



National and International Research on Short Food Supply Chains

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National and International Research on Short Food Supply Chains

Section One: Introduction to Short Food Supply Chains (SFSCs)

What Are Short Food Supply Chains

Short Food Supply Chains (SFSCs) refer to food distribution systems that involve a minimal number of intermediaries between local food producers and consumers. These chains often emphasise local, regional, or direct-to-consumer models, enhancing traceability, transparency, and trust.

Key characteristics include:

- **Few or no intermediaries:** Typically just the producer and the consumer (e.g., farmers' markets, farm shops). In some cases, a single intermediary such as a local retailer can qualify as an SFSC where the producer is located close to the point of sale.
- **Geographical proximity:** Production, processing, and consumption occur within a defined local or regional area.
- **Strong producer–consumer relationships:** There is often personal interaction or storytelling about the origin and added value of the food.
- **Social and environmental benefits:** These include reduced food miles, support for local economies, and often more sustainable practices.

SFSCs are increasingly promoted as part of sustainable food systems and food security in both rural development and agri-food policies across Europe and beyond.

Benefits of Short-supply Chains

Short Food Supply Chains (SFSCs) are gaining popularity among consumers and local food businesses because they can meet growing consumer expectations while delivering tangible benefits to producers who add value through processing or product innovation. SFSCs are recognised as sustainable alternatives to global supply chains. By reconnecting local producers with consumers, they are often cited as drivers of business diversification and rural community development. As a result, SFSCs offer economic, environmental, and social benefits.

Consumer expectations are evolving:

- Many customers seek products with sustainable attributes such as freshness, seasonality, organic certification, or local provenance.
- Consumers are increasingly aware of the wider impacts of their choices, including animal welfare and ethical production standards. This includes interest in low-impact systems and assurances around humane practices.
- Environmental considerations are also key, such as biodiversity impacts, water quality, and the carbon footprint of production systems.
- Global discourse on climate change has heightened awareness of food miles and sustainability, creating demand for transparency and provenance information.

For micro-enterprises operating within SFSCs, this presents a valuable opportunity to differentiate through storytelling and clear communication of standards. Provenance information can be shared through packaging, marketing, or direct engagement at the point of sale. When customers are confident in quality and production standards, they are more likely to support local businesses and value-added products.



Challenges

As with any business model, SFSCs present certain risks. A study (*Food supply chains and sustainability: evidence from specialist food producers in the Scottish/English borders*) identified several common challenges among six case study SFSCs:

- **Unreliable sales at farmers' markets:** Many businesses reported inconsistent customer demand at farmers' markets. As a result, some opted to reduce their presence at these markets and instead supply independent catering and retail outlets, which were considered more reliable channels.
- **High distribution costs:** When businesses expanded beyond their immediate locality, transport and logistics costs increased significantly. This challenge is difficult to mitigate where local demand for certain products is limited, requiring wider distribution.
- **Sector-specific risks:** For businesses involved in fresh meat or smoked products, issues included shortages of skilled processing staff (e.g., butchery or smoking) and the closure of local processing facilities such as abattoirs or smokeries.

These risks highlight the importance of planning for diversified sales channels, efficient logistics, and access to specialised processing skills and infrastructure—particularly for micro-enterprises developing value-added products.

Consumer Attitudes Towards Short Supply Chains

Nationally and internationally, consumer interest in short food supply chains (SFSCs) is rising due to the previously referenced increasing awareness of sustainability, local economic support, and food transparency and the importance of food security in Ireland and across the EU, consumers are prioritising local origin, minimal processing, and ethical sourcing. In the UK and Nordics, there's strong alignment with carbon reduction and food miles. In the USA and Australia, trends indicate demand for artisan and traceable produce. Overall, SFSCs are viewed as a trustworthy, authentic alternative to industrial supply chains.

