

Grundtvig Project “Building Regional Produce Supply Chains: Logistics for Short Circuit Agriculture”

With: **Urgenci (France, Project leader), Voedselteams (Belgium), Agronauten (Germany) and Luomuliitto (Finland)**

Running time: September 2013 – July 2015

Brief presentation of the project participants:

The local and solidarity-based partnerships between producers and consumers (LSP), also called Community Supported Agriculture (CSA), are the core business for **Urgenci**. LSP are based on a long-term commitment of the consumers towards their local farmer, through contractualisation and upfront payment. URGENCI aims to strengthen, broaden and build the capacities of the consumer-producer movements of Europe, by:

- 1-Relaying the message of existing LSP to the EU authorities;
- 2-Promoting increased inter-citizen participation in the development of sustainable economic structures in Europe;
- 3-Identifying and developing tools for the establishment of alternative distribution systems based on the food sovereignty framework.

Voedselsteams is a movement of active food producers and consumers who cooperate with each other. Voedselsteams strive to improve small-scale sustainable agriculture, and to build local economic chains. The organisation's main interest is the well-being of the consumers and producers and sustainable food produced by resilient companies. Voedselsteams aspires to pioneer the short distribution chain and alternative business management, and make these accessible to a broad audience. The organisation thus promotes honest agricultural politics and wants to spread its vision to the government and society.

Die Agronauten is a non-profit research society for sustainable regional agriculture. The motivation for its activities lies in: respect for the work of farmers as land stewards and food providers, advancement of alternative economic paradigms, the potential of regional value-added cycles and the promotion of a new societal discourse on food and agriculture. Inspiration for the founding of DIE AGRONAUTEN was also the obvious lack of practical research investigating innovative forms of land-use and communicating results of the research outside of academic circles.

Luomuliitto, the Organic Alliance, was formed to promote the Finnish organic sector and the organic production including networking, advocacy, communication and research.



Education and Culture Lifelong learning programme

Project background and objectives

The demand for regional foods in Europe is increasing significantly (UN Food and Agriculture Organisation, 2008) for various reasons, whether related to consumer behaviour, health, rural and urban economic development, economic and environmental resilience, reduction of carbon footprint, and farm sustainability. However, this growing demand is often not being met, due to complexities regarding logistics, policy, and vertical marketing systems. This forces small-scale farmers into economic precariousness, and often out of the workforce, when they could be organizing their production to meet this demand. This project will focus on emerging alternative food distribution systems (AFDS), a concept that encompasses community supported agriculture (CSA), short distribution chains, and cooperatives. The proposed partnership organisations include CSAs, AMAP (Association to maintain small-scale family farms), farmer and caterer's cooperatives and organisations involved in farmer training, knowledge transfer and support services. One of its main objectives is to support adult and lifelong learning to support people in increasing their skills and innovation base. The project will look primarily at practical solutions to logistical problems within short chain circuit supply systems and will identify the essential building blocks of regional distribution systems within the relationship from farmer to consumer. It will harness and crystallise the diverse knowledge already existing within the group through extension practice and skill-share. It will identify gaps in routes to markets for producers and suppliers, and will identify points of access for consumers and members of civil society. It will aim to share the resources and tools it creates with a wide audience in Europe.

- The overall objective of the partnership is to find appropriate and economically viable ways to establish small/medium scale regional logistics, therefore linking local producers and consumers. The concrete objectives are:

- 1/ to get a comprehensive overview of models and tools that exist for regional logistics;
- 2/ to scan the current approaches amongst the partners;
- 3/ to learn from each other's requirements and experiences;
- 4/ to develop appropriate and economically viable models for each partner and to improve the partner's approaches;
- 5/ to create guidelines that highlight the key stages in the process of establishing a regional or local food system;
- 6/ to disseminate the information about successful experiences through other communication channels.

The main problem we are addressing is that logistic systems are currently not designed or established for new forms of sustainable regional agriculture like CSAs, local food systems, small cooperatives or urban gardening. In order to enable logistics between small scale producers and consumers/processors/retail we have to address certain practical challenges linking demand and supply. The main ones are:

- 1-Intelligent route planning;

2-Choice of environmentally friendly transport means;

3-Logistics is more than just transport; it communicates to support groups and consumers the added value of the produce;

4-Maintaining proximity between consumers and producers.

Our approach is to use a participatory research method in order to identify the real challenges and needs for grassroot-organisations and small- to mid-scale producers. This is done by including CSAs, cooperatives and other regional sustainable networks as well as voluntary researchers in the process. A thorough data review will be coupled with mapping the experiences and approaches of the initiatives in order to deliver relevant training sessions. Exchanges will identify the problems and possible solutions.