

Session 6

General session on localized agri-food systems in a changing world.

Convenor

Professor François Casabianca, INRA.

This general session on localized agri-food systems deals with a wide variety of topics such as:

- The potential of the SYAL approach to provide a vision of historical trajectories at local level
- Lock-in processes
- The analysis of territories and the localization (delocalization – relocalization) of activities
- The limits of supply chains approach.
- Innovation processes within SYAL situations, Knowledge systems and learning processes
- The role of territories as subsidiary level for Sustainable Development
- SYAL as its potential as social pillar for sustainable development.
- Technical and gastronomical cultures to be transmitted (how and by whom) to future generations.
- SYAL and solidarities in crisis time.

'The new is simply the long-forgotten old': Transitioning back local food movements

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A Russian proverb loosely translated claims 'the new is simply the long-forgotten old'. This proverb should strike a chord with those seeking to build localized agri-food systems. The aim to grow, eat, and preserve local food products may stand in sharp contrast to the global food system that emerged in the post-World War II era, but it is very reflective of the pre-Green revolution era. This paper explores how the local food movement's goals, objectives and everyday practices stand in sharp contrast to the recent past but not to other historical time periods. Even though emerging local food systems are often framed as new, or even a 'renaissance', phase in the economic and political development of modern food systems, this paper argues local food systems are quite simply the rediscovery of past food practices. Using a comparative case study design and data collected from interviews with farm women, local farmers and archival records, this paper explores the similarities and differences in food production practices pre- and post- the Green Revolution in rural New Brunswick, Canada. It pays particular attention to the self-provisioning and subsistence farming practices of farm families engaged in dairy and potato production during the later half of the twentieth century. Accounts of what farm families were doing in the 1940, 50s, and 60s are strikingly similar to present day efforts to regain food knowledge and rebuild local food systems. It concludes many of the dimensions associated with localized agri-food systems are essentially long-forgotten, food provisioning practices. While in the past they were common practices, today they represent niche markets and privileged knowledge.

Taking account of demand: what impact on LAFS-based rural territorial development in Latin America

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Local Agri-Food System (LAFS) definition as a local productive system with territorial anchoring underlines the existence of food consumption patterns based on the place-related qualification of products linked to food cultural heritage. It entails therefore, at least implicitly, a reference to the character of demand for the products supplied by these productive systems. However, until now, this demand issue has not been really tackled by LAFS literature, at a general level and particularly in Latin America.

This contribution intends to, firstly, characterize for Latin America the link between LAFS's and demand, stressing the role of new patterns of urban demand and, secondly, identify what conclusions can be drawn from this characterization about rural local development path sustainability. We shall proceed as follows:

Since the beginning of the century, an array of case-studies has been carried out on specific LAFS in various Latin American countries. Although, as we just said, demand issue has not been systematically reviewed and analyzed in these studies, this does not mean that we cannot find in them scattered information or hypotheses on this matter. We intend firstly to gather them in order to see if they design a scheme for the characterization of the demand for LAFS products.

Then we shall put this scheme in the more general framework of relationship between food consumption patterns and income level strata and social classes in Latin American countries.

Finally, taking note of the alternative character vindicated by LAFS approach, seen as a proposition for a strategy of rural local development, we shall assess in what measure the links with demand sketched previously contribute to determine both the opportunities for strengthening territorial development dynamics associated with LAFS in Latin America and LAFS capacity to change food consumption patterns in the wake of “nutritional transition” in Latin America.

Title: New tools for the a of localized agri-food systems

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In this paper we discuss how spatial data analysis can assist researchers and actors in the identification and better understanding of localized agri-food systems.

In agriculture we observe variations in production technology arising from locally-specific solutions that satisfy the environmental or social conditions within which farms operate. For example, soil types and climate can influence the choice of varieties grown; therefore, cultural practices and yields differ. This means that the same stimulus may provoke a different response on different farms or in different parts of the study region due to the interactions among site-specific environmental variables and farmer decision making about technology. These variations in relationships over space are referred to as a particular type of non-stationarity, and failing to recognize them leads to inaccurate understandings of technological characteristics.

