

Local and Regional Food



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Report from the European Conference on Local and Regional Food
27-28 september 2005 in Lerum, Sweden



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The aim of the first European Conference on Local and Regional Food was to provide a forum for politicians, officials and representatives from the food production and processing industries to meet and discuss the future of local food. The topics in focus were:

- 🎯 The influence of EU and national policies on local food development and how to bring about changes.
- 🎯 How to connect the producers of local food with the consumers.
- 🎯 How to achieve profitability in local food production.
- 🎯 What are the qualities of local food?
- 🎯 Why European collaboration and how can it benefit the production of local food?
- 🎯 What are the environmental aspects of local food production?

The conference was sponsored by The Swedish Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Consumer Affairs and The Regional Government of Western Swedish Region. Organisers and partners to the European Conference were:

European Network of Regional Culinary Heritage (www.culinary-heritage.com)
Federation of Rural Economy and Agricultural societies (www.hush.se)
Interreg IIC Culinary Heritage Europe Project (www.culinaryeurope.org)
KSLA, The Royal Swedish Academy of Agriculture and Forestry (www.ksla.se)
LRF, Federation of Swedish Farmers (www.lrf.se)
Regional Government of Western Swedish Region, Västra Götalandsregionen (www.vgregion.se)
Swedish National Network Unit for Leader+ (www.leaderplus.se)
Slow Food International, Swedish Ark Commission (www.slowfood.com)
SLU, Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences (www.slu.se)
The Gastronomic Academy of Western Sweden (www.vgak.info)
The Network of Europe Direct Offices in Sweden (www.se.carrefour.org)
West Sweden Tourist Board (www.vastsverige.com)
Öland Harvest Festival (www.skordefest.nu)

The conference was initiated by the network of Food in Sweden at SLU, the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences. More information about the conference can be found on the website www.foodinsweden.se.

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PERSPECTIVES

**Ann-Christin Nyqvist, Minister of Food,
Agriculture and Consumer Affairs, Sweden:**

(A few exclusions have been made in the text. The full version of the speech is available at www.regeringen.se/sb/d/1191/a/50805)

/.../

A number of trends are currently said to characterize the food sector. The mega-trend is said to be health, but local and regional food are also said to be growing in importance. Others detect trends in very different directions: food, they say, is becoming anonymous and travel-worn. /.../

The current trend in the food trade is anything but small-scale and local. Throughout the world, we see the emergence of company amalgamation, centralised purchasing and distribution, and the development of private labels by megastores. The price war is in full swing and low-price superstores are grabbing market share. It is of course possible to meet many consumer requirements within this conceptual framework, but I believe that - in Sweden, at least - consumers are not convinced that this trend is to their advantage. People are worried that price cuts also mean reduced quality. It is up to the trade to show that they are wrong in this.

Running counter to these developments is a trend towards greater demand for food that has an identity and that has not travelled halfway round the world to reach the dinner table. I don't believe we can choose one alternative or the other. We need both. We need to support local and regional food production and we also

need to make demands both on the food industry and on established retailers.

At this conference, the focus is on local and regional food. There is an added value of food with local and regional connection. This production is often built upon cultural tradition and knowledge. We often associate such produce with the countryside and with nature. Local and regional producers - usually small companies - are well placed to produce food that has the quality, the taste and the unique properties demanded by consumers. This is often the kind of produce that is associated with unspoilt nature, clean and healthy food, good animal welfare, a high level of producer skill and obvious origin. Local and regional food are valuable assets in our bid to develop the kind of tourism and recreation that are associated with nature and culture.

Thus local and regional food generate added value - to all of us in the form of a varied open agricultural landscape and to consumers in the form of high quality food. Small-scale food production also stimulates the establishment of companies and generates jobs, thus supporting rural development. As the Minister responsible for consumer affairs, I also believe it is important to make people aware of the link between consumer choice in the shops and the implications of these choices for our nature, our landscape and our rural areas.

There are obviously a number of obstacles that must be overcome. Small-scale food processing often evolves at farm level. One initial problem is that the product and the production process cannot be developed further due to lack

of expertise or investment capital. It is also difficult to have knowledge of all current rules. In addition, the existing rules are not adapted to small companies.

Selling of small-scale food products also tends to be on a small scale, often at the farm itself. /.../ Producers who want to step up production and reach more consumers often encounter problems, one of which is that deliveries to other, larger shops must be regular and reliable. In addition, the logistics must work at the distribution stage. The traditional distribution channels are in many cases not suitable. Moreover, shops demand quality-controlled products - quite rightly, but this presupposes an awareness of the rules concerning food and hygiene.

Furthermore, produce must be marketed to consumers, usually in tough competition with large companies that strongly promote their own labels. The lack of networks and organisations make it more difficult to be informed and to reach the market in an efficient way. Weak profitability and consumer perception that the products are too expensive do not make the situation easier for the small-scale companies.

/.../

However, talking only about the problems gives the wrong impression of local and regional food products. There are a lot of opportunities, too.

The interest in local and regional food is on the increase, both in Sweden and in the rest of Europe. This is very gratifying, since it makes it so much easier for us to develop and preserve our countryside while at the same time giving consumers the opportunity to buy food that has been produced nearby - food that is vital to our traditions and our culture.

We are also seeing an increasing number of farming companies becoming involved in the further processing of their products. This is a

very welcome development, as it brings new entrepreneurs and can revitalise the rural economy. As a supplementary benefit, it also provides the potential to develop tourism and connected activities.

The reformed European Union agriculture policy also creates opportunities. Modulation and rural development schemes support local and regional food production.

/.../ In my opinion, we have the means to jointly support the development of local and regional food in a number of different ways.

I believe it is important to encourage investment in small-scale food production and processing. The Swedish Government, therefore, has granted ten million crowns for this purpose for the current year. Most of the funding will be used to set up a national resource centre for the development of small-scale food processing. /.../ Furthermore, my Ministry has recently produced a report on small-scale food processing. It discusses matters relating to the funding of small-scale producers, including skills enhancement programmes and development grants. It also looks at topical questions concerning legislation and supervision. The report has been circulated for comment and we are currently compiling the answers. Within the next month we intend to present a bill to the Swedish Parliament.

We want to see organic production and consumption encouraged. My Government, therefore, will shortly present a communication outlining new objectives, including targets for certified organic production and for the public consumption of organic food. This is a totally new approach, and I think it will have an important impact on the development of both the supply of organic produce and the demand for it. Meanwhile, we will be continuing our efforts to promote environmental and fair trade labelling.

The EU policy is of course of great importance. The reformation of the Common Agricultural Policy and further modulation must be fulfilled. The new Rural Development Programme for the period 2007-2013 will also be crucial.

One way of supporting small scale food production is to create more flexible rules via the new EU regulations concerning foodstuffs and hygiene, the Hygiene Package. Taking into account the different conditions under which producers operate, we must use this opportunity to create opportunities for supporting the development of processing, of new products and of innovation in small companies, and encourage cooperation on quality produce.

/.../

We must be aware that we can expect greater competition on an increasingly open food market. The reform of the Common Agricultural Policy now in progress is essential if the policy is to gain acceptance among EU citizens. The decoupling process and reduced subsidies will, of course, affect the financial position of farm businesses, and will also affect the production of local and regional food. In Sweden we expect continuing structural changes with even bigger production entities, but also a growing number of small diversified companies. This is a challenge for which we must prepare ourselves. One thing from which the Swedish food sector can draw strength is that Swedish farmers have invested in environmentally sound production systems that also take ethical aspects into account. I think we could take even greater advantage of this aspect than we are doing today.

I am convinced that together we can take steps to help local and regional food acquire a growing share of the food market.

Kyösti Tapio Virrankoski, Member of the European Parliament:

The Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) is one of the oldest policy areas in the EU. Without transforming agricultural policy into a common policy, it would not have been possible to create a single market area in the EU. Because of the potential distortion of the single market, national agricultural subsidies are forbidden. The share of agricultural spending in the EU budget is about 50%. With this amount, which is about 0.5% of the GDP of the EU, we have safeguarded secure and diversified foodstuff supply at a reasonable price to the consumer and created a good basis for our food and drink industries, which is the biggest industrial area in the EU, with 4.5 million employees and a turnover of 800 billion euros.

However, this enormous market area tends to harmonise not only the production, but also the diversification of food. We eat pizzas all over Europe, as well as hamburgers, cola drinks etc. In order to maintain and promote the diversity of food, also connected to our heritage and environmental requirements, the EU has done, and tries to do, much to resist this kind of harmonisation.

The EU has just started its extensive agricultural reform. The main issue is to decouple support from production by creating a single farm payment. The aim is to reduce overproduction, to make agriculture more market-orientated, to safeguard the economic situation of farmers and to develop a system that can be defended in the WTO negotiations. An essential part in this is to promote the so-called second pillar of the agricultural policy, the rural development.

When the EU decided to establish the single farm payment, it also decided to promote other features and multifunctionality of agriculture. Food quality measures are recognised as having

an essential role. Additional support is given to farmers who participate on a voluntary basis in Community or national quality schemes provided for by the Community law on the protection of geographical indications and designations of origin, certificates of specific character, organic farming and quality wines. These quality schemes allow full traceability, indicate the specific features of the final product and ensure these are complied with. Financial support for food quality may be granted for no more than five years up to 3 000 euros per farm per year. The amount is determined according to the costs associated with participating in quality schemes. Support may also be granted to producer groups for information, promotion and publicity activities aimed at consumers.

Related measures are also those aimed at promoting organic farming. Organic farming has often been recognised as being related to food quality and food safety, and sometimes based on regional traditions. The EU has tried hard to promote this kind of farming as a counter-weight to industrial farming, but results have remained tiny. Not more than 2% of EU-15 farmers practise organic farming. The biggest share is in Austria, (11%), next is Italy and then Sweden and Finland, at about 7%.

Last year, EU established a new program on the conservation, characterisation, collection and utilisation of genetic resources in agriculture. The amount that will be allocated to this programme is 10 million euros. Part of this money can be spent on *in situ*-conservation, e.g. keeping domesticated animal breeds or cultivated plant species in the farmed environment where they have developed their distinctive properties.

Future agriculture will have an increasingly multifunctional role. It will have to produce foodstuffs which are healthy and diversified, it will have to safeguard the material base on

which our food and drink industry can build its future, and it will have to contribute to keeping our countryside alive and a challenging place in which to live.

However, it will also have to compete on an increasingly global market. In this competition, the trust of consumers is essential. Consumers have to be confident that the food produced is not only healthy and of high quality, but also that it has been produced in a sustainable way, respecting the environment and animal welfare, using ethically sustainable methods. Regional and local food contribute to achieving these goals. Regional and local food not only improve and diversify the quality of food, but also contribute to maintaining and developing our cultural heritage, and in this way enhancing the trust of consumers in producers.