Sustainability Impacts of SFSC Models

Environmentally, SFSCs can reduce carbon emissions due to shorter transport routes, minimal packaging, and more efficient distribution. Socially, SFSCs foster local employment, strengthen community links, and improve food business-consumer relationships. Economically, while SFSCs can reduce costs related to intermediaries, they may face scalability and logistical challenges. For SMEs, SFSCs offer differentiation opportunities but require strategic investment in logistics and communication.

Figure 1

The table below sets out expected benefits for consumers in SFSCs together with potential problems.

SFSC Consumer Expected Benefits and Potential Problems	
Expected Benefits	Potential Problems
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More affordable prices for food • Easier access to quality product: fresh, local “authentic”, origin food • Availability of products traceable from a known food business • Reconnect food to the production process • Easier access to healthier food options • Meets social and ethical objectives • Supports the local economy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More time needed for food purchase (may have to visit different venues) • New function to be performed in purchase and in preparing food (products may not be as prepared as supermarket ranges) • New competences to be acquired in food preparation (washing, trimming, etc) • Increase in the “total cost” of food (Premium required for local food) • Scarce information on where to buy local food • More accessible to certain customer demographics

Figure 2

The table below sets out expected benefits for local food businesses in SFSCs together with potential problems.

SFSC Local Food Business Expected Benefits and Potential Problems	
Expected Benefits	Potential Problems
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhanced value-added opportunities: Ability to create processed or artisan products that command higher margins. • Improved market access: Particularly for small-scale food businesses seeking entry into local and regional markets. • Direct consumer engagement: Better communication and storytelling about provenance and sustainability. • Diversified sales channels: Use of direct selling, online platforms, and partnerships with independent retailers or foodservice outlets. • Stable commercial relationships: Building long-term connections with local buyers and customers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional business functions: Managing marketing, logistics, and customer engagement alongside production. • Workforce requirements: Possible need to increase staff for processing, packaging, and distribution. • Capital investment: Equipment and infrastructure for processing, storage, transport, and retail may require upfront investment. • Skills development: New competencies in food safety, compliance, marketing, and digital sales channels. • Product diversification: Adapting production methods and forming partnerships to broaden offerings.



	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Geographic limitations: Opportunities may be concentrated near population centres, limiting reach for remote businesses.• Market competition: Growing interest in SFSCs can lead to increased competition within the segment.• Regulatory compliance: Meeting food safety, labelling, and traceability requirements is essential and can be resource-intensive.
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Section Two: SFSCs for Meat

Introduction

Short Food Supply Chains (SFSCs) for meat involve direct or minimal intermediary connections between local food businesses and consumers, promoting regional meat products and reducing food miles. These chains can include farm shops, box schemes, online sales, butchers, restaurants, or direct delivery to consumers. For micro-enterprises, SFSCs offer opportunities to add value through processing, branding, and customer engagement.

Benefits of Short Food Supply Chains for Meat

- **Increased Transparency:** Consumers gain confidence by knowing where their meat comes from and how it is processed.
- **Reduced Food Miles:** Lower transportation distances reduce environmental impact and often result in fresher products.
- **Local Economic Boost:** Sales through SFSCs keep more money within the community and support small-scale food businesses.
- **Higher Value Opportunities:** By reducing intermediaries and adding value through processing, businesses can achieve better margins.
- **Consumer Connection:** SFSCs foster stronger relationships between customers and producers, enhancing appreciation for quality and sustainability.
- **Educational Engagement:** Opportunities to inform consumers about production methods, cuts of meat, and nose-to-tail cooking.

Examples of SFSCs for Meat

Cutting out intermediaries getting meat directly to the consumer can involve selling directly through channels such as farmers' markets, farm shops, box schemes, online sales, butchers and restaurants.

A good example of a SFSC for meat is [Sussex Grazed - Brighton and Hove Food Partnership](#) or <https://kilmullenfarm.ie/>

Challenges of SFSCs for Meat

While there are many benefits of SFSCs for meat, there can be challenges such as SFSCs being limited in terms of access to some consumers, processing may not be cost effective at small scale, demand may be limited to premium/mainstream cuts and prices may not always be lower than conventional supermarkets.