In this paper we apply the Iterative Geographically Weighted Regression (IGWR) method – based on both the Geographically Weighted Regression and the Adaptive Weights Smoothing procedures- to the olive production in three Italian regions to explicitly account for inherent spatial heterogeneity in terms of spatially varying relationships. This approach allows us to endogenously identify local clusters of farms that are homogeneous in terms of production technologies. In the case of olive production, the technology adopted to grow olives depends on a large and complex bundle of dynamic interactions among socio-economic and ecological systems. For example, different microclimate conditions, soil formations and elevation levels have led to the development of location-specific varieties, each with different productivity levels, agronomic needs and adaptability to irrigation and mechanization. The territorial anchorage of the production of these location-specific varieties is further strengthened by social and marketing considerations because farmers choose varieties on the basis of not only agronomic characteristics (e.g., disease resistance, climate preferences, high productivity) but also the aptitude for preserving local production knowledge (e.g., flavour, suitability for curing, etc.) and ability to guarantee the production of high-quality oil. It follows that the underlying production technology is not the same for all olive farms; rather, it is location specific, and the group of farms sharing the same technology can be termed a local technology cluster, a concept similar to that of terroir in oenology. In fact, it is difficult, if not impossible, to collect all the information needed to define the boundaries of the local technology cluster. A solution is offered by the application of the IGWR method that uses farms' geographical coordinates to proxy for the effects of the interplay among a variety of latent unobserved environmental and socio-economic factors, which gives rise to structural differences in production across space. Our results first confirmed the existence of local technology, i.e., groups of farms that follow a

similar local production econometric model. Second, it allowed us to determine the boundaries of the identified spatial clusters and analyse the characteristics of olive farms in each cluster. The IGWR approach opens new perspective for the assessment of the performance of farms operating in localized agri-food system and a better spatial targeting of policy measures.

Sheep breeding system in Southern Albania between political transition and market integration

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Abstracts

The LAS (Localized Agri-food Systems) approach has been widely recognized as an efficient analytical framework to understand the organization and the functioning of agricultural and food production systems focusing on relationships between products, local societies and territories. In disadvantaged rural areas, in particular, it helps to understand industry activity concentration and spatial dynamics generated by food microenterprises, usually considered as backward, informal/ illegal and not competitive in the global market.

Our paper addresses the dynamics of sheep breeding and the dairy industry systems in a mountain area of Southern Albania (municipality of Vithkuq, Korça District), after the fall of communism in 1991 and the subsequent agrarian reform leading to very small farm holdings and land fragmentation. At the same time the massive out-migration of the active population in lowlands and abroad (mainly in neighboring Greece) still further degraded local socio-productive systems. Nevertheless, outcomes of the fieldwork research (diagnostic phase and field observation) show a tendency to increase in the herd size accompanied by some entrepreneurial farming and collective action initiatives aiming to improve farm productivity and market integration. The increasing demand for both dairy and meat products (due to the rapid growth of regional and urban markets) accompanied by the food safety standards at national and international level opens new perspectives for local communities to reinforce farming incomes and strengthen territorial added values through the improvement of livestock farming systems and a better valorization of their typical local products.

Drawing on the results of the field survey (semi-structured interviews with key-informants, questionnaires to breeders and dairy processors, available statistic data) the paper will focus on the following main points: a) the restructuring of traditional breeding systems generates

competition/ conflicts in grazing land use among breeders including transhumant herders from outside areas raising the question of the management of the community pastures, b) the establishment of a few modern small dairies (3 in number) that collect all milk production from the broader mountainous area, including isolated villages, reveals the constraints of oligopolistic conditions within the studied territory. Local dairies apply low producer prices discouraging stockbreeders to improve farming systems and milk quality standards; c) entrepreneurial dairy farming and collective action initiatives are spontaneous or unrelated to each other stemming from “up-down” and extraterritorial stakeholders (e.g. international consulting and development companies) missing of territorial development impacts.

Based on the LAS approach the main question to discuss is how to support stockbreeding farmers and actors involved in the dairy value chain to both improve sector productivity and activate territorial specificities (natural pastures, local adapted breeds, tacit knowledge, networks, etc) in a market integration perspective and better valorization of their local products.

Farmers' markets in the Basque Country: economic and social impact assessments

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In opposite to the trends registered in other Northern countries, the relevance of local farmers' markets (LFM) as marketing channel for small farmers has reduced in the Basque Country during last decades, due to the rise of new marketing channels, the change in consumption patterns and other processes related to local and global food systems. All these changes have forced LFM to remain as folkloric events, in spite of the efforts realized by farmers and other local agents (as municipalities or provincial governments) to support them.

The main aim of our research is to make an assessment of the economic and social impact of LFM over local economy in the Basque province of Gipuzkoa (northern Spain). The methodology is based in the SEED&NEED&FEED (Sticky Economic Evaluation Device & Neighborhood Exchange Evaluation Device & Food Environment Evaluation Device) approach (MARKETUMBRELLA.ORG, 2015), adapted to the specific context of the Basque Country. The scope extends to ten different LFM of the province. To achieve the previewed goals, three different surveys have been done since October to December of 2015 among producers, consumer and neighbors of the area surrounding the markets. The obtained results are expected to give us an economic value of the impact of this marketing channel, including direct and indirect effects, and the measure of the social impact of this LFM.