Kristina Jonäng, Chair of the Environmental Committee, Region of Västra Götaland, Sweden:

There is a new curiosity about food in Sweden these days, especially about local and regional food. It is continuously growing stronger, also – or maybe even especially – in the region of Västra Götaland. This is the part of Sweden where the automobile industry has its base, and it is also a centre for the petrochemical industry. We produce logistic systems and medicines, just to mention a few other sectors. But apart from being a leading industrial region, Västra Götaland is also at the forefront when it comes to food production. In fact, this is one of very few regions in Sweden that is self-sufficient in foodstuffs such as pork, milk, eggs, potatoes and a number of vegetables.

We are proud to have an agricultural sector that is able to compete on the market with its products. However, this ability can never be

taken for granted. Maintaining and developing competitive power is a big challenge for us, as well as for all other regions in Europe. For Västra Götaland it is not a viable strategy to compete with low price products. Quality is the key – as it has been for a long time for products from Swedish companies, be it mobile phone systems, cars or food products. I am convinced that the crucial issues for agriculture and the food industry in the future are *how* we produce and *where* we produce. The demand for locally and regionally produced food will continue to grow. The challenge for the future is to develop strategies that facilitate local and regional food production while maintaining competitive power on a market where the focus on price is very strong and where quality is not always recognised or appreciated.

Increasing consumer awareness is crucial in making this happen. Consumers must be more aware in their choice, and must learn not only to compare price, but also quality, and must be encouraged to ask far more questions when shopping. I am convinced that every consumer taking this path will eventually find that very often local and regional products are the best buy. I would also like to stress that decision-makers in the public and the private sector are also consumers in this respect. The purchasing of food for schools, hospitals, restaurants etc. represents an enormous economic power that could bring about profound changes in the market.

Addressing a conference on design the other day, I said that I can think of no other sector having a bigger influence on people – except the food sector. Another way to put it is that food is also a matter of design. Manufacturing and marketing local and regional food products involve creating identities, not only through the products themselves, but also through the packaging and the way the products are mar-

keted. By doing this in a clever way, we also strengthen the cultural identity of our regions, which in turn can support development of tourism and other sectors.

Staying competitive, creating jobs, strengthening the economy, finding ways to fund the public sector, improving the health and the well-being of the population – these are all main concerns of politicians and civil servants in every European region. It is my belief that most efforts are of little use if we do not first of all focus on what we eat and drink. If we do not exercise care in this very basic and essential aspect of life, it will not only affect our health, but also damage our culture and eventually the possibilities for sustainable development in our society as a whole.

As a politician I will do my best to deal with the concept of local and regional food, trying to find ways to use it as a stepping stone for developing Västra Götaland further. I am convinced that you have come here in order to gain knowledge and inspiration to do the same in your regions.

Carlo Petrini, International President of Slow Food:

When I came to this meeting I was convinced that we would discuss necessary and obligatory changes in our food production. However, the discussion has so far been very open. In my opinion, there is no room for an open discussion on this point. Local and regional food production is a must, not because we love good old times, but because the process of industrialisation has come to an end.

Recently, the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment report was published. Based on an initiative by UN Secretary General Mr Annan, 1 400 scientists worked for four years to eva-

luate the state of the world's ecosystems. The overall conclusion of the report is that the impact of the industrial system on global ecosystems is enormous. The Secretary General of the FAO, Mr Diouf, has declared that if the figures presented in the report are accurate, we are at the brink of extinction of the species of Man within the next 300 years. Three hundred years is nothing in the history of mankind!

Just to mention a few facts from the report:

- ❶ More land was converted to cropland in the 30 years after 1950 than in the 150 years between 1700 and 1850.
- ❷ Water withdrawal from lakes and rivers has doubled since 1960, and 60% of this is for agricultural use.
- ❸ Since 1960, flows of biologically active nitrogen in terrestrial ecosystems have doubled and flows of phosphorus have tripled. More than half of all synthetic nitrogen fertilizer ever used on our planet has been used since 1985.
- ❹ Atmospheric concentration of carbon dioxide has increased by 32% since 1750, primarily due to combustion of fossil fuels and deforestation.
- ❺ Over the past few hundred years, humans have increased the species extinction rate by as much as 1 000 times over the natural background rate.

The loss of biodiversity has also been enormous in the agricultural system. In the USA 80% of the tomato varieties cultivated at the beginning of the 20th century have now disappeared, as have 92% of lettuce varieties and 86% of apple varieties. Of 5 000 varieties of potatoes previously cultivated, only four remain today. The figures have been published by the FAO, and they reflect a tremendous change in our agricultural system – or rather, a totally different concept.

The processes of industrialisation has pla-

ced profit over politics, economy over culture, quantity over quality. We are facing a technocratic dictatorship. The relation between Man and Nature has been destroyed.

In this state of affairs, it might seem like a joke to speak about gastronomy, but paying attention to what is on our plate is actually a good place to start. A gastronome who is not an environmentalist is stupid. And to me, an environmentalist who is not a gastronome is boring.

Food is not simply fuel, we also eat for pleasure. Food gives gratification, social interaction and a happier life. So food must be good, but what does 'good' entail? It is a cultural concept - what tastes good to an Italian might taste bad to a Swede. The definition of 'good' is different in every part of the world and gastronomes have to respect these differences.

The second element of food quality is that food must be clean. It must respect the environment and animal welfare and it must not contain dangerous chemicals. However, when it comes to food quality, we must make sure that requirements are not only forced onto small farmers, but also onto industrial-scale producers. Yesterday I visited a small-scale Swedish farmer, producing a marvellous cheese made from fresh cows' milk. The farmer was afraid that the authorities would find out that he did not pasteurise his milk and stop the production. On my way back from the farm I stopped at a gas station, where I found a number of pre-fabricated, plastic-packed meals containing long lists of more or less unbelievable additives on the shelves. Now, that is what is ruining humanity, not farm-produced cheese from fresh milk!

The third element of food quality is that the food must be fair. Nothing has been said about this aspect at this meeting so far – the focus has been almost entirely on the consumer. But if we don't pay farmers a reasonable wage, we will not

achieve acceptable food quality. In other words, we must be prepared to pay more for our food otherwise the consequences will be disastrous. In Italy, 50% of the population was engaged in agriculture in 1950. Today the figure is 4%. The corresponding figure for Sweden is 2%. To turn this trend, we must restore the dignity of farmers. In fact, Europeans have never paid as little for food as they do today. In Italy, a family spent 32 % of its income on food in 1930. Today only 17% of the household spending is on food – which can be compared to, for example, 12% spent on mobile phone costs. This is, for very basic reasons, not a healthy relationship. What we eat becomes part of us, mobile phones stay outside.

We can live without many things, but not without food. This is why food must be put back in focus of our attention. The relationship between Man and Nature must be restored. That is why we should return to slow food, slow production. This is not archaeology or nostalgia, it is thoroughly modern.

We need to revise the concept of food quality, we need a new philosophy and we need to spread it in society. This requires political initiatives, which in turn require a strong grass-root movement able to put pressure on politicians. This movement must also be a cultural movement, striving to restore the links to our food history. To do this, there must be an exchange of knowledge between science and farmers. To date, we have seen very little of such dialogue. We also need to create networks for cooperation between small-scale farmers in different parts of the world. And, last but not least, we need to change our view of consumers. As concerns food, calling people consumers is destructive, indicating that they consume nature and the environment. Instead, let us call them co-producers. Eating should be regarded as the primary act of agriculture. And for producers,

agriculture should be seen as the first act of gastronomy.

Only if we base our action on this philosophy we bring about change. But even then, it is by no means certain that we will win.

Mary Ann Sörensen, Federation of Swedish Farmers, LRF:

The Federation of Swedish Farmers wants the countryside to develop and the producers to prosper. Small-scale production is a very important part in making this happen. So those who might think that a large organisation like ours is not supporting small-scale production are quite wrong.

One thing that small producers will benefit from is the reform of the EU Common Agricultural Policy. Decoupling farm subsidies from production creates possibilities for farmers to develop their business into new areas. The Rural Development Programme coming into force from 2007 also will make money available for investment for small producers.

For an organisation where farmers previously sold their products solely to the large producers' cooperatives without ever meeting the consumers, the strong emerging interest in food and its origin was initially a bit of a shock. Everybody was interested in food, people were talking about food, where it came from and how it had been produced. In an ever more globalised world this is of course a very positive trend.

However, meeting this consumer interest is not a simple thing to do. Farmers' markets create great meeting places for producers and consumers, but they cannot be organised everywhere. We have to accept that the bulk of the food supply in modern society is through large retailers and we have to work to improve their

role as providers of local products and as meeting places between producers and consumers. Consumers must let shopkeepers know what they want, and producers must market their products to the retailers. Some years ago our organisation ran a project called 'Farmer in the Shop', where producers met consumers in food stores and discussed their products with them. The farmers really liked doing this, but the interest from the large food retailers faded out. Maybe it is time to give this idea a second try.

Promoting local and regional food production must never be achieved at the expense of food safety. Failures in food safety would be extremely harmful for any product, regardless of its taste and origin – no consumer buys more of a product that has made him/her ill. Of course producers today are well aware that food safety is not the responsibility of the authorities, but primarily of the producers themselves.

A new set of laws, the Hygiene Package, will come into force next year. The new regulations will probably make things easier for small food producers, even if they do not explicitly mention small-scale production. They relate to the complexity of production and the risks involved and require that every producer has a programme to identify the risks and take proper precautions. I hope that all member states will interpret and impose the rules in the spirit in which they were developed, and see the Hygiene Package as an opportunity to facilitate and promote small-scale food production.

During this conference we have heard a number of good examples of how to support local food production from all over Europe: Farmers' markets, harvest festivals, producers forming cooperatives, developing logistic solutions, educational activities in schools etc. We know from experience that such things can be done and that they are often very successful. And in most of these cases, it is true that what

works in one European country will work in most other countries too.

It may be true that small is beautiful, but big can be beautiful too. Farmers who want to expand their production should of course be encouraged to do so, while those who want to remain small should feel free to choose their means of production. Quality is not primarily a matter of scale, but regardless of the scale of production it does not come cheap. Consumers must be prepared to pay to make quality production possible. Our organisation has made numerous consumer surveys asking people what they are willing to pay for increased animal welfare, environmentally sound products etc. Many claim that they would be willing to pay considerably more for such products if they were offered in the shops.

As we have seen during these days, there is a lot of potential. Farmers are able and willing to produce traditional, high quality products for local and regional markets, and consumers want these kind of products. The challenge is to connect producers and consumers, to create a market and make it grow. One obvious obstacle is the logistics, but once a problem is identified it can be solved, and it seems we are well on our way to doing that.

So producers – keep going! Get together with your neighbours, network, learn from examples in other regions and countries.

Authorities have to make sure that laws and regulations do not unnecessarily inhibit the development of small-scale food production. They should be simplified as far as possible, not only in the field of food production but also tax laws, regulations on employing staff etc.

Consumers have to make informed choices and keep demanding products of good quality.

