

SUPURBFOOD is a research project funded by the European Commission's 7th Framework Program. It aims to contribute to the development of sustainable modes of urban and peri-urban food provisioning.

About the project

Until recent, short food supply chains and multifunctional agriculture were considered to be part of the rural development realm. However, this project looks at these topics from the perspective of urban rather than rural development. Short food supply chains have been advocated as a means to reduce the environmental impact of the agro-food system. However, to improve the ecological performance of the agro-food system other flows (e.g. nutrient, water, and urban waste) need to be considered as well. In the current context these aspects are usually treated separately. This project will treat them in an integrated manner.

Approach

Research will be carried out in seven European city-regions (Rotterdam (NL), Rome (IT), Ghent (BE), Vigo (ES), Bristol (UK), Zürich (CH) and Riga (LV)) in collaboration with a diverse group of SMEs to further innovate in urban and peri-urban food provisioning, nutrient, water and waste management, and multifunctional use of urban and peri-urban space. Finally the project will also establish links with researchers, policymakers and SMEs in these domains in developing countries. This will be organised through a process of dialogue, sharing of experiences, exchanging of best practices and joint learning.

More information

www.supurbfood.eu



What is Zolle about?

Zolle is an intermediaire in the delivery of fresh and processed food in Rome, which connects producers and consumers through a box scheme. The company works with small and medium organic farmers mostly located in the countryside around Rome (Rome province and the rest of Lazio Region) personally chosen by the company's leader. Farmers are asked to adopt not intensive production methods (farming and grazing), to adapt to seasonal cycles and to prefer local and regional species and varieties, both grown in-farm and exchanged at regional level.

The mode of production and the contribution to local development is generally preferred to the mere distance from Rome for the selection of the farmers. Nevertheless some farmers are chosen in other regions (like Tuscany and Sicily) also in order to have a secure availability of a wider range of high quality products. A single relation with a French wine producer has also been established.

Among the products delivered: fruit and vegetables, eggs, meat, wine, honey, and also processed food like cheese, orange juices, bakery, jams, pasta.

Who is involved?

Alongside Simona and Ghila (the two founders) about 20 persons are employed (some of them part-time): 8 for the administration, the others in the control of the produce and in the organization of the boxes and related activities, place the persons involved in the distribution which are employed by the bikers' company.

Currently an average of 1,300 households receive the box every week (for a total amount of about 2,500 customer households).

Which activities are carried out?

Products are daily gathered in the storehouse and then re-assembled into the single boxes, tailored on customers' needs and wills, to be then delivered throughout the city. The construction of boxes tailored on customers' needs and preferences is a key part of everyday work.

The logistic for the delivery is mixed. The first part of the transport from the headquarters to the delivery points is made through vans (a highly trusted family transport company is in charge), but the final delivery to the consumers is made by bicycle. Zolle has contributed to the start up of an autonomous bikers' company that manages to bring the boxes to the consumers, once the van has parked in the specific neighborhood.

Zolle has also an active website, where producers are presented with their own face and location, and sometimes personal contacts between producers and consumers, with visits to the farms, are also encouraged.

Where is Zolle located?

The business is centered in Rome as far as customers are concerned. Rome provides a large potential basin of demand for quality products. Headquarters and storehouse are located in the same building, in the southern periphery of the city (see the red mark).

Products are then delivered throughout the city with the mixed van+bicycles distribution systems outlined above.



Lessons from Zolle for SUPURBFOOD

- ✓ Intermediaries can connect in an efficient way small producers and urban consumers for quality products
- ✓ Organic method is an important marketing lever but personal trust for the producer or the retailer can overcome certification in the consumer's perception
- ✓ Mixed (vans+ bicycles) delivery arrangements can provide the most suitable solution to deliver fresh food to urban dwellers
- ✓ Websites can be important interface between producers and consumers, and can be the pre-condition to develop personal contacts and farm visits

Contact details of [Title]

Zolle, via Giuseppe Belluzzo 55,
Rome, Italy

mangio@zolle.it

<http://www.zolle.it/web/>

Contact details of [project member]

For more information on
SUPURBFOOD contact

Stefano Grando, stefanog6@yahoo.it

Livia Ortolani, l.ortolani@aiaab.it

AIAB, www.aiab.it




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