

# Development opportunities of the short supply chains

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*Abstract: In the concentrated commerce it is problematic for the small-sized agricultural producers to join into the modern chains. Taking parts in short supply chains (SSCs) is a supported alternate opportunity for them. The most typical form of the direct producers' sale in Hungary is the trades of local markets. The more innovative SSC-forms are less spread than for e.g. in some countries of West Europe. The present study show positive examples of well-functioning SSC trading from abroad and presents the producers' advices about the improvement of the producing and SSC-trade in Hungary.*

*Keywords: producers, producers' satisfaction, consumers, producers' market, marketing*

## 1. Introduction

Today in Hungary, and in the developed countries, the food commerce means a concentrated and overstocked market. Concentration of the market took place about in a decade (Dobos 2009), and according to Kartali and his contributors (2009) this process started from the second third part of the 1990s. In accordance with study of the GfK Hungária (2016) analysing the first half-year of 2016, 59% of the shares of the consuming goods' market were held by the hypermarkets, supermarkets and discount stores (by the units of the modern retail). The tendencies in the European Union are similar. According to the EPRS report's data (2016) on the level of the Union, 54% of the total edible grocery sales was done in supermarkets, hypermarkets and discount stores. In the case of fresh foods, the share of the direct sales was about 2% in the EU-level.

In the food-commerce, shopping centres owning the greatest market-shares typically have strict conditions towards their suppliers. According to Kartali and his contributors (2009) one way of supplying into these chains, that producers sell

their wares through cooperation (for example in producers' organisations) to them. Another practice of getting into these chains is the supplying of niche products. Apart from these two ways, the conventional, traditional sales channels remains for the producers. But the cited authors wrote that these conventional sales channels offers a decreasing opportunity. In accordance with Jankuné Kürthy and her contributors (2012) it is probable that market shares of the modern commercial chains increase in the future. This process consistently involves the further decrease of the conventional sales channels. It is a somewhat opposing tendency that according to Benedek and Fertő (2015) the claim for directly sold products and for alternate supply chains has increased worldwide. In accordance with Kneafsey and her contributors (2013) that local food culture remained strong in Hungary even after the change of the regime, especially in the remote rural areas. The Hungarian Rural Development Program (2014-2020) qualifies the products sold through the short supply chains demanded in Hungary. On the other hand, the News-portal of the Hungarian Government (kormany.hu) shares the information that in the European Union the solution have been searched for a long time that can increase the agricultural producers' shares in the gain comes from the food chains. A possible and obvious concerning solution is the supporting of short supply chains.

## **2. Literature review**

### **2.1. Defining the short supply chains**

The "shortness" of the short supply chains can be interpreted basically in two approaches. On the one hand by the low numbers of the participants of the supply chain. The European Parliament and Council defines the short supply chains in the following way: "a supply chain involving a limited number of economic operators, committed to cooperation, local economic development, and close geographical and social relations between producers, processors and consumers" [Regulation EU No. 1305/2013, p. I. 347/499]. According to the Hungarian Rural Development Program (2014-2020), this definition of the short supply chains can be termed as general. For this reason it offered the opportunity to work out thematic subprogram that adjust flexibly to the local needs of the member states. The Hungarian Rural Development Program defines the short supply chains as a supply chain in which the producers or groups of producers sell to consumers or groups of consumers on a direct way or by the intercession of maximum one intermediate actor.

On the other hand, shortness of the short supply chains can be defined on the basis of the physical distance of the production, processing, transport and consumption.

(Benedek et al. 2015). This kind of distance in the case of “local food systems” is determined by international sources and reflections in between 20 and 100 kilometers typically. (Kneafsey et al. 2013)

The different channels of short supply chains can be categorized on the basis of different topics. The topics can be seen in the *Table 1.*, is presented by the Rural Development Program (2014-2020).