FACTS AND FINDINGS

Logistic opportunities for local suppliers to municipal units

Kaj Ringsberg, University of Lund, Sweden, presented a case study on developing the opportunities for small rural producers to supply local towns with food. The town studied was Falköping, in the western part of Sweden. It has about 30,000 inhabitants, half of whom live in the rural area around the town. There are numerous small-scale farms in the area. There is a fairly high degree of logistic understanding or culture in the town, since it has long been a railway hub and a centre for transportation in other ways, supported by a number of big companies.

This study is part of an EU programme on rural development, connected to the Interreg North Sea programme.

As concerns the food supply to municipality units like schools, retirement homes etc., there are 14 producing kitchens and 29 receiving kitchens in the town of Falköping. The total annual purchasing is about 2 million euros. All in all, there are incoming flows from 15 main suppliers to about 40 receiving points in the town. At present, each supplier separately supplies every receiver without any kind of coordination whatsoever.

Discussions with the staff at the receiving points revealed a number of problems with the present system, basically caused by too many deliveries and deliveries at unsuitable times. For example, there were risks related to trucks moving in school yards during school hours. Ordering and receiving orders was regarded as too time-consuming. Lack of local suppliers was also identified as a problem. Furthermore,

the staff had no relation to their suppliers since their job was to cook, not to handle transports and logistics.

One way to bring about change is to do what the automobile industry or the big food retailers did decades ago: establish some kind of coordination point between the suppliers and the receivers. However, this is not enough. Transports are currently so cheap that in most cases such coordination in itself is not economically feasible. For most Swedish towns and cities, coordinating transport through some kind of hub would in fact increase the total costs for external transport, since big suppliers include transport costs in the price of the goods. Buying only the goods and not the transportation normally does not give price reductions. For big suppliers, controlling the transport is a way of controlling the market.

A key issue therefore is to find ways to separate purchasing of food products from purchasing of transport. Small producers do not have transport facilities themselves. Reorganising transports and creating transport possibilities for small scale producers normally leads to lower prices due to increased competition and including this factor in the calculations would perhaps make it possible to reach break-even. However, in the case of Falköping, the number of local suppliers could be increased by at least 50% and the purchases from local sources by at least 20%. Doing this, and synchronising local production with consumption, would make it possible to make large savings in the producing kitchens. Among other things, it would reduce the need for storage (supplies can be stored by

the producers and delivered right on time), and simplify the administration of deliveries.

There are about 270 municipalities authorities in Sweden. This study of one of them shows that there are great opportunities for local food producers to increase their sales to municipal units if the logistics are in place. Local food producers must consider logistics, just as the suppliers to the car industry did ten years ago.

Animal transport and animal welfare

Girma Gebresenbet, Department of Biometry and Engineering, Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, presented some basic facts on the transport of farm animals. Animals are transported for a number of reasons, including breeding, fattening, sport and other activities. However, most transport of animals is for bringing animals to slaughter. Transport of animals is increasing at all levels – national, EU and international – for the same reasons that are causing the transport of all kinds of goods to increase: globalisation of markets, centralisation of production systems and low transportation costs. At the European level, the EU export support policy encourages animal transport. Labelling is another important factor. Since consumers want to be assured that they are buying locally produced meat, a lot of animals are transported from producing countries to slaughter in other

countries. Labour policy is another underlying factor of importance. Italy, for example, has the largest slaughter system in the EU and reducing animal transport would cause great problems for this industry, which in turn would cause unemployment problems etc.

At present about one million farm animals are transported every day of the year within the EU (transport in the ten new member states not included). Of the annual total, there are 45 million cattle, 95 million sheep, 225 million pigs and 300 000 horses. Of the cattle, 30 million are transported for slaughter. Sixty-seven percent of all animals are transported by truck. In addition, about 300 000 cattle are transported from the EU to the Middle East annually. Some of the main flows in the European trade with animals are shown in Tables 1 and 2.

An example of a typical animal trade flow is the export of calves from France to Spain for fattening, and later from Spain to southern Italy (Sicily) for slaughter. It is very common that animals are transported at least twice during their lifetime.

During the transport from the EU to the Middle East, animals are often not treated in an ethically acceptable way. According to EU regulations, they should be allowed to rest after a maximum 24 hours on the road. However, unfamiliar animals are then often mixed and the overall conditions are not favourable for the animals.

TABLE 1 EXPORT AND IMPORT OF CATTLE

Country	Export	Import
Italy	86 600	1 682 400
Spain	119 400	673 600
France	1 500 000	194 300
Holland	102 900	656 400
Germany	645 100	177 500

TABLE 2 EXPORT AND IMPORT OF PIGS

Country	Export	Import
Holland	3 285 000	482 000
Denmark	1 519 000	0
Spain	1 236 000	1 266 000
Germany	1 087 000	3 188 000
Belgium	975 000	895 000
Ireland	405 000	0
France	254 000	546 000
Italy	0	1 069 000

One could define animal welfare as a state free from:

- Thirst, hunger and malnutrition
- Discomfort
- Pain, injury and disease
- Abnormal behaviour
- Fear and distress

For a start, transport of an animals means that it is often separated from its group, which in itself is a stress factor. Loading, the confinement on the truck, the vibrations during the transport and being put together with unfamiliar animals from other farms are other stress factors. Unloading, the unfamiliar environment at the abattoir, the handling there and stunning process itself further add to the stress.

Of course the duration of the transport is of great importance. Studies carried out by Professor Gebresenbet and colleagues have for example shown that the heart rate of calves exposed to vibrations similar to those during truck transport increases and remains high during the length of the

exposure (se Figure 1). This means that the vibrations induce negative stress. An overall conclusion of this series of experiments in eight European countries is that there is a rapidly increasing negative effect on animal welfare when the transport time exceeds six hours.

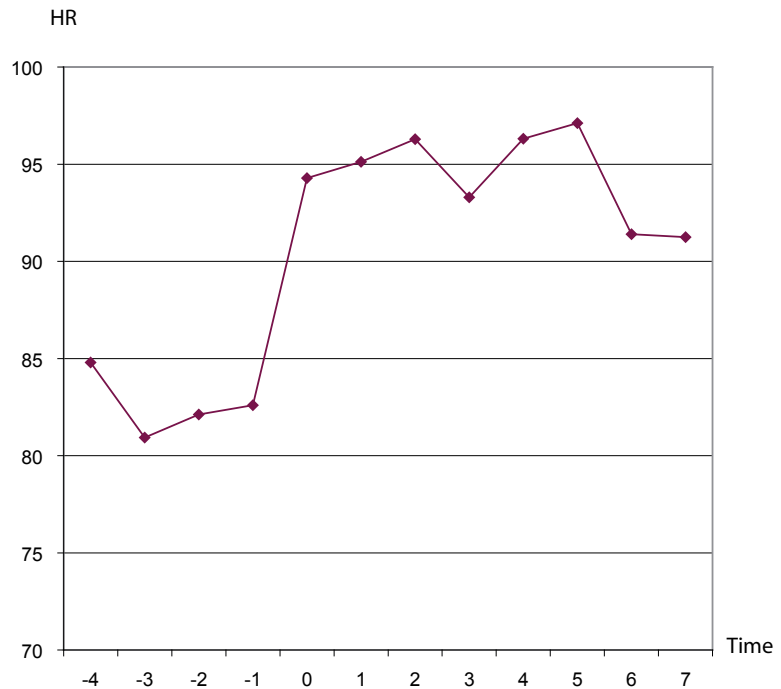


Figure 1. The effect of vibration on heart rate of calves.

There are a number of alternatives to improve animal welfare in relation to transport:

- ❶ Minimising stress-inducing factors through improving animal transport logistics system and handling methods (improve handling, loading and unloading facilities, driving performance, optimised activities at the abattoir)
- ❷ Avoiding or minimising transport by developing a mobile or semi-mobile abattoir
- ❸ Promoting local and regional abattoirs

Concerning the last point a case study has been carried out in order to investigate the benefits of small-scale abattoirs in relation to animal welfare, meat quality and the environmental impact from transport. In this study, the large abattoir in Uppsala, Sweden, was compared to a planned small abattoir in the town of Ockelbo, about 150 km north of Uppsala. Within a radius of 50 km from Ockelbo there are 430 farms. The total number of slaughtered cattle is about 18 000 annually, which corresponds to a meat production of about 9 tonnes. This is more than sufficient to supply the population living within a 50 km range from Ockelbo.

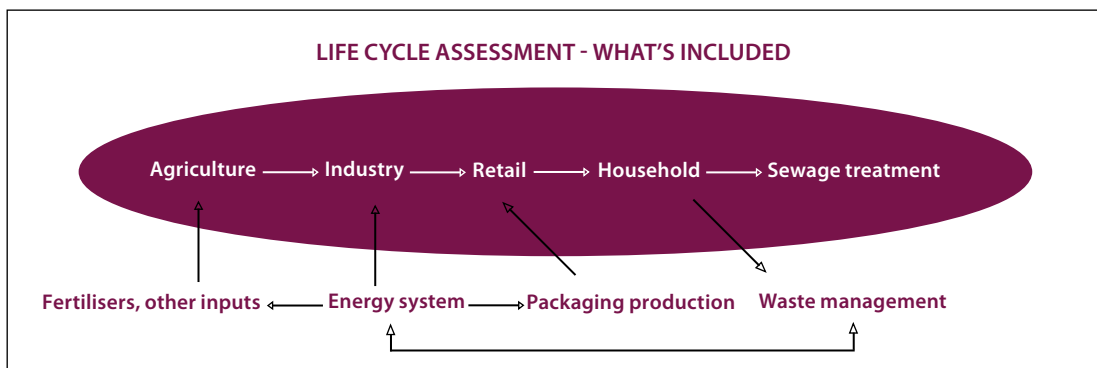
The transport work needed to collect animals from five farms in the region and deliver them to the Uppsala abattoir was calculated and compared to delivery to a local Ockelbo abat-

toir. It turned out that a local abattoir would reduce the total distance driven and the transport time by more than 50%. Thus the local abattoir would improve animal welfare, but also meat quality. Of course, environmental impact from truck emissions would be reduced correspondingly. Furthermore, it would decrease the risk of spreading disease, which is actually a major negative aspect of animal transport today. Since the majority of consumers prefer locally produced meat, it would also increase consumer confidence in meat quality.

Overview of the life cycle environmental impact from food products

Ulf Sonesson, Swedish Institute for Food and Biotechnology, discussed local and regional food production from an environmental point of view, using life cycle analysis (LCA) as an assessment tool.

Sustainable food should be healthy, safe and affordable. It should supply the nutrients we need and it should be produced in an environmentally sound way and with social responsibility to animals, humans and local societies. Local and regional food production may have advantages in many of these respects, such as animal welfare, impact on local society and



Ulf Sonesson Figure 1. To make fair assessments and comparisons, all emissions and resources used throughout the life cycle of the product have to be taken into account: agricultural production, processing, transport, retail and consumption.

