



Sustainable food systems

Short food supply chains and good practices from Hungary



Zsófia Perényi – Ágnes Szegedyné Fricz – Emese Gyöngyösi

SUSTAINABLE FOOD SYSTEMS

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There are many forms of short food supply chains available to those who wish to join an initiative, either as a consumer or as a producer, in order to support local food supply chains. In this publication, we aim to present some short food supply chain (SFSC) related concepts and national good practices.

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Introduction

Thanks to globalization, it is now possible to obtain almost any kind of food, regardless of season or growing region. This is due to modern cultivation technology, logistical networks and the free movement of labour, which means that food produced in remote parts of the world often travels a very long distance from the grower to the consumer's table. The standard retail model involves a complex web of logistical pathways, which is currently primarily employed by traditional retail marketing. The participants in this model of fresh vegetable retailing are agents, auctioneers, wholesalers and various retailers.

Although at first it may seem that the present system is to consumers' advantage, since they can easily get the food they want, and only need to visit a single supermarket to get it, in fact the picture is not quite so simple. The current model can be criticized on several points, as it makes it difficult for small farmers and small or medium-sized enterprises to access the market, while there are also major issues involving environmental pollution and food safety.

At present, the interests of small producers can best be represented by the expansion of short food supply chains (SFSCs), and their promotion to consumers. In this study, we describe the concept and forms of SFSC, as well as some Hungarian examples, hoping that the reader will also be encouraged to try these systems.



(Source: ÖMKi)

What is a short food supply chain?

Conceptually, the term short food supply chain (SFSC) means a fair livelihood for producers within their local community and a secure food supply for consumers based on trust and loyalty, thus making it an essential means of ensuring food sovereignty.¹

In most EU countries, the legal wording applied to SFSC follows the definition in the (since expired) Regulation/EU 1305/2013,² according to which an SFSC is a supply chain that

- affects a limited number of economic actors,
- ensures
 - cooperation,
 - local economic development, and
 - geographical and social relations between producers, processors and consumers.

Any SFSC comprises at least two actors: it always starts with the producer and always ends with the consumer. The food supply chain is shortest when producers sell their products directly, e.g. from the farm, market, distribution point, farmer's shop or in a community-supported agricultural system. Local products are either taken by the producer to the consumer (for example by home delivery), or the consumer goes to the producer to get them.



Figure 1: Zsankó Small Producer's Farm, and the producer's shop.
Source: Zalai Nyitott Porták (Zalai Open Doors)

Between the producer and the consumer, there may be a limited number (one, two, or perhaps three) intermediate actors whose task is to mediate between the producer and the consumer, if the producer is selling to a shop, bakery, pastry shop, restaurant, hospitality venue or catering

1 Food sovereignty is the right of peoples to ecologically appropriate and sustainably produced, healthy and culturally appropriate food, and to determine their own food and agricultural systems. It puts those who produce, distribute and consume food at the centre of food systems and regulation, rather than focusing on the demands of markets and corporations. It also protects the interests of future generations. (source: Declaration of Nyéléni)

2 COMMISSION IMPLEMENTING REGULATION (EU) 2021/73 of 26 January 2021 amending Implementing Regulation 808/2014/EU establishing the rules of application of Regulation 1305/2013/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council on rural development support to be provided from the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) *

kitchen. The most important criterion of SFSCs is transparency. Even if there are several intermediaries between the producer and the consumer, locality must still be preserved, and shared local values must be taken into account.

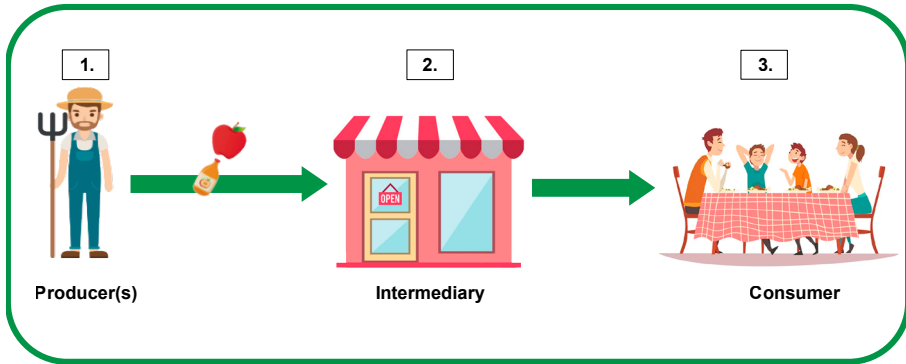


Figure 2: How do we interpret the concept of an intermediary? Source: Kislépték Association

Why is it important that as many producers as possible can connect to SFSCs, and that the fewest intermediaries position themselves in the chain?