Table 1.  
Grouping of SSC-types in innovate and conventional context.  
Source: Own, unofficial translation and own edition on the basis of the Hungarian Rural Development Program (2014-2020); 735.p

<b>Type of the SSC</b>	<b>Conventional forms</b>	<b>New, novel forms</b>
<b>Sale to retailers</b>	- Processor who sells in direct way	- Hospitality. - Institutional catering, - Retail trade
<b>Sale at the customers' house</b>	- Door-to-door selling, - Moving shop	- Box scheme
<b>Opened farm</b>	- Shop in the farmyard, - „Pick yourself” - Rural guest-table	- Community supported agriculture (CSA)
<b>Trading points</b>	- Market*, fair, - Temporary „settling out”	- Producers' market, - Festival, - Farmers' shop in the settlement - Automat

\* Remark: according to an opinion of an expert, the traditional market as a sales channel cannot be classified as a SSC sales channel, because traders and retailers also sells in these markets, who do not correspond with the criteria of *maximum one intermediary actors*. But apart from this, it can be really said that conventional markets have a significant role in the producers' direct sales. It can be mentioned as an intrest, that according to Benedek and Fertő (2015) separating and distinction of the conventional and traditional markets are not typical in the Hungarian literature.

This topic presented above does not include it, but internet-based commerce can also be meintioned as a modern form of SSC. (Benedek -Balázs 2014)

## **2.2. Presenting some aspect of the short supply chains on the basis of the producers sale and the producers market.**

### **2.2.1. Factors of the direct sale and market-sales in the producers' point of view**

This present study is based on a research was made with producers, primarily in producers' markets, and secondly in conventional markets. For this reason, I present in the Literature Review the general advantageous and disadvantageous aspects of the direct sales and the market sales, with the help of the literatures examining this subject. In the case of direct sale or marketplaces, the producers get their incomes in the time of the selling, in the form of cash (and not by delayed payments). Compared to the retail sale, they can achieve higher price levels and they have freedom in the determination of the prices (in contrast with the strict price-determining behaviour of some engrossers). They are free from engrossers, they can sell in a flexible way. They can make relationships with the consumers, they can obtain a returning circle of customers. On the basis of the consumers' feedbacks they can get market-information, and information about the consumers' needs. There are also disadvantageous aspects of the direct or market sales, for example the producers have to do all of the marketing- and sales-duties for themselves in this case; there are no traders to deal with them. The product-volumes can be sold in this way are limited. Selling at marketplaces are often circuitous (the "marketing in the early morning" , and the exposition to the weather conditions can be mentioned here for example). The shopping circumstances are also worse than in the shopping centres. Lastly, it is an important viewpoint, that because of the commerce-concentration, the share of the market-trades decreased in Hungary. (Kiss/a 2017; 166.p., on the basis of summarised information from Csíkné (2011), Csíkné - Lehota (2014), Szabó - Juhász (2012); Horváth (2010), Mastronardi et al. (2015)).

### **2.2.2. The factors of direct sale and market sale from the customers' point of view, and from marketing side**

According to more literature reviews examining customer attitudes it can be pronounced that customers do prefer buying in (producers') market and buying from producers because they attribute good quality to the products can be bought from producers (Benedek 2014, Benedek – Balázs 2014) or in marketplaces (Kiss – Nagyné Demeter 2016, Szabó – Juhász 2012) But on the other hand the main disadvantages of the producers' markets from the customers' side are the higher price-levels, the uncomfortable shopping circumstances, the relatively small selection (and furthermore, payments can be done only in the form of cash, and there are markets that are only seasonal). (BENEDEK – BALÁZS 2014). In my opinion these characteristics can be also true in the case of other SSC sales

channels, for example in fairs. I think it is an important question that what causes the positive consumers' judgement of these products. It can be pronounced on the basis of Benedek and Balázs (2014) that customers know the origin of the product, and by the producers-consumer personal relationships, the consumers' trust can be evolved. The intent of supporting local farmer can be obtained. Benedek (2014) makes the reasoning of *Edward Jones and his contributors (2008)* known, that "being local" cannot be an absolute pledge of the "good quality," because all of the products can be considered somewhere as "local". They mentioned that viewpoint too, that the conventional chains with more participants can also be able to take the products to the customers quickly (due to their efficiency). This can query for example the advantage of "freshness" comes from the short transport (in the case of SSC).