Setting up and managing efficient logistics for local meat delivery can be challenging, especially when a farmer also has to prioritise their own farm. Consumers need to be informed about the benefits of SFSCs and how to access them which requires strong and sometimes costly marketing campaigns.

Ensuring a consistent supply of meat to cater for demand can be difficult, especially for smaller farms, and the consumer expects a full range each week. In parallel supermarkets are



increasingly offering local products, or creating links with key farm suppliers, which can create competition for SFSCs.

Sometimes farmers struggle with compliance issues especially if they have to extend into further processing of their meat. Most regions in Ireland, have limited abattoir and further processing facilities.

In conclusion, SFSC's for meat offer a promising alternative to conventional food systems, with benefits for both producers and consumers. While challenges exist, and should be carefully considered, the growing interest in local food and sustainable practices suggests a positive outlook for the future of SFSCs in the meat industry.

Section Three: Vegetable Short Food Supply Chains

Introduction

Short Food Supply Chains (SFSCs) for vegetables involve direct or minimal-intermediary connections between local food businesses and consumers, often through farm shops, box schemes, online platforms, or farmers' markets. These models prioritise freshness, quality, and sustainability while strengthening relationships between producers and customers.

Vegetables supplied through SFSCs are typically fresher and of higher quality due to reduced transportation and handling. Consumers gain access to locally grown, seasonal produce, supporting local economies and encouraging healthier eating habits. For micro-enterprises, SFSCs offer opportunities to add value through processing (e.g., ready-to-cook packs, fermented products), branding, and storytelling about provenance and sustainability.

A good example of a SFSC for vegetable is [GIY - Grow Cook Eat – GROW HQ](#) who grow their own vegetables and sell directly to the consumer via a veg box scheme and an onsite café. Green Earth Organics is another example. <https://www.greenearthorganics.ie/>

Challenges of SFSCs for Vegetables

While SFSCs for vegetables offer clear benefits, they also present challenges that businesses need to address:

- **Seasonal limitations:** Ireland's climate and short growing windows can restrict availability, and adverse weather can impact output.
- **Consistency of supply:** Smaller enterprises may struggle to meet regular demand, particularly when consumers expect variety beyond what small-scale growers typically produce.
- **Higher unit costs:** Labour-intensive production and small-scale operations often result in higher prices compared to supermarkets, which frequently use vegetables as loss leaders.
- **Consumer expectations:** Many consumers are accustomed to year-round availability and low prices in mainstream retail. Lack of understanding of seasonality and small-scale production means significant consumer education is required.
- **Marketing and awareness:** Changing consumer mindsets and promoting the benefits of local, seasonal produce requires strong communication strategies, which can be resource-intensive.



Section Four: Seafood Short Food Supply Chains

Introduction

Seafood SFSCs, while less common, aim to reduce intermediaries between local food businesses and consumers, creating more direct connections and minimising transport and storage requirements. These models often involve short-distance distribution and can include direct marketing through online platforms, local fishmongers, or partnerships with restaurants. For micro-enterprises, SFSCs present opportunities to add value through processing (e.g., filleting, smoking, ready-to-cook packs), branding, and storytelling about provenance and sustainability.

A good example of a SFSC for seafood is Sole of Discretion, a Plymouth based collective of small-scale fishermen. There is a strong focus on sustainable fishing and the economic multiplier effect whereby small boats support far more fishing families.

<https://soleofdiscretion.co.uk/>

Challenges of SFSCs for Seafood

Seafood SFSCs present unique challenges that businesses must address:

- **Supply variability:** Quotas, trading caps, and seasonality affect reliability and predictability. Landed catch may not always match consumer or restaurant preferences.
- **Cold chain logistics:** Maintaining constant temperature during transport and storage is essential. Smaller operators may lack the infrastructure for chilled storage and delivery.
- **Regulatory compliance:** Requirements such as HACCP, traceability, landing declarations, and processing regulations create administrative burdens and may require investment in equipment and training.
- **Consumer expectations:** Many consumers expect a consistent supply of specific species in standard sizes and are unfamiliar with seasonal availability or sustainability considerations. Education and marketing are needed to bridge this gap.
- **Infrastructure limitations:** Limited access to processing facilities for filleting, smoking, or packaging can restrict opportunities for value-added products.

