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Who Gets Included in Community Supported Agriculture? Governance Design, Transaction Costs, and Socio-Demographic Patterns among Small Organic Farmers in Indonesia

Maula Fadhilata Rahmatika[1*], Sri Muljaningsih[2], Amira Hasnanuha Ulayya[3]
[1*]Universitas Negeri Surabaya, Surabaya, Indonesia
[2]Universitas Brawijaya, Malang, Indonesia
[3]Universiti Putra Malaysia, Selangor, Malaysia

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ABSTRACT

Objective: *This study aims to examine how Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) governance design shapes the socio-demographic inclusion of small organic farmers. While CSA has gained attention as an alternative agri-food system, existing research remains predominantly consumer-oriented and provides limited explanation of how different categories of farmers are included or excluded. This study addresses this gap by reframing farmer participation as an institutional outcome rather than an individual choice.* ***Method:*** *The study adopts a qualitative comparative case study approach, focusing on two contrasting CSA models in Mojokerto, Indonesia. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with 38 farmers, CSA managers, and coordinators, complemented by document analysis and field observations. Guided by Transaction Cost Economics (TCE), qualitative data were analyzed using Atlas.ti through a deductive–inductive thematic analysis followed by cross-case comparison.* ***Results:*** *The findings show that CSA governance design plays a decisive role in shaping farmer inclusion. Decentralized, community-based governance relies on peer coordination and informal monitoring, effectively favoring experienced, land-owning farmers with strong social embeddedness. In contrast, centralized, organization-led governance internalizes coordination, monitoring, and certification costs, lowering entry barriers for younger, landless, or less experienced farmers, albeit with reduced autonomy. Socio-demographic characteristics thus emerge as reflections of governance compatibility rather than direct determinants of participation.* ***Novelty:*** *This study contributes to CSA scholarship by conceptualizing farmer inclusion as an institutional outcome shaped by transaction cost allocation. By extending Transaction Cost Economics to alternative agri-food networks, it provides a governance-based explanation of inclusion and exclusion dynamics in CSA, particularly in developing-country contexts.*

INTRODUCTION

Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) has increasingly emerged as an alternative model of sustainable agriculture, promoted for its potential to shorten food supply chains, enhance environmental sustainability, and strengthen relationships between producers and consumers (Medici, Canavari, & Castellini, 2021; Savarese, Chamberlain, & Graffigna, 2020; Tay, Ng, & Lim, 2024). Originating in Japan and later diffusing across Europe and North America, CSA has been widely discussed as a response to the ecological, economic, and social limitations of conventional agricultural markets (Medici et al., 2021; Paul, 2019). More recently, CSA has expanded beyond its original geographic contexts and has begun to gain traction in developing countries across Asia, including Indonesia, where it is increasingly promoted as an innovative institutional arrangement for small-scale organic farming (Mendoza, Furoc-Paelmo, Makahiya, & Mendoza, 2020; Reuter & MacRae, 2022; Tay et al., 2024).

Alongside its practical diffusion, academic interest in CSA has grown substantially over the past two decades. However, this expanding body of literature reveals a strong

consumer-centered orientation. Most empirical studies focus on consumers' motivations, preferences, and behavioral intentions to participate in CSA schemes (Chen, Gao, Chen, & Zhang, 2019; Diekmann & Theuvsen, 2019a; Galley, Saleh, & Bottazzi, 2025; Rahmatika, Suman, Syafitri, & Muljaningsih, 2024). Research commonly examines factors such as health consciousness, environmental concern, ethical consumption, willingness to pay, and lifestyle alignment, often drawing on behavioral frameworks such as the Theory of Planned Behavior, UTAUT, or value-based models (de Matos, de Barcellos, & Dalmoro, 2025; Diekmann & Theuvsen, 2019b; Yang, Al Mamun, Reza, Naznen, & Masud, 2024). This consumer-oriented emphasis is not limited to developed economies. In emerging CSA contexts across Asia, CSA research has similarly tended to frame CSA as a market innovation focused on improving consumers' access to organic food. In Indonesia, this tendency is particularly evident, as existing studies predominantly emphasize consumer behavior while paying limited attention to farmers' participation (Azre & Osbahr, 2025; Rahmatika et al., 2024; Sulistyowati, Afiff, Baiquni, & Siscawati, 2023, 2026). Farmers are frequently treated as passive beneficiaries of CSA or as homogeneous actors whose participation is assumed rather than analytically examined (Azre & Osbahr, 2025; Doherty, Tayse, Kaiser, & Rao, 2023). When farmers are included, studies tend to focus on outcome-oriented assessments, such as income stability (Galt et al., 2017; Paul, 2019), welfare improvement (Daudu, Abdoulaye, Bamba, Shuaib, & Awotide, 2023), or livelihood enhancement after joining CSA (Xu, Zuo, Law, & Zhang, 2022). Consequently, relatively little is known about who actually participates as a CSA farmer and how such participation is patterned along socio-demographic lines.

