



SUSTAINABLE LOCAL PROCUREMENT



DID YOU KNOW?

GOVERNANCE



The development of local food systems takes a people-centered approach because they depend on the contribution of many from the community, rather than the control of a few. This promotes participatory governance of food systems and also the ecosystems used for production. Participatory governance means having a diverse range of citizens engaged in local food systems which enables more voices to be heard when deciding how best to manage community resources.

SOCIAL



Local procurement is generally focused on whole food products which are better for the health and well-being of communities because they are fresher, more nutritious and tastier because of their seasonality. Also, local procurement provides an opportunity to increase domestic food self-sufficiency, as well as to strengthen communities by increasing the accountability and transparency between consumers and producers. Additionally, local procurement can be an effective option for protecting traditional food cultures and native species, both of which can be essential resources for sustainability.

ECONOMY



The economic benefits of local procurement can include farmer retention on farmlands, greater income generation at the community level, employment growth and import substitution. Additionally, local food channels, such as farmers' markets, can further stimulate business activity by providing small producers with greater access to consumers. The tremendous growth in recent years of farmers' markets and other community-supported agriculture schemes demonstrates the value being found in local procurement and the potential for further inclusion of this option to help create more sustainable local economies.

ENVIRONMENT



Local procurement can reduce the negative environmental impacts associated with the transportation of food over long distances. This includes reduced greenhouse gas emissions and other pollutants which are harmful to the environment and human health. It can also help reduce the demand on congested infrastructure, such as roads and airports. Local procurement can also be an effective option for supporting local agriculture and production which, if managed sustainably, can increase the resilience of ecosystems. More resilient ecosystems can be beneficial for mitigating the impacts of extreme weather events, such as droughts and floods.

Interchangeable terms such as “local food,” “local food system” and “(re) localization” refer to food that is produced near its point of consumption. The term “sustainable local procurement” means that in addition to food produced near its point of consumption, other sustainability themes are also considered such as: food sovereignty, fair pricing and environmental conservation. At the heart of the local food movement, is the goal to establish healthy communities and sustainable regional agricultural economies. It can take various forms such as, farmers' markets, community supported agriculture, local food box delivery schemes, local food procurement programmes by public institutions and support for local products in supermarkets.



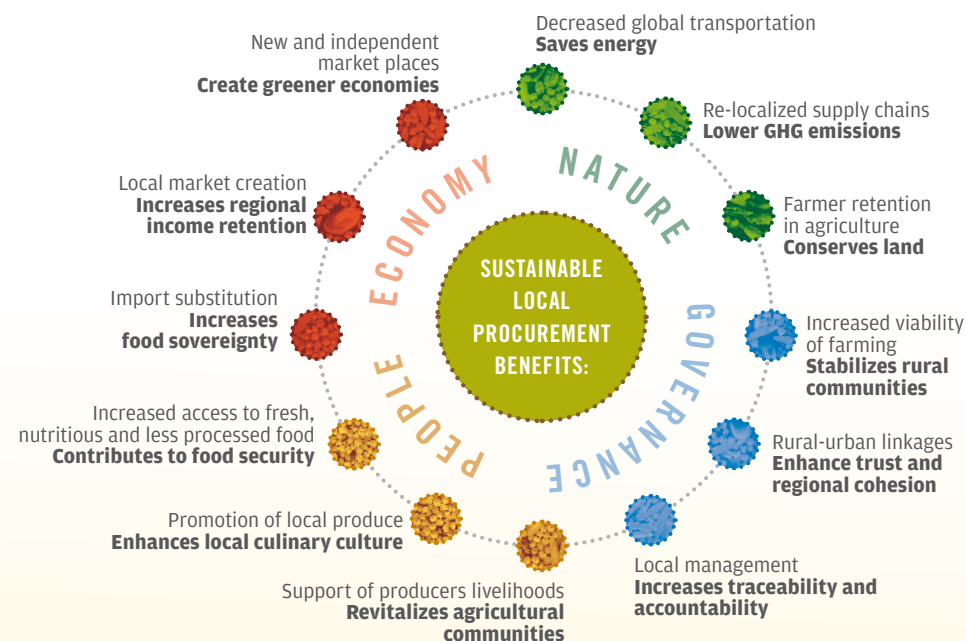
WHY DOES LOCAL PROCUREMENT MATTER FOR SUSTAINABILITY?

For local procurement, proximity between production and consumption ranges from:

- direct transactions between producers and consumers – such as sales on-farm, fish landing sites, food processing operations; through
- sophisticated short supply chains – such as internet orders and home delivery (e.g. organic foods in Denmark is the second most extended national distribution network after the post office); to
- regional product marketing; in the definition adopted by the 2008 US Farm Act, the total distance that a product can be transported and still be considered a “locally or regionally produced agricultural food product” is less than 400 miles from its origin, or within the state in which it is produced.

