



Short food supply chain as an alternative for promoting family agriculture

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Introduction

In recent years, increasing attention has been given to promoting short agrifood supply chains, not only in Europe and the United States but also in Latin America. Short food supply chains are alternative agrifood systems that include different forms of distribution characterized mainly by few (or no) intermediaries between consumers and producers, or short geographical distances between them (Deverre and Lamine, 2010; Parker, 2005).

Originally, short food supply chains were associated primarily with a demand for social proximity: consumers wanted direct contact and relationships of trust with producers. The growing interest in short food supply chains also reflects consumer demand for quality and traceability, given the alarming health crises in food markets (Renting and others, 2003; Aubry and Kebir, 2013). It also reflects an increase in so-called ethical food consumption, the aim of which is to spur social, economic, or environmental change through individual decisions on what, how, and when to buy.

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For farmers, short food supply chains are attractive opportunities for diversifying production, capturing greater value added, and ensuring more stable incomes.

For local communities, short food supply chains are a means to relocate value chains in order to retain value added in their territories, create jobs, capture value added from intangible assets (brand, territorial anchoring), strengthen their territories' resilience in times of crisis, reclaim the value of their assets, and become an important vector for growth and attraction in their territories.

Although short food supply chains are normally associated with better product quality or more sustainable production and commercial practices, these characteristics do not develop automatically since production location alone does not guarantee the attributes of quality and safety, nor that the products have a low environmental impact or include social responsibility attributes. (Winter, 2003; Aubry and Kebir, 2013).

This bulletin describes some specific experiences with short food supply chains, both in Latin America and in other parts of the world, which have made it possible to identify success factors and lessons learned. These examples are based on cases discussed at the seminar on short food supply chains recently held by ECLAC, FAO and WHO, the full report on which can be found at <http://bit.ly/1pqMzMj>.

Basic concepts

Proximity or short food supply chains are a form of commerce based on the direct sale of fresh or seasonal products. Generally, producers and consumers are in close geographical proximity, and no more than one intermediary is involved in the relations between the two (sales). The European Commission, through the LEADER European Observatory (2000), noted that consumers who buy agrifood products through short food supply chains value the freshness of the products, and knowing that the produce is picked on nearby farms shortly before being sold; moreover, they often are familiar with the land where the products are grown, and even the water that irrigates them. In almost every case, the output of these farms is low, or produced with artisanal systems that could not be marketed in any other way.

Although throughout history farmers have been able to sell directly to end consumers, the present form of short food supply chains originated formally in 1965 in Japan, when a group of mothers concerned about the industrialization of agriculture and the massive use of agrochemicals founded the first partnerships (*teikei*) with farmers. In these partnerships, farmers agreed to provide chemical-free foods, while the women committed to purchasing their produce through subscriptions to these “*teikei*.”

In that same period, community farms called food guilds were created in Switzerland, and in the United States and in Canada local agriculture was stimulated by what is called community supported agriculture. In Italy the groups are called *Gruppi di Acquisto Solidale*, while in Germany they are known as *Landwirtschaftsgemeinschaftshof*. This concept has been promoted in France since 2002 by associations that support peasant farming (*Associations pour le Maintien de l'Agriculture*

Paysanne –AMAP–), which operate in different parts of the country independently of the State through agreements between consumers and farmers. These models do not conflict with other forms of commercialization; rather they complement them by offering consumers and producers alternatives.

In Latin America and the Caribbean, short food supply chains are an emerging trend, taking the shape of biomarkets and ecological or organic markets, such as those in Loja and Cuenca in Ecuador, or Jalisco and Xalapa in Mexico. They are also associated with public procurements, the most noteworthy being Brazil's “Zero Hunger” program, under which the Family Farm Food Purchasing Program has connected local supply with schools' need for food thanks to the enactment of a law that establishes that at least 30% of all food for school meals must be procured directly from family farms or local farmer organizations.

Several typologies have been formulated to classify short food supply chains identified by empirical research. Renting and collaborators (2003) classify short food supply chains as short chains involving direct, face-to-face relationships between producers and buyers; proximity supply chains (within a short geographical distance); and geographically extended supply chains in which the relationship between the farmers and the buyers persists over time. Other authors have developed typologies keyed to the maximum number of intermediaries or the nature of the social relations established in the production chain (Aubry and Kebir, 2013). What all these typologies have in common is the identification of factors of proximity (geographical, organizational, or social) in the relationship between producers and buyers.