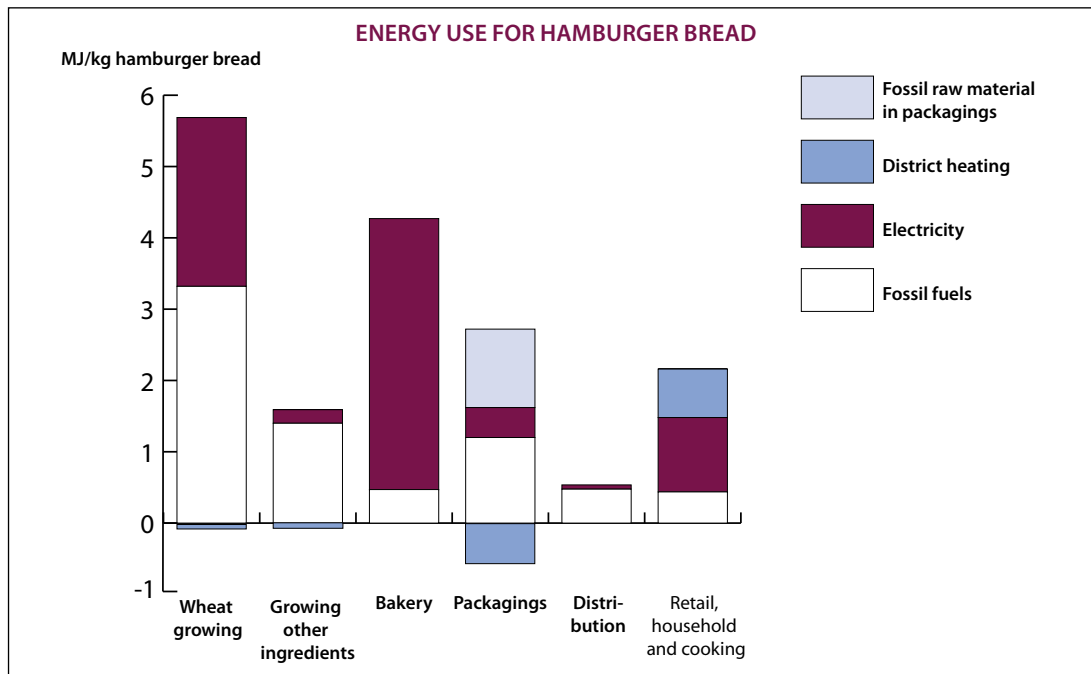


Figure 2. Energy use for hamburger bread, baked and deep frozen. A rather typical pattern of energy use for processed food. Growing of the wheat and barley is the major energy user here. Source: *Maten och miljön, LRF.*

health (fresher food supplies). As concerns the health aspect, however, one must keep in mind that microbes are by no means less harmful when growing on local or regional food.

As concerns the environmental aspect, which is the topic here, transport is of course an important factor, but it is not the only relevant issue when it comes to environmental impact from food production. To make fair assessments and comparisons, all emissions and resources used throughout the life cycle of the product have to be taken into account: agricultural production, processing, transport, retail and consumption (see figure 1). This presentation is based on such life cycle assessment covering the entire food chain. There is an ISO standardised method for life cycle assessment which makes it more transparent and facilitates comparisons between different studies.

The Swedish Institute for Food and Biotechnology (SIK) has conducted LCAs for a wide variety of food products, including beef, cod, lettuce, milk, bread, baby food and chicken meal. A few examples of the results are shown in figures 2-4).

As can be seen from the graphs the pattern varies rather widely between different kinds of products, but it is still possible to draw some general conclusions. LCAs for most kinds of products reveal that most of the environmental impact occurs during use of the product. The pattern for food products is in most cases different; the environmental impact is high in the early parts of the food chain (agriculture) and sometimes in the end (waste management), while the environmental impact in between (processing, retail and use) is often limited (figure 5).

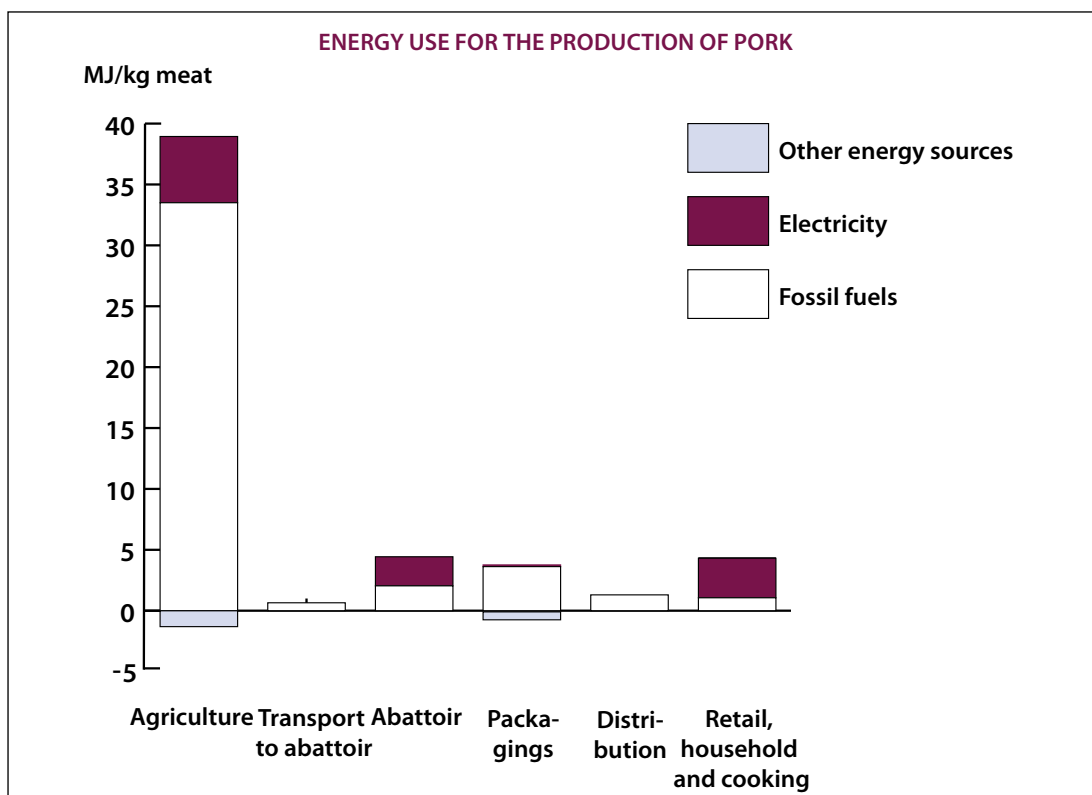


Figure 3. Energy use for production of pork. Most of the energy is used in the agricultural sector, the major energy source being fossil fuels. Source: *Maten och miljön*, LRF.

Agriculture is the most important phase for most products, and that is true for eutrophication, acidification and other types of pollution and often for energy use as well. However, there are exceptions, for example fruit and vegetables air-transported over very long distances. Energy use is often more pronounced in later steps of the food chain, such as processing, transport, sometimes retail and often the household phase. Packaging is often important, but varies greatly between different product types. Transport is not always important for the total environmental impact of food products.

A general conclusion from LCAs of food products is that raw material utilisation is criti-

cal. Since the environmental impact in the production phase is often high, wasting raw material later in the chain is of course costly from an environmental point of view.

A comparison between large-scale food production and local and regional food production from an LCA perspective indicates both pros and cons for local and regional food. Among the pros are less transport, small batches (which means smaller losses due to failures) and possibilities for more accurate supply due to closer links between consumer and producer. However, there is also an inevitable drawback in small-scale production: smaller batches mean less efficient production in terms of energy

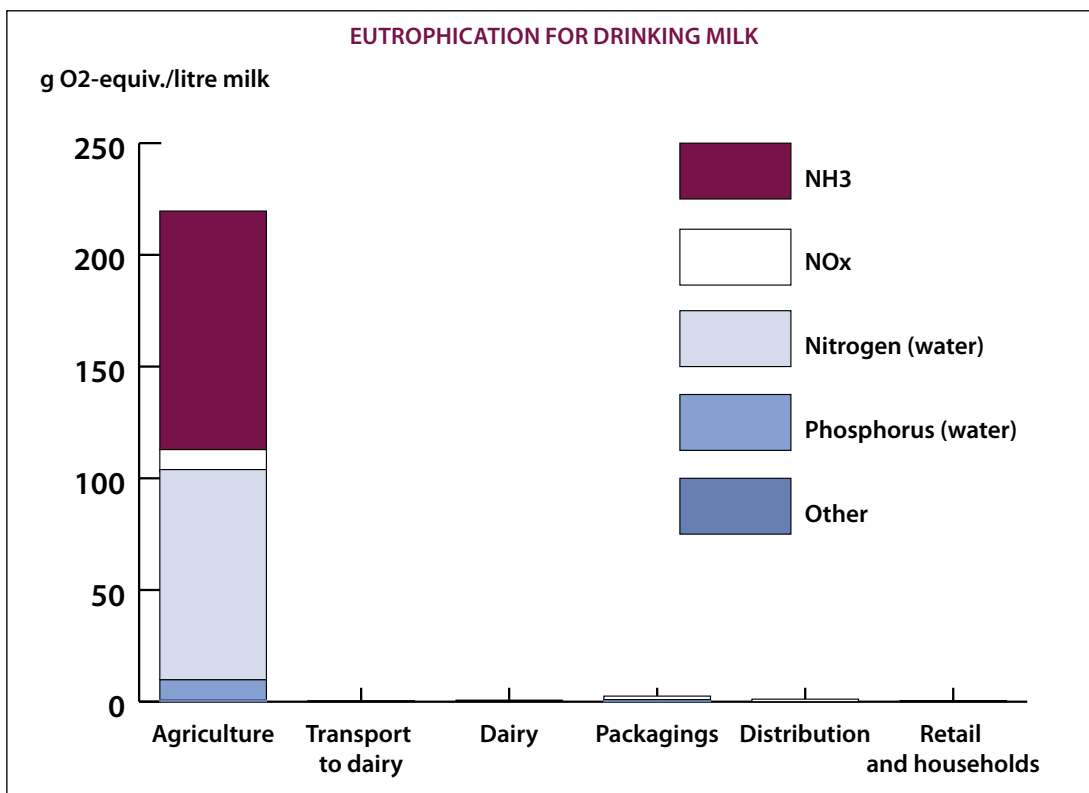


Figure 4. Eutrophication for drinking milk. This pattern is typical for most agricultural products. Source: Maten och miljön, LRF.

use, water consumption for cleaning and larger losses, which in turn generates more waste.

It is important, therefore, to keep in mind that short transport alone does not make small-scale food production environmentally sustainable. Production efficiency throughout the chain is critical for any kind of production, regardless of scale, when it comes to minimising environmental impacts and achieving sustainability. In fact, because of the inherent drawback with small-scale production mentioned above, local food producers may have to work even harder than bigger producers with technological improvements, management, logistics and product development.

