

## **Local food systems in Walloon Region (Belgium): definition and trends in supply and demand**

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Comps S.<sup>1</sup>, Claustrioux J-J.<sup>2</sup>, Vandercammen M.<sup>3</sup>, Horge E.<sup>1</sup>, Lebailly P.<sup>1</sup>

(1) ULg - Gembloux Agro-Bio-Tech, Unité d'Economie et Développement rural. Passage des déportés, 2, B-5030 Gembloux, Belgium.

(2) ULg - Gembloux Agro-Bio-Tech, Unité de Statistique, Informatique et Mathématique appliquées à la bioingénierie. Passage des déportés, 2, B-5030 Gembloux, Belgium.

(3) Centre de Recherche et d'Information des Organisations de Consommateurs. Fondation d'utilité publique. Boulevard Paepsem, 20, B-1070 Bruxelles, Belgium.

### **1. Introduction**

(Re) development of more local marketing practices of agricultural food products is observed in most developed countries. However, the intentions behind the renewal of local food systems are different and the national experiences regularly take part in various political and social projects<sup>1</sup>.

The purpose is not to oppose the local food systems to other kinds of marketing as classical distribution; they complement each other. They can meet consumer expectations which are outlined above. They provide a response to the growing needs of traditional products, authentic social relations, while informing the consumers of the transparency of production methods. The sale of local products in the retail stores is the clearest example of this interaction which can offer a new service to the citizens<sup>2</sup>.

In this paper, the recent evolution in local food systems and the experience encountered in Walloon Region are reviewed (paragraph 2). The definition (paragraph 3) and the typology (paragraph 4) of local food systems are then outlined. Subsequently, the results of two studies are presented, the first one is dealing with the consumers' demand (paragraph 5) and the second with the products supply (paragraph 6). A link between these two studies is then made (paragraph 7). The paper ends with a conclusion (paragraph 8).

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<sup>1</sup> Dubuisson-Quellier S. (2009). Circuits courts : partager les responsabilités entre agriculteurs et consommateurs. In : Club Démeter. *Démeter 2010 : Economie et stratégies agricoles*. p. 87-112.

<sup>2</sup> Berger B. (2008). Nouveaux circuits courts et nouveaux services. In : Maréchal G., Ed. *Les circuits courts alimentaires : bien manger dans les territoires*. p. 93-101.

## 2. Recent evolution and experiences in Walloon Region

Nowadays, the evolution of local food systems is mainly due to two factors<sup>3</sup>. In the first place, the miscellaneous motivations of consumers: from the search of fresh and seasonable products to the support for the local economy (as demanded by consumers most committed) through the respect of environment<sup>4</sup>. While consuming more, citizens seek to restore meaning to their food buying behaviours<sup>5</sup>. The second factor relates to producers who cannot or do not want to meet the increasingly drastic demands of supermarkets platforms. Therefore they are involved in the development of more direct selling networks, usually individually in Walloon Region<sup>6</sup>. The challenge is not only to be better paid and a recognition of the qualities of their products, but also a social recognition allowing an enhancement of the farming profession. These social values are very important because they represent the solidarity between the inhabitants of a territory but also between different generations through the development of local and sustainable activities<sup>7</sup>.

Various local food systems have been developed in Wallonia from producers, consumers and trade unions or the government. The best known initiatives coming from the consumers are the interdependent buying groups of rural agriculture (GASAP) from Brussels and the local buying groups (GAC) which are popping up everywhere in Walloon Region. These forms of direct selling are based on the principle of contractual baskets.

Walloon producers are more likely to develop a direct selling activity on the farm and / or other forms of local food systems.

Indeed, the Walloon agency for the promotion of quality agriculture (APAQ-W) has recorded an increase of 23% in the number of producers enrolled in the promotion of local food systems between 2009 and 2010. This agency was created in 2003 by the Walloon Regional council to enhance the reputation of the agricultural sectors and to support the marketing of their products. The government of the Walloon Region also finances the Unit of Quality Farm

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<sup>3</sup> Chiffolleau Y. (2010). Les circuits courts de commercialisation des produits alimentaires biologiques (fiche n°2). In : *Réseau mixte technologie* « développement de l'agriculture biologique ». 4 p.

<sup>4</sup> Delhommeau T. (2009). *Les cahiers de la solidarité n°20 : circuits courts et circuits de proximité*. Belgique : Asbl pour la solidarité. 257 p.

