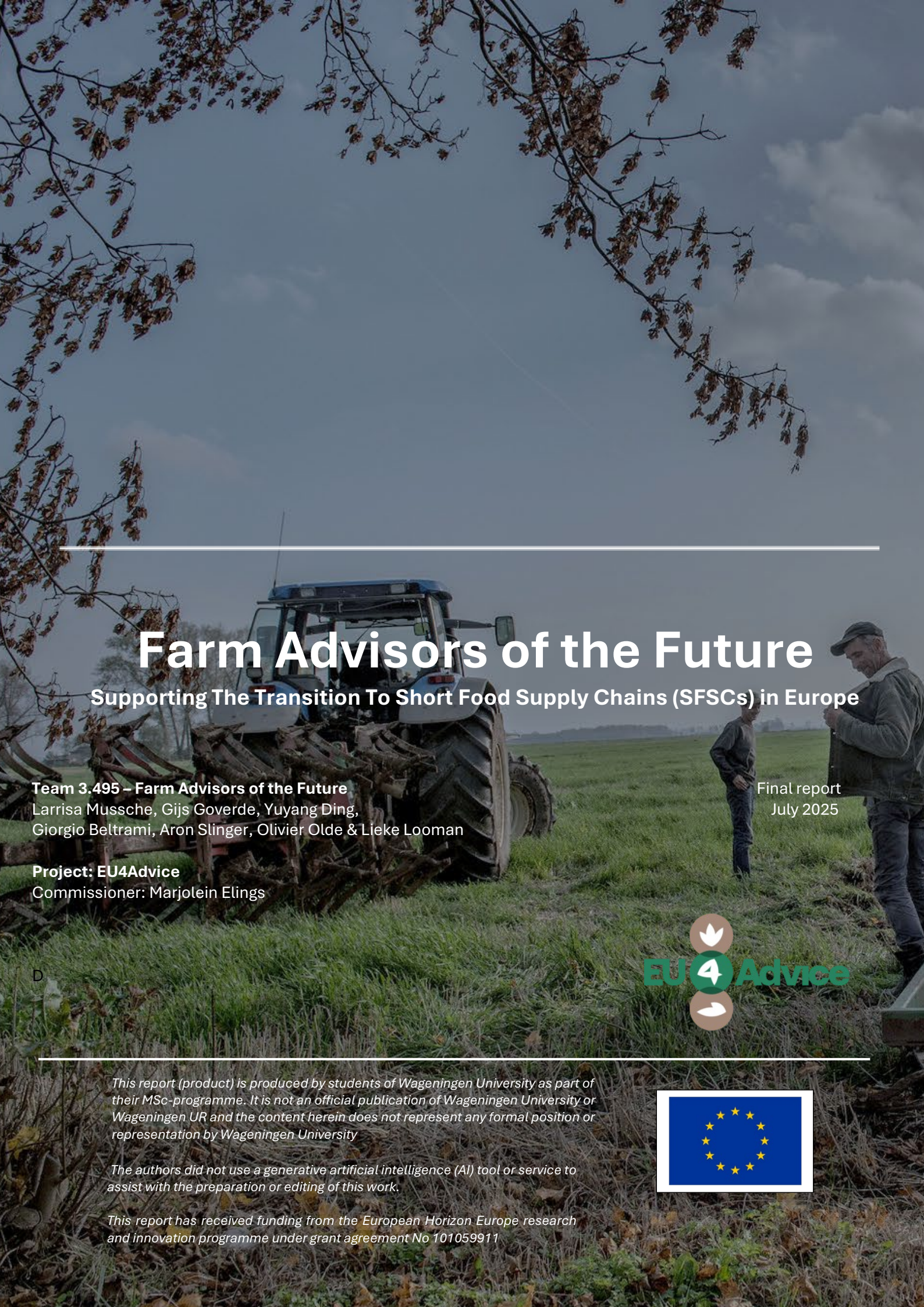


Farm Advisors of the Future

Supporting The Transition To Short Food Supply Chains (SFSCs) in Europe

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Project: EU4Advice
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1. Introduction

Climate change leads to unpredictability in agricultural production, endangering food safety and security (Kremen et al, 2012). Climate change is accelerated by globalisation; the increasing interdependence of cultures and economies (Mabuza, 2020). Globalisation has reshaped agricultural food systems in the last century. Direct contact between consumers and farmers has been displaced by complex long food supply chains (LFSCs) with various intermediary actors (Dunne et al., 2011). Retailers are often supermarket chains applying vertical integration on these types of supply chains, which may leave farmers susceptible to unfair trade (Michel-Villarreal et al., 2019). The share of the consumer price primary farmers recieve within LFSCs remains relatively low and has continued to decline in recent years (Berti & Mulligan, 2016; Yi et al., 2021). Furthermore, LFSCs cause inadequate transfer of information on food quality and provenance to consumers and thereby diminishes consumer awareness (Kneafsey et al., 2013; Moragues-Faus et al., 2017; Paciarotti & Torregiani, 2021). Additionally, increasing the number of actors within a supply chain generally leads to greater transport distances, consequently resulting in a higher carbon footprint and more food waste (Malak-Rawlikowska et al., 2019).

Agricultural food systems have been transitioning in recent years with increasing emphasis on environmental sustainability, direct farmer-consumer connections and local sourcing (Acella et al., 2024; Jia et al., 2024; Paciarotti & Torregiani, 2021). Short food supply chain (SFSC) initiatives are one of the major components in enforcing this transition and mitigating the previously described issues. The umbrella term SFSC contains various initiatives which may be categorised to either physical, economic and social proximity (Alessandrini, 2024). Current SFSC initiatives primarily aim to contribute to closer social proximity between farmers and society and are characterised by a maximum of one intermediary between farmer and consumer, therefore generally leading to closer geographical proximity (Alessandrini, 2024; Jia et al., 2024). There are various types of SFSC, including farm markets, box scheme models and community supported agriculture (CSA), which respectively increase in level of commitment required from farmers and consumers (Alessandrini, 2024; Djordjevic Milosevic et al., 2021; Jarzębowski et al., 2020; Renkema & Hilletofth, 2022). Thereby, farmers are currently switching to more environmentally sustainable agricultural production systems (Al-Kaisi & Lal, 2020; Asigbaase et al., 2021), which may hinder the transition in post-harvest food supply chains as well (Paciarotti & Torregiani, 2021). The opportunities and challenges of transitioning to various SFSC initiatives are different in different agricultural production systems (Al-Kaisi & Lal, 2020; Asigbaase et al., 2021). The transition from global food systems to SFSC initiatives seem to be hampered by a lack of knowledge and experience of farmers (Alessandrini, 2024; Doernberg et al., 2022).

The experience of farmers who adopted SFSCs provides valuable lessons for farmers in globalised food networks. How did farmers build trust with involved stakeholders in SFSCs? What marketing strategies do farmers use in SFSCs? How do farmers improve market infrastructure and market access in SFSCs? There is currently a lack of gathered knowledge and training materials on how to transition from LFSCs to SFSCs. There is a clear need for tailored training materials which integrates the experience of farmers with theoretical knowledge on SFSC initiatives. These training materials will ensure that farm advisors have access to accurate knowledge and tools necessary to effectively guide farmers in the transition to SFSCs (Laure & Grainer, 2017).

The EU4Advice project, funded by the European Commission (EC), aims to bridge this knowledge gap, consequently strengthening SFSC initiatives in Europe (EU4Advice, 2025; Schebesta et al., 2020). Strengthening SFSC initiatives is part of the EU Farm-to-Fork (F2F) strategy as well, which aims for fair, healthy and environmentally sustainable food systems (Alessandrini, 2024). A primary goal of the EU4Advice project is to ensure a continuous and effective knowledge flow to

all involved stakeholders (see Figure 1), which requires the implementation of Agricultural and Innovation Systems (AKIS). SFSC advisors have to be integrated into national AKIS systems, while establishing an international advisory network that interacts with policy makers (EU4Advice, 2025).

The aim of this project is to effectively support knowledge transfer from farm advisors to farmers in Europe through providing training materials on SFSC initiatives. The research question was as follows:

> *"How to effectively support farm advisors in guiding farmers through a transition towards SFSC initiatives?"*

To answer this question, challenges and opportunities were assessed during the transition towards different SFSCs. Additionally, to create a useful output the knowledge gap and output type of the training material for farm advisors had to be identified. The most important training material is the interactive poster with farmer interviews and the supplemental second training material is this report. The implementation of the training materials was assessed through a survey based on the Measurement Instrument Innovation Determinants (MIDI) model (Fleuren et al., 2014A) and Motivation-Opportunity-Abilities (MOA) model (Ölander & Thøgersen, 1995), in which farm advisors assess whether the training materials can be implemented in the field. These training materials aim to provide farm advisors with the necessary knowledge and skills to better guide farmers in their transition to SFSC initiatives.

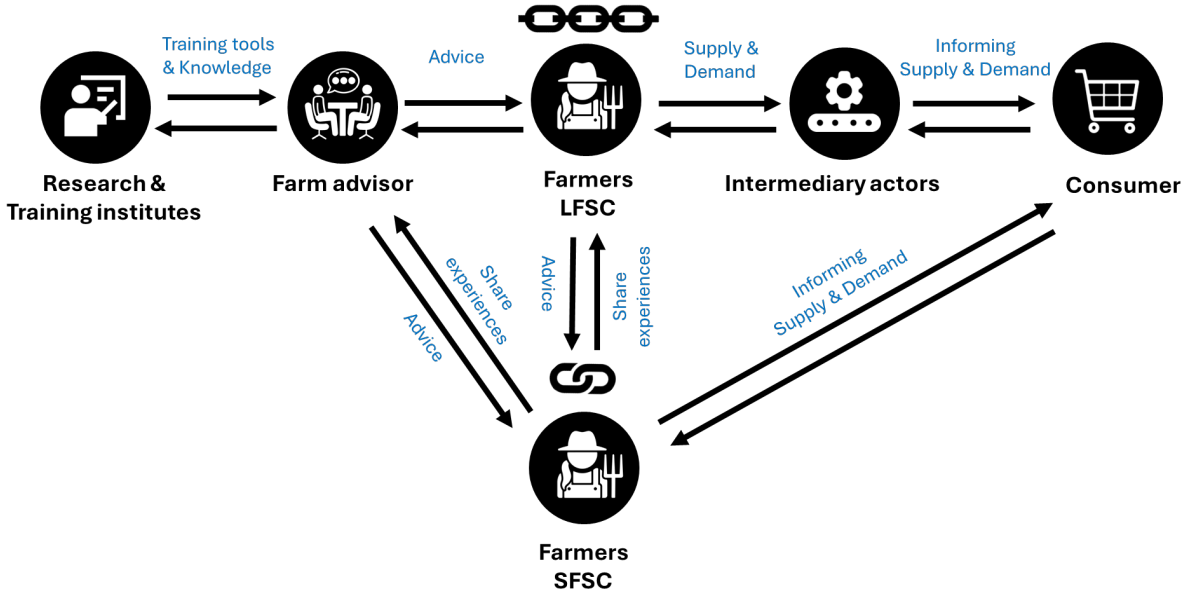


Figure 1: *Overview of main stakeholders involved in the Current Food Network and in the Alternative Food Network*

2. Methodology

2.1. Research methods

Content of training material for farm advisors

A schematic literature review was conducted on different types of SFSC initiatives, while highlighting key parallel relationships of socio-economic and environmental aspects of SFSCs. Challenges of consumers and farmers were obtained from literature and from interview with farmers (n=6, Appendix 8.1 and 8.4)

Output and applicability of the training material

Multiple interviews were conducted with SFSC experts, farm advisors (n=7) and farmers from different agricultural production systems involved in SFSCs (n=6). The information obtained from interviews with farmers are used as examples in the interactive poster. Interviews with SFSC experts and farm advisors were primarily used to ensure the knowledge level is sufficient and whether outputs may be implemented in practice. A Measuring instrument Determinants of Innovations (MIDI) survey (Fleuren et al., 2014A) was given to farm advisors to assess how the interactive poster and the model on it can be implemented in the field. To ensure that the end products will be used by the advisors, the Motivation-Opportunity-Abilities (MOA) model has been utilised. In this model key aspects on the behaviour of the target audience will be analysed including social norms, habits and situational conditions to attempt to integrate the end product into the desired outcome by farm advisors. The interactive poster was assessed by farm advisors (n=3). The survey consisted of 12 determinants and included with three questions for the MOA model (Appendix 8.2).