Environmental impact

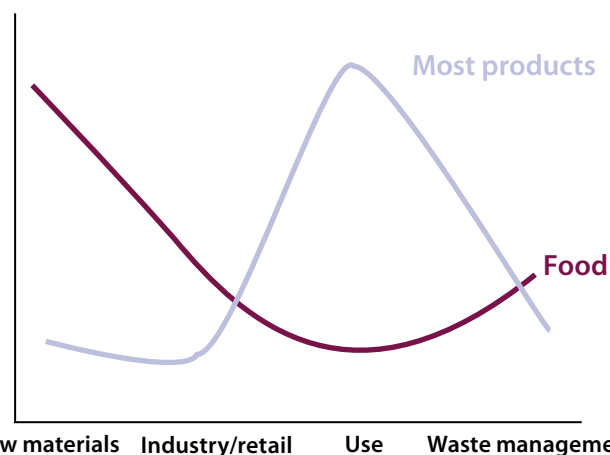


Figure 5. The pattern for food products is in most cases different; the environmental impact is high in the early parts of the food chain (agriculture) and sometimes in the end (waste management), while the environmental impact in between (processing, retail and use) is often limited.

Swedish regional food culture – meal construction during the Swedish EU presidency 2001

Richard Tellström, University of Örebro, Sweden is carrying out research on local and regional food and how the food heritage is commercialised. As part of this research, Tellström has looked into how regional food culture was used during Sweden's EU presidency in 2001. How did professionals within the food and catering sector work with civil servants and sponsors to create a locally and regionally profiled meal culture during this event?

Tellström stressed that the issue to a large extent was about construction of a food culture. The food culture in contexts like EU ministerial meetings is created for a purpose. Food, meals and banquets are useful political symbols, just as they have been throughout history. For example, one picture in the medieval Bayeux tapestry shows the banquet celebrating the victory at the battle of Hastings. Dinners are good memories, and can be used to make political events remembered.

Of course when states are involved the food must be of high quality but, even more importantly, of high status. Some food items and meals are more politically correct than others. When President George Bush visited the US troops in Iraq in 2003, he was photographed carrying a dish of high symbolic value, the Thanksgiving turkey. Another example of a high-ranking politician hijacking food for political purposes is President Putin of Russia, who created a photo opportunity serving tea to a lady during the presidential election campaign of 2004. Of course he chose a typically high status Russian meal, not a meal typical for immigrants, minorities or socially lower classes.

The eleven ministerial meetings during Sweden's EU presidency were held in different places all over the country. In its strategy pa-

per for the presidency, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs wrote that it was "urgent that the organisation of the meetings in Sweden be characterised by punctuality, efficiency, facility and unostentatious hospitality, and should express Swedish character, preferably through local elements related to the meeting's geographic location /.../". The hub of the process in which the menus for the ministerial meetings was decided was the Department of Foreign Affairs and the Presidency Secretariat. The ministries in charge of the meetings were consulted, as were the Swedish Farmers' Association and the National Culinary Team. There was an ongoing discussion among these bodies on what could be served at the meetings and what should be ruled out. Ultimately the decision was in the hands of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Ostrich farming has been a growing sector in Sweden for more than 20 years, and there are now ostrich farms in all parts of the country. Yet ostrich meat was not approved for ministerial meeting menus as it could not be considered Swedish meat, despite the fact that it is produced in Sweden. For the same reasons shitake mushrooms, grown in the big iron mines in northern-most Sweden, were rejected as an ingredient. Herring is abundant in the seas along most of the Swedish coast and it is the basis for a vast number of traditional Swedish dishes. The problem is that it is also very cheap, and the Ministry's opinion was that such a simple dish could not be served. However, after an intense discussion with the other bodies involved, herring was finally approved.

The discussions eventually defined three culinary regions in Sweden, each with its own set of regional products:

- ☉ **The northern game region** with regional food items like elk, reindeer, whitefish, wild berries and Västerbotten cheese.
- ☉ **The cultivation region** with game bird,

chicken, meat, garden berries and clove cheese.

- ❶ The fish region along the coastline of southern Sweden with cod, turbot, Baltic herring, deer and garden berries.

Conveniently, Stockholm – where most of the meetings took place – was the only part of the country where all three regions overlapped.

This might seem like an unproblematic approach. However, for farmers in any region producing other things than the ‘approved’ regional specialities, it is not. It means they are not put on the map of local and regional food culture. Another problem is that if for example elk or wild berries are defined as parts of the northern regional food culture, they cannot be part of the culture in other regions, despite the fact that they are abundant in forests all over the country.

The overall reason for all this is that the picture of regional food culture communicated must be simple and easy to understand. In this case a small group defined local and regional food, thus creating and repeating food culture myths or stories. The stories are essential – if the food does not have a good story it is not good food in this context.

A basic conclusion from the research is that the food during the Swedish ministerial meetings was state culture – a tool for political image building – rather than food culture. In a wider context the emerging and strongly EU-supported local and regional food culture trend can be interpreted in the same way: as part of a government construction of a common European cultural heritage.

Further reading:

Tellström, R., Gustafsson, I.B & Fjellström, C. (2003). Food Culture as a Political Tool – meal construction during the Swedish EU-chairmanship 2001. Food Service Technology 3:2, 89-96

Protecting regional food products in Europe

As a result of a growing consumer interest in regional food, producer demands and also a new political orientation towards the support of small farmers, the EU has adopted two council regulations on developing an protecting foodstuffs in 1992 (2081/92 and 2082/92). **Carmina Ionescu, National Food Administration, Sweden**, gave an overview of these regulations. They provide a general framework, while the detailed rules on the actual features of the products are to be defined by the producers. The objectives of the regulations are:

- ❶ To encourage diverse agricultural production
- ❷ To protect product names from imitation
- ❸ To help consumers by providing information concerning the characteristics of products

Council regulation no. 2081/92 is about protection of geographical indications and designations of origin for agricultural products and foodstuffs (PDO and PGI, see below). To put it simply, it regulates the protection of names of food products.

Regulation no. 2082/92 provides a scheme on certificates of specific characters for agricultural products and foodstuffs (TSG, see below). It deals with protection of traditional recipes.

Regulation no. 2092/91 concerns organic production of agricultural products and foodstuffs. It defines and protects the name of a method of production.

PDO (Protected Designation of Origin) can be given to products closely associated with the area whose name they bear. To achieve PDO-status the quality or characteristics of the product must be essentially or exclusively due to the particular geographical environment of the place of origin. The production and processing of the raw materials must take place in

the defined geographical area whose name the product bears. Examples of PDO-products are *Prosciutto di Parma*, *Camembert de Normandie* and *Aceto Balsamico di Modena*. There are currently over 300 PDO-protected food products in Europe.

PGI (Protected Geographical Indications) can also be given to products closely associated with the area whose name they bear, but the requirements are less strict and the link of a different nature than for PDO. PGI products must be produced in the geographical area whose name they bear, but the raw materials used may come from other areas. The product should be of a specific quality, reputation or other characteristic. Examples of PGI products are *Jambon de Bayonne*, *Bayrisches bier* and *spettekaka* from Scania in Sweden. There are currently 200-300 PGI-products registered.

TSG (Traditional Specialities Guaranteed) can be used to protect a product with 'specific character' distinguishing it from other products of the same category. Only traditional products (with a historical record of minimum 25 years) can be labelled.

The third regulation (2092/91) lays down community rules for the production of organic products. Organic products can also be protected as PDO, PGI and TSG and marketed under these labels, provided they fulfil the requirements

and are registered.

There are labels for all three protection schemes (Figure 1). The use of these labels on the products is optional.

Producers who want to protect their products under PDO, PGI or TSG must write an application defining the product according to precise specifications in regulation 2081/92. The application should be sent to the relevant national authority (in Sweden The National Food Administration), where it is processed and eventually forwarded to the EU Commission. At the EU level the application undergoes a number of control procedures. The application is made public in the official journal of the Union and anyone concerned can object to the application within six months of publication. Once product names are protected they are listed in the register of Protected Designations of Origin and Protected Geographical Indications. This registration gives producers an exclusive right to use the registered name. However, this right is not only for the producers who made the application, but for any producer who fulfils all requirements specified in the application.

The register of protected products is available and searchable via the internet: http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/agriculture/foodqual/quali1_en.htm



Figure 1. There are labels for all three protection schemes, PDO, PGI and TSG.

The role of the consumer in the competitiveness of local food in Sweden

Imported food products are gaining market share in Sweden, where three large chains of retailers control over 70% of the market. All three have a strong focus on price and promotion of their own private labels. Organic products can fit well into this strategy, but local products do not.

Lena Ekelund and colleagues at the Department of Plant Science, Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences have conducted research where Swedish consumers were asked to rank different bundles of properties linked to products – such as origin, production methods and price. The result showed that price was the single most important attribute. The perceived utility of origin (domestic or imported) was greater than the utility of production method (organic or conventional).

Consumers were also asked to write down their associations to four different product properties: ‘Swedish’, ‘Imported’, ‘Conventional’ and ‘Organic’. The sample was 145 randomly selected consumers.

The most common associations to ‘Imported’ turned out to be ‘spraying’ and ‘chemicals’, mentioned by 24.8% of the consumers. Other frequent associations were ‘long transportation’

TABLE 1 ASSOCIATIONS TO LABELS SWEDISH AND ORGANIC

Associations	Swedish	Organic
Quality/taste	✓✓✓✓	✓✓
Chemicals/safety	✓	✓✓
Local/less transport	✓	
Environment		✓
Health		✓
High price		✓✓



Comparing associations to the properties ‘Swedish’ and ‘Organic’ it was concluded that quality was associated with Swedish products to a higher extent than to organic products, while taste was a property only associated with organic products. Photo: LivsmedelsSverige.

(20.9%), ‘doubt, unsafe products’ (15.0%), ‘bad, worse, uneven quality’ (14.4%), and ‘cheap’ (8.5%).

‘Swedish’ was primarily associated with ‘good, best’ (24.2%), ‘quality’ (22.9%) and ‘grown locally, short transport’ (20.3%). Other common associations were ‘safe, reliable’ (10.5%) and ‘less chemical spraying’ (8.5%).

Comparing associations to the properties ‘Swedish’ and ‘Organic’ it was concluded that quality was associated with Swedish products to a higher extent than to organic products, while taste was a property only associated with organic products. ‘Safety’ and ‘less chemicals’, on the other hand, were more frequently associated with ‘Organic’ than ‘Swedish’. ‘Local,

less transportation' was only associated with Swedish products, while 'environment', 'health' and 'high price' were exclusively linked to organic products (Table 1).

An overall interpretation of this is that to Swedish consumers 'Swedish' is good enough. Swedish food products fulfil the demands Swedish consumers have concerning product properties apart from 'health'.

