



# FOODMETRES Innovation Brief

Guido Sali, Annette Piore, Stefano Corsi

## RURAL DEVELOPMENT POLICY AND SFSCS: NEW PERSPECTIVES FOR SUSTAINABILITY, FOOD SECURITY AND SOCIAL INCLUSION

Innovation, sustainability, reconnection: the evolution and future development of metropolitan agri-food systems revolves around these three keywords. In this context, the FOODMETRES project ([www.foodmetres.eu](http://www.foodmetres.eu)) contributes spatial and functional assessment tools that are responsive to the dynamic nature of urban development trends and which can guide food chain planning and innovation at the level of metropolitan regions.

### Introduction

Global issues, from climate change to the consumption of natural and energy resources, and local issues, such as the increasing demand from civil society for a closer relationship with the territory, lead to possible solutions in the regional reconnection of agri-food production and consumption.

The food security of metropolitan areas (that in the near future will encompass most of world population) requires not only an environmental impact lower than the current productive and distribution structure (footprint), but also a greater resilience in responding to several shocks (e.g. natural disasters, social instabilities, geopolitical tensions, etc.).

### Approach and Results

Analyzing six case studies has made it possible to highlight how the complex structure of a Metropolitan Agri-food System (MAS) is able to respond to the challenges of domestic food supply, to compete in the global context (in connection with the Global Agri-food

System, GAS), and to meet citizens' demand for a direct relationship through the development of Local Agri-food Systems (LAS).

The involvement of experts and stakeholders has revealed that the fields in which the rural development policy need further adjustments concern (i) the strengthening of local supply chains, (ii) vertical integration, (iii) support to innovations in governance that aim to develop agro-industrial local clusters.

With the new RDP 2014-2020 thematic development priorities have been put on the agenda, that exhibit particular significance for SFSC in Metropolitan regions: Knowledge transfer, Food Chain, Resource Efficiency and Social Inclusion. Our research underlines that different types of SFSC are based on fundamentally different forms of chain organisation, professionalism and regional and social embeddedness.

However, considering commonalities in motivations and innovation directions between types we want to point to the following issues:

- Spatial entities of innovative urban-rural interactions rarely coincide with the target areas and spatial designation rules applied in RDP. It is crucial to achieve a common understanding on how metropolitan regions are triggers for sustainable development in rural regions, and that funding instruments and rules require appropriate consideration in territorial eligibility settings.
- Local governance, including networking, objective setting, development of novel chain organisations and solutions is a characteristic of new SFSC and can provide learning from best practices for other

cases. However, although local governance is recognized as a mechanism which should be enabled through and for RDP design, in reality many hurdles are in the way of this. With new area settings for LEADER eligibility and the new instrument EIP, first steps are taken, but these are still insufficiently known by the actors of SFSC.

- The target groups of RDP are traditionally farmers or rural actors from other sectors or administration. SFSC are comprised from different and mixed groups, also underlying more volatility.
- New entrepreneurs are an important group of innovation agents, and the RDP offers relevant measures, however, it is necessary to actively convey actors and measures, e.g. through intermediaries like knowledge brokers and novel services that apply different information pathways and advisory services than the traditional ones.

Furthermore the RDP is a complex system of measures which can contribute with different impacts to the development of SFSCs and to their sustainability.

The project FOODMETRES, through a survey, has analysed the relevance of different RDP issues to the different types of SFSCs, in order to comprehend how rural development policies at European level and rural development programs at local level can best support the spread of sustainable SFSCs in European metropolitan areas.

In general, Knowledge transfer and information actions, Investments in physical assets and Setting-up of producers groups and organisations are the most relevant measures.

Analysing the different SFSC typologies we can underline that the support to organic farming can be determinant in Urban gardening for private consumption and in Direct sales on-farm to the private consumers where the relationship between producers and consumers (even in case of self-consumption) is not mediated at all. The measures concerning the Setting up of producers groups and organizations plays a particular role in the Urban gardening for commercial purpose, Sale to regional enterprises and Agro Parks/Metropolitan Food cluster. Despite these three SFSCs acting at different scales, (local for urban gardening and metropolitan for regional enterprises and Agro Parks), the survey brings

out the need for organization of farmers/producers in order to meet the aggregate demand for food.

Moreover investments in physical assets can be a fundamental element in different SFSCs like Direct sales on and off farm, sales to regional enterprises and to public procurement and Agro Parks, as they can increase the level of internal organization (logistics, access to the market, etc.) of individual farmers and or groups.

Finally the Quality schemes are essential to enhance and standardise the production quality in order to meet the requirements of consumers in particular in complex systems like the Sales to regional enterprises and to public procurement.

## Conclusions

Results confirm that to set a food policy able to deal with the challenges of urban food supply, adequate cognitive, simulation and planning instruments are needed.

- RDP should include new areas like metropolitan regions and new groups, not only farmers.
- RDP should consider and support new food chains models in particular SFSCs, which benefit from a great recognition in civil society.
- RDP should assess and monitor the sustainability (environmental, economic and social) of SFSCs in comparison with the conventional food chains.

## Recommendations

At European level the innovative approach to the RDP must address specific measures to the sustainable development of SFSCs including areas and social groups other than rural ones within a metropolitan and regional vision.

At local level Rural Development Programs must contemplate the specificity and diversity of SFSCs which arise from the local contexts and adapt measures and actions to support the most sustainable and promising initiatives according to sustainability goals.