<sup>5</sup> Chiffolleau Y. (2008). Les circuits courts de commercialisation en agriculture : diversité et enjeux pour le développement durable. In : Maréchal G., Ed. *Les circuits courts alimentaires : bien manger dans les territoires*. Educagri, 2008. p. 21-30.

<sup>6</sup> Comps S. (2010). *Etat des lieux de la vente directe et en circuits courts des produits agricoles en province de Namur*. 76 p. (+ annexes). Mémoire de fin d'études : Master bioingénieur en Sciences agronomiques, Economie et Développement rural : Université de Liège - Gembloux Agro-Bio Tech.

<sup>7</sup> Rastoin J-L. (2010). Perspectives in : *Actes des 2èmes assises bretonnes de la vente directe « Circuits courts & territoires »*, Rennes, 28 avril 2010, 68p.

Products (CQPF). Its missions are to control the sanitary quality of agricultural production, to foster diversification of products and to maintain a high level of overall quality while ensuring the farming exploitation profitability.

Walloon Federation of Agriculture (FWA) and the United Federation of Groups of Farmers and Breeders (FUGEA) guarantee the advertising of local food systems through their respective association: “Accueil Champêtre en Wallonie” and “saveurs paysannes”.

### **3. Local food systems definition**

In contrast to global food systems, local ones are generally defined as systems mobilizing not more than one intermediate person<sup>8</sup>.

At first, this definition does not include the notion of physical distance between producer and consumer. However texts of the European Parliament, particularly those concerning the hygienic quality of farm products, introduce a physical distance of 80 km between the place of production and the place of sale as a limit to define the notion of area in local food systems.

In the context of the Walloon Region, this arbitrary distance should not be a limitation to the overall analysis of local food systems, especially as the use of a virtual intermediary such as Internet breaks down these borders<sup>9</sup>. Nevertheless, geographic proximity remains an essential characteristic of those networks. It must take the importance of eating local and seasonal products into account.

We must bring two constraints to this definition. Firstly the exchanges must be monetized so that barter and self-production-consumption are excluded and secondly the establishment of a close relationship between the producer and the consumer to insist on the importance of the communication about the product which is sold or purchased. This relationship puts together the act of purchasing a product that provides satisfaction and the communication which fosters a mutual understanding of actors' needs and values<sup>10</sup>.

According to French rules and regulations local food systems are divided into two categories: direct selling and local distribution network.

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<sup>8</sup> Chaffotte L., Chiffolleaux Y. (2007). Vente directe et circuits courts : évaluations, définitions et typologie. *Les Cahiers de l'Observatoire CROC, INRA, 1*, 1-8.

<sup>9</sup> Clautriaux J.-J., Palm R., Lebailly Ph., Winandy S. (2010). *Circuits courts pour la commercialisation des productions agricoles alimentaires : de quoi s'agit-il ?* Colloque « Les circuits courts en Région wallonne : échanges et réflexions ». Gembloux, 8 décembre 2010, 9 p.

<sup>10</sup> Amemiya H., Bénézech D., Renault M. (2008). Les circuits courts : « un monde de commercialisation » interpersonnel ?. In : Maréchal G., Ed. *Les circuits courts alimentaires : bien manger dans les territoires*. p. 113-124.

Direct selling is the transfer of a product by sale. The producer is present during the trade with the final consumer who becomes the owner only then. It should be mentioned that the place of sale may be different from the production one. In this system there is no intermediate person. The producer is the seller.

In a local distribution network, a single middleman is introduced. This actor owns the product at one time in the marketing chain. The producer first sells to the intermediate person who will then sell the product to the final consumer. The producer is not there during the trade.

#### 4. Local food systems typology

To establish an inventory of the kinds of local food systems and rank them is not an elementary operation. The first criterion for this classification comes from the definition given above and is the number of intermediate person (0: direct selling or 1: local distribution network).

After consulting the literature<sup>11</sup>, the following classification elements were chosen for their frequency of use and for the overall approach of the local food system they give<sup>12</sup>:

- The proximity between the producer and the consumer: it may be geographic (a quite variable concept depending on the location of farms and products specificity) and / or relational (direct contact between producer and consumer);
- Moving to point of sale or deposit, which can be done by the producer and / or the consumer and / or the intermediate person;

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<sup>11</sup> Aubry C., Traversac J-B. (2010). *Les circuits courts en agriculture : un modèle de distribution alimentaire à contre-courant*. [http://www.inra.fr/la\\_scienc\\_e\\_et\\_vous/apprendre\\_experimenter/circuits\\_courts](http://www.inra.fr/la_scienc_e_et_vous/apprendre_experimenter/circuits_courts) (consulté le 26/01/2011).

