



Building a roundtable for a sustainable hazelnut supply chain



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ABSTRACT

Considering the increasing awareness of the sustainability issues in the hazelnut sector in Turkey as well as its leading role in the international market, this paper provides a thorough qualitative analysis of the potential of creating a roundtable for sustainable hazelnuts, and the key success factors to consider. This is done by combining insights from the most relevant stakeholders in the hazelnut sector and the existing literature on partnerships for sustainability. The research findings show that there is potential to create a roundtable for sustainable hazelnuts. The issues in the sector are highly complex, there exist multiple interdependences among stakeholders, and potential solutions can be achieved through joint interventions. This research equips practitioners with relevant information that allows them to better understand the potential and the formation phase of a multi-stakeholder partnership for the sector, facilitating the process and increasing its chance for success in case there is a desire to create such an organization. Meanwhile, a more practical and sector-specific perspective is provided to the existing literature, particularly to that on the formation process of partnerships. In addition, the methodology followed in this paper indicates a clear and systematic approach to analyze the potential of other partnerships' formation which can be applicable to different settings.

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1. Introduction

In 1992, during the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD), one of the first official calls was made to put sustainable development on the international agenda (van Huijstee et al., 2007). Since then, multiple initiatives have emerged in order to improve sustainability in the different economic sectors, among which the agricultural sector has a prominent position (Dentoni and Peterson, 2011). These initiatives have generally aimed to achieve sustainable production through the Triple Bottom Line (henceforth, TBL) approach¹ via the implementation of good agricultural practices, the improvement of farm management skills and social and living conditions, and the care for the environment (Potts et al., 2014).

There are significant differences in the way these initiatives to increase agriculture sustainability are structured, as well as on their intrinsic motivations, and the capabilities and mechanisms

available to achieve their goal. This diversity, especially concerning capabilities, combined with the recognition of the complexity to tackle sustainability issues has increased the awareness among organizations of their interdependences and their need to collaborate. As a result, more and more partnerships have emerged, which have been increasingly embraced by academics and practitioners (i.e. Stöteler et al., 2012; van Huijstee et al., 2007). Examples of partnerships for sustainable agriculture are the Roundtable for Sustainable Palm Oil RSPO, the Sustainable Agriculture Network SAN, the World Cocoa Foundation WCF, and the Sustainable Rice Platform SRP.

This paper provides a thorough qualitative analysis of the potential of creating a roundtable for sustainable hazelnuts in Turkey. Alongside this qualitative analysis, this paper describes how the roundtable should be set up in order to increase the chance of success. Therefore, the emphasis lies on the formation phase which sets the basis for a successful partnership (Stöteler et al., 2012). The focus on the Turkish hazelnut sector aligns with its national and international importance. The food and agriculture industry in Turkey is large, contributing to approximately 9% of the overall Gross Value Added (GVA) and 25% of the employment levels in the country (ISPAT, 2014). Among the different crops in Turkey, the production of hazelnuts stands out. According to the Food and

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¹ See (Elkington, 1998). The TBL approach provides a comprehensive definition of sustainability, based on three dimensions: economic (profit), social (people), and ecological (planet), known as the PPPs.

Agriculture Organization of the United Nations [FAO \(2016\)](#), Turkey is the world's leading hazelnut producer and exporter, accounting for about 70% of the total world supply, and 76% of the world's hazelnut trade. Moreover, the hazelnut production has a strong influence on the social and economic structure of a significant portion of Turkey as thousands of people, especially in the Black Sea Region, are directly or indirectly related to this economic activity ([Köksal, 2000](#)). Unfortunately, the Turkish hazelnut sector faces many challenges in terms of sustainability, such as low productivity due to old orchards, low environmental standards, unsafe working conditions for migrant workers, low wages, and child labor ([UTZ, 2016](#)).

The acknowledgment of these problems in the hazelnut sector in Turkey has recently led to various local and international organizations, including private firms, NGOs and governmental institutions, moving efforts and resources into programs that help boosting sustainability. However, most of these initiatives are being developed in isolation, potentially leading to overlapping or even conflicting efforts. Favorably, these initiatives are still in their startup phases, which makes it the right moment to identify interdependences, and decide whether it is convenient to join forces in order to achieve the desirable sector impact. The analysis drawn in this paper intends to support practitioners in the hazelnut sector by providing them with a set of practical recommendations on whether the transition towards a roundtable for sustainable hazelnuts is viable, and if so, what the essential requirements are during the formation phase to guarantee the best results.

The literature on partnerships for sustainability in the agricultural sector is relatively scarce. Moreover a large majority of the literature focuses on either providing a general theoretical model of how such partnerships should operate, or on applying those theoretical models to perform an ex-post assessment of existing initiatives. This paper contributes to this literature by providing a practical approach in which both, theory and experts' knowledge, are applied to an ex-ante assessment of a potential partnership in a specific sector, namely the hazelnut sector. For this purpose, a formation phase partnership model from the literature is used to design the qualitative approach and present the findings of this paper. In-depth interviews with relevant actors in the hazelnut sector and a questionnaire filled out by hazelnut farmers are used to gather information on the perceptions of key stakeholders regarding the formation of a roundtable for sustainability in the Turkish hazelnut sector. This approach can be subsequently used in different settings to investigate the potential of a roundtable for other crops. The main objective of this paper is therefore to investigate the potential of a roundtable for sustainable hazelnuts from both a theoretical perspective and the perception of stakeholders. To achieve this main objective, this paper addresses five secondary related objectives, namely: i. the main sustainability issues in the hazelnut sector in Turkey and the existing initiatives addressing these issues; ii. the benefits of creating a roundtable for sustainable hazelnuts; iii. the costs and risks of a roundtable for sustainable hazelnuts; iv. the challenges in the formation of a roundtable for sustainable hazelnuts; v. the main conditions and recommendations for success for a roundtable for sustainable hazelnuts.

The remainder of this paper is structured as follows. Section 2 outlines the existing literature by first defining roundtables for sustainability, and their advantages and disadvantages; and then exploring the formation process of roundtables. Section 3 focuses in Turkey by presenting a situational description of the hazelnut sector and the existing sustainability initiatives. Section 4 discusses the research methodology and the data; and provides an overview of the interview participants. Section 5 presents the results and discussion. Finally, section 6 concludes.

2. Literature review

2.1. Sustainability and multi-sectoral partnerships

The concept of sustainability can take different definitions, depending in particular, on the field of research in which it is used (see e.g. [Vos, 2007](#) for an ecological perspective of sustainability, and [Toman, 1992](#) for a social science and anthropological perspective). Despite the differences in definitions, all of them preserve the character given by the United Nations of intergenerational fairness and respect. This paper follows [Elkington \(1998\)](#) and [Willard \(2002\)](#) on the definition of sustainable agriculture and sustainable food supply chain.² By that, this paper considers that achieving a sustainable hazelnut supply chain encompasses that all stakeholders involved in the production, transportation and distribution, processing and manufacturing, and retailing, are aware of the necessity of adopting sustainable practices that care for the environment, the people, and the profit; and that they act upon this necessity. Achieving a sustainable hazelnut supply chain also implies that the market demands better practices and rewards them, that consumers are well informed on the performance of the sector, and that organizations outside the chain such as governments, NGOs and research institutions are also involved in the process (see [Boström et al., 2015](#); [Govindan et al., 2016](#); [Luthra et al., 2017](#); [Rajeev et al., 2017](#); and [Silvestre, 2015](#) for recent work on sustainable supply chain).

Contrary to the concept of sustainability, the notion of multi-sectoral partnership does not vary significantly among studies. The core idea of the concept is to denote joined voluntary activities in which at least three different sectors of society are involved (business, government, NGOs, and civil society), and which is beneficial for all participants ([Gray and Stites, 2013](#); [Rein et al., 2005](#); [van Huijstee et al., 2007](#)). Nevertheless, a vast majority of the literature uses collaborative arrangements, cross-sectoral partnerships, intersectoral partnerships, and multi-stakeholder initiatives (MSIs) interchangeably ([Gray and Stites, 2013](#)).

Regardless of the name given to the cooperation, according to the [Partnerships Resource Centre \(2015\)](#) there are certain requirements that need to be met in order to classify such cooperation as a partnership. These requirements stress that there needs to be a high degree of partners' involvement, which is based on the intention of cooperating and on the obligations, that come along with the process. Such obligations involve clear inputs in terms of resources and competences, risk sharing, commitment to institutionalize the partnership beyond its own boundaries, among others. Furthermore, highlighting obligations leads to the necessity of having a monitoring system in place that allows to evaluate a member's compliance and the partnership's performance. [The Partnerships Resource Centre \(2015\)](#) also states that it is central to clarify all these aspects in the initial phases of the partnership, and to include them in a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU).

