



REABILITE OF THE ORGANIC CERTIFICATION STANDARD: AN EMPIRICAL STUDY AT THE PRODUCER LEVEL IN COSTA RICA

ANA GABRIELA CENTENO CERDAS

**MASTER OF SCIENCE (M.Sc.) IN INTERNATIONAL AGRIBUSINESS
FACULTY OF AGRICULTURAL SCIENCES**

ABSTRACT

The extraordinary growth experienced by the organic market around the globe has created new opportunities and challenges for the organic sector. Among them, one of the most important challenges is to guarantee the reliability of the organic products. The mechanisms of control implemented for that proposed so far have shown not to be a 'panacea' and actually 'feeble' in the achievement of its ambitions. Therefore, new and more suitable mechanisms should be developed, along with a deeper knowledge of the factors that influence the reliability of the organic certification standard. This work seeks to shed some light on the matter of reliability, with the main objective of identifying the factors that influence the reliability of the organic standard at the farmer level. To that end, a theoretical model was proposed and proved through a survey carried out at the producer level in Costa Rica (n=63). The original theoretical model pursued to measure the influence of seven independent variables ('perceived usefulness', 'perceived costs', 'motivations', 'sources of control' attitudes towards risk, the certification body and the auditor) influencing the determination of the reliability, and three target variables (satisfaction, credibility and good reputation) linked with the reliability. From them, the variables 'managerial and economic motivation', perceived usefulness', 'perceived costs' and 'auditor's expertise' were found to be significant, explaining 61.3 percent of the variance in the 'perceived reliability' of the organic certification standard among organic farmers. Besides, the results indicate the existence of a significant correlation between the reliability and farmers' satisfaction with the organic standard. Instead of the introduction of stricter controls or higher sanctions, as suggested often in the literature, the findings of this work propose working on the cost/benefit ratio of the producer, his/her motivations and the performance of the auditor during the inspections in order to improve the reliability of the organic certification standard. Besides, that will be way to contribute to farmers' satisfaction with the use of organic certification standard.