

THE ROLE OF MUNICIPALITIES IN PROMOTING THE USE OF LOCALLY PRODUCED AND PROCESSED ECOLOGICAL FOOD

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Ecological farming is a form or a way of food production, which is gaining on importance in the Slovene and global space. These are also excellent opportunities which are key for the further development of the municipality, region and country. The consuming and benefits of organically produced and processed foods are more or less subjective. Ecological farmers must take into account the wishes of the residents (who are also consumers), and strive to maintain and improve the production and processing of high-quality foods. By doing this, we will preserve our natural resources and achieve the contentment and health of our fellow people. In the survey on the sample of inhabitants of the Podravje region in Slovenia, we found that respondents attribute great importance to local foods and local producers and processors.

Key words: *ecological farming, municipality, ecological nutrition.*

РОЛЬ МУНИЦИПАЛИТЕТОВ В ПРОДВИЖЕНИИ ИСПОЛЬЗОВАНИЯ ЭКОЛОГИЧЕСКИ ЧИСТЫХ ПРОДУКТОВ МЕСТНОГО ПРОИЗВОДСТВА И ПЕРЕРАБОТКИ

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Экологическое земледелие – это форма или способ производства продовольствия, который приобретает все большее значение в словенском и глобальном пространстве. Это также отличные возможности, которые являются ключевыми для дальнейшего развития муниципалитета, региона и страны. Потребление и выгоды продуктов органического производства и переработки являются более или менее субъективными. Экологические фермеры должны учитывать пожелания жителей (которые также являются потребителями) и стремиться поддерживать и совершенствовать производство и переработку высококачественных продуктов питания. Благодаря этому, мы сохраним наши природные ресурсы и достигнем удовлетворения и здоровья людей. В исследовании на выборке жителей региона Подравье в Словении, мы обнаружили, что респонденты придают большое значение местным продуктам, а также местным производителям и переработчикам.

Ключевые слова: *экологическое земледелие, муниципалитет, экологическое питание.*

Introduction

Ecological farming ensures the cultivation and processing of high quality and safe food with high nutritional value and high levels of vitamins, minerals and antioxidants.

"The term ecologically does not refer to food or foodstuff itself, but refers to its production. The term "ecological" is defined by the regulation, and the entire production and processing chain of ecological foods, products and produce is subject to very strict rules "(Grant, 2002).

In the article, we will present the importance of local producers and processors of agricultural foods on the theoretical and research basis, the importance of local market outlets for the sale of ecological foods, the quality of locally produced foods and what counts for users when choosing agricultural products. Namely, management of the organization must be aware of the risk of fraud in the accounting statements, therefore the risk management of fraud is an integral part of the operations in each organization (Horvat, Lipičnik, 2016, p. 29).

Theoretical basis

Ecological farming

Ecological farming has an increasing importance in Slovene municipalities as it represents the way and the shape of the natural farming method, which is more friendly and acceptable to residents, animals and nature. Such a form of locally sustainable food supply ensures high-quality production and processing of foods with high nutritional value.

When talking about ecological farming, we are talking about ecological production and processing of foods, which works according to the system of natural processes and methods. This means that genetically modified organisms and products (pesticides, chemically synthesized phytopharmaceutical products) must not be used. Taking into account that kind of rules, we guarantee a high standard of nutrition and the health and safety of residents. The strategy and the system of healthy locally produced and processed foods must also include the control of crops and products. The fact is that locally produced and processed organic foods that are produced and processed in a way that protects the natural resources of life (air, water, soil, ...) are less burdensome for the eco-system, and the environment in which we live.

Local growers and processors of food

The term of "local" directly implies on one hand inclusion, and on the other exclusion of the place, certain people, their way of life, eating (DuPuis and Goodman, 2005, p. 361).

The vision and goal of the municipality should be based on values, important factors of a healthy and quality life of residents, the discovery of development opportunities and other key points on which the municipality will base itself or build its further development and promotion.

Modern rural changes define the speed, persistence, integrity and interdependence of change. The reason for the speed and complexity of the changes

is accelerated development of technology in social reforms and integration of the countryside into global social and spatial processes. Changes are not only evident in physical modernization of the countryside, but also in changed behavior and perception of people living in the countryside and shaping it. This continues to reduce borders between urban and rural (Klemenčič, 2006, p. 161).