Szabó and Juhász (2012) examined the marketing activities of the marketplaces. In their wording, the right information of the consumers have an important role in the increasing of thrust towards the markets and in the increasing of the trade. It is not typical of the market-operators to use marketing tools in order to make the offers of the marketplaces known. There are possible solutions to promote and advertise the markets (beyond the expensive community medias), for example (according to the authors) the use of opportunities offered by the internet, or the use of prospects, information sheets or leaflets to present the sellers, producers and their wares. The authors make it know that mainly in the case of well-functioning producers' markets from abroad, experiences exceeding the shopping, and additional services are offered to the consumers. For example product- and cooking demonstrations were held, perhaps seasonal recipes or attached shopping lists were offered. They wrote that it is not typical of the Hungarian markets.

### **2.3. Presenting some SSC-practice based on cooperation**

Kalmárné and Vargová (2010) mention the cases of Austria, France and Germany, where trade of local products have a great importance, and local products are connected with village tourism. In Hungary, they qualify the organisation-level of farms offering local product low. They recommend to set up cooperatives, clusters as a solution opportunity. Positive example of direct sale from abroad that in Austria there are a regional and national short food supply chain (SFSC) system, that name of "Gutes from Baurenhof" can be translated in English as "Good things from the farm" (Kneafsey et al 2013, 76.p.). It's important aim is to make contact between the producers and consumers, and to support the unique, traditional, traceable products, with taking the customers' need into consideration. At present (data from 2013) it contains 1520 producers. In France, according to data from 2010, about the 21% of farm businesses (about 107 000 businesses) sell a part of their products through the "circuit courts." (Circuit courts can be interpret as the French equivalents of the short food supply chains.) These circuit courts are not limited to direct sales. (Kneafsey et al. 2013). The Dutch example brought up by

Takácsné György and Takács (2016) shows also that, by the cooperation of small producers a quiet unique way of sale opens for them but individually they could not take part in it. The Beemster Dutch milk-processor, and cheese producer, farmer owned cooperative can be a catering-supplier of an airline company having a world-network like the Dutch KLM. (*beemstercheese.us*) Galli and Brunori (2013) presents 19 case studies about the succesfull SSC-initiations from different European countries. For example, it makes the Russian LavkaLavka internet shop known, that is present with its branches in St Petersburg, Moscow, Kaliningrad and Kiev. This organisation buys product from the farmers (nearly at retail price) and delivers them to the customers' house. It offers opportunity to register for box scheme. Its price level can be pronounced high. The authors' other example is the "Oregional" farming cooperative, that is consisted of 22 producers (the shareholders), and functioning in the area of the Dutch Nijmegen city. The producers are all located within an area of 50 km from Nijmegen. The "Oregional" sell products directly to restaurants, shops, caterers and care institutes in the region. They opened a webshop in 2012, where they sell fruit- and juice- boxes and boxes with an assortment of regional products. An other example is the Austrian "SpeiseLokal!" organisation which is a "community supported retailing". Generally, five persons work in the organisation and they are in contact with about 40 farms in the region of Lower Austria. They serve about 70 families each week. The producers get a high percentage from the final product price (about two-third part from it). The organisation sells products that the producers want to sell, and only local, traditional products are sold. (examples of Galli and Brunori, 2013)

### **3. Material and Method**

The aim of this study is to make suggestions about the development opportunities of the direct sale and producers' markets (and generally of the short supply chains).

The conclusions of this study are based on the literature reviews and on a primary interview-survey made with producers, by me personally, in the spring and the early summer of 2017. 22 small-sized agricultural producer and 1 food-processor small entrepreneur took part in my survey. The interviews were made in the "Liliomkert Producers' Market" of Budapest (with 14 persons), in the "Nagytarcsai Producers' Market" (with 3 persons; in Nagytarcsa village, in the near of Budapest), and in the (conventional) market of Gödöllő town (5 persons) and in one case over the phone. Primarily I searched the answer to the question that how the producers were satisfied with the sale-opportunities used by them. Further aim of the survey was to examine that according to the small producers, how the conditions of the production and sale can be increased, in general in Hungary, and also in their own situations. The demographic data, calibrating data,

and the detailed satisfaction-results were explained in the publication of “Short supply chains – from the viewpoint of the producers” (Kiss, 2017/b). The results were presented here, are partly post-publications, furthermore the further expansion of the producers’ favourable suggestions.