2.2. Roundtables for sustainability

In addition, there are also different types of multi-sectoral partnerships. Among those, roundtables have become more common to tackle sustainability issues ([Ponte, 2014](#)). Examples of these are the Roundtable on Sustainable Biomaterials (RSB), the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO), the Global Roundtable for Sustainable Beef (GRSB), and the Roundtable on Responsible Soy (RTRS). [Ponte \(2014\)](#) defines 'roundtabling' as: "the current process

² The majority of the studies in sustainable supply chain management focus on the agriculture and food sectors ([Rajeev et al., 2017](#)).

of fitting a variety of commodity-specific sustainability situations into a form that not only 'hears more voices' (as in multi-stakeholder) but also portrays to give them equal standing at the table of negotiations (roundtable), thus raising higher expectations in terms of accountability, transparency, inclusiveness and 'proper democratic process' (Ponte, 2014, p. 262).

Therefore, roundtables for sustainability are initiatives consisting of different stakeholders, from different societal levels, which aim to jointly tackle sustainability issues of a specific sector or product mainly by developing and promoting standards for better practices (WWF, 2010). In line with the WWF's descriptions, Ponte (2014) and Cheyns (2011), among others, recognize the development of standards, and the certification and accreditation schemes, as common procedural features of MSIs and roundtables. Furthermore, Ponte's (2014) definition of 'roundtabling' emphasizes the equal right to participate for all partners as a key distinguishing feature of roundtables compared to other MSIs. Ponte (2014) argues that this characteristic, together with the procedural features mentioned above, and some specific institutional features are required for multi-stakeholder initiatives to be considered as roundtables. The institutional features include an executive director, an executive board or a board of directors, an assembly or council, technical advisory committees or working groups with experts on the concerning topics, and support staff (Ponte, 2014).³

2.3. Roundtable for hazelnut supply chain

Considering the literature on partnerships and sustainability, a roundtable for sustainable hazelnuts should ideally meet a general set of requirements. It needs to be a voluntary initiative that involves different stakeholders, who represent more than two societal levels which are being affected by sustainability issues in the sector and want to work towards its improvement across the entire supply chain. Moreover, to be legitimized as a partnership rather than a collaboration initiative, the roundtable needs to fulfill the given criteria of the Partnerships Resource Centre (2015). Finally, following Ponte's (2014) arguments, it needs to ensure that the right mechanisms are in place for all partners to have equal standing at the table of negotiations, and the procedural and institutional features need to be taken into account. These are all ideal characteristics for a roundtable, while in practice specific definitions and requirements are developed and agreed by the partners based on what they perceive as the most relevant dimensions (The Partnerships Resource Centre, 2015).

Having defined what is meant by a roundtable for sustainable hazelnuts, next it should be clear the suitability of such approach to tackle sustainability issues. MSIs are increasingly emerging, especially in the food and beverage sector (Dentoni and Peterson, 2011). This trend has been identified by various academics (e.g. Carter and Rogers, 2008; Cheung et al., 2009; Cheyns, 2011; Gray and Stites, 2013; Potts et al., 2014), who acknowledge the complexity of achieving sustainable development. These studies agree that partnerships are the most suitable approach to address complex sustainability challenges (Vollmer, 2009). Despite these positive perceptions, a few concerns about using MSIs to tackle sustainability issues remain. These concerns relate mainly to: i. the lack of legitimacy of partnerships, which is highly linked to inclusiveness problems (see Andonova and Levy, 2003; Bäckstrand, 2006; Cheyns, 2011; Fünfgeld, 2010; Gleckman, 2016; Gosses and Keen, 2014; Knorringer et al., 2012 and; McAllister and Taylor, 2015) and

to; ii. the new type of governance that is emerging along with these MSIs and its institutional implications (see Ivanova, 2003; McAllister and Taylor, 2015; and van Huijstee, 2012).

Despite the challenges imposed by the two abovementioned concerns,⁴ the critics are commonly focused on problems that emerge when MSIs are not properly designed and executed, rather than focused on the essence of the concept of MSIs (Bäckstrand, 2006; and McAllister and Taylor, 2015). From this perspective, such concerns are not necessarily in contradiction to the potential advantages of MSIs. According to van Huijstee et al. (2007), who perform a comprehensive review of the existing studies on the topic, the literature is in general very optimistic about the opportunities that MSIs offer. Those opportunities range from access to more knowledge and resources to more innovative and likely implemented solutions, often leading to larger-scale and more sustained improvements compared to those achieved by isolated interventions (see Andonova and Levy, 2003; Kania and Kramer, 2011; and Ponte, 2014; for support to partnerships).

Consequently, in order to seize the advantages of MSIs there is a strong necessity to understand the process of partnering. This necessity is even greater when considering the complexity of partnerships. Cross-sectoral partnerships are highly complex because of the issues they address, which often take place in a difficult context, but also because of the number of parties involved. The larger the number of stakeholders involved, the greater the pool of resources to provide solutions from, but also the higher the heterogeneity in strategies, interests and cultures (Stöteler et al., 2012). This vast heterogeneity makes the partnership lifecycle a challenging process, with overwhelming outcomes when wrongly tackled.⁵

Despite the challenging process of the partnership lifecycle, the academic literature dealing with the first phase of the partnership is still infant. Exception to this are Gray (2007); Seitanidi and Crane (2009); Seitanidi et al. (2010); and Stöteler et al. (2012). While examining the necessary conditions for partnerships to succeed, Gray (2007) focuses on the challenges encountered during the formation phase. Seitanidi and Crane (2009) add to this literature by analyzing two existing partnership case studies to identify the selection, design and institutionalization of the partnerships. Seitanidi et al. (2010), on the other hand, develop a model for analyzing partnership formation. Finally, Stöteler et al. (2012) builds on previous literature to propose a comprehensive model in which key determinants in the formation and execution phases are identified and explained. This model is derived from findings in the literature and is thus complementary to the literature discussed above. The main advantage of Stöteler et al. (2012) model is that it is designed for practitioners as a guide for partnership consideration and implementation. In this sense, the model encompasses all elements presented in the literature. Fig. 1 presents this model, in which the partnership formation process consists of two phases, namely the partnership initiation and the partnership building, linked by 'the spark'.⁶ This paper follows this model proposed by Stöteler et al. (2012) to fill the research gap in which the analysis of

⁴ There are other concerns which are more focused on procedural features of MSIs such as the time and resources expended, and the standards that result from these agreements (see e.g. Austin, 2000; Cheyns, 2011; Glasbergen, 2011; Margerum and Robinson, 2015; McAllister and Taylor, 2015; and Oxfam Novib, 2015).

⁵ The Partnership Lifecycle consists of two phases: the formation phase and the execution phase. The formation phase includes two steps: initiation/exploration, and building. Meanwhile, the execution phase includes three steps: implementation, and institutionalization and or extension (Stöteler et al., 2012).

⁶ These phases might be comparable to the levels proposed by Glasbergen (2011) as the exploratory level and the formation level, correspondingly.

³ From here on this paper uses the terms of partnership, multi-sectoral partnership, multi-stakeholder partnership, and multi-stakeholder initiate (MSI) interchangeably.

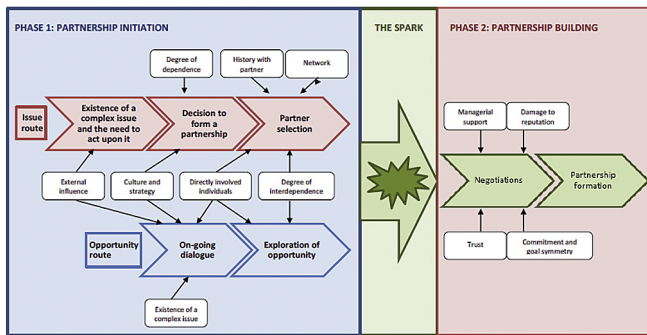


Fig. 1. The partnerships formation process (Stöteler et al., 2012).

the formation phase of a partnership has been focused either on providing a general theoretical model, or on applying those theoretical models to perform an ex-post assessment of existing initiatives. Thus, this paper bases the design of the qualitative approach on the model of Stöteler et al. (2012) to perform an ex-ante assessment of a potential partnership in the Turkish hazelnut sector.

3. Situational background

Turkey is the leading producer and exporter of hazelnuts with a share of approximately 70% of the total world supply, and 76% of the world's hazelnut trade (FAO, 2016). Around 4 million people are directly or indirectly involved in the sector, which implies that the hazelnut crop has a high influence on socio-economic aspects (Boubaker et al., 2014). The sustainability challenges in the hazelnut sector in Turkey are mostly concentrated at the farm level, and are mainly related to: i. working conditions; ii. low productivity and quality and; iii. environmental challenges (UTZ, 2016). The importance of the hazelnut sector in Turkey, as well as the large amount of sustainability challenges in the country, explain why Turkey has been the first focus country of most of the existing sustainability initiatives in this sector.