From an *economic point of view*, local production and sales support the local economy (fair income, tax revenue) and self-employment, and promote job creation. From an *environmental perspective*, production methods on small farms are often more sustainable, and it is possible to create a circular economy (e.g. in terms of materials and energy). It can contribute to the maintenance of biological diversity, the well-being of animals, and environmental conservation. From a *social standpoint*, it ensures the preservation of local knowledge, and nurtures culture and traditions.



Figure 3: Ten key elements of SFSCs. Source: Source: Kislépték Association, 2021.

The small farms included in the SFSC are better able to react to economic, environmental and social challenges, and thus adapt to changes more easily, and change production or sales methods more quickly. The food supply is less vulnerable, since livelihoods tend to be multifaceted, standing on several legs. An SFSC works well when the consumers know the producers and a direct dialogue develops between them, which promotes mutual understanding and solidarity.

The rules of small-scale producing

In order to build trust between producer and consumer, it is essential that the actors in the chain follow the food-production hygiene rules. Pursuant to Article 13 (3) of Regulation 852/2004/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 29 April 2004 on food hygiene, member states may adopt national measures on hygiene rules for small-scale producers.

In Hungary, the rules for small producers are governed by **Decree AM 60/2023 (XI 15) on the hygienic conditions for small-scale, local and marginal food production and sales**, which came into force on 23 November 2023.

Decree AM 60/2023 enables safe food production to be carried out by a small producer under simplified hygiene conditions. The simplified hygiene conditions can be implemented in two categories, depending on the quantity of the basic product or food that the small producer wishes to produce.

Small producers belonging to category I and larger small producers belonging to category II can carry out their activities, within quantitative limits, according to Annex 3 of the decree, according to the conditions established in the decree.

Pursuant to the decree, small producers can sell directly from their farm, at a local farmers' market operating in Hungary, at a market, fair, or other occasional event, at an authorized temporary sales point, via mail order, at a delivery point and from a vending machine. Small producers can also sell to retail operators (e.g. stores that serve consumers), as well as to hospitality venues and catering establishments.

The decree enables the operation of **small-scale abattoirs**, which is a great help for local producers dealing with animal husbandry and processing.

One of the most effective ways for local producers to reach consumers directly is the **falusi vendégszta szolgáltatás** or 'village guest-table service'. This enables small-scale producers to present (not as a regular activity) foods related to domestic traditions or based on local ingredients and the activities relating to their preparation (not as a regular activity) in a village, farm, or rural environment. They can also offer the prepared foods for local consumption, and – with the exception of freshly slaughtered meat – sell them at the village guest table.

In addition to food production, small producers can also provide the following services to other small producers:

- smoking,
- drying, grinding, milling,
- winnowing and other crop cleaning methods,
- pressing of oil seeds, pasteurization.

In order to better understand the operation of SFSCs - and to encourage participation in them, either as a producer or a consumer – two forms of short food supply chains, community-supported agriculture and the shopping community system, are presented in detail.

Community Supported Agriculture

Community-supported agriculture, or CSA, is another less well-known form of short food supply chains, the special feature of which is that it requires long-term commitment from both producers and customers.

Community supported agriculture is a personal collaboration between producer and consumer, in which the risks, responsibilities and fruits of farming are jointly shared in a regulated manner as part of a long-term agreement.

In practice, this means that the farmer undertakes to produce for the members of the community throughout the year, while the customers undertake to receive the crops in exchange for a flat fee. In such '**share systems**', the farmer distributes all produce among members. Produce (whether fruit and vegetables, eggs, or animal products) can typically be picked up weekly, at the same time and in the same place, throughout the season.

The idea originated in Japan: in 1971, the philosopher Teruo Ichiraku started the organic farming movement. Three years later, he was joined by a group of housewives who were concerned about the effects of agricultural chemicals, and together they created the first cooperative agreement between producers and buyers. This solved the issue of food safety – consumers knew where and how food was being produced for them. These collaborations are called '**Teikei**' in Japan, which means 'food with the face of the farmer'.

The first examples of CSA in Europe and America first appeared in the 1970s, spreading through Germany, Switzerland, several other regions of Europe, and the United States of America. According to the 2021 data of Urgenci, the international organization of community farms, there are more than 4,600 community farms operating in 18 European countries, which serve nearly 500,000 consumers. According to their estimates, the number of customers who purchase food from such farms in the world today may be as high as two million, since the model can also be found in countries such as the United States of America and even China.

