SMARTCHAIN

SMART SOLUTIONS IN SHORT FOOD SUPPLY CHAINS

INSIGHTS & RECOMMENDATIONS TO SUPPORT COLLABORATIVE SHORT FOOD SUPPLY CHAINS

FOREWORD

In the last decades, the European agri-food system has become more and more complex, facing several important challenges, among others, feeding a growing population, improving food market transparency and reducing the environmental impact of the food production and distribution. Therefore, we need an innovative re-organisation of the food supply chains to establish a more competitive and sustainable agri-food industry in Europe.

In recent times, Short Food Supply Chains (SFSCs) and local food markets, where local farmers and food producers sell their produce directly to consumers or through a very limited number of intermediaries, have flourished in Europe, both in rural and urban areas. They represent an alternative to conventional longer food chains where small farmers or cooperatives often have little bargaining power and the people cannot trace the food to a known producer or local area. **Advantages of short supply routes include reduction of carbon footprint, access to locally produced food of known origin, and sustainable small farms and businesses. Such food systems have the potential to respond to a number of needs and opportunities of farmers, food producers and consumers.**

Based on the sale channel of choice, SFSCs initiatives can take different forms such as farm shops (e.g. on-farm selling), online or offline marketplaces (e.g. farmers' markets, vending machines), box schemes, roadside sales, pick-your-own and community supported agriculture.

The development of SFSCs is one of the approaches of the Common Agricultural Policy, in an effort to increase resilience and promote a more favourable framework for **sustainable, healthier, local and ethically produced food.** In addition, given the extreme uncertainty around the duration and intensity of the current global crisis, it is essential to strengthen the research activities to provide technical and non-technical solutions aimed to improve collaboration in SFSCs and local food production.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

4 The SMARTCHAIN project

7 SMARTCHAIN working definition of SFSCs

8 Improve innovation and business performance of SFSCs

12 Innovative and practical solutions

16 Social innovations for SFSCs

19 Value perception of SFSCs:
how to improve consumer uptake

22 Sustainability assessment of SFSCs

25 SMARTCHAIN Innovation Platform

27 Community engagement: the case of LinkedIn

THE SMARTCHAIN PROJECT

SMARTCHAIN aimed to foster and accelerate the shift towards collaborative short food supply chains (SFSCs) by linking scientists with practitioners and different actors in the sector. Through specific actions and recommendations, SMARTCHAIN introduced new robust business models and innovative practical solutions that enhance the competitiveness and sustainability of the European agri-food system. Some examples can be found in the batch of EIP Agri Practice Abstracts.

SMARTCHAIN partners performed a thorough analysis of different types of SFSCs (on-farm direct sales, farmers' markets, speciality shops, community supported agriculture, etc.), identifying the key parameters that influence sustainable food production and rural development in the different EU regions.

The project developed concrete policy and business recommendations and analysed 18 case studies to understand the different factors (technological, regulatory, social, economic, and environmental) that play a role in the success of SFSCs.

KEY FACTS

3 YEARS
2018-2021

43 PARTNERS
FROM 11 EUROPEAN COUNTRIES

9
INNOVATION HUBS

18
CASE STUDIES
OF SHORT FOOD SUPPLY CHAINS

INNOVATION PLATFORM

Go to index

COMMUNITY

Many issues blocking SFSCs from obtaining a larger market share can be (at least partially) solved by **building an international community of SFSCs to share concerns, experiences and best practices, to discuss and collaborate together.**

That is why SMARTCHAIN launched and strengthened the collaboration of different actors through 9 innovation and collaboration hubs, but also innovation workshops and training activities for farmers and SFSCs-entrepreneurs. It also developed an interactive online platform to collect practical innovative solutions and mapped out a strategy to bring together an international community of SFSCs, by also utilising the approach of gamification.

SMARTCHAIN was coordinated by the **University of Hohenheim** and received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and Innovation programme under grant agreement No. 773785.

