

Impact case study (REF3)

Institution: Coventry University		
Unit of Assessment: 14		
Title of case study: Supporting Rural Development through Short Food Supply Chains and Local Food Systems		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2001 - 2015		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s):	Role(s) (e.g. job title):	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:
Moya Kneafsey	Professor	1997-Present
Ulrich Schmutz	Associate Professor	2012-Present
Matthew Blackett	Reader	2010-Present
Liz Trenchard	Assistant Professor	2008-Present
Gemma Foster (nee Sutton)	Research Assistant	2013-Present
Elizabeth Bos	Research Fellow	2012-19
Period when the claimed impact occurred:	August 2013-July 2020	
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? Y/N No		

1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words)

It is increasingly recognized that industrial farming and long-distance food chains pose threats to the environment, climate and rural livelihoods. Research at Coventry University has helped to raise the profile of short food supply chains (SFSCs) and local food systems (LFS) which are more sustainable and deliver benefits for farmers, consumers and rural economies. This case study reports on the impact of a European-wide study, which contributed to the evidence base for EU policy discussions, informed H2020 research projects, and influenced policies and practices to enable the growth of SFSCs and LFS in Austria, Croatia, Hungary, Poland and Scotland.

2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words)

Since 2001, several high quality externally-funded research projects from Coventry University have helped to establish the efficacy of short food supply chains (SFSCs) and local food systems (LFS) as a means of improving the livelihoods of small-scale farmers, contributing to rural development and delivering socio-economic benefits for consumers and communities.

From 2001-4, SUPPLIERS (G1), highlighted the role of short food supply chains linking Small and Medium Enterprises in Lagging Rural Regions. During 2003-7, Reconnecting Consumers, Producers and Food (G2) analysed the motives and behaviours of consumers and producers involved in 'alternative' food networks in England, Scotland and Italy [R1, R2] and developed concepts and methodologies for analysing these new socio-economic practices [R3, R4]. Following on (2008-9), Mapping Local Foodwebs (G3) developed a toolkit for mapping the socio-economic and environmental impacts of local food systems.

Building on the expertise and insights generated through this research, Kneafsey led a team from Coventry University, Garden Organic and Innovative Futures Research which was awarded funding by the Institute for Prospective Technological Studies (IPTS) to undertake a study of the State of Play of Short Food Supply Chains and Local Food Systems in the EU (G4) [R5]. The aim of the research was to describe the different SFSC and LFS and gather evidence concerning the pros and cons of introducing an EU labelling scheme for local products and direct

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sales. The study conducted the first systematic literature review of SFSCs and LFS in the EU and presented a consolidated definition of SFSCs as those where a limited number of intermediaries (ideally one or less) are present between the producer and final consumer of the food. Drawing on the review, it critically evaluated the socio-economic and environmental impacts of the main types of SFSC/LFS. It presented an updated and comprehensive typology of SFSCs and LFS and developed a new database of over eighty examples of SFSC/LFS, which were analysed using the capital assets framework. It also produced three original case studies in western, central and eastern Europe, drawing on semi-structured interviews, consumer surveys and focus groups. It provided an appraisal of the advantages and disadvantages of a labelling scheme, and recommended strategies that could be used to support SFSC/LFS, especially when businesses are in the start-up phase. For example, it recommended greater training and knowledge exchange for producers, especially in marketing, promotion and communication skills. The study was widely disseminated (hosted on the webpages of the EU Publications Office and UN Food and Agriculture Organisation, for example).

On the basis of the research conducted for IPTS, Kneafsey was in 2014 invited to co-ordinate an expert focus group on Innovative Short Food Chain Management for the European Innovation Partnership-AGRI. The group published a widely-read report [R6] translated into Spanish and Polish, which included detailed case studies of the steps involved in setting up and scaling up SFSC, identified barriers to success, and made extensive recommendations for policy and future research.