In Hungary, the Association of Conscious Consumers coordinates the community supported agriculture movement. Their last survey was conducted in 2022, at which point nearly 20 community farms supplied more than 1,200 families with fresh, local, seasonal organic vegetables, meat, eggs and fruit, which is estimated to mean more than 4,000 consumers including additional family members.

The basic principles of community supported agriculture

- **PARTNERSHIP:** The details of the cooperation are **regulated by a contract** which each consumer signs this with the producer, entailing a mutual commitment to supply each other with resources during a specified period. In other words, the buyer gives money, the farmer gives produce. This contract can cover a few months or even a whole year.
- **LOCAL LEVEL:** CSA schemes operate at the local level: **they connect producers with local communities**. Reducing transport is also important from an environmental perspective. The distance between farms and delivery points varies: in Hungary a distance of roughly 15-100 kilometres is typical, but for products that are more difficult to source, such as meat, it can involve journeys of up to 200 kilometres.
- **SOLIDARITY:** The operation of the group is on a 'human scale'. Members provide predictable support to producers throughout the year, and in many countries **they pay in advance at the beginning of the season**. This allows producers and their families to ma-

tain their farms and live with dignity. In Hungary, customers usually pay monthly, but in many cases they offer payments for three/six months or even a whole season in advance.

- **PERSONAL CONNECTION:** The key element of the model is the **sharing of risks and rewards**. If something goes wrong on the farm, for example, or the farmer cannot deliver for two weeks due to heavy snow, the customers have to accept it. In return, farmers produce to the best of their abilities, and share all their harvest with members, while also naturally trying to find solutions whenever problems arise.

Why community supported agriculture?

The CSA model is popular because it is good for both farmers and customers.

ADVANTAGES FOR PRODUCERS

- **A secure livelihood:** Competition with other growers is not the only problem small producers face – they also have to contend with traders' low purchase prices and uncertainty regarding the time of payment. In farms operating a CSA model, members pay a flat fee for the products, which means a fair and secure income for the producer, and permanent customers.
- **Production according to real needs:** With a CSA system, farmers know exactly how many families they will produce for in a given season, so they can plan accordingly. Since they undertake to distribute everything that is produced among the customers, there is much less surplus in the system.
- **Selected production methods:** Producers are free to decide on production methods, and do not have to meet market expectations or traders' conditions. In deciding what to grow, the key determining factors are the requirements of members and the growing conditions on the farm.
- **Belonging to a community:** Thanks to risk sharing and a close relationship, consumers understand if, for example, one type of vegetable cannot be harvested due to weather conditions or other reasons. Many CSA farmers tell us how much energy it gives them when they receive positive feedback throughout the year from those who eat the food they produce.
- **Free time:** It may sound strange at first, but CSA farmers can even have more time for themselves and their families, since they do not have to sell their products at the market. There have been instances in some communities where the members themselves 'sent' the farmer on vacation, agreeing that the weekly handovers would be suspended during that time.

ADVANTAGES FOR BUYERS

- **A reliable source throughout the year:** As stipulated in the contract, the farmer undertakes to supply members of the community with food during the given period. Supply is virtually unaffected by domestic or foreign suppliers or low purchase prices. This was a definite advantage during the COVID period, for example, when the delivery capacity of large chains was exceeded, whereas community farmers continued to deliver healthy food to customers every week.
- **Fresh and delicious:** When customers are asked why they join community farms, the most common answer is because of the fresh, delicious food. Freshness is guaranteed, because the farmers harvest on the morning of delivery or the day before, and collect everything for the community.
- **Healthy:** Community farmers undertake to produce according to the principles of organic farming, even if they do not have official certification. They farm on a small area, and their relationship with the environment and people is more direct. This is also important because well-planned plant associations, the use of crop rotations, and the harmonious relationship between plants and animals all contribute to not having to use artificial substances in cultivation. As a result, the organic food they produce is safer.
- **Good for the environment:** No intermediaries, and no unnecessary transport, storage or packaging. Instead, farmers deliver their produce directly to the delivery point, so the number of food miles is minimal, as is packaging. Incidentally, this also means that the price of the products is also less affected by rising fuel prices.