Therefore, short agrifood supply chains can be defined according to those three dimensions, which are not mutually exclusive. For example, even if a consumer does not buy a local product directly from the farmer, some authors will consider it an example of a short food supply chain because it satisfies the criteria of geographical proximity.

For its part, France's Ministry of Agriculture states that, for it to be a short food supply chain, there may be no more than one intermediary between producers and consumers, with no reference made to the geographical distance between where the product is produced and where it is sold. More advanced short food supply chains include one or more of these dimensions.

Based on the experience, the following varieties of short food supply chains involve one or more

of the dimensions of proximity described above (LEADER European Observatory):

- Direct on-farm sales;
- Direct sales in local markets;
- Sales in stores (collective points of sale, restaurants, retail merchants, others) and local supermarkets;
- Home delivery;
- Advance sales;
- Mail orders or electronic commerce;
- Direct on-farm consumption (agrotourism);
- Direct sales to institutional programs in the public sector;
- Sales on the international market.

Experiences in Latin America and other parts of the world

Free fairs as a market access mechanism for family farmers in Chile

In Chile, free fairs are one of the principal ways that family farmers can access consumers. Free fairs are held in Chile's different communes and regions, and they have come to play an important role in the territories. They contribute to local economic chains and to social integration, and are part of the solution for healthy eating habits. Chile has 933 free fairs, involving 66,514 merchants throughout the country who supply an estimated 70% of the country's fruit and vegetable market and 30% of its fish market.

There are three main forms of commercial relations between free fairs and family farming or artisanal fishing. In the first, free fairs are supplied largely by wholesale markets to which peasant farmers and

fisherfolk (or intermediaries) sell their products. Second, in some cases stallholders buy directly from farmers and fisherfolk. Third, farmers sell their own products at the fairs, primarily fruits and vegetables, but also other products, such as eggs and honey.

The fairs play an important role locally in the marketing of products: by consolidating supply they help overcome the problem of the low volumes sold by family farmers. Moreover, many small farmers and artisanal fisherfolk cannot meet the requirements of more formal commercial channels (volume, payment methods, logistics, sales receipts). In addition to consolidating supply and having less stringent requirements, free fairs are a marketing

channel that benefit small-scale producers of fruits and vegetables, fish and seafood, or handicrafts, especially because transactions are in cash.

In 2013, the Chilean Association of Free Fair Organizations (ASOF C.G.), the United Agricultural Workers Confederation (UOC) –a nationwide organization of small farmers–, the National Confederation of Artisanal Fisherfolk (CONAPACH), and the National Consumers and Users Corporation

(CONADECUS) created the Corporation for the Development of the Agricultural and Fisheries Products Market, which is linked to the traditional channel. Its overall objective is to foster productive, commercial, and institutional relationships among stallholders, artisanal fisherfolk, peasant farmers, consumers, and their respective organizations, and its purpose is to develop and shorten the value chains in the domestic fresh foods market.

Inclusive gastronomic agrifood chains in Peru

The objective of the the project “Inclusive Gastronomic Agrifood Chains” promoted by the Peruvian Gastronomic Society (APEGA) is to combat malnutrition and rural poverty through economic promotion of small-scale agriculture. This project is framed by the current boom in Peruvian gastronomy, one of the motors of economic growth given its labor-intensive nature, the fact that it draws on various production activities, including agriculture, and that is stimulating development in the country’s interior.

The project is cofinanced by the Multilateral Investment Fund (MIF) of the Inter-American Development Bank, and its purpose is to contribute to the economic and social inclusion of small farmers and medium and small enterprises in retail markets. It has four components: i) sustainable models for farmers’ markets; ii) model for retail markets; iii) information system, and iv) knowledge management.

The project targets two farmers’ markets and seeks to strengthen the management skills of stallholders through monthly workshops on topics including

organization, operations, marketing, and finances. It also aims to familiarize operators with the new expectations of urban markets and the requirements of retail markets; moreover, it intends to bring about a renewal of their business models, their value propositions and, in some cases, a modernization of physical infrastructure.