MIDI Model

To better understand how new practices or tools, such as the training materials created, are used in practice, the Measurement Instrument Innovation Determinants (MIDI) model as proposed by Fleuren et al. (2014A; 2014B) is used. The MIDI model is a scientifically grounded framework, used by amongst others Zorginzicht which is a governmental institution, developed to identify factors supporting or hindering implementation of innovations in real-world settings. This framework includes a total of 29 specific determinants which influence whether an innovation is successfully adopted in the real-world and utilised as intended

The different determinants are grouped into four categories, presenting different aspects of the real-world usefulness of the innovation, or in our case poster. The four categories are:

- The innovation: characteristics of the poster itself;
- The user: factors related to the farm advisors expected to make use of the poster;
- The organisation: aspects of the work environment of the farm advisors;
- The socio-political context: external things influencing the adoption of the poster.

(Fleuren et al., 2014A; Fleuren et al., 2014B)

By presenting statements based on these categories and the existing determinants, the aim is to gain insights into the contributing and hindering parts of the training material created to support farmers in advising farmers on the SFSCs in the real-world context. With this information the quality and usefulness of the poster is illustrated and helps to improve creating of further training materials or adaptions to the created poster.

MOA Model

In order to ensure the outputs from this project are valuable for the real-world, the MOA model is used. In this way, different sides of the real-world usefulness are evaluated than in the MIDI model. The MOA model, standing for Motivation, Opportunity, and Ability, is a behavioural framework for explaining why individuals choose to adopt new practices proposed by Ölander and Thøgersen (1995) and shown in Figure 2. This model argues that successful behavioural change depends on three main conditions:

- Motivation: In the model, motivation is defined as the actor's internal drive in choosing certain behaviour, rather than other types of behaviour, towards a certain objective. Motivation is shaped by the factors Beliefs about objective, Attitude towards the behaviour, Intention, and Social norm, capturing underlying reasons between motives influencing behavioural intentions;
- Opportunity: Opportunity is about Overall and situational conditions that enable or constrain someone's ability to perform certain behaviour. This includes external conditions such as social and cultural context, convenience and accessibility;
- Ability: Ability refers to the capacity to perform certain behaviour, based on Habit and Task knowledge. In the case one's motivation is high, competence and resources are necessary to be able to carry out the intended behaviour.

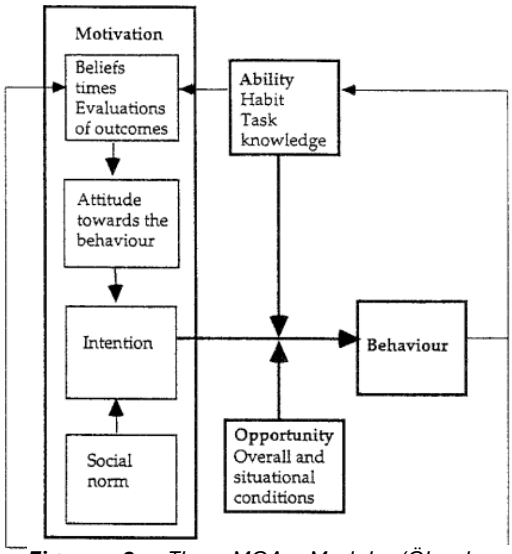


Figure 2: *The MOA Model (Ölander & Thøgersen,1995)*

These three core conditions come together in forming behaviour, in our case this behaviour is about farm advisors using the poster created during this project. First, the usefulness of the product in the framework of the MOA-model is argued based on interviews conducted. Then, this is supported by the outcomes of the questionnaire send out to the interviewed farm advisors.

2.2 Ethical considerations

This project has been carried out with attention to ethical standards and the potential (negative) impacts on participants. Participation in interviews and the follow-up questionnaire was entirely voluntary; participants could withdraw at any moment without providing reason or decide not to answer questions they were not comfortable with. Prior to the start of the interviews with third parties, participants receive clear and concise information about the direct and broader purpose of the project. Interviewees will be given a choice on the level of anonymity they prefer, the project will honour this choice.

The information gathered during the interviews will solely be used for academic purposes during this project. Participants are offered to receive the outputs resulting from this project.

While the research is low risk in nature, potential negative impacts were considered. These include:

- The risk that participants of the interviews may feel evaluated or judged on their knowledge or practice;
- The possibility that the outputs from this project may oversimplify real-world complexities;

- The possibility that the outputs from this project may not match the needs of all different advisors, potentially resulting in confusion;
- The time burden on farm advisors and farmers, who may have limited time available.

In order to mitigate these risks, materials were developed with feedback from farm advisors, and questions were designed with care to frame them in a supportive, non-judgemental manner. The aim of this project is to support farm advisors by providing them training tools on SFSCs reflecting their insights and real-world context, rather than impose additional expectations.

3. Literature review

3.1. Different production systems

In order to answer our first sub research question, we utilised literature. In this next part we try to answer the question: What different production systems and how does it relate to the SFSC? Conventional production is highly mechanised, large scale, and dependent on synthetic inputs and specialised crop varieties. It mainly focusses on maximising yield per unit area (Durham & Mizik, 2021). Integrated production incorporates sustainable practices while trying to maintain conventional productivity. It is based on chemical inputs, integrated pest management (IPM), and resource conservation techniques (Durham & Mizik, 2021).

When conventional production transforms to SFSC, the production characteristics of other types of production methods will be involved. Alternative production systems have emerged as a response to the huge environmental and social concerns:

- Agroecology, this is a movement, a practice and a science, which applies ecological principles on systems in agriculture. It focusses on resource cycling, biodiversity and minimises the external inputs (Wezel et al., 2009).
- Organic production systems are banned from using synthetic inputs, it promotes soil health and a healthy, well-functioning agroecosystem (European Commission, 2018).
- Regenerative agriculture focusses on restoring organic matter and biodiversity in the soil, to create a healthy soil environment (LaCanne & Lundgren, 2018).
- Biodynamic agriculture takes organic practices and combines it with a more holistic approach, here the farm is seen as an integrated self-sustaining organism (Turinek et al., 2009).
- Permaculture is an agricultural system that mimics a natural ecosystem, by minimizing human intervention, but creating productive lands (Ferguson & Lovell, 2014).

Agroecological research taking Andalusia as a sample has demonstrated that SFSCs may have advantages. Due to local farmers' organic and sustainable production methods, they are increasingly favoured by consumers (Matarán Ruiz et al., 2024). The limitation is that the production scale of some ecological agricultural products is relatively small, limiting the ability to meet large-scale market demands which SFSCs initiatives compensate for. There may also be difficulties in coordinating and integrating various links of the supply chain.

There is no obvious literature evidence clearly indicating the impact of the practices of organic production systems, regenerative agriculture, biodynamic agriculture and permaculture on SFSC. This is a valuable research gap, as we learned in the subsequent interview that SFSC farms typically adopt the measures mentioned in the production system.

3.2. Short Food Supply Chain

A SFSC can have many definitions, depending on people and on regions. For this project, we use the definition that is also used in the EU4Advice program: a short food supply chain mostly consists of local farmers who work together to promote local food markets and ensures that the produce only travels short distances, this to ensure farmers and consumers are able to communicate with each other (EU4Advice, 2025).

3.3. SFSC initiative levels

For the purpose of this project, it is important to understand and highlight the different levels of commitment related to different SFSC initiatives. Exploring the differences in required levels of commitment and responsibility for farmers helps advisors guide farmers towards the most appropriate SFSC initiative for them specifically. This is done with use of the guiding question:

"What types of SFSC initiatives are there and what are the differences in commitment for consumers and producers?" The different types of SFSC have been placed in separate levels of commitment required from the farmer to the system. The commitment levels have been categorised in level 1, 2, and 3 (Figure 3). Examples of SFSC systems have been provided and categorised on the commitment levels (Jarzębowski et al., 2020).

Commitment level 1

In the first commitment level, initiatives in SFSC can be 'on farm selling' in different forms like a vending machine or a shop located on the farm. These forms of SFSC are placed in a lower commitment scale since contact between the farmer and the consumer is not needed. With a key element being that the consumer comes to the farm to directly buy the wanted product at the farmer. The infrastructure that is needed is dependent on the product that a farmer tries to sell. In some cases, the product will need to be refrigerated or pasteurised until/before it is sold. In these cases, there is an initial cost to purchases the equipment needed to be able to do the on-farm selling. However, afterwards only running costs and restocking are needed. For a farmer this method of selling has a higher income rather than the conventional way (Dries, 2021) . Although as stated by Dries (2021) the turnover of the products through the on-farm selling are less than 5% of the total turnover.

Another example of a SFSC initiative is 'pick your own'. In this initiative, consumers will need to come to the farm and can than pick their own fruits, vegetables, or flowers. Some of these locations have more than one type of product which the consumers could pick (Dries, 2021). This will require a direct relation between farmer and consumer, since the field in which the consumers can pick their own will need to be prepared and a level of supervision while the consumer is picking.

Commitment level 2

In the second commitment level, initiatives in SFSC can be different types of active selling of the products by the farmer. These active forms of selling can be selling on a farmers' market or having a box selling programme. These ways of selling require the framer to interact with the consumer. Furthermore, it will require an increased knowledge on the requirements form the consumers. The infrastructure needed is dependent on the type of SFSC initiative the farmer wants to implement. The farmers market will require some transportation method/ equipment to bring the produce from the farm to the market. The box programme will require a method of delivery and a logistical system to complete orders in a correct method. In these initiatives investments maybe will be needed, and similarly to commitment level 1, thereafter are running costs. Therefore, the main difference between commitment level 1 and commitment level 2 is the way of interaction between farmer and consumer.

Commitment level 3

In the third commitment level, initiatives in SFSC can be different types of involvement from the farmer or consumers. Examples of the involvement from consumers are community supported agriculture (CSA), or a solidarity purchasing group. These are examples in which the farmers and consumers are in close contact about each other's requirements and needs. In these cases, a farmer might have to change their production system since the consumers want more seasonal vegetables. Furthermore, the consumers often need to buy themselves into this method or pay a subscription fee. In these cases, the consumer is closely related to the production in and on the farm. Sometimes, the consumers are also working on the farm helping with the production. Due to the combination of the increased commitment from the farmer and consumers this is categorised as the third level.

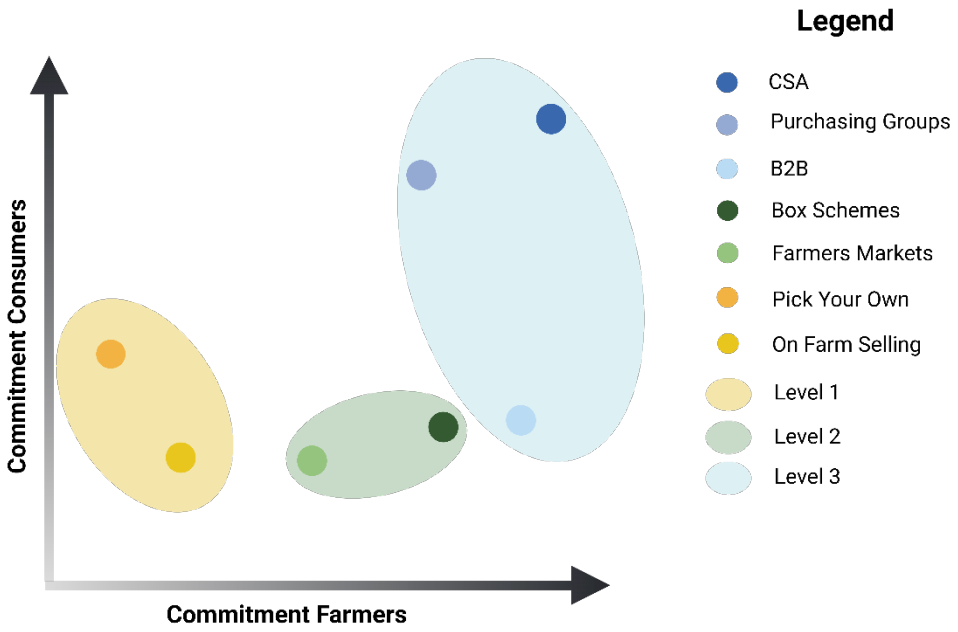


Figure 3: *Schematic model of SFSCs Commitment Level*

3.4. Benefits and Challenges of SFSCs

This next section examines the benefits and challenges associated with SFSCs, these localised food systems have important implications for environmental impact, economic structures, social relation and consumer experiences. SFSCs are often praised for their more sustainable production methods and social proximity, they face challenges related to, amongst others, scale and accessibility. With this, we aim at answering our sub question: *"What are the key socio-economic and environmental benefits of transitioning towards SFSCs?"*

Social

Switching from LFSC to SFSC has many social advantages, for both the farmers and consumers. Market-access is easier, cooperation with other farmers and consumers is improved, which also gives educational opportunities for these groups of people (Cirone et al., 2023). Benefits that relate more to consumers are that there is easier access to high quality produce, with which they support their local economy (Cirone et al., 2023). There are however also challenges, farmers might have to invest a lot of money due to different demands, they need more workers or need to switch to a diverse range of products for which they require new knowledge. Also, farmers are reliant on the behaviour and preferences of consumers (Rucabado-Palomar & Cuéllar-Padilla, 2018; Olde & Mcgarr-O'Brien, 2024).

