

Practice Abstract No 6

The participative supermarkets as novel examples for consumer co-operative approaches to food retailing



Description

The participative supermarket is an innovative business model in food retailing spreading rapidly across the EU and beyond and concerning urban and rural areas alike. The new model is rooted in the consumer co-operative example, hence abiding to the specific set of values (i.e., equality, equity, solidarity) and principles (i.e., democratic governance, members' economic participation, concern for the community) at the core of the co-operative movement. The distinctive characteristics of these innovative initiatives are to be found in the direct participation of a majority of members into the business as a labour force, and - in some cases - to the limited accessibility of the service to their members.

Members, through the participation in specific working groups, manage the business and directly choose the products based on considerations over six - equally weighted - criteria (i.e. environmental impact, proximity, fairness, taste, price, culinary needs of the neighbourhood) and rely on the full price transparency (fixed profit margins). While trade-offs are inevitable, the overall objective is to increase the access to & affordability of sustainable products. Rate of sales is the determinant for the continued supply of a product. While this remains fundamental to guarantee economic viability, like other consumer co-op retailers the participative supermarkets are not-for-profit organisations (surplus capital is re-invested in the business or socially relevant actions).

Participative supermarkets contribute to the transition towards sustainable food systems, by upholding principles such as cooperation, knowledge and competence sharing, support of local communities, civic engagement & investment in social innovation.

Author(s)

Giulia Tarsitano
*European Community of
Consumer Co-operatives
(Eurocoop)*

Stakeholders

Consumers, retail

Country/Region

EU

Keywords

Co-op retailer, social innovation,
participative supermarket



Additional Information (context, links, etc.)

<https://www.eurocoop.coop/>

About CO-FRESH

The CO-FRESH project aims to provide techniques, tools and insights on how to make agri-food value chains more environmentally sustainable, socio-economically balanced and economically competitive. The project pilots several agri-food value chain innovations to see how they, in combination, can improve environmental and socio-economic sustainability.

Visit us!



<https://co-fresh.eu/>



[COFRESH-H2020](#)



[CO-FRESH](#)

CO-FRESH Partners



Disclaimer

This practice abstract reflects only the author's view. The CO-FRESH project is not responsible for any use that may be made of the information it contains.



This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 101000852.