- **Prices do not rise from week to week:** farmers calculate their prices in advance for a year or season, which members pay in the form of a monthly flat rate. The last few years can be considered extreme in many ways, with fuel and food prices skyrocketing. These effects were felt in the world of CSAs as well, and several farmers were forced to raise their monthly fees in mid-season. That being said, however, prices are still much more predictable than at the supermarket or market.
- **Money well spent:** Those who buy from CSA farms contribute to the survival of rural areas and small farms. Not to mention the fact that large food supply chains are looking increasingly precarious, so more and more local producers will be needed to ensure a stable food supply. This is the future!

How Does it Work?



Figure 4: The CSA process in action (Source: Association of Conscious Consumers)

1. **Meeting at the start of the season:** Before the season, new members can get to know the system and find a community they like at online or in-person events. In some communities, before joining, it is obligatory that members also visit the farm to get to know it and meet the farmer in person.
2. **Contract conclusion and payment:** The customers and the community farmer sign a bilateral agreement, which contains not only the usual information (such as the price of the produce, and the time and frequency of payment), but also important details for cooperation (place and time of deliveries; or what happens if someone cannot pick up their vegetables).
3. **Preparation of a plan for the year:** The farmer prepares the annual management plan based on the number of members. Community economies cannot grow without limits. The size of the plot or the number of animals in a livestock herd sets a limit to how many members can join a given community. That is why, if there is no vacancy in a CSA community in the spring, they may not be able to admit new members.
4. **Work on the farm:** Work on the farm will begin based on the plans. The work is done by the farmer, but in most farms there are also occasions when members can also do voluntary work and help with certain tasks. These are great opportunities to strengthen the community.
5. **Delivery:** In the case of vegetable CSA communities, the weekly share is prepared for members in advance in a box or bag, but there are also farms where the members measure and select their portions themselves. In the latter case, the farmer always indicates on a board, for example, how much of each vegetable a member receives in a given week.
6. **Members and their families cook with the produce:** CSA membership is recommended for those who cook at home a lot, because the large amount of vegetables or meat and eggs they regularly receive have to be processed. Some may find cooking challenging at first, but most members quickly get the hang of it.

What is included in a weekly 'share'?

Although international examples show that there is almost no food product that cannot be brought to customers using the CSA model, in Hungary it is predominantly vegetable growers who employ this method. The season usually lasts from spring to December. At the weekly deliveries, each customer receives their own 'share', which includes at least 6–8, but often 10–12 different types of vegetables. In most communities, members can sign up for larger (enough for a family of four) or smaller (enough for two) shares.

As an indication, over the course of a year, the following vegetables may be included in shares:

<p>Spring:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ radishes ➤ baby carrots ➤ cauliflower ➤ pak-choi ➤ Napa cabbage ➤ baby beets ➤ lettuce ➤ chives 	<p>Summer:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ sweetcorn ➤ tomatoes ➤ peppers ➤ courgettes ➤ kohlrabi ➤ sorrel ➤ aubergine ➤ cucumber ➤ new potatoes ➤ green beans ➤ white onion ➤ garlic
<p>Autumn:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ sweet potatoes ➤ fennel ➤ white radish ➤ broccoli ➤ cabbage ➤ spinach ➤ parsnips ➤ leeks ➤ pumpkin ➤ celeriac 	<p>Winter:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Brussels sprouts ➤ artichoke ➤ black radishes ➤ red onions ➤ potatoes ➤ carrots ➤ parsley ➤ beets ➤ curly kale ➤ young salad

What is different: pricing structure

The pricing system of CSA farms differs from the practice of stores or even farmers' markets. In this system, the farmer is paid by the customers to produce the food. The farmer calculates the price based on all the costs of the farm, including, for example, the costs of wages, insurance, or investments necessary to supply the community. The monthly flat fee for a share is therefore the total cost divided by the number of members and the number of months.

That is why many community farms in Hungary specify the membership fee for the season, since by this logic it is not really the 'boxes' the members are paying for. At other farms, in 2024, an amount of between HUF 5,000–10,000 (EUR 12-25) was requested for smaller shares, and HUF 9,500–17,500 (EUR 25-45) for larger ones. In general, food purchased through community farms is cheaper for customers than purchasing it at an organic market or through a box order system.

The community

As the name of the model implies, customers become members of a community: not only do they assume the joint risk with the farmers and even pay their membership dues in advance, they also 'take part' in running the community. This is not a simple matter. In many European countries, consumers take a much greater part in the operation of CSA communities than in Hungary. There are countries (e.g. the Czech Republic) where buyers get together, decide on a delivery point, look for a suitable farmer and operate the system themselves. Elsewhere (e.g. in France) associations are formed to operate community farms, where farmers and customers participate equally in decision-making and planning. Elsewhere (for example in the UK) members may collectively rent land and employ farmers to produce for them.

