

Mengoni, Matteo; Marescotti, Andrea; Belletti, Giovanni

## Article

# Farmers' markets as a sustainable model of producers-consumers relationships: Evidence from Tuscany

Italian Review of Agricultural Economics (REA)

## Provided in Cooperation with:

Firenze University Press

*Suggested Citation:* Mengoni, Matteo; Marescotti, Andrea; Belletti, Giovanni (2024) : Farmers' markets as a sustainable model of producers-consumers relationships: Evidence from Tuscany, Italian Review of Agricultural Economics (REA), ISSN 2281-1559, Firenze University Press, Florence, Vol. 79, Iss. 1, pp. 47-62,  
<https://doi.org/10.36253/rea-14895>

This Version is available at:

<https://hdl.handle.net/10419/325676>

## Standard-Nutzungsbedingungen:

Die Dokumente auf EconStor dürfen zu eigenen wissenschaftlichen Zwecken und zum Privatgebrauch gespeichert und kopiert werden.

Sie dürfen die Dokumente nicht für öffentliche oder kommerzielle Zwecke vervielfältigen, öffentlich ausstellen, öffentlich zugänglich machen, vertreiben oder anderweitig nutzen.

Sofern die Verfasser die Dokumente unter Open-Content-Lizenzen (insbesondere CC-Lizenzen) zur Verfügung gestellt haben sollten, gelten abweichend von diesen Nutzungsbedingungen die in der dort genannten Lizenz gewährten Nutzungsrechte.

## Terms of use:

*Documents in EconStor may be saved and copied for your personal and scholarly purposes.*

*You are not to copy documents for public or commercial purposes, to exhibit the documents publicly, to make them publicly available on the internet, or to distribute or otherwise use the documents in public.*

*If the documents have been made available under an Open Content Licence (especially Creative Commons Licences), you may exercise further usage rights as specified in the indicated licence.*



<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>



**Citation:** Mengoni, M., Marescotti, A., & Belletti, G. (2024). Farmers' markets as a sustainable model of producers-consumers relationships: evidence from Tuscany. *Italian Review of Agricultural Economics* 79(1): 47-62. DOI: 10.36253/rea-14895

**Received:** November 11, 2023

**Revised:** February 04, 2024

**Accepted:** April 03, 2024

**Copyright:** © 2024 Mengoni, M., Marescotti, A., & Belletti, G. This is an open access, peer-reviewed article published by Firenze University Press (<https://www.fupress.com/rea>) and distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License, which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited.

**Data Availability Statement:** All relevant data are within the paper and its Supporting Information files.

**Competing Interests:** The Author(s) declare(s) no conflict of interest.

**Guest Editor:** Bernard Pecqueur, Marcello De Rosa, Catia Zumpano

#### ORCID

MM: 0000-0003-4505-9658

AM: 0000-0001-9891-2857

GB: 0000-0002-0347-4274

Agrifood system between global and territorial vision – Research article

## Farmers' markets as a sustainable model of producers-consumers relationships: evidence from Tuscany

MATTEO MENGONI, ANDREA MARESCOTTI\*, GIOVANNI BELLETTI

*Department of Economics and Management, University of Florence, Italy*

\*Corresponding author. E-mail: [andrea.marescotti@unifi.it](mailto:andrea.marescotti@unifi.it)

**Abstract.** Evidence from the literature emphasize the role of Farmers' Markets (FMs) in enhancing economic benefits for both producers and consumers, improving social outcomes and benefiting the environment. Therefore, FMs can be conceived not just as an alternative to the market, but also as a specific way of shaping producers-consumers relationships, which influences and is at the same time the result of their respective selling-buying models. This article aims at investigating the hypothesis of FMs as a specific and structural form of producers-consumers relationships, and collecting evidence on their perceptions, motivations and behaviour at the markets, and on the impact of selling and purchasing at these FMs on sustainability dimensions. For this purpose, we selected a sample of FMs in the north of Tuscany (Italy) and submitted two in-person semi-structured questionnaires, to both producers and consumers. The methodology was based on actors' self-assessment supported by guiding interviewers. Results showed how producers and consumers participating in FMs, although with differences across FMs types, do not only activate market relationships, but share, learn and build values together. Indeed, FMs are perceived by the actors involved as a structural and alternative framework, giving space and shaping alternative producers-consumers connections.

**Keywords:** farmers' markets, short food supply chains, alternative food networks, sustainability, proximity economy.

**JEL codes:** Q12, Q13.

#### HIGHLIGHTS

- FMs are widespread in Tuscany, differing in terms of promoters, degree of actors' involvement, governance and functioning.
- In each FM, producers and consumers create their own organisational space, reflecting the characteristics of the products they exchange, their idea of agrifood systems, and the relational model that better suits their values.
- FMs constitute an innovative and alternative economic and social space, structuring producers-consumers relations and shaping their selling and buying models.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Over the last few decades, the agri-food system has undergone rapid and deep changes, characterized by a strong trend toward globalization, privatization and vertical coordination (Swinnen and Maertens, 2007; Hendrickson and Heffernan, 2002). These shifts have resulted from various demographics, political, social, technical, economic and cultural factors, culminating in the emergence of an industrialized model of food production and distribution. In this model, large-scale food processing companies and supermarket chains have come to dominate a progressively globalized food system.

Simultaneously, shifts in consumers' behaviours and needs have been driven by societal and economic transformation. The decline of the economic importance of agriculture in rural areas, coupled with urbanization, has led to the geographical separation of agricultural production from consumption centres. This geographical gap needs a complex network of physical (transport, storage, packaging, processing), digital (e-commerce platforms, websites, online stores) and informational connections facilitated by diverse stakeholders. Moreover, income growth, changes in work organisation and shifts in family structure have heightened the demand for additional services in the food purchasing process, reducing consumers direct engagement with farming activities. These changes in the agri-food system have presented an opportunity to make a wide range of food products available globally, thereby enhancing food security and safety, and improving nutritional, technological and sensory attributes of food.

At the same time, the rise of global food chains has raised concerns, notably regarding vulnerability. The industrialized food provisioning model has sparked growing criticisms across multiple dimensions. Economically, smallholders and SMEs face growing challenges in market accessing due to the complexity of adhering to quality standards and the dominance of larger industrial and distribution players, coupled with price compression at the farm gate and increased market price volatility.

The growing geographical, cultural, information divide between production and consumption, along with the negative effects of food system industrialization on equity and fairness, environmental degradation and the loss of social relations, have spurred renewed emphasis on short food supply chains (SFSCs). The increasing interest in SFSCs worldwide, driven by farmers, consumers and citizens, and in some cases, public authorities, underscores the need for alternative food systems that can fulfil some functions overlooked by the industrialized model. SFSCs aim to bridge the gap between food

production and consumption, while supporting small producers in achieving viable livelihoods and vibrant rural communities.

Indeed, SFSCs are often characterized as “alternative” (Goodman, DuPuis and Goodman, 2011) or “civic” (Lamine, 2005) supply-chains, or even “nested markets” (Van der Ploeg, Jingzhong and Schneider, 2012). They represent a shift away from industrialized agriculture and food production mainly in developed countries, prioritizing social and environmental sustainability over purely economic considerations. In essence, SFSCs can be conceptualized as an alternative component within the global food system, with a focus on transforming the principle of production and market exchange. Their development spurred a wide theoretical debate over the innovative character of such initiatives – their “alternativeness” – as well as with their “transformative” role. This transformation places emphasis on fairness, solidarity and sustainability.

The recent Covid-19 pandemic has further reinforced the interest in SFSCs. Travel restrictions encouraged the search for alternative food supply methods to reduce physical contacts, while disruption in international trade prompted a re-evaluation of locally produced foods. In this context, SFSCs and local productions have emerged as avenues for innovations, combining social and technological advancements (Belletti and Marescotti, 2020; Nemes *et al.*, 2021; Hobbes, 2021), as well as experimenting new forms of governance and relational connections.

This article aims at investigating Farmers' Markets (FMs) as a special form of producers-consumers relationship which goes beyond the pure economic sphere of market exchange, shaping a new arena where social relationships between producers and consumers can develop, and where actors' participations show different motivations other than economic profitability, to embrace a whole set of economic, social and environmental values (Manser, 2022), such as territorial proximity, community belonging, environmental care, social relationships, learning. In other words, as Smithers *et al.* (2008: 338; cit. in Manser, 2022) put it, FMs are important “as not only a site of exchange, but also as a venue for negotiated meaning in the local food landscape”. Analysing a sample of Tuscan FMs belonging to three Italian FMs' networks, this article tries to compare more “institutional” FMs (Coldiretti and Cia) to more “alternative” ones (Genuino Clandestino), to see how through their different governance structures and functioning mechanisms they respond to different objectives, ideas and values that are the expression of the actors involved (producers and consumers). The ultimate goal of this article is

to feed the debate on FMs as alternative and innovative tools, tailored to producers and consumer needs, motivation and expectation, and contributing to the transition towards more sustainable and resilient territorial food systems.