The project also worked to position a set of products considered to be emblematic, with the aim of generating greater value for their producers. An emblematic product has been defined as one that is distinguished by its flavor, color, aroma, texture, and place of origin, and has strong roots in the gastronomy of a given territory. These characteristics can be supplemented by others, including: i) the existence of actors, or population or ethnic groups that reflect the history of the territory and its struggle against poverty; ii) a higher nutritional value or content than similar products, thus contributing to the battle against hunger and malnutrition; and iii) a production system that can be described as clean, fair, legal, organic, ecological, and non-transgenic, among other things.

Short food supply chains in public procurements for school meals: the cases of Brazil and Peru

Brazil’s National School Nutrition Program (PNEA) has been in existence for more than 50 years. At the outset, its procurements were completely centralized. In 1994, procurements were decentralized and importance was attached

to purchasing from family farms. After a while that emphasis was lost. Now, the Food Procurement Program (PAA), a part of the “Zero Hunger” strategy launched in 2003 during president Lula da Silva’s first term in office, has returned the focus

to decentralized purchasing from family farms, and has shown that this segment of farmers is capable of supplying massive government food procurement programs.

In 2009, the PNEA was successful in enacting legislation according to which at least 30% of the State funds provided to municipalities for school food purchases must be earmarked for family farms and their organizations. Moreover, it prioritizes purchasing from farms in agrarian reform settlements, and farms of indigenous groups or quilombola communities (descendants of slaves living in rural communities). It includes mechanisms for paying a price premium for agroecological and organic products.

The program, which serves 45 million students 200 days a year, has an annual budget of around US\$1.5 billion (US\$500 million of which is earmarked for family farming). Some 5,000 municipalities nationwide are directly responsible for making their purchases in a completely decentralized fashion. The methodology for purchasing the food is as follows: municipalities give priority to local production; if what they need is not available locally, they extend their search to suppliers in their region, and so on. Although formally established organizations receive priority, purchases can also be made, for one year, from recently-created informal groups, which serves as an incentive for them to formally establish their organizations.

To ensure the success of this program it was necessary to reform the legislation governing public procurements. The key points of said reform, which establishes the bases for procuring products from family farms, are set out in the law 11947/2009, which was drafted collectively by government ministries and civil society over a four-year period through the Food and Nutritional Security Council. Article 14 of the law establishes that bidding procedures are not required when procuring products from family farms so long as the prices offered are compatible with local market prices and the products meet the regulatory authorities' food quality and safety standards.

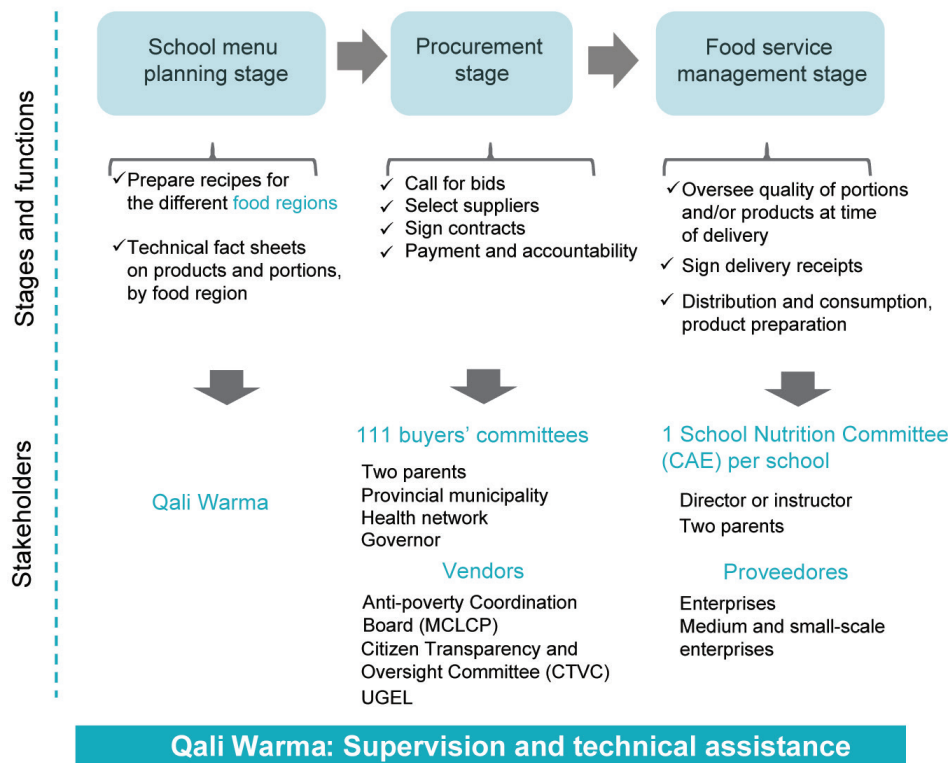
In Peru, the Qali Warma (“thriving child” in quechua) program provides school meals to children between the ages of three and six enrolled in early childhood education, and to children between the ages of six and twelve enrolled in primary school. One of its key premises is that different foods are eaten in different parts of the country.

