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Abstract

Sustainable entrepreneurs are key actors in sustainability transitions; they develop needed innovations, create markets, and pressure incumbents. While socio-technical transitions literature is well developed, questions remain in terms of (1) the different roles that sustainable entrepreneurs can play in sustainable transitions, and (2) how best to empower these roles. To explore these challenges, we review literature and construct a framework combining the multilevel perspective and entrepreneurial ecosystem perspective. We apply this framework to the context of climate-smart agriculture in (Western and Central) Europe. By analysing semi-structured interview data (n = 27) we find that sustainable entrepreneurs are constrained by ineffective policy, resistant users, as well as novel alignment issues within the supply chain. We focus on the role of sustainable entrepreneurs as coordinators of action rather than developers of technological innovation within transition contexts characterised by low landscape pressures, large unmotivated incumbent firms, low consumer awareness and demand, and unincentivized users (farmers).

Keywords: Socio-technical transitions, Entrepreneurial eco-system, Sustainability, Entrepreneurship, Climate-smart agriculture

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