A similar study was based on in-store interviews. One hundred consumers who had bought carrots were asked if the origin of the carrots was of importance for their choice. Well over 50% stated that it was of importance that the carrots were grown in Sweden, 8% said that it

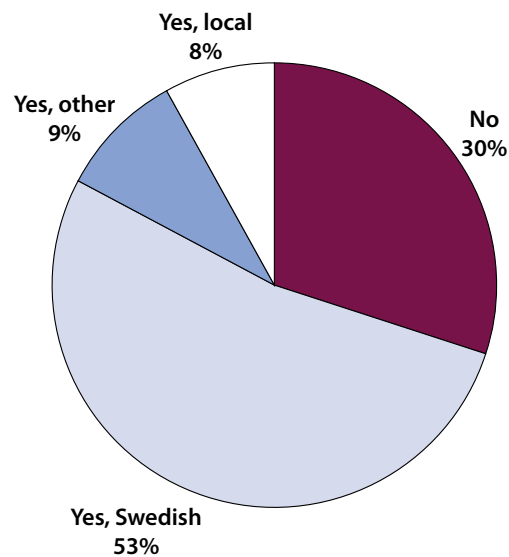


Figure 1. Is the origin of carrots important? Answers from 100 in-store interviews. Elin Karlsson 2005.

was important that they were locally produced, while 9% had other preferences. To about one third of the consumers, origin was of no importance (Figure 1).

Consumer attitudes to local and regional food

For the last five years, the Countryside Agency in the UK has been running a programme called Eat the View, aimed at creating a market for products that support rural development and sustainable land management. It tries to encourage people to buy products that can have a positive influence on how the land is managed. In doing this, it is important to know what consumers want and what makes local and regional food attractive to them. **James Petts, The Countryside Agency, UK**, presented some results from research carried out by the agency in this field, primarily drawing from two recent studies:

- Consumer Attitudes to Eat the View – Parts 1 & 2 (IGD, 2002)
- Consumer Attitudes to Sustainable Local Products in Yorkshire and the Humber (MORI/Brock Lyndhurst, 2004)

The first of these two studies found that most consumer decisions on what to buy were based on self-benefit, i.e. value for money, taste or convenience, rather than altruistic reasons. Most consumers had an active interest in food production, but this did not always affect purchasing behaviour. Consumers were most likely to change behaviour for self-interest reasons, e.g. health, risk avoidance, taste, etc. Perceived health benefits from fewer pesticides or additives were the main reason cited for buying organic products, while supporting the local community and farmers and freshness were the main reasons for buying local food.

The second study, carried out in the English regions of Yorkshire and Humber, found that about every second consumer was interested in where food comes from and that one in six was very interested. The interest was highest amongst women, older people and the most affluent groups. There was a similar pattern in

consumer attitudes to how the food was produced. However, the interest in production methods was slightly higher than the interest in origin – which is a different result than that presented by Lena Ekelund. When it came to purchasing, however, consumers were more likely to chose ‘local’ over ‘sustainable’. People related most to the economic aspects of ‘sustainable local products’ (jobs, farm incomes etc.).

In addition to this, a lot of relevant knowledge on British consumer attitudes can of course be drawn from research carried out by sources other than the Countryside Agency. This is just a few examples:

- ❶ Twenty-six percent of the public have a strong interest in seeing restaurant menus identify food that has been locally produced. (*Tourist Attitudes Towards Regional and Local Foods, MAFF/Countryside Agency, 2000*)
- ❷ In 2001, 43% of people were ‘very worried’ about the use of pesticides, fertilizers and other chemical sprays, while 59% were very worried about the effect of livestock production methods (this was at the height of the BSE crisis). (*Survey of Public Attitudes to Quality of Life and the Environment 2001, DEFRA, 2001*)
- ❸ Fifty-nine percent of the population are interested in buying locally-produced food. (*Local sourcing, IGD, 2002*)
- ❹ Over half of consumers would look for a label saying local or giving the country of origin when looking for a local product. (*Consumer Watch: Local & British Foods, IGD, 2003*)
- ❺ Half of consumers try to buy British when shopping for meat. A further 44% of adults try to buy British when shopping for fruit and vegetables. (*Attitudes Towards Buying Local Produce, Mintel, 2003*)

- ❶ Nineteen percent look for ‘ethical’ info on food labels, 23% for country of origin. (*Consumer Attitudes to Food Survey 2004, FSA*)
- ❷ In 2004, 84% of consumers were prepared to pay a little extra for products that meet higher ethical standards, provided that quality was good (compared with 62% in 1994). (*Shopping with Attitude, The Cooperative Group, '04*)
- ❸ Seventy percent of consumers want to buy local food and 50% want to buy more than they presently do. This was a 10% increase compared with 2002. (*Local and Regional Food Opportunity, IGD, 2005*)

By and large, national market research in this field in Britain suggests that value, convenience and safety are aspects that consumers expect, or take for granted. Consumers have a positive but often passive attitude towards production issues and provenance. There is a significant gap between attitudes and actual behaviour. Furthermore, the impacts of purchasing decisions are rarely considered at the point of purchase. On this point, however, there is a difference between customers in a large supermarket compared to those in a local shop or a farmers’ market.

In addition to the picture emerging from market and consumer research, there is first-hand experience from producers suggesting there is a small but growing sector of consumers with purchasing patterns in favour of food with known provenance.

Most of the research reports mentioned here are available at the research section on www.eat-the-view.org.

MAKING IT WORK - THE GOOD EXAMPLES

Supporting local and regional food in England

Simon Johnson, Department of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA), UK, outlined what is done in the UK, or more accurately in England, to encourage a thriving local and regional food sector, starting from the recommendations of a Policy Commission report on the future of food and farming. The Commission was set up following the outbreak of foot-and-mouth disease five years ago, and its purpose was to advise the UK government on how to establish a sustainable, competitive and diverse farming and food sector.

The central theme of the Commission's recommendations was reconnection: reconnecting farmers with the market and the rest of the food chain, reconnecting the food chain with a healthy and attractive countryside and reconnecting consumers with what they eat and where it comes from. The report stated that one of the greatest opportunities for farmers to add value to their output was to build on the public's enthusiasm for locally and regional produced food, and the Commission made a number of specific recommendations in this area.

The government accepted these recommendations and developed a strategy for supporting regional quality food production. The headline objective was to create a flourishing high quality regional food sector in England. The more specific target was to increase the turnover of the quality regional food sector by 25% by 1 April 2008.

In developing the strategy, it became important to define the difference between local and regional food. One reason for this is that direct public fund-

ing for the local food sector is not allowed according to EU regulations, while support for regional food, focusing on quality, is permitted.

Regional food is food produced within a particular geographical area (whether administrative region, county, town or other appellation) and is marketed as coming from that area. It may be sold within or outside that area. Regional food is perceived to have a distinctive quality because of the area or the method by which it is produced. Regional food products must be distinctive in some way, differentiating them from, and raising them above, other products falling within the same category by virtue of specific characteristics concerning the raw materials used, the composition of the finished products or the production and processing methods used. In practice the distinction between regional and local food is not always clear-cut. Much quality regional food is also local. Most quality regional food producers start off by selling most of their production in their locality, and many remain trading at this level.

The strategy focused on assistance in three areas:

- Trade development – projects aimed at encouraging retailers and food service industry to source more regional food and promote it themselves
- Consumer awareness – projects designed to increase consumer knowledge of the rich variety of regional food available and the beneficial effects of buying it
- Increasing competitiveness – business and financial planning, providing market intelligence etc.

The mechanism for providing this assistance was Food from Britain, an agency that would develop a programme of support for the regional food sector at national level. The agency is now well into the third year of this support programme. (For an overview of what has been achieved, see Jane Wakeling's presentation)

There are many similarities between quality regional and local food in terms of the benefits they can deliver, the problems and barriers and the need of support. Nevertheless, it is also true that many of the best solutions to supporting local food sector are, by the very nature of the sector, best decided at the local level. However, that is not a get-out clause for national governments, which should focus on adding value at the national level, principally through the national grant schemes, the public procurement initiative and spreading Best Practice.

There are a number of barriers to developing the local food sector. Not surprisingly, one of these is funding. In England, the main source for funding in this sector is under the Rural Development Programme, which is part of a wider EU programme. Funding has been provided for farm-based processing projects, marketing, establishment of farmers' markets, farm shops, box schemes and other outlets.

There is a need to improve infrastructure to overcome the problems of distribution and the availability of processing facilities. One particular concern in England has been the lack of small and medium-sized abattoirs, which has acted as a brake on the supply of local meat. DEFRA has been working with the meat sector to overcome this obstacle.

Lack of cooperation between producers has been another problem, also identified in the Policy Commission report. DEFRA is developing a strategy to encourage more cooperation between farmers providing specialist advice and training. This will, among other things, play an

important role in identifying examples of Best Practice.

Access to markets is of course crucial. DEFRA has encouraged farmers' markets by stressing to local authorities the benefits they can bring to the rural economy and to town centres.

Another area in which DEFRA is trying to create opportunities for local producers is through public procurement. The Public Procurement Initiative is designed to encourage public sector bodies, which spend £1.8 billion on food and catering each year, to procure their food in a manner that promotes sustainable development, and to encourage more small-scale local producers and suppliers to compete to supply them with food.

Another way forward is to encourage social enterprises, business with a primary social objective, whose surplus is principally reinvested for that purpose, in the enterprise or in the local community. Producers are encouraged to consider social enterprise solutions and use them alongside government funding solutions.

Food from Britain

The British government strategy for sustainable food and farming sets out how industry, government and consumers can develop a competitive, sustainable future for the UK agriculture and food sectors, while at the same time contributing to a better environment, improved nutrition and public health and more prosperous communities. Within this framework, in 2003 the Department of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs produced a new strategy for the quality regional food sector. The aim of the strategy was to encourage a flourishing, high quality regional food and drink sector in England.

Jane Wakeling presented **Food from Britain**, which is a vehicle for this strategy. It is

a government development agency, responsible for delivering British food exports and quality British regional food and drink. Ninety-five per cent of the work is about exports, and the focus on regional and local food is a fairly new task.

The market for local and regional food in the UK is becoming increasingly dynamic. Recent research by the Institute of Grocery Distribution shows that 70% of British consumers want to buy local food and 49% want to buy more than they currently do. So the demand is clearly there. The research also shows that 'freshness' is the overwhelming reason for buying local and regional food. The most popular product categories are vegetables and fruits and other primary or speciality produce.

Food from Britain is now in the final year of a three-year programme of support for quality local and regional food and drink. Britain has a long and rich tradition of quality food production which means there is an abundance of products and producers to work with. The programme is focusing on trade development, consumer awareness and business competitiveness. The annual budget is one million pounds.

Most of the work has been done in the area of trade development, in both a national and international perspective. An example is encouraging and supporting the participation of local producers in national and international trade shows. In many cases, local producers cooperate to present their products at such events.

From a trade perspective it is essential to engage with retailers and supermarkets, since they control a large part of the market. From the retailers' point of view it is important to know their customer base on a store-by-store basis, in order to identify opportunities to expand the local and regional food market across their store portfolios. It is not the task of Food from Britain to put local and regional food on the retailers' agenda. However, where a retailer

has identified an opportunity in this field, there is also an opportunity to assist them in identifying products and producers.