Irish Examples of SFSCs

There are some good examples of SFSCs which exist already in the Irish marketplace. These include the following:

The Urban Co-op Limerick
<https://www.theurbanco-op.ie>

- The Urban Co-op is a member-owned grocery store in Limerick.
- Offers local vegetables, dairy, meats, bakery items, and health products.
- Transparent sourcing and traceability.
- Includes wellness services, cooking workshops, etc
- Works closely with local farmers and artisan producers.
- Supports small producers.
- Strengthens local food resilience.
- Acts as an educational hub.



<p>Dublin Food Coop</p> <p>https://dublinfood.coop/</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ireland's longest running and largest community-owned consumer co-operative.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Established with an aim to provide affordable, nutritious, wholesome and sustainably sourced food. • Sells via a physical and online shop. • 2,500 members, 120 volunteers and 18 staff members. • Operates as a co-operative.
<p>Cloughjordan Community Farm Tipperary</p> <p>https://cloughjordancommunityfarm.ie/</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ireland's first Community Supported Agricultural initiative within the Cloughjordan Ecovillage. • Operates on a subscription model. • Emphasises zero food miles. • Practices regenerative agriculture. • Offers educational programmes. • Collaborative governance structure. • Provides financial stability. • Builds a deep understanding. • Reduces environmental impact.
<p>Local Green Box Cavan</p> <p>https://cottagemarketcavan.ie/</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Run as a social enterprise. • A collective of vegetable growers providing subscription-based boxes. • Also includes added value products, but the core focus is on the veg boxes. • Reduces food miles and promotes seasonal eating. • Encourages sustainable farming. • Ensures diverse, consistent supply. • Improves food security and awareness. • Supports farmer market planning.
<p>Síolta Chroí (Monaghan)</p> <p>https://sioltachroi.ie/</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regenerative farming initiative combining education and production. • Focus on education and community engagement. • Supports biodiversity and soil health. • Offers workshops and training. • Inspires regenerative practice adoption. • Builds knowledge-sharing networks. • Strengthens local food resilience. • Planning to sell on Open Food Network.
<p>Sonairte Eco-Centre (Laytown, Co. Meath)</p> <p>https://sonairte.ie/</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Ecology Centre with organic garden and food hub. • Certified organic market garden. • Hosts food hubs and events. • Provides sustainability education. • Links food and ecology. • Enables community learning



<p>The Local Market Hub (Newbridge, Co. Kildare)</p> <p>https://openfoodnetwork.ie/</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connects producers and consumers via a centralised hub. • Boosts visibility for small-scale farmers. • Fosters community support. • Streamlines access to local food. • Encourages producer cooperation. • Supports community resilience. • Using Open Food Network.
<p>Kilmullen Farm</p> <p>https://kilmullenfarm.ie/</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Operate a consumer direct lamb model, selling whole/cut lambs directly to consumers. • Have a regular market pitch at Airfield Estate. • Farm gate and online sales. • Have been operating direct to consumer model for over a decade. • On farm processing facility/cutting room.
<p>Castlemine Farm</p> <p>https://castleminefarm.ie/</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A farm that originally sold their animals to the large factories. • Initially set up a farm shop on the farm • Now have grown to a large enterprise butchering all animals on farm. • Farm shop now moved into business centre of population.
<p>Fiorbhia Farm</p> <p>https://www.fiorbhiafarm.ie/</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus is on regenerative farming without chemical fertilisers, sprays or antibiotics • Use forested land to capture carbon • While beef is the main product, also sell pork, chicken and bacon. • Main sale through online shop • Strong educational aspect with on farm classes etc • Set up as a limited company



International Examples of SFSCs

SFSCs are also growing in international markets with some innovative projects and case studies throughout the world.