## 2. THE SUSTAINABILITY OF FARMERS' MARKETS

FMs have been increasingly spreading in Italy since the late 1990s, as a way for farmers and small-medium enterprises to increase their position on the market and their share of value added, bypassing intermediaries, and for consumers to get high quality, fresh and healthy food from local sources. FMs exist under various forms and can be activated and led by a variety of different stakeholders (producers, consumers, municipalities, professionals' organisations). Therefore, FMs can be conceived not just an alternative route to market for producers and consumers to satisfy their respective needs, but they can constitute a specific form of producers-consumers relationship, which influences and is at the same time the result of their respective selling-buying models. In other terms, FMs can represent a model of "proximity economy" (Marotta and Nazzaro, 2023), where producers sell their products to local citizens, and consumers are interested in buying products and services from their own territory, while exchanging and strengthening ties and values that can no longer be found in conventional marketing channels.

The sustainability of FMs is a strongly debated issue in the academic arena (Forssell and Lankoski, 2014; Michel-Villarreal *et al.*, 2019; Chiffolleau and Dourian, 2020), especially in comparison with long conventional food chains (Brunori *et al.*, 2016; Galli *et al.*, 2015), and has gained increasing political attention in view of the beneficial outcomes they are likely to provide for the economy, environment and society as a whole (Vittersø *et al.*, 2019).

### 2.1. The economic dimension

Many studies suggest that FMs can contribute to rural development and economic regeneration. FMs can be new sources of value added to retain locally, stimulating rural economic regeneration and dynamism (Marotta and Nazzaro, 2023). They can create "new economic spaces" enhancing the local attributes such as terroir, traditional knowledge and landrace species, which can translate into higher prices (DuPuis and Goodman, 2005; Van der Ploeg *et al.*, 2000; Marsden *et al.*, 2002). Shortening the number of links in the supply chain

results in a "multiplier effect", that is increased local sales, increased demand for local services and increased labour markets (Otto and Varner, 2005; Henneberry *et al.*, 2009). Some studies have also suggested that the presence of FMs attracts shoppers into areas they would otherwise not visit and creates new opportunities for tourism, the revenue from which tends to remain in the local economy, triggering its multiplier effects in the local community (Lev *et al.*, 2003).

At individual level, the most reported economic benefit associated with FMs is the increase in producers' incomes. Selling through FMs enables producers, thanks to the elimination of intermediaries (distributors, wholesalers, etc.), to further process and add value themselves to their produce, which in turn allows them to add a price premium on these products and thereby capture a greater share of the profits (Pearson *et al.*, 2011; Sage, 2003).

The higher quality and increased freshness of products usually observed in FMs, also increases the economic value for consumers, who can buy food that lasts longer and thus reduce food waste (Marino and Cicatiello, 2012).

### 2.2. The social dimension

Among the positive effects of SFSCs on the three pillars of sustainability, the social ones are usually the most cited in the literature (Demartini *et al.*, 2017). Kneafsey *et al.* (2013) identified three main social areas of impact, namely (1) social interaction, trust and social embeddedness, (2) sense of community, (3) knowledge and behavioural change.

Building relationships of trust is crucial in every experience of FMs. The social dimension is one of the most highlighted aspects by consumers who attend FMs, who often greatly value the atmosphere of their shopping experience. Consumers tend to become loyal customers and to develop confidential relationships with sellers and producers, so that over time, the feeling of trust is no longer referred to the food product itself but to the fact that one can trust the farmer to produce this food in a "safe" way, because the consumer knows the farmer and holds him/her responsible (Hendrickson and Heffernan, 2002; cit. in Kneafsey *et al.*, 2013).

Another important dimension influenced by SFSCs is what Kneafsey *et al.* (2013) call "sense of community". FMs have the potential to empower and revitalise local communities, increase work opportunities for young farmers and for people who would be excluded from traditional agriculture (women, pensioners, disabled) and therefore create new employment. They can succeed in keeping rural communities in rural areas and avoid

their desertification and isolation, by creating new forms of relationships between the city and the countryside.

Moreover, SFSCs tend to favour cooperation at all levels and small producers can benefit from working with others (producers, consumers and institutions), since this enables them to reach markets they would otherwise not reach through, for example, shared logistics and delivery operations, shared labelling schemes, shared publicity and promotional campaigns. This can also favour co-operation towards innovation, through the establishment of networks of knowledge exchange, skills training and technical relations among farmers (Mastronardi *et al.*, 2015; Vittersø *et al.*, 2019; Kneafsey *et al.*, 2013; Mancini *et al.*, 2019).

Looking at the more emotional acceptance of the sense of community, SFSCs can contribute to strengthen cultural and regional identities, enhance social cohesion and community building by instilling a sense of pride and belonging to a particular area or social group (Vittersø *et al.*, 2019).

The third social dimension concerns knowledge leading to behavioural change. Consumers attending SFSCs, through social relationships with producers, sellers and other consumers, may learn information on how the food is produced, the methods used and specific organoleptic and territorial attributes, improving their food awareness, culinary education and sustainable food choices. This makes it easier for consumers to evaluate the fairness of prices and understand the true cost and externalities of food production (Malak-Rawlikowska *et al.*, 2019; Vittersø *et al.*, 2019; Mastronardi *et al.*, 2015).

### 2.3. The environmental dimension

The environmental impact is the more uncertain of the three sustainability pillars. In the literature, the more commonly reported effects that FMs are likely to have on the environment are reduction in food miles and carbon footprint, positive impacts on biodiversity and reduction in the use of agrochemicals on organic farms. Notwithstanding this, quantitative evidence on these effects is quite rare, due to the difficulty in measuring environmental effects and externalities of the different types of SFSCs.

FMs are likely to have a positive impact on agrobiodiversity since, with the necessity to meet consumers' demand for variety, usually met by supermarkets, they feel the need to diversify production instead of specialising in one or two crops, often rediscovering ancient and traditional varieties or introducing organic farming (Bullock, 2000).

In FMs, farmers may also have the tendency to adopt more sustainable practices to reduce negative externalities

of agriculture on the environment, such as avoiding the use of pesticides and agrochemicals (typical in organic production), contrasting water pollution and land degradation, protecting natural habitats, reducing packaging of products, contributing to food waste reduction through fresh and high-quality products, paying attention to animal welfare (Marino and Cicatiello, 2012).

FMs, being based on the close relationship between producers and consumers at a local level, may contribute to reduce "food miles", namely the distance food travels to reach consumers, and therefore lower the negative externalities linked to food transportation such as CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and air pollution (DEFRA 2005; cit. in Mastronardi *et al.*, 2015, and in Marino *et al.*, 2013). Nevertheless, on this last point, there is a lack of agreement in the literature since consumers driving to and from the local retail place (market, farm or pick-up point) to buy small quantities of food can be more "carbon intensive" per kilo of product compared to ordinary shopping (Vittersø *et al.*, 2019; Mancini *et al.*, 2019).

## 3. DATA AND METHODS

Farmers' markets in Tuscany have a long historical tradition, dating back to the early 1970s and originating from farmers' search for alternative ways to the dominant development model of the industrial agri-food system. In recent years, FMs have begun to attract the growing interest of consumers, but also of public actors, in particular regional and local administrations, who started to perceive their value in local development processes and to take direct action for their promotion (Brunori *et al.*, 2009). Nowadays, FMs are still very widespread in the region, varying in terms of types of promoters (professional producers' organisations, consumers' associations, public institutions, small farmers' networks), degree of actors' involvement, governance and functioning.

This article aims to investigate Farmers' Markets (FMs) as a new arena for social relationships between producers and consumers, where actors show different motivations other than economic profitability that embrace a whole set of economic, social and environmental values.

