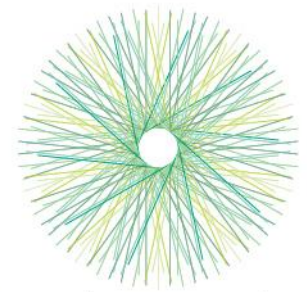


# Inspirational idea



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AGRICULTURE & INNOVATION

## Re-building relationships in short supply chains

### Reconnecting producers and consumers

**Operational Group Madrid-KmRegión promotes short supply chains as an opportunity for family and social agriculture in the region of Madrid (Spain). "The ultimate goal was to design, implement and evaluate pilot strategies for the (re)building of relationships between agri-food producers and consumers through short supply channels." – Luis Velasco, farmer and partner in the project.**



Large distribution companies often means a high level of standardisation and increased distance in the relationship between the producers and the consumers.

Small and local farmers are looking for alternatives to the large distribution channels, because the requirements of these large distribution channels with regards to the products are often too specific. On the other hand, consumers may be interested in buying locally but in a survey carried out by Madrid-KmRegión it was found that they are reluctant to buy directly from farmers because they do not know which farmers are reliable.

In order to address these challenges, this Operational Group project was set up in 2018. "Short marketing channels can favour the economic stability of local producers, allow consumers to access fresh, healthy and affordable food, and reconnect farmers and consumers", says José Luis Cruz, researcher at IMIDRA and coordinator of the project.

Project partners include producers organisations, consumer organisations, local councils, food associations, and a research centre. "The wide range of partners allow for different approaches and perceptions to address the common challenge of reconnecting farmers and consumers." – José Luis Cruz.

The Operational Group set out to design, implement and evaluate a number of pilot strategies:



**Open Farms:** The project wanted to create spaces where consumers and producers could meet. This strategy includes the awareness-raising campaigns for markets and fairs but also the creation of a network of farms that can be visited. Today, after the Operational Group project has actually ended, there are 27 farms in the network. They include a variety of horticulture, agro-forestry, dairy and beef farms.

On the project website, there is a map of the farms involved, showing consumers when they can visit. There are videos and information about each farm, providing detailed information to consumers. The project has organised annual Open Days where the farms can do direct sales at the farm or organise processing

workshops, visits, agro-tourism, environmental education activities, and even product tastings. These experiences exist in other countries and regions, however, according to the project, in the region around Madrid it is a new type of initiative.

Luis Velasco is one of the farmers "We really appreciate the possibility to show the work of our farm, to show to the consumer where their food comes from and how it is produced. We plan visits on an individual basis and we do it so they do not interfere with our farming activity. We work with the project to coordinate visits at the same time as other farms nearby, this way it has a greater impact – the consumers get to see a range of products and farming techniques."

"This activity has been one of the most difficult in the project because of the COVID pandemic. However, at the same time, it has shown the potential value of short food supply chains"- José Luis Cruz.

**Sustainability label:** The purpose of this label is to inform the consumer on the sustainability of the agricultural products. Gemma Trigueros - "Consumers are increasingly concerned about environmental and social impact. We are beginning to see carbon footprint labels, in France for example". Madrid-KmRegión has developed a prototype of a sustainability label which takes into account different environmental, social and economic sustainability parameters. Gemma continues: "The prototyping has received very good feedback from consumers and producers. We have included their recommendations. Currently, the main challenge is to adjust the costs of calculating the label, since this label should not represent additional effort for small farmers".

**Observatory of short marketing channel:** This is a mixed committee where the members of the Operational Group look at successful marketing strategies in the local supply chains. The Observatory has collected information about good practices in other regions. Furthermore, it has monitored the short food supply chains in the Region of Madrid. The challenge now is to continue the work of this Observatory for the next few years, in order to advise policy makers and develop policies to foster short food supply chains.

**Matchfunding.** Madrid KmRegión and the Triodos Foundation launched 3 calls between 2019 and 2021 aimed at new or existing short food supply chain projects in the Region of Madrid which wanted to further develop their activity. A total of 43 projects applied and 13 were selected. More than 1300 consumers supported the selected projects with almost 87 000 € in crowdfunding.

Operational Group Madrid-KmRegión has confirmed the high interest from all the stakeholders in alternative supply channels and has demonstrated that its pilot strategies are important resources for the (re)construction and strengthening of relationships between farmers and consumers.



### More information

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#### Project info:

- [Page on EIP-AGRI Operational Group database](#)
- [Project website](#)