<p>La Ruche qui dit Oui! (France)</p> <p>https://laruchequiditoui.fr</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • La Ruche qui dit Oui! (also known as the Food Assembly) is a French initiative that connects local producers directly with consumers. • Sold through an online platform and local distribution hubs. • Offers meats, vegetables, dairy, and baked goods from nearby farms. • Transparent pricing and fair margins for producers. • Encourages community-based food buying. • Operates across multiple European countries with over 700 active “assemblies” • The expansion includes countries such as Belgium, Spain, Italy, Germany and The Netherlands.
<p>Food Connect Australia</p> <p>https://foodconnect.com.au</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Based in Brisbane, Food Connect is a social enterprise that operates a community-supported distribution model. • Weekly seasonal produce boxes from local regenerative farms. • Operates using a shared values charter with producers. • Transparent payment system that ensures fair wages. • Runs a community food hub and event space. • Builds direct producer-consumer relationships. • Reduces food waste through forward ordering. • Encourages ethical consumer behaviour. • Has a wholesale aspect selling to restaurants and cafes. • Uses Open Food Network
<p>Helsinki Wholesale Food Market – REKO Rings (Finland)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • REKO Rings are Facebook-based food buying groups in Finland that connect producers directly to consumers. • Closed Facebook groups without middleman facilitate direct ordering, prepayment and delivery coordination.



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Customers and producers are administrators of the Facebook groups. • Farmers deliver directly to a set location once a week for scheduled pick-ups, typically in car parks or community facilities • Wide variety of products including meat, veg, honey, and bakery items. • Entirely peer-managed and decentralised. • Extremely low operational overheads. • Expands rural producer access to urban customers. • Builds vibrant, localised food culture through simplicity. • There are over 160 Reko Rings in Finland
<p>Norwich FarmShare (UK)</p> <p>https://norwichfarmshare.ooooby.org/</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set up initially by 50 Norwich residents and now has 700 residents involved. • Norwich FarmShare is a community-owned agriculture scheme in the UK combining organic vegetable production with volunteerism. • CSA model where members pre-pay for weekly veg shares. • Volunteers help with harvesting and distribution. • Operates within 15 miles of Norwich city centre. • Education and engagement events are core to the model.
<p>The Sustainable Fishing Success Story of Cabaz Frescomar (Portugal)</p> <p>https://cabazfrescomar.pt/</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An initiative launched by the Fuseta Fishing Vessel Owners Association • Working with approx. 100 traditional fishing vessels, delivers 60 to 70 baskets of fresh fish per week directly to households. • All fish is locally caught, ensuring transparency, freshness, and minimal environmental impact. • Aims to improve working conditions, increase product quality, and find new markets for lesser-known or previously discarded species. • Now serves not only as a local success story but also as a reference point for sustainable fisheries across Europe.
<p>Cape Ann Fresh Catch</p> <p>https://cafc.fish/</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community supported fishery (CSF) • Direct to consumer model



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fishers are able to attain higher value for their catch. (no middleman) • Members subscribe and pay for an “allotment” of fish each week (1LB, 2 LB or whole fish share) • Customer option for home delivery or collect at pick up sites • Community outreach programme to ensure those disadvantaged can enjoy seafood.
<p>Green City Growers (Part of Evergreen Co-operatives)</p> <p>https://greencitygrowers.com/about-green-city-growers/</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GCG was developed as a large-scale indoor food production facility, designed to produce leafy greens and herbs year-round. • The business originally operated as a worker-owner cooperative: employees could become owners, earn shares and participate in decision-making. • GCG was started as one of the early flagship cooperative businesses under the Evergreen umbrella. • Evergreen helped provide the structure, financing, and initial support for GCG’s development

Technology and Innovation Enabling SFSCs

Digital tools such as blockchain for traceability, QR codes for product transparency, and e-commerce platforms are critical to SFSC scalability. Digital marketplaces allow producers to sell directly to consumers while managing logistics efficiently. Mobile apps and IoT-based inventory systems also enhance real-time coordination. Veg box pre order options and other similar functionality allows customers to order ahead of harvest, thus dictating which products to come out of the ground or which meat cuts are prepared. These technologies build consumer trust by offering transparent data on provenance, practices, and sustainability metrics.

