Limiting & enabling factors in farmers’ collective marketing initiatives

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

Karlheinz Knickel, Corinna Zerger, Gundula Jahn & Henk Renting
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 / PGIvs 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
Clustered / typology

- It's 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 questions

- 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!

- For more info:
  - Website: [www.ifls.de](http://www.ifls.de)
  - E-Mail: [knickel@em.uni-frankfurt.de](mailto:knickel@em.uni-frankfurt.de)
  - Project website: [www.cofami.org](http://www.cofami.org)