Another working area is food service, which is a new and evolving opportunity. Food from Britain is supporting this market by working with key food service companies. Among other things the agency has produced a guide specifically for small and medium-sized producers on how to do business with the food service market.

A guide to British regional food and drink has also been produced, primarily to support the annual British Food Fortnight.

On the agency's website www.regional-foodanddrink.co.uk over 3 000 producers of local and regional food and drink have been brought together. Retailers and consumers can search by category and find the nearest producer of the foodstuff in which they are interested.

In the field of support for consumer activities Food from Britain has a marketing agreement on food tourism with Visiting Britain. It also supports events, in particular British Cheese Festival.

Less has been done on the business competitiveness side, but one achievement within this area is the introduction of bench-marking, which makes it possible for small producers to identify their strengths and weaknesses compared to other producers. This in turn makes it possible to identify ways to help small producers to improve. A number of guidelines for specific areas have been produced. One example is a Best Practice guide on distribution.

Bauernherbst in Salzburgerland, Austria

Bauernherbst, an annual harvest festival in the Austrian region of Salzburgerland, was presented by **Karl Riegler, Salzburger Land Tourismus, Austria**. The festival begins by

the end of August and runs until the end of October. Last year about 2000 different events took place as parts of the festival and 80 villages were involved.

The project started ten years ago, basically as an attempt to prolong the summer tourist season, to increase the number of visitors in the Salzburg region and thereby increase the earnings for the tourist sector and all enterprises involved in the project. The project tried to do this by creating a unique selling point for the region as a tourist attraction, while at the same time developing something of interest and value also for the local population.

Bauernherbst is based on three pillars: local food, local culture and local festivals.

As concerns local food, there was already a market for traditional products when the project started, but it has served as a strong force to further develop production and marketing of regional food. Bauernherbst has its roots in local culture, since harvest festivals have a long tradition in the region. Such festivals have been taking place in some villages for ages, and the project



The local festival Bauernherbst in Salzburgerland, Austria.

merely stimulated other villages to create or rejuvenate events in the same tradition. Thus one can say that Bauernherbst is something different from

the more or less constructed folklore events created as showpieces for tourists around the world.

Bauernherbst invites visitors to take part in a piece of genuine local culture, to celebrate the harvest season together with farmers and other local people in the villages.

The events provide opportunities for local farmers to sell their products. Restaurants serve local specialities based on local products. Local craftsmen demonstrate their techniques and sell their products. In addition, there is a wide variety of cultural events such as dance performances and concerts. To a large extent local harvest festivals in the villages are the hubs of all these activities.

Bauernherbst is a brand controlled by the Regional Tourist Board, which is responsible for marketing the event. The marketing budget is at present 300 000 € per year, of which one third is covered by the Board itself. The participating communities are responsible for another third, while external sponsors cover the remaining part.

Every participating village signs an agreement with the Tourist Board concerning their responsibilities. A minimum requirement is that each village arranges at least one local harvest festival.

During the ten years that have passed since the project started, Bauernherbst has contributed substantially not only to developing the regional food sector, but also to the local economy in general. Last year the event attracted 360 000 visitors. The additional revenue during the ten years that Bauernherbst has been in operation is estimated at 34 million €. In addition economy has improved greatly for tour operators, hotels and other enterprises in the tourist sector. This far Bauernherbst has generated about 400 000 additional overnight stays in the region.



Sapere dai sapori – knowledge from flavours

The idea behind the project **Sapere dai sapori** (knowledge from flavours) in the Tuscany region of Italy developed through the flavours of the region itself. The leader of the project, **Maria Stefania Bardi Tesi, Tuscany, Italy**, describes these flavours as simple and genuine, but at the same time rich in inimitable tastes and captivating perfumes linked to the seasons. *Sapere dai sapori* is a marketing project which works while having fun. It offers remunerative possibilities for anyone proposing activities or taking part in it: farmers, craftsmen, commercial laboratories, restaurants, taverns and every citizen of the region offering hospitality to a culturally curious visitor.

The principal elements of the project are:

- ❶ Food education for children
- ❷ Environmental education in relation to agriculture
- ❸ Promotion of products, resources and the region itself
- ❹ Food equilibrium
- ❺ Creation of a genuine local identity that can be proudly presented externally

The first of these elements is extremely important and a primary focus of the project. Children are the men and women of tomorrow. Children are free from prejudices, they are curious and their tastes are not determined. And what wonderful promotional messengers they are! First their families absorb and transmit their message within their circle of friends and relatives, who in turn transmit it to their families and so on.

A central element of the project is a model of informal education that can be summarized in three points:

1) Children train their sense of taste. While discovering new ways of eating they gain knowledge on subjects with more interest

and curiosity. This provides a fun and unusual way of learning. They discover their region, its products, its habits and customs, thus increasing their consciousness of their own historical and cultural identity.

2) The children themselves become teachers of their families and friends. They ‘move’ the adults and lead them to places of production, cultivation and to the laboratories. The adults learn and spread their knowledge among friends, at workplaces etc.

3) Children act unselfconsciously and instinctively as community leaders with the evident positive result of a peaceful social integration among different ethnic groups. This provides a long-awaited possibility to promote national projects working to enable intercultural exchange among schools, not only between regions but also between countries, using the language of food as a tool.

Specific objectives of the educational activities include promoting a healthy lifestyle through a healthy diet, promoting the typical quality products of the region, increasing the understanding of their historical and cultural context and improving understanding of the relationship between man, animals and the environment.

The *Sapere dai sapori* project is addressing schools on all levels from kindergartens to high schools. Some of the food items covered are the chestnuts, olives and olive oil, grapes and wine and herbs and fruits of the forest. Each topic includes both theoretical and practical elements, including preparing typical dishes, tasting the food prepared and comparing it with the regular everyday food.

To look closer at one of these topics, for example ‘Life of the wine’ includes understanding the annual work in the vineyard - such as pruning and trimming - in order to optimize the harvest. Last year, the grade 5A students of

one of the schools in the region took part in the making of a local wine from one of the vineyards in the area. The students even designed a label for this wine, which is now served at the tavern *Il Boccon do Vino* in Pistoia.

Students working with the chestnut theme take part in the harvest and visit the *metato*, the traditional stores where chestnuts are dried before being ground to powder. Later they prepare typical local products based on chestnut meal, such as *castagnaccio* (chestnut cake) and *pattona* (sweet polenta).

Sapere dai sapori offers the same activities to adults as afternoon or evening events and often followed by tasting, buffets or themed dinners. Sometimes these activities are also combined with cultural events before or after the activities on the farm.

For further information visit the website of the project: www.saperedaisapori.com (in Italian).

Supporting regional food in Austria

A recent survey has shown that 81% of the Austrian public consider food as important or very important, and half the population prefer Austrian cuisine over other food cultures. The second most popular cooking style is Italian cuisine, preferred by only 4% of Austrians. This strong preference for local and regional food forms the background to the creation of The Food Academy, presented by **Sabine Flöcklmüller of the Austrian Board for Agricultural Products**. Target groups of the project are consumers in general, with a specific focus on amateur cooks. The aims of this project are:

- 🍷 To make consumers more aware of Austrian food culture
- 🍷 To help them discover the variety of food tastes and identify the different qualities of food



One of the billboards in the campaign Regional specialities in Austria.

- 🍷 To make consumers aware of their own eating and drinking habits

The project offers a variety of educational evening events in urban areas. The themes for the events can be for example beef or cheese. During a three or four hour session participants are given information on the products and their nutritional values, tips on buying and storing food and demonstrations by cooks on how to prepare the products. Guided tastings are another type of event in this framework. In addition, longer intensive courses, covering 1.5 days, are arranged. They take place in the regions where the product in focus is produced – for example beef courses in Lower Austria and cheese courses in Voralrberg – and consists of a mixture of lessons, cooking and excursions to local food producers.

School of Taste is a second marketing strategy for local and regional food in Austria. It is targeted at young people in order to develop their awareness about food and to change their dietary habits. In this project, teachers are provided with teaching material, like the

Geschmackskoffe (taste box), which enables them to give taste lessons. Pupils become detectives of taste and receive certificates of their skills. In advance to the activity the school teachers are trained by food scientists to use the material. The project also offers a three-day activity for 10-15 year old pupils. This takes place out of school. The activities includes excursions to farmers and other food producers, tasting and comparing food and cooking together.

Regional Specialities of Austria is a campaign carried out in cooperation with the Ministry of Agriculture. The aims of this project are:

- ❶ To position Austrian farmers as producers of high quality food and preservers of typical regional food, food culture and landscape
- ❷ To highlight the regions where food processing take place
- ❸ To show the connection between landscape and food production

The main activity of the project is to place product billboards along all main roads in Austria, informing consumers which agricultural products are produced in the different regions.

To become a Region of Speciality (Genussregion) in Austria, certain criteria must be met. Not only must the region be a leading producer of a traditional or typical product, the product must also be offered at regional restaurants and marketed at festivals in the region. Today, 24 regions have achieved the status of Genussregion in Austria. The project will continue for two more years and by that time about 70 regions are expected to have become Regions of Speciality, each of them linked to a specific local food product.

Furthermore, two books have been published as part of the project. Specialities of

Austria gives an overview of 340 food manufacturers in Austria, describing their work and their products. The second book is a guide for gourmets, listing the 1000 best producers and shops for regional food in the country.

Slow Food and the Suovas Presidium

Slow Food is a movement taking initiatives of different kinds to promote gastronomic culture, develop flavours, educate members and consumers and protect food and provisions threatened by extinction. As a vehicle for the protection of excellent gastronomic food products threatened by, for example, industrial standardisation, hygiene regulations, large-scale production or distribution or environmental degradation, Slow Food has created the Ark of Taste. The Ark is intended to contain products that have the possibility to reach the market and become commercially successful. Globally, there are around 750 products on the Ark today.

A presidium project is a rescue action for a specific product on the Ark. It is locally based and aims at improving the conditions for the threatened product in question. There are about 260 presidium projects in progress at present.

Ola Buckard, Slow Food Sweden and Lars-Ove Johnsson, Swedish Sami Organisation, presented the first presidium project in Sweden, the Suovas Presidium, which started about a year ago. *Suovas* is smoked innerloin of reindeer from the Swedish part of Sapmi, the territory of the Sami people. Sapmi covers the northern part of Norway, Sweden, Finland and the Kola peninsula of north-western Russia. There are about 17 000 Samis in Sweden, of whom about 3 000 are engaged in the traditional livelihood, reindeer herding. There are around 250 000 reindeer in Sweden. Annual per capita consumption of reindeer meat in Sweden is currently only about 0.3 kg.