Three Examples of Technology Solutions Enabling SFSCs are as Follows:

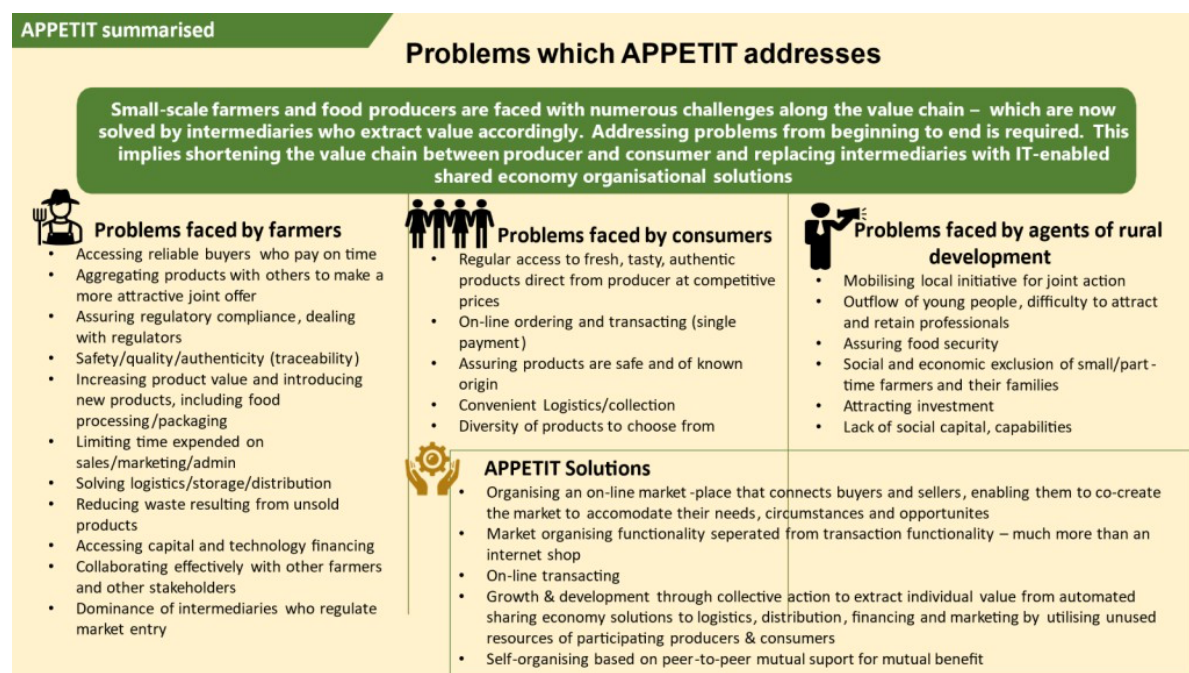
- The Appetit Platform [APPETIT Living Lab | Codecs](#)
- Local Line [The Farm to Fork Commerce Platform | Local Line](#)
- The Open Food Network [Welcome to Open Food Network](#)

The Appetit Platform

The Appetit Platform is a European funded digital innovation project building a community driven online marketplace for local food. It enables small scale producers and local stakeholders (farmers, co-operatives, food hubs) to engage directly with consumers enhancing visibility, trust and digital access.



It fosters stronger links between producers and consumers, encourages collective marketing and coordination among small farm networks and brings added value like provenance, transparency, community engagement and shared logistics. Producers maintain control over how they present and market their products. The chart below demonstrates the role Appetit provides. <https://www.horizoncodecs.eu/from-farm-to-table-appetit-platform-highlights-digital-innovation-in-local-food-markets/>



Local Line

Local Line is a farm-to-fork commerce platform, originally from Canada, designed for farms, food hubs, CSAs, farmers' markets, restaurants, and food buyers like grocers and distributors.