Bergot S., Lafeuille B. (2010). Circuits courts. Vendre ses produits fermiers sur internet. In : *La France Agricole*, n° 3342 – 02 juillet 2010. p. 43-47.

Caudron F. (2007). *Les circuits courts : un pas vers la relocalisation de l'agriculture*. Saint-Servais : Equipes populaires. 7 p.

Chaffotte L., Chiffolleaux Y. (2007), op. cit.

Cordelier S. et al. (2006). Longue vie aux circuits courts (1/2). In : *Transrural Initiatives*, n° 313 du 4 juillet 2006. 8p.

Darras S. et al. (2007). Longue vie aux circuits courts (2/2). In : *Transrural Initiatives*, n° 333 du 8 mai 2007. 8p.

Dubuisson-Quellier (2009), op. cit.

Herault-Fournier C. (2007). Les circuits courts : contours et enjeux pour les acteurs et les territoires in : *FPNRF Actes de la rencontre « Développement des circuits courts : plus-value pour les producteurs et les territoires »*, Brière, mars 2008, 36p.

Maréchal G. (dir.) (2008). *Les circuits courts alimentaires : bien manger dans les territoires*. Paris : Educagri. 214p.

<sup>12</sup> Léonard V. (2010). *Essai de typologie des modes de commercialisation des produits fermiers en circuits courts*. Colloque « Les circuits courts en Région wallonne : échanges et réflexions ». Gembloux, 8 décembre 2010, 23 p.

- The initiative for the creation of the marketing system, which may come from the producer and / or the consumer and / or the intermediate person;
- The possible commitment (to provide volume, quality, regularity of supply, prices, ...) that should take one or more partners in the selling system;
- The monitoring of the terms of trade between the producer and the consumer or middleman (price, volume, quality, delivery frequency, ...), which is in the hands of one or more partners in the local food system;
- The individual or collective form of producers' organization.

Concerning the direct selling, a distinction has to be made between selling on the place of production (Table 1) and selling outside the place of production (Table 2).

The first part of direct selling (Table 1) is created by the producer who also monitors the terms of trading. The consumer moves to the place where the sale is carried out. Except vending machines, these categories of selling are characterized by a very close and strong relationship.

**Table 1: Categories of direct selling on the production site**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Definition</b>
Sales at farm	Point of sale where a producer or a group of producers sells his products (raw or processed) to the final consumer on the farm site.
Picking °Freedom service °Freedom picking	° Picking by the buyers (payment of the amounts collected). ° A production (e.g. the production of a fruit tree) which is prepaid by the consumer who picks it himself.
Farm restaurant	Valuation of farm products in the form of meals sold and consumed on the site (e.g. farmhouse inn).
Event held on the farm site	Activities and farm products discovery days as Open farm days (JFO).

Vending machine to sell farm products	Vending machine providing customer with many kinds of farm products (milk, fruit and vegetables, cheese, eggs, ready meals, preserves ...) in exchange for cash or electronically payment. The vending machine can be placed on the site of the farm or outside (selling outside the production site in this case).
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The second part of direct selling (Table 2) is also created by the producer who monitors the terms of trading. The two actors move to the point of sale, except for home and ordered in advance deliveries. The relational proximity is always present but is less deep as the production site is not visited by the consumer.

A particular category of direct selling is presented on table 2: the interdependent networks between consumers and producers. The initiative for the creation of the marketing system comes from the consumers. The terms of trading are monitoring by both actors and the commitment is important on both sides. This category is widely used through the world (French AMAP, American CSA or Japanese teikei for example).

**Table 2: Categories of direct selling outside the production site**

Category	Definition
1. Regular market 2. Farmers' market 3. Market at farm 4. Full of wind market	1. Markets organized by the municipalities where all kinds of goods are sold.  2. Market in which farmers, growers or producers from a defined local area are present in person to sell their own produce direct to the public. All products sold should have been grown, reared, caught, brewed, pickled, baked, smoked or processed by the stallholder.  3. Sales by producers of their products on one producer's farm (sales at farm for this producer).  4. Intermediate type between the farmers' markets and regular markets consisting mainly of farmers.
Sale on the roadside	Sales by the producer of its own products alongside a road.