Eight food regions (distinct from political-administrative regions) that share not only a similar culinary identity but also the same festivities, products and local consumption habits, were identified. These customs are taken into account in preparing the program's recipes, the purpose being to more closely reflect local consumption habits, highlight the products grown in the area, and meet nutritional standards, all of which ensured greater acceptance of the food served.

Taking into account problems that arose in an earlier public food procurement program (PRONAA), a key principle of Qali Warma is that local supply will only be promoted if the relationship is based on merit and not privilege or favoritism. Previous experience showed that the smaller the local market, the harder it is to obtain sufficient, suitable supplies at reasonable prices, as a result of which food supply is no longer limited to local markets.

Qali Warma operates under a co-management model in which a variety of stakeholders are involved in program operations, which gives rise to significant challenges in terms of participation. For the procurement stage, 111 decentralized committees were established throughout the country, with representatives from the three levels of government (national, regional, local), program beneficiaries (parents of school children), and the health network in the given area. This co-management model is not limited to procurements and is in effect for all stages of the program. For example, in the food service stage, when products are distributed to schools, a school food committee made up of students' parents and the school director or teachers, receive and assess the quality of the products (Figure 1). Qali Warma has a team of almost 700 employees with permanent contracts, and another 1,000 with temporary contracts throughout the country to supervise and provide technical assistance.

Diagram 1
Qali Warma operating model



Source: Romero (2014)

Short food supply chains and nutrition education: CentroNia's "Eat Healthy, Live Healthy" program in the United States

The Eat Healthy, Live Healthy program was created in 2009 by the Food and Nutrition Department of CentroNia, a community organization whose objective is to provide quality education to more than 1,200 children in the Washington, D.C. area, most from the families of Latin American immigrants.

The objective of the Eat Healthy, Live Healthy program is to create an innovative and effective nutrition education model for students and for the community. The model seeks to change school menus, improve their nutritional value, incorporate fresh foods, and prioritize the consumption of local products. A bilingual educational curriculum, called "I Want to be Healthy," was developed, which includes alternative learning tools such as school gardens. In addition, since the entire community should be involved if the education is

to be effective, activities were also developed for the parents and instructors.

The first step was to make a radical change in the menus. All flours were replaced with whole grains; fish is served once a week, vegetables once a week, and all students eat a vegetarian dish twice a week; only fresh fruits are served, ideally whole fruits. Only fresh vegetables are served, no flavors are added to milk, which is 1% fat. The amount of sodium, saturated fats, and refined sugars was reduced, and juices, which were generally incorrectly used, were replaced by fresh fruit. Given the magnitude of the challenge and in order to avoid rejection, the program had to find means to introduce the new foods gradually. One such tool, which has also been the most effective, was to introduce salad bars.

As parents are considered key actors in the process to introduce children to new food habits, a variety of activities were created for them. Jobs were created to involve children's parents and provide them with training; cooking classes were offered; and parents were given vouchers that could be exchanged for produce in local farmers' markets. Thus, parents not only learned new wholesome recipes but were also provided with the inputs needed to replicate the recipes at home, providing continuity at home for what is learned at school.

Since only fresh products are used in preparing the meals, networks had to be set up with other organizations and local producers to have access to affordable fresh produce. This gave rise to food cooperatives, a collective of small-scale buyers interested in purchasing fresh, and ideally local, products.

None of this would have been possible without changes in the regulations. In 2012, the Healthy Schools Act, which promotes more wholesome school environments, was passed. Section 201 of that law contains new and improved school meal standards set by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). Section 301 promotes the consumption of locally produced foods, and section 302 urges

government agencies, community organizations, and public schools to develop programs to publicize the benefits of consuming local products.