The harvest of hazelnuts, which takes place in August, is highly labor intensive and is characterized by shortages of local workers. For this reason, producers commonly employ Kurdish people, and migrant workers from Georgia, Romania and more recently Syria. Some of these workers are employed under illegal conditions. Moreover, there are not clear and well defined procedures or systems to manage the employment relationship. Migrant workers usually do not have a direct agreement with the farmers because they depend on a labor contractor, and there are no formal contracts or employment records. Consequently, those workers lack clear and in-advance information about their rights, their salary, and the commission that the labor contractor will deduct from their salaries.

Furthermore, weekly working hours often exceed 48 h without any additional compensation. The working hours as well as the wages vary depending on the origin of the workers, with migrant workers facing worse conditions compared to local workers. Additionally, migrant workers suffer from cultural repression as they cannot use their mother tongue. Accommodation conditions are also problematic and there are no sufficient measures undertaken to guarantee the safety and health of workers (e.g. workers are usually not provided with personal protective equipment). In addition, Turkish children and children from migrant families are commonly found working in the hazelnut crop fields. This is mainly linked to the fact that worker families are traveling during several months to go from crop to crop, often taking their children along.

Thus, despite the hazelnut harvest falling in the school holiday period, those children do not attend school regularly because their families are involved in many other seasonal agricultural jobs. Unfortunately, the mechanisms to prevent child labor are often weak or even absent leading to high child labor presence in the sector.

The second main sustainability issue in the hazelnut sector in Turkey relates to low productivity and quality. These two facts are a result of old hazelnuts orchards (on average between 80 and 100 years old), as well as inappropriate farming practices such as incorrect pruning or lack of soil analyses. In addition, a large number of hazelnut farmers are small scale producers which do not live on their farms and for whom hazelnuts are not their only source of income. Consequently, farms are abandoned for some periods, and farmers do not allocate sufficient time and efforts to increase their farm's productivity and quality.

The final sustainability issue is related to the environmental challenges. The lack of proper trainings and information about good agricultural practices poses a threat on the environment. Insufficient attention is paid to the reduction of air, soil and water contamination by better use of pesticides and fertilizers or the mechanisms to store and dispose waste, among others. Moreover, growers do not usually know how to adapt properly to climate change, which is problematic as increasing temperatures in the coastal zone of the Black Sea region may affect hazelnut production severely in the coming years.

The acknowledgment of the discussed challenges, as well as the increasing awareness of the need to tackle them, has led to different actors directly or indirectly linked to the sector to start developing programs that aim to ensure and boost sustainable practices. Additional pressures, such as that put by the coalition 'Stop Child Labour – School is the best place to work' (SCL),⁷ have especially pushed companies that buy Turkish hazelnuts to expand their efforts. A thorough examination of the currently active initiatives yielded a list of four NGOs initiatives and five industry initiatives, established as a response of the sustainability concerns in the sector. Table 1 briefly presents these initiatives, whereas more detailed information about each of these initiatives can be obtained upon request.

There are other individual company actions than the ones listed on Table 1, however those often do not have high presence in the field, but rather rely on setting a basic criteria for suppliers. An example of this is the "Sustainable Sourcing Policy for Hazelnuts" of Barry Callebaut.⁸ Additionally, Turkish universities, research institutes and governmental organizations, such as the Ondokuz Mayıs University and the Hazelnut Research Institute, are actively involved in research on the topic.

4. Methodology and data

This paper takes a qualitative approach to answer our main question of whether there is potential for a roundtable for sustainable hazelnuts in Turkey. For this approach, the most widely known and used technique are in-depth interviews, which are especially useful to explore detailed information about an individual's perception on a particular topic (Boyce and Neale, 2006). The interviews' results complement the existing literature by providing information that specifically concerns the hazelnut

⁷ SCL is a coalition of the Algemene Onderwijsbond (AOB), Mondiaal FNV, Hivos, the India Committee of the Netherlands (ICN), Kerk in Actie and ICCO Cooperation and Stichting Kinderpostzegels Nederland. For additional information on the coalition see <http://www.stopchildlabour.eu/>.

⁸ This company is also member of CAOBISCO (see Table 1).

Table 1
Current sustainability initiatives in Turkey.

	Initiative	Type	Year	Main characteristic
1	UTZ Hazelnut Program	NGO	2014	Certification program for sustainable hazelnuts
2	Support to Life (Hayata Destek)	NGO	2013	Campaigns, events and community based trainings to raise awareness on child labor issues
3	Young life foundation (Genç Hayat Foundation)	NGO	2014	Summer schools to children and awareness raising activities. In collaboration with Balsu Gıda, Lindt & Sprüngli, Nuteks, and Unilever
4	Development Workshop Cooperative (Kalkınma Atölyesi Kooperatifi)	NGO	2002	Research and policy recommendations related to child labor. In collaboration with ILO and the Embassy of the Netherlands in Turkey
5	CAOBISCO	Industry	2013	Public-private partnership project focused on child labor promoted by some members of CAOBISCO in collaboration with the Dutch Government, the ILO, and the Turkish Ministry of Labour and Social Security
6	Ferrero Group	Industry	2012	Ferrero Farming Values Hazelnut Program
7	Nestlé	Industry	2012	Business-NGO partnership to increase traceability and reduce child labor. In collaboration with FLA
8	Varistor AG	Industry	2014	Happy Hazelnut Project: Turkish hazelnuts without child labor. In collaboration with Isik Organik Gıda
9	Ülker	Industry	2015	Business-NGO partnership focused on ecological sustainability. In collaboration with the WWF Turkey

sector.

This paper uses, in particular, semi-structured interviews to gather the needed information from relevant actors in the hazelnut sector (see [Bryman, 2015](#) for a discussion of the advantages of this method). Nevertheless, this is not the most convenient method when considering the hazelnut farmers as there are access, time and communication constraints.⁹ Furthermore, the available knowledge about the topic may vary significantly between established organizations such as commercial companies and NGOs, and individuals such as smallholders. Thus, acknowledging the relevance of evaluating the hazelnut farmers' perceptions on the topic, this paper develops a simple and accessible questionnaire for the farmers.

Based on the literature discussed on Section 2, particularly on the model of [Stöteler et al. \(2012\)](#), and considering the research objectives, this paper aims with the interviews (see [Appendix A](#)) and questionnaire (see [Appendix B](#)) to:

1. Evaluate the existence of a common vocabulary related to sustainability
2. Evaluate to what extent there is recognition of a complex issue
3. Evaluate the likelihood that the organization will move to the formation phase of a roundtable, and its willingness to collaborate:
 - Whether the organization's strategy and culture are in line with partnering for sustainability
 - Existing incentives for partnering (external and internal influences)
 - Awareness of interdependence among stakeholders: complementarity/value added from others
 - Existence of similar expectations when engaging in a roundtable
 - Current level of trust with possible partners
 - Perceived costs and risks versus perceived benefits

The interview selection is done based on a purposive sampling. Hence, interviewees are selected taking into account their experience and knowledge in the sector, and their active participation in existing sustainability initiatives. In total 10 interviews are

conducted, lasting between 30 and 50 min. Interviews are recorded, and the recordings are complemented with additional notes. Additionally, questionnaires are distributed among 10 hazelnut farmers randomly selected. [Table 2](#) presents the interviewee selection, the type of organization, and a list of the main reasons to select these interviewees.

The interviews are manually transcribed and coded, following [Richards and Morse \(2012\)](#). To analyze the information gathered with the farmers questionnaires the data is converted into numbers. For the first question a value of 5 is attached to the aspect ranked as the most important, while with each step down on the ranking the score decreases by one. For the second question, the number of respondents checking the same box is counted. The results, from both the interviews and the questionnaires, are classified, recurring themes are identified, and links between these themes are analyzed. [Fig. 2](#) presents the identified topics that are allocated in each of the steps in the formation process model of [Stöteler et al. \(2012\)](#).

5. Findings and discussion

The description and analysis of the main findings of this research follows the scheme presented in [Fig. 2](#).

5.1. Existence of a complex issue and the need to act upon it

The recognition of a complex issue and the desire to find solutions are, according to [Gray and Stites \(2013\)](#); and [Stöteler et al. \(2012\)](#), the central conditions required to start with the *Partnership Initiation* phase. The situational background shows that there are multiple complex sustainability problems in the Turkish hazelnut sector, which are also recognized by all interviewed stakeholders. Moreover, all interviewees are actively involved in at least one project aiming to increase sustainability in the sector, which shows that there is a need to act upon the existing issues.

Most interviewees claim to have intrinsic motivations to work towards sustainability issues that concern their organizations. Those interviewees argue that sustainability has been part of their philosophy and strategy for many years, in the case of companies, or it is explicit in their mission and objectives, in the case of NGOs and research institutions. In addition, some of the interviewed commercial companies argue that by incorporating sustainability in their daily operations they can differentiate themselves from other players in the market and secure raw materials, making it a

⁹ Farmers are difficult to reach as during the period which this research took place, the majority of farmers were absent of their farms. Besides, most of them do not speak English.

Table 2
Interviewee selection.