For the purpose of this study, we selected a sample of 9 farmers markets on the Florence-Prato-Pistoia plain (in the north of Tuscany, Italy, see Figure 1) belonging to three different networks: Coldiretti, Cia and Genuino Clandestino. Coldiretti (*Confederazione Nazionale Coltivatori Diretti*) and Cia (*Confederazione Italiana Agricoltori*) are the two main Italian farmers' unions, both

**Figure 1.** Location of the case study area: Florence-Prato-Pistoia plain, Tuscany, central Italy.

organising and managing a network of farmers' markets, respectively *Campagna Amica* FMs and *La Spesa in Campagna* FMs. *Genuino Clandestino*, instead, is a local association gathering small farmers campaigning for food sovereignty. While the two farmers' unions are very institutionalised organisations, the last one is a bottom-up network of farmers, with a quite strong political connotation and a militant approach to themes such as food self-determination and food sovereignty. In our sample we selected 2 *Cia* FMs, 5 *Coldiretti* FMs and 2 *Genuino Clandestino* FMs (Table 1). All these FMs are recent markets, created in the last 10-15 years by independent farmers' groups (*Genuino Clandestino*) or according to nation-wide initiatives of the two farmers' unions (*Coldiretti* and *Cia*). In these FMs, depending on the regulations of each single market, producers mostly sell their own products, or those produced by other members of these networks. Most of the producers participating in these FMs are local or regional producers, with a few exceptions for those selling very specific or traditional products from other Italian regions.

For each selected market, we conducted some in-person interviews, submitting two different questionnaires to a sample of 34 producers and 181 consumers, with the aim of collecting evidence on their perceptions, motivations and behaviour in the markets, and on the

impact of selling/purchasing in these farmers markets on sustainability dimensions. The two samples were almost equally distributed among the 9 markets, with 3-4 producers and 20 consumers interviewed for each one. Interviews were conducted in April and May 2023.

The producers' sample contains mostly small family businesses located in Tuscany, around the provinces of Florence, Prato, Pistoia and Lucca, with some exceptions of non-Tuscan producers selling particular kind of products such as *Parmigiano Reggiano* from Emilia-Romagna (central Italy) and citrus fruit from Basilicata (southern Italy). For the majority, producers sell fruit and vegetables, cheese and milk derivatives, meat and cold cuts, and olive oil, which is a very typical and widespread product in Tuscany, largely used in the culinary tradition.

Consumers in the sample are 61% females (111 individuals) and 39% males (70 individuals), with an average age of 56 years old (min. 19, max. 90) and an average family size of 2.73 components.

The methodology employed is based on actors' self-assessment supported by a guiding interviewer. The questionnaire submitted to producers is divided into two main sections. The first section contains open-ended questions collecting descriptive information on the characteristics of respondents' businesses and their participation in the specific FM (e.g., organisational arrange-

**Table 1.** Structure of the sample in relation to the market characteristics.

| Market          | City                  | Network             | N° producers | N° consumers |
|-----------------|-----------------------|---------------------|--------------|--------------|
| Piazza Alberti  | Florence (FI)         | CIA                 | 4            | 20           |
| Parterre        | Florence (FI)         | CIA                 | 3            | 20           |
| Novoli          | Florence (FI)         | COLDIRETTI          | 3            | 20           |
| Cascine         | Florence (FI)         | COLDIRETTI          | 4            | 20           |
| Osmannoro       | Sesto Fiorentino (FI) | COLDIRETTI          | 4            | 20           |
| Sacra Famiglia  | Prato (PO)            | COLDIRETTI          | 4            | 21           |
| Via dell'Annona | Pistoia (PT)          | COLDIRETTI          | 5            | 20           |
| Piazza Tasso    | Florence (FI)         | Genuino Clandestino | 4            | 20           |
| Le Fornaci      | Pistoia (PT)          | Genuino Clandestino | 3            | 20           |
| Total           |                       |                     | 34           | 181          |

ments, resources needed, motivations and expectations, difficulties and future needs). The second section contains two sets of structured questions, the first set asking producers to evaluate (on a 5-point Likert scale, from “not important” to “very important”) the importance of a list of seven criteria (income increase, income security and stability, fairness and social justice, supporting the local community, consumers’ satisfaction, reduction of negative environmental externalities, preservation of local resources) in the decision-making process of their business, and the second set asking them to assess (on a 5-point Likert scale, from “very negative” to “very positive”) the impact of the specific FM on a list of 33 economic (EC), social (S) and environmental (EN) aspects (Table 2).

The questionnaire submitted to consumers contains closed-ended questions dealing, in the first part, with the general characteristics of consumers’ participation in the specific market (e.g., frequency of attendance, types of products purchased, average expenditure). The second part of the questionnaire contains some questions asking consumers to express (on a 3-points Likert scale) their agreement with the perceived impact of the FM on a list of consumption attributes grouped into 3 categories (consumption experience and prices (CE), quality and health (QH), localness and the environment (LE)) and with the factors perceived as limiting (LM) the access and frequency of purchases at FMs (Table 3).

#### 4. RESULTS

Results show that both the producers and consumers interviewed use farmers’ markets in a stable and continuous way, as their main commercial outlet. 76% of the producers in the sample also participate in other FMs than the one in which they were interviewed, and 79%

of them consider FMs as “very important” in relation to their economic turnover (Figure 2). Moreover, the majority of producers offer a quite wide supply products at the FM (Figure 3), with 56% of producers selling 3 or more categories of products, 26% of them 4 or more categories, and 15% 5 or more categories.

Looking at consumers (Figure 4), 71% of the sample frequently buy products at the FM where they were interviewed (50% of them weekly and 21% a few times a month), while 42% also frequently buy products from other FMs. Moreover, the majority of consumers buy a quite varied basket of products at the FM (Figure 3), with 80% of consumers buying 3 or more categories of products, 56% of them 4 or more categories, and 35% 5 or more, suggesting a use of FMs for the usual food shopping.

Producers in the sample on average evaluated social and environmental criteria (“support local community”, “consumers’ satisfaction”, “reduction of negative environmental externalities” and “preservation of local resources”) as significantly more important in their productive and marketing decisions than economic criteria (“income increase” and “income security and stability”). However, some differences emerged across different FMs networks (Figure 5). Most of the producers from Genuino Clandestino (91%) consider social and environmental decision-making criteria very important and only 28% of them attribute importance to economic ones. Instead, in Cia and especially Coldiretti markets, even if most of the producers attribute a significant importance to social and environmental criteria, they still also consider economic criteria very important (50% of producers in Cia and 90% in Coldiretti).

Concerning sustainability, producers on average evaluated the impacts of FMs as positive on all the items analysed in the three sustainability dimensions but, however, environmental and social aspects are perceived as

**Table 2.** Decision-making criteria and FMs' impacts from the producers' questionnaire.

|                                              |
|----------------------------------------------|
| Economic impacts (EC)                        |
| EC1) Price level                             |
| EC2) Income level                            |
| EC3) Sales predictability                    |
| EC4) Access to market                        |
| EC5) Power & autonomy                        |
| EC6) Products & income diversification       |
| EC7) Unfit products                          |
| EC8) Favourable payment terms                |
| EC9) Risk sharing                            |
| EC10) Resource sharing                       |
| EC11) Distributive equity                    |
| EC12) Local economy growth                   |
| EC13) Consumers' satisfaction                |
| EC14) Economic resilience to external shocks |
| Social impacts (S)                           |
| S1) Trust & relationships                    |
| S2) Producers' cooperation                   |
| S3) Local jobs                               |
| S4) Marginalised workers                     |
| S5) Producers' wellbeing                     |
| S6) Female empowerment                       |
| S7) Community empowerment                    |
| S8) Local identity & knowledge preservation  |
| S9) Consumers' food awareness                |
| S10) Affordability for consumers             |
| S11) Job resilience to external shocks       |
| Environmental impacts (EN)                   |
| EN1) Transport pollution                     |
| EN2) Packaging pollution                     |
| EN3) Food waste                              |
| EN4) Pesticides                              |
| EN5) Agrobiodiversity preservation           |
| EN6) Animal welfare                          |
| EN7) Resources regeneration                  |
| EN8) Environmental awareness                 |

Source: authors' elaboration. Questionnaire adapted from the COACH project methodology.

more positively influenced by FMs than economic ones. Looking across the three different networks of FMs, some interesting differences emerge (Figure 6). Genuino Clandestino producers are the most critical producers, especially towards the impact on purely economic aspects (EC1-EC5, EC8, EC11), while they perceive a positive impact of the FM on economic resilience (EC14), thanks to the possibility of coping with different market risks though diversification (EC6), sale of products

