

## Dossier

### Overview of short supply chains in France

This discussion paper is the synthesis of a document written by Brigitte Midoux, official representative for the directorate general of agriculture, agro-food and territories policies within the French Ministry of agriculture, food, rurality, fisheries and territorial planning (MAAPRAT), under the works of the French rural network.



The development of short supply food chains<sup>1</sup> appears now as one of the solutions to meet challenges that territories face nowadays: by creating added value, short supply chains contribute to the development of a more sustainable and responsible consumption, to maintaining agriculture in tourist and peri-urban areas in conjunction with the city (they are then called "proximity" supply chains). Moreover, short supply chains promote and allow the emergence of new synergies and forms of solidarity between local players.

The working group on "economic development of local resources: agriculture and food", has taken further the thematic on short supply chains with two goals: promote exchanges between concerned players, and identify interesting experiences to enhance. The work of this group identifies several areas of work, condition for both implementation and achievement of short supply chains. They show that:

- The development of short supply chains is a complex process that relies on an integrated approach at the scale of a territory, which supposes to develop different actions simultaneously with a whole variety of actors.
- It is necessary to act on product supply, on linking supply and demand as well as on consumers, all in a social cohesion approach that guarantees a fair access to quality food between population groups.

### **THE IMPLEMENTATION OF SHORT SUPPLY CHAINS: A COMPLEX INTEGRATED APPROACH**

The installation or diversification of producers, are key factors for the development of short supply chains. The success of these approaches is greatly enhanced by the existence of territorial coherent strategies that involve in a coordinated way all the actors. But the installation or diversification project will be successful only if there are adapted tools and opportunities on the territory. As such, it is necessary to keep processing plants adapted at a local level, to develop group workshops, to structure short supply chains at a territorial scale so as to ensure costs sharing, to organize supply and opportunities. The success of installations in short supply chains relies also on adapted project support and networking of players, diversified financial support, and taking better account of land-use issues especially in urban planning documents.

References on types of support for installation in short supply chains (in French): [Prise en compte de l'agriculture dans les documents d'urbanisme \(scot\)](#), [synthèse atelier](#), [fiches techniques](#)

---

<sup>1</sup> A short supply chain is a marketing method for farm products that is realized either by direct selling from producer to consumer, or by indirect selling provided that there is only one intermediary.



### **A POTENTIAL OPPORTUNITY IN COLLECTIVE CATERING**

If catering is proving an attractive market opportunity, the need for stable volumes and quality, such as EU rules on non-distortion of competition, are bottlenecks in the development of catering.

It is the reason why introducing local products in catering requires the commitment of local elected officials through a project approach, the development of coaching and training for professionals, thoughts on the use of the public procurement code in order to give producers the opportunity to access preferentially to public demand, to strengthen the integration of short supply chains in distribution patterns and the professionalization of the sector via a structure that improves supply.

The voluntary approach to shop with local products implies significant changes in the practices of different actors of catering, from the conception of food plans to managers' habits, who have to modify their purchasing practices, as well as the farmer who has to anticipate from upstream the volumes that he will have to supply, to balance the roles of producer, seller and facilitator for the territory and the farming sector.

References (in French): [Actes, fiches techniques , Guide de la restauration collective](#)

### **SHORT SUPPLY CHAINS: A STRONG COHESION VECTOR**

It seems necessary nowadays to consider ways of reconciling social cohesion and short supply chains. This consideration concerns particularly implementation ways to facilitate access to quality food for all. Short supply chains can therefore prove some interest as they generate dynamics if they come with specific actions in favor of the poor. Indeed, they can strengthen more easily the capacity of affected populations ("empowerment"), the "social mix" and the construction of social cohesion.

Reference (in French): [synthèse et fiches techniques](#)

### **SYNERGIES BETWEEN ECONOMIC ACTORS TO STRENGTHEN**

Short supply chains imply the coordination of multiple actions at the scale of a territory, while involving diverse actors: a few experiences have proven that the creation of dynamics between players, from upstream (production) as well as from downstream (marketing) is necessary to promote the emergence and also the structuring of short supply chains. The willful resolution of actors and their ability to work together are pre-requisites for the success of these chains, which now leads the players to question the forms of governance to develop.

References (in French): [synthèse et fiches techniques](#)



## THE FORM OF GOVERNANCE TO ADOPT: A CENTRAL ISSUE

In the current context of changes in the agricultural sector, of new social, environmental and economic challenges, designing new governance for the local food chain appears as a possible catalyst for a sustainable development of territories as well as for local food production to strengthen short supply chains.

But the complexity of territories and diversity of concerned actors may prove a barrier to the development of effective governance. To elaborate a structured strategy within a territory project can be an appropriate response to those challenges. It is therefore necessary to question the appropriate level of implementation, re-thinking the territory in terms of product flows, pooling resources, organizing space and information traffic. Governance will also imply institutionalizing consultation, encouraging public-private partnerships in the interest of territorial cooperation and social cohesion.

If national and EU policies may represent real levers for food governance, especially in terms of production and processing methods, regulation and supervision along the food chain, local governance has a very clear role to play in the implementation of those food policies.

References (in French): [Gouvernance alimentaire des agglomérations françaises, mise en perspective des circuits courts avec les enjeux alimentaires, guide à l'attention des élus et des animateurs de territoires, Observatoire des circuits courts](#)

## CONCLUSION

The observation of multiple local dynamics around short supply chains, made in the context of the rural network, at national as well as regional level, suggests that those chains could eventually represent a market segment rather than a "niche", especially because they contribute to new structures and habits on the territories.

In terms of potential, the challenges of short supply chains are described as substantial since, besides the capture of value for the producer, they allow savings on other segments of the costs chain and the creation of value on intangible assets (branding, local rooting, authenticity and social bonds).

To harness this potential while ensuring fair compensation for different levels of the sector and a socially inclusive territorial integration, the works of the French rural network show that the organization of short supply chains require a territorialized comprehensive policy, both at European and national level.