

eip-agri  
AGRICULTURE & INNOVATION

# Innovation in short food supply chains

Creating value together



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This brochure has been produced within the framework of the European Innovation Partnership for Agricultural Productivity and Sustainability (EIP-AGRI), which was launched by the European Commission to promote innovation in the agricultural and forestry sectors and to better connect research and practice.

This brochure follows up on the [EIP-AGRI Focus Group on 'Innovative short food supply chain management'](#), the [EIP-AGRI workshop 'Cities and food - connecting producers and consumers'](#), and the [EIP-AGRI workshop 'Innovation in the supply chain: creating value together'](#).

For more details on the Operational Groups and other innovative projects presented in this brochure, please see the [dedicated booklet on the EIP-AGRI website](#).







## ► Collaborating along the supply chain

Short food supply chains exist in many forms across Europe, ranging from direct sales on the farm and community-supported agriculture to local food chains involving restaurants or shops. All these forms of collaboration typically have a limited number of intermediaries between agri-food producer and consumer, and tend to focus on local and close cooperation between the people involved. Short food supply chains have the potential to bring together producers and consumers, and increase added value for farmers in the food chain. This can improve farm income, increase competitiveness and support environmental sustainability, provided that the chain is organised in an efficient way and costs are clearly calculated.

Improving collaboration between farmers, farm cooperatives, food processors, consumers and others involved in short food supply chains can boost this potential and enhance mutual benefits. It can enable the people involved to develop new products and processes to add value and to improve the range of products available to consumers. It can also help to make logistics and distribution more efficient, and it can strengthen food chains and open up new markets.



*This brochure highlights a number of Operational Groups and other innovative projects and initiatives that are exploring solutions for challenges that collaborative short food supply chains are facing. These projects illustrate successful ways of bringing innovation and collaboration to short food chains, for more impact. This publication also offers inspiration from EIP-AGRI Focus Groups and Horizon 2020 thematic networks, which help share results more broadly across Europe.*







## ► Developing new products and processes

Developing new products through collaborative short food supply chains offers opportunities for agri-food producers to diversify their crop range, optimise processes, tap into new markets, and increase farm income. A diversified product range also means that more people can become involved in the chain, creating more job opportunities and possibilities for knowledge sharing.

The development of new products is particularly important in the context of changing consumer demands for healthy and sustainable products, and an increasing interest in locally grown food. Regional branding can also help create a product identity that attracts consumers and stands for quality.



### Aronia and other organic superberries in Centre-Val de Loire

The production of chokeberry (*Aronia*) and other “superberries” such as honeysuckle (*Lonicera*), sea buckthorn (*Hippophae*), serviceberry (*Amelanchier*) and elderberry is already well established in Poland, Germany, Switzerland and other countries. An Operational Group from the French region of Centre-Val de Loire now sees opportunities to develop these fruits for the organic market in France. “By growing these berries, organic fruit producers can diversify their crops”, says project coordinator Jean-Marc Delacour from regional growers association CDHR. “We are also seeing an increasing consumer interest in traceable organic food products that are rich in vitamins and antioxidants.”

The Operational Group is building a complete chain, from cultivar production to harvesting and processing for the organic market. The project has started with organic production of the ‘pilot fruit’, Aronia, which is rich in antioxidants and is very tolerant to pests and

diseases. Experimental plots are also being planted for serviceberry, honeysuckle, sea buckthorn and elderberry.

“In addition to producing these new berry crops, the consumer products made from these berries, including jam, fruit juice and pastries, are almost non-existent in France”, Jean-Marc says. “We see this as a major asset to remain competitive and to develop the project successfully. Two of the project’s processors have now started developing experimental recipes for jam and pastries. We are also exploring the potential value of by-products of berry production: using berry residues after pressing for cosmetic or pharmaceutical purposes.”

**More information** [on the project website](#) or [in the EIP-AGRI database](#)

**Watch** the [project clip on YouTube](#)



## ► New business and marketing models

Several innovative projects are testing cost-effective and sustainable solutions for more efficient logistics and distribution, allowing short food chains to share costs and resources, and tailor to the needs of larger customers. Smart IT solutions can enable producers to supply to different markets, and to explore both direct and online sales while maintaining a close relationship with consumers. Sharing knowledge and skills is essential in developing these solutions.



### Food Value: online marketplace for local food chains

To support local short food supply chains, the Dutch Operational Group Food Value has set up an online marketplace where primary producers, food processors, transporters and customers can organise themselves in communities. "We want to give farmers the opportunity to sell their products to more customers without having to become large-scale producers", says project coordinator Marieke Karszen. "Our platform is designed to make the organisation and logistics of local food chains easier, giving locally grown food the value it deserves."

Producers or local food groups can set up their own online shop through the Food Value platform, which gives them access to a dashboard showing all orders that have been placed. This information can be easily extracted for administrative purposes or to match supply and demand. Customers can choose products from all farm stores on the platform. The local logistical partner organises the orders and distributes them in the city.

Over 23 farmers, retailers, transporters and restaurant owners helped test the portal and contributed with ideas to develop a useful online tool. Food Value wants to encourage communication

between the people that use the platform, and stimulate them to work as a group. Marieke explains: "The tool allows producers, processors, retailers and customers to easily send each other direct messages, or to call each other directly. They can form thematic groups, for instance for customers and producers to share recipes. Restaurant owners can form a group with suppliers to discuss a menu for the next month. They can discuss what is available and can make agreements about products and prices. This contributes to building trust."