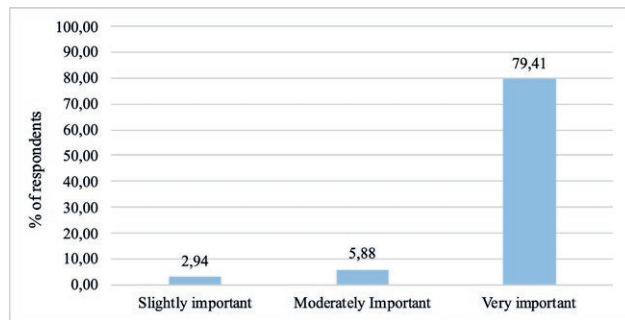
**Table 3.** Consumption attributes among consumers at FMs.

|                                                                                    |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Consumption experience and prices (CE)                                             |
| CE1) It saves me money                                                             |
| CE2) It saves me time                                                              |
| CE3) It allows me to shop more pleasantly                                          |
| CE4) I find a wider and more diverse selection of products than in the supermarket |
| CE5) After the COVID pandemic I increased my purchases at the farmers' market      |
| Quality and health (QH)                                                            |
| QH1) It makes it easier for me to buy typical and traditional products             |
| QH2) It makes it easier for me to buy seasonal fruit and vegetables                |
| QH3) I find fresher and better-quality produce                                     |
| QH4) It contributes to a more varied and healthier diet                            |
| Localness and environment (LE)                                                     |
| LE1) It makes it easier for me to buy local products                               |
| LE2) It allows me to reduce food waste                                             |
| LE3) It allows me to reduce pollution due to transport                             |
| LE4) It allows me to reduce packaging waste                                        |
| LE5) It contributes to supporting local producers                                  |
| Limiting factors (LM)                                                              |
| LM1) Too much time is needed                                                       |
| LM2) I cannot find all products when I need them                                   |
| LM3) Purchasing is too complicated (management, logistics)                         |
| LM4) Products are too expensive                                                    |
| LM5) Little variety of products available                                          |

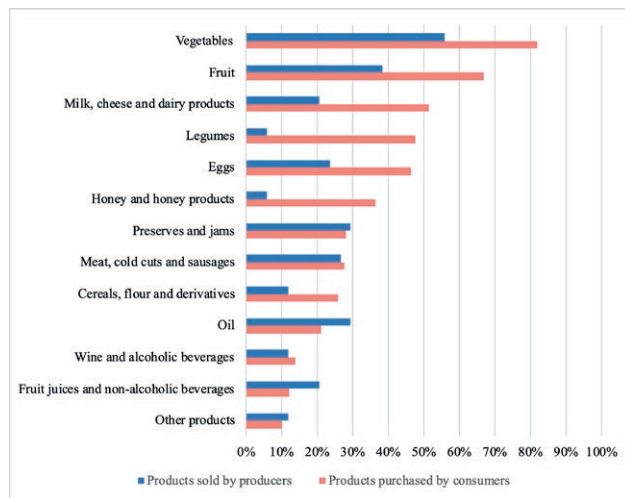
unfit (EC7) for modern markets (small defects, imperfect shape/size) risk and resources sharing mechanisms (EC9, EC10). Producers of this network also perceived the social impacts of the FM as very positive, especially on dimensions linked to trust, cooperation, job creation and resilience, producers' wellbeing and community empowerment (S1-S4, S7, S11), while they are less convinced of the effects on consumers' awareness, and food identity preservation (S8, S9, S10), and of the capacity of FMs to counteract negative environmental externalities of agri-food production (EN1-EN8). Producers from Cia and Coldiretti, instead, tend to be more in line with each other in the whole spectrum of sustainability aspects, even if Cia producers clearly show a more positive perception of the environmental impacts of FMs.

To test the hypothesis of FMs as a structural marketing and relational strategy for producers, alternative to conventional distribution channels, going beyond the mere economic profitability and embracing also a set of other economic, social and environmental values (Manser, 2022), we selected four of the impact variables as "proxy" for stability and intensity of producers' rela-

**Figure 2.** Importance of FMs in relation to producers' economic turnover.

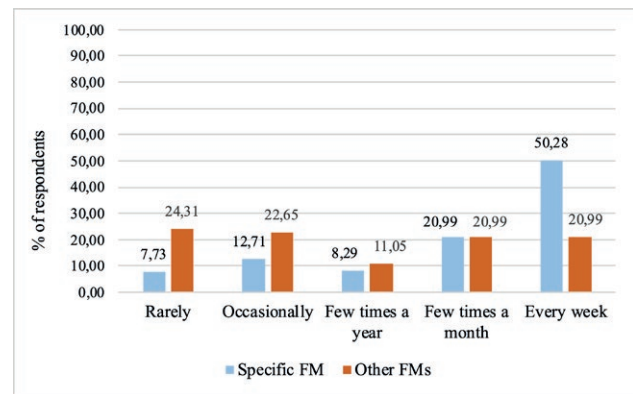


**Figure 3.** Producers supply of and consumers' demand for products at FMs.

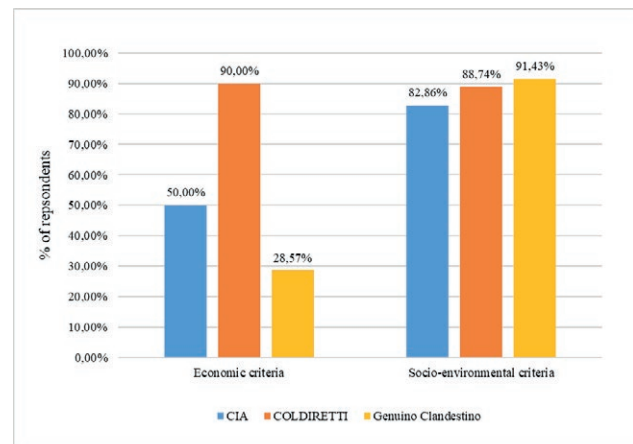


tionship with the FM and its other actors (other producers and consumers). The four proxy variables concern economic aspects like risk-sharing (EC9) and resource-sharing (EC10) with other actors, and social aspects such as the building of social and trust relationships between different actors (S1) and cooperation dynamics between producers (S2). Results (Figure 7) show how the two social proxy variables (S1 and S2) are perceived as very much positively influenced by FMs, coherently with what can be found in the literature (Mastronardi *et al.*, 2015; Vittersø *et al.*, 2019; Kneafsey *et al.*, 2013; Mancini *et al.*, 2019). Indeed, 79% of the sample producers consider the impact of FMs as positive on cooperation between producers (S2) and 97% of them consider the impact of FMs as positive on trust and social relations between producers and consumers (S1), with no “non positive” answers. For the economic proxy variable EC10 – i.e., the possibility of sharing resources with other producers, con-