	Organization	Type	Reasons
1.	Ferrero Group	Private Sector - Manufacturer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Top buyer of hazelnuts in the world • Actively involved in promoting a sustainable supply chain in Turkey through its own company program FFVh
2.	Migros/Delica AG	Private Sector - Retailer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Owner of Oltan Group, the largest exporter and processor of hazelnuts in Turkey • Migros is the largest retail company in Switzerland • Founding Member of the UTZ Hazelnut Program
3.	Nestlé Germany	Private Sector – Manufacturer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Largest food company in the world • One of the major buyers of hazelnuts, sourcing more than half of its hazelnuts from Turkey • Actively involved in promoting a sustainable supply chain in Turkey together with the FLA, Balsu and Olam-Progida
4.	Varistor AG	Private Sector – Supplier/Importer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supplier of raw and processed products for the Swiss food industry • Founder of the Happy Hazelnut Foundation in Turkey
5.	Industry Stakeholder (Anonymous)	Private sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This stakeholder has a widespread presence in the hazelnut sector • Actively involved in eliminating child labor in hazelnut harvesting in Turkey
6.	Turkish Supply Chain Actor (Anonymous)	Private Sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Active actor in the supply chain of hazelnuts • Local company
7.	UTZ	Civil Society – Dutch NGO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only independent third party certification program for sustainable hazelnuts in Turkey
8.	Support to Life	Civil Society –Turkish NGO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local NGO • Actively involved in eradication of agricultural child labor in Turkey, with the hazelnut crop as its first focus
9.	WWF Turkey	Civil Society NGO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partner of Ülker in the “Sustainable Hazelnut Agriculture” project • Actively involved in multiple MSIs
10.	Ondokuz Mayıs University, Faculty of Agriculture, Department of Agricultural Economics	Research Institution Turkey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One of the leading universities in Turkey • Actively involved in academic research on hazelnut production
11.	Hazelnut Farmers (10)	Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Directly involved in the hazelnut production • Directly affected by a potential roundtable to promote sustainability in the sector

profitable activity. This is consistent with both [Carter and Rogers' \(2008\)](#) and [Smith's \(2008\)](#) reasoning who argue that by adopting sustainable practices, companies benefit economically by improving corporate reputation, creating added consumer value, and reducing uncertainty of resources supply. Moreover, UTZ, explicitly refers to the vacuum created by the lack of willingness or capabilities of governments to act as part of their reasons to work towards sustainability improvements, thus referring to the decline of government efficacy mentioned by [Gray and Stites \(2013\)](#). At the same time, the representative of UTZ argues that, contrary to the 'crowding out effect' identified by [Huijstee \(2012\)](#) in which the role of the government might be marginalized by the actions of other actors, the government is actually often stimulated and reacts actively once there is an existing initiative.

5.2. Decision to form a partnership

According to the model of [Stöteler et al. \(2012\)](#), the decision to form a partnership is influenced by the culture and strategy of the organization, and its degree of dependence. The interviews' answers revealed that partnering is part of the strategy and culture of all respondents as they all have had experience with formal and or informal partnerships. These experiences varied in degree with different types of partnerships including cross-sectoral partnerships, roundtables, and policy dialogues. For example, Varistor AG does not have significant experience with different types of partnerships, which its representative confers to its relatively small size and its focalized market. However, the company's strategy is based on long-term partnerships with their suppliers. Therefore, in general, the interviewees comply with the precondition of cooperative behavior identified by [Ählström and Sjöström \(2005\)](#).

All interviewees are aware of the importance of having a dialogue with actors involved in the sector in order to exchange knowledge and experience, discuss different perspectives and potential collaborations, give each other feedback, and find more sustainable and comprehensive solutions. Therefore, all

interviewed organizations have started or have been involved in different kinds of dialogues. This recognition of complementary between activities supports the case for the creation of a roundtable as, in correspondence with the concept of 'adaptive problems', presented by [Kania and Kramer \(2011\)](#), there is no individual organization that has the complete set of resources and authority required to change the current situation.

The recognition of dependence by all of the interviewees mainly relates to competency-oriented and society-oriented motivations to look for partners, alike those described by [Gray and Stites \(2013\)](#). Only two interviewees (from Ferrero Group and Nestlé Germany) add legitimacy-oriented motivations. Both companies recognize that despite their initiatives are on the right path, there is a need to improve the perception of external actors. In addition, the Turkish Supply Chain Actor and the representative from the Ondokuz Mayıs University refer to resource-oriented motivations related to financial assets as they recognize that financial support is needed and that by partnering they could benefit from co-financing opportunities. UTZ explicitly refers to those resource-oriented motivations related to social assets recognizing that through a potential roundtable the organization could have access to a broader network since nearly all of the important parties it has attracted in the hazelnut sector are private actors.

Moreover, the analysis of the existing initiatives in the Turkish hazelnut sector also supports the existence of dependence among the stakeholders. Each of the existing initiatives has its own strengths. However, those initiatives have been developed independently of each other. Moreover, there is no single program that involves all relevant actors in the sector. Consequently, the lack of coordination and inclusiveness might lead to current programs that are not as comprehensive and sustainable as possible, and to overlapping efforts.

An additional factor to consider when deciding to form a partnership corresponds to the potential benefits that such initiative could bring to each of its members. Among the benefits, most of the respondents emphasize the formality and improvement of the

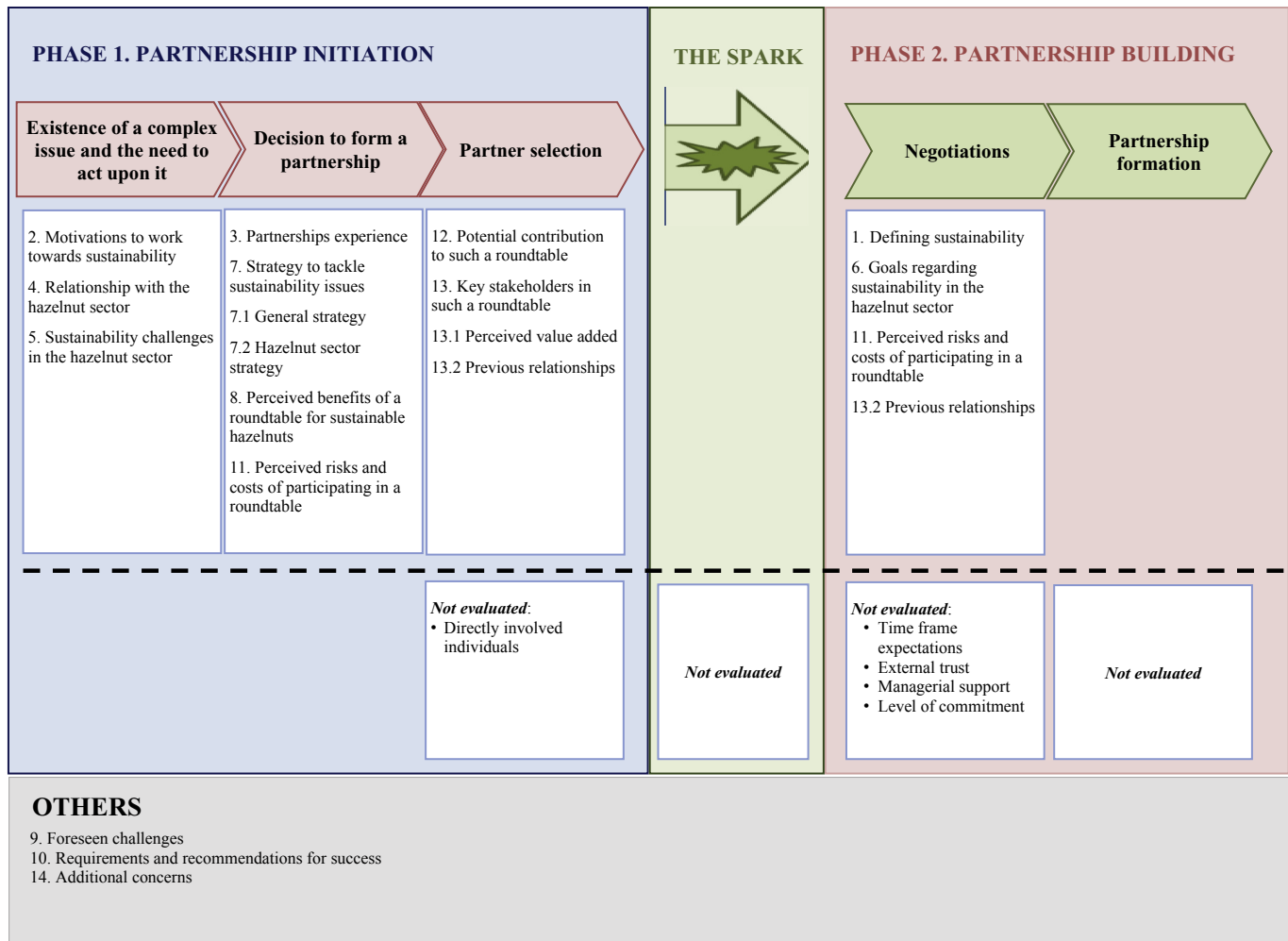


Fig. 2. Classification of interview answers according to their topics.

existing dialogues; and the increase in coordination and avoidance of duplication. In addition, the representative from the Ondokuz Mayıs University identifies the increase of awareness about sustainability issues as one of the main benefits. Meanwhile, for the representatives of Migros/Delica AG and Varistor AG one of the most significant benefits of such a roundtable would be to guarantee traceable and good quality raw materials delivered at the right time and at fair prices. Unfortunately, these respondents are especially hesitant on the capability of a roundtable to guarantee this. From their perspective, price is what matters the most for hazelnut producers, and speculation with prices is a common activity among hazelnut producers who always try to get the highest possible compensation regardless of the actual market conditions and or any previous commitments. Considering this, a roundtable might be helpful if such partnership achieves to bring together the most relevant buyers in the sector. In this case, the partnership could have a structured pressure mechanism to avoid price manipulation.