It's not a consumer-facing marketplace—rather, it provides a white-label e-commerce shop and bulk ordering tools, giving producers full control over their brand and sales channels. It is available in 14 countries across the world.

It facilitates commerce storefront & subscriptions and allows for the management of retail & wholesale listings, CSAs, custom boxes, and recurring orders. It also facilitates inventory management and price lists, facilitating flexible pricing for different customer segments, with options like box building and store credits.

It also has integrated tools for packing, invoicing, payments (including credit card), and pick and- -pack workflows. The graphic below sets out the areas covered by the system as used by Local Line in Canada.

An example of Local Line software in action can be seen on how “Eat Local Huron” use the software. There are 3 videos on the landing page which paint the picture <https://www.localline.co/blog/eat-local-huron>



- Customer in Huron County, Ontario order online <https://eat-local-huron.localline.ca/eat-local-huron-1>
- Each Monday producers check their orders and prepare
- Stock is brought to a hub and packed with produce from others. The hub seems to have storage fridges etc
- Customers either collect or have orders delivered to collection points, or their door
- The use of sponsors on the web shop is a unique feature
- The use of “Farm Crawls” which are used to get the customer onto the farm and engaged
- Each Huron now have a physical retail store as well

The Graphic Below sets out the operating model.



What is Open Food Network

The Open Food Network (OFN) is an open-source, not-for-profit digital platform designed to enable short, transparent, and ethical food supply chains, particularly for farmers, food hubs, CSAs, cooperatives, and community initiatives.

Producers can run their own shops or group together into hubs or cooperatives—selling boxes, variable-weight products, CSAs, and more. The system handles subscription models, delivery/pickup options, and inventory management tailored to food (dozens of eggs, bunches of herbs, whole chickens, etc.)

It promotes social-ecological aims: transparency, regenerative agriculture, democratic decision-making, and cooperative structures. While the platform is global, each country or



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region hosts a locally managed instance (like OFN UK, Ireland, France, Spain, etc.)—powered by a mix of developers, producer groups, and civil society actors. It was launched in Ireland in 2020 and peaked during COVID. There are a small number of community enterprises using this platform in Ireland including Cloughjordan Community Farm, as referenced earlier.

The Graphic Below sets out the operating model.



Short Food Supply Chains Which Have Not Worked

Not all SFSC's work successfully despite having the best of intentions. The Irish model NeighbourFood was an online farmers' market platform founded in Ireland in 2018. It was designed to connect local food producers directly with local customers, making it easier to buy fresh, seasonal, and artisan foods from small suppliers.

The model worked as follows:

- Customers ordered online each week from local producers via the NeighbourFood website.
- Orders were collated by producer, and producers delivered to a local collection point (often called a NeighbourFood Market). Very often the collection point was a café which operated as a host and picked and packed orders by customers.
- Customers picked up their entire order in one go—like a click-and-collect farmers' market.
- The commercial model ensured that 80% of the price paid by the customer, went straight to the producer, 10% to the host and 10% to the site.



The model surged during the COVID period with many new online markets and producers added, and a number of collection hosts enlarged. This peak trading began to settle back to pre-COVID levels during 2022 and 2023. The online marketplace was subsequently closed.

Speaking with the NeighbourFood founders, a number of contributory factors were cited.

- While the site was still trading successfully, consumer interest post COVID had declined
- The business co-founders also had other business interests which needed to be supported
- The fixed collection time for customers to pick up an order, may not have suited everyone's lifestyle
- While the model was generous getting 80% of the revenue to the farmer/grower, some of those supplying product sought to reclaim the remaining 20% by increasing prices to cover commissions thus making some products very expensive

The key learning for the Dingle Peninsula and direct food supply will be ensuring that product can be got to the consumer in a way that is perceived as value for money (quality versus price equation), and equally importantly, whether enough customers will be motivated to fit in with any restrictions the sales model might have (or alternatively ensuring the sales model makes it as easy for the customer to purchase as possible).