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Go to index

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CITOLIVA
Organic Services syntheses. strategies. solutions.
ctcpa FOOD INDUSTRY SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

SHORT FOOD SUPPLY CHAIN INITIATIVES

yaia
Zala TermálVölgye
alce nero IL BUONO DEL BIOLOGICO DAL 1978
arvaia CITTADINI · COLTIVATORI · BIOLOGICI
100% NATUURLIJK VLEESCH&CO EERLIJK VLEES RECHTSTREEKS UIT DE NATUUR
local2local
Αλλότροπον
boiturra Arabako La Trufa de Álava
Bio fruits
Lantegi Batuak
UDRUŽENJE KOMPANIJA ZA PRERADU VOĆA I POVRĆA
POLO Čačak
Einkaufen auf dem Bauernhof weil's vom Land kommt
foodhub local food network
Solidarische Landwirtschaft sich die Ernte teilen
Couleurs Paysannes Nos terroirs, entre vos mains
Association Gersoise pour la Promotion du Foie Gras

Go to index

SMARTCHAIN WORKING DEFINITION OF SFSCs

Currently, there is no official and agreed definition of SFSCs. The EU's rural development regulation (1305/2013) defines a "short supply chain" as a supply chain involving a limited number of economic operators, committed to cooperation, local economic development, and close geographical and social relations between food producers, processors and consumers. However, the Article 11 of the European Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) No 807/2014 states that "Support for the establishment and development of short supply chains (…) shall cover only supply chains involving no more than one intermediary between farmer and consumer", and even other existing definitions **limit the number of economic operators/ intermediaries to zero.**

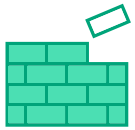
Keeping in mind that with a narrow definition many relevant examples of food supply chains would be left out of our scope, SMARTCHAIN partners agreed on an inclusive SFSCs' "working" definition to be used in the context of the project.

"SFSCs are co-operative systems that include very few intermediaries, increasing sustainability, transparency, social relations and fairer prices for farmers and consumers. Such supply chains usually involve local producers working together to promote local food which, in many cases, only travels a short distance, so farmers and consumers can communicate with each other".

Go to index

IMPROVE INNOVATION AND BUSINESS PERFORMANCE OF SFSCs

RECOMMENDATIONS TO IMPLEMENT INNOVATION AND IMPROVE BUSINESS PERFORMANCE



Prioritise the innovations that really add value to your products and services

Focus on the innovations than can differentiate your company from your competitors, like a marketing claim or something that can be positively valued by your customers.

Seek innovations that work in other similar regions, countries or sectors

Before coming up with a completely new solution for a problem, look for innovations and methods that are already in place and proved successful.

“Low cost” innovations can make the difference

Sometimes, innovations with low cost can make the difference. Innovation is not related to high cost. You don’t have to completely revolutionise your way of producing. It is better to improve your products and services step by step, which implies less risk and can make you learn during the process.

Collaborate with others: nobody knows everything!

Collaboration is key. If you want to innovate, contact the stakeholders that have the required knowledge that is lacking in your organisation.

Take advantage of innovation for marketing

Communicate that you are innovating and about what you are doing to improve your business. What is not communicated does not exist!

Go to index

BUSINESS RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **Clearly express your value proposition.**
   Tell a story about your products!

2. **Implement social innovation tools** like co-creation and co-operation

3. **Promote your products** in restaurants, hotels and cafes in the local area

4. **Think about your customers.**
   Consumers should be the cornerstone of your business. Promote networking and social initiatives to improve the relations with them and foster their engagement. Understand their needs and expectations, for example by producing foods that are aligned with their necessities, facilitating the purchases, etc.

5. **Explore new selling channels.**
   Online marketplaces have more benefits than own online shops

THESE RECOMMENDATIONS ARE BASED ON THE AVERAGE CHARACTERISTICS SFSCs CASE STUDIES:

Small-medium companies < 10 M€; < 50 people
that commonly share resources with other farmers and producers.

Selling at a province/regional level (1,000 -10,000 km²)
through of a variety of channels (speciality retailers, own shops, door-to-door deliveries, local markets & restaurants).

Using quality labels like organic production, DOP, PGI, regional labels, etc.

Limited investments of resources in marketing and innovation.

Customers are mainly located in urban areas.

Go to index

BASED ON THE SAME 18 SFSCs, FIVE EXPLOITATION MODELS HAVE BEEN IDENTIFIED:

Cooperative of producers

Where producers of the same or similar products manufacture, distribute, market and sell the products in co-operation.

- When combining marketing and selling, producers can develop more and different sales channels.
- Chosen when production and processing is relatively expensive and can be difficult to source as an individual.

Individual producers

One person, family or small group of people owns, controls and conducts the business.

- Relatively simple (inexpensive) processing or distribution required.
- Usually sell online or through onsite farm shop.
- Besides farming, additional and educational activities involving the underprivileged or people with disability lead to more engagement from the social community and to new revenue streams.