This imbalance points to a critical research gap. Despite the central role of farmers in CSA arrangements, studies explicitly examining the socio-demographic characteristics of CSA farmers remain scarce, particularly in developing-country contexts. Variables such as age, education, farming experience, land ownership, and household labor are often reported descriptively but rarely analyzed as key elements shaping participation. More importantly, these characteristics are usually treated as individual attributes, detached from the institutional and organizational environments in which CSA operates. As a result, CSA participation is implicitly portrayed as open and self-selective, obscuring the role of governance structures in shaping inclusion.

The neglect of farmers' socio-demographic profiles is especially problematic in contexts where smallholders face substantial structural constraints. In countries like Indonesia, organic farmers encounter high transaction costs related to certification, coordination, quality control, and market access, compounded by limited access to land, capital, and technical knowledge (Fritz et al., 2021; Sujianto et al., 2022). Under such conditions, participation in CSA cannot be understood solely as a matter of personal preference or demographic suitability. Instead, it raises a more fundamental question: which types of farmers are able to enter CSA arrangements, and through what institutional mechanisms?

Addressing this question requires moving beyond demographic description toward an institutional explanation of inclusion. This study argues that farmers' socio-demographic profiles should not be viewed merely as independent determinants of CSA participation, but rather as outcomes shaped by governance design. Different CSA models allocate coordination responsibilities, risks, and transaction costs in distinct ways, and these allocations systematically influence who can realistically participate (Rotoli,

Scalco, & Pigatto, 2021; Shi & Wang, 2023; Zhao & Yue, 2020). CSA models relying on farmer-led coordination and peer monitoring may implicitly favor experienced farmers with strong social capital, whereas models characterized by centralized management and formal control systems may lower entry barriers for younger, less experienced, or land-constrained farmers (Rotoli et al., 2021; Vaderna, Home, Migliorini, & Roep, 2022).

Despite its relevance, this institutional perspective remains underdeveloped in CSA research. Existing studies rarely engage with theories of economic organization, such as Transaction Cost Economics (TCE), which emphasize how governance structures emerge to economize on transaction costs under conditions of uncertainty and bounded rationality. In contrast to behavioral or social capital-based approaches that tend to emphasize psychological or relational factors, Transaction Cost Economics (TCE) was chosen because it provides a systematic analytical tool to trace how the costs of coordination, monitoring, and risk bearing, which are at the core of the barriers to small-scale farmer participation, are distributed and internalized by organizational structures. TCE allows for a more structured analysis of how variations in institutional design (such as levels of centralization, control mechanisms, and asset allocation) selectively attract or deter farmers with different resource endowments. Thus, TCE offers a more mechanistic explanation of the relationship between governance and inclusion patterns than an alternative theoretical framework. Applying TCE to CSA enables a more systematic analysis of how organizational forms distribute costs and responsibilities between farmers and coordinating entities, thereby shaping patterns of inclusion and exclusion. This gap is particularly evident in Indonesia, where CSA remains under-researched compared to Western contexts (Azre & Osbahr, 2025; Rahmatika et al., 2024; Sulistyowati et al., 2023, 2026). While previous studies have documented consumer interest in CSA and assessed its impacts on farmer welfare, few have examined the internal organization of CSA models and how these governance structures shape the socio-demographic composition of participating farmers. As a result, current knowledge provides limited insight into whether CSA functions as an inclusive institutional arrangement or inadvertently reproduces existing inequalities among smallholders.

