



# Short supply chains supported by AVSF

Experiences and lessons

**October 2022**



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# INTRODUCTION

In the early 1980s, AVSF's initial experience in supporting farmers' organisations and developing South-North fair trade demonstrated the importance of marketing control for the development of small-scale farming. As part of its cooperation in support of an agro-ecological transition in countries of the South, the development of short supplychains is also an important marketing lever, benefiting both farming families and those who consume their sustainably farmed produce.

Numerous projects implemented by AVSF and together with farming families and their organisations, as well as other private and public players, have led to the development of short supply chains as defined by the French Ministry of Agriculture and Food Sovereignty: "a method of marketing agricultural products which is carried out either by direct sale from the producer to the consumer, or by indirect sale, provided that there is only one intermediary".

Various different short supply chains have been promoted and supported in the Andes, Brazil and Venezuela, Central America, Haiti and Senegal: direct sales to consumers at open-air markets; sales at public institutional markets; sales of baskets of produce inspired by the French experience of inspired by the experience of the French Agricultural Support Associations (AMAP - *Association pour le Maintien de l'Agriculture Paysanne*); sales in specialised shops and dedicated kiosks run mainly by the farmers' own organisations; and farm sales.

This document, based on past and current projects, aims to capitalise on the results and lessons learnt from AVSF's many experiences and the scattered and insufficiently exploited bibliographical resources produced. It is part of the association's efforts to contribute to agro-ecological transitions and the sustainability of food systems, which are at the heart of current and future challenges facing populations and political decision-makers of southern countries, as well as the community of technical and financial actors involved in development cooperation.

# 1

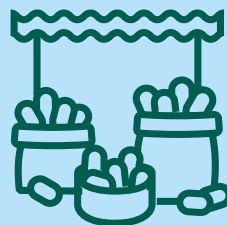
## OVERVIEW OF SHORT SUPPLY CHAINS DEVELOPED BY AVSF

The various types of short supply chains promoted by AVSF for the marketing and supply of quality farm produce to consumers are presented opposite.

**These different types of supported short supply chains are distinguished in particular by the degree of collective organisation involved** (building up volumes, diversity of supply, development of services, etc.). In the case of farm-gate sales and specialised shops, and also up to a certain scale of product volumes in the case of door-to-door sales and urban baskets, these are most often individual initiatives or initiatives led by small groups of producers, in conjunction with other individual entrepreneurial initiatives (mini-dairies, shops in town, etc.).

The establishment and development of each of these types of short distribution channel generally depend on a combination of factors.

Several types of short supply chains are often developed at the same time, complementing each other, in response to the need to sell the quantities produced, and with a view to enhancing the value of farming production systems and reducing the risks for farming families - and their organisations when they are involved in short channel sales.



### OPEN-AIR MARKETS

Farmers' markets, or conventional markets where farmers can sell their product directly

#### AMONG KEY ASPECTS:

- ➔ Limited individual volumes
- ➔ Limited total volumes but growth potential
- ➔ A wide range of products

#### AND IN THE SPECIFIC CASE OF FARMERS' MARKETS:

- ➔ A social relationship between the countryside and the city, and within the countryside itself
- ➔ A collective organisation to manage and regulate the market
- ➔ Minimum infrastructure
- ➔ A municipal space and a permit
- ➔ Proximity to an urban centre



### URBAN BASKETS

#### AMONG KEY ASPECTS:

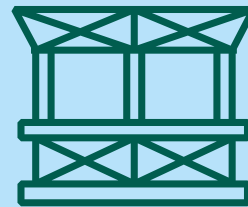
- ➔ Limited individual volumes
- ➔ Limited total volumes but strong growth potential
- ➔ A wide range of products
- ➔ A close relationship between producers and consumers
- ➔ A regular supply
- ➔ Planning ability and solid organisation
- ➔ Minimum infrastructure



## PUBLIC PROCUREMENT

### AMONG KEY ASPECTS:

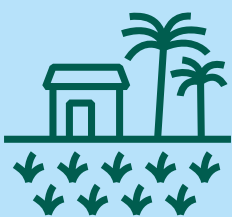
- Medium to large volumes (depending on the degree of decentralisation of public procurement)
- Specific products
- The ability to respond to tough calls for tender, with stringent procedures, conditions and requirements (health and hygiene-related)
- A very strong organisational management capability
- Irregular, late payments