Home delivery	The producer moves to sell its products, according to determinate path and schedule.
Ordered in advance delivery	Delivery of products ordered in advance at the customer's home or relay points.
Sales demonstration	Presentation and sale of products (e.g.: festive food) in front of a group of potential customers in a private meeting.
Mail-order selling: Mail postal Telephone, fax Internet	Distance selling of products in a catalogue managed or co-managed by the producer. These products are sent to customers by the post office or another delivery company.
Fairs, trade shows	The producer takes part in an event hosted by a third party, where he presents and sells its products in a stand reserved for him or that he shared with other producers and / or resellers.
Collective sale outlet	Retail outlet managed by several producers who jointly organize the sale of their products.
Baskets °Individual °Collective of producers	Baskets or food parcels containing products (usually vegetables and fruit) from one or more farms which are regularly delivered to relay points.
Interdependent networks between consumers and producers	Associations of producers and consumers which are jointly managing production and sale of agricultural commodities.

Table 3 presents the various forms taken by the local distribution networks (where the producer sells his products to an intermediary). The initiative for the creation comes from both the producer and the middleman. Exchanges are double and each actor plays the role of seller severally. The commitment is usually contractual. The relational proximity is strongly

reduced to the benefit of geographic (which is a concept highly variable) and cultural proximity. Each category can be used by an individual producer or a producer group.

**Table 3: Categories of local distribution networks**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Definition</b>
Retail outlet at the farm of another producer	Selling products to another producer who resells them on his own account.
Shops: Supermarkets, convenience store or specialized shops	Selling products to shops.
Restaurant owners	Selling products to another producer who will use them in meals he sells in his farm (a greater choice of local ingredients is thus possible) or a traditional restaurant.
Catering	
Wholesaler	Sales of products through a professional seller who works directly with consumers.
Company created by producers (cooperative type)	The company purchases members' products and sells them directly to consumers.
Networks to promote regional products	Associative or public structures which gather local products from different producers and organize the sale to consumers.

Each part of this classification is connected with other fields of social or economic development, and therefore:

- direct selling on the production site allows the producer to show his work and furthermore to present the other activities developed (agro-tourism, educational farm, horse stables, park and garden work, etc.);
- direct sales outside the place of production enable the producer to promote the other types of marketing used and especially to encourage the customer to move to the

production site so he can visit the farm and know the full path followed by the products purchased;

- local distribution networks help to promote local products known or "forgotten" by the people.

This typology shows that local food systems are much diversified in the Walloon Region and continue to be more diversified. Both consumers and producers often use several local food systems, showing that each system meets the requirements of a different public.

### **5. The most interesting categories of local food systems for consumers**

A study was conducted in Wallonia and Brussels in 2010 by the CRIOC<sup>13</sup> to assess consumers' perceptions and expectations of local products marketing using local food systems.

In relation to this typology, the regular market, the convenience store and the sales at the farm are the categories that are considered as most interesting by 1 consumer in 2. Less than one consumer in four shows an interest in home delivery, market at farm, Internet sales or collective baskets. The other categories meet less interest.

**Regular markets:** 83% of the citizens know that they exist and 67% are interested in these markets. More than half of the consumers use that direct selling network and 7% of the population could also be interested in using this form of direct selling. It should be noticed that consumers who do not care of eating seasonal products are only 35% using this formula. On the other hand consumers who eat products from fair trade, local products or seasonal products are more likely to use this sale network. 'Fruit and vegetables' and dairy products are the two categories of products which are most popular and the segment of the population most interested in it consists of families with children.

More than 8 out of 10 consumers claim to know the principle of the **convenience store** and about 6 out of 10 use it. Consumers in rural communities are the biggest users of this formula (about 75%), instead of inhabitants of Brussels who use less this distribution network (47%). As regular markets, 'fruit and vegetables' and dairy products are the two categories of products which are most sold.

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<sup>13</sup> Vanderammen M. (2010). *Circuits courts*. Bruxelles : CRIOC. 98p.