This consumer behaviour is an important factor into the success or failure of a SFSC initiative. One solution can work in the Netherlands, but might not work in Spain or Poland, due to distances between farm and consumer for example (Aouinait et al., 2022). This also has to do with the mentality of the consumers, do they want to put some extra effort to get better products or not. Some SFSC initiatives, e.g. on-farm selling could require consumers to travel larger distances than they would to supermarkets. In densely populated regions this might not be much of a problem, but in regions like rural Spain or Poland, there are a lot less people, so roadside selling would make less sense. The larger the distance is between the farm and the consumer, the more detached the consumer gets from the farm and the less they might order, and the more they forget SFSC benefits (Rucabado-Palomar & Cuéllar-Padilla, 2018). It is therefore important for each case to look what is possible and sensible when switching to a SFSC.

Moreover, some barriers that come with some SFSC initiatives are a relative lack of convenience and high prices. People like to buy SFSC products, to support their health, the farmer and the environment, but do not do it often due to these barriers. More information and education would be needed to inform and engage people to start buying more SFSC produce (Aouinait et al., 2022).

Environmental

SFSCs can directly reduce carbon emissions during transportation by shortening the distance from food production sites to consumption sites, but there are seasonal differences in whether they are reduced or not (Feng et al., 2023, Snoek et al., 2024). Carbon emission intensity increases with transportation distance, that is, the longer the total transportation distance, the higher the carbon emissions (Rizet et al., 2014). Reducing the consumption of fossil fuels and reducing greenhouse gas emissions have positive significance for mitigating climate change, but this still depends on the choice of vehicles and routes during transportation.

SFSCs provide a good platform for sustainable agricultural practices. SFSC farmers tend to adopt organic farming and eco-friendly practices. Compared with traditional agriculture, these methods help protect natural resources and biodiversity (Majewski, 2019). It not only reduces dependence on chemical pesticides and fertilizers, reduces pollution to the environment, and improves the resilience of agricultural systems (Chiaverina et al., 2024). This measure is also believed to help attract consumers, which will be elaborated on in detail in the subsequent chapters.

SFSC's short distance and direct supply chain help reduce food losses during storage and transportation, thereby reducing food waste. Traditional food chains in developing countries will cause the colour, aroma and nutrition of products to decline (Ali et al., 2021). After the transportation distance increased, the freshness and quality of food are reduced, and waste caused by improper storage or transportation delays is increased. In addition, SFSCs also promote consumers' understanding of the origin and production process of food, play a role in directly educating consumers, and cultivate consumers' awareness of making more environmentally friendly food choices, further reducing food waste (Jarzębowski et al., 2020).

Short food supply chains (SFSCs) help reduce land and water pollution and minimize resource waste. Fresher products result in a longer shelf life, which in turn reduces post-harvest losses and food waste, indirectly reduces agricultural pollution caused by waste food processing, and protects resources such as land, water, and labour used in agricultural production. In addition to the indirect resource efficiency improvements brought about by reducing waste, sustainable energy supply sources such as solar energy directly improve resource efficiency throughout the supply chain from production to consumption.

Economic

SFSCs offer a range of economic advantages for farmers and their local economies, though there are challenges as well. One of the most notable benefits for farmers is the increase in profit margins due to directly selling to consumers rather than intermediaries. This direct relationship between farmer and consumer increases the farmers' market power by greater control over price-setting and consumer engagement (Stanco et all., 2019). At the local level, SFSC initiatives contribute to the local multiplier effect: money spent locally tends to stay within the community, thereby supporting businesses, infrastructure and services in the same region (Von Allmen, 2012; Domański & Gwosdz, 2010). In general, consumers' willingness to pay for food is influenced by available information on the processes the food product underwent. Around 86% of consumers have a higher willingness to pay for food products that are produced in a more

environmentally friendly manner. As SFSC production systems often are more sustainable than conventional systems, farmers can use this in marketing and setting the price for their products, thereby increasing their revenues.
Furthermore, SFSC initiatives foster the creation of jobs, especially in rural areas. SFSCs often are more labour intensive on-farm than conventional LFSC farms are, due to the labour needed in marketing, logistics and processing (Kneafsey et all., 2013).
In addition to this, SFSCs tend to be more stable during market disruption compared to LFSCs. Due to relying on local actors and inputs, SFSCs adapt quicker to shocks. Such as we saw during the global Covid-19 pandemic, or experience with fuel price surges or trade tariffs. The localised structure decreases the reliability on international markets and thereby is more resilient to global market disruptions, ensuring continuous fresh foods to the consumers and income for the farmer (Raftowicz, 2024).

However, entering SFSC schemes often requires upfront investments in for example storage, infrastructure and on-farm processing machines. Thereby, farmers likely have to acquire new skills or competences in marketing and customer service, as these things are handled by intermediaries in the conventional LFSCs. Furthermore, SFSCs often are more labour-intensive, as they require more hands-on labour on-farm than LFSCs, and likely face difficulties in accessing economies of scale or face diminishing returns to scale (Canfora, 2016). Another challenge lies in the regulatory and logistical complexity related to SFSC operations. Farmers will face different challenges on this regard than they do when participating in LFSCs.

These benefits and challenges for SFSC initiatives are all dependent on the location of the SFSC farm, as more urban regions perform better due to more consumers and thereby demand for the products of the farmer participating in the SFSC (Chiaverina et all., 2023).

Consumer

As consumers play an important role within SFSCs and the successes of different SFSC initiatives, the challenges and benefits for the consumers are highlighted below. In this way we incorporate them in our research, though limitedly, as it is outside the scope of this project to evaluate and analyse the consumer side in the SFSC more deeply. In this next section we aim to answer the following sub question of our research: *"What benefits do SFSC initiatives bring to consumers?"*

SFSCs offer a lot to consumers, especially in terms of transparency, freshness and quality of food, and sustainability. SFSC farms use being transparent about their practices in their advantage for marketing purposes, this has benefits for the consumer as well as this increases the information on the product and increases the trust (Mustapa & Kallas, 2025). In addition to this, by buying products locally, the consumers contribute to the local economies, (in)directly ensuring the welfare in the region, which farmers use in their marketing as well. Furthermore, consumers benefit from improved freshness and quality of the food products bought locally, as these products often undergo less processing for self-life or transportation purposes. This can enhance health outcomes for the consumers, and 90% consumers are willing to pay more for healthier food and food coming with information about health risks (Acella et al., 2024). The sustainability dimension offers great value to certain consumers as well, especially nowadays where there is an increased focus on the environment and our role as consumers. Due to the lower GHG-emissions associated with SFSCs, SFSCs appeal to a group of consumers in society as they find importance in decreasing their emissions (Jarzębowski et al., 2020; Hyland et al., 2024)).

However, SFSC present challenges for consumers as well. Product availability and variety is often limited due to the seasonality, scale and regionality of the products produced by the farm, this might result in inconsistencies in supply and restricted choice for consumers. Moreover, accessibility and convenience may be barriers for consumers, as consumers need to visit the farm, farmers' market, or commit to subscription models like CSAs. This might limit consumers buying from SFSCs, as it often takes more effort to visit the local SFSC business, rather than only do grocery shopping in the supermarket. Especially in less densely populated countries in Europe the accessibility dimension might impose difficulties (González-Azcárate et al., 2021).

Then looking at the price from a consumer perspective, there can be both advantages as well as disadvantages for them in buying from SFSC farms. In some cases, prices for products will be lower than they are in the supermarket, as no intermediaries come in between that require payments. However, in other cases, prices may be higher due to the more labour-intensive, absence of large-scale efficiencies, and specificity of the product.

4. Results

4.1. Interview with Farm Advisors

During the ACT-project semi-structured interviews were conducted with seven people we classify as farm advisor. Most of them have an active role as farm advisor in their daily life, however interviews were conducted with legal experts and people involved in education as well, which we classify as farm advisors for the purpose of our project. The interviews are not presented as raw transcripts in Appendix 8.4, however serve as the foundation for extracting key insights presented in this section. From analysing the different interviews conducted, several recurring themes came up across all interviews. These recurring themes are highlighted below and reflected in the contents of the poster.

All different interviewees strongly expressed their support for and engagement in SFSC initiatives, some interviewees saw SFSCs as promising or even necessary for the sustainability of agri-food systems in today's world. Stakeholders with personal farming background (e.g. Bregje and Auke) highlighted the importance of increased autonomy, better relationships with consumers and opportunities for more diverse practices on the farm that SFSCs bring.

The interviewed farm advisors all mentioned that farmers face several challenges when shifting from LFSCs to SFSCs, challenges covered during interviews include:

- The broader, or better said, different skills required for participating in SFSCs with your own farm. As farmers are required to have skills not only regarding producing their products, but also in marketing, logistics and sustaining a relationship with consumers;
- Legislative and regulatory complexity. The bureaucratic complexity in the agricultural world in general, and especially in SFSCs, results in limited access to fundings or getting the right permits being too big of an obstacle. As well as the burden that certification systems bring and the overall distrust in food labels present under consumers nowadays;
- Farmers experiencing difficulties with reaching consumers directly, due to a lack of visibility for their farm and their practices.

Some of these challenges highlighted by farm advisors are used to inform the 'Challenges' section of the poster.

The farm advisors highlighted that their role was not limited to just being technical experts on SFSCs, however that they are often seen as key enablers of the change for farmers as well. For one, Jorge and Auke emphasised the importance of two-sided trust in working with farmers. By listening to the farmers, really understanding their needs, and offering guidance specifically to their individual situation, this trust is build, creating an important base in the work of a farm advisor. This highlights the importance of the relational support farmers require during a change from LFSCs to SFSCs, emphasising the importance of such soft-skills for farm advisors together with their technical knowledge (A8.3.1.; A8.3.6).

According to the legal expert, Mirta Alessandrini, we interviewed, there is a lack of clear and legal definitions on SFSCs and a complex policy system hampers the growth of SFSCs (A. Though some policy frameworks, such as the CAP or national support, do exist throughout the EU, such financial models often fail to reach the actual farmers due to their complexity. This leads to the need of simplified and accessible information for both farmers and farm advisors in our training materials. Therefore, we tried to make our poster not too complex, but rather straightforward (A8.3.3).

Several of the interviewees, especially Jorge, Auke and Henk, highlighted the central role consumers play in SFSC successes. The social proximity between farmer and consumer, the

price transparency, and two-sided trust are crucial for SFSC successes. Based on this, the relational side of SFSCs is important in our outputs, especially for the reasons why SFSCs matter, which is why this is highlighted under this section in our poster as well (A8.3.1.; A8.3.6.; A8.3.7.).

During the interviews the idea or draft version of our poster was shown and explained to the farm advisors. Martin, working in education, supported the dual-output idea of creating both a poster and a report with deeper information, he suggested that the poster could be used in mock advisor-farmer scenarios to train farm advisors of the future (A8.3.2.). Overall, the farm advisors were of the opinion that information and knowledge about SFSCs and the transition towards them does exist, however that this material is widely spread and not gathered in a manageable and informative manner. With the poster and this report, we aim at gathering the relevant information needed in SFSC transitions. With the report we aim to give more in-depth information which farm advisors can use to educate themselves on this topic, and the poster is aimed at engaging, inspiring and educating both farmers and farm advisors about SFSC and possibilities.