Following Glasbergen's (2011) concept of collaborative advantage, the recognition of benefits is not enough for potential partners to participate. It is required that the benefits overcome the costs and risks of partnering for an organization to join. The most cited costs by the respondents relate to time, efforts and skills. In addition, the Ferrero Group, for example, stresses the cost of having to disclose more from their operations and business. However, as long as the roundtable has sufficient impact on the ground, this cost

would be acceptable. In line with the argumentation of Kania and Kramer (2011), the respondent acknowledges that participation in a roundtable for sustainability corresponds to a pre-competitive phase in which cooperation is needed to obtain future benefits.

Furthermore, some of the interviewees consider that one of the highest risks of the roundtable is the involvement of actors that eventually are unwilling to cooperate and are characterized by passive behavior. According to the respondents, this would slow down the roundtable processes and the organizations' own processes. The reputational damage, a risk that following the model of Stötelet al. (2012) is also influencing the step of Negotiations, is only perceived by the respondent from the Ferrero Group. According to this respondent by participating in the roundtable the company would be even more observed and exposed to critics, leading to credibility risks if failing. Evaluating the proportion of perceived benefits versus perceived costs and risks, for most of the respondents the benefits are higher than or at least balanced with the costs and risks of participating in such a roundtable, especially when the roundtable is created through a very rigorous process. Therefore, based on collaborative advantages, a roundtable for sustainable hazelnuts is seen as valuable for relevant partners who would likely be interested in participating.

Finally, some of the respondents state that the proportion of perceived benefits versus perceived costs and risks for their organizations is difficult to determine. These respondents argue that benefits and costs/risks depend on the participants, goals,

conditions and framework of such a roundtable, which are still unknown. Besides, the respondents would first need to evaluate the results of both their own and other potential participants' on-going activities in order to determine whether a roundtable could be a beneficial step. Meanwhile, Migros/Delica AG and Varistor AG state that the costs/risks and benefits depend on the size of the organization. Thus, since these respondents consider themselves as medium and small sized, respectively, they regard themselves as being in a middle position where costs of participating should not be significantly high since they might not benefit significantly either. In that sense, a roundtable may be able to establish a mechanism in which financial costs and contributions are proportional to the potential benefits. However, controlling for additional costs related to time and efforts might be more difficult to measure, and are dependent on the organizational structure of the members. Thus, a roundtable needs to ensure that processes are as efficient as possible in order to minimize costs.

5.3. Partner selection

According to the model of Stöteler et al. (2012), the identification of suitable partners is influenced by the existing network of the organization, the history with the potential partners, the degree of interdependence, and the directly involved individuals. The interviewees were asked about potential key partners and their added value in the roundtable. Altogether, the respondents' answers include all players directly and indirectly involved in the hazelnut sector, considering both actors in the supply chain as well as outside of the supply chain. In addition, all interviewees acknowledge a certain degree of interdependence with various different stakeholders.

Regarding supply chain actors, most of the interviewees agree that they need to be involved as those are the ones that are directly related to the hazelnut sector, that are primarily influenced by the decisions of a potential roundtable, and that would have to implement the proposed measures. Additionally, the representative of Varistor AG states that supply chain actors have more knowledge about the behavior of the market and the prices. Among the supply chain actors, the respondents argue that although farmers and workers should be included, involving them might be rather difficult due to lack of organization, especially among smallholders.

According to the interviewees, considering players outside of the supply chain, NGOs, research institutions, the press, the Turkish government, and the governments of migrant workers' countries of origin are key stakeholders to involve. Some of the interviewees explicitly refer to local (Turkish) NGOs, as they consider these to have more knowledge about the issue, to have more networks in the country and to be closer to the field. Research institutions are only specifically mentioned as key stakeholders by the Ondokuz Mayıs University and the WWF-Turkey representatives, with support on research as their added value. The relatively low rate of recognition of the added value of research institutions could be linked to the fact that such organizations are usually focused on improving economic and environmental aspects related to agricultural production rather than its social aspects, which are the major focus in the hazelnut sector for most of the interviewed organizations.

Nevertheless, research institutions have been listed among the participants of the dialogues' events which the interviewed organizations have started or taken part in, meaning that their role is somehow acknowledged. Yet, considering that knowledge exchange is one of the key advantages of MSIs, and that various research institutions have higher access to useful data, it is crucial to increase awareness among hazelnut stakeholders on the relevance of a

cooperation with research institutions. Finally, the press is considered important by the Turkish Supply Chain actor because it helps to generate attention from external parties. This is beneficial for awareness raising and advocacy purposes. However, it should also be managed with caution and a press approach should be agreed by all partners. The involvement of the press might be detrimental to some partners, for example, by exposing them to more critics (respondent of the Ferrero Group).

All interviewees acknowledge that sustainable solutions to issues, such as migrant workers and child labor, need to be achieved in cooperation with the Turkish government. According to the respondents, there needs to be concordance between the law and its enforcement, and the roundtable proposals and requirements. Others mention the benefit from increasing the government's accountability regarding sustainability (Ferrero Group respondent) and from increasing funds (Industry Stakeholder and the Turkish Supply Chain actor representatives). Moreover, some of the respondents distinguish between the national and the local Turkish governments, emphasizing that both of them are important. Furthermore, the Industry Stakeholder points to the importance of including government representatives from the countries where the migrant workers come from because they can assist in increasing employment opportunities in the places of origin of migrant workers.

Yet, most of the respondents also agree that involving the government might be a challenging process. According to the interviewees, governments usually have other priorities and another agenda to follow and this is particularly true in the case of Turkey with its recent political and social tensions. Once again, this might lead to inclusiveness problems, which in this case are more difficult to control by the roundtable. A possible exclusion of the government will not be explained by lack of resources and organization, as in the case of farmers and workers, but by the unwillingness to participate. Thus, the roundtable could not offer direct solutions, other than continuously and effectively lobbying for inclusion of the government. In this respect, the involvement of partners with existing and positive relationships with the government might be a crucial success factor.

Fig. 3 shows that most farmers perceive governmental organizations as the most important and reliable partner. The second most important partners for farmers are other supply chain actors. Four out of the ten farmers believe that other stakeholders in the supply chain are relevant partners. Interestingly, the reason for all of these farmers to partner with other supply chain actors is the possibility to earn higher profits by setting better prices. This is in line with the comments of Varistor AG and Migros/Delica AG that price significantly matters to hazelnut producers. Indeed, the hazelnut sector is highly price-sensitive and hence, a roundtable could play an important role to bring more stability into the market, benefiting both producers and buyers. Moreover, considering the DEFRA (2002) principles related to the definition of sustainable food supply chain, a roundtable that aims for a sustainable hazelnut supply chain might be able to establish convenient economic rewarding mechanisms for farmers such as price premiums.

NGOs, and research institutions rank third and fourth, respectively. Three out of 10 farmers consider that partnering with NGOs is beneficial. Their reasons vary: access to better and more honest help as NGOs do not aim to make profits, creation of awareness in the market, and reputational benefits for farmers when cooperating particularly with international NGOs. As for the interviews' respondents, research institutions are the least selected partners with two out of 10 farmers considering them relevant. Both of these farmers argue that by working with those institutions their productivity, and thus their profits, can increase through access to technical support. Finally, Fig. 3 shows that none of the farmers

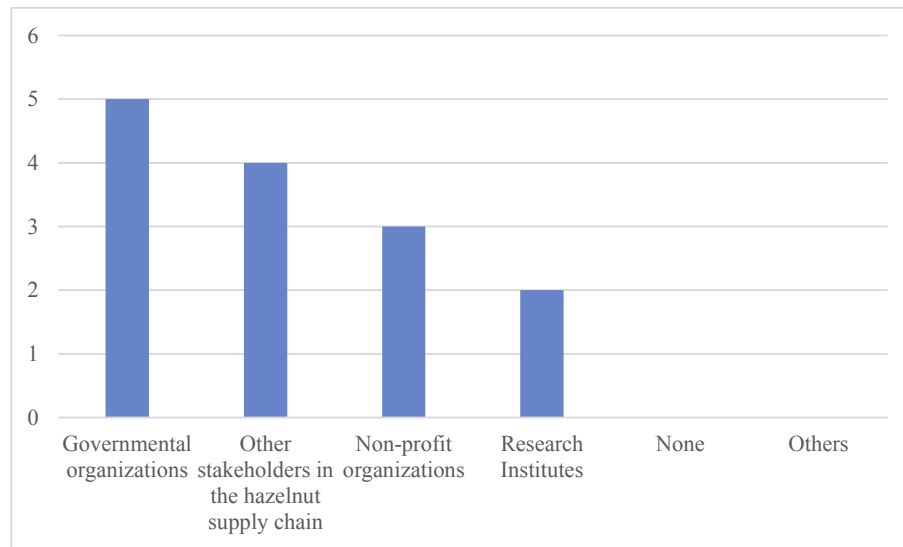


Fig. 3. Key partners for hazelnut farmers.

consider that there is no need or usefulness in working together with other actors.