7 out of 10 consumers claim to know the **sales at farm** and 3 out of 10 use it. The use of this direct selling network varies widely by the region of origin of the consumer: 39% for small municipalities, 52% for rural ones and 18% for Brussels. As for the two categories described above, 'fruit and vegetables' and dairy products are most purchased.

Nearly 1 out of 2 consumers declares to know the **home delivery** and nearly 1 out of 10 uses this distribution network. Users from Brussels are fewer (4%) than those of Walloon cities (20%). Fruit and vegetables are products that are most requested.

7 out of 10 consumers say they do not know the **markets at farm** and only 7% of consumers use that method of farm retailing. Walloon consumers use it more than the inhabitants in Brussels. 'Fruit and vegetables' with dairy products are most popular.

More than 5 out of 10 consumers claim to know the **Internet sales** but if the formula is known by more than half of the consumers, only 2% of them use it. Consumers in the Walloon cities are more likely to use this circuit (8%). The consumers' demand concerns a wider range of products: 'fruit and vegetables', dairy products, pastries, eggs and potatoes. The consumers that are more interested in Internet sales are less than 30 years old and represent 10% of the total number of consumers.

17% of the consumers claim to know the **collective baskets** but only 3% use it. It is interesting to notice that 9% of the consumers from smaller Walloon communities use this circuit against only 1% of inhabitants of Brussels. 'Fruit and vegetables' is the category most purchased. Further investigations on the collective baskets reveal that consumers are interested in baskets containing basic products, ingredients for a whole meal or semi-prepared dishes. Prepared dishes will not increase interest, probably because the concept of basket is related to local and agricultural products for consumers. However proposing recipes included in the basket increases consumer interest of 9%.

Among the criteria for purchasing food products through local food systems, the first listed are: the freshness, the taste, the smell, the proximity and the appearance. Then the quality, the price and the variety of products followed by the parking security and the absence of harmful additives were nominated. These criteria are almost the same as the ones concerning the choice of food products in supermarkets.

About the distances travelled by the consumers in local food systems, this study shows that they are very limited. Therefore, these systems are addressed almost exclusively to consumers

nearby a point of sale. As a consequence, the offer in local products must cover the whole territory to meet enough interest.

Each network knows a particular interest according to consumer profiles. Their implementation is addressed at specific consumers' segments.

## 6. Producers and local food systems in the Province of Namur (Walloon Region)

A study was conducted in 2010 to establish an inventory of local food systems in the Province of Namur<sup>14</sup>. It had four main objectives which will be developed hereafter.

### *Categories of local food systems used*

The first method used in the Province of Namur is unmistakably the sales at farm (Table 4). All the producers enquired use it and realize 50% of their turnover on average. This is where a relationship of trust between the different actors is forged as easily as the production system is seen by customers. This relationship helps to build customer loyalty. The producer has understood that mechanism and orients its production strategy towards quality and not quantity.

The second category of local food systems which is the most represented is the convenience stores. The producers who practice it realize about a third of their turnover. This success is explained by the facility of the process used by the producer who works as a deliveryman and should not spend time to sell its products.

Farmers' markets, home deliveries and retail outlets at farm come next. Dairy products are the most frequently encountered when the producer goes to meet the consumer.

We also note that, except from the convenience stores, local distribution networks (with one middleman) are only of minor importance. Opportunities are certainly to be taken in these sectors (Table 4).

**Table 4: Categories of local food systems used in the Province of Namur**

Categories	Number of producers	Average percentage turnover per farm	Typical products
Sales at farm	25	50 %	All the produce, particularly fruit, vegetables, meat and cooked meats.

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<sup>14</sup> Comps S. (2010), op. cit.

Farmer's markets	8	22,50 %	Dairy products and products made with fruit.
Regular markets	2	5 %	Dairy products.
Home delivery	7	22,10 %	Dairy products and potatoes.
Interdependent networks between consumers and producers	3	5 %	Dairy products and poultry.
Markets at farm	4	10 %	Dairy products and products made with fruit.
Retail outlets at farm	7	11 %	Good food preservation.
Restaurant owners	4	48 %	Dairy products and snails (fresh produce).
Convenience stores	15	33 %	Honey, pork for butcher's shops, ice cream, butter, potatoes, products made with snails and products made with fruit.
Supermarkets	1	5 %	Prepared snails.
Catering	3	5 %	Cheeses and potatoes.