The farm advisor Auke suggested farm-based video materials in order to increase the engagement and reality dimension of our output (A.8.3.6). This suggestion guided us in making the poster itself more interactive, by being able to click through it and using attention grabbing icons and pictures in the poster. However, creating videos of real-world examples of SFSCs was not doable within the time and resources of this project, nevertheless this is something interesting for further steps in the EU4Advice project. Henk also mentioned that a description of what initiative would be suitable for what type of farm or farmer could be useful. Especially of the larger farms, it could be difficult to adapt to SFSCs, thus it could be handy to have some overview of what would be easily adaptable for that farm. All farm advisors were in agreement that having (positive) examples in a training module is of great value. Showing examples that have adopted initiatives and learning from their experiences is useful for farm advisor and farmer.

The interviews with farm advisors revealed a consensus about the potential that SFSCs have and how engaging and interactive training materials could contribute to the realization of this potential. Thereby, it highlighted several important challenges in SFSC and the role of farm advisors. The commonly recurring themes directly shaped the structure of the poster as well as the overall direction of the project.

4.2. Interviews with Farmers

In order to get a more complete understanding of the dynamics of SFSCs, and for the purpose of making the outputs inspiring after the wish of the commissioner, we interviewed several farmers. The relevant outcomes of these interviews can be found in Appendix 8.4, in the next section recurring themes and topics will be highlighted. From each of the earlier identified types of SFSC initiatives we interviewed the owners/managers of one such farm. We used the information gathered from these interviews to provide examples of SFSC successes in the poster. In this way, farmers interested in transitioning to SFSCs and farm advisors can see real-world examples and together discuss how this would fit for their individual circumstance.

Farmers highlighted that outside of financial opportunities, there are other important valuable sides to being involved in the SFSC as well. An important factor, mentioned by several farmers, is the increased social proximity and thereby closer connection with consumers they now have. In addition to that, farmers found it valuable to be more in charge on the pricing and quality of their products, this increased control is something the SFSC-farmers find a positive aspect of being involved in the SFSCs. Furthermore, some farms, e.g. the Herenboeren, find importance and meaning in educating consumers and raising awareness among them about how food is

grown and the efforts going into it (A8.4.1.). This social and educational value is seen as a key advantage for certain types of SFSCs. For example, the Herenboeren organise open days and the Vineyard Wilgenhorst has days where people can be 'farmer for a day', in this way they want to increase the awareness about where food comes from and how it is grown. Thereby, these farmers are of the opinion that active participation is good for the people, not only in terms of awareness about food, also for general health it is good to be active and outside, working together with others on the farm (A8.4.1.; A8.4.5.). This increases the social proximity in a region. This social proximity is involved in our poster under why SFSCs matter, as this gives value and meaning to the farmers and contributes to the society. Thereby, challenges more specific to a certain SFSC initiative are highlighted in the poster on their respective individual page.

Other than meaning and values the farmers get from being part of the SFSC, several challenges were highlighted as well. Farmer X (Business to business) mentioned experiencing challenges with obtaining the right infrastructure for their SFSC practices, which require investments as well as skills in working with the infrastructure in an efficient and effective manner (A8.4.2.). For the Herenboeren (Bert) the main challenge lies in finding and accessing land to create a Herenboerderij with, especially closer to larger urban areas. Another recurring theme during the interviews was the social demands and emotional energy required to manage a SFSC-farm (A8.4.1.). Barton (Ooijs Moois) mentioned that he sometimes faces difficulties with the crossing of his personal boundaries, as people come onto the farm constantly, thus him facing high social demands from the consumers (A8.4.4.). In our poster, some of these challenges are highlighted. Especially the infrastructure challenge is highlighted on the first page of the poster, the other challenges are highlighted on the page regarding the specific farm.

During the semi-structured interviews, the farmers were asked what changes they made to shift to SFSCs, if applicable, this information is highlighted on the individual page about the specific farm, as this is different for the different types of farms. Important and recurring themes were that the farmers had to diversify their produce to better align with consumer demands and shift their business model. Another thing presented on the induvial page of each farm is the advantages and disadvantages in their opinion of the SFSC and their business.

When interviewing the farmers, it was discussed what their advice or recommendations would be for people starting a SFSC farm. This with the aim to present farmers with a bit of advice from people already deeply involved in the SFSC and thus get peer-advice from like people. Advice for starting farmers ranged from aligning your personal vision with that of the SFSC and to think beyond making profit, considering sustainability, care and educational dimensions of SFSCs, to the advice that trial and error is the key. Another important advice was that the trust and transparency towards consumers is essential in certain types SFSC-farm. The different advice is presented in the poster on the individual farm page, as these often are more specific to the type of SFSC initiative.

Overall, several themes recurred during the interviews with the farmers. Such as the importance and meaning of the increased social proximity between the consumers and farmers for farmers in the SFSC, as well as their role in educating consumers and raising awareness about the efforts going into our food production. Another example is the challenges related to infrastructure that farmers face. These two themes are highlighted at the main page of the poster, while other comments farmers made are presented on their individual page as these often are more farm type specific.

4.3. Poster

As part of this ACT-project, the commissioner wished to gain engaging materials that could be used in training farm advisors in the EU on SFSCs, thus an accessible, practical and inspiring training tool. Therefore, we chose to develop a creative, interactive poster rather than only a conventional report and presentation containing our results. In this way, something was created that can be adopted and adapted to use in the real-world context.

The contents of the poster are based on data collected through interviews with farm advisors and farmers involved in SFSC initiatives, together with literature related to SFSCs covered earlier in this report. During the collection of the data, key challenges, benefits and opportunities that actors in SFSCs commonly encounter were identified. Then these insights were structured into outputs presented on the poster. The report serves as a source for additional and deeper knowledge about the different things covered on the poster.

One example of how we used the inputs from the interviews in the poster is that Bregje, one of the farm advisors interviewed, mentioned the importance of highlighting the challenges related to SFSCs. Therefore, on our poster there is a section highlighting some of the challenges we found in literature or through interviews.

At the bottom of the poster, we reintroduce the SFSC farmers interviewed during the ACT-project; by clicking on their logo the viewer is taking to a slide specifically about that farmer and their farm. On this slide, in-depth summaries of farm interviews are presented, including experiences and motivations of the farmer. With this, the abstract model is brought to life more, due to the use of real-world and practical examples, aimed at being a source for peer-inspiration for other farmers.

In conclusion, the poster is not only a visual summary of the research done during this project. It is an experience-based tool that can be used to train farm advisors and inspire a dialogue between farm advisors and farmers about SFSC initiatives and possibilities for the farmer in this. It translates the raw data from interviews and literature into an accessible, engaging, and actionable format for the real-world context.

4.4. Outcomes academic survey on poster

MIDI Model related questions

The survey in which farm advisors (n=3) assessed the poster showed that on all determinants (Appendix 8.2) our poster scored positively (Figure 4). The poster is found to be accessible, provides sufficient and correct knowledge on SFSCs and shows clear effects of SFSCs, which is expected to be both relevant and useful for farmers. The output of the poster is something that farm advisors are already used to working with, increasing the accessibility of the poster. Furthermore, farm advisors did not find the poster too complex. The personal knowledge gain from the poster was found to deviate across farm advisors, however this is likely due to the differences in academic background and experience level from farm advisors (Appendix 8.3).

MOA Model related questions

In order to further assess the practical usefulness of our poster output further and more completely, farm advisors were asked to score a couple of statements related to the MOA model (Appendix 8.2), and how the poster impacts this on a Likert scale. From the results (Figure 4) we can see that the ability and motivation dimensions both score well and the opportunity dimensions scores less well. This implies that the poster contributes to motivating the farm

advisors in actively helping farmers in their SFSC transitions. The ability dimension scores good as well, meaning that the examples and contents in the poster positively contribute to the ability and confidence of farmers in their advisory work. Concerning the opportunity, this scores more neutral. However, the opportunity is for an important part influenced by the time and resources available to the farm advisor, thus this might be due to a lack of ICT resources or contradicting style of advising.

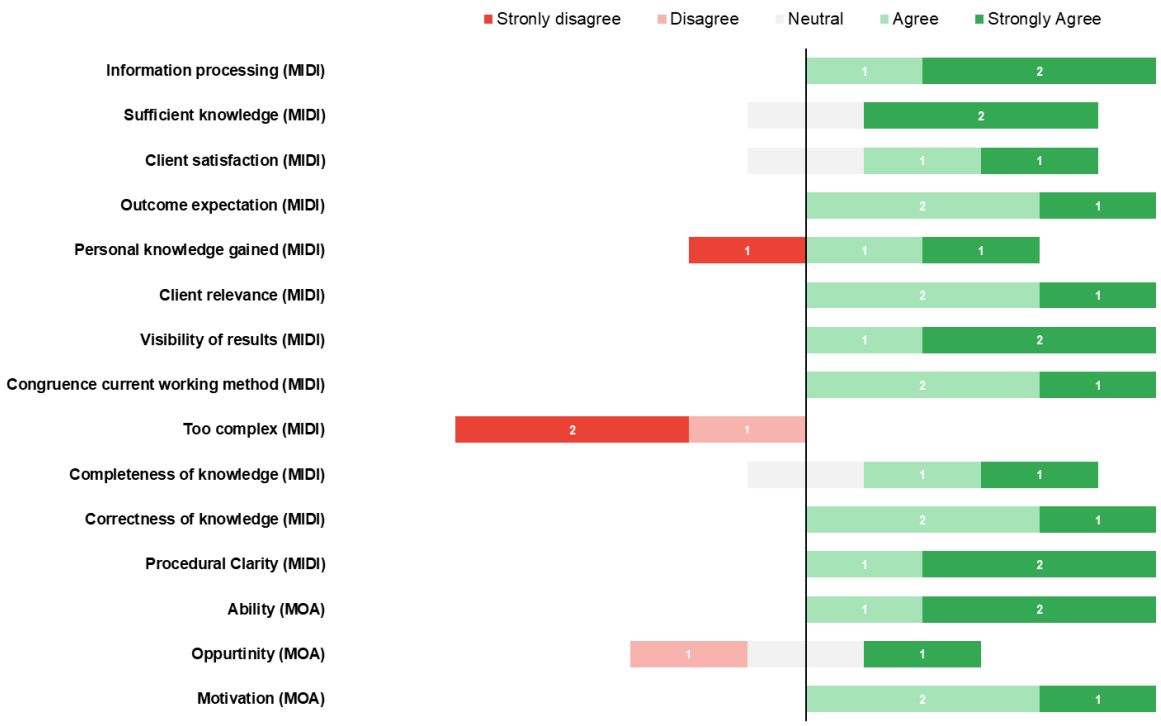


Figure 4: Results survey from farm advisors (n=3) which assessed the interactive poster with interviews on SFSCs

5. Discussion

5.1. Optimising certification systems in SFSCs

Both Auke Hempenius and Mirta Alessandrini emphasised the challenges brought by the current certification system. Auke believes that certifications like "organic" mainly exist due to the lack of trust between consumers and farmers. Better information sharing and transparency can serve as an alternative to these systems. Mirta also pointed out that the legal basis of SFSCs is unstable, and the complexity of policy design hinders farmers from obtaining resources and support.

This raises a question worth exploring, whether the certification system is the most effective way to build trust and ensure quality in SFSC. Although certifications can provide a certain degree of guarantee, they are often accompanied by high costs and bureaucratic burdens, especially for small farmers. As Auke mentioned, the ‘Suver en Sun’ project indicates that SFSC can operate well through guidance and community support, rather than merely relying on a strict certification system. This is in line with the viewpoint mentioned earlier, that is, methods such as promoting direct communication between farmers and consumers and enhancing transparency through information sharing may be more beneficial to the SFSC initiative. By reducing reliance on complex certification systems and lowering the barriers to entry for farmers, it can encourage farmers to adopt SFSCs more widely.