In Hungary, however, farmers take on most of the tasks: as well as growing the vegetables, they are responsible for organization, communication tasks and community building. In order to avoid burnout, it is important to make them aware that such a complex system can only be operated with the consent of customer members. Fortunately, we are already starting to see good examples. For example, the Dunasziget Vegetable Association participated in a two-day training, where the farmers and the most committed members thought about how to improve cooperation. By the end of the two days, not only had work groups been formed (for example, a team responsible for strategic planning and members helping to organize events), but most also expressed a willingness to give a larger financial contribution in order to support the livelihood of the farmers and the operation of the system.

Good examples

Pallagvölgyi Biokert: Youth initiative

The Pallagvölgyi Biokert (Pallavölgy Organic Garden) was founded in 2020 and has been operating as a CSA farm since 2021. Its specialty is that the farm is maintained by four young professionals, in cooperation with the local government of Kóspallag. The team was formed on the basis of friendships and professional relationships, and they had a common motivation: they all wanted to deal with small-scale vegetable cultivation, following the principles of organic farming and permaculture.

The garden is owned by the municipality and is in the backyard of the kindergarten. Vegetables and herbs are grown on a beautiful, sloping 5,500-m² plot. They deliver from April to mid-November, and have 75 members from the area: they deliver to Kóspallag, Szokolya, Nagymaros, Kismaros, Verőce, Vác and Göd. Over the course of one season, nearly 50 types of vegetables and 8–10 types of herbs are placed in the boxes. One unique element in the operation of the farm that it is headed by a 'team of farmers'. Cooperation has many advantages, as it enables joint decision-making, mutual support and substitution. Link: <https://pallagvolgy.wordpress.com/>



Figure 5: Fresh vegetables and herbs from the Pallagvölgyi Biokert

Szigetmonostori Biokert: long-term success

The CSA project of one of the most experienced community farmers, Áron Pető, has been operating since 2009, and started to engage in selling to a community following the example of French AMAPs (*Association pour le maintien d'une agriculture paysanne*, or association for the preservation of small-scale farming). French communal farms operate as a 'share system', i.e. farmers distribute everything they produce among members of the community. Áron decided to embrace this farming model because he wanted to eliminate the uncertainties inherent in market sales.

One of the keys to success is dedication. An experienced organic farmer, Áron has been farming since 2004, and in 2020 he was named as Organic Farmer of the Year in Hungary. He is currently one of the vice presidents of the Central Hungarian branch of the Biokultúra Egyesület (Organic Farming Association). It cooperates with horticultural higher education institutions, regularly accepts interns, and has helped many farmers get started in CSA farming.



Figure 6: Pepper cultivation in foil in the Szigetmonostor Biokert

And what does he think about the model after all these years? In his view, the main advantage is the predictability, as well as the fact that *'people are much more appreciative of this kind of food, and of our workers. Getting the food to the consumer also involves much less waste, which is an important factor for me when it comes to such premium-quality organic vegetables.'* Link: <https://biokert.org/>

Dunasziget Vegetable Association: let's work together!

As in the case of many German and Austrian CSA farms, the Dunasziget Vegetable Association collects the amount necessary for annual operation using the 'recommended contribution method'. The essence of making an offer is that, in the spirit of solidarity, each member offers as much as he can afford in exchange for the annual share.

In practice, this works as follows: farmers present annual budgets to members so they can understand the 'guide price'. Each member donates as much as they feel able to – the goal is to ensure the total matches the budget. The model originated in Austria (Auction 2.0), where the monthly or annual net income of the members (supplied anonymously) is aggregated. They then calculate what percentage of this total net income the company's production costs make up. This ratio is the basis of the target price - everyone can offer this part of their income to the community. Link: <https://www.facebook.com/dunaszigetizoldseggiozosseg>

Are you interested in community supported agriculture? Would you like to join in? Become part of the Association of Conscious Consumers! Take an introductory course or attend the Community Farming Family Day, held every year in February! <https://tudatosvasarlo.hu/english>

List of CSA farms 2024

Source: Association of Conscious Consumers (link: <https://tudatosvasarlo.hu/kozossegi-mezogazdalkodas/hazai-kozossegi-gazdasagok>)