This perspective generates a central theoretical tension in understanding farmer participation. On one hand, prevailing approaches, implicit in much of the consumer-focused literature, treat socio-demographic characteristics as independent, individual-level determinants of participation. From this perspective, inclusion is largely a matter of self-selection based on personal attributes, resources, and preferences. On the other hand, an institutional economics perspective, guided by TCE, posits that these characteristics are better understood as outcomes filtered through governance structures that allocate transaction costs and coordination burdens in specific ways. This study explicitly addresses this tension by investigating not which farmers participate based on demographics alone, but how the institutional design of CSA models systematically shapes participation by redistributing the costs and responsibilities that different farmers are able to bear.

In response, this study shifts the analytical focus from consumers to producers by examining who gets included in CSA from the farmers' perspective. Rather than asking which farmers participate based on demographic characteristics alone, this study investigates how CSA governance structures shape participation by redistributing transaction costs and coordination burdens. Through a comparative analysis of two

contrasting CSA models in Indonesia, Brenjonk Organik and Twelve's Organik, this research explores how different governance designs correspond to distinct socio-demographic profiles of participating farmers. By doing so, this study makes three contributions to the CSA literature. First, it addresses the empirical gap concerning farmers' socio-demographic profiles in CSA, particularly in developing-country contexts. Second, it reconceptualizes farmer inclusion as an institutional outcome shaped by governance design rather than as a purely individual choice. Third, it extends the application of Transaction Cost Economics to alternative agri-food networks by offering a governance-based explanation of inclusion and exclusion within CSA systems. The main contribution of this research is to recontextualize socio-demographic characteristics from what was originally an explanatory variable, to a variable that is explained as a result of institutional design. This approach not only fills the research gap in Indonesia, but also offers an analytical framework that can be applied to understand the selectivity of inclusion in various forms of collective organization in the agricultural sector.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative comparative case study design to examine how different CSA governance structures shape the socio-demographic inclusion of small organic farmers. A qualitative approach is appropriate given the study's objective to uncover institutional and governance mechanisms, rather than to test individual-level behavioral relationships (Minah & Malvido Pérez Carletti, 2019; Untari & Vellema, 2022). The research is grounded in an institutional economics perspective, conceptualizing socio-demographic characteristics of farmers as outcomes of governance arrangements rather than as independent explanatory variables. The unit of analysis is the CSA governance model, within which farmers are embedded. The two cases used in this research, Brenjonk Organik and Twelve's Organik, were selected based on a maximum variation logic to represent two distinct ideal types along the decentralization–centralization continuum of governance design. Both operate within the same regional context (Mojokerto, Indonesia) under similar market and regulatory conditions, allowing the study to isolate the influence of institutional variation on farmer participation patterns while controlling for external contextual factors. By comparing two CSA initiatives operating in similar market and regulatory environments but characterized by distinct governance designs, the study aims to identify how institutional variation influences farmer participation patterns.

Data were collected using multiple qualitative methods to enable triangulation and enhance analytical robustness. Semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted with 38 farmers which are CSA managers, coordinators, and participating farmers in both cases. Interviews lasted 60–90 minutes on average, were conducted in Bahasa Indonesia, and were audio-recorded with prior consent. All recordings were transcribed verbatim and, where necessary for analysis, translated into English while preserving original meaning. Interview protocols focused on governance arrangements, entry requirements, coordination mechanisms, certification processes, risk-sharing practices, and farmers' experiences of participation. To complement interview data, organizational documents, partnership agreements, certification guidelines, and other publicly available materials were analyzed to capture the formal governance structures and institutional arrangements underpinning each CSA model. In addition, non-participant field

observations were carried out at production sites, coordination meetings, and operational activities to document day-to-day practices and informal interactions that are not always articulated in interviews. Together, these data sources provide a comprehensive understanding of both formal and informal mechanisms shaping farmer inclusion in CSA systems.