The experts in the field of nutrition, (Matej Gregorič and Urška Blaznik, 2014) from the Institute of Public Health (IVZ), consider the term "local" to be associated with shorter delivery time and storage of foods. For example, if vegetables, fruits, animals, ... are processed in vegetable juice, fruit juice or meat products, we are talking about the processing of agricultural products. Different technological processes that have an effect on the final product are used. In this case, this is a change in the primary form of the crop. Karla Klander (2012), a nutrition consultant, believes that locally-produced food is the one that has been produced in our vicinity, and the collected and harvested is the day before the sale, which is the reason it is more mature, full of taste and naturally fresh. On the contrary, vegetables and fruits are waiting for long-haul transportation, storage ..., and the harvest is collected too early, and it is still heavily chemically treated. Karla Klander lists some of the key arguments brought about by locally produced foods:

- when we buy local food, we support local family farms;
- local shopping supports a clean environment and nature;
- locally produced foods have a better taste;
- buying local food preserves uninhabited areas;
- Locally produced foods are more beneficial to us.

When we talk about the production of agricultural products, we mean foods in unprocessed form (fruit, vegetables, cereals, ...) and do not change the basic appearance and natural form. They do not lose the status of the primary agricultural product.

Quality of locally produced ecological foods

The quality of locally produced foods is based on the fact that crops are produced by the integrated production process (nature friendly way) and which reduce the negative effects of farming on the environment. In the United States, the institutionalization of quality was introduced already in 1906 by the Federal Food and Drugs Act and the Meat Inspection Act (Giovannucci et al., p. 96).

How high quality and safe food will we consume as also generations following us depends mainly on the support that consumers and Slovenian food producers will receive (Gale, 2011). High quality and healthy ecological products and processed foods represent a way of farming, that has a strong influence on the sustainable management of non-renewable natural resources. Sustainable development is a few wider term, because it involves three dimensions of activity of a business entity: environmental, economic and social dimension (Horvat, 2015). The method of animal breeding and crop production is complemented in an integrated way, thus following the circulation of substances in nature and natural methods of food production and processing. Any management is responsible for the legality of operations and regard

to this with the prevention and detection of business, which is non-compliant with legal norms (Horvat, Antoni, 2016, p. 64).

Healthy food and local self sufficiency with ecological food

An important factor in our contentment and health is food, which is a vital demand for survival. The importance of consuming food is not only the fulfillment of physiological needs, but as claims (Cousin, 2012), food also reflects the characteristics of certain social, religious and other needs. "Healthy nutrition is a basic condition for maintaining health, improving well being and quality living. From a childhood, with a balanced diet and a healthy lifestyle, we can reduce the risk of developing dietary conditioned diseases and affect the length of life "(Hlastan Ribič, 2010, p. 5).

Self-sustenance with food

Local communities can contribute to greater self sufficiency with agricultural products for their inhabitants. "Food self sufficiency has become one of the important strategic issues of national or state security in today's times of uncertain food supply. It is ensured within the food security of a particular area or country through food chains, including the promotion of local food consumption. In this regard, it is necessary to take into account the environment, economy, culture, health and society in the broad sense, as well as the security on which local self-sustainability has a direct and indirect impact "(Plut, 2012b, p. 7).

"Self-sustenance with food means a state when a country produces enough food for the needs of its population, and it itself ensures a balanced state between its supply and demand, not only in normal conditions, but also in emergency and crisis situations. It allows the traceability of unharmed produced food and a safe level of potential self-sufficiency. "(Pestotnik, 2014, p. 14).

The goals of a balanced diet

The aims and benefits of the taste of organic products are more or less subjective, but for organic farmers it is known that on their farms they raise a greater diversity of plant and animal species. This gives consumers a chance to enjoy new flavors and culinary experiences.

Grunert (2005, p. 370) estimates that a more dynamic and heterogeneous demand in the food market creates an opportunity for those producers who are willing to expose themselves to the risk of differentiating their products, target specific markets and, in spite of global marketing pressures, adapt to the conditions of the local environment. Such manufacturers follow a customer-oriented concept and, by ensuring the quality of their products, they want to influence the consumer's perception of their product as a better quality and better than a competitive one.

Local - ecological food markets

A space or the location where people who trade with various crops and products are called markets. This is a place where people are socializing, buying, getting to know each other, enjoying, relaxing ... Each municipality should have a

regular or occasional ecological market where local producers and processors of food would be represented, and the citizens would consequently be more happy. Market day means socializing and shopping at the same time.