## **4. Research results**

### **4.1. Judgement of the producers’ sale opportunities**

I asked the producers to assess that how they are satisfied with their sales opportunities in general, on a 5-rank Likert scale. It is an important result that none of the responders had pronounced negative assessment (1 or 2 values on the Likert-scale). 47% of the responders assessed this factor at middle level, and 32% of them were moderately, and 21% were clearly satisfied with it. Middle level (in the case of this sample; the worst) assessments were given in the greatest proportion by the producers of the conventional market (relatively by the older responders). I asked the respondents to assess the certain factors of the producers’ sale, given by me. They could answer in their own point of view. In the time of the interviews, only the factors were given by me, and the responders could interpret and assess freely, independently from the others’ answers. On the basis of the answers, it could be seen that which factors had positive and which ones had negative assessments (2. table). (Full-scale answers were presented in the study of Kiss 2017/b).

It can be said in general, that the responders were dissatisfied with their demand. This dissatisfaction came primarily from the low numbers of the customers (11 responders were dissatisfied in the case of this factor and only 3 were satisfied). It came secondly from the volumes of saleable products (on the basis of 7 dissatisfied and 4 satisfied responders). 6 responders said that they did not experience differences between the sales channels used by them, relating to the numbers of the customers. In the producers’ markets more of them mentioned that they sell products of premium-quality and for this reason, the prices of the products are also high. During a conversation I made with a certain producer, I got to know that according to his opinion, their substantive customers are not necessary from the rich people, but who have the willingness to spend on the more expensive food-products, from their income-surpluses. (And for example not on expensive consumer electronics). The numbers of these customers are certainly low. Negative assessments could be observed in the case of the circumstances of the sale also. More of them disapproved the infrastructural lacks (6 mentions), for example the lack of power supply. 5 responders pointed out the exposition to the weather conditions. For example the rainy weather can have effects on the

numbers of costumers in the marketplaces. According to a responder, (mainly in the case of greater festivals and fairs) the false weather-forecast can also cause problems. Just a 4 responders said, that the conditions of the marketplaces can or should be accepted; saying, marketplaces are like this, and it is not about the comfort.

Table 2.  
Assessment of some factors of the producers' sale, on the basis of the responder producers  
(Source: own editing, on the basis of Kiss 2017/b)

<b>Factor</b>	<b>Numbers of positive opinions (+)</b>	<b>Numbers of indifferent, non-committal opinions (0)</b>	<b>Numbers of negative opinions (-)</b>	
<b>(+): Factor were assessed in mostly positive way by the responders</b>				
<b>Quality of saleable products</b>	7	7	-	
<b>Price-levels can be achieved</b>	9	3	7	
<b>Costs of the sale</b>	9 (those opinions that think the cost levels are acceptable, real or positive)		5	
<b>( - ): Factor were assessed in mostly negative way by the responders</b>				
<b>Height of the demand</b>	Numbers of customers	3	-	11
	Quantity of saleable products	4	2	7
<b>Circumstances of the sale</b>	4	3	12	

#### **4.2. The producers' suggestions of development**

During the survey, I asked my responders to tell me, that in their opinion what would cause positive change whether in the producing or in the sales conditions; in their own situation and also in general. A lot of responders could not give substantive answer to this question. More of them referred to the strong market-competition. The substantive answers could be classified into 4 categories:



1. Doing marketing-activities (in general) – 7 mentions.
2. Product-quality is a great a strength of the producers' wares. It should be utilised in a better way (4 mentions) - for example, by shaping attitudes or promotion.
3. Making cooperation. (4 mentions)
4. Organizing markets in a better way. (3 mentions)