Community supported agriculture

The traditional model emphasises **sustainable agriculture, shared production risk, consumer involvement with production activities, and authenticity of local sourcing.** Over the years, other types of CSA have evolved:

- Subscription model (subscription-based contract).
- Shareholder model (purchase of shares and produce from the land).
- Community model (invest and operate farm/land and share the produce with the community).

Go to index

BASED ON THE SAME 18 SFSCs, FIVE EXPLOITATION MODELS HAVE BEEN IDENTIFIED:

Online and offline marketplace

Online retail is still growing fast and **COVID-19 brought to a promising traction for SFSCs.**

- Traditional **marketplaces** offer independent producers a platform/ market and marketing knowledge to sell goods without the burden of a brick-and-mortar store.
- Online marketplaces offer clear benefits of **being able to sell local products 24/7** to an increasing group of potential customers.

Promotion of on farm selling

Supports on-farm and online selling of individual producers and improves the visibility on the farm.

- Conducting marketing research on consumer behaviour at local, regional and national level and sharing marketing knowledge will bring additional value.
- These initiatives are typically supported through public funds.

Go to index

INNOVATIVE AND PRACTICAL SOLUTIONS FOR SHORT FOOD SUPPLY CHAINS

One of the main goals of SMARTCHAIN was to develop methods to help SFSCs design strategies of improvement to increase competitiveness and sustainability within the food system. One of the methods used focused on differentiation, namely the "value for money" concept, starting from identifying what is the specific value a SFSC can provide and the reason why customers will choose its products.

Defining the "value propositions" is essential to determine current and further opportunities to develop.

These can be consumer-focused value propositions, that focus on the values for consumers and customers, or SFSCs-focused value propositions, that focus on benefits for the members of the SFSCs.

To find the value propositions of SFSCs, the first step is to identify two main elements:

- **Success factors** that support the exploitation of the opportunities and eliminate or reduce the threats.
- **Bottlenecks** that can hamper the exploitation of an opportunity or can increase the impact of threats.

Go to index

This method was applied to the 18 SMARTCHAIN case studies and recommendations were developed for each organisation to improve their performance through the application of technological and non-technological innovations (activities, methods, tools, and solutions) that enhance success factors and/or eliminate bottlenecks.

The method is based on these steps:

1. Identify your current value proposition

2. Analyse your situation (potentially by SWOT-analysis) and identify the success factors and bottlenecks

3. Identify applicable innovations, necessary activities, tools, and methods to develop your business innovations

4. Upgrade your value propositions and added value

5. Identification of the strategy (or strategies) and preparation of the action plan

You can find the method explained in the **Guide to the implementation of the method for improving the competitiveness of Short Food Supply Chains through the application of innovations.**

Go to index

SMARTCHAIN also identified some of the hindering factors that explain why producers and consumers do not embrace SFSCs:

- Limited and unpredictable **product volumes**
- **Perishability** of products
- Limited access to resources (material, **infrastructure,** technology, financial)
- Limited **availability of labour**
- **High cost of logistics/products**
- Poor direct access/links to consumers **& low consumer awareness**
- **Lack of trust** among the chain actors
- **Low negotiating power** with retailers, large service providers, large customers, intermediaries, municipal government
- **Low adaptability** to price competition resulting **in high prices of products**
- **Lack of information and knowledge** of product development skills, advanced technologies, marketing, awareness of public funding opportunities, understanding of and compliance to legal requirements.
- **Lack of collaboration with peers** and other SFSCs members

These elements can be counteracted by applying diverse technological and non-technological solutions, that have been collected in an Inventory of Innovations available on the SMARTCHAIN platform.

With the application of the appropriate innovations, the image, products and services of the short chain organisations can become more appealing for the consumers, supporting the their choice of fresh, healthy and nutritious local products.

Go to index

Many of these innovations were evaluated by small firms and associations involved in SFSCs activities. **The most promising innovative solutions are characterised by practical applicability, technological feasibility, financial feasibility, social suitability, and organisational means and are suitable for different types of SFSCs like farmers' markets, basket/box delivery systems, local food festivals/fairs, community supported agriculture, catering, etc.** Some examples of the innovations you can find in the Inventory of Innovations are:

- Biodegradable active packaging
- Cooperative supermarket
- Online marketplace for local and fresh products
- Open farm tours
- Social media marketing and other marketing tools (e.g. storytelling)
- Temperature monitoring labels
- A collection of rules, regulations, guidelines and good practices tailored for SFSCs
- Quality assurance system for product specifications and jointly agreed quality requirements
- Collective selling points
- Virtual market platform for farmers

These innovations can improve SFSCs competitiveness, leading to:

- **Sales growth**
- **Positive spill-over (i.e. word-of-mouth can be beneficial for the popularity of SFSCs)**
- **Logistics improvement**
- **Creation of new selling channels**
- **Increased added value**
- **Extended shelf life of the products**

Go to index

SOCIAL INNOVATIONS AND SHORT FOOD SUPPLY CHAINS

Social innovations? What are they?