Name, contact information	Pick-up points	Produce
Bio Pipacs Tanya Zsuzsa Arnoldné Óré, 06 20 538 0938, pipacs.tanya@hotmail.com	Szeged, Kistelek, Pusztaszer	vegetables
Biokert Szigetmonostor Renáta Bangha, 06 20 425 5253, aron- peto23@gmail.com	Szigetmonostor, Szentendre, Dunakeszi, Göd, Budapest	vegetables
Birs Közösség, Szilvia Héjjas 06 20 215 9353, hejasszilvia@gmail.com	Budapest (Districts 8, 9, 11, 13 and 14)	vegetables
Csendülő Életkert János Kiss, 06 20 410 3136 kiss.janos.krisztian@gmail.com	Miskolc	vegetables
Dunaszigeti Zöldsgközösség Anna Payr, info@dzk.hu	Dunasziget, Mosonmagyaróvár	vegetables
Ezerjő Farm és Vendégház Zsolt Dudás, 06 30 856 2291 ezerjofarm@gmail.com	Home delivery: Budapest, Páty, Budakeszi, Szombathely, Sárvár, Veszprém, Balatonfüred	vegetables
Élet Forrása Birtok Anna Bükkiné Budafalvi, 06 20 913 1871 eletforrasabirtok@gmail.com	Nagybakónak, Nagykanizsa	vegetables
Gyurgyalagos Tanya Ferenc Gyergyószegi, 06 30 930 5290, gyurgyalagostanya@gmail.com	Budapest (Districts 14 and 19), Hatvan	vegetables
Jászsági Biokert Norbert Varga, 06 70 321 5663, jaszsagibiokert@gmail.com	Szolnok, Budapest (District 11)	vegetables
Kakuk Élőkert Ágnes Kakukné Varga, 06 70 341 3839, akavasystem@gmail.com	Szeged	vegetables
Kertet Nevelek Krisztina Dudás, 06 70 322 1441, nevelemakertem@gmail.com	Budaörs, Lovasberény, Csákvár, Székesfehérvár, Gárdony	vegetables
Kertszelet Zöldsgközösség Gabriella Kása, 06 20 422 5775, kertszelet2421@gmail.com	Nagyvenyim, Rácalmás, Dunaújváros	vegetables
Kisdomb Viktória Istvánkó, 06 30 565 6936, vistvanko@gmail.com	Budakeszi, Piliscsaba, Telki	vegetables
MagosVölgy Ökológia Gazdaság Zoltán Dezsény, 06 20 394 7971 kapcsolat@magosvolgy.hu	Budapest (Districts 1 and 8)	vegetables

Name, contact information	Pick-up points	Produce
Nádland Farm József Lukács, 06 20 958 4813, jozsef@nadlandfarm.hu	Budapest, Vizslás	vegetables
Napfonat kert – Mozsgó Tamás Barcsik, 06 20 464 6913 napfonatkert@gmail.com	Pécs, Szigetvár	vegetables
Natúr Spájz Adrián Horváth, 06 70 639 8552, naturspajz@gmail.com	Home delivery: Budapest, Győr, Sopron, Százhalombatta, Szombathely, Veszprém	vegetables
Pallagvölgyi Biokert Nikoletta Kálmán, 06 30 245 3699 pallagvolgy@gmail.com	Kóspallag, Szokolya, Kismaros, Nagymaros, Verőce, Vác, Göd	vegetables
Panoráma Ökokert Kinga Kocsis, 06 20 375 8945, panoramaokokert@gmail.com	Fót, Dunakeszi, Budapest házhozzállítás	vegetables
Szandaszögi Ökokertészet Orsolya Drevenka, 06 30 798 1428 szandaszogi@gmail.com	Budapest (District 15), Vác, Balassagyarmat, Szanda	vegetables
Tamás Gazda Vegyszermentes Gazdaság Tamás Dobozi, 06 30 825 4884 , tamaszgazda526@gmail.com	Budapest (Districts 3, 11, 14 and 17), Kecskemét, Szolnok, Cegléd	vegetables
Táncoskert Zoltán Lengyel, 06 70 453 7310 lengyel.zoltan@tancoskert.hu	Budapest (Districts 3, 13 and 15)	meat
Tápiódoboz Gabriella Trencsényi-Vörös, 06 70 451 7701 tapiodoboz@gmail.com	Budapest (Districts 3 and 13), Gyömrő, Maglód	vegetables
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It's not a market, but a shopping community!

