

## Improving Sustainability Impact of SFSCs

### Overview

As part of the Integrated sustainability assessments during the SMARTCHAIN project, comparison between selected case studies and general conventional supply chains was undertaken, whilst considering the three dimensions of sustainability: social, economic and environment. The purpose was to identify elements to reduce the environmental impact of SFSCs whilst maintaining and improving their positive social and economic impact

### Challenges

There are also significant differences in the impacts of SFSCs' according to the country, type of product, and type of organisation. It was clear when assessing the case studies and comparing them with conventional food supply chains that there is a large variation, among different SFSCs highlighting the diversity across the European landscape. Despite the perception of SFSCs being more environmentally friendly, SFSCs can be associated with higher food miles and larger carbon footprints than conventional supply chains. This can be attributed by the need for actors such as consumers to travel for more kilometers to buy small quantities of food. Whereas supermarkets are generally 'one stop shops' where customers can fulfill all their needs

### Key Recommendations

- Coordinated logistics and food distributions amongst local SFSC practitioners
- A diversification of distribution channels and points of sale
- Development of social and physical infrastructure, such as food hubs
- Apply the food hub concept to digital solutions, creating digital food hubs
- Choose environmentally friendly transport.

### Main Findings

In order to assess and recommend improved sustainability aspects of SFSCs, an environmental and socio-economic assessment was undertaken on selected case studies of the project across Europe. An evaluation of SFSC innovations from environmental, social and economic perspectives was made, comparing them with conventional food chain practices. This provided an insight into the comparative advantages and disadvantages of different types of SFSCs

Overall the socio-economic impacts on the Social Life Cycle assessment show better results for SFSC, with less gender discrimination, less corruption, fair competition, and appropriate working time. Beyond economic reasons, social integration and empowerment have a great importance in SFSC. The most important advantages of SFSCs for producers are the direct, social and supportive relationship with consumers, the control they keep on their product along the value chain and conviviality. In addition, the direct relationship with consumers enhances all SFSCs benefits

Despite general perception of SFSCs having a reduced environmental impact, this is not always the case due to the logistical parameters of SFSC. In general, SFSC's distribution avenues are located outside populated areas meaning some consumers are required to drive more kilometers by car per kilogram

## Environmental recommendations

- **Foster farmers' markets and cooperative shops**

Farmer markets, as well as cooperative shops bring together a range of local producers for a 'one stop shop', usually in a central location to consumers. Supporting these selling channels reduces the travel requirement of consumers whilst the location enables customers to visit complementary shops nearby without travelling more

- **Provide networking platforms**

Platforms provide opportunities for primary producers to connect and build networks with other local SFSC actors, and enable future collaboration to complement each others offers

- **Transportation**

Practitioners and consumers should choose environmentally friendly transportation available to them, in order to reduce their carbon footprint

## Socio-economic recommendations for practitioners

- **Cooperate with local producers and supply chains**

Sharing knowledge, investments, and resources, could optimize logistics and to get more visibility for individual SFSCs

- **Diversification**

Complement the produce on offer by including goods from other producers to provide more options for consumers

- **Increase the accessibility of products:**

Explore additional selling channels such as online sales, new local-food markets or social events, good sources of communication and marketing

- **Carry out informative and educational campaigns**

Improving the understand of consumers of the origin of their locally sourced products, could lead to informed choices and increased sales.

## Socio-economic recommendations for policy makers

- **Foster local reindustrialisation**

The lack of local processing infrastructure is a barrier in the development of SFSCs. Improved infrastructure such as slaughterhouses, mills, shared processing plants, etc. is needed along with their adaption to handle small and seasonal productions

- **Social criteria for public procurement**

Consider rules that include a social criterion favouring providers that are socially sustainable, and contribute to the local economy, viability of farmers, and the revitalisation of rural areas

- **Increase Investment in SFSC related research**

The results of the environmental and socio-economic assessments call for more coordination of the food production and supply in SFSCs. From a social perspective, the modalities of this cooperation (vertical and horizontal) should be further investigated, focusing on the conditions under which cooperatives effectively act as a support to producers' empowerment.

For this, more data is needed, harmonised data at EU level, according to common criteria and indicators, to know more about the contribution of SFSC in EU economy (in terms of GDP, employment, etc.), their relative importance in producers' business model, but also more qualitative aspect (satisfaction of producers, etc.)

## More Info

The central objective of SMARTCHAIN is to foster and accelerate the shift towards collaborative short food supply chains and, through specific actions and recommendations, to introduce new robust business models and innovative practical solutions that enhance the competitiveness and sustainability of the European agri-food system



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