Social innovations are neither products nor technical solutions.

They are processes that empower people and enhance their capacity to act. They change how people relate, think, or interact, and how people eventually act (together). They create something new, such as new relationships, fresh mentalities, and novel ways of working with others.

Of course, social innovations often result in new or improved products or services. Not surprisingly, social innovations benefit people in organisations, communities, and society at large through directly and indirectly achieving greater social good.

Why are social innovations good for SFSCs?

SFSCs should not be simply seen as alternative food networks or direct commercial configurations. They are not just instances of people who transact directly.

Instead, SFSCs can be viewed as **co-operative systems of different actors (like producers, processors, and consumers) who choose to act together.** If these actors also embrace social innovations — if they change how they relate, think, or interact — their SFSC will be better positioned to become a vibrant social living system that evolves, thrives, and makes a constant positive social impact. Social innovations can therefore contribute to the enhancement of a society's capacity to be proactive and respond to local and global challenges.

Go to Index

How can people foster social innovations in SFSCs?

If SFSCs wish to lay the ground for social innovations, they need to have a group of dedicated actors that understand their role in acting together and implementing solutions themselves. In the early stages, they might organise special trainings for communication and co-operation, and seek a small group of “initiators” who will spearhead the changes in how all actors relate, think, or interact. Then, opening up and including as many and different actors as possible is the key to ensure engagement in the common endeavour. In general, SFSC actors may adopt practices that help them get closer to each other, **shortening both their physical and social distance.** For example, they might choose to share spaces or resources (even with the broader community), or they might opt for using not only formal contracts but also informal agreements, based on trust.

Can you give us a social innovation example from a SFSC?

Let us discuss a SMARTCHAIN example. Allotropon is a non-profit retail co-operative in Greece and a SMARTCHAIN case study. Since the foundation of their short food supply chain, Allotropon members embraced a vibrant social innovation. That is, the group of Allotropon initiators attempted to change the way a grocery store is viewed and treated by Allotropon actors and the local community. They have been using the grocery store as a venue for transformational initiatives that get people together and stimulate social activity. They have been co-organising various open events, such as food fairs, “earth fests” (e.g., informational events devoted to the real value of seeds), cultural happenings (e.g., concerts, film screenings, book presentations), speeches, and socially oriented campaigns (e.g., gathering food items for refugees). Hence, Allotropon actors created new relationships and mentalities, a lot of people in the local community (and beyond) got the chance to benefit, and more people got in the store and on board.

Go to index

Why is it important to assess social innovation level in SFSCs?

Each short food supply chain may benefit from the evaluation of its level of social innovativeness because this can give an immediate and measurable picture of how the dimensions of the social innovation are perceived by the organisation and how they are transformed in real actions during the production/market phases. The results of the assessment give the organisation the possibility to understand the social value generated by its activity and reflect on its behaviour, its objectives and its vision. It is the way to take some corrective actions for a transition to a more socially innovative short food supply chain, if this is its desire.

How can we assess the social innovation level in a SFSC?

Each SFSC can assess its level of social innovation using a specific tool of self-assessment called SIAT (Social Innovation Assessment Template) which has the specific aim to investigate five dimensions of the organisation operating in the short chain: economic, environmental, socio-cultural, governance and influence. The SIAT tool, that SMARTCHAIN used to assess the 18 SMARTCHAIN case studies, represents a strategic and managerial tool that helps the organisations within the chain to pinpoint their level of social innovativeness and to identify where there is room for improvement and possible change of strategies.

Which are the main advantages for an organisation in applying SIAT tool?

The SIAT tool allows to take into consideration a variety of aspects that determine the social innovativeness of the chain. **The organisations that use this tool have the possibility to see clearly what their degree of openness in terms of involvement of customers is, as well as that of other stakeholders of the chain and of the institutions.** They can then decide, based on the results on these dimensions, whether it is important or necessary to review some of their managerial behaviours or some of the aspects of their internal organisation.