5.2. Terminology in SFSCs

In addition to the further improvement of the certification system and the establishment of trust, the specific concepts of SFSC initiatives should also be clarified. For instance, the scope of CSA proposed by different researchers varies (Woods et al., 2017). The definition of CSA also varies in practical guidance or farmers' guidelines. The scope of CSA proposed by different researchers varies, and the definition of CSA also differs in various practical guidelines or farmers' guidelines. The basic characteristics are mainly as follows: (1) Members share the risks and benefits of food production with farmers; (2) Members purchase a portion of the farm's products before each growing season; (3) In return, they will receive regular agricultural products delivered by the farm throughout the season. By defining the content of CSA more specific and standardised, the credibility of the materials can be enhanced, and it would help advisors provide accurate guidance to farmers.

5.3. Diverse SFSC types

SFSC exists in various forms in Europe, which has positive impacts on both consumers and farmers. Take the fish market as an example. The form of the SFSC fish market in Norway is to establish a cooperative sales organization. This form ensures that fishermen themselves have a certain bargaining power, guarantees their basic income, and at the same time ensures that consumers can enjoy transparent prices by reducing the participation of middlemen. In contrast, in the UK, the bargaining power is often in the hands of commercial companies. They control a large number of distributors and sales channels, control the overall operation of the fish market, and squeeze the bargaining space of fishermen (Vittersø et al., 2019). In this report, due to time and geographical limitations, interviews and surveys targeting other EU countries have shown a certain deficiency.

5.4. Consumer content under exploration

Consumer interviews and research, especially surveys targeting consumers across the entire European Union, is a lengthy and highly demanding task. For now, the content in dynamic posters can be used to create educational materials for consumers, but it still needs to be more targeted. In a secondary interview, consumers who chose to consume only biological products said that

SFSC products were the most common option. A survey on the overall consumption willingness of different types of SFSCs shows that consumers in Western Europe have the highest consumption willingness to pay (WTP), reaching up to 58% (Mustapa & Kallas, 2025). In Germany, values and attitudes have a profound influence on consumers' choices of food retail. Consumers who attach importance to environmental and social factors are more likely to purchase from SFSCS such as farmer's markets or choose other related forms (Cicia et al., 2021).

5.5. Future perspective

The future of SFSCs holds potential, and certain achievements have been made in currently related practices. As Martin Duijkers mentioned in the interview, the agricultural world is expected to evolve into a model where "25% of the farms produce 75% of the products, while the remaining 75% of the farms focus on building strong connections between consumers and farmers and produce 25% produce", describing the prophets & wizards' agricultural theory (Figure 5) (Mann, 2018). This shift towards a more localised and consumer-oriented food system highlights the role of the SFSC initiative in shaping the future of agriculture.

Auke mentioned in the interview that the main competitors of SFSC are traditional food supply chain participants such as supermarkets and distributors rather than growers (Vittersø et al., 2019). To gain an advantage in this competition, enhanced cooperation and support among farmers, farm advisors, consumers and policymakers are needed. This includes providing farmers with the necessary training, resources and infrastructure to successfully transition to SFSC, as well as creating a more favourable policy environment that recognizes and supports the unique needs and value of SFSC initiatives.

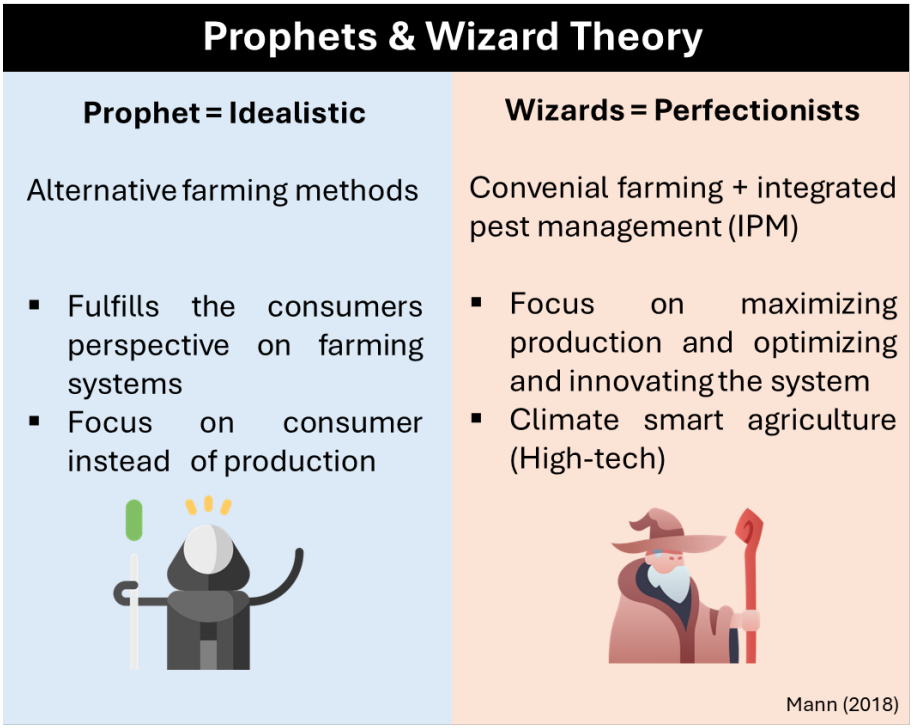


Figure 5: *Overview of prophets & wizards' theory from Mann (2018)*

6. Conclusion

Different production systems were explored, highlighting how SFSCs can effectively complement these systems by enhancing transparency and trust. It has clarified various types of SFSC initiatives, such as farm markets and community-supported agriculture, and defined the varying degrees of commitment required by farmers and consumers for the corresponding systems. SFSC has brought about significant socio-economic and environmental benefits, including increasing farmers' profit margins, reducing environmental impact, and enhancing consumers' awareness of the source and quality of food. For consumers, SFSC offers fresher and higher-quality products and provides an opportunity to support the local economy.

Providing comprehensive and convenient training materials for farm advisors, such as the interactive posters and report developed in this project, may enhance the ability of farmers in their transition to SFSCs. During the interviews with many farm advisors, all farm advisors expressed a positive attitude to the poster and training materials. However, one farm advisor did point out that there are other materials with more interactive and dissemination power which might be more feasible than a poster. The training materials that currently are the end product still require work as there was limited time to create other outputs such as a podcast or video. Nevertheless, the backbone structure has been created which may be developed in the future. Furthermore, results from the survey in which farm advisors assessed the poster show that farm advisors were positive about the implementation of the output. On all determinants related to the innovation of the MIDI model a positive neutral and or positive score was given. For the MOA model both the motivation and ability scored high, indicating that farm advisors are motivated and feel more able confident in their ability to enable farmers to transition towards SFSC initiatives. However, currently farm advisors feel like they do not have both the time and resources to implement the poster in their work. In future projects, the training materials could be created in a video format to mitigate this. The recommendation is to actively keep working on commitment model and creating other types of inspiring training materials to widen the target group and encourage more farmers to adopt SFSC initiatives.

Enhancing the knowledge flow on SFSC initiatives and its importance remains only part of the solution. However, farmers are ultimately the ones in control of their company. Farmers for instance may not want to be in close contact with consumers or invest time and or money in a nascent sector. The latter could be solved with the implementation of European grants for example. Furthermore, SFSCs often also require diversification of produce, which may not be possible for farmers due to limited space or high investment costs. To tackle these challenges, it is important to know what farmers find difficult in the adoption of SFSC initiatives other than the lack of knowledge and experience. Our recommendation is to interview farmers in globalised food systems to know if it is the lack of knowledge that hinders the transition to SFSCs or are there other factors involved? Secondarily, the appropriate target consumer also needs to be located near the business. A farmer can start a SFSC initiative, however typically the consumers also need to commit more towards the SFSC initiative. Although some studies (Acella et al., 2024; Adams & Salois, 2010) indicate that consumers desire social proximity to farmers, there may be regional discrepancies. Our recommendation is to conduct a consumer analysis for each European country, to know for which areas there is a high demand for SFSC initiatives. Bridging the knowledge gap is only the start in guiding the transition to SFSCs. However, to enable successful transition of farmers more knowledge is required on what drives farmers and mapping the demand of consumers.

This ACT project defined the key elements that could make the creation of an Alternative Food Network feasible. A sustainable food network, in which the farmer and the consumer have a closer connection. Additionally, it allows the farmer to increase the marginal profit and the

consumer to be more aware of the food provenance and quality, which is consistent with the content analysed in the previous chapters. The EU4Advice project play a key role, bridging the knowledge gap between farmers in the LFSC and SFSC. This initiative could play a central role in the future Vision for Agriculture and Food of the European Commission for 2040.

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8. Appendix

8.1. Questionnaire of the farm interviews

General questions:

1. **In your opinion what is a Short Food Supply Chains (SFSC), and how do you see their role in the current and future food system?**
   Purpose: Understand values, perceptions, and personal stance on SFSC from either farmers or advisors.

2. **From your experience, what are the main challenges that farmers face when trying to move from a long to a short food supply chain?**
   Purpose: Identify practical, economic, logistic, or cultural barriers to help tailor training to real-world issues.

3. **What kind of support or training would be most helpful — for both farmers and farming advisors — to facilitate a possible successful transition to SFSCs?**
   Purpose: Reveal gaps in knowledge, skills, or tools, and inform development of targeted training materials.

Farmers

4. **How do you describe your business, and why do you think it is identifiable with the SFSC?**
   Purpose: To get general information on the farm, and how they implement SFSC

5. **What is your perspective on the concept and goals of Short Food Supply Chains (SFSC). How is this impacting your values and business as a farmer? Have you ever thought about defining a common goal with other local farmers?**
   Purpose: Covers their understanding, alignment with SFSC, and value perception.)

6. **What did you change during the conversion into the Short Food Supply Chain system? Did you increase the number of employees that are working on the farm? Did you change your production system? Did you buy new equipment?**
   Purpose: To get information on how intensive it was to switch/ adopt a SFSC system.

7. **What kind of benefits and disadvantages did you get from this conversion?**
   Purpose: understand who the person is that we are interviewing and the background.

8. **Why did you start a form of short food supply chain selling? What motivated you to do so? And where did you get the knowledge from? One of the reasons is connected with the CAP and the eco-schemes?**
   Purpose: Understand real motivations, hesitations, turning points, and knowledge sources in transitioning to SFSC.

9. **If you would have the option to redo it, were there things that you would do differently? If yes, what would they be? If not, why did you not experience any obstacles?**
   Purpose: To understand what obstacles or discouragements the farmer experienced.

Farm advisors

10. **What type of Farmer Advisor are you? Are you a freelancer of are you working for a company?**
    Purpose: To understand what the position is of the advisor to the farmer.

11. **In your role, what are the most common difficulties or resistance you encounter when encouraging farmers to adopt SFSC practices?**
    Purpose: Capture real-life advisory challenges to address them in the training content.

12. **Based on your experience, are there common traits among farmers who are more likely to consider or succeed in transitioning to SFSCs?**
    Purpose: Define farmer profiles and success factors, helping advisors better identify and support potential candidates.

13. **Which strategies did you adopt to help the farmer in this kind of conversion?**
    Purpose: To understand how an advisor advice a farmer, to come to understanding of required information.

14. **Would this model be useful for you?**
    Purpose: To understand whether the product that we are making will be useful in the work of the farm advisor.

Teachers

15. **Have you already implemented learning material on the topic of SFSC?**
    Purpose: To understand to what capacity future advisors have studied SFSC systems.

16. **If implemented already, how is the learning material thought to the students?**
    Purpose: To understand what is already being thought about the SFSC systems.

17. **What kind of didactic materials have been used to provide this knowledge?**
    Purpose: Knowing the actual diffusion and development of the SFSC concept. Knowing how the academic world is involved in the diffusion and organization of knowledge.

8.2. Survey question MIDI & MOA model for farm advisors

(1) Procedural clarity

The innovation clearly indicates which activities I need to perform and in what order.

(2) Accuracy

The innovation is based on factually correct knowledge.

(3) Completeness

The innovation provides all the information and materials needed to work with it properly.

(4) Complexity

The innovation is too complicated for me to use.

(5) Congruence current working method

The innovation fits in well with the way I am used to working

(6) Visibility of results

I find the effects of using the innovation clearly visible (examples)

(7) Relevance

I find the innovation suitable for my clients.