**Figure 4.** Consumers' frequency of purchase at FMs.

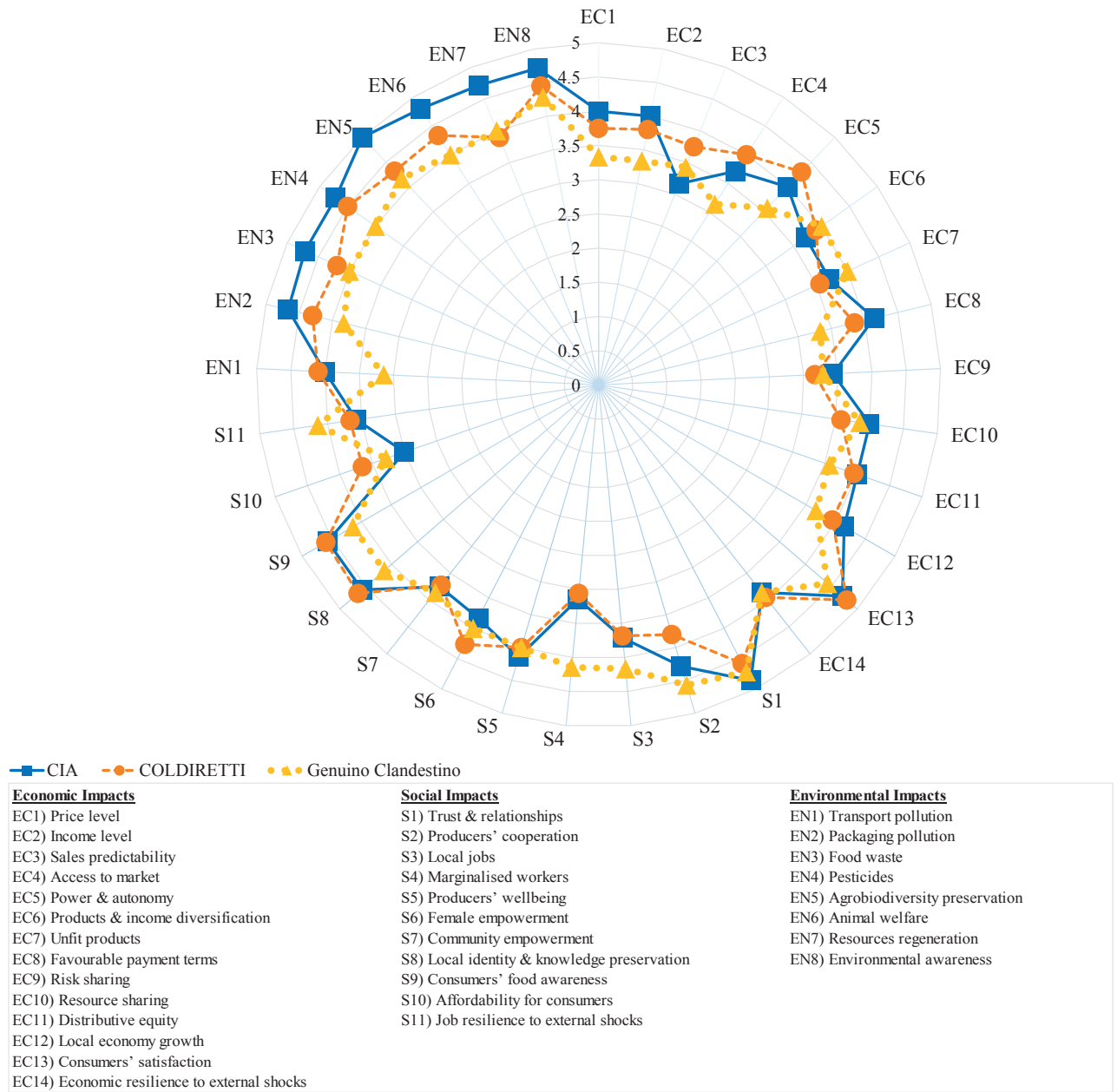


**Figure 5.** Importance of economic and socio-environmental criteria in producers' decision-making processes.



sumers or other actors – the perceived effect of FMs is significantly positive, with 64% of the sample producers declaring a positive impact. Instead, for the other economic proxy variable EC9 – concerning the possibility to share risk with other producers, consumers or other actors – the majority of actors (59%) perceived a non-positive impact of FMs, while 35% of them perceived it as positive. In reality, looking deeper into the non-positive answers, only 15% of the producers expressed a negative impact of FMs on risk-sharing, while 44% of them perceived that impact as neutral (“neither positive nor negative”), which could be indicative of the fact that collective risk-coping mechanisms are not put in place by the interviewed producers, or that they are implemented outside the markets, regardless of producers' participation in FMs. No significative differences across FMs networks were found for these four proxy variables, suggesting that the degree of intensity and stability of relations between

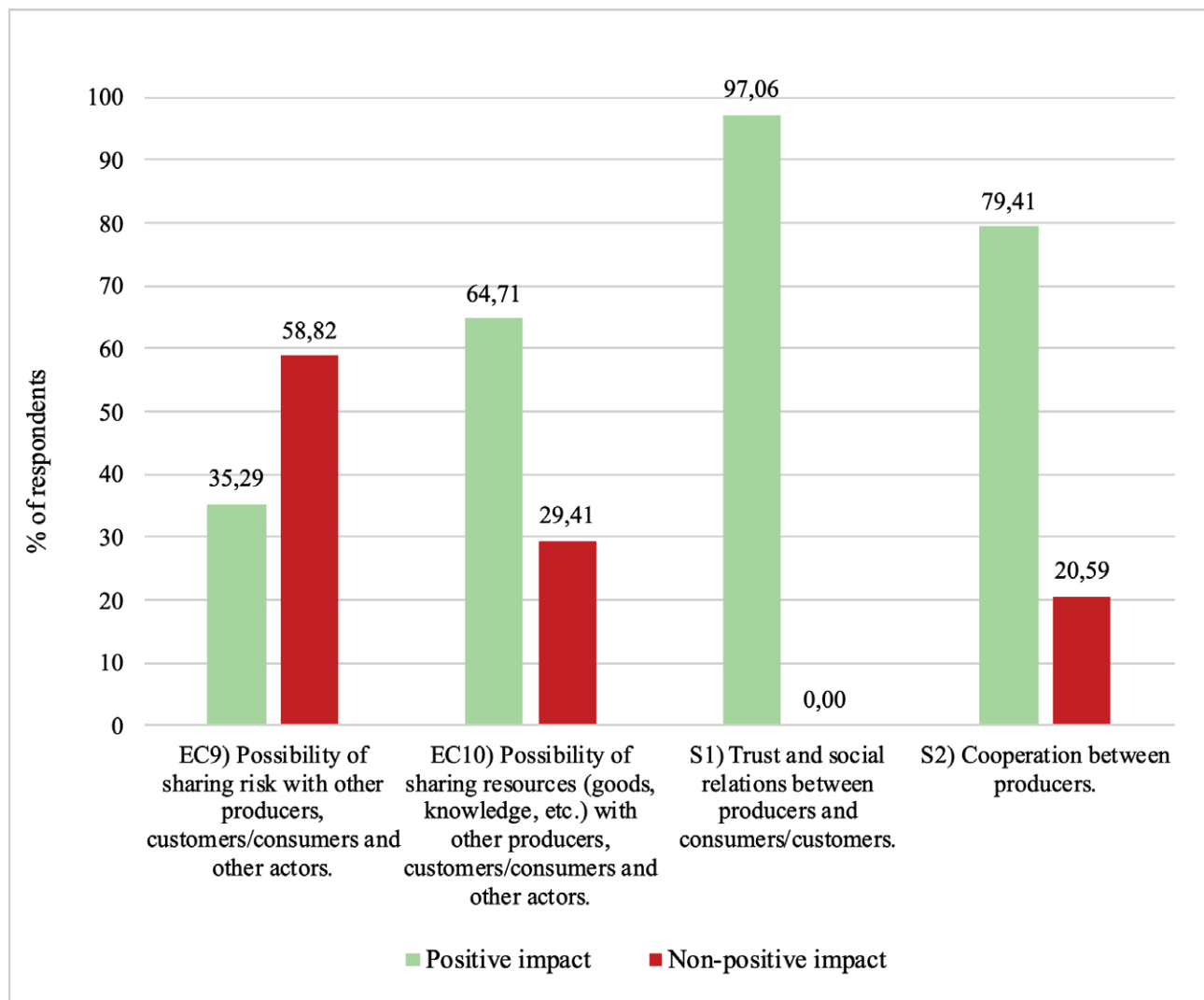
**Figure 6.** Sustainability impacts of FM. Average of producers' answers on a 1-5 Likert scale by FM network ("very negative" to "very positive").



producers and other actors in FMs (other producers and consumers) is not influenced by the FM type, unlike their content, objectives and motivations which vary across FMs, as discussed above.

Consumers in the sample on average consider FMs as positively impacting on their consumption behaviour, diet, and on the territory and the environment, compared to conventional distribution channels (Figure 8), as highlighted in the literature on this topic

(Marino and Cicatiello, 2012; Malak-Rawlikowska *et al.*, 2019; Vittersø *et al.*, 2019; Mastronardi *et al.*, 2015). Notwithstanding this, on more economic aspects such as saving money/time or finding a wide selection of products (BH1, BH2, BH4) only 25-30% of them agree, which probably shows the awareness of FMs often being more time-money consuming than conventional channels, especially to complete the full weekly shopping. As happened for producers, it is interesting again

