

Chapter 44

Organic Markets, Participatory Guarantee Systems, and Community–Supported Agriculture for Sustainable Food Communities

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ABSTRACT

Local and organic food is of global importance and benefits our health, community, and environment. Today, people come together and build a food community to access local and organic food directly from the farmers under a chain of trust. It is an amazing opportunity to support small farmers and reach fresh produce. Organic markets, participatory guarantee systems, farm shares or community supported agriculture, work exchange, and other co-operatives allow us to connect with one another and perpetuate social and ecological sustainability. This chapter analyzes these direct organic marketing mechanisms and community building ways towards green economy. It demonstrates these cultures and gives some best practices in the creation of sustainable food community networks around the world. The chapter concludes with emphasizing the significance on the sociality and locality, thus contributing to the long-term goal of sustainable development and resilience.

INTRODUCTION

The production of organic food by environmentally friendly cultivation techniques (e.g. drip irrigation, natural farming, companion planting, crop rotation, composting) is a worldwide growing trend. The multinational seed companies push hard the governments all around the world to use their infertile and genetically modified seeds (GMO) by free trade agreements. That is a great threat against the food security of the world. The use of local seeds is forbidden by governments under the pressure of big in-

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ternational companies and western countries. The biodiversity of ecosystems are under pressure due to GMO's, pesticides and chemicals used in agriculture. As all the food is grown locally, the reduction of food transportation radically reduces the environmental impact of food chain. People living in a town can access high-quality organic food directly from producers. Organic markets promote an urban healthy lifestyle by enabling city inhabitants to be better informed and buy organic and safe food directly from farmers (Meroni, 2007). They also contribute to the survival of local producers, promote a conviviality not found in the city supermarkets and reconnect city and countryside.

The organic markets, which get only minimum support from municipalities and NGOs, provide new and alternative retail channels for small organic producers. Farmers can earn more and consumers can find organic food easier. Alternatively, in community supported agriculture (CSA) and participatory guarantee systems (PGS), fresh, organically grown and reasonably priced box of vegetables are directly delivered to the doors of the supporters. These services foster awareness of tradition, taste and the natural seasonal availability and healthy food. Being in touch with the surrounding region, getting the best from it and the luxury of receiving organic food to home bring the feeling of confidence to its provenance.

From global dependency to local sustainability, the shift towards more localized and productive living strategies is not a choice, but an inevitable direction for humanity. This chapter focuses on the organic markets and food communities towards green economy, enabling both community prosperity and economic sustainability. Organic markets abound with the vibrant colours, smells and sights that define the multicultural city, meaning organic markets are one of the best ways to soak up the local culture. In many examples, these markets are a meeting point and provide space for social relationships and interaction. This study examines the main features of an organic market for a vibrant space for the community. It also searches the users of the markets and their preferences. The organic market culture is defined and different types of activities held in the market are explained in this chapter.

On the other hand, there are some other direct marketing mechanisms for the organic or locally grown products such as participatory guarantee systems and community supported agriculture. Participatory Guarantee Systems (PGS) are local quality certification systems. The community certified producers who are based on a mutual trust, social network and knowledge exchange. Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) is another mechanism for communities to purchase local and fresh products directly from a producer nearby. It is built on a farm share. A farmer offers shares to the local people. Local people buy a share into the farm, they support seasonal products with money, and in exchange, they will receive a box of local, organic produce directly from the farm every week.

The objectives of this chapter are to demonstrate organic market culture, to analyze an understanding what PGS and CSA are and how they work and to provide operation information on how to set-up and manage them for being a sustainable food community. The chapter also gives case study insights on how different communities around the world have managed to develop flourishing local economies with PGS and CSA. Firstly, the importance of developing direct models for being a sustainable food community is defined following by the shift of consumer behavior in the context of green economy. Then the role of organic markets is emphasized, best practices in the creation of sustainable food community networks are given from around the world such as Brazil, France, USA, Japan and India etc. The next section specifically focuses on Turkish case and Turkish consumers, the rapid growth of Turkish ecological markets and best practices of PGS and CSA social networks in metropolitan cities in Turkey. The chapter concludes by an evaluation which is made on the significance on these social networks of sustainable food communities, thus contributing to the long-term goal of sustainable development.

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