A major component of the local food movement is direct sales. Direct sales and community-supported agriculture present a unique opportunity for entrepreneurial small farms to connect with urban consumers. Studies in Northern America and Europe have shown that engaging in direct sales may serve as a catalyst for greater economic sustainability, bringing consumers to the farm who may also be interested in rural hospitality, agritourism, value-added on-farm products, custom orders or connecting to larger buyers, such as restaurants and institutions. Other common local food selling channels, such as cooperatives, represent greater social inclusion and economic access to local and organic food systems through their member-based ownership and governance. Furthermore, local products can often be distinguished by certain characteristics and qualities, resulting from their geographic origin. These characteristics (i.e. native food species, traditional production), not only provide a unique selling point in competitive markets, but may also provide important resources for local environmental and social sustainability, in terms of being well adapted to soil and climate conditions.

Local procurement matters for sustainability because it can contribute to the mitigation of a variety of sustainability challenges. While local food is commonly perceived as opposing imported food, it is important to note that the two may be difficult to separate (e.g. locally baked bread made using imported grain) and that “local” is not synonymous with “sustainable” (e.g. when local production may be overexploiting natural resources). This highlights the point that when evaluating the costs and benefits of different food chain options, performance in all four dimensions of sustainability should be assessed to determine the most sustainable procurement options.



HIGHLIGHTS

PUBLIC FOOD PROCUREMENT IN BRAZIL

The Brazilian Government developed a new approach to simultaneously support both national food production and food access through a local public procurement scheme (Programa de Aquisição de Alimentos, PAA). PPA is a strategic part of the country's wider food security policy framework known as *Zero Hunger*, which aims to ensure that populations suffering from food and nutritional insecurity have access to food. PPA helps to achieve Zero Hunger because it connects food products coming from smallholder or family farmers with local public institutions, such as community associations, day-care centres and hospitals. Products are bought without a bidding process, providing the farmer with greater access to buyers in an otherwise highly competitive market. In 2008, around 120 000 farmers were selling products through the scheme to local institutions, which were distributing the food to 16.8 million people. The programme has led to multiple benefits for the farmers, such as increases in productivity and product quality. In addition to the security of financial support and the ability to reinvest in capabilities, the improved quality of the food has also been attributed to the "farmers committed to deliver good food products to the local beneficiaries". PPA has also encouraged the production and consumption of neglected native food species, such as cassava.

LOCAL INGREDIENTS FOR UK SCHOOLS

In the UK, the Public Sector Food Procurement Initiative was launched in August 2003, as part of the government's *Strategy for Sustainable Farming and Food*. While competition law prevents caterers from setting "local" as a criteria in tendering for supplies for public sector food, stipulations around quality, frequency of delivery and support for small business, has enabled the development of local suppliers networks for public schools. For example, in Nottinghamshire, spending for school meals locally was calculated to generate over USD 7.5 million in value each year. The total amount of money circulating in the local economy from this source has increased substantially, from USD 282 540 dollars in 2004 to USD 5 960 066 in 2011. For every USD 1.56 spent initially from the Nottinghamshire school meals budget on seasonal, local ingredients, a further USD 1.85 of economic activity is being generated. A local meat wholesaler provides meat which is 90-95 per cent local (within 80 km); 50-55 per cent is from within 48 km: staples, such as potatoes, onions and cabbage are 100 per cent locally provided; 40 per cent of the fruit and vegetables is local; the milk and eggs are 100 per cent local. This focus on local produce has allowed primary producers to benefit all year round from the school meals contract because menus are changed according to seasonality.





PRODUCERS

- Engage in direct selling and rural-urban networks.
- Advocate for local varieties and local produce.
- Coordinate local business strategies.

CONSUMERS

- Favour purchasing of local produce in different market outlets.
- Pressure university and other institutions with canteens to source sustainable local ingredients.
- Be informed about where food originates.

HOW CAN YOU HELP?

FOOD INDUSTRY

- Express support for increased local procurement.
- Develop business plans that target local production.
- Promote labeling that informs consumers on product origin.

POLICY-MAKERS

- Establish policies and practices that support local food procurement.
- Revise regulations that hinder local food procurement.
- Establish targets for local food procurement in public institutions.

FURTHER RESEARCH AREAS

- Undertake holistic sustainability assessment of existing local procurement schemes, with a view to identify hotspots and improve.
- Identify the barriers to implementing/extending sustainable local procurement options.
- Develop strategies to educate about the benefits of sustainable local procurement



The sustainability of local procurement options can be assessed using the FAO Guidelines for the Sustainability Assessment of Food and Agriculture systems (SAFA). SAFA provides an assessment framework and supporting IT Tool that can be used to compare the performance of different food chain options. For information on food quality linked to geographical origin (though not necessarily consumed locally) see www.fao.org/food-quality-origin

For more details: <http://www.fao.org/nr/sustainability/sustainability-assessments-safa>