Is this tool useful only for the applying organisation?

Because it allows to interpret both the internal and the external relations of the organisation at the same time, the SIAT tool can be used by individual SFSCs but also to design public policies for a certain territory. Because it takes into account the evidence of each dimension and it provides precious information to policymakers, both in terms of positive and “negative” results, the SIAT tool can potentially help reshape local policies when applied to a significant number of cases.

Go to index

VALUE PERCEPTION OF SFSCs: HOW TO IMPROVE CONSUMER UPTAKE

Although consumers generally have positive perceptions of local food, very few of them purchase from SFSCs with any regularity. To help find solutions to this problem, SMARTCHAIN conducted three consumer studies to examine how consumers relate to SFSCs and the barriers and facilitators to the purchase of SFSC products. This investigation led to recommendations on how to increase consumer purchase of SFSCs products.

1. SFSCs must become more accessible

Consumers generally have positive opinions of SFSCs and the quality of their products. However, they tend to find it easier to shop at supermarkets, local stores and discount stores, as they prefer to shop via accessible platforms that offer a wide range of readily available products and other conveniences such as longer opening hours. Thus, SFSCs could increase the convenience of their products by:

- Supplying their products at sale-points that are closer to consumers, such as markets, supermarkets, local stores, vending machines
- Joining with other producers (such as through a cooperative) to provide a wider range of products in one place
- Offering delivery to consumers' homes or a pick-up point, for example by collaborating with consumer purchase groups or local retailers/institutions

Go to index

2. Increase marketing activities and/or help producers to do so

Consumers think that SFSCs are generally not well promoted and often **seem not to know about the existence of SFSCs at all or about details of their product range.** Since consumers in general like the idea of supporting local producers and knowing the provenance of the food, these aspects can be further emphasised in the marketing of the SFSC products:

- Through community campaigns (e.g., local festivals)
- On producer communication channels (e.g. producer/market websites)
- Through descriptions given at the point-of-purchase or on the product packaging
- Via more classic channels such as local newspapers, social media, or advertising signs along the roads
- On the public side, by setting up education courses or platforms where they producers can promote their products.

3. Raise awareness for SFSCs and about why is worthwhile to support them

Ethical consumption and the added value of supporting a good cause are major drivers for purchases of SFSC products. **Consumers were particularly interested in supporting local producers, as well as environmentally-friendly consumption, animal welfare, and ethical employment.** These ethical aspects should be highlighted when communicating to consumers about SFSCs, the are major drivers for consumer behaviour.

4. Explain to consumers why the prices may be higher

Consumer behaviour and willingness to pay differs according to product type, with consumers being more likely to purchase and more willing to pay more for fruits, vegetables and eggs, although there are minor country variations. However, many consumers are discouraged by the higher cost of SFSCs products compared to those from longer. As such, the reason for this price difference can be better explained to consumers.

When consumers better understand how the prices are calculated and what effort is behind the production, they are more likely to accept a price premium for products from SFSCs.

Go to index

5. Provide more information about food provenance and production

Consumers appreciate SFSCs because they allow them to know where their food comes from more easily. However, some would like more information on how the food was produced, and which hygiene measures were followed (particularly for foods with a higher risk of food safety issues, such as dairy products). **Providing this information on the product, at the point of sale, or even on the producer's website could also increase the trust consumers have in the quality and food hygiene practices associated with SFSCs products,** as lack of trust appears to discourage some consumers from purchasing from SFSCs. In fact, many consumers mentioned that they would like to visit farms to see how the food they buy is produced. **To satisfy this desire, farmers could show videos of their farms and production methods on their websites, explaining the story behind their products.** This method of communication has also been recommended by Slow Food.

6. Match supply and demand

It is important to determine what the needs of SFSCs actors are in relation to consumers, which may differ according to individual actors, region and the product being sold. For instance, if demand is insufficient, some SFSCs may need to increase their consumer base. This could involve finding out more about their target market, supplying products with a greater demand and/or increasing the accessibility and convenience of purchasing their products. For producers who already have a website or Facebook page, they could use Google Analytics to find out more about the consumers who visit their online pages.

Finally, if supply is insufficient to address the needs of producers and maintain the interest of consumers, then the aim may be to improve the supply of SFSCs products, such as by investing in more efficient production methods and/or by improving logistics on the part of the producer/intermediary. Such measures may also help to reduce the cost of SFSCs products, which may in turn increase consumer uptake.