Suovas, meaning smoke in the Sami language, is a traditional method of preparing and preserving reindeer meat. The meat is salted for three or four days and then cold-smoked for at least eight hours over open fires in traditional huts, or nowadays in smoke huts designed for this purpose. The firewood used is from deciduous trees such as alder, birch or willow. Most Sami prepare the entire steak in this way, but as regards the Suovas Presidium product, it has been decided that only the best part of the steak, the innerloin, should be used. After cooling, the smoked meat is ready to eat. It is very tender and has a strong aromatic flavour. If it is left to air dry a couple of week it becomes harder and is then called *goikke suovas*. All in all, *suovas* is a unique Sami product with very strong bonds to Sami culture and history.

The Suovas Presidium came to the conclusion that some kind of standardisation of the manufacturing process and more efficient marketing of the product was needed. Cooperation was established with a project run by the Swedish National Sami Association, aiming at improving marketing of reindeer meat in general. A common strategy was developed, in which the spearhead products *suovas* and *goikke suovas* would be used to communicate the positive qualities and values that reindeer and reindeer husbandry represent: the ethnic connection, the ethical and ecological means of production and the high nutritional value of the meat. The primary market for the products is local and regional – Sapmi and its surroundings. Swedish restaurants were identified as a secondary market and food stores in general as a third.



Suovas - when the meat has cooled down it is ready to eat.

Suovas is a seasonal product, the season beginning at the autumn slaughter in November, when fresh meat becomes available. A key factor for success is of course maintaining high quality and reliable deliveries. Unfortunately there have been some problems in this area, due to fierce competition among the producers. Producers prepare their product in different ways with different results, which causes problems for some customers, especially restaurants. An important part of the project therefore has been to develop the quality of the product. An important tool in this is the production manual, a document describing all parts of the process from reindeer herding to the final distribution to the customers. All producers wanting to take part in the project have to sign a contract committing themselves to follow the production manual. The outcome of this process has been so successful that the Swedish Sami Association now plans to create similar standards for all kinds of reindeer food products intended for marketing in the wake of *suovas*.

In parallel to this process the efforts to increase attention for *suovas* have been intensified. The Slow Food international magazine has published an article on the product and Sami culture. *Suovas* received an enthusiastic reception at last year's *Salone del Gusto*, a large Italian food fair attracting more than 200 000 visitors. A tasting event at the fair was sold out months in advance. After this, the project was presented on the domestic arena through events that got extremely good media coverage.

A number of Stockholm restaurants have committed themselves to keeping *suovas* on their menus, and the amount of the product sold this way has very quickly increased to several hundred kilograms per year.

Future tasks on the agenda of the Suovas Presidium and the producers at the moment include protecting the product name *suovas* as a

PDO (Protected Designation of Origin) under the EU system for protection of foodstuffs. A common premium brand for *suovas* and other high quality reindeer products is under development. This also includes developing new products and agreements on production manuals for all products.

Culinary Heritage Europe

Caroline Jacobsson presented Culinary Heritage Europe, an initiative aimed at promoting small-scale food production in Europe by means of cooperation. The project was started ten years ago by the Swedish region of Skåne and the Danish region of Bornholm. In its early years the project was funded by the Nordic Council. Over time the project has developed into a network of regions and food producers all over Europe. Today, 23 regions are members of the network, each with a number of food producers involved. In Skåne, for example, 60 producers take part in the project.

Interlinked with this is also a EU Interreg project (Interreg IIIc) with the same name. It started in 2003 and involves only the public bodies in the network.

The overall aim of Culinary Heritage Europe is to promote regional development through culinary heritage in the participating regions. The results are reached through exchange of experiences, mutual strategies on tourism development, logistics, distribution and realisation of political-strategic cooperation.

There are four working areas in the project:

- Management and coordination of the network and the projects.
- Common strategies and inter-regional partnership for development within the small-scale food sector.
- Culinary experience within the tourism industry.

🍷 Business development and logistics.

The regions can choose in which of these areas they want to participate.

Overall, exchange of experiences between regions is a central part of the project and the network. One method used is 'Best Practice', which to put it simply means to highlight very good examples in different areas for others to learn from. The project has also worked with SWOT analysis (SWOT = Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) for small-scale food production. Some of the regions had never performed this kind of analysis before.

In general terms, one of the opportunities identified is of course the growing interest in regional and local food. Other opportunities relate to regional identity, traceability and food safety regulations. Some threats are centralisation and the large and ever-growing scale of the food sector, the race for ever lower prices and the limited competitiveness of many small-scale food producers.

Within the project a number of measures to take advantage of these opportunities and counter the threats have been identified:

- 🍷 Increasing awareness among consumers, but also among decision-makers, of the importance of food as a means of regional development.
- 🍷 Cooperation between producers and public bodies. This has repeatedly been identified as a key factor in our SWOT analysis.
- 🍷 Creation of Best Practice examples showing the positive effect of small-scale producers
- 🍷 Increased exchange of experiences (study trips).

More information on the Culinary Heritage Project on www.culinaryeurope.org

Labelling to Protect and Promote Regional Food - The Case of Vålåloffen Cheese

Vålåloffen is a regional cheese from the Swedish region of Jämtland/Härjedalen. It is a hard washed-rind cheese, made from cows' milk. Its production requires manual handling, which does not fit into today's large-scale industrial dairy production. For this reason, the production of Vålåloffen cheese ceased and it disappeared from the market some 30 years ago, despite being very much appreciated by consumers.

Charlotte Lagerberg Fogelberg, Centre for Sustainable Agriculture, Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, reported on the recreation of Vålåloffen cheese and the project that has been set up to support this product and protect it by labelling it with Protected Designation of Origin (PDO). Vålåloffen may indeed become the first Swedish product to get the PDO-label.

Milk and meat production dominate the agricultural sector in the region of Jämtland/Härjedalen. Farms are generally fairly small, usually basing their economy mainly on forestry. The agricultural use of commercial fertilisers and pesticides is very limited compared to other parts of the country.

Due to a number of mergers, the Vålåloffen brand is today owned by Milko, which is one of the major dairy producers in Sweden and owned by its milk producers. A producers' consortium involving Milko as well as a number of small farms has been formed. Milko has made the brand name available to the consortium, which is also open for new producers to join. Through the consortium, small-scale producers of the cheese get access to Milko's large distribution system and to the market while the large producer receives goodwill by offering consumers a popular product which it cannot produce itself. The experiences from this cooperation are very positive and there is a great potential in

large and small producers joining forces around products in this way.

The central part of the PDO-application to the EU is the product specification, which includes: the name of the product, a product description, description of the geographical area, the link between the geographical area and the product quality, the method of production, the link between the production method and the geographical area, and the inspection body and labelling to be used.

It is of course crucial that the producers agree on the product specification, since it actually defines the product and the rules the producers must work by. This is one of the reasons why forming a consortium of producers is essential. Furthermore, it is important that the producers themselves take active part in developing the product specification, and it is important that the producers are aware of this responsibility before a project of this kind is started.

Another experience from the application process is the difficulty involved in finding documents and references supporting the statements made in the product specification. This seems to be caused in part by an excessive ambition to clear out archives instead of saving old documents from defunct agencies and companies. Because of tougher economic conditions, both private and public companies and agencies no longer find themselves able to maintain archives, especially those taken over in mergers and from dissolved companies. There is a risk that documents which are very valuable in the promotion of more POD applications have been lost during this process. For instance the company Riksost (National Cheese) handled the cheese market of Sweden for several decades and among other things arranged annual national cheese competitions. However, Riksost closed down some ten years ago and its archives are gone. Another sad



Vålåloffen cheese may indeed become the first Swedish product to get the PDO-label. Photo: Mikael Karlsson, Grafisk Design.

experience is KMÄ (Swedish Control Agency for Dairy Products and Egg), which for instance tested and certified all cheese on the Swedish market. Only fragments of its archive remain. Fortunately, private citizens in their capacity as employees and from their own interest have sometimes saved documents and photos which would otherwise have been cleared out and destroyed.

Bondens egen – an internet-based market place for local food

John Higson, Street Stockholm, Sweden, presented *Bondens egen* (Farmers Own), the world's first fully integrated internet-based system for sales and marketing of locally produced food. The system is user controlled – there is no external third force controlling the system. It is run on a non-profit basis and it is free to use for groups of producers and consumers in any region. In Stockholm, where the system was first developed, 180 farms supplying local produce are enrolled. The buyers include restaurants, schools, retirement homes etc.

The elements of the system are:

📍 **A database of local producers** with information on every farmer. The customer can see who the farmer is, the method of production, what he is offering and what it costs, plus a host of other information. It is updated 2-3 times a week, basically working as a farmers' market on-line.

📍 **An online warehouse system**, personal for every producer. Producers can differentiate for every products to be sold within the system and outside. The system is very easy to update for produces and updates automatically when orders are placed. Producers must keep their lists of products updated, otherwise the system blanks them out.

📍 **A marketing bank** with information on every producer, pictures, logos to download etc.

📍 **A distribution planner** Producers are grouped into different geographical areas, with a distribution hub in every area. Products are co-distributed to reduce transportation costs and create a single delivery. The introduction of these distribution hubs has reduced transportation costs in Stockholm to about a quarter of the previous level.

📍 **An ordering and invoicing system** Restaurants and other buyers place one order and

receive one invoice even though products are bought from a number of producers. The invoice is paid through a secure encrypted connection to the bank and the system automatically splits up the payment between the producers on the invoice.

📍 **A harvest planner**, which is the catalyst of the system. It reveals what the customers want produced and informs customers about seasonal products. It can also, for example, help plan the sale of a whole animal instead of just cuts of meat.

📍 **An environmental indicator**, showing the cost to the environment of producing and delivering the product. This part of the system is still under development.

Users log-in on the site with a user-id and a password. Once in, they can seek products by name or by category (organic, biodynamic etc.). The system present a list of what is available and also what the producer can offer apart from the product in the original search. Customers can also seek specific producers and find out what they have to offer.

Buyers have easy access to their earlier orders, which makes it easy to use standard orders and modify them. It is possible to place orders weeks, or even months, in advance.

When the order is placed, the system informs the customer of the total cost, the transport agent and the expected time of delivery.

A Stockholm restaurant with 40 or 50 suppliers of local products could previously spend a full work day a week placing orders by phone and fax to each supplier separately. Doing the same thing on the internet using Bondens egen does not take more than 15 to 20 minutes.

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Nr 9 Local and Regional Food *

The aim of the first European Conference on Local and Regional Food was to provide a forum for politicians, officials and representatives from the food production and processing industries to meet and discuss the future of local food.

The topics in focus were:

- ❶ The influence of EU and national policies on local food development and how to bring about changes
- ❷ How to connect the producers of local food with the consumers
- ❸ How to achieve profitability in local food production
- ❹ What are the qualities of local food?
- ❺ Why European collaboration and how can it benefit the production of local food?
- ❻ What are the environmental aspects of local food production?



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The Royal Swedish Academy of Agriculture and Forestry (KSLA) is a meeting place for the green sector. The Academy is a free and independent network organisation working with issues relating to agriculture, horticulture, food, forestry and forest products, fishing, hunting and aquaculture, the environment and natural resources, and with agricultural and forest history. We work with issues that concern all and interest many!