What the Dingle Peninsula Can Learn

There are many learnings which can be taken from the above research and case studies and may be summarised under different headings as follows:

Consumer Messaging Needs to be Crystal Clear

- Consumers need to understand trust, local origin, quality, freshness, and sustainability as part of the messaging.
- Dingle Peninsula food businesses should tell their story well—traceability, natural/regenerative practices, fishing heritage.
- Carbon reduction (food miles), community benefits, and premium quality should be part of the messaging.
- Investment in branding and storytelling will be essential.

Logistics will be a Key Component

- The role of a central hub and/or shared services for consolidation should be explored.
- Coordination between stakeholders will need careful planning and where technology can assist this communication, it should be prioritised e.g., tech enabled auto generation of individual orders split between each stakeholder.
- Maintenance of supply chain and demand for different routes to market should underpin any model.

Choose Sales Channels that Fit Dingle Peninsula Realities

- There are many suitable local Dingle Peninsula direct-to-consumer channels e.g., can be farmers' markets, online sales, subscription boxes, local shops, restaurants.



- Initially only one channel should be focused on however diversification into other markets is essential in ensuring the long-term financial sustainability of the business
- Much of the research indicates that having sufficient population to support local food supply chains is an important factor.
- With a population of 13,000 residents on the Peninsula, choosing the model that will appeal to most will be essential.
- Some of the International models have harnessed technology platforms like Open Food Network and Local Line to make it easy for customers to order. The evidence in Ireland is not as compelling and suggests a physical selling model may achieve a faster result as a phase one approach.

Manage the Quality vs. Price Equation for Consumers

- Local food businesses participating in SFSCs should ensure that pricing reflects the true value of the product, including processing, quality, and sustainability standards. This approach supports fair returns across the supply chain and helps maintain viable, community-based enterprises.
- This needs to be balanced with the consumer getting a sense of value for money, which will require significant marketing and storytelling to justify the sale price.
- Failure to communicate USPs will result in the consumer seeing price as the only decision factor.
- People (skills, passion, and craftsmanship), place (Dingle Peninsula terroir) and product (breed/species, natural/organic characteristics, etc) should be the pillar communication messages.

Collaboration is Key

- Successful Irish and international examples show cooperatives, food hubs, partnerships and social enterprises work better than solo efforts.
- The Dingle Peninsula group should explore formal or informal shared services models for marketing, logistics, and sales.
- Several of the international case studies, and research above, emphasise the critical nature of the stakeholders personally embracing the collective model and putting aside individual views. Many emphasised the need for mindset change.

Emphasise Education and Community Engagement

- Examples like Cloughjordan CSA or Sonairte show value in education, workshops, farm visits.
- The quirky nature of the “farm crawls” identified in the USA could be used on The Dingle Peninsula as a way to engage consumers.
- Education activities build customer loyalty and justify premium pricing.
- Farm/fishing boat tours, “meet the farmer/fisher” events, cooking classes, sustainability talks will all strengthen customer relationships and support the local food positioning.

Consider Technology as an Enabler

- Online ordering, subscriptions, and direct marketing can broaden reach beyond The Dingle Peninsula.
- Platforms like Open Food Network or Local Line can help manage orders, inventory, payments.
- Simple tools (Facebook, WhatsApp) are good to get started.
- Starting small with simple digital tools, which then can be scaled up as needed.



Plan for Seasonality and Supply Consistency

- Customers expect consistent availability.
- For vegetables, this means planning for seasonal gaps and variety.
- For seafood and meat, clear communication about availability is key.
- Communication tools such as email or mobile phone databases will allow for maximum direct education about seasonal availability.

Mitigate Risks

- The research has shown that there are risks with local food supply such as;
 - Declining consumer interest if novelty fades.
 - Logistical complexity.
 - Capital investment requirements.
 - Supply and demand management
 - Price sensitivity.
 - Coordination failures among farmers/fishers
- Any Dingle Peninsula local food model will need to address these thoroughly