3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

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- R1. Kneafsey, M., Holloway, L., Venn, L., Dowler, E., Cox, R., Tuomainen, H. (2008) Reconnecting consumers, producers and food: exploring alternatives. Oxford: Berg. ISBN: 978-1-84520-252-1 <http://dx.doi.org/10.5040/9781350047631>
- R2. Holloway, L. Cox, R., Venn, L., Kneafsey, M., Dowler, E., Tuomainen, H. (2006) Managing sustainable farmed landscape through 'alternative' food networks: a case study from Italy, *Geographical Journal*, 172 (3), 219-229. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1475-4959.2006.00205.x>
- R3. Venn, L., Kneafsey, M., Holloway, L., (...) Dowler, E., Tuomainen, H. (2006) Researching European 'alternative' food networks: some methodological considerations, *Area* 38 (3): 248-258. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1475-4762.2006.00694.x>
- R4. Holloway, L., Kneafsey, M., Venn, L. (...) Dowler, E. (2007) Possible food economies: A methodological framework for exploring food production-consumption relationships, *Sociologia Ruralis* 47 (1): 1 – 19. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9523.2007.00427.x>
- R5. Kneafsey, M., Venn, L., Schmutz, U., Balázs, B., Trenchard, E. (...) Gemma Sutton, Matthew Blackett (2013) *Short Food Chains and Local Food Systems in the EU: A State of Play*, European Commission, Joint Research Centre: Institute for Prospective Technological Studies, Seville. ISBN 978-92-79-29288- 0 (pdf); ISSN 1831-9424 (online); DOI: <https://doi.org/10.2791/88784>
- R6. EIP-AGRI Focus Group on Innovative Short Food Supply Chain Management (2015) Final Report (available in English, Spanish and Polish) <https://ec.europa.eu/eip/agriculture/en/publications/eip-agri-focus-group-innovative-short-food-supply>
- G1. Ilbery, B. (PI) and Kneafsey, M. (Co-I) (2001-4). 'Supply Chains Linking Food SMEs in Europe's Lagging Rural Regions'. European Union, 5th Framework. Co-ordinated by Scottish Agricultural College. Total Grant: € 2,120,548 (£1,351,001); grant to CU: £128,000.
- G2. Kneafsey, M. (PI) M., Holloway, L., Cox, R., Dowler, E., (2003-7). 'Reconnecting Producers, Consumers and Food: Alternative Food Networks'. ESRC-AHRC. Total Grant £205,890.

G3. G3. Kneafsey, M. (PI), E.Dowler, H.Lambie (2008-9). 'Mapping Local Foodwebs'. Campaign to Protect Rural England. Total Grant: £54,778.

G4. Kneafsey, M. (PI), L.Venn *et al* (2011-13). 'Short Food Supply Chains and Local Food Systems in the EU - A State of Play. European Commission, JRC Institute for Prospective Technological Studies. Total Grant: £47,000.

4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

As a result of widespread dissemination of R5 and R6 and supported by outreach and engagement activities, impact was generated in two key areas:

1. Contributing Evidence to EU Policy Decisions:

Findings from R5 were 'essential input' (p.5) in a report submitted by the European Commission to the European Parliament and Council (06.12.13), which cited specific results from the study (pp. 6, 8, 9 and 10) in discussing the case for local farming and a new short food chain labelling scheme [S1]. R5 thus contributed to the evidence base that informed the European Parliament's decision to adopt new policy measures to support SFSC in Article 2 of EU Regulation No 1305/2013 on support for rural development. As a result of the measures, 300,000 farmers have been supported to develop SFSC, local markets, enter quality schemes and producer groups during 2014 – 2020 [S2].

Additionally, the 2016 European Parliamentary Briefing on Short Food Chains drew on R5 extensively, and was widely distributed [S3]. Outcomes of both R5 and R6 'contributed to the development of the European Commission's Horizon 2020 Work Programme', which 'resulted in many ongoing EU-funded R&I projects, such as SMARTCHAIN, FAIRCHAIN [and] FOX' [S4]. The reports became important reference points for several of these projects; the Co-ordinator of the EU-funded Short Supply Chain and Knowledge Innovation Network (SKIN) stated that 'definitions, concepts and case studies' from R6 helped practitioners 'to better define models and find alternative solutions to real cases encountered during the activities deployment' [S5].