(8) Personal advantage / disadvantage

This learning module has ensured that I have gained new knowledge about the transition to short food chains.

(9) Outcome expectation

I expect that by implementing this learning module, more transition to short food chain initiatives can actually be achieved among my clients.

(10) Client satisfaction

Clients will generally be satisfied if I use this innovation.

(11) Sufficient knowledge

I have sufficient knowledge to use the innovation.

(12) Information processing

To what extent are you aware of the content related to short food chains?

(M) Motivation

The innovation motivates me to actively support farmers in short transitions in the food supply chain.

(O) Opportunity

In my current position I have the time and resources to apply the content of the innovation in my advisory work

(A) Ability

The examples and content in the innovation increase my ability and confidence to advise farmers on short food supply chains.

8.3. Interviews with Farm Advisors

Interview 8.3.1 Farm Advisor – Jorge Moleros Cortes

1. What he thinks about SFSC and his direct experience

Jorge has been a farmer himself in the past. He had an organic farm for two years and he was also part of a small cooperative with other farmers who sold boxes to 200 consumers per week. However, due to water shortages and struggles with the municipality they had to quit the cooperative. Nowadays, Jorge focusses on advising other farmers and newcomers in short food supply chain initiatives. Thus, he is a big advocate of implementing short food supply chains in the production systems. He mentioned some important differences between the long food supply chains and the short food supply chains, focussing on the role of the farmers. It is important to take these differences into account while creating training materials for farm advisors. For example, small-scale farmers cannot compete in production with large-scale farmers who are producing for supermarkets. This is why small-scale farmers need to focus on other aspects, mainly related to the consumers' expectations, such as taste, offering special varieties, etc. Another difference is how structured the production process is. A farmer who produces for supermarkets, for example, is more specialised and large-scale. The production process is also more structured and monitored as there are often high-quality standards.

2. What are the main challenges?

He mentioned that the most important thing to do for a farm advisor is to listen to the farmers. This means that farm advisors need to visit the farmers and first listen to the farmers' opinion to understand what they are doing and thinking. Therefore, the farmers feel like they are being heard instead of being ordered around by other people, as this happened frequently in the past. Another challenge is the need for farmers to take on multiple roles. This means that a farmer needs to transition from only being a farmer to also organise the other steps of the food supply chain.

3. What he thinks about the product

Jorge was the first farm advisor being interviewed. Therefore, we pitched him a previous model, which existed of an x- and y-axis and four quadrants. He advised us to change it to having only one quadrant and to include the commitment level of the consumers. He did like our idea as it can be used to encourage conversations about short food supply chains and to inspire farmers to transition. He did emphasise the role of the consumers in this model as there is an important link between the consumers and farmers within the short food supply chain. Therefore, you cannot look at the farmers and consumers separately.

Interview 8.3.2 - Aeres University of Applied Science team lead – Martin Duijkers

1. What he thinks about the product

He was happy to hear what we had as an idea about our product. He found both the poster (compass) and the report very good ideas. The poster would than maybe be less useful for the lectures that would be given. However, it could be used in mock farmer and farm advisor conversations. The report would be useful to create a redline throughout all the years of the bachelor on the topic of SFSC, or in specific lessons.

2. Agri-Food-Vision: "The wizard and the prophet"

Moreover, from this interview emerged a future vision of the agricultural world: "the wizard and the prophet". He explained that he expects the future of agriculture to look like 25% of the farms producing 75% of the product. With 75% of the farms creating 25% of the product. However, the 75% of the farms will then be based on the link between consumer and farmer, these will create the perspective and good will from the consumer of the agricultural sector. The so-called prophets in the book, which are people of idealism and alternative methods. Then the 25% of the

farms will be based on optimization and innovation of the current systems. These are the so-called wizards, these people are then optimizing the current process or expanding to optimize it. The wizards would for example look for robots to pick fruits, or fully automated packaging plants.

Interview 8.3.3 - Food Law – Mirta Alessandrini

1. Unstable Legal Ground for SFSCs
According to Mirta, a major challenge lies in the absence of a coherent legal definition. Until 2023, SFSCs were loosely governed by Article 1305 of the Rural Development Regulation, but this led to ambiguous interpretations. As a result, the European Commission eventually withdrew its official definition, creating even more uncertainty for both member states and stakeholders.

2. Policy Design Fails to Reach the Ground Level
Mirta highlights a persistent disconnect between EU-level strategies and farmers' lived realities. Although significant funding is allocated to support SFSCs, the way it's distributed—through mechanisms like the "policy premium" model and eco-schemes under the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP)—is overly complex. This makes it hard for farmers to access resources unless they conform to rigid bureaucratic criteria.

3. Struggles with Market Concentration
Another issue she identifies is the market dominance of large retailers, which puts small farmers under growing pressure. SFSCs, by their nature, aim to foster localised, direct food systems—but their potential is constrained by an environment increasingly controlled by supermarket chains and global supply networks.

4. Evolving Vision: From Sustainability to Resilience
In reviewing the EU's Vision for Agriculture and Food by 2040, Mirta observes a shift in priorities. Whereas sustainability was once the guiding principle, today's focus is moving toward resilience—a response to both geopolitical uncertainties and the need to recalibrate earlier objectives from the Farm to Fork Strategy.

5. Information as Empowerment
Concluding the conversation, Mirta emphasises that knowledge is power. She argues that farmers and local actors need access to clear, organised, and actionable information. This, in her view, is the cornerstone for building a new generation of Alternative Food Networks, ones that are transparent, inclusive, and capable of challenging the status quo.

Interview 8.3.4 - Market Assistant Agri2000 – Roberto Sciolino

1. What he thinks about SFSC and his direct experience
During this interview, we spoke about SFSC in Italy and especially with a focus on Emilia-Romagna, where the agricultural culture and movement are strong. From the experience of Roberto, the SFSC is a good initiative which has various advantages, first of all, the price transparency and the higher level of freedom in the price making for the farmer side. Moreover, this initiative could be something that plays an important role to contrast the even higher tendency of young farmers of close the family company. Indeed, 78% of the young are not motivated to continue or invest their life in the countryside since the selling price of the product and the marginality connected to it are too low compared to the effort necessary to reach a good level of production.

Moreover," the idea of SFSC is taking in itself also sustainability aims, and for sure nowadays in Italy, one of the key elements that could increase the interest about SFSC's solutions is related

to the diversification of the productions which could help the farmers to generate a response against the daily increase of challenging in the agricultural managing due to the climate change".

2. From your experience, what are the main challenges that farmers face when trying to transition from a long to a short food supply chain?
"I think that the main challenges that this conversion poses to the farmers in Italy, and especially in Emilia-Romagna, are connected to the preparation of the farmer, both for management skills and technical skills that are going beyond the agricultural ones. Another issue is connected with the complexity of the bureaucracy system beyond the certification and access to the national funds. Indeed, only to understand this complex system of documents and certification, the farmers have to assume a new person who is an expert in the interpretation of these documents, and that could help the farmers to orient themselves. themselves in this jungle"

3. What he thinks about the product
The general opinion of Roberto on our product is positive, and he is interested in how the final product will look, especially the interactive aspect and the versatility of this instrument. He is looking forward to seeing the future development of this training material.

Interview 8.3.5 - Farm advisor and Farmer – Bregje Hamelynck

1. What she thinks about SFSC and her direct experience
From Bregje's experience, it emerged that Short Food Supply Chains (SFSCs) are seen as a strategic way to improve farmers' positions in the food system by aiming for 25% of national production to be routed through these channels. This shift would offer farmers greater guarantees and more solid market access, counterbalancing the dominance of large supermarket chains. However, a major challenge is that many farmers sell only one product, which can be inconvenient for consumers who prefer a one-stop shopping experience. A proposed solution is to organize collective points of sale where products from multiple farmers are available together, improving convenience and promoting diversification.
Collaboration among farmers is essential but not always easy due to resistance or logistical issues. Government support, especially training for developing location-specific SFSC models, is crucial. Moreover, SFSCs are strongly associated with sustainability, and there's an expectation for farmers involved to adopt organic or transparent conventional practices. While conventional farmers can participate, transparency is key to maintaining consumer trust. Models like Community Supported Agriculture (CSA), even at small scales (e.g., ½ hectare with 200 gardens), show the diversity and potential of SFSC approaches.

2. From your experience, what are the main challenges that farmers face when trying to move from a long to a short food supply chain?
The main challenges related to the conversion are:

- Lack of experience from both sides, so farmers and Farmer Advisors
- Lack of visibility of the companies that are making this conversion.

Interview 8.3.6 – Farm Advisor – Auke Hempenius

1. What he thinks about SFSC and his direct experience
He is a strong advocate for SFSC, seeing it not just as a viable future for agriculture, but as a necessary shift away from the current industrial and supermarket-dominated food system. His vision is rooted in honesty, transparency, and direct connection between farmers and consumers, without the need for expensive certification schemes like "organic." He argues that certifications exist largely because of a lack of trust, and believes that better information sharing and transparency can replace these systems, benefiting both farmers and consumers economically.

His goal is to promote SFSC as widely as possible until his retirement in 2035, aiming for a food system where 80% of consumption comes from SFSCs and supermarkets play only a minor role. His mantra is to “do business the right way”: respect farmers, produce responsibly, and build trust through openness.
In practice, his work with the Suver en Sun project shows that SFSCs are more than an idea, they’re a working alternative. The project includes both conventional and organic farmers. Through coaching and community support, it helps farmers adopt more sustainable practices, even if they don’t fit into rigid organic certification systems. The goal isn’t perfection, but "doing your best" with minimal, non-toxic interventions and less paperwork.
His experience also shows that SFSCs grow through word of mouth and relationships. He began by approaching farm shops and speaking directly with open-minded farmers. Now, farmers bring others into the network. One notable success includes three women managing 400 hectares and a shop where 90% of products are sourced within 5 km, a perfect example of SFSC in action.
Ultimately, his experience reveals that SFSCs empower farmers, rebuild local economies, and restore consumer trust, all while creating a more sustainable and community-driven food system.

2. What are the main challenges
He notes that many farmers are eager to transition, especially since the SFSC approach reduces administrative burdens and allows more autonomy. Resistance doesn’t come from farmers, but rather from supermarkets and corporations in the long food supply chain, who stand to lose the most from this change.
Moreover, there are clear problems connected to:

- The organic certification system, which is still too difficult to reach
- The general narrative around the agricultural world, which is especially connected to the mistakes rather than the improvements
- The eating culture, which should be radically changed, from his point of view, in order to make possible the introduction of an Alternative Food Network.

3. What he thinks about the product
The overall idea is considered promising and innovative. There is a strong emphasis on the need for new and engaging materials to improve its effectiveness. A few key suggestions include:

- Developing interactive materials, tailored specifically to the target audience, which is crucial for impact.
- Exploring potential collaboration between the project commissioner and the individual giving feedback.
- A proposal to conduct 10 interviews across different segments, ideally accompanied by videos filmed on farms, to boost engagement and real-life connection with the content.

Interview 8.3.7 Farm Advisor – Henk Schelling

1. His opinion on SFSC and experiences
According to Henk, switching to SFSCs is more doable for small businesses and not so much for large businesses. Of course, exceptions exist, but he does use this as a rule of thumb in his work.
In terms of future perspective for SFSCs, Henk thinks that it is really dependent on the farmers themselves, as some like it and are very enthusiastic about it, but that there are also a lot of farms focussing on mass production for who it is less of a likely switch. Mainly he says that the small farms are unable to compete with the large ones and therefore switch to SFSCs for financial reasons as well, as they in that way try to find their own share of the market.

2. Main challenges related to SFSCs in his experience

“The biggest challenge is creating a market to sell your produce to. You need to make choices, switching between different initiatives is not doable, so you need to pick one and go for it.” … “It is a combination of the farmer and the consumer; the consumer has to be ‘triggered’ in a sense to come to your farm and buy stuff from it. Also, the consumer has to be ready for it, in and around big cities, SFSC initiatives are more successful than in more rural areas.”

Henk highlights the demands required for SFSCs and that this is more present in urban areas rather than rural areas, also he mentions that the lower demand in rural areas is associated with higher prices for the products, further discouraging the consumer to buy from SFSCs.