Referring to the Literature Review (Szabó and Juhász 2012), and as it can be experienced also in the practice, that the market-operators generally do not use marketing-tools in order to inform the customers about the wares can be bought in the marketplace or about the unique offers. Although one of the respondents said that the operator of the examined producers' market, dealt with marketing-work seriously. According to an other producers' opinion, this kind of marketing could be done in all kind of possible ways: for example by (local) television, by opportunities offered by the internet (e.g. by community media), by leaflets, advertisements and so on. Referring again to the Literature Review (Benedek 2014, Benedek and Balázs 2015) in the case of producers' markets, the demand for producers' goods is related to that the costumers attributes good quality to the producers' wares or they perceive them as having good quality. This results was also presented by the research of Kiss and Nagyné Demeter (2016) that examined the producers' and the customers' judgement of the conventional markets (among others). 4 producers mentioned the suggestion that product-quality as a strength should be utilised in a better way, to call the customers' attention to the values offered by the producers' goods. Some of them mentioned the idea of shaping attitude. The third substantive group of opinion draw the attention to the cooperation of the producers. But it is noticeable that on the basis of the literature examining this subject, and on the basis of the practice, the producers' cooperation and willingness to cooperate have a low level in Hungary. The question concerning to the cooperation were asked from 17 responders, and only 3 of them took part in any kind cooperation. Altogether 3 of them suggested the better market-organising as an opportunity for solution.

### **Conclusions**

Both from the research results and from the literature reviews can be seen that the basic problem of the producers and producers' market is the low demand. According to my opinion this statement are valid in the cases of the SSC-channels with higher price levels. On the basis of the research, the second main problem are comes from the circumstances of the sale and from its characteristic, for example the exposition to the weather conditions or the infrastructural lacks.

Seven responders suggested the doing of marketing activities in the short supply chains. According to my knowledge only a low part of the producers deal with individual marketing-work. It goes with extra work and cost, furthermore it can be typical that the producers do not thrust in the returns of this kind of investments.

Szabó and Juhász (2012) show examples for the marketing-activities can be done by producers and market-organizers, for example information tables can be placed next to the stands, catalogues including maps, opportunities offered by the internet, and the intense personal contacts.

Four responders pointed out that producers' goods have additional values and it would be important to utilise them in a better way, for example by product-promotions or by shaping attitudes. Literature sources mention that today there is an increasing demand for the producers goods and for the local foods. It can be observed in the practical life that the healthy nutrition become more and more important amongst the consumers. On the basis of more case studies it can be stated that consumers think producers goods have good quality and this is one reason or perhaps the most important reason that they do prefer these products. In my opinion it can be a basis of a further research topic, that on what basis the consumers attributes good quality to these products or what "good quality" means for them at all. There can be consumers whom extensive cultivation or extensive keeping technology means an advantage for example. Or the ingredients of the processed products or their (possible) handmade origin can be an important factor for them. It is a fact, that producers' goods can represent an important "marketing-value" from this kind of viewpoint. These values can catch the attention of susceptible consumers, and they can offer them a point of reference during their shopping decisions.

A further four responders pointed out the significance of the producers' cooperation, collaboration and/or its necessity. More literatures examined the advantages of the cooperation and the factors are hindering them. According to the experiences got on the spot, the small producers' collaboration are greatly hindered by the mistrust amongst the producers. Probably, producers who know each other from the past and trust each other are more willing to cooperate. One of the respondents told, that he can imagine cooperation concerning the procurement, but not in the sale (because of mistrust). Furthermore, about two responders mentioned that they can imagine smaller cooperation (of four or five participants for example) but not greater ones. The "Literature Review" chapter made some positive examples known about well-functioning SSC-sales from different countries of the EU. From the examples it can be reasoned out, that a strong intent and collaboration stands behind their success or at least an actor who is able to coordinate and harmonize the producers of the given region and their supplies. From the producers' side there is a kind of openness and from the customers' side there must be a certain level of willingness to purchase and preference towards producers' wares, I think.

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