In sum, the project was able to change the food habits of students and their families by articulating efforts in three key areas:

- The educational component, which opened up to the possibility of improving quality control of the food served to students and extending education to include new topics, such as nutrition and health.
- The children and their parents, who were enriched by the education received in these new areas and, as indicated in the project's evaluation, promoted significant changes to support acceptance of more wholesome food.
- Farmers, who furnished their output, made investments, and created new distribution routes. Through their efforts, everyone in the city can now receive their products through direct delivery.

In 2012, the program received an award from the Alliance for a Healthier Generation, which distinguished it for promoting health among its students and also among the wider community.

Action plan of France's Ministry of Agriculture for short food supply chains

In the last ten years, there has been a growing interest in France in proximity short food supply chains as a means to diversify agrifood production and to capture more value added for producers. Short food supply chains in France are characterized primarily by relational proximity, which is defined as the number of intermediaries between the producer and the consumer; in this case, it is limited to no more than one intermediary. Also valued are geographical proximity (short distances between production and consumption) and cultural identity proximity, which refers to the products of a given territory, or "terroir."

According to France's last agricultural census (2010), 21% of all farms sell all or part of their output through short food supply chains. These farms are smaller than the national average (20 hectares

vs 55 hectares) and hire more labor (2.2 annual work units –AWU– as compared to the national average of 1.4 AWU). The main products marketed through short food supply chains are honey (51%), vegetables (46%), fruits (26%), poultry and eggs (10%), and dairy products (8%).

These farms more often produce under a quality seal (10% of short food supply chain farms are classified as organic as compared to the national average of 2%) and often involve some kind of non-agricultural diversification (26% of short food supply chain farms as compared to 8% of all farms). The main means of commercialization in short food supply chains is direct, on-farm sales (48%), open markets (18%), farmers' markets or cooperative points of sale (5%), itinerant and harvest sales (8%), e-commerce, restaurants, local collectives, or supermarkets.

In response to the growing interest in short food supply chains, in 2009 France's Ministry of Agriculture promoted an action plan to foster and develop farms whose output could be marketed through short food supply chains. The key points of the plan are as follows:

- Increase knowledge: Because of the lack of statistical data and information on this form of marketing, the first step was to introduce a series of questions into the 2010 agricultural census. Studies were also conducted on the skill profiles farmers would need to participate effectively in these chains.
- Support farmers' entry into short food supply chains: Technical and economic references were prepared to assess the viability of projects in short food supply chains. This has helped farmers strengthen their requests for financing, both from private banks and from public agencies.
- Strengthen stakeholders' skills: Support is provided to develop farmers' skills in product transformation, marketing, and management, with special emphasis on human resources management and the management of cooperatives.

At the same time, given that the restaurant sector offers a great opportunity for short food supply chains,

the Ministry of Agriculture created a training platform for the restaurant sector as a means to promote the use of fresh local products. The Agriculture and Fisheries Modernization Law, enacted in 2010, includes additional measures that promote farming for short food supply chains, including:

- With the idea that the State should set the example, it establishes that at least 20% of foodstuffs used in public restaurants and dining rooms should be procured locally.
- Public procurement standards were amended to explicitly establish preference for products marketed directly by producers, provided they are offered under equal conditions as products sold by intermediaries (decree of 25 August 2011).

The bill of law on the Future of Agriculture, Agrifood, and Forests, currently being drafted, will be submitted to parliament in 2014 and will further strengthen the Modernization Law. This legal framework promotes a form of agriculture that balances the challenges of competitiveness with environmental conservation, while also responding to the expectations of farmers, consumers, and citizens. The aim is to have a diversified agricultural sector with a variety of food supply chains that also has room for proximity agriculture.

Factors of success and lessons learned

The experiences of the short food supply chains described above, as well as others examined at the same seminar, suggest that these alternatives are useful for improving the market position of family farms and the living conditions of family farmers. While very few formal evaluations have studied the real impact of these marketing chains on family farming, some factors associated with their success, which can be considered for future experiences, have been drawn from empirical information and the cases described above.