In order to help farmers create a market for their products, Henk tries to connect the farmers with the right marketing people. Part of this marketing is about creating an experience on and around the SFSC farm and product, in this way the consumer does not come to the farm for just the product, but for the farm experience around it as well.

On the question if there are general challenges switching farmers experience, Henk goes to talk about the fact that it depends on the farm. “This depends on the type of farmers and farms. Small businesses want to earn more, so this is likely a positive change for them, large businesses are less open for this change as they likely will make less money and go back in time 40 years.”

3. Henk his strategy in advising people

In general, Henk says he thinks that it is very important to share positive examples, as in that way you can show farmers that it is possible, and they tend to be more interested. However, again, for large farms this is more difficult to realise. Also, Henk says the market plays a crucial role, so assessing the market is important for his advice he gives as well.

4. What he thinks about the product

Henk is enthusiastic about the use of examples and says that these would be useful for him personally, also as it fits his style of advising well.

For him, a challenge with the poster is assessing whether all initiatives are possible for every farm. He thinks some farms cannot use some of these initiatives. Therefore, for him, it would be helpful if something is added about what is the right company or commitment for each initiative. Also, more information about the type of company or farmer is handy, as then the farmer interested in SFSC can relate to the examples more (or not).

What Henk likes is that in a quick scan of the poster, you have pictures by the different examples that grab your attention and give you a direction about the different things already before reading it. Thereby, he likes that some general info on SFSC is involved in the poster as well. Furthermore, he likes that you can bring the poster with you when visiting a farmer, so you have all information directly available. The questions we asked during the interview and show on the farm specific pages of the poster is something he likes as well, he thinks it are good questions to ask, especially the one on what inspired the farmers to start and such. Lastly, he likes that the consumer side is involved in our commitment level graph as well, as this is an important aspect of the transition and an important factor for the farmers to take into account in their decision making about SFSCs.

8.4. Interviews with Farmers involved in SFSC

Interview 8.4.1 – Herenboerderijen Project Manager – Bert Rietman

1. What he thinks about SFSC and his direct experience

The interviewee, Bert, basically confirmed the value of our project/what we are making. As he mentioned that there is a lot of information, however there is not a nice overview of the relevant information available anywhere. This info, he thinks, is important in informing farmers as well as consumers, to in this way increase awareness on where our food comes from, the labour/effort that goes into producing food, the price.

2. From your experience, what are the main challenges that farmers face when trying to move from a long to a short food supply chain?

- Having to be located close to urban areas with 50.000+ citizens to have enough consumers to participate in the Herenboerderij so it can be economically self-sufficient
- From the management: keeping people enthusiastic and involved in the Herenboerderij, also with them participating in the labour on the land.
- Complex legal and regulatory landscape, which gives limitations to the initiatives → such as no dairy, maximum number of cattle/chickens and such (which he also sees as a benefit, as then the scale does stay small, and it does not turn into large-scale (unpersonal) thing.
- Finding people in regions to start up the Herenboerderij. At the start-up phase there needs to be enough people involved for it to be feasible; finding enough people with the right competences in a region sometimes is a difficulty in setting up new farms. Such as he experienced in Kampen
- Finding and buying land that is a good fit for the purpose of the Herenboerderij, heavy clay or peat soils are not suitable. And now, buying land is difficult and expensive in the Netherlands in general. → finding land & quality of soil issues.

3. How do you now work on increasing knowledge/awareness among consumers?

At this moment, consumers are educated during information evenings, during open days on the Herenboerderijen, and regularly groups elementary school students are invited to the farms to be educated on the topic of SFSC and the Herenboerderij initiative. They want to expend this to involving the elderly as well.

So by telling the story behind the Herenboerdrijen and the ideas, as well as letting farmers explain things + let the consumers experience it (also by helping with the farm-work)

Interview 8.4.2 – Farmers X, Business to Business

After the wishes of this farmer, they are anonymised.

1. What they think about SFSC and their direct experience

SFSC is about a short connection between consumer and farmer, both in terms of product as social proximity. In this, I see a role in educating the customers about my work and about my farm and why I make certain choices. Thereby, we hope to contribute to a more local, sustainable food production.

2. From your experience, what are the main challenges that farmers face when trying to move from a long to a short food supply chain?

- Initial capital, both money and structures
- Managing of the social aspect that is added from the SFSC to the farm

3. What is your perspective on the concept and goals of Short Food Supply Chains (SFSC). How is this impacting your values and business as a farmer? Have you ever thought about defining a common goal with other local farmers?
Importance of a more local focussed food production and in that way more sustainable, both in the social and environmental sense. Never really thought about a common goal with other local farmers, also not really a common goal with the other farmers we are working with, it's mainly just about helping each other and a win-win scenario for all parties.

4. What did you change during the conversion into the Short Food Supply Chain system? Did you increase the number of employees that are working on the farm? Did you change your production system? Did you buy new equipment?
"Because we did not have much land, scaling-up the farm when we took over was not possible, especially with the high prices for ground + a lot of farmers located here already. Therefore, though we already wanted it, we saw it was also the best option to make a living of farming, by changing our production systems or type of farm.
We did, to process the cheese and meat, especially for packaging it. And a new wagon to transport the cattle to a different land, however the previous wagon was pretty old already."

5. What kind of benefits and disadvantages did you get from this conversion?
"Both being able to work on the farm, which is pretty nice with the kids, that one of us is at home at all times and not that FarmerX.2 is teaching and I always have to be present. However, we now do have to do a lot more on the social side, in socials and in communication with other parties. Sometimes this can be draining our energy, however, we love it at the same time."

6. What they think about the product
They say that such a product, especially a poster, could be valuable for enabling discussions between farm advisors and farmers. As then there is a lot of information centrally gathered, which forms a good starting point for conversations about SFSCs. Thereby, they think that the information does not have to be too deep for the farmers or farm advisors, as they will do their own research, and as all outcomes or opportunities for SFSCs call for tailor-made solutions.

Interview 8.4.3 – Het Binnenveld, with Farmer and owner – Roel Van Dijk

1. How did you come up with starting those SFSC initiatives (e.g. HORECA or box schemes)?
"Those were just ideas that I came up with on the fly, you read different things, you hear things from other people, other farmers. But even if you hear things, it never gives certainty." He mentions that the meat packages he implemented never perfectly met the desires of the consumers, as they all wanted to have a different composition.

2. Do you have a lot of people which have subscriptions to the meat/vegetable boxes?
"Very few, but that is not comparable to the farming shop. But I understand this, if I look online, we have 20-30 online orders a week max. The people want to see that piece of meat, fruit or vegetables; you cannot see that online. The consumers we have online are a fixed group, but they know your company. So, they order online based on trust in our company. Myself I would also not order online, a pair of jeans you can order online and send back, but with natural products that is not possible."

3. What were other advantages or disadvantages by working with HORECA?
"Some big companies, during the summer months if you have a lot of leftovers, you give them some discount and then you can sell them quickly. However, since of Corona apart from 2 businesses all other HORECA we cannot deliver to anymore because of the low price they want to pay for it. He is transparent in his price, he thinks it is a fair price and it is take it or leave it. He

does not want to lower his quality of meat, he never wants to lower the quality for a lower price; because then he sells himself."

4. Did you face any challenges during the transition to SFSC initiatives you started? And, what type of change did you did?
"The entire company changed by the short food supply chains. The whole company now is now about the farm shop. We now have 700 customers each week and with the new shop we are building we aim to go to 1700 customers. The main force to gain new customers is diversifying the assortment he mentions. Adding special beer, adding types of nuts, baking mixes, gluten-free products, fruits & vegetables. Especially adding the fruits & vegetables boosted the number of consumers we see now. We tried that years before that but then we could throw away most of the fruits & vegetables, but you need to keep trying it."

5. Did you include some other different SFSC strategies in your business plan?
"We started the pick-your-own guarding a few years ago. We asked for advice on a pick-your-own garden in Nijmegen. They have a waiting list for 3 years, are 40 euros more expensive compared to here. Tell me what it is, then? Assortment? Currently, we are breaking even. We start to add more things to attract new people.
The consumers pay yearly for the production costs and in return, they get a part of the yield."

6. Special mentions
He recently did the master class ''Short chains'' in Wageningen University. First year he learned a lot about how to know who his consumer is.

Interview 8.4.4 – Ooijs Moois, with Farmer and owner – Barton Arnts

1. What he thinks about SFSC and his direct experience
"I started with this 10-15 years ago. I want to eliminate the actors who take my money and close the gap between farmer and consumer, which results in a better relationship. These were my main reasons to start with SFSC."

2. What did you change in your production system?
"We used to produce for the auction, which meant strict daily quality checks and high-pressure harvesting began at 5:30 AM, with samples due by 7:30. One lower-quality berry could reduce the price for the whole harvest. To shift focus, we transitioned to a "pick your own" model to raise awareness about food origins. This required a major mindset change: no more pesticides, less perfection, and adapting from a closed to an open farm where visitors are always present. We now hold only the Global GAP certification."

3. What helped you during the transition towards SFSC?
"We asked help from 'Landwaart', they helped us with innovative thinking. They asked a lot of questions to figure out what would make us happy and what we would like to do. We got the idea during a trip to the UK. But it is not possible to make profit from the pick your own branch alone, therefore, we started thinking about the combination with a care farm as well. It is important to have an external person asking you questions as it is less likely you get irritated when it is an external person and not someone within the family. This person can ask you questions of which you had never thought about, but it makes you think about new topics, so the seed is planted.
It is also important to look for a mission and a vision as a farmer. It is not likely to think about this when you're a farmer, but it can really help you."

4. What are the main challenges that you experienced with the transition?
"Every year, I have discussions with people who find that farmers are not producing in a way that is not fit for them. I would like to show them the other side of the story by inviting them to work on

the farm for a day. This results in more awareness of the people. The biggest bottleneck for me, personally, is letting people onto your farm. Everyone needs to have a private space; these boundaries are sometimes being crossed when you transition towards an open farm."

5. What do you think the main advantages are?
"I find it important to keep the people active, they exercise by walking around the farm and picking their own fruits. But they also have more social interaction with other consumers and us."

6. Have you implemented any additional SFSC strategies in your business, and how do you distribute your products?
"Yes, we collaborate with a certified winery that processes our berries into juice—they handle the weighing and pressing. Around 70% of our berries are picked by visitors, while we harvest the remaining 30% to freeze and later use for our own products, which we sell during the peak season. Our juices are mainly sold to local HORECA businesses, the nearby SPAR supermarket, and at events like the 'Vierdaagse'."

7. If someone would like to start a SFSC initiative, what would be your advice?
"Dare to look beyond your boundaries, and to open up for new ideas."

Interview 8.4.5 – Vineyard Wilgenhorst, with Farmer and owner – Geert Horlings

1. What he thinks about SFSC and what the advantages are
The winery believes that their wines are of high quality and diverse in variety, catering to the preferences of different consumers. These characteristics are also indispensable for the operation of other types of SFSC. The winery's advantage lies in its ability to produce a wide variety of wines using a limited number of grape varieties, maintaining a high level of product diversity to meet customer demands as much as possible. The winery is confident in the uniqueness and quality of its products because the initial quality of its wines is already very good and can even be improved through appropriate storage, which also solves the storage problem of SFSC at the same time.
In addition, wine is a very suitable business model for SFSC, as different types of consumers are often willing to pay a higher price for such products. Local consumers tend to be more interested in farmers whose production models conform to the characteristics of sustainability.

2. What do you think the main advantages are?
As farmers participating in SFSC winery, they have adopted sustainable practices in grape cultivation and winemaking. They focus on disease prevention, using disease-resistant varieties and meticulous pruning. They prefer direct sales rather than selling through supermarkets to maintain the profit margin. They try to supply to restaurants, but the demand from restaurants is too large for them to fully meet. They also recognised the importance of multi-functional land use and combined grape production with tourism, entertainment and other activities, such as holding wine tastings and parties. Their strategy was formed by learning from past mistakes and emphasizing community participation. Another advantage of it lies in that the winery manager, in the early stage of the winery's construction, uses his own social influence to attract many interested potential customers.