**Figure 7.** Producers' perception of the impact of FMs on variables EC9, EC10, S1 and S2.

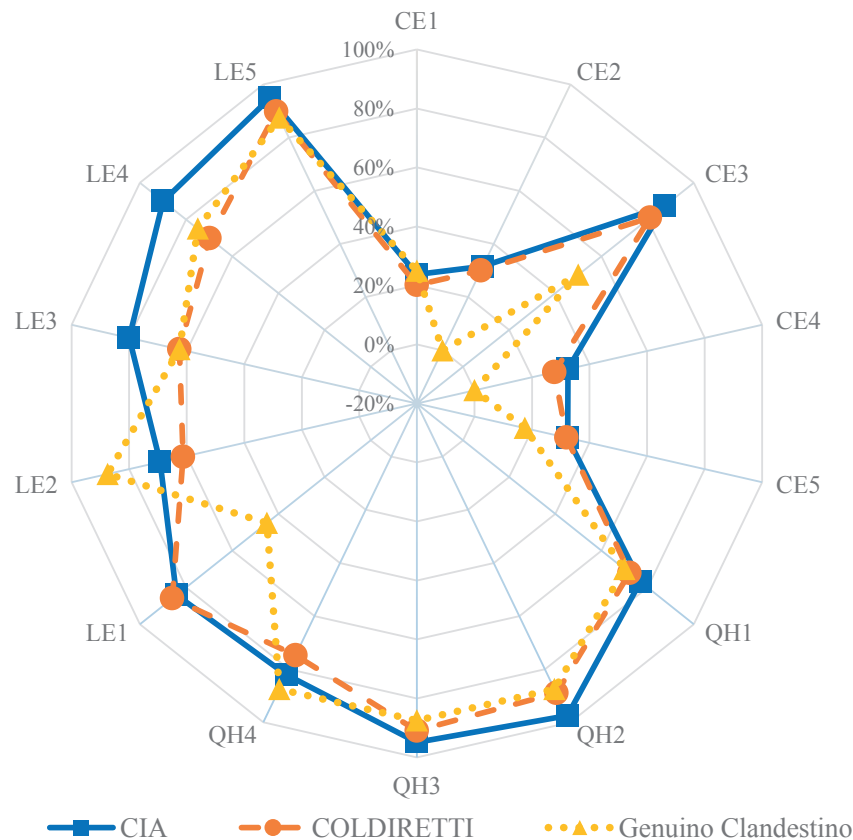
The graph represents positive VS non-positive perceived impact (by producers), with positive including “very positive” and “positive” response options and “non-positive” including “neither positive nor negative”, “negative” and “very negative” response options.

to note the differences in perceptions of Genuino Clandestino consumers. Indeed, their perception of economic aspects (CE1, CE2, CE4) is even worse than that of the rest of the sample, while most of them are quite sceptical about the pleasantness of the shopping experience (CE3) and do not agree on the facility to buy local products (LE1). Instead, they are quite in line with the rest of the sample in appreciating the impact of FMs on their diet improvement (QH1-QH4), supporting local producers (LE5) and reducing negative environmental effects (LE2-LE4).

Concerning factors that can limit consumers' access and hinder more frequent purchases at FMs (Figure 9), the most agreed were the variability of the supply over

time (LM2) and the cost of products (LM4), but also the limited variety of products (LM5) and the extra time needed to shop at FMs (LM1) were mentioned by a significant number of respondents. Genuino Clandestino consumers perceived as highly limiting the time needed to shop (LM1) at FMs and the variability of the supply (LM2), while Cia consumers stressed more as hindering factors the limited variety of products (LM5) and their cost (LM4).

**Figure 8.** Consumers' perception on the impact of FMs on consumption behaviour, diet, territory and environment (% of respondents agreeing with each item).



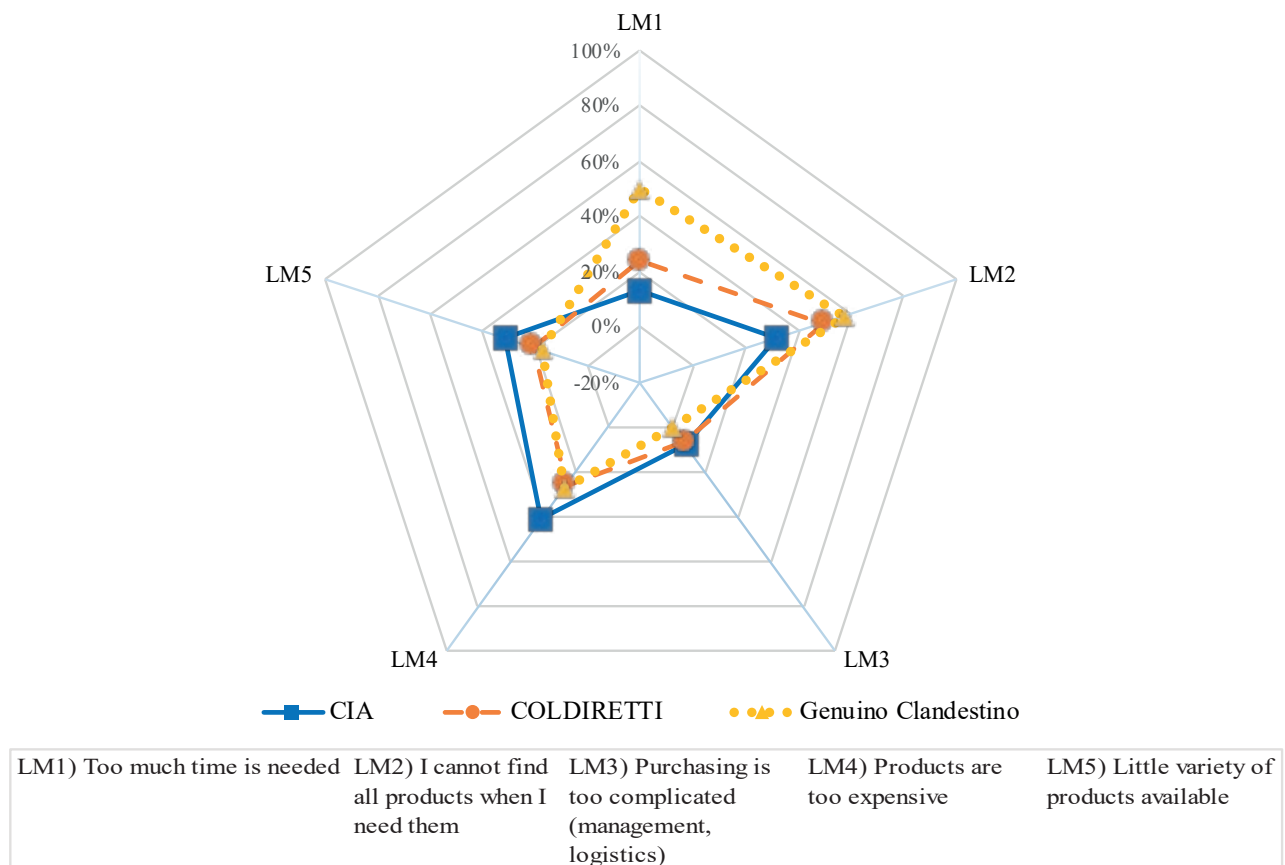
| Consumption experience and prices (CE)                                             | Quality and health (QH)                                                | Localness and environment (LE)                         |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------|
| CE1) It saves me money                                                             | QH1) It makes it easier for me to buy typical and traditional products | LE1) It makes it easier for me to buy local products   |
| CE2) It saves me time                                                              | QH2) It makes it easier for me to buy seasonal fruit and vegetables    | LE2) It allows me to reduce food waste                 |
| CE3) It allows me to shop more pleasantly                                          | QH3) I find fresher and better quality produce                         | LE3) It allows me to reduce pollution due to transport |
| CE4) I find a wider and more diverse selection of products than in the supermarket | QH4) It contributes to a more varied and healthier diet                | LE4) It allows me to reduce packaging waste            |
| CE5) After the COVID pandemic I increased my purchases at the farmers' market      |                                                                        | LE5) It contributes to supporting local producers      |

## 5. DISCUSSION

Results from the analysis show that, for most of the actors involved, FMs appear to be a specific and structural choice that reflects producers and consumers' expectations and motivations, giving a particular imprinting to their respective selling and buying models, to the extent that they constitute a specific way of shaping their mutual relationships.

FMs are not just a sporadic choice, but a structured and continuous way of intending producers-consumers

economic and social relations. On one side, they reflect a specific approach to food and agriculture, and they better suit the products, values and messages these actors bring with them and are interesting to sell, buy, convey and share with each other (Alkon, 2008). On the other side, FMs themselves influence and shape producers and consumers' selling and buying habits and behaviours, and their mutual relationships. The continuity and stability of these relations is confirmed by the results, which show how the majority of producers consider FMs as an extremely important market outlet in relation to their

**Figure 9.** Consumers' perception of factors limiting access and more frequent purchases at FMs (% of respondents agreeing with each item).

economic turnover, and they usually participate in several of them. Consumers too opt for FMs as a stable shopping modality, buying their products there weekly or very frequently and often attending more than one FM.