Another variant on SFSCs, which has become more and more widespread in Hungary in recent years, is the shopping community system. The characteristics of shopping communities are that they are always organized on a voluntary basis, as a joint endeavour by producers, organizers and volunteers, to provide a dedicated space for the sale of local produce grown by small-scale producers. These spaces also perform various social and community-building functions.

Anyone who feels it is important to consume local products from reliable, known sources can become a member of a shopping community. However, some communities may operate on different sales principles, and there is no one-size-fits-all rule. In some shopping-basket communities, the selected products can only be purchased by pre-order, meaning that consumers help the farmers plan, and there are no surplus goods at the end of the delivery day, the further logistics of which would have to be dealt with later. By these means, the producer does not work unnecessarily, and consumers also have access to fresh goods, even if they cannot be present at the beginning of the delivery day when there are still a lot of goods (as is the case at a traditional farmers' market). In these cases, the organizers and the volunteers who help them often prepare the ordered products on the day of the handover, and the producers are often not personally present at the handover time (the pre-ordered goods are sent to the shopping community handover point a few hours before the stated handover time). Managing such a process requires considerable organizational capacity, which must be taken into account when planning the establishment of the shopping community.

If the organizers forming the shopping community do not have the capacity to manage pre-orders, the handover day can operate more like a traditional farmers' market and involve the direct presence of the producers. The advantage of this is that the direct relationship between the consumer and the producer is preserved, and there is an opportunity to exchange ideas between the parties and to strengthen personal relationships. Producers can manage their own pre-orders independently or do so collectively in small groups. We often find examples of a few farmers coming together within a shopping community, so it is not necessary for all of them to appear in person at every handover.

Shopping communities are grassroots initiatives established in response to the shortcomings and problems of existing, centralized food systems, on the basis of civil cooperation. In the following, we will present the features of the system and the steps leading to success, using the example of a shopping community in Budapest.

Best practice of a Hungarian shopping community – Zuglói Kenyérközösség

The beginnings

Zuglói Kenyérközösség (Zugló Bread Community) was founded in February 2019 by two principal founders, who were trying to answer the question of how to put healthy, additive-free food on their families' tables, and thereby support small producers instead of large supermarket chains. They started talking to acquaintances, friends, and colleagues about these topics, and it slowly became more and more evident that many people would support such an initiative



in the district. The next step was to find producers – an important element in this respect was close-to-nature, organic plant growing and animal husbandry practices, as well as ensuring that processed products were made by traditional preservation means, without artificial dyes and additives. The first handover day was announced as a tasting day, which gave the farmers the opportunity to introduce themselves and introduce their products. The event was a success, and visitors' receptiveness made it plain that they welcomed this alternative, supporting food procurement opportunities for small producers.

What does a handover day look like?

Zuglói Kenyérközösség will celebrate its fifth anniversary in 2024, and over the years the circle of organizers and volunteers, as well as producers, has both significantly expanded and solidified. While at first there were only five or six, today there are fifteen permanent and eleven periodical producers in the shopping community, offering the following product groups:

- certified organic fruit and vegetables
- organically grown (but not certified organic) vegetables and processed produce
- game meat and processed products (smoked goods)
- foraged and cultivated mushrooms (fresh and dried)
- additive-free, leavened (sourdough) baked goods
- microgreens and freshly squeezed fruit and vegetable juices
- smoked goose made with traditional preservation methods
- hen and quail eggs
- nuts
- homemade cheeses and dairy products
- jams, herbal syrups (traditional and sugar-free), honey
- cut flowers
- seasonal organic vegetable seedlings
- handicraft products (crocheted, knitted and painted ornaments and souvenirs)



Figure 7: Delivery of vegetable boxes and sale of individual produce items at the Orsiherba Biokert stand (source: Zuglói Kenyérközösség)

At the Zuglói Kenyérközösség, the handover takes place during a three-hour afternoon slot, with the personal presence of the producers and the on-site coordination of organizers. Three sales categories can be distinguished within the shopping community:

1. **the free vendor solution:** Farmers sell their products according to the traditional market system as long as stocks last.
2. **the pre-order system:** Products can only be purchased by pre-order, so the farmer only brings as many products to the handover day as have already been ordered (the typical solution for freshly slaughtered meat products). In this case, ordering closes two days before the delivery date.
3. **the box system:** A form of pre-ordering, which is close to the agricultural form supported by the community. Small and large boxes of vegetables can be pre-ordered from the producer on a weekly basis, but it is not necessary to commit to the entire season. In addition to the ordered boxes, individual goods may also be sold at the market if the farm produced a larger than expected quantity.

