

EU-funded SMARTCHAIN reveals key steps to improve sustainability of short food supply chains



Brussels, 6 July 2021 - The EU-funded project SMARTCHAIN hosts today its closing event, showcasing its main findings and recommendations to support collaborative Short Food Supply Chains (SFSCs) in Europe. The 3-year long project brought together a wide range of policymakers, practitioners and researchers interested in learning more on collaborative SFSCs and how to support their growth. SFSCs are food systems with a potential to create a shift in the way we grow, distribute and consume food, responding to the needs of farmers, food producers and consumers.

SMARTCHAIN's new booklet "[Insights & recommendations to support collaborative Short Food Supply Chains](#)" will spur further initiatives aimed at changing the European food supply chain model.

A thorough analysis of different types of SFSCs across Europe, such as on-farm direct sales, farmers' markets, community supported agriculture and cooperatives, and their regulatory frameworks, led to the formulation of **policy and business recommendations** in the agri-food sector.

Dr. F. Javier Casado Hebrard from the University of Hohenheim, SMARTCHAIN project manager, said:

"During 3 years of intense work, SMARTCHAIN analysed 18 Short Food Supply Chains from 9 different countries to understand the factors that play a role in their success, but also to identify their main needs, barriers and bottlenecks, with a focus on the consumer's perspective. In the SMARTCHAIN booklet, farmers, food producers and other SFSCs practitioners can find applicable solutions, recommendations and useful tips to improve business performance while increasing sustainability. We also developed a series of actionable policy recommendations for decision-makers to support SFSCs and their competitiveness".

Thanks to the identification of the key parameters that influence sustainable food production and rural development in the different European regions, SMARTCHAIN laid out the crucial factors that play an essential role for SFSCs businesses, leading to the identification of the **main success factors and also bottlenecks** for their development and exploitation. These solutions can enhance



competitiveness in the form of economic growth, logistic improvements and the creation of new sales channels.

Social innovation at the core of the SFSCs' shift

The SMARTCHAIN guide also features a focus on **social innovations** for SFSCs and an **assessment of their sustainability** from an economic, environmental and social perspective. Additionally, it presents the results from an analysis on the **value perception** and attitudes of consumers towards SFSCs and provides suggestions on how to reach greater acceptance of this type of supply chain.

SMARTCHAIN partners **launched an Innovation Platform** to facilitate knowledge, innovative solutions and know-how transfer among leading actors with the common goal of making a difference in the SFSCs' game. The SMARTCHAIN booklet will also be soon available on the Platform in nine languages: Dutch, French, English, German, Greek, Hungarian, Italian, Serbian and Spanish.

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About SMARTCHAIN

SFSCs are food systems with a potential to respond to some of the main needs and opportunities of farmers, food producers and consumers. They can bring many advantages compared to conventional longer food chains, for example the short distance between production and consumption, the access to locally produced food of known origin, and the support of the local economy.

SMARTCHAIN's 43 partners coming from 11 European countries worked for 3 years to support the shift towards collaborative SFSCs by linking scientists with practitioners and different actors in the sector. SMARTCHAIN project "Towards Innovation - driven and smart solutions in short food supply chains" was coordinated by the University of Hohenheim and received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and Innovation programme under grant agreement No. 773785.

What's next?

The SMARTCHAIN Innovation Platform, one of the main outcomes of the project, will remain accessible thanks to the decision of 5 new Horizon 2020 projects to keep using and updating it in the coming years. An overview of the content and materials SMARTCHAIN partners shared on the platform is also available in the booklet.

Website: www.smartchain-h2020.eu

SMARTCHAIN Innovation Platform: <https://www.smartchain-platform.eu/>

Twitter: [@Smartchain_EU](https://twitter.com/Smartchain_EU)

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