The analysis is guided by Transaction Cost Economics (TCE) as the primary analytical framework, which provides a systematic lens to examine how governance structures emerge to economize on transaction costs under conditions of uncertainty, asset specificity, and bounded rationality. Within this framework, CSA is conceptualized as a hybrid governance form that combines elements of market exchange and hierarchical coordination (Ciliberti, Frascarelli, & Martino, 2020; Rommel, Posse, Wittkamp, & Paech, 2022; Rotoli et al., 2021). The study focuses on how different CSA models allocate key transaction costs faced by small organic farmers, particularly coordination costs related to production planning and collective decision-making, monitoring and certification costs associated with organic compliance, and risk-bearing costs arising from yield uncertainty and market fluctuations. Farmers' socio-demographic characteristics such as age, education, land ownership status, and farming experience, are therefore interpreted not as independent determinants of participation but as institutionally filtered outcomes that reflect the degree of compatibility between farmer attributes and the governance requirements of each CSA model.

Qualitative data analysis was conducted using Atlas.ti qualitative data analysis software to ensure systematic coding, transparency, and analytical rigor. Interview transcripts, field notes, and relevant documents were imported into Atlas.ti and analyzed through a deductive–inductive thematic analysis combined with comparative case analysis (Carlson & Bitsch, 2019). Deductive coding was first applied based on key concepts derived from Transaction Cost Economics, including governance structure, coordination mechanisms, transaction cost allocation, degree of centralization, and risk distribution, providing a theoretical scaffold for examining the institutional features of each CSA model (Rotoli et al., 2021). This was followed by inductive coding to capture themes emerging directly from the data, such as informal entry criteria, farmer recruitment processes, perceived barriers to participation, and the role of socio-demographic attributes in shaping farmers' experiences within CSA. To ensure coding reliability and consistency, an iterative process was employed: two researchers independently coded a subset of transcripts, discussed discrepancies until consensus was reached, and refined the codebook accordingly. This codebook then guided the coding of the remaining data. Regular audit trails and memo-writing within Atlas.ti documented the analytical decisions and emerging interpretations. Atlas.ti facilitated memo writing and code co-occurrence analysis, enabling iterative refinement of analytical categories. Subsequently, a cross-case comparative analysis was conducted within Atlas.ti to systematically compare Brenjonk Organik and Twelve's Organik, focusing on how differences in governance design corresponded to distinct transaction cost structures and, in turn, to different socio-demographic profiles of participating farmers. The analysis culminated in the development of a governance typology of CSA models that links institutional design to farmer inclusion mechanisms. The goal of this analysis is analytical generalization, aiming to generate theoretically grounded insights about the relationship between governance design and inclusion mechanisms that can be applied to similar institutional contexts, rather than statistical generalization to a broader population.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

The empirical findings reveal clear differences between the two CSA initiatives in terms of governance arrangements, transaction cost allocation, and the socio-demographic composition of participating farmers. In terms of governance arrangements, Brenjonk Organik operates under a community-based partnership model characterized by decentralized governance. Farmers retain control over their land and production decisions, while coordination is conducted through regular meetings and informal agreements among members. Decision-making processes involve collective discussions among farmers, and production planning is coordinated through group-based arrangements. Monitoring of organic practices relies primarily on peer-based mechanisms and mutual oversight among farmers, with limited reliance on formal documentation. In contrast, Twelve's Organik adopts a centralized governance structure. Farmers participate through land-leasing arrangements in which production land is provided by the organization. Production planning, input use, and quality standards are determined centrally by the organization. Organic compliance is ensured through a formal Internal Control System (ICS) managed by the organization, replacing individual or peer-based monitoring. Farmers follow standardized production protocols, while coordination and certification processes are handled by organizational staff.

These governance arrangements correspond to different distributions of transaction-related activities. In Brenjonk Organik, coordination activities such as planning, communication, and scheduling are carried out primarily by farmers. Monitoring activities, including compliance with organic practices and quality control, are also conducted at the farmer level through peer-based arrangements. Although formal certification expenses are relatively limited, farmers engage in frequent coordination and monitoring activities as part of routine participation. In Twelve's Organik, transaction-related activities associated with coordination, monitoring, and certification are largely managed by the organization. Farmers are not required to organize collective coordination processes or engage directly in certification-related administration. Instead, these activities are centralized within the organizational structure, resulting in a lower level of administrative involvement for individual farmers.

Entry mechanisms differ across the two CSA models. In Brenjonk Organik, entry is informal and based on group-level acceptance. Prospective farmers are expected to participate in collective activities and demonstrate familiarity with farming practices. Access to land is a prerequisite, as farmers cultivate their own plots. Social interaction within the farmer group plays an important role in shaping participation. In Twelve's Organik, entry is formalized through organizational recruitment procedures. Farmers are selected through an application process and participate under predefined contractual arrangements. Land access is provided by the organization, and prior experience with organic farming is not a formal requirement for participation.