It should be noted that only two collective networks are used by producers: market at farm and retail outlets at farm (the latter being the limiting form between collective direct selling and individual local food networks). Producers take care of finding markets by themselves; no such common satisfactory structure is in place for the collective sales. Nevertheless it would bring a beginning of solution to both problems of time and product promotion. The gathering at one point of sale enables customers to find and buy products for which they would not move (to another sale outlet) in normal times. But it also would make things easier for them by restricting their movements to a single point of sale instead than going from one producer to another. In terms of promotion, this system should be as effective as local markets and fairs and exhibitions conducted in that way. The problem of time devoted to the sale can also be simplified through a rotation system of permanencies.

The weaknesses of the collective sales are mainly due to individualism and lack of enthusiasm of the producers for this kind of process.

The lack of promotion of local products combined with the hold up of the "farm product" image by the food industry may make the development of local marketing more difficult. The consumer compares the products of food industry with the local ones and does not understand the interest of moving to another outlet to find products that appear similar to him.

### *The variety of products supply*

Producers cultivating **fruit, vegetables and potatoes** count for 35% of the total number of farmers using local food systems in the Province of Namur. The main fruit which are met are strawberries and tree fruit (apples and pears). It is surprising to find a variety of local supply so limited in light of the global production. Similarly, vegetables are quite rare, finding only endives and squashes in the sample studied. But if they have not all been interviewed, producers who are members of the Interprofessional Market gardener Centre (CIM) use local food systems and sell mushrooms, carrots, tomatoes, onions, shallots, leeks, radishes, cilantro, parsley and turnips, cabbages (different varieties) and watercress. Nevertheless the supply of vegetables is still low in volume while the demand is real as mentioned before.

Regarding **dairy products**, 43% of producers in the province of Namur are present in this category. We can classify dairy farmers using local food systems in 3 categories:

- Large farms producing butter which most often use their co-products for producing cream, yogurt and fresh cheeses.
- Smaller farms not producing butter are specialized in soft ripened cheeses, washed rind cheeses or ice-cream.
- Cheese makers are only concerned with the processing of milk. They buy milk from local producers at a price ranging between 35 and 40 euro cents a litre. This purchase price is the minimum price guaranteed to producers. If market prices exceed those minimum prices then the cheese makers will buy at the market prices so that they do not prejudice the producer.

The supply for this category of products is quite flexible as producers can increase their production volume since none of them sells its entire quota in local food systems. However, the workforce is usually the limiting factor for this increase of production and the producers feel that they cannot do more.

Producers of **meat and poultry** represent 12% of the total number of producers. This category is miscellaneous: beef, pork and 'ostrich and poultry meat'. Apart from the poultry

producer who sells half of its production through local food systems, other producers sell their entire production through those marketing networks. The demand for this category of products is real and the producers want to meet by increasing their respective livestock.

The other productions available in the Province of Namur are **snails and honey**. The wholesale trade in the snail marketing is important although Belgian legislation is incomplete to allow making differences between real snail (*Helix aspersa*) and other products of substitution (*Achatinidae*). On the other side, beekeepers sell their entire productions through the use of local food systems as the competition with discount prices is impossible.

### ***Main difficulties encountered***

The **investments** are the first difficulty. They include two main items: the installation costs and the costs related to the local food systems activities (production, processing and selling). The activities costs are very different depending on the productions and on the categories of local food systems chosen. Installation costs relate to the main building (residence of the producer); the secondary buildings (warehouse, etc.); the land and the equipment related to agricultural production which are not sold through the networks studied. The constraint on investment does not only come from the amounts of money to borrow but rather from finding those funds. The current land context only aggravates that problem especially in peri-urban areas where the real estate pressure pushes up prices (In Wallonia, 14.2% of the territory was built in early 2010, against 13.1% in 2000 and 11.8% in 1990<sup>15</sup>).

The **working time** is the second difficulty encountered. The average producer often has three jobs: farmer, processor and seller. The study shows us that the activity of conventional farmers occupies about 50% of producers' working time. The working time required to processing and selling occupies about 50% of the total. It should be noticed that producers who do not process spend 29% of their working time in selling.

The other restrictions are: the difficulty to obtain permits (to build, to operate), to access to land, to build the customers loyalty, to obtain a product of invariable quality and to deal with administrative burdens.

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<sup>15</sup> Reference: SPF Economie - Direction Générale Statistique et Information Economique et SPF Finances (cadastre).