"Trading between the city and the village was so in the past, as is still of special importance to citizens and villagers today. The city and you are traded with each other with different wares and in different ways. For the city, the rural surroundings are especially important from the point of view of food supply, and one of the places where this type of trading takes place is the city's food markets. The most convincing about their importance is the fact that they are known almost everywhere around the world. Their origin goes far back to the past, but in a more or less changed form they have been preserved up to the present day "(Jew, 1994, p. 7). Also logistics costs are very important. If logistics costs are not regulated by internal rules, this means a greater risk of incorrect and ineffective management, non-attainment of company's objectives, ineffective use of resources, damage to assets as well as incorrect and unreliable information and data (Horvat, Antoni, 2016, p. 63).

Activities of healthy eco-nutrition through the media and organic markets are increasingly effective, as residents are aware of the importance of consuming food from local producers and processors. Residents or consumers today are much more likely to check the origin of food than before. Purchase or choice of eco-produced and processed foods that are bought on organic markets shows that for citizens (consumers) health is very important, and those who prefer to buy food in shopping centers are more interested in quality and price. They differ in environmental awareness, which is considerably higher in ecological markets.

Research and discussion






The survey covers ten selected municipalities of the Podravje region in Slovenia, which represents a total of 3739 citizens. The selected municipalities were: Cerkevjak, Cirkulane, Kungota, Makole, Podlechnik, Sv. Trojica v Slovenskih goricah, Sv. Andraž v Slovenskih goricah, Sv. Jurij in Slovenskih goricah, Sveti Videm and Žetale. We covered citizens aged between 40 and 50, to whom we sent a questionnaire with questions about the importance of local producers and processors of agricultural food, the importance of markets in the local community for the sale of ecological foods, the quality of locally produced foods, and what is important for users when choosing between agricultural foods. The questionnaire was answered by 110 people who represent a sample of the survey. The results of the answers are shown in Tables 1, 2, 3 and 4.

Table 1 – Locally produced and processed foods have a major impact health improvement from the standpoint of nutritional value of foods.

Yes	41		82%
No	3		6%
Don't know	6		12%
All results	50		

Source: Own research.








Table 2 – Municipalities should pay more attention to:

Promotion of healthy food in the Municipality	9		18%
Importance of local producers and processors of food	20		40%
Contentment of the citizen	6		12%
Socialising of citizen	2		4%
Cooperation with local producers and processors of food	13		26%
All results	50		

Source: Own research.

As it can be seen in the responses to the survey, the majority (82%, Table 1) of respondents agree that locally produced and processed foods have a major impact on improving health, and that municipalities should pay more attention to the promotion of locally produced foods and cooperation with local producers and processors of food (Table 2).

Table 3 – The quality of locally produced foods is better (look, smell, price, ...), logistics (unnecessary storage, long haulage, ...) is more rational and the foods are healthier.

I agree totaly	32		64%
I agree	10		20%
I partially agree	6		12%
I don't agree nor disagree	2		4%
I partially disagree	0		0%
I disagree	0		0%
I totaly disagree	0		0%

Source: Own research.

Table 4 – Evaluate what is most important to you when purchasing food (1- most important; 5 - least important).

	Position	Points
Source "origin" of foods	1.	125
Poznan »lokalni« pridelovalec oz. predelovalec živil	2.	132
A "local" food producer or processor	3.	158
The appearance of the food	4.	159
Food price	5.	176

Source: Own research (The position points to the importance of a possible answer: The higher the position, the more important the answer is, the points are the sum of all the answers for this answer The most important answer has the lowest number of points The least important answer has the highest number of points.)

Most respondents also fully agree (64% from Table 3) that locally produced foods are better in quality and that the source or origin of foods and also a known producer or processor of foods are important (Table 4).

Conclusion

In the Slovenian market, local sustainable food supply could play a major role or represent a significant proportion of crops, because foods are of high quality and represent the survival for the processors and growers, while providing a source of nutrition. Municipalities should be aware that local consumption and, from another angle, food production is of utmost importance for the development of the countryside and the whole region.

Even Slabe and others (2011, pp. 93-109), in order to increase the role of ecological food production in local self-sustenance, recognize many new and good development opportunities, since many farms are ecologically oriented, the demographic picture is quite favorable, the potential is showing in new development ideas and innovations of already existing ecological farms. However, they find that the realization of the potential depends on various obstacles felt by the food producers.

As the theoretical basis and the research have shown, on the sample of inhabitants of the Podravje region in Slovenia we can assert, that respondents place great importance to local foods and local producers and processors. We therefore recommend to municipalities, as the survey has shown, to pay more attention to local foods, their promotion and other forms of promoting sales of local food.

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