In order to better identify interdependences among partners it is also important to evaluate what each stakeholder consider that might be its contribution to the roundtable. None of the interviewees refer to financial resources while all of them mention that knowledge and experience are potential contributions. Providing access to existing networks corresponds to another widely mentioned contribution, which is also identified by stakeholders as part of the potential benefits of partnering. This is of importance for the hazelnut sector as, for example, those members with connections with the Turkish government might be able to facilitate the process of involvement of this actor in the roundtable by cooperating with networking processes and advocacy.

Finally, many of the respondents mention that one of their contributions might be being present and adopting the decisions taken by the roundtable. This aspect is in line with one of the conditions listed by the [Partnerships Resource Centre \(2015\)](#) for a collaborative relationship to be considered as a partnership. Moreover, the fact that these respondents mention the adoption of the decisions taken by the roundtable as a potential contribution reduces the likelihood of the materialization of the risk of passive behavior. In addition, those respondents argue that their active participation in the roundtable might motivate or exert pressure on parties initially hostile or indifferent to join. This is a relevant aspect for the hazelnut sector considering its commercial nature.¹⁰

5.4. Negotiations

In order to initiate the *Partnership Building Phase* the selected partners need to begin with the negotiation process. The interview's questions primarily provide information about reputational damage, the existence of trust among partners, and the goal symmetry among the organizations, which are key factors in this

step.

The assessment of goal symmetry requires the evaluation of the way organizations define sustainability ([Gray and Stites, 2013](#)). Practically all interviewees share a common vocabulary related to sustainability and the complex issue. Their definitions of sustainability coincide with the one presented by the United Nations in 1987 and complemented by the TBL concept. The Turkish NGO, Support to Life, adds to this definition the notion of sustainability as ensuring that all proposed solutions to the issue become sustainable by themselves without having to have others pushing them. Furthermore, commercial companies, particularly those at the end of the supply chain, relate sustainability to responsible sourcing. Some interviewees highlight the importance of adapting the definition of sustainability according to the risk hotspots for a particular product and its specific country of origin. This often leads to a special focus on one or two of the three aspects considered in the TBL concept. For hazelnuts particularly, there is a strong focus by most of the interviewees on the social aspects, among which the most urgent matters include migrant workers and child labor. Nonetheless, almost all the interviewees emphasize that the economic and ecological dimensions are also important as the three dimensions are closely related and influence each other. Only one of the interviewees is focused on ecological aspects, in particular natural conservation (WWF-Turkey). Meanwhile, the interviewed research institution, Ondokuz Mayıs University, has a stronger focus on productivity and quality aspects which is expected as the respondent is part of the Department of Agricultural Economics.

The different focus of stakeholders can enrich the partnership as they increase the likelihood of each of the members having a different set of competences and resources that could complement or support others. Additionally, the fact that there are some actors focused primarily on the economic and ecological aspects guarantees that a potential roundtable is not wrongly polarized on social issues, underestimating the importance of tackling all aspects in order to achieve significant improvements in sustainability.

In addition to the general goal of increasing sustainability in the sector, some of the interviewees argue that transparency and full traceability in the supply chain should also be part of the roundtable's goals. Not surprisingly, those interviewees are representatives of commercial companies at the end of the hazelnut supply chain. This finding can be explained by turning to [Bonini et al. \(2007\)](#), who argue that following the CSR concept, commercial

¹⁰ A considerable amount of companies buying hazelnuts correspond to confectionaries companies that use hazelnuts as complementary goods to produce their main core products, such as chocolates and ice creams. The percentage of hazelnuts added to these core products is commonly relatively small compared, for instance, to the amount of cocoa or palm oil required. As a result, hazelnuts are not the most important raw material for many companies and thus, the focus is often primarily placed on complying with sustainable practices of their other components.

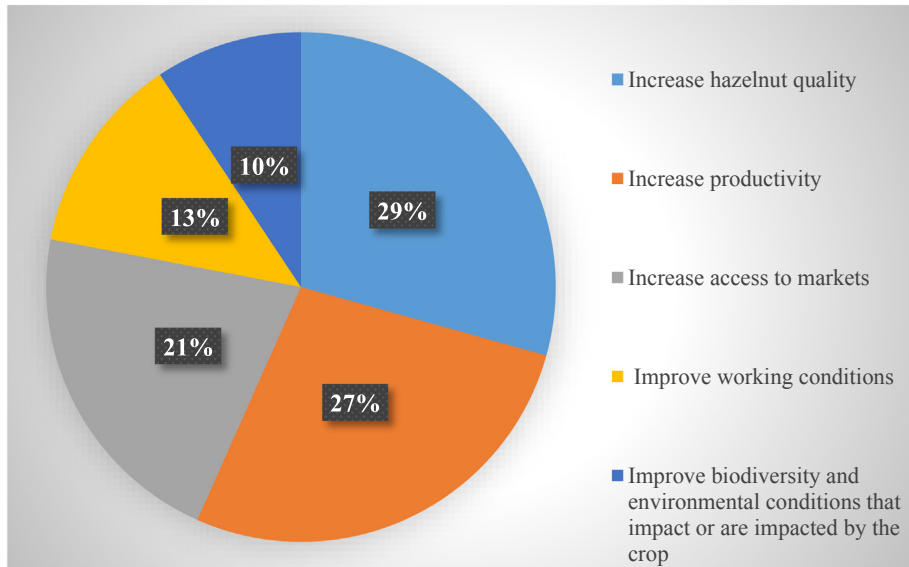


Fig. 4. Sustainability priorities for hazelnut farmers.

companies have to take care of their operations but also of their suppliers' operations. The goals of transparency and full traceability in the hazelnuts supply chain are very much in line with the general goal of increasing sustainability in the sector since those are key conditions that need to be guaranteed if a roundtable aims to claim sustainable hazelnuts.

Fig. 4 shows that the improvement of working conditions, which includes the main social issues in the hazelnut sector, does not rank among the top three priorities of farmers. This is in contradiction with the interviews' respondents. For these farmers, the key priorities correspond to the economic aspects of sustainability. They perceive quality, productivity and access to markets as the first, second and third most important topics respectively. Nonetheless, research institutions, which are highly focused on these topics, are only identified by two out of the 10 farmers as key stakeholders. Finally, Fig. 4 shows that the least relevant topic for hazelnut farmers is the conservation and improvement of the environment. This is in line with the interviews' answers where only one respondent, WWF-Turkey, prioritize ecological issues.

With respect to the existence of internal trust among partners, most of the interviewees state to have had previous positive interactions with different key stakeholders in the sector. Nevertheless, many of these experiences have been limited to sporadic dialogues or meetings rather than to formal partnerships or agreements. Yet, the fact that stakeholders already know each other, even slightly, sets a basis for the negotiations since, according to Lui and Ngo (2005), it facilitates the process of trust development. In addition, following the reasoning of Sanging et al. (2007) and the model of Stötelet et al. (2012), there might also be a decrease in the transactional and informational costs involved in the formation of the roundtable.

The difficulty level of the negotiation process depends on a diverse set of features which includes partner organizations' characteristics as well as characteristics of the issue and the framework it develops. The fact that there is a certain level of alignment in goals, and that there is an existing level of trust might be initial indicators that the negotiation process could be facilitated considerably. Nevertheless, it does not imply that the negotiations could be less rigorous. It is crucial that all relevant topics regarding,

not only the formation but also the implementation phase, are discussed in-depth and agreed upon.

5.5. Other topics: geographical and sectorial scope

There are additional topics which emerged during some of the interviews in relation to both the geographical and sectorial scope of the roundtable. The sectorial scope refers to whether the roundtable should be focalized only on hazelnuts or should include other crops in the country. This is brought up particularly by those respondents with a strong focus on child labor. The reason behind is the fact that social issues are conferred to a variety of crops because families and their children travel from crop to crop in Turkey. Therefore, some of the respondents emphasize that in order to find complete and sustainable solutions to these issues the roundtable should consider other crops. Yet, this consideration does not necessarily imply that the roundtable should focus on multiple agricultural sectors at the same time. While focusing on hazelnuts, there should be a continuous and constructive relationship with actors and initiatives in other crops. This ensures that certain topics can be addressed with all relevant parties involved without directly expanding the roundtable to other crops, which might harm the roundtable's effectiveness in an individual sector. Expanding the roundtable could also be a threat to the focus of the partnership on sustainability as a whole because it would likely lead to an increased bias towards social issues. This might not only be explained by the prioritization of child labor but also by the fact that, contrary to social issues, economic and ecological issues differ significantly among crops.