The handover days are often enriched by various events in collaboration with the organizers and producers. These include community cooking (e.g. summer ratatouille or winter venison stew dinner) events related to Advent preparations or folk traditions (e.g. the St. Martin's day festivities), or the joint celebration of the anniversary of the shopping community's launch. These events create an opportunity for locals to connect, and the handover day is also a meeting place, a scene for friendly conversations and knowledge sharing. The organizers incorporate various thematic events into the community's programmes for the purpose of imparting knowledge, so for instance Zugló's first mushroom festival was held in 2023, thanks to cooperation between the Kalapka Kézműves Gombafarm (Kalapka Mushroom Farm) and Zuglói Kenyérközösség, but there have also been workshops on gentle cleaning products and natural cosmetics.



Figure 8: the Zuglói Kenyérközösség as a delivery point for ÖMKi landrace-variety tomato seedling sale (source: Zuglói Kenyérközösség).

Social responsibility

It can be clearly seen that shopping communities offer much more than a traditional farmers market. Significant emphasis is also placed on human relations and social activities. In the Zuglói Kenyérközösség there are regular fundraisers, which are used for cooking, raffles, or can be linked to so-called 'pop-up' fairs. They also collected money, food and clothing donations for families in difficult situations, as well as animal shelters in the district, and their team has even participated in the cooking competition of the Charity Gastrofestival.



Figure 9: Handing over a fresh and long-lasting food donation to the Tündérpakk Foundation in Zugló (source: Zuglói Kenyérközösség)

Conclusion

There are many forms of short food supply chains available to those who wish to join an initiative, either as a consumer or as a producer, in order to support local food supply chains. Sustainable rural development cannot be imagined without SFSC, as the relationship and cooperation between consumers and producers is crucial for the survival of small producers. It is therefore worthwhile for everyone to think about their own options and preferences: whether it is a weekly vegetable box system or an occasional farmers' market visit, consumers not only support the livelihoods of small local producers, but also their own health.

Useful resources and recommended literature:

Community farming page of the Association of Conscious Consumers (in Hungarian):

<https://tudatosvasarlo.hu/kozossegi-mezogazdalkodas/>

Link to sign up for the community farming newsletter:

https://bit.ly/legyreszese_hirlevel

The website of Urgenci, the international community farming network:

<https://urgenci.net/>

Online learning opportunities and resources about community farming:

<https://hub.urgenci.net/>

Website dealing with the operation of shopping communities and the steps involved in establishing them (in Hungarian):

<https://kosarkozosseg.hu/>

Katalin Réthy, Zoltán Dezsény (2013): Közösség által támogatott mezőgazdaság: Útmutató gazdálkodóknak a rövid élelmiszerláncokról és a termelői-fogyasztói közösségek létrehozásáról (Community-Supported Agriculture: A Guide for farmers on short food chains and building producer-consumer communities)

Local Produce Handbook (in Hungarian):

<https://wv.v.nak.hu/kiadvanyok/kiadvanyok/4349-helyi-termek-kezikonyv/file>

Local produce good practices and producer introductions (in Hungarian):

<https://s3-eu-central-1.amazonaws.com/kisleptek.hu/wp-media-folder-kisleptek/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/helyi-termek-katalogus-1.pdf>

Insights and recommendations for supporting collaboration in short food supply chains (in Hungarian):

<https://s3-eu-central-1.amazonaws.com/kisleptek.hu/wp-media-folder-kisleptek/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/smartchain-hu-1.pdf>

BIOEAST project findings on food systems (in Hungarian):

<https://kisleptek.hu/egyeb-kiadvany/bioeast-projekt-megallapitasai-az-elelmiszer-rendszerekről/>

BIOEAST study in English:

<https://s3-eu-central-1.amazonaws.com/kisleptek.hu/wp-media-folder-kisleptek/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/3-study-food-systems-1.pdf>

Collection page of open portal and local product themed tours (2022):

<https://kisleptek.hu/tudastar/nyitott-porta-es-temautak/>

Collecting sites - three lists of where to find local products (2022):

<https://kisleptek.hu/tudastar/SFSC-hub/3-termeloi-gyujtooldal/>

Shopping and basket communities collection - Updated 2022:

<https://kisleptek.hu/egyeb-kiadvany/dobozrendszerek/>

SFSC international best practices:

<https://kisleptek.hu/category/tudastar/jogyakorlatok/nemzetkozi/>