FMs are not a secondary or residual marketing channel, but a significant and important marketing and shopping modality. Indeed, most of the producers in the sample offer a quite diversified set of products, as well as the great majority of consumers buy a significantly varied basket of products (at least more than 3 categories of products), suggesting from both sides an intensive use of FMs for an important share of the usual marketing and shopping. Regarding producers, the variety of products sold also highlights how FMs, and more in general SFSCs, influence the farm's structure and strategy: indeed, as reported also by Lancaster and Torres (2019), conversely to conventional distribution channels, FMs tend to promote products diversification, which is often essential to better meet consumers' varied demand and achieve economic viability.

FMs are not just a marketing or purchasing choice to respond to producers and consumers' economic needs

for selling and buying food by obtaining better remuneration and pursuing value for money. Even though the economic component surely still plays an important role behind producers and consumers' market choices, it is often not the primary engine of their involvement in FMs. Producers in the sample, besides economic motivations, attribute great importance to social and environmental criteria when making decisions on their business, such as supporting the local community and preserving the environment and local resources (Kneafsey *et al.*, 2013). Moreover, when it comes to the perceived impacts (Figure 4), they acknowledge that FMs have a significant influence in shaping relations between producers and consumers, as shown by their answers to the four relational stability-intensity "proxy" variables (EC9, EC10, S1, S2). Indeed, FMs tend to foster the development of both economic relations leading to share resources, knowledge (EC10) and market risks (EC9), and social relations based on trust (S1) and cooperation (S2). This intensifies the flow of information and exchanges between the two sides, which on the one hand positively affects producers' work-related wellbeing (S5) and con-

sumers' satisfaction about FMs (EC13), and on the other increases consumers' awareness about food products and production processes (S9), resulting in an enhanced capacity of FMs to preserve and valorise local food products and the related knowledge, culture and identity (S8). Consumers' perceptions confirm that FMs, through the intensification of producers-consumers relationships, enhance the flow of information between the two sides, making their shopping experience more pleasant (BH3) and easing the purchase of products which are not only seasonal, fresh and of good quality (DT2, DT3), but also typical, traditional (DT1) and local (TE1).

In this general framework coming out from the analysis, some interesting differences emerge between the more "institutional" and business-oriented FMs organised by the Coldiretti and Cia, and the more "alternative" and solidarity-oriented ones of the Genuino Clandestino network. In general, the actors from this network are more critical and severe in their opinions, especially towards more economic aspects to which they attribute far less importance than to social and environmental ones, and which they consider as less impacted by FMs. Indeed, producers and consumers from this network tend to share a quite strong "activist" and political attitude towards agriculture and food, being very close to ideas of self-sufficiency and food sovereignty, and therefore radically opposed to conventional agrifood production and distribution (Alkon, 2008). This often takes their opinions to extremes reflected in their answers, also because of their specific view of how relationships in agrifood systems should be shaped and function. Moreover, solidarity mechanisms in the network are quite strong, and exchanges and cooperation are very frequent, enhanced also by the informal participatory guarantee system (PGS) they put in place among producers, with frequent farm visits coupled to collective moments of work, resources (e.g., seeds) and knowledge sharing. This is reflected in their agreement on the positive impact of FMs on risk and resources sharing (EC9, EC10), and especially in their much higher perception of the positive influence on producers' cooperation and job resilience (S2-S4, S11), as the intensity of relations and solidarity within the network helps the member to cope with market risks and eventual external shocks.

These differences in actors' perceptions and attitudes toward FMs show how FMs are not all the same (Marino and Cicatiello, 2012). Besides some general characteristics and patterns, in each market producers and consumers create their own organisational space, which reflects the characteristics of the products they exchange, their idea and understanding of agriculture and agrifood

systems, and the relational model that better suits the messages and values they want to bring about.

From all these evidences and considerations, the comparison between producers and consumers' results highlights a common pattern in their behaviour and perceptions in relation to FMs that seems to confirm our initial hypothesis. FMs are not just one of many ways of buying and selling food products that producers and consumers have at their disposal, but they emerge as a stable and critical alternative marketing and shopping choice, generating specific relational models between the actors involved which at the same time reflect, influence and enable the expression and practice of a given approach to food and agriculture.

## 6. CONCLUSIONS

The growth of FMs, together with the more general wave of emerging SFSCs, witnesses the desire of searching for alternatives to the conventional agri-food system. Indeed, in spite of the fact that the reality of SFSCs shows different types of initiatives and 'souls' of the movement, more or less aimed at a radical transformation of the conventional agri-food system, it is possible to read a general tendency towards overcoming the logic of the pure neo-classical market.

The results of this survey, although only exploratory in nature, show how both producers and consumers participating in FMs in Tuscany, although with differences across FMs types, do not only activate market relationships, but share, learn and build values together. The great importance attributed by the interviewed consumers to social and environmental criteria when making their decisions about which marketing channel to choose and which producer to buy from, and the lower importance attributed by producers to economic variables such as price premium, is a clear signal of the diversity of FMs. Indeed, as previous studies showed (Marino *et al.*, 2013; Vittersø, 2019), values such as FMs local identity, community building, knowledge and information exchange, trust, solidarity to local people, co-operation, eco-friendliness, waste reduction, often appear to be more important than economic advantages for both producers and consumers.

Therefore, FMs constitute an innovative and alternative economic and social space, structuring producers-consumers relations, as well as their relations with the market space itself and the products' exchange dynamics. If, on the one hand, they reflect a specific approach to food and agriculture and offer an appropriate space to channel and convey products, values and messages rep-

resenting this approach, on the other, FMs themselves influence and shape producers and consumers' selling and buying models, and their mutual relationship. This bidirectional and circular influence between the FM and its community of producers and consumers clearly emerged in the results of this article, in the way different types of FMs are created and structured to respond to the different objectives, ideas and values of their members, influencing and shaping them at the same time.

The approach followed in this article presents some limitations. The sample of both producers and consumers could have been bigger and include more FMs showing a more varied set of organisational models, to better appreciate the differences between them. Moreover, the methodological choice of designing the producers' survey as an actors' self-assessment, even though guided by an interviewer, may have slightly altered the robustness of results due to possible misunderstandings in the meaning of some questions and/or terminology.

Nevertheless, with this article we hope to feed the debate and contribute to the understanding of FMs as an alternative innovative tool supporting the development of more sustainable and resilient territorial food systems.

Future research on the governance mechanisms of the various types of FMs could help to understand the implications of different organisational models on the sustainability of FMs and their appropriateness according to actors' business structure and type, as well as in relation to their values and expectations. Interesting evidence could emerge from a comparison of the thematic dimension, between FMs with different degrees of "alternativeness" in their content or governance structure, of the spatial dimension, between FMs of different areas and regions of Italy, and of the time dimension, between "historical" and more recent FMs.

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS AND FUNDING

This article presents some of the results of COACH project – Collaborative Agri-food Chains: Driving Innovation in Territorial Food Systems and Improving Outcomes for Producers and Consumers (<https://coach-project.eu/>), European Commission, Coordination and support actions, CALL H2020-RUR-2020-1, Program H2020, Project 101000918. The authors would like to thank the students of the course *Economia dell'Impresa Agro-alimentare* at the University of Florence (Italy), who contributed to the collection and first data processing from interviewed consumers and producers.

#### AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

M.M.: Conceptualization, Methodology, Validation, Formal analysis, Investigation, Data curation, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing; A.M.: Conceptualization, Methodology, Validation, Formal analysis, Investigation, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing; G.B.: Conceptualization, Methodology, Validation, Formal analysis, Investigation, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing.