Furthermore, for some other interviewees it is key for a roundtable for sustainable hazelnuts to develop into a broader scale in which other producing countries are also taken into account. The respondents argue that sustainability issues are starting to be revealed in other hazelnut producing countries, and even though their share in production and exports is much lower, it is still existent and growing. In addition, by involving other producing countries there will be more exchange of knowledge, experiences and practices. Nevertheless, those interviewees also state that it is important to bear in mind that Turkey is the main target as the

largest producer and exporter, and the riskiest in terms of sustainability. Meanwhile, the representative from the Ferrero Group and from the WWF-Turkey consider that an international platform is not the most convenient approach because it could make the partnership too complex, and because the issues and context in Turkey are considerably different and thus, demand a national platform.

5.6. Further challenges and recommendations

The interviews and questionnaires allow to gather a significant amount of information regarding challenges and recommendations for a roundtable for sustainable hazelnuts. Many have been mentioned along the previous sections. Some additional challenges and associated recommendations are discussed in this section. These can be divided into those aspects related to the formation process of the partnership, those related to the implementation phase, and those that are more related to specific outcomes of the roundtable.

First, considering the formation process, all interviewees emphasize that a key success aspect is the involvement of all relevant actors in the roundtable. The relevant role of local NGOs, the farmers and workers, and the government is highlighted by the respondents. According to the representative of UTZ the roundtable should help farmers and workers to organize themselves and have a proper representation within the organization. To overcome the challenge of the involvement of the Turkish government, the Industry Stakeholder recommends that the pressure needs to start from the local up to the national level, as the local governments are often well organized and more interested in the topic. Nonetheless, the WWF-Turkey representative emphasizes that local governments do not have sufficient power to influence the national government. Consequently, for this interviewee it would be better to involve both the national and the local government directly.

While aiming to involve producers and governments, the roundtable should not undermine other relevant stakeholders which might also face different constraints to join such as Turkish NGOs with economic and human resources limitations. Furthermore, following the recommendation of the respondent from the WWF-Turkey, the roundtable should try to avoid involvement in any political line. The underpinning argument of this statement is that if people perceive that there is a political basis at the bottom of the roundtable it would be highly dividing and multiple conflicts might emerge, especially considering the political context in Turkey.

The respondent from WWF-Turkey suggests working based on an example of an already successful roundtable. This would encourage and motivate participants, and would guide the process as multiple lessons can be learned from an existing initiative. An additional recommendation related to the formation phase is the identification of a small but greatly interested, willing, and powerful group of partners, which is mentioned by many of the interviewees. According to them, even though all actors that are directly or indirectly involved in the hazelnut sector need to be part of the roundtable, it is important that a small but effective group takes the leadership during the formation process. This group needs to rigorously prepare a formal proposal for the roundtable that defines clear goals, clear benefits and a detailed roadmap with concrete future steps. The roundtable proposal would be the basis of the partnership with which additional stakeholders should be convinced of the viability of the project. In this respect, the representative of Support to Life adds that it is recommended to develop an actor mapping process and define a strategy to approach these additional stakeholders. This includes a clear and logical division of tasks among the different actors within the leading group

depending on the type of dialogue needed and the skills and network of each actor. This recommendation is in line with already existing MSIs experiences. In the case of the RSPO, for example, it was the small group conformed only by Aarhus United UK Ltd, Migros, Malaysian Palm Oil Association and Unilever, while led by the WWF, that started with the collaboration process in 2001 (Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil RSPO, 2016).

The representatives from Varistor AG and from Nestlé Germany add that the existence of different interest groups is usually accompanied by the debate on which party should lead and facilitate the discussions. In this respect, it is interesting to see that a majority of the existing initiatives presented in the situational background have been developed under the leadership and initiative of international actors rather than Turkish actors. This supports the arguments of Andonova and Levy (2003) in which partnerships for sustainability are mostly 'North driven' rather than 'South driven'. From this perspective, one could argue that local Turkish organizations should take the lead and facilitate the initial discussions for a roundtable for sustainable hazelnuts. Indeed, it would be important that Turkish organizations are among the leading group members. Nevertheless, this does not imply that international organizations cannot be part of the leading group. An initiator group, as mentioned previously, should be as strong as possible. Considering the existing experience of international organizations involved in the sector, their participation might be crucial for the roundtable's success.

Also, linked to the formation process, and referring to the foundation of the RSPO, the representative from UTZ discusses potential founding mechanisms for the roundtable. The interviewee argues that there must be a financial contribution either based on the size of the members, a levy on the production of hazelnuts, or both. Thus, for this respondent it is important that all partners somehow contribute economically since it helps to develop a sense of ownership. One could argue that a membership contribution based on the size of the member might lead to negative power dynamics. Nevertheless, this respondent emphasizes that this is not necessarily true. The underpinning argument is that power imbalances are not linked per se to economic contributions since there are other important resources and factors that play a role. It might be that small members who pay low fees are still powerful due to, for example, their social assets or the sector they are representing. From this perspective, paying the same amount of money does not guarantee any of the parties that they would be equally powerful. The respondent of WWF-Turkey adds that those with more resources, not necessarily referring to financial resources, are the most powerful actors that might influence decisions. A roundtable should ensure that the decision making process within the partnership is structured in such a way that no single actor would have complete dominance in the process.

Taking into account more institutional features related to the formation of the roundtable, even though it is not mentioned by any of the respondents, based on Kania and Kramer (2011), it would be highly important for a roundtable for sustainable hazelnuts to have an independent backbone organization with its own dedicated staff. The creation of this independent organization would ensure that there is a supporting infrastructure for the partnership in which all activities and resources are solely intended to serve the roundtable's purposes. Moreover, as stressed by Ponte (2014) the roundtable should have an executive director, an executive board or a board of directors, an assembly or council, technical advisory committees or working groups with experts on the concerning topics, and support staff.

Second, considering the implementation phase of the roundtable, the majority of the interviewees recognizes the relevance of proper communication as a key recommendation for the success of

the partnership. The communication needs to be regular, effective, consistent and transparent. Nevertheless, some of the interviewees also mention that although communication is key, action is as well important. Thus, there need to be concrete actions on the ground which could start with for instance, pilots in regions where the conditions are most convenient, such as those with actors that are the most willing to cooperate. Furthermore, it is crucial for these activities to have follow up actions as part of long-term programs until the solutions are sustainable by itself. Highly related to the relevance of both proper communication and concrete action is another recommendation made by many of the interviewees, which is having a good monitoring system in place that allows to continuously assess the progress and performance of the roundtable and its members. According to the respondents, evaluating performance and communicating the results, either positive or negative, is important as it allows to develop more trust, to generate more ideas, to receive feedback and to improve processes. These recommendations are in congruence with [Kania and Kramer's \(2011\)](#) conditions for success of continuous communication and shared measurement systems.

In addition, some representatives recognize an additional challenge, related to the implementation phase, and which is linked to the culture and farmers' situation in Turkey. For example, WWF-Turkey mentions that because hazelnut production is considered by the farmers more as a cultural asset rather than an income generating asset, particularly smallholders do not have incentives to improve practices. Thus, it might be a challenge to drive improvements on the ground when farmers are not really interested in doing so. Moreover, this respondent, among others, also mentions that dealing with cultural differences in Turkey is difficult as for instance child labor might not be perceived as wrong by some farmers. Therefore, there is first a great necessity to increase awareness in the sector. Following [Smith \(2008\)](#), by incorporating all actors in the hazelnut supply chain, a roundtable for the sector may be useful in this case in order to create positive interactions through which pressure but also support from other actors in the supply chain to the farmers might incentivize them to implement and promote more sustainable agricultural practices.

Third, based on the successful experiences with RSPO, the representative from UTZ identifies the development of a standard as a highly-recommended activity in order to increase the likelihood of success. This has been identified by [WWF \(2010\)](#) as one of the common outcomes of MSIs. According to the respondent, the development of a standard is linked to the performance of concrete actions on the ground since it materializes the complex work of a roundtable in a list of relatively simple guidelines. These guidelines give all interested actors the ability to act. Nevertheless, the interviewee adds that considering that there already exist some standards for the hazelnut sector, and that the sector is not big, the roundtable should not create an extra standard with very detailed requirements. It could be argued that a suitable approach would then be to set a benchmark with a moderate number of guidelines which could be used as a reference to approve the existing standards placing those under the same umbrella of the roundtable. This proposal is in line with the remark of the respondent from Migros/Delica AG who stresses that it will not be realistic to believe that existing programs would leave their standards behind to follow a new standard proposed by a roundtable.