Go to index

SUSTAINABILITY ASSESSMENT OF SFSCs

The sustainability of selected SFSCs compared to longer conventional supply chains was assessed by SMARTCHAIN from the environmental, social and economic perspective and led to a number of recommendations for SFSCs practitioners to improve their overall sustainability.

Environmental sustainability

From the environmental point of view, the most relevant part of SFSCs is the consumer's transport. How can you, as a producer, help your customers to reduce their environmental impact?

Farm Shop, On-Farm Sales

The best case is if your customers reach you by foot, by bike or by public transport, as the environmental impact in this case is minimal. If, however, they come by car, some considerations should be made. The environmental impact is typically calculated by kg of product bought. If your customers drive a long route to buy a small portion, their impact is maximal. But if they are able to buy many of the products, they need directly from you, this will lower the footprint because it will reduce their need to drive anywhere else. **Therefore, a good strategy for you could be to partner up with neighbours that can complement your production so that together you can offer a wider range of products.** And don't forget to manage the transports associated with this collaboration just as efficiently. If you sell only a small selection of products, for example meat, make sure your client can buy much of that product at once and store it at home.

Farmers' Market

The main advantage of farmers' markets is the presence of a variety of farmers and producers selling a wide range of complementary goods. Therefore, you can assume that your customers will have more opportunities to find all they need at once and that the market will be a "one stop shop", thus reducing the footprint of transport per product unit. An even more favourable situation is when the market is located in an area with more shops nearby and when the farmers' market is easily accessible by bike or public transport, for example when it's in a city.

Delivery services

The choice of a low-emission vehicle and an efficient route planning are key. There are many apps and software available that help you calculate the shortest route.

Community Supported Agriculture

To be efficient, make sure that the vehicle used for delivery travels as fully packed as possible and plan your point of delivery in the city, or near enough so that your clients can come to your drop-off point either by bike or public transport. If you want to reduce your footprint even more, think about the vehicle you are using and whether you can possibly shorten your route, in case you serve multiple drop-off points. You could also encourage your customers to bring their own reusable bags.

Socio-economic sustainability

The socio-economic perspective of sustainability can also help the producers perform better while improving their well-being and that of the other people involved in SFSCs: workers, value chain actors, the local community and society.

The socioeconomic dimension is key in terms of SFSCs impacts and right to exist. From the producers' point of view, the main benefits of SFSCs are the direct relationship with the consumer, the control they can keep on their product until the end of the value chain as well as the conviviality. Furthermore, it seems that SFSCs more adequately meet the needs of producers who process small quantities and focus on quality/ exclusivity rather than quantity.

Apart from better prices and greater margins, which are obvious economic advantages, the producers also obtain greater business certainty and security – especially with the CSA model. But beyond these economic benefits and acknowledgment, **social recognition and the feeling of being part of a community** are the most essential sources of self-esteem and personal satisfaction. Other important aspects are the empowerment in terms of independence and freedom in pricing and work organisation, as well as the control of the whole value chain.

Go to index

Recommendations for producers

Make a point to **improve relations with your clients and suppliers.** The inclusion of Social Responsibility policies in your company will allow the measurement and monitoring the relation with your value chain. This could also improve the coordination between the different actors of the value chain and increase the added value of your products.

The association with other producers enhances social benefits of SFSCs, such as **conviviality and solidarity.** It is also beneficial in terms of business models, since it allows to share investments and resources (to run a virtual or physical shop, for instance), and to get more visibility.

To improve the resilience and performance of your business, try and increase the accessibility of your products.
A combination of different chains, including more conventional ones, can be key in this respect. Online sales or new local food markets could attract a larger audience and increase the demand.

To ensure success in new markets, we encourage to focus on **building consumer trust** by implementing information or educational campaigns focused on demonstrating the transparency and traceability of your products.

To foster the marketing potential of the direct relationship with consumers, **synergies can be found** with other activities such as tourism, cultural and pedagogical activities, which have positive feedback on the sales.

Finally, **contractual models,** requiring a greater engagement of consumers, such as CSA, provide higher business certainty and price security. Indeed, by connecting to any private or public initiative you will be able to improve the consumers' perception of your products.

Go to index

SMARTCHAIN INNOVATION PLATFORM

The SMARTCHAIN Innovation Platform shares knowledge and innovative practical solutions for SFSCs.

Who can find interesting information on the Platform?

- Consumers
- Farmers & Cooperatives
- Industry & Retail
- Policy Makers
- Technology Providers

What exactly can you find on the Platform?