#### REFERENCES

- Alkon A.H. (2008). From value to values: sustainable consumption at farmers markets. *Agriculture and Human Values*, 25: 487-498. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10460-008-9136-y>.
- Belletti G., Marescotti A. (2020). *Short Food Supply Chains for Promoting Local Food on Local Markets*. Department of Trade, Investment, and Innovation (TII) of the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), Wien.
- Brunori G., Galli F., Barjolle D., van Broekhuizen R., Colombo L., Giampietro M., Touzard J.M. (2016). Are local food chains more sustainable than global food chains? Considerations for Assessment. *Sustainability*, 8(5): 1-27. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.3390/su8050449>.
- Brunori G., Rossi A., Cerruti R., Guidi F. (2009). Nicchie produttive e innovazione di sistema: un'analisi secondo l'approccio delle transizioni tecnologiche attraverso il caso dei farmers' markets in Toscana. *Economia Agro-alimentare*, 3. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.3280/ECAG2009-003008>.
- Bullock S. (2000). *The economic benefits of farmers' market*. Friends of the Earth Trust, London, UK.
- Chiffolleau Y., Dourian T. (2020). Sustainable Food Supply Chains: Is Shortening the Answer? A Literature Review for a Research and Innovation Agenda. *Sustainability*, 12(23): 9831. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.3390/su12239831>.
- DEFRA (2005). *The validity of food miles as an indicator of sustainable development*. Final report for the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, issue 7, London.
- Demartini E., Gaviglio A., Pirani A. (2017). Farmers' motivation and perceived effects of participating in short food supply chains: evidence from a North Italian survey. *Agricultural Economics – Czech*, 63(5): 204-216. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1742170519000309>.
- DuPuis M., Goodman D. (2005). "Should we go 'home' to eat?: toward a Reflective Politics of Localism". *Jour-*

- nal of Rural Studies*, 21: 359-371. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jrurstud.2005.05.011>.
- Forssell S., Lankoski L. (2014). The sustainability promise of alternative food networks: an examination through "alternative" characteristics. *Agriculture and Human Values*, 32(1). DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10460-014-9516-4>.
- Galli F., Bartolini F., Brunori G., Colombo L., Gava O., Grando S., Marescotti A. (2015). "Sustainability assessment of food supply chains: an application to local and global bread in Italy". *Agricultural and Food Economics*, 3(21). DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40100-015-0039-0>.
- Goodman D., DuPuis M.E., Goodman M.K. (2011). *Alternative Food Networks: Knowledge, Practice and Politics*. Routledge, London.
- Hendrickson M., Heffernan W. (2002). Opening Spaces through Relocalization: Locating Potential Resistance in the Weaknesses of the Global Food System. *Sociologia Ruralis*, 42(4): 347-369. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9523.00221>.
- Henneberry S.R., Whitacre B., Agustini H.N. (2009). An Evaluation of the Economic Impacts of Oklahoma Farmers Markets. *Journal of Food Distribution Research*, 40(3): 64-78. DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.22004/ag.econ.99760>.
- Hobbs J.E. (2021). Food supply chain resilience and the COVID-19 pandemic: What have we learned?. *Canadian Journal of Agricultural Economics*, 69(2): 189-196. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1111/cjag.12279>.
- Kneafsey M., Venn L., Schmutz U., Balazs B., Trenchard L., Eyden-Wood T., Bos E., Sutton G., Blackett M. (2013). *Short Food Supply Chains and Local Food Systems in the EU. A State of Play of their Socio-Economic Characteristics*. Scientific and Policy Report, European Commission, Joint Research Centre, Institute for Prospective Technological Studies, Luxembourg.
- Lamine C. (2005). Settling Shared Uncertainties: Local Partnerships Between Producers and Consumers. *Sociologia Ruralis*, 45(4): 324-345. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9523.2005.00308.x>.
- Lancaster N.A., Torres A.P. (2019). Investigating the Drivers of Farm Diversification Among U.S. Fruit and Vegetable Operations. *Sustainability*, 11(12): 3380. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.3390/su11123380>.
- Lev L., Brewer L., Stephenson G. (2003). *How do farmers' markets affect neighbouring businesses?*. Oregon Small Farms Technical Report no. 16, Small Farms Extension Program, Oregon State University: Corvallis, OR.
- Malak-Rawlikowska A., Majewski E., Wa A., Borgen S.O., Csillag P., Donati M., Freeman R., Hoàng V., Lecoœur J.L., Mancini M.C., Nguyen A., Saïdi M., Tocco B., Török Á., Veneziani V., Vittersø G., Wavresky P. (2019). Measuring the Economic, Environmental, and Social Sustainability of Short Food Supply Chains. *Sustainability*, 11: 4004. DOI: [doi:10.3390/su11154004](https://doi.org/10.3390/su11154004).
- Mancini M.C., Menozzi D., Donati M., Biasini B., Veneziani M., Arfini F. (2019). Producers' and Consumers' Perception of the Sustainability of Short Food Supply Chains: The Case of Parmigiano Reggiano PDO. *Sustainability*, 11: 721. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.3390/su11030721>.
- Manser G.M. (2022). Systematizing authenticity and codifying values: The role of values, standards, and governance at farmers markets. *Journal of Rural Studies*, 96: 154-166. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jrurstud.2022.10.021>.
- Marino D., Mastronardi L., Franco S., De Gregorio D., Cicatiello C., Pancino B. (2013). *Farmers' Markets, Producer and Consumer Behaviour: Analysis of Interactions with the Metrics of Sustainability*. Proceedings of the 6<sup>th</sup> International European Forum on System Dynamics and Innovation in Food Networks. February 18-22-2013, Innsbruck-Igls (Austria), Universität Bonn-ILB Press, Bonn.
- Marino D., Cicatiello C. (2012). *I farmers' market: la mano invisibile del mercato. Aspetti economici, sociali e ambientali delle filiere corte*. FrancoAngeli, Milano.
- Marotta G., Nazzaro C. (2023). Proximity economy and local food chains for the regeneration of inner areas. *Italian Review of Agricultural Economics*, 78(1): 3-15. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.36253/rea-14309>.
- Marsden T., Banks J., Bristow G. (2002). The Social Management of Rural Nature: Understanding Agrarian-Based Rural Development. *Environment and Planning, A* 34: 809-825. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1068/a3427>.
- Mastronardi L., Marino D., Cavallo A., Giannelli A. (2015). Exploring the Role of Farmers in Short Food Supply Chains: The Case of Italy. *International Food and Agribusiness Management Review*, 18(2). DOI: <https://doi.org/10.22004/ag.econ.204139>.
- Michel-Villarreal R., Hingley M., Canavari M., Bregoli I. (2019). Sustainability in Alternative Food Networks: A systematic literature review. *Sustainability*, 11(3): 859. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.3390/su11030859>.
- Nemes G., Chiffolleau Y., Zollet S., Collison M., Benedek Z., Colantuono F., Dulsrud A., Fiore M., Holtkamp C., Kim T.Y., Korzun M., Mesa-Manzano R., Reckinger R., Ruiz-Martínez I., Smith K., Tamura N., Viteri M.L., Orbán É. (2021). The impact of COVID-19 on alternative and local food systems and the potential for the sustainability transition: Insights from

- 13 countries. *Sustainable Production and Consumption*, 28: 591-599. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.spc.2021.06.022>.
- Otto D., Varner T. (2005). *Consumers, Vendors, and the Economic Importance of Iowa Farmers Markets: An Economic Impact Survey Analysis*. Iowa: Iowa State University.
- Pearson D., Henryks J., Trott A., Jones P., Parker G., Dumaresq D., Dyball R. (2011). Local Food: Understanding Consumer Motivations in Innovative Retail Formats. *British Food Journal*, 113(7): 886-899. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1108/00070701111148414>.
- Sage C. (2003). Social Embeddedness and Relations of Regard: Alternative “Good Food” Networks in South West Ireland. *Journal of Rural Studies*, 19: 47-60. DOI: [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0743-0167\(02\)00044-X](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0743-0167(02)00044-X).
- Smithers J., Lamarche J., Joseph A. (2008). Unpacking the terms of engagement with local food at the farmers’ market: insights from Ontario. *Journal of Rural Studies*, 24: 337-350. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jrurstud.2007.12.009>.
- Swinnen J.F.M., Maertens M. (2007). Globalization, privatization, and vertical coordination in food value chains in developing and transition countries. *Agricultural Economics*, 37(1): 89-102. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1574-0862.2007.00237>.
- Van der Ploeg J.D., Renting H., Brunori G., Knickel K., Mannion J., Marsden T., de Roest K., Sevilla-Guzman E., Ventura F. (2000). Rural Development: From Practices and Policies towards Theory. *Sociologia Ruralis*, 40(4): 391-408. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9523.00156>.
- Van der Ploeg J.D., Jingzhong Y., Schneider S. (2012). Rural development through the construction of new, nested, markets: comparative perspectives from China, Brazil and the European Union. *The Journal of Peasant Studies*, 39(1): 133-173. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/03066150.2011.652619>.
- Vittersø G., Torjusen H., Laitala K., Tocco B., Biasini B., Csillag P., Dubois de Labarre M., Lecoœur J.L., Maj A., Majewski E., Malak-Rawlikowska A., Menozzi D., Török Á., Wavresky P. (2019). Short Food Supply Chains and Their Contributions to Sustainability: Participants’ Views and Perceptions from 12 European Cases. *Sustainability*, 11: 4800. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.3390/su11174800>.