Some of the most important are:

- Recognize and attribute value to local cultural and nutritional features of products that serve as a basis of differentiation and value-added. In identifying these attributes, it is always important to consider the relationship with the territory.
- Provide training for all stakeholders (production through marketing).
- Identify market trends on a timely basis, to

develop the potential of the short food supply chains vis-à-vis trends in demand, especially the growth of ethical consumption and wholesome nutrition.

- Modernize distribution logistics. The shorter distances between farmers and consumers means that farmers will have to take charge of one or more stages of the distribution and marketing processes, activities for which they usually do not have experience or the necessary logistics.
- Establish partnerships and networks. One thing all the policies and projects on short food supply chains have in common is the creation of partnerships and networks in a wide variety of areas and for diverse purposes, such as to augment scale, diversify supply, add value, or improve the efficiency of logistics.
- Reform regulations and the institutional framework. Given the nature of family farmers and the products to be marketed, the success of short food supply chains depends in large part on the design and implementation of flexible regulations and institutions that specifically take into account the farmers' social conditions.

On the other hand, certain factors impede the successful establishment of short food supply chains to support a strengthening of family farms. Some are exogenous to agricultural production and some are endogenous. They include:

- Inadequate land tenancy and structural land tenure problems, combined with little access to production asset for family farmers. This limits their capacity and willingness to make investments, and also restricts access to lines of credit, certification programs and, in some cases, public policies that support production and marketing.
- Weak development of cooperative or associative forms of production in a community weakens confidence among peers. Although this does not completely determine the future behavior of participants, it is a determining factor when the time comes to create new partnerships and networks.
- Scant access to information and know-how, and the gap between agricultural innovation systems and family farmers' needs. Family farmers have little

access to up-to-date information that is relevant to their needs, given their geographical isolation and reduced access to information and communications technologies. For their part, agricultural innovation systems are not designed to address the specific needs of that segment of farmers.

- Deficiencies in marketing systems and post-harvest management of fresh products. Family farmers have scant access to advanced technologies for harvest and post-harvest practices, transportation, distribution, and marketing, which are necessary for maintaining agrifood products fresh from the farm to the end-consumer. Because these stages of the value chain have been historically handled by intermediaries and large enterprises, small farmers have not had the opportunity to develop these capacities. Moreover, the technology available is often not suited to their conditions and scale of operations, while the infrastructure needed, especially in rural areas, is inadequate to conserve the value and quality of the products.
- Family farmers tend to have weak business and organizational skills since, for the most part, they have not been involved in the post-production stages of their agricultural goods. As a result, they have not developed strong skills in marketing, publicity, negotiation, customer service, etc. Low access to strategic information on market trends and competition are also a limitation.
- Communities are generally unfamiliar with short food supply chains as a marketing option. That market niche is still relatively unknown and therefore its full potential is not tapped by small farmer communities. This is accentuated by geographical isolation, reduced access to strategic information, and weak associative culture.
- Lack of public policy coordination. In some cases this has prevented policies and projects that support short food supply chains from realizing a positive impact on small farmers. The experience of countries that have been able to implement broad-reaching policies to include smallholders in short food supply chains, such as Brazil, France, and to a lesser extent Peru and the United States, show that coordination among multiple ministries, agencies, and levels of government is needed to ensure wide-reaching and sustainable results.

Conclusions and recommendations

Today Latin America, Europe, and other parts of the world are experiencing an upsurge in new social demands related to the type of development wanted by their societies. The call is being made for sustainable economic, environmental, social, and cultural development. Demand is also growing for greater transparency in the food chain, better food quality, information on food origin, and social and environmental impacts. Short agrifood supply chains are at the crossroads between these emerging social demands and the farmers' need to be more equitably connected to the markets.

When value is attached to the land and to local production (the value that underpins short food supply chains), family farming acquires a relevance and competitiveness that is bypassed by traditional value chains. This is because their contribution to development and to preserving the territory's environmental and cultural heritage have little value in systems where the price variable prevails. Thus, promotion of short food supply chains fosters a form of agriculture that is rooted in the territory that nurtures it and that it preserves. In the International Year of Family Farming, it is important that we better understand the potential of short food supply chains for strengthening small-scale agriculture, and for family farming to respond to the new demands from society and the market.