The socio-demographic characteristics of participating farmers differ across the two CSA models. Farmers involved in Brenjonk Organik are predominantly middle-aged to

older individuals with substantial farming experience and control over land resources. Many have prior exposure to organic farming practices and long-standing involvement in agricultural activities within their local communities. In contrast, Twelve's Organik includes a more heterogeneous group of farmers. Participants include younger individuals, farmers with limited prior farming experience, and farmers without land ownership. For several participants, involvement in Twelve's Organik represents their first experience with organic farming.

Table 1. Comparative Summary of CSA Models, Transaction Cost Allocation, and Farmer Profiles.

Dimension	Brenjonk Organik	Twelve's Organik
Governance structure	Decentralized, community-based partnership	Centralized, organization-led
Land access	Farmer-owned or controlled	Land leased from organization
Production decision-making	Farmer-led, collective coordination	Centrally determined
Monitoring & certification	Peer-based monitoring, informal	Formal Internal Control System (ICS)
Coordination costs	High, borne by farmers	Low for farmers, internalized by organization
Certification costs	Low formal costs, high informal effort	Internalized by organization
Entry mechanism	Informal, socially selective	Formal recruitment procedures
Typical farmer age	Middle-aged to older	Younger and more diverse
Farming experience	Long experience, prior organic exposure	Limited or no prior organic experience
Land ownership	Mostly land-owning farmers	Includes landless/semi-landless farmers

Discussion

This study demonstrates that socio-demographic patterns among CSA farmers are institutionally produced rather than individually chosen, aligning with institutional economics perspectives that conceptualize farmer characteristics as outcomes of governance arrangements rather than as independent variables (Mwadzingeni, Mugandani, & Mafongoya, 2022). Farmer inclusion in CSA should therefore be understood as an institutional outcome shaped by how coordination responsibilities, risks, and transaction costs are allocated, rather than as a reflection of personal attributes or preferences (Ciliberti et al., 2020; Rotoli et al., 2021). This finding directly challenges the dominant consumer-centered orientation in CSA research, which has largely focused on consumers' motivations and ethical preferences (Wharton, Hughner, MacMillan, & Dumitrescu, 2015), while neglecting producer-side mechanisms that structure inclusion

and exclusion. As several Indonesian studies confirm, CSA research in the Global South remains heavily skewed toward consumer perspectives, with little systematic attention to farmers' participation or governance design (Rahmatika et al., 2024; Sulistyowati et al., 2023). A central contribution of this study lies in reframing socio-demographic characteristics such as age, land ownership, and farming experience, not as causal determinants but as indicators of compatibility between farmer endowments and governance requirements (Rwela, 2023). Participation is therefore systematically filtered through institutional logics that select for farmers with specific capacities such as time for coordination, existing trust networks, or managerial literacy, while creating barriers for those without them. This analytical insight moves beyond normative judgments about fairness to explain how governance structures produce distinct patterns of social selectivity. These patterns can be systematically interpreted through the core constructs of Transaction Cost Economics (TCE). First, asset specificity manifests in land ownership where Brenjonk's model requires farmers who own the specific asset (land), whereas Twelve's reduces this specificity by providing leased land. Second, uncertainty and production risk are largely borne by farmers in Brenjonk's decentralized system, while Twelve's absorbs this uncertainty through centralized planning and risk-pooling. Third, bounded rationality explains why farmers with limited time or cognitive capacity (e.g., younger or less experienced farmers) struggle with the relational coordination demands of Brenjonk's model, whereas Twelve's simplifies decision-making through standardized protocols. Finally, the choice of governance structure in each model represents a transaction-cost-efficient response to these conditions, with inclusion emerging as a distributive consequence of that efficiency calculus (Butler Flora & Bregendahl, 2012; Rommel et al., 2022; Vaderna et al., 2022).

