only a very limited quantity of the commodity, serving as a rehearsal for the actual volume of trade that has yet to be reached during post-pit trading. The pit price is a market device deployed and produced by merchants to strengthen their positions when making actual transaction prices. The rehearsal price is also a device because it is simultaneously an investment for post-pit trading and also an actual transaction price since cotton is exchanged by its acceptance.

Once this first market boundary has been crossed, literally by leaving the pit at 12:30 and entering the second location - the post-pit, traders begin to use rehearsal prices to negotiate actual transaction prices. However, both the traders and their prices are scattered in this second market location. Hundreds of registered and unregistered prices are made in this dynamic situation. What is particularly interesting is that this is not the place where the market price emerges.

Following post-pit trading, the market price is formed in the Closing Price Committee meeting. The committee members remove the highest and the lowest market prices from the list they receive from IME administration, and take the weighted arithmetic average of individual registered transaction prices. Hence, the market price is not set by the coming together of demand and supply, as neo-classical price theory suggests, but is produced by the application of a mathematical formula to a political process of deliberation and bargaining, that is affected on a daily basis by the market power and positions of traders.

Demand and supply also play a role, but again in a surprising setting. Before traders perceive their effects, supply and demand impacts are negotiated by specially-formed committees of Ministry of Agriculture bureaucrats, traders, economists, agricultural engineers, a few large landowners and officials from TARIS, the cotton sales cooperative that represents farmers that produce more than a quarter of the cotton in the country. As the market process progresses, actual supply and demand figures cannot be known for sure, only becoming clear once all the cotton has been sold. Prices in their multiple forms are made before these levels are known. The perceptions of “what the market will be” are discussed and negotiated, and figures such as supply volume or production costs are produced, thus further informing the ways in which prices are made.

Three main groups attend meetings; with three diverse sets of motives that prefigure their approach to cotton supply estimates. Traders, merchants and brokers comprise the first group, all of whom have an interest in depressed prices because lower prices enable larger volumes to be traded. As a result they strive to prevent underestimation of the production level, because a lower supply forecast pushes prices up. Large landowners and cooperative representatives have the opposite motivation. Obviously, they benefit from increasing prices and thus have an incentive to prevent overestimation of the production level, because the higher the supply prediction, the lower the price. Ministerial representatives, however, do not share the same concerns for price levels as the previous two groups. Their main purpose is to obtain the highest possible accuracy in the estimate of cotton supply levels, since this figure informs the allocation of agricultural subsidies in the annual budget. An underestimate can lead to budget deficit, while an overestimate can make the government look unsuccessful.
to grow cotton altogether. If this process continues for two more decades, the land will be consolidated in fewer hands and prosthetic prices may then become more relevant in the countryside, not because the farmers will have understood how to use derivative markets, but because there will be no small farmers left.

THE FARMERS’ PRICE
The cotton price for a farmer is never the formal posted price. For them, formal prices – whether posted by merchant houses or TARIS – are only indicative of what they can get for their cotton. “The price is what I carry in my pocket after I sell my crop,” said Numan, a cotton grower who had to sell his cotton to a ginning factory owner from whom he’d borrowed cash. Numan received his money in less than an hour on the condition that he “gave” his cotton to this private trader, settling the difference after the debt had been deducted.

The price that farmers receive is always lower than the price they are offered. To obtain the cotton, traders begin with illegally lending money, yet creating a legal context for it. When Numan made his deal with the ginning factory owner, the trader told him that he had some bank credit that he did not need at the time, and “since he liked Numan a lot,” he offered Numan that money to use. The interest rate he applied was even one point lower than the private bank rate. He sold his money, but pretended that he served as an intermediary between the bank and the farmer. “Usually, they never give money directly to us. We go and get it from the bank. It looks as if the bank gives us the money,” explains Numan.

“I know that it doesn’t come from the bank. He [the money lender] sends a note to his friends in the bank, authorizing me to withdraw money from his account, and it is his money that I get. Other villagers don’t know. They think it is the bank that gives them the money and that the fabrikacı is the intermediary. When there is a bank, there is paperwork, the state is involved, courts, etc. They send letters and stuff. Everybody knows that you borrow money in the village, so other villagers don’t want to work with you.

“The first thing he [the fabrikacı] asks is not the amount of money we need, but the field size we have. Because he will not get the cash back, he will ask for my cotton instead.

“You cannot have a farmer sell his crop in advance without having TARIS’s price. The fabrikacı also offers the TARIS price. But the amount he pays is always lower. For example, when you bring your cotton, he never likes it. The randıman [ginning outturn] is everything in cotton. If the cotton has more seeds, it has less lint. So the money I get goes down if the randıman decreases. The fabrikacı always mess with these roller-gins. They fix their scissors so that they pick a little bit less lint. So they pay less. They also play with their scales. Farmers’ cotton always weighs less. They make money in this way too.”
A former ginning factory owner confirmed Numan’s description of how the cotton is sold in the market. He commented:

“This business of debt is making the rich richer and the poor poorer. But what can farmers really do? The Agricultural Bank does not give credit anymore. TARIS’s bank is taken away. Farmers are left alone. They need money, and usually very rapidly. Who has money? The ginners. They don’t like the poorest or the richest farmers. The poor have nothing to lose; the rich have power to resist. They want the middle farmers who produce enough, yet don’t have money to finance themselves. These farmers also need them, because they want to borrow fast, and they want to borrow it secretly. Ginners keep it secret, and sometimes the farmers lose their land secretly if they cannot pay the debt.”

