

How Sustainable are EU Short Food Supply Chains? Empirical Evidence, Recommendations & Innovation Actions from H2020 Strength2Food

[Strength2food](#) is a EU-funded Horizon 2020 multi-actor project aimed at 'Strengthening European Food Chain Sustainability by Quality and Procurement Policy'. One theme of the project concerns Short Food Supply Chains (SFSC). Two empirical studies investigate the economic, environmental and social impacts of selected cases of SFSCs across six European countries (France, Hungary, Italy, Norway, Poland and the UK). First, a qualitative case study analysis sheds light on producers' practices, organizational constraints and consumers' behavior (Vittersø *et al.*, 2019). Second, a novel quantitative methodology assesses the impacts of SFSC compared against mainstream, 'longer' retail alternatives (Malak-Rawlikowska *et al.*, 2019).

The results highlight SFSC can deliver socio-economic benefits, in particular for small and medium scale producers. Successful implementation of SFSC business models typically requires the realization of secondary value-capturing opportunities, drastically transforming producer- consumer relationships. This represents a fundamental challenge to primary producing SMEs in terms of their capabilities, resources, vision and values. From a consumer perspective, several barriers toward local-sustainable food exist, in terms of consumer perceptions, knowledge and behaviour.

To address some of these supply-demand side issues and integrate acquired knowledge into practical innovation capacity, participatory action research and innovation demonstration activities have been conducted, to stimulate local-short food supply chains in North-East England (Strength2Food, 2019) and farmers' markets in Italy.

This contribution will present:

- Empirical evidence on the sustainability of SFSC based on economic, social and environmental indications
- Good practices and evidence-based policy and practical recommendations to improve the operation of SFSC
- Lessons from pilot initiatives and innovative actions relating to SFSC

The session, designed for agri-food practitioners, policy makers and academics, will provide insights regarding how to manage and promote SFSC for the benefit of producers, consumers and local economies.

References

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