- **Innovation & Collaboration Hubs:** Hubs in France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Netherlands, Serbia, Spain and Switzerland each worked with 2 case studies of successful SFSCs. Read about the 9 Hubs and our 18 case studies and be inspired!

- **Innovation Inventory & Initiative Inventory:** These inventories are continuously growing and searchable databases of:

  o SFSCs innovations throughout Europe, from cheese-making equipment to websites and vending machines. These are geared towards SFSCs entrepreneurs.

  o SFSCs initiatives from apps to order local food to agrotourism websites, these may be local or international and can serve consumers, policy makers, and others.

You are invited to contribute your SFSCs innovation or initiative to the inventory!

Go to index

- **Resources:** Here are 2 databases – one for SFSCs-related publications (including public deliverables of the SMARTCHAIN project) and one for SFSCs-related weblinks. Find all you need to know about SFSCs by browsing these pages.

- **Training:** Free and accessible on your schedule, you can find here:

  - o A 5-week, e-learning course on "Best Practices in SFSC Innovations" which presents favourite innovations at the local, the regional and the national/international levels. Complete the course successfully and earn a SMARTCHAIN certificate.
  - o A video tutorial on the use and features of the SMARTCHAIN Platform.
  - o The outcomes of 9 Innovation and solution-based multi-actor workshops, each in the local language and geared to the local issues of the Innovation and Collaboration Hubs.

- **Gain Model:** Understand through the GAIN gamification model how networking through 4 levels of engagement and collaboration can increase your SFSC competitiveness and sustainability.

What is the future of the Platform?

After the SMARTCHAIN project ends (Aug 2021), the Platform will continue to grow with the support of 5 new H2020 projects.

FAIRCHAIN

LOWINFOOD

FOODRUS

CO FRESH

PLOUTOS

Don't be left behind – register on the SMARTCHAIN Innovation Platform today.

Go to index

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT: THE CASE OF LINKEDIN

Creating a strategy and roadmap for building community engagement on a local, regional, national and European level

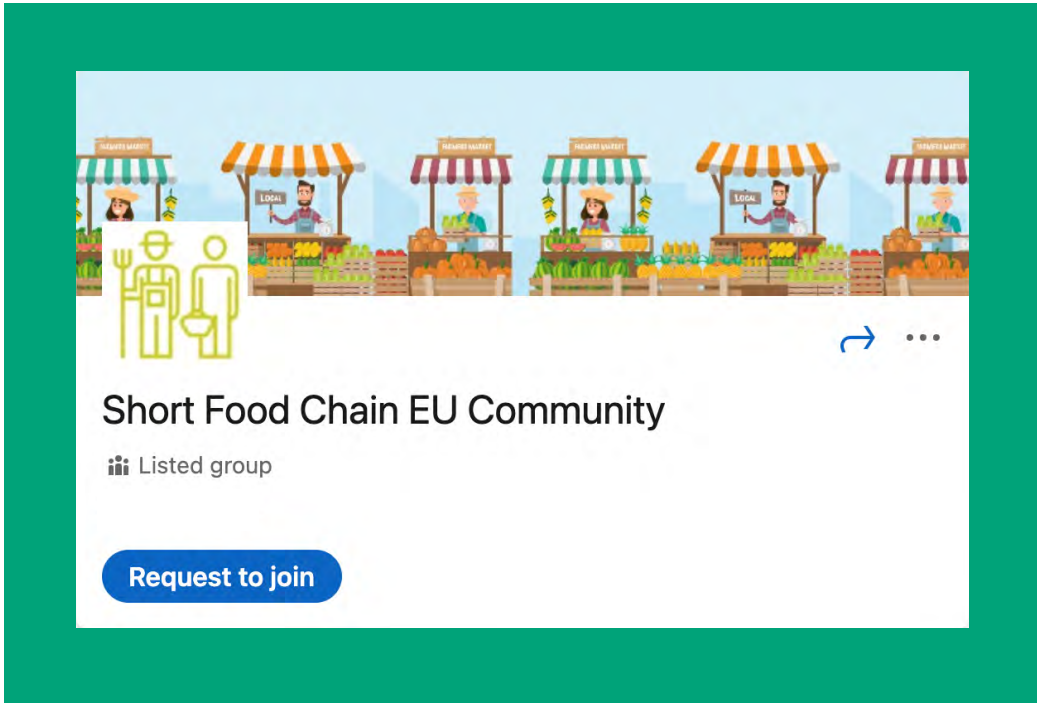
Short Food Chain EU community

The Short Food Chain EU Community has set the goal of removing the main obstacles for SFSCs in the coming years. By connecting practitioners, initiatives, organisation, knowledge institutions and entrepreneurs, the community generates knowledge, inspiration and data that can be used in a circular fashion. This enables entrepreneurs and initiatives to scale up, realise profitable revenue models, create new collaborations and jointly achieve more impact.