- **More information:** [www.foodvalue.nl](http://www.foodvalue.nl) or in the [EIP-AGRI database](#)
- Marieke Karszen presented this initiative at the EIP-AGRI workshop 'Innovation in the supply chain: creating value together'. Find inspiration from other projects [on the event page](#) and [in the workshop booklet](#).







## ► Strengthening the link between cities and rural areas

Cities offer enormous potential for agri-food producers involved in food chains operating in urban or peri-urban areas. Smarter logistics can shorten the distance between producers and consumers, stimulating market opportunities for local farmers and giving citizens access to fresh, healthy and sustainably grown food. Close cooperation with cities and consumers can help agri-food producers establish a stable supply chain and a better income. Many interesting initiatives are being set up, including [community-supported agriculture \(CSA\)](#) and [Food Hubs](#). Public food procurement in cities, for instance for nurseries, schools or hospitals, can also be organised to source food that is produced locally and in a sustainable way.



### An Edible Park for citizens of Reggio Emilia

Near the Italian city of Reggio Emilia, the Operational Group 'Edible Park' has set up an agroforestry-based farm that supplies fresh produce to people from the city. The farm spans about 1 ha of farmland, with 80 mulberry trees planted in rows between the crops. This enhances biodiversity and helps to maintain the traditional rural landscape of the area.

"Our customers can come in twice a week to buy fresh vegetables and food products", says project coordinator Paolo Mantovi from research organisation CRPA. "We offer high quality products with a low environmental impact, thanks to our sustainable production model, and by selling our produce directly. Vegetables that are not sold are processed by an agricultural cooperative into, for instance, fresh vegetable mixes that can be used to make soup. 'Edible Park' is also the new brand for soups sold in stores."

Edible Park wants to make sure the farm activities can continue after the end of the project. To make this agricultural model economically sustainable,

the project is exploring ways to improve logistics and sales, for instance through a web platform to collect orders. Paolo says: "We want to involve our customers more in the planning and development of the project and know which vegetables, food products or packaging they prefer."



#### More information on

<http://parcocommestibile.crupa.it/> or in the [EIP-AGRI database](#)

#### Inspiration for city food systems

The cities of [Copenhagen](#), [Ljubljana](#) and [Lyon](#) are bringing fresh, locally produced food into their public kitchens.

Find more inspiration in the results from the [EIP-AGRI workshop 'Cities and food - connecting producers and consumers'](#).



- ▶ Several [Horizon 2020 multi-actor projects](#), including [DIVERSIFOOD](#), [Strength2Food](#) and [SMARTCHAIN](#) are exploring solutions for sustainable food supply chains.
- ▶ Read more on research and innovation for short food supply chains in the [factsheet on Sustainable, circular and innovative value chains](#).



## ▶ Sharing knowledge and experiences across Europe

Connecting with other people, projects and European networks such as Horizon 2020 thematic networks and multi-actor projects can boost inspiration and innovation for short food supply chains.

### Food for thought through EIP-AGRI Focus Groups

*"After I participated in the EIP-AGRI Focus Group on short food supply chains, I decided to apply the knowledge I had gained in my own region in Croatia. As part of the Regional Development Agency of Međimurje, we managed to set up the Interreg project [AgriShort](#), which allowed us to establish four short food supply chains in Croatia and Hungary. These were the first short food supply chains to be organised in Croatia.*

*We noticed that this new idea and the promotion we did for short food chains led many people in the local community to change their way of thinking. They started to prioritise local food, local farmers, and supply chains with more direct contact. We also got the government on board, who now supports us in developing shops for local products."*

**- Valentina Hažić, expert from the EIP-AGRI Focus Group 'Innovative short food supply chain management' -**

Find all Focus Group results on the [EIP-AGRI website](#)

## Thematic networks connecting links in the (supply) chain

SKIN (Short supply chain Knowledge and Innovation Network) is a Horizon 2020 thematic network that collects and spreads knowledge and best practices on short food supply chains.

- ▶ More information, video stories and a map with good practices on [www.shortfood-chain.eu](http://www.shortfood-chain.eu)
- ▶ Find an [overview of all thematic networks](#) on the EIP-AGRI website

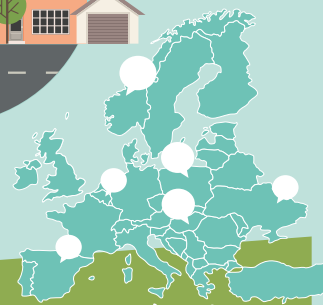


## INNOVATION IN SHORT FOOD SUPPLY CHAINS

Creating value together



Sharing knowledge across Europe



### BENEFITS



#### Developing new products & processes

- ▶ Added value for producers & processors
- ▶ Access to new markets
- ▶ Broader product range for consumers



#### Exploring innovative business & marketing models

- ▶ Efficient logistics and distribution
- ▶ Sharing costs and resources
- ▶ Close relationship with consumers



#### Linking cities & rural areas

- ▶ Access to fresh food for city consumers
- ▶ Stable supply chains
- ▶ Procurement contracts for public institutions