The contrast between Brenjonk Organik and Twelve's Organik reveals how different governance strategies fundamentally redistribute coordination costs, cognitive burdens, and production risks, thereby shaping the social composition of those able to participate. Brenjonk Organik's decentralized, peer-monitored governance embodies a farmer-led ideal commonly celebrated in alternative food movements as "community empowerment" (Butler Flora & Bregendahl, 2012). However, the findings align with Butler Flora & Bregendahl (2012) that this governance form externalizes substantial coordination, time, and cognitive costs to farmers themselves. This pattern also align with Transaction Cost Economics (TCE), which predicts that under bounded rationality and asset specificity, decentralized systems tend to shift the burden of coordination downstream, thereby raising participation thresholds (Buckingham, 1954). In Brenjonk's case, the absence of formal coordination mechanisms or managerial oversight means that only farmers with prior land control, strong managerial literacy, and dense social capital can sustain participation, an outcome empirically consistent with studies of farmer-led irrigation and collective agriculture where "decentralization can paradoxically reproduce exclusion by privileging those already well-endowed with resources and networks" (Khadka et al., 2021). It is important to acknowledge that some studies have found

decentralized, community-based models to be inclusive under certain conditions, particularly where initial resource endowments among farmers are relatively equal. The difference in findings highlights how contextual factors, especially pre-existing inequalities in land ownership and social capital, mediate the relationship between governance design and inclusion outcomes. In contexts like Mojokerto, where such inequalities are pronounced, decentralization tends to amplify them.

Comparable findings have been documented in other farmer-led CSA systems which results in decentralized systems relying on peer coordination tend to favor those with higher social capital and organizational capacity, while marginalizing new entrants or resource-constrained farmers (Collins, Gray, Reid, Shadbolt, & Dooley, 2018; Vaderna et al., 2022; Waters-Bayer et al., 2015). As Rommel et al. (2022) note, "coordination costs are not eliminated by trust, they are merely relocated within the system." In this sense, Brenjonk's farmer-led model produces a specific pattern of selective inclusion where participation depends not only on willingness but on the capacity to internalize coordination and monitoring costs.

By contrast, Twelve's Organik represents a centralized, organization-led model that internalizes transaction costs through managerial coordination, land leasing, and a formal Internal Control System (ICS). This hybrid arrangement reflects Kahneman, Knetsch, & Thaler's (1986) argument that hierarchical coordination substitutes for relational contracting under uncertainty. Empirically, this design mirrors findings from hybrid CSA and organic certification networks, where hierarchical coordination and formal monitoring mechanisms enable economies of scale in compliance and certification (Glin, Oosterveer, & Mol, 2015). In Twelve's case, by absorbing monitoring and certification costs institutionally, the organization effectively lowers entry barriers for resource-constrained farmers, allowing those without land or prior experience to participate. This governance form aligns with broader evidence that centralized coordination can foster inclusion as access by substituting for missing social capital or managerial capacity (Jackson, 2023; Matthews, Fish, & Tzanopoulos, 2024). This comparison reveals a fundamental governance dilemma, each design solves one set of coordination problems while creating another. Decentralized models like Brenjonk's minimize formal administrative costs and preserve farmer autonomy but maximize relational transaction costs and cognitive burdens placed on individual members. Centralized models like Twelve's efficiently reduce coordination costs and barriers to entry but create new dependencies and reduce producer control over decision-making. Thus, inclusion and autonomy emerge as frequently competing, rather than complementary, institutional outcomes.

In Twelve's Organik, coordination efficiency is achieved through institutional substitution rather than farmer self-organization, an outcome that illustrates the logic of transaction-cost internalization within hybrid forms. Yet, as the findings reveal, this inclusivity is accompanied by trade-offs in autonomy. Farmers in Twelve's Organik experience limited discretion over production planning and marketing, consistent with

Koopmans, Rogge, Mettepenningen, Knickel, & Šūmane (2018) observation that multi-actor governance may align incentives and reduce transaction costs, but at the expense of decision-making independence. The organizational concentration of authority thus redefines inclusion as institutional incorporation contingent upon compliance with organizational procedures as Glin et al. (2015) called as "rule-based legitimacy". This finding underscores the ambivalent nature of inclusion in institutional design while centralized governance structures can democratize access by absorbing costs, they may simultaneously reproduce new forms of dependency and hierarchical control. As a result, the two cases exemplify contrasting institutional logics of inclusion. Brenjonk Organik achieves inclusion through social embeddedness, relying on trust and experience, while Twelve's Organik does so through institutional substitution, relying on formal coordination and control. Both are transactionally rational but socially differentiated outcomes, confirming Rotoli et al.'s (2021) argument that the design of CSA organizations systematically determines who can participate, not merely how they produce.