### ***Benchmarks for the installation***

The first step is to analyze the supply. Indeed the creation of an activity of local food systems should ideally complete the already present supply. Therefore, it is important to situate the orientation of farms currently operating in the surrounding in terms of products supply and in terms of modalities used. A visit of the region's convenience shops is a good first approach to this problem. After this, the potential opportunities in the chosen region must be defined to predict the minimum volumes of production that can be sold.

To choose the marketing methods which will be used is the second step. Sales on the farm are essential; working with retailers in the shopping area is a good way to promote its products at first and often proves to be a constant outlet afterwards. Some products as the dairy ones follow common marketing trajectories; home delivery and regular or farmer's market in this case.

The promotion of the farming exploitation is one of the major challenges at the launch of a production. An adequate publicity launched before the opening of the company helps to familiarize potential customers with the products and the ways they can obtain them. The producers insist that it is important to bring the customer on the location of the farm so he can see the production system and have confidence in the products. The promotion of farm products is a key point to find outlets from the beginning.

The development must be progressive. All producers have started their activity of local food systems with relatively low sales volumes and in addition to their main job. Moreover, many of them continue on this way.

### **7. Does supply meet demand?**

When looking at results from those two studies, the categories of 'fruit and vegetables' and dairy products are the most important both in terms of demand and supply. Nevertheless, if 35% of the producers cultivate fruit and vegetables, the products range is limited. Furthermore, the producers do not use all the possibilities offered by local food systems. Regarding the dairy products it is quite the opposite. The producers (43% of the total) use many different networks to reach different customers.

About categories of local food systems used, sales at farm and convenience stores are the most exploited by producers and are in the top three of consumers. Those two categories have been tried and tested for quite a long time. This is not the case of regular market which is the

top consumers' category. The producers do not get involved in this distribution network. This is explained by the presence of resellers who are competing with them by offering cheaper products of lower quality but with the same appellation. Another interesting category is the home delivery. 1 consumer in 10 and 7 producers out of 25 use it. This system is advantageous to producers because it enables delivering consumers and convenience stores in a single tour.

Considering the importance of the 'fruit and vegetables' demand, it is important to improve the local distribution systems in this category to encourage a better meeting between demand and supply.

Another way to develop local food systems is to accustom consumers to new distribution networks as farmers' markets which are quite often used by producers or to encourage restaurant owners and caterers to stock up with these networks.

## **8. Conclusion**

The typological analysis of local food systems appears to provide a wide diversity which has implications on the modes of agricultural production. This multiplicity of procedures is an advantage for the farmer who can decide, according to his abilities, which resources to implement to expand the range of its outlets. Therefore, more people with diverse schedules, budgets, expectations and needs will increase their awareness of local farm products.

Using local food systems is a personal and economic choice for the producers. They make this choice to take pride in their job through the quality of their work and thus of their products. And how to be better recognized than to meet the consumer? That recognition is based on the trust between actors, the transparency of the production system and the pleasure of eating healthy products while maintaining neighbourly relations.

Nevertheless by taking into account only the consumer, it also appears that it is not easy for producers to meet individual needs for local agricultural produce which are vulnerable and seasonal.

We can also perceive easily all the economic importance of geographical space between the agricultural producer and the consumer. On the one hand, the consumer does not want to move too far. On the other hand, the producer must take into consideration factors such as time spent in marketing, commercial insecurity, harvested volumes, etc. in addition to the skills of production, processing and selling and to the quality restrictions imposed by the laws.

Therefore, it is not surprising that the food local systems promote individualism among producers and that any attempt to work together and promote networks is difficult to implement. However, the creation of a collective of farmers has several advantages: more comprehensive range of products, saving time spent in sales and increasing visibility of local products.

It is also clear that better information on the expectations of consumers in local products from the sustainable agriculture, the organic farming, etc. is necessary to define in a better way the sectors of information, communication and promotion of agricultural products in order to support and give directions to producers.

At the Belgian level, the definition of a legislative framework to support local food systems as proposed in France would certainly enable a positive evolution. The development of local food systems must include many fields of action: to facilitate the installation or the evolution of producers, to improve training in the management of three professions (farmer, processor and seller), to encourage the creation of collective producer for processing and selling, to design an efficient logistics distribution, to make the supply more visible, to give abilities to the consumers to identify local products, etc.