3. What do you think the main advantages are?
The winery has explored innovative ways to attract consumers, such as offering grape-picking experiences, becoming a "farmer for a day", providing farmer lunches or simply picking experiences, as well as digital grape-growing projects. These measures have proven to be attractive and economically valuable, while also reducing the management cost, demonstrating business characteristics of continuous innovation and adaptation to consumer preferences.

Interview 8.4.6 – Pollo Samoggia, with farmer and owner – Luigi Ruggeri

1. What are the main challenges that you experienced with the transition?

- **The certification "Game":** He said "To be honest, the problems are at home. Talking with all my friends who are in the same line of work, more or less, we all face the same difficulties. These issues stem mainly from the size of our operations and the fact that we are subjected to the same European regulations as the big farmers.
  Let me explain I have exactly the same obligations as a major player like Amadori, who operates in a warehouse with 120,000 hens, while I have only 40. This means I'm subject to the same bureaucratic checks and certifications, which happen two or three times a year. I need to comply with the same paperwork, inspections, and requirements.
  I'm part of Coldiretti, and I use certified organic feed. That alone costs me €70–80 per quintal, compared to about €40 for conventional feed, that is nearly double. And then there are labelling issues: if I want to sell more and try to reach a supermarket or a larger chain, not only do I need a larger quantity of product, but I also need to handle all the required labelling processes. Without that, I simply can't sell to them.
  But even labelling comes with extra costs. In my case, for example, I would need to have an in-house veterinarian. I would also need to take specific training courses, which are, frankly, out of reach for us, small farmers, both financially and practically.
  I even mentioned ornamental breeds earlier. They told me that if I want to keep this kind of close interaction between my production and my hobby (raising ornamental birds), I'd have to comply with more rules. Even if I have just one pair of birds in a coop, I'd still be required to install a Swedish door, change boots at every door, absurd stuff.
  They want me to install a sanitisation system for trucks entering the farm. But in my case, trucks don't even enter, I go pick up the goods myself! Still, the law says I have to have this system in place. It's completely disconnected from the reality of small-scale farms like mine"
- **The organisation with other farmers**: "We are selling our product in the context of a farmer's market where it is difficult to have more than one farmer that is making the same product. Indeed, since each one is selling their own product, if another farmer starts to sell eggs, I will lose part of my final income. For this reason in reality like this it is difficult to manage and find the right space for everyone, since each time that there is the ingress of a new farmer, often this required to the other to change something, to still have an high level of diversification that is required to keep the business and the market in itself working an balance".
- **Location and dimension of the farm**: "For sure, one of the things that plays a key role in the success of a farm in the context of SFSC is the location of the farm, since if the farm is in a too isolate place is too difficult for it to reach the right visibility and the right organization." Moreover, he confirmed that "for some farm is impossible to think about a differentiation of the business, such for example to have a collaboration with school or restaurant, since it is always required to have a constant and sufficient production to satisfy the request every time. But this is a request that is impossible for small realities that are pursuing Bio productions."

2. What are the distinctive characteristics of Mercato Ritrovato?

This initiative is the result of collaboration between more than 50 farmers and various local institutions in Bologna. One notable example is the partnership between the market and Cinema Lumière: the market is granted use of the cinema's space and facilities — such as restrooms — while the cinema benefits from increased visibility and free promotion through the market's audience.

Additionally, the Municipality of Bologna has included this market in its official tourist guides, which has helped attract international attention to what is essentially a local initiative. This

visibility has even brought in several tourists. Given that the products sold at the market are priced higher than average, this type of customer, typically more willing to spend, is exactly what is needed to support and increase the farmers' income.

Who is helping in this food system transition?
In Emilia-Romagna, one of the key players supporting the transition from Long Food Supply Chains (LFSC) to Short Food Supply Chains (SFSC) is the **GAL** (Local Action Group), a public-private partnership aimed at rural development. These groups, together with newly established **territorial districts** and in coordination with the Region, municipalities, and provinces, are helping small local farmers by allocating specific funding — for example, 30% of regional agricultural funds — to support small businesses. While organisations like Coldiretti may not be actively involved in these efforts, the GAL provides crucial support for investment-related projects, such as building parking areas for agritourism sites or small restaurants. However, it's important to note that these aids are limited to structural investments and do not cover commercial aspects.

Interview 8.4.7 – Gelukkige Groentes, with owners and farmers – Sam & Jorian

General information
For 5 years, Gelukkige Groentes exists, first starting in another location than we interviewed. They have two plots of 1 ha, both with around 20 types of vegetables and herbs. They also grow some forgotten vegetables. It was started by owner Sam, he noticed there quite a lot of animo for it, so they started growing. Eventually the second owner, Jorian, joined via a cursus and they started the second garden together. It is a pick your own vegetable garden, so people pick their own produce, the people working there only take care of the garden and produce. 275 people per garden are subscribed and can harvest there. It was started due to a specific ideology, they do everything ReGen, organic and in corporation with nature. It is practically designed for the consumers, so they do get rid of weeds, and they use a no-dig principle, so very little turning of the earth is done. The participants pay in the beginning of the year, although it is possible to pay monthly. From May-Dec you can pick your own vegetables for daily use, so people do not pick too much. You share in the risks and the abundance in produce, so if there is a pest that eats part of the produce, but also if there is a lot more of a product than expected.

They do fight pests, but only in a natural way, so organic products or live animals (aaltjes). It’s a no go to use pesticides. They provide a training for people to learn how to do these things, how to work in the garden and how help people. There is close contact with the consumers, there is a personal connection towards the people who want it as well. They work the garden with two people, three counting a student who does the workshop. They do not use certificates, they inform their participants through transparency, which is an important factor to the business.

Explanation of specific questions (Farmer, Advisor, or Teacher)
How do you see the future of SFSC?
He hopes that this will grow a lot further and aimed for it by everyone. However, it is not yet happening.

What inspired Sam & Jorian
Sam was not happy in his previous workplace, so he went an entirely different direction. Just like everyone else working there, they all quit their previous job and started again at Gelukkige Groentes.

Advantages + challenges
There is no trouble with transport, as the consumers come to you. You do not have to worry about the harvest itself, just about taking care of it as it grows. If there are huge leftovers, it goes to the Foodbank. They also try to manage the gardens without volunteers.

Changes in production system?
They started off as an organic ReGen Garden, so no major changes. They do note things down they run into during the year; they do a big reflection session at the end of the year to take this into account for the next year. There are also many innovations, such as the usage of mulch or using fermentation reactions to boost soil health.

Advice for beginners
Learn from others, look at different CSA farms, talk to people, do training programs if possible. Orientate widely for places to do it, is there animo for it? How is the soil, healthy? Clay or something different? Keep in touch with your participants, listen to their needs and wishes.

8.5. Basic info/ website of interviewed farm

8.5.1. Vineyard Wilgenhorst (On farm selling)

This vineyard produces wine in Zeewolde in the Netherlands on a total area of 1.2 ha. The company was founded in 2012, by Geert Horlings, starting with a total of 900 grape trees. In 2014 the first grapes were harvested and made into wine. Currently the vineyard exists of 4000 grape trees of different varieties. The different varieties give the vineyard the opportunity to produce 9 different types of wine, from white, red, to sparkling wine.

As explained by the farmer in the interview, the vineyard has a reliable consumer and volunteer base within the region of Zeewolde. The consumers are sometimes also volunteers on the farm with several activities. The activities include the picking of grapes, and helping during events held at the vineyard. To visit the website of the vineyard you can click on the logo or use the link below.

https://wijngoedwilgenhorst.nl

8.5.2. Ooijs Moois (Pick your own)

Ooijs Moois used to be a pig and cow farm in Ooij nearby Nijmegen. However, when the current owner came into the company in 1989, he changed the farm from animals to small fruits farm. This changed lasted from 1989 until 2000 when the pigs part of the company was sold. Due to the flood that occurred in the region in 1995 the closure of the pig part of the company was fast tracked. The farmer also started to work for the fire brigade after the flood, which reduced the attention on the farm. The farm was rented out to another farmer and focused on only the small fruits and selling it through action.

The pick your own concept got introduced to the farmer in 2009 on a holiday in the UK. This is when the owner changed his farm from selling through the auction to that the consumers are allowed to pick their own fruit. The totality of the farm is at 2 ha for pick your own and 20 ha of sugar beets and wheat production. The farmer tries to implement the requirements for biological production. However, they do not have the actual certificate for producing biological. To visit the website of Ooijs Moois you can click on the logo or use the link below.

https://ooijsmoois.nl

8.5.3. PolloSamoggia & Mercato Ritrovato (Farmers' Market)

PolloSomoggia is a family business reality that perfectly matches the characteristics of the SFSC. This company has an extension of 1 ha and maintains a constant production of more than 40 chickens per period. In this family company, where Luigi is working with his wife, there is not only the biological production of eggs, but also of elaborated meat which is worked directly inside the company. Indeed, the second income of this company is represented by the direct selling of ready-to-cook products or by the direct degustation of their meat, already cooked.

This farm is following a diversification system, where it is able to keep more than one business at the same time: on-farm selling (with organisation of parties, weddings and dinners), farm market, and direct selling to restaurants (this last one represents a small part of the income). The biggest income is from the farmer's Market called “Mercato Ritrovato” where more than 50 farmers are working and collaborating to keep alive an initiative that not only has the right potential, but that is slowly becoming more than a good business.

8.5.4. Het Binnenveld (Box Schemes)

The current owner came into the family company in 1997, to be able to pay the bills the owner started 2005 with the on-farm selling of his cattle meat. However, the consumers sometimes bought the meat, despite the sale of the meat directly to the consumers it was not enough to be profitable. To expand on the concept, they started to include different types of meat, and processing of the meat to ground meat. This eventually expanded to the selling of the products to consumers and restaurants.

Currently the company expanded to include five employees, to process the meat into the products. Combined with the farm shop, which is open on Saturdays, they deliver boxes to consumers and restaurants and furthermore are present on a farmers’ market in the region. The company produces the feed for the cattle on 40 ha. With a total cattle amount of 45 milk cows, 150 meat cows annually, chickens, and pigs. To visit the website of Het Binnenveld you can click on the logo or use the link below.

https://boerderijhetbinnenveld.nl

8.5.5. Farmer X (Business to Business)

The farmer wished to be anonymised and therefore no general information on the farm or on the website is given in this report.

8.5.6. Gelukkige Groentes (Community Supported Agriculture)

Gelukkige Groentes is a Dutch Community Supported Agriculture type of SFSC business. In 2019, Gelukkige Groentes started with Sam, who wanted to explore whether urban farming was something that fits him, and it was. At the moment, Gelukkige Groentes has two food gardens in the Netherlands, one in Malden and one in Ooij, and also two farmers: Sam who was also the one starting Gelukkige Groentes and Jorian joined him as second farmer. Both the farmers are of the opinion that many things are out-of-balance at the moment, in the world in general but also in the agricultural world. Therefore, they want to be part of the change and be part of increasing our connection with nature and our appreciation of it.

In these food gardens, the vegetables, flowers and herbs are grown in an ecological , in an ecological manner. Outside of the use of the food gardens purely for the food grown in them, Gelukkige Groentes organises courses about gardening, offers opportunities for team events, and offer training for people wanting to start their own food gardens. To visit their website, you can click on their logo or on the link below.

https://gelukkigegroentes.nl/

8.5.7. Herenboeren (Public Relations – Not used for the poster)

Herenboeren is a relatively new company which started in 2016 with one location of 20 ha. Herenboeren is more a concept rather than a singular company with multiple locations. One location can feed a maximum of 500 people total. On the approximately 20 ha all the vegetables, fruits, eggs, and meat are created in a biological way. However, officially the Herenboeren are not certified as biological farmers. Currently there are 23 Herenboeren locations in total, with around 35 projects trying to create a location. The locations of Herenboeren are started by the consumers, who need to accumulate money with €2.500, - per person. After this one-time investment of €2.500, - the person will need to pay €50, - to €80, - per mouth within the family.

The consumers are directly involved with the farm and sometimes help with the work on the farm. However, together the consumers also hire a farmer which is responsible for the day-to-day tasks on the farm. The consumers at the end of the week can come to the location and pick up their box. In the interview with a representative of the Herenboeren, he said that the expectation is that this concept will reach a maximum number of locations of approximately 50. To visit the website of Herenboeren you can click on the logo or use the link below.

https://herenboeren.nl