

The Hidden Benefits of Short Food Supply Chains: Farmers' Markets Density and Body Mass Index in Italy

Short Food Supply Chains (SFSCs) encompass any form of direct sales from farmer to consumer, such as farm shops or farmers markets. SFSCs work in opposition to mainstream global food supply systems, functioning on much smaller scales and reducing the number of intermediaries between producer and consumer. More farmers are adopting short distribution channels in developed countries, and the numbers of SFSC schemes are growing rapidly.

Existing literature demonstrates that SFSCs provide multiple societal benefits and – although limited research on the topic exists, some evidence demonstrates the fact that SFSCs lead to increased access to healthier food options and potentially lead to reductions in obesity rates. This study investigates the relationship between short supply chains and Body Mass Index (BMI) in Italy – specifically aiming to determine whether an increased density of farmer's markets results in a societal reduction in BMI.

The results of the study demonstrated that, in Italy, a higher density of farmer's markets is associated with lower adult BMI (and therefore a reduction in overweight and obesity rates), and that this association is even stronger in those individuals with higher BMI and lower supermarket access.

These results support the beneficial effect of SFSCs on society.

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