Beyond CSA, these findings contribute to broader debates in institutional economics and the study of collective organizations. First, they extend TCE's analytical reach from questions of efficiency to the distributive consequences of governance choice. Second, they enrich our understanding of hybrid organizational forms by showing how variations in the internalization of transaction costs produce different patterns of member participation. Third, they offer a framework for analyzing selectivity in various membership-based organizations—such as cooperatives, producer associations, and certification schemes—where governance demands interact with member heterogeneity. In TCE terms, Brenjonk's model minimizes administrative costs at the expense of high relational transaction costs, while Twelve's model reverses this by internalizing administrative costs and achieving lower coordination costs through hierarchy. The contrast highlights that CSA governance forms are not morally distinct alternatives to markets, but institutional responses to transaction cost constraints, a view also echoed in Ciliberti et al. (2020), who describe agri-food collectives as hybrid arrangements that balance autonomy with control in the pursuit of cost efficiency. Ultimately, this comparative analysis reveals that CSA inclusion is contingent on the institutional architecture through which transaction costs are organized. Both models achieve inclusion, but by different mechanisms and with distinct distributive consequences, underscoring that governance design, not ethical orientation, defines the social reach of alternative food systems.

CONCLUSION

Fundamental Finding: This study demonstrates that farmer inclusion in Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) is a structured institutional outcome, not a simple aggregate of individual choices. The central finding is that socio-demographic patterns, such as the prevalence of experienced, land-owning farmers in decentralized models versus younger, landless participants in centralized ones are primarily the product of governance design. By applying Transaction Cost Economics (TCE), the analysis reveals

that these patterns emerge from how different CSA models allocate key costs: decentralized systems externalize coordination and monitoring burdens onto farmers, while centralized systems internalize them within an organizational hierarchy. This evidence fundamentally re-conceptualizes farmer characteristics from being independent predictors of participation to being filters of institutional compatibility. **Implication:** This finding has significant theoretical and practical consequences. Theoretically, it advances TCE by systematically linking the economization of transaction costs to social differentiation, thereby extending the framework's explanatory power from efficiency to inclusion. For practitioners and policymakers, the imperative is clear: achieving equitable inclusion requires deliberate institutional engineering. Interventions must shift focus from training individual farmers to building supportive infrastructures, such as collective certification schemes, cooperative land-access models, and professional managerial intermediation. Crucially, these designs must navigate the core trade-off between widening access and preserving autonomy, ensuring that mechanisms for inclusion also safeguard farmer agency and voice. **Limitation:** The insights of this study are bounded by its methodological scope. As a qualitative, comparative case study focused on two initiatives within a single Indonesian region, its findings are contextually rich and analytically generalizable to similar institutional settings, but not statistically representative of all CSA models. The analysis highlights governance mechanisms but does not quantify the precise weight of different transaction costs or their evolution over time. **Future Research:** To deepen and extend this institutional analysis, several research pathways are essential. Future studies should employ longitudinal designs to trace the evolution of inclusion patterns and trade-offs. Comparative research across different national and policy contexts is needed to test the robustness of the proposed framework and identify its boundary conditions. Mixed methods approaches that quantify participation patterns while qualitatively unpacking governance dynamics would provide stronger evidence. Finally, integrating political economy and critical agrarian perspectives would illuminate how broader power relations, market structures, and state policies shape the possibilities and limits of inclusive governance in alternative food networks.

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*__Maula Fadhilata Rahmatika (Corresponding Author)__
Department of Economics Faculty of Economics and Business,
Universitas Negeri Surabaya,
Address: Surabaya
Email: maularahmatika@unesa.ac.id

Sri Mulyaningsih
Department of Economics Faculty of Economics and Business,
Universitas Brawijaya,
Address: Malang
Email: muljaningsih@ub.ac.id

Amira Hasnanuha Ulayya
Department Food Science Faculty of Food Science and Technology
Universiti Putra Malaysia,
Address: Putrajaya
Email: Gs73275@student.upm.edu.my