Short food supply chains also have the potential to improve food and nutritional security in their respective areas, not just for consumers but also for farmers, their families, and communities. Several of the case studies described in this bulletin—especially the food procurement programs for schools in Brazil, Peru, and the United States—showed improvements in the diets of beneficiaries

resulting from increased access to fresh foods and, at least in the case of Brazil, also an increase in the variety of foods consumed by farmers' families and sold in local markets.

To consolidate these trends in the region, considerable work will be needed to raise social awareness among consumers and producers, conduct research, and design public policies. First, it will be necessary to identify, characterize, classify, and disseminate the different models of short food supply chains so as to enable producers and consumers to more clearly visualize them. With regard to research, the obstacles addressed in the described experiences should be identified, along with the solutions used to overcome them. Efforts are needed to quantify the economic advantages of these new marketing arrangements for producers and society as a whole, which will involve measuring the impact of these experiences on economic outcomes, taking into account their possible positive and negative externalities. Moreover, it will be necessary to design public policies to promote and stimulate more such experiences since the determination and commitment of farmers, entrepreneurs, or consumers is not enough.

While access to natural products, either as a result of prices or proximity, is key for improving the people's diets, this too is not enough. Campaigns are needed to inform people of the benefits of consuming natural products as opposed to highly processed alternatives. Policies are needed to enable people to balance their work and family life, so they can dedicate more time to preparing their food. Perhaps most importantly, it is necessary to invest in educating the new generations to develop a healthier relationship with food, and through

them, their families and communities. They can all learn how the food they consume is produced, and to become involved in the entire process by which their food travels from the farm to their plate. Although these policies are broader than policies that specifically target short food supply chains, they strengthen and nurture them.

Another condition required for ensuring a sustainable supply of foodstuffs in a given territory is effective articulation of national and local policies, in a wide variety of areas including agriculture, production development, infrastructure, commerce, technological development, education, health and social inclusion, among other things. Bringing together representatives of all of these areas, as well as farmers and farmer organizations, food marketing agents, and civil society, to discuss short food supply chains and agriculture can contribute to the discussion and design of broad-reaching and sustainable policies.

A number of recommendations can be drawn from these experiences that can be applied to the design of public or private projects to promote short food supply chains:

- Local supply and local demand need to be identified, connected, and strengthened. In order to promote direct connections between producers and consumers, it is useful to have and disseminate information on the farmers, the suppliers of inputs (production, transportation, packaging), marketing arrangements (farmers' markets, inclusive businesses, points of sale, etc.), consumer networks, etc.
- In line with the foregoing, it is vitally important to create information systems for farmers, potential buyers of local products (families, consumer organizations, or institutions such as restaurants, hotels, catering services, schools, and others). Thus, information technologies and organizational arrangements that promote new forms of contact between consumers and producers need to be developed.
- Networks are necessary for ensuring the sustainability of short food supply chains. This involves a vital effort to develop information and communication systems that link peers and partners. It is also necessary to promote and support the involvement of producer and consumer

associations in project and policy design, as a means to ensure greater impact of policies to raise awareness and foster training. Finally, networks can also support efforts to obtain credits, whether through traditional means (banks, public programs) or alternative means (crowdfunding), because of scaling and their social control attributes.

- Effective technological support is a necessity. In the case of projects that promote short food supply chains, this means efforts to upgrade the quality and safety of agrifood products, as well as the development of farmers' management, marketing, and commercialization skills.
- The State and local governments should create a legal and institutional framework that supports the development of short food supply chains. This includes recognizing the value of local production and its economic, social, environmental, and cultural contributions, as well as specific measures for promoting them (i.e., certification, fair trade policies, and labeling that identifies food origin and other attributes).
- The State can promote short food supply chains by means of direct measures such as public procurement of local foodstuffs for schools, hospitals, prisons, and other institutions, and by having public institutions set the example, such as by taking the initiative to contract restaurant and catering services that include the participation of local food producers.
- Nutrition education programs deserve special mention because they are key to encouraging the acceptance of more wholesome diets. When combined with projects that promote short agrifood supply chains, they generate a virtuous circle running from local producers to educational organizations, providing not only fresh food but also information on sustainable means of production and the value of local food culture; and from students and teachers to the community (including producers), providing more stable incomes and markets as well as nutrition education. To strengthen this virtuous circle, all professionals involved in the program –producers, cooks, teachers, etc.– should receive ongoing training, and training opportunities should be extended to students' families and the community.

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