Limiting & enabling factors in farmers' collective marketing initiatives

Results of a comparative analysis of the situation & trends in ten European countries

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4 points

- Data basis & approach
- Present situation, trends: key contextual factors ... limiting; enabling
- Main forms of collective farmers marketing
- Perspectives ... research questions

Data basis & approach

- EU funded COFAMI project (FP 6)
- 10 country reports
  - Status-quo analysis & trends
  - Context factors
- Clustering: a) regions & b) types of initiative
- Cross-national comparative analysis
  - Perspectives
  - Support systems

Clustering of countries

- Central & Eastern Europe
  Latvia, Hungary, Czech Republic
- North-Western Europe
  The Netherlands, Denmark, Northern-Germany
- Southern Europe
  Italy, France
- Alpine Region
  Austria, Switzerland, Southern-Germany

Central & Eastern Europe: Political & economic factors

- Political change after 1990
  - Privatisation: land, production, processing & marketing
  - shift to food-safety & quality issues
- EU & internat. org. support collective actions
- Often larger farms successfully establishing initiatives
- Retail: multinationals ‘replaced’ state companies
  - small shops disappeared or did not develop
  - but: to compete with multinational enterprises, small-scale producers feel encouraged to join forces

Technical, social & cultural factors

- Often deficits in technical infrastructure, investments in & use of ‚new' technologies
- Collectivity 'enacted' top-down
  - Farmers mistrust cooperative ideas
- Advisory services often inadequate
  - reg. small-scale farming
  - reg. „new" or „alternative" approaches
- Often deficits in managerial knowledge
  - reg. collective action / multi-farm cooperation

North-Western Europe: Political & economic factors

- “Traditional” co-operatives still powerful players
- Regulations on food safety ⇨ mainly adjusted to large-scale industrial production
- Policy-driven programmes (as LEADER) ⇨ support the development of ‘new’ initiatives
- Farmer driven movements often pioneering
- Large retailers have limited interest in ‘alternative’ food qualities
- Low number of SMEs as strategic chain partners

Technical, social & cultural factors

- Use of internet / ICT ⇨ new opportunities for direct marketing & shortening of food chains
- Advisory services show growing attention for ‘alternative pathways’
- Sometimes territorial / cultural heritage lost & poor gastronomic tradition
  - but: slow revival of regional identities
  - & growing attention towards culinary traditions & locality
- Rural population ⇨ non-farmers moving in

Southern Europe: Political & economic factors

- Public attention on RD (e.g. food labelling)
- New institut. & regulat. frameworks encourage local actors to develop networks & projects
- Still many SME processors / retailers
- PDOs / PGIs very important
- LFA farmers actively search market niches, etc.
- Smaller scale, traditional, artisanal producers under pressure
  - powerful large retailers
  - hygienic & food safety standards

Technical, social & cultural factors

- Region-specific, artisanal, typical products play a major role
- Historically strong consumer awareness of food quality / gastronomy
  - but: new patterns of RD (incl. organic farming, agro-tourism) often started by newcomers / foreigners
  - “alternative” farmers often organise their own advisory service (for innovative solutions)

Alpine Region: Political & economic factors

- Still many SME processors / retailers
- Well developed AE policies
- Substantial dependence on governmental support
- High percentage of part-time farmers
  - Limiting (less economic pressure; limited willingness to invest)
  - Enabling (exposure, wider networks)

Technical, social & cultural factors

- Internet access well developed ⇨ good basis for internal & external communication
- Strongly developed environmental awareness ⇨ high share of organic & animal welfare products
- Increasing consumer awareness for high quality products
- Strong confidence in local / regional products

Main forms of collective farmers marketing

Initiatives ...

1. .. that aim at pooling volume
2. .. with a focus on high quality production
3. .. concentrating on regional food production
4. .. establishing regional marketing
5. .. that aim at direct prod.-cons. relations

Clustering / typology

- its needed as an analytical tool to cope with variation & diversity
- but: difficult because
  - dynamics: character of initiatives changes over time
  - overlap:
    - often different strategies are being combined
    - often initiatives have attributes from various types

Perspectives & research qestions

- Strong power of 'conventional' co-operatives
- Concentration in processing & retailing gives little space for 'alternative' movements
- Food hygiene standards often problematic
- Growing consumer demand for specific food qualities & products with regional identity
- SM farmers need to respond to power of retail
  - building alliances, networks
  - collective action (e.g. dairy farmers)

Thank you!

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