In relation to the existence of guidelines, the representative from Nestlé Germany emphasizes the necessity of not only being satisfied with the compliance of standards and the achievement of a certification, but also making additional efforts. According to this respondent, sustainability standards established by roundtables usually set a baseline for sustainability. However, there is a need to not only preserve the conditions for future generations but to

further improve them. This would also translate into more benefits since by developing projects or investments, at higher levels than those required by a standard, the organizations can distinguish from others who are only complying with the basics. Based on this, it could be argued that the need to distinguish might boost private sector actors to go beyond compliance. However, following the arguments of Oxfam Novib's report (2015) the level of standards should be set at an optimum level, since otherwise it may affect the willingness of private sector actors to go beyond compliance. The representative from UTZ mentions that even though a standard is an important contribution to sustainability improvements, it is only part of the solution and does not comprise all of what is required to guarantee a sustainable supply chain. Hence, additional activities need to be undertaken. However, this interviewee also stresses that those activities should be performed as an initiative of individual members rather than by the roundtable itself because otherwise there might be the risk of the roundtable not being able to control everything and or becoming highly dependent on funds.

From this perspective, and following [Kania and Kramer's \(2011\)](#) conditions for success of mutually reinforcing activities, it is important for a roundtable to not only provide guidelines on better practices, but also to encourage members to undertake additional activities that are reinforcing the plan of action of the partnership. This does not imply that the roundtable should be directly involved in such activities, but that it can indirectly spur individual initiatives by, for example, promoting working groups on the topic. In addition, the indirect support of the roundtable might also be beneficial for the partnership itself as it ensures that the organization maintains supervision of the sustainability activities in the sector and can make sure those are coordinated and contributing to the same final goal of achieving a sustainable hazelnut supply chain. The RSPO Next, an addendum recently created for those RSPO members that have not only met the current requirements of the RSPO basic standard but also exceeded them ([Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil RSPO, 2016](#)), is a good case for new roundtables to evaluate in this respect. For those members that are not able to comply with RSPO Next this addendum might not be beneficial as they may suddenly be perceived as inferior within the RSPO. Therefore, from the beginning the roundtable for hazelnuts should take into account the different expectations of members, including both those able to go beyond and those that can only meet the basic requirements, in order to avoid any future disagreements or disappointments.

6. Conclusion

Considering the growing awareness of the necessity to increase sustainability in the hazelnut sector in Turkey the objective of this research was to identify the potential of setting a multi-stakeholder partnership for a sustainable hazelnut supply chain. The findings show that this potential exists. The issues in the hazelnut sector in Turkey are sufficiently complex, which requires coordination and cooperation of different actors in order to find real and sustainable solutions. A roundtable for the sector is useful to avoid overlapping or even conflicting efforts and to identify complementarities. Consequently, efficiency is increased and a large-scale impact becomes reachable.

This research found that stakeholders in the sector are mostly characterized by an organizational culture and strategy in which partnering is considered as a viable way to achieve common goals. In addition, stakeholders generally recognized the added value of such partnerships as well as the added value of other hazelnut key stakeholders. That means that the perceived benefits of participating are higher than the perceived costs and risks. The stakeholders in the sector are not only characterized by cooperative

behavior, but they also acknowledge collaborative advantages specifically associated to join a roundtable for sustainable hazelnuts.

Nevertheless, stakeholders also note that there are certain general and sector-specific challenges such as the management of interest groups, the culture and context in Turkey, and the inclusiveness of, particularly, farmers and the Turkish government. These challenges need to be taken into account in order to succeed both in the formation phase and the implementation phase of the roundtable. Accordingly, this paper established a set of recommendations based on a combination of the respondents' perceptions and the existing literature. These recommendations included, among others, the relevance of creating a strong leading group and having a communication characterized by continuity, transparency, and feedback loops, as well as, the relevance of establishing an independent backbone organization, proper guidelines on sustainable practices, a monitoring and evaluation system, and mechanisms to encourage mutually reinforcing activities.

The findings of this research are highly relevant for both academics and practitioners. This research combines a theoretical model and stakeholders' knowledge and experience, in order to perform an assessment of the potential of a roundtable for sustainable hazelnuts. This approach has offered a more practical and sector-specific perspective to the existing literature, particularly to that on the formation process of partnerships. One contribution of this paper is therefore to indicate one approach to analyze the potential of other partnerships formation (to either other crops in Turkey or to other countries), as this qualitative framework can be easily adapted to other crops and locations. In terms of the relevance for practitioners in the hazelnut sector, this research provides them with relevant information in order to better understand the potential and the formation process of a multi-stakeholder partnership for the sector. In this way, practitioners can further explore the possibilities for creating a roundtable. Moreover, if decided to go ahead with the formation process, this research could help the process and its success.

This research shows that the creation of a roundtable for sustainable hazelnuts would be beneficial for the hazelnut sector in Turkey, but also for the country as a whole and for other producing countries. A large-scale sustainability increase in the sector would lead to a more sustainable development in all the three aspects: people, profit and planet. The productivity and quality of the hazelnut crop would increase considerably while at the same time ensuring that the environment is protected, and the rights of communities, and in particular the children of those communities, are respected. Furthermore, the sector may be able to meet the demands in the international markets with a higher competitive advantage. Lessons, practices and solutions in the hazelnut sector might be helpful for other crops in the country. This would improve the reputational image of the country making it a more attractive partner for companies worldwide. Besides, the developments in the Turkish hazelnut sector could also be useful for other producing countries as the roundtable would not be developed in isolation. As a result, the interest from governments, markets and society in achieving improvements in the sector in other countries might increase while the proposed solutions for the Turkish case might be adaptable and transferrable to these other producing countries.

Appendix A. Interview guide

Introduction:

(Purpose of the interview, terms of confidentiality, structure, questions before starting)

Section 1: Your organization and the hazelnut sector

1. What is the main activity of [name of the organization (name)]? What is precisely your function within the organization, and how long have you been working there?
2. What is the relationship between your organization and the hazelnut sector?

Section 2: Sustainability in your organization

3. How does your organization define sustainability within the supply chain?
4. What are the main motivations for your organization to work towards sustainability improvements?
5. What has been your organization's strategy to tackle sustainability issues that concern it?
6. Does your organization have any experience in partnerships for sustainability?
 - If any, what type of partnerships, and what specific role has your organization played within the partnerships?
 - If none, why has your organization chosen not to be involved in partnering?
7. If yes to question 6: What do you think that your organization and other partnerships for sustainability could learn from those experiences, positive and/or negative?

Otherwise move to question 8.

Section 3: A roundtable for sustainable hazelnuts

8. What are the main goals of your organization regarding sustainability in the hazelnut supply chain, and what are you doing to achieve these goals?
9. Would a roundtable for sustainable hazelnuts have the potential to complement/support these goals? Why and how?
10. What do you identify as the main sustainability issues in the hazelnut supply chain? And how should those issues be ranked in the roundtable according to your organization's priorities?
11. Which would be key stakeholders/organizations to be part of the roundtable, and what would be their added value?
12. Have you had any previous relationship with the stakeholders/organizations you mentioned in your answer to question 11?
13. What kind of challenges can be foreseen while establishing the roundtable?
14. What would be the essential steps and key requirements for the roundtable to be successful from formation to implementation?
15. How do you balance the proportion of costs and risks versus benefits for your organization when participating in the roundtable?
16. If interested in participation, how do you consider that your organization could contribute to the roundtable?

Section 4: Conclusion

17. Do you have any additional comments or recommendations in regard to a future creation of the roundtable?
18. Is there anyone else who you consider should be interviewed, or may be interested?
19. Do you have any further questions or remarks?

Appendix B. Questionnaire for farmers

1. What are your priorities regarding the production of hazelnuts? Please rank each of the following items in order of importance

with #1 being the most important aspect to #5 being the least important aspect.

- Increase productivity
- Increase hazelnut quality
- Increase access to markets
- Improve working conditions
- Improve biodiversity and environmental conditions that impact or are impacted by your crop

2. Would it be useful for you and for your hazelnut production to work together with some of these actors? Please check all the boxes that apply.

- Governmental organizations. Why?
- Non-profit organizations. Why?
- Research Institutes. Why?
- Other stakeholders in the hazelnut supply chain. Why?
- Others: _____, Why?
 - None of those. Why?

Appendix C. Interviewees details

Organization	Job Title
Ferrero Group	Sustainable Project Developer
Industry Stakeholder (Anonymous)	Anonymous
Migros/Delica AG	Head of Sustainability
Nestlé (Germany)	Group Manager Supply Chain Sustainability
Ondokuz Mayıs University	Associate Professor Faculty of Agriculture, Department of Agricultural Economics
Support to Life	Child Protection Programme Manager
Turkish Supply Chain Actor (Anonymous)	Anonymous
UTZ	Executive Director
Varistor AG	Project Manager - Sustainability
WWF Turkey	Senior Conservation Officer

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