Not all farmers are indebted, yet they still work with private traders. Scales and sampling roller-gins are usually more balanced when it comes to working with farmers who are not indebted. A discussion on the formation of farmers’ prices must include mention of the “performances” put on by traders, which weigh heavily against the farmers. A farmer with better financial resources wanted to sell his cotton to a private trader. He talked to a few ginners before the harvest about his intention to sell. “Initially all of them thought that I wanted to borrow money. They were nice to me, wanting to help like a father. Attitudes changed however when he brought them samples of his cotton: “They looked at it, didn’t like it, yet still wanted to buy it. They are real actors. Like those on TV.”

When a rich trader and a poor farmer come together within an exchange context, the latter finds himself in a field of power that works against him. Traders use an idiom that farmers are unaccustomed to; they are experienced in buying and selling and thus outperform the farmers; and they have a financial cushion to rely on if they do not win the bargaining. This is hardly the case for farmers, who sell small amounts compared to the quantities the traders buy everyday.

Knowing that trading performances are “only acting” does not help the Pamukköy farmers. Farmer motivations in the marketplace are dominated by their urgency to sell their produce to pay their debts. They cannot get their cotton ginned and wait for the best opportunity to sell their commodity. They cannot produce and deploy various prices to empower their trading position, for they do not have one. They cannot travel with their cotton between various potential buyers, nor can they shop around to find the best merchant. The market as seen by Pamukköy farmers is not a neutral place where supply and demand set the price. It is a place where the farmers are relatively powerless agents of the exchange relationship that turns their cotton into money. This conclusion suggests a rethinking of the relationship between the field and the market.

CONCLUSION
For farmers, contact with the market involves bargaining and agreeing a price in the trader’s office, usually located in a ginning factory owned by the merchant himself. Three factors prefigure this bargaining process.
First, the previous relationship between the trader and the farmer has a strong effect on negotiations. If the farmer owes money to the trader, he has to pay it back, usually before 31st October. Traders informally cooperate not to buy from a farmer who is indebted to another trader. Thus, farmers can only sell to the trader from whom they borrow. According to the author’s calculations, in 2001 the Pamukköy farmers who borrowed from private traders sold their cotton for eleven percent less than the farmers who borrowed from family members or the cooperative.

The second factor relates to the specific processes that take place in the IME. All active traders in the Söke Plain have representatives in the Exchange. Well before the cotton hits the market, traders begin to prepare the ground. Various prosthetic prices are probed and produced during pit and post-pit trading. Traders also work hard to affect the market process. For instance, they lobby agricultural engineers, statisticians, researchers, government officials and cooperative representatives to influence their perception of the coming harvest. The objective being to produce an estimate of a high yield and low production costs. In caucuses dominated by traders, such as the Permanent Working Group on Cotton, the very supply of cotton is determined even before farmers harvest their crop. These estimates are always lower than the actual levels.

The third relates to the trading performances and politics that merchants forge on the ground. Traders attempt to undermine a farmer’s produce to strengthen their trading position. Furthermore, merchants cooperate to ensure that they fix their sellers even before the harvest. Most cotton buyers in the plain lend money to farmers, then buy the farmers’ cotton and settle the difference. Farmers are excluded from lint markets because they do not have warehouses to store their cotton, the financial means to insure it, the means to follow prices on a daily basis or the political power to participate in price-making.

The market price offered to farmers, who are relatively passive agents of trade, is produced prior to the moment of exchange. Merchants devote much time to building networks to affect prices, while farmers spend all their available time growing cotton, hiring or pooling labour, hoeing fields or picking cotton. Farmers do not have time to simultaneously maintain market platforms and grow cotton.

The price that serves as the interface between the field and the market can be regarded as a summary of all the power contestations that take place before and during the moment of exchange. Studies of rural relations of exchange and production should take into account the specific nature of price-making on the ground and consider the asymmetries in the way prices are produced. Treating prices as things that are set in the market is itself a political investment in shaping markets. Prices are not set through actual demand and supply; they are produced as prostheses to be used by a select group of market participants only. Academic research on agricultural production and exchange must take these factors into account, or risk being a formative part of the politico-economic universe it studies.

The Pamukköy farmers see the markets and fields as places where various trading performances take place. The farmers’ capacity to improvise and exploit these performances increases in direct proportion to the amount of land they own. Yet,
for most of these cotton farmers, such relative autonomy vanishes when they enter the cotton market.

In conclusion, economic activities in the countryside involve fields of power where webs of asymmetrical relations are forged and maintained by a multiplicity of actors. These actors operate in a cascading relationship of domination, resistance and negotiation, structured in an essentially political topography of encounter. Such a political context can only be understood if one pays ethnographic attention to the specific predicaments of different actors involved in commodity production and exchange.

REFERENCES


Towards Agricultural Change?

A Planet for Life 2012 focuses on agriculture and its relation to development, food and the environment. At the end of the 2000s, a consensus has emerged and points to the urgent need for massive investment in the agricultural sector, which is (once again) viewed as one of the prime engines for development and food security, as well as for poverty reduction. But what exactly does this consensus cover? While the idea of investing in agriculture is gaining ground and although several countries or regions appear to be offering opportunities for investment in agricultural land, debates are going on as to which agricultural models to choose and how agricultural policies should be implemented.

A Planet for Life called on many highly specialized authors from different countries and perspectives, and invites the reader to discover the sector in all its complexity, upstream and downstream of agricultural production. At the crossroads of the challenges posed by development, food security and the environment, the transformation of the agricultural sector is at the heart of the global stakes of sustainable development. To help steer these changes towards greater sustainability, this book makes us aware of how crucial it is to also change our representations of agriculture, change the visions that guide projects for change and the policies regulating this sector.

- Papers by leading international experts and scholars
- New perspectives from across the planet
- Multiple maps, charts, timelines and thematic focus essays
- A wealth of ideas for specialists and non-specialists alike (policy makers, administrators, concerned citizens, development professionals, entrepreneurs, journalists, students and others)