2. Influencing Policies and Practices in EU Member States and Scotland:

In Scotland, R5 and R6 informed advocacy and policy development around SFSC and LFS, providing an evidence base for organisations. The Executive Director of Nourish Scotland confirmed that 'core findings' of the outputs 'have been integral to our efforts to persuade Scottish Government and national agencies to invest more in SFSC and local food economies.' As a result, '...this year's Programme for Government...includes a commitment to a national strategy for local food', and the new post-COVID strategic plan for 'Scotland Food and Drink...prioritises serving the local market.' Both reports are considered 'invaluable because they provide evidence... about the actual economic, environmental and social impacts' of SFSCs, 'rather than simply declaring that they are nice to have' [S6].

In Croatia, insights from R5 and R6 were used to inform the AgriShort project (2017-18) which led to four new SFSC initiatives in the Croatian – Hungarian cross-border region [S7]. In 2017 Kneafsey contributed to the first training on SFSC delivered in the country, for farmers and institutional representatives; training materials she provided were subsequently used to inform the 'Guidelines for Institutions' to support SFSC in Croatia. Following this, the Croatian Ministry of Agriculture included SFSCs 'in the new legislation on public procurement and organization of family farms', establishing the definition of SFSC in legislation for the first time, amongst a 'growing interest from a wider public' [S7]. The former Head of Rural Development for the Međimurje region confirmed that the research helped them 'choose the direction of local food system development in practice', and develop practical guidance on SFSC. Whereas before there was no collaboration, now farmers were 'willing to cooperate under the values of SFSC for the first time... thanks to the research, projects and trainings' [S7].

In Poland R6 was used to shape the agenda of the 2016 'Food and Cities' workshop, hosted by EIP-AGRI in Krakow. The President of the Polish Environmental Partnership noted it was unlikely that any other documents were 'more influential in relation to promoting SFSCs in Poland' [S8]. Describing it as 'an important milestone and point of reference for policy, programming and planning', the barriers and opportunities to 'scaling' SFSCs discussed in R6 provided evidence used to lobby for legislation to support 'local food for local markets'. This contributed to regulatory changes in 2017-18 that enabled farmers to sell directly to consumers. R6 is directly referenced in guidance prepared in 2019 by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development for the Agency for Restructuring and Modernisation of Agriculture, which is responsible for providing financial support for SFSC development.

In Hungary, policy picked up concepts from R5 and 66 million Euros were allocated to short food supply chains as a sub-programme of rural development policy. In 2015 a year of local products was initiated, and in 2016 the handbook of the rural development programme and handbook of local food products were published by Hungary's Agricultural Chamber, drawing on materials from the study [S9]. In Austria, a senior representative of the Chamber of Agriculture confirmed that both R5 and R6 'made clear some characteristics of SFSCs, which are still used (e.g. the typology of SFSCs or that 1 intermediary is possible)'. The research helped raise awareness and drive 'a clear political position' in Austria 'that SFSCs are important in many ways: economically, ecologically, socially' [S10].

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

S1. Report. 'Report from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council on the case for a local farming and direct sales labelling scheme', European Commission (December 2013). <<https://ec.europa.eu/transparency/regdoc/rep/1/2013/EN/1-2013-866-EN-F1-1.Pdf>> [Accessed 07.1.21]

S2. Factsheet. 'The Common Agricultural Policy: Investing in Rural Europe', EU AGRI, European Commission, 2014. <https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/food-farming-fisheries/key_policies/documents/rdp-2014-20-factsheet_en.pdf> [Accessed 07.1.21]

S3. Briefing Document. 'Briefing: Short food supply chains and local food systems in the EU', European Parliamentary Research Service (EPRS), European Parliament, September 2016. <[http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2016/586650/EPRS_BRI\(2016\)586650_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2016/586650/EPRS_BRI(2016)586650_EN.pdf)> [Accessed 07.1.21]

S4. Testimonial. Communications Officer, EIP-AGRI.

S5. Testimonial. Scientific Co-ordinator, SKIN project.

S6. Testimonial. Executive Director, Nourish Scotland.

S7. Testimonial. Head of Rural Development Department, Međimurje, Croatia (Regionalna razvojna agencija Međimurje REDEA.)

S8. Testimonial. President, Polish Environmental Partnership Foundation.

S9. Testimonial. Managing Director, ESSRG, Hungary.

S10. Testimonial. Head of Unit, Agricultural Marketing and Special Crops, Austrian Chamber of Agriculture.