Engagement strategy

The LinkedIn group page makes it possible for members to share content and invite relevant contacts within their network to join the SFCC community page, enabling the community to expand greatly. The community started with the members of the SMARTCHAIN project. Then, a Social Network Analysis using LinkedIn connection databases was conducted within the networks of the community members to find out hidden connections and select relevant people to invite, namely the mutual contacts within the community, sharing similar interests, goals and vision.

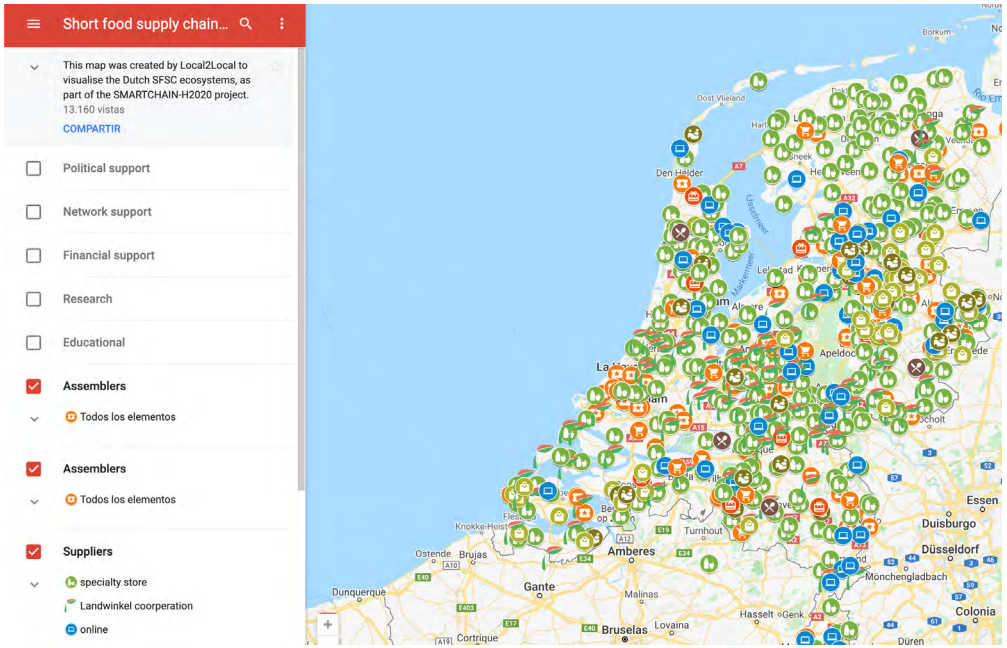
Thanks to this the community exponentially grew to almost 300 members. What's more, the Strength2Food community and SMARTCHAIN community joined forces and now collectively engage within the community page.



Go to index

Use the power of Social Networks and Innovation Ecosystems

The foundation for strong innovation ecosystems is trust, knowing each other and sharing the same values and vision. The Social Network Analysis is an effective tool to speed up the process of forming this trusted network of actors. The analysis of these datasets and dividing the represented people, organisations and institutions into various actor types of the innovation ecosystem gives insights on an individual as well as an organisational level. As an example, see the Dutch short food supply chain ecosystem map and explore the different types of actors in the collective network of frontrunners in the Netherlands.



The creation of such an ecosystem map provides strategic insights about the different types of actors that need to be represented in order to enable a systemic transition and will help you:

- **Show other SFSC actors who they can collaborate with and position yourself as a strong partner.**
- **Select actor to collaborate with based on who is missing in your ecosystem.**
- **Funnel and prioritise your communication activities and strategies.**

Be part of the community!

Members of the community frequently post events, publications or practical tips and developments related to SFSCs or ask feedback on a new idea from the community of practitioners and experts in the field. **Join the Short Food Chain EU community and start contributing and connecting your relevant contacts, we are looking forward to seeing you!**

Go to index

SMARTCHAIN

SMART SOLUTIONS IN SHORT FOOD SUPPLY CHAINS

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