

WP5 Summary of tools

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Report introduction only (contact f3 for more information)

Tools for the assessment of short food supply chains' sustainability

Summary: The following represents a summary of tools applied in a working group (WP5) of the EU-project SUPURBFOOD ("Towards sustainable modes of urban and peri-urban food provisioning", www.supurbfood.eu). Within WP5, three research partners, three SME's of short food supply chains and one food consultancy from Italy, the Netherlands, Switzerland and the UK commonly explored logistical strategies that aim to make regional food delivery systems more sustainable while remaining economically viable, including addressing issues of scale.

For more detailed information on the tools applied and also practical examples, this summary might be used alongside the SUPURBFOOD Report (WP5) 'Short chain delivery of food in urban and peri-urban areas' that is available for download at the SUPURBFOOD project website [www.supurbfood.eu].

Overall purpose: We wanted to better understand and assess the sustainability of short food supply chains (SFSC) and identify practical ways in which SME's can assess their own business sustainability and related wider impacts – impacts on themselves, on their suppliers and on their customers. SME's that applied these tools during the project included wholesalers with predominantly organic product lines and a farmers' co-operative.

The tools are mainly aimed at SMEs involved in retailing or variously acting as intermediaries in the chain (this is also witnessed by the definition of a questionnaire for suppliers, as indicated in Step 4, below). Nevertheless they can be adopted also by farmers (which may also be engaged in collecting food from other partners and selling it).

Approach: we took a holistic approach to assessing SFSC sustainability by looking at the whole of the short (and transparent) food supply chain that the SMEs are involved in. The tools that WP5 partners have collectively identified and developed can be used by a wide range of SME's to support the assessment of their current performances and their supply chains sustainability. Outcomes could be also used to prioritise future improvements.

The assessment process can be detailed in the following steps.

Step 1: Collect contextual information about each SME to help the SME identify its current business practices and identify possible issues for improvement (using 4 tools):

- A brief narrative about the SME and its business including information on history, size, overview of supply chain, territory (1000 words)
- A flow chart diagram illustrating the current logistics of the SME's supply chain
- Diary entries to monitor the most regular logistical challenges that need to be addressed

Step 2: SME self-assessment using f3 & EcoStudio sustainable business review to provide SME with a baseline of current performance and identify action areas for improvements.

Step 3: SME looks in more detail at the local supply/short chain impacts and decides which things are most applicable to their business and therefore useful to measure. A new self-assessment tool with a specific focus on exploring the SME's own short supply chain impacts

and benefits is piloted for this purpose, designed by f3 with input from all WP5 partners. The tool aims at investigating three areas of concern, broadly corresponding to the three classic sustainability dimensions (ecological, economic and social).

- Transportation distances, fuel efficiency and waste management
- Contribution to building a vibrant local economy
- Contribution to building stronger social connections and ultimately a vibrant local community

Step 4: SME finds out what kind of impact it has on its suppliers and thus on the issue of synergies. For this, there is a newly designed supplier questionnaire developed by f3 and piloted by SME's and research partners. The purpose is to help the SME assess some of the benefits of its own work on keeping the supply chains short. In theory the supplier questionnaire should produce the following information for the SME:

- More about the suppliers' farming activities
- More about suppliers wider marketing & purchasing
- Suppliers' own social/environmental impacts
- Suppliers' employment (local economic) impacts
- Impact of SME on the supplier business
- Local community impacts of the supplier

Step 5: Combine results into a holistic view of SFSC SME's to support decision making on improving sustainability