## SPECIALIST SHOPS AND KIOSKS

### AMONG KEY ASPECTS:

- Daily sales, based in particular on permanent volumes and flows
- High operating costs and significant time commitment
- A range of non-perishable products
- Management capabilities
- Formalising the business and the point of sale
- Availability of sales premises (own or third party)



## FARM SALES

### AMONG KEY ASPECTS:

- Save time and transport
- Relatively low minimum volumes
- Lower costs and prices
- No collective organisation required
- Diversified production and/or production that is difficult to find elsewhere



## HOME SALES

Door-to-door sales

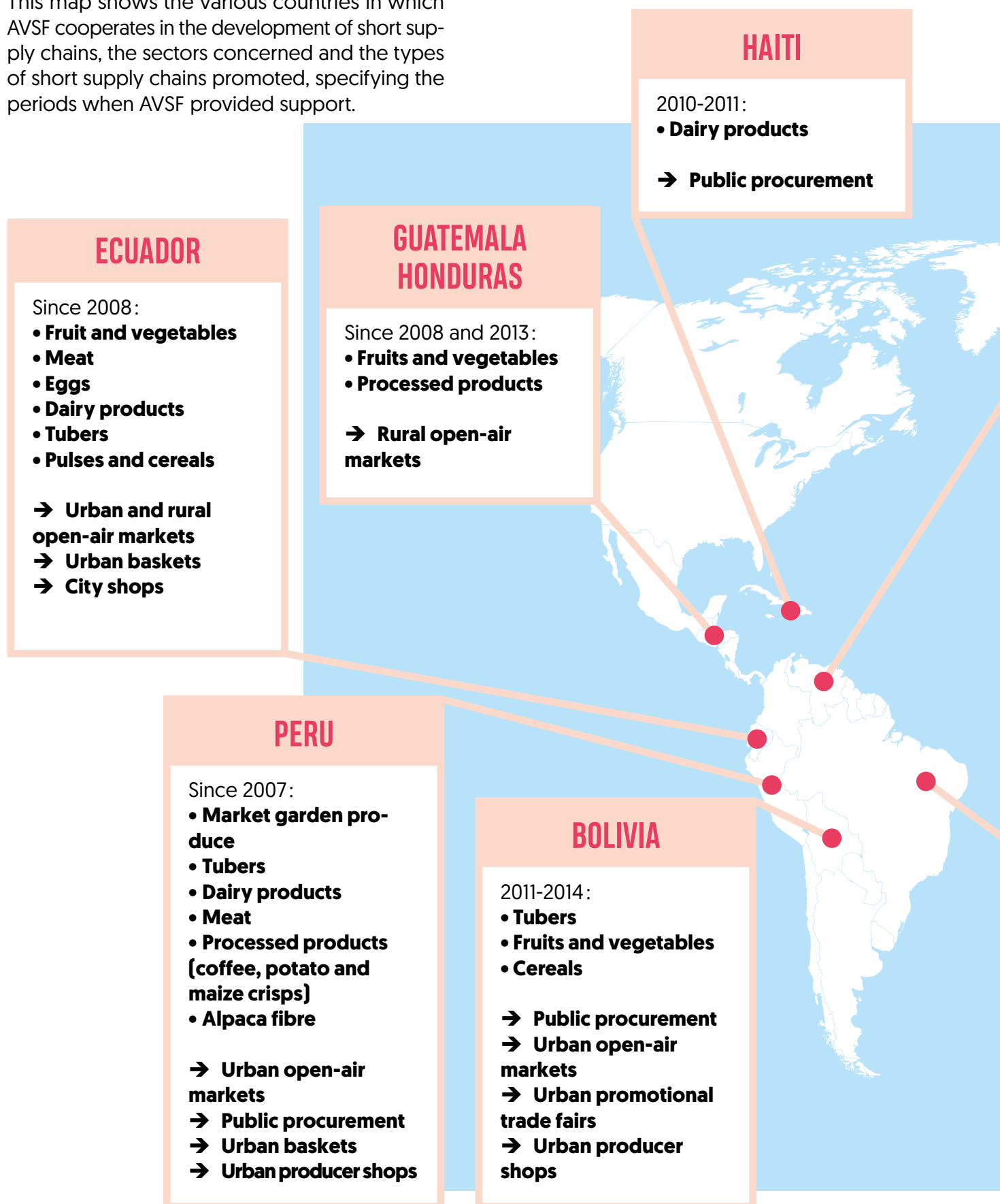
### AMONG KEY ASPECTS:

- Small volumes
- A strong relationship with consumers
- A long selling time
- Transport requirements
- No collective organisation necessarily required



# PRODUCTS AND TYPES OF SHORT SUPPLY CHAINS SUPPORTED BY COUNTRY

This map shows the various countries in which AVSF cooperates in the development of short supply chains, the sectors concerned and the types of short supply chains promoted, specifying the periods when AVSF provided support.





## VENEZUELA

1994-2002:

- **Market gardening**
- **Fruits**
- **Home-cooked products**

→ **Urban open-air markets**

## SENEGAL

Since 2011:

- **Market garden products**
- **Milk and dairy products**
- **Enriched flours**
- **Cashew nuts**

→ **Urban open-air markets**  
→ **Kiosks run by cooperatives**  
→ **Shops in town**  
→ **Direct sales at processing sites**  
→ **Public procurement**

## MALI

Since 2010:

- **Live animals**

→ **Rural livestock market**

## BRAZIL

2001-2014:

- **A wide range of food products**

→ **Public procurement**  
→ **Urban open-air markets**  
→ **Urban baskets**

# 2

## RESULTS OF AVSF'S SUPPORT FOR SHORT SUPPLY CHAINS

The following are the results observed in the monitoring and evaluation systems of the projects developed, the capitalisations on experience made and other publications (dissertations, doctoral theses, scientific articles), during the implementation and/or deployment of short supply chains with the support of AVSF, at the level of farming families, their organisations, consumers, territories and public policies.

### AT THE LEVEL OF FARMING FAMILIES

#### ON A SOCIAL LEVEL

- [Re]valuing farmers in the eyes of urban dwellers
- Adding value, generating income and empowering women
- [Re]promoting native, local products
- Farming families' own appreciation of their role, self-esteem and dignity restored

#### ON AN ECONOMICAL LEVEL

- Increased sales prices and revenues
- Stabilising and securing income

#### IN TERMS OF HEALTH

- Reducing the use of dangerous pesticides without technical control or protection, which has a positive impact on health

#### IN TERMS OF PRODUCTION

- Growing adoption of agro-ecological practices
- Improving production quality
- Increase in yields and volume produced
- Diversification of production and reduced dependence on a single crop
- Increased capacity for self-consumption of their products

#### COMMERCIALLY

- Increase in sales volumes
- Secure and regular sales
- Diversification of sales channels and reduced commercial dependency





## IN ECUADOR,

the establishment of agroecological farmers' markets in the north and south of the country has led to **an average increase in income of 30%** – the vast majority of which is earned by women involved in production, processing and marketing activities – as well as a stabilized income through weekly sales.



## AT THE LEVEL OF FARMERS' ORGANISATIONS

- Setting up producer organisations (PO) and processing companies
- Organisational and professional consolidation of business management
- Development of new products
- Income generation, service development and financial empowerment
- Repositioning in the internal market
- Dialogue and consultation with public authorities

## AT CONSUMER LEVEL

- Increased access to local farm products
- Increased access to fresh, healthier products derived from agro-ecological practices
- Greater access to a diversified range of products

### IN PERU,

in the Cuzco region, the ARPAC association, made up of more than 4,000 farming families, obtained from the city council, on the basis of an impact study carried out with the support of AVSF and bilateral negotiations, **the provision of a space in the city of Cuzco dedicated to the development of the Huancaro self-managed market**. Every week, more than 1,000 member farming families sell **more than 1,000 tonnes of agro-ecological produce from the surrounding provinces** to urban consumers on a rotating basis.

### IN SENEGAL,

6 dairy processing units supported by AVSF in building their capacity for milk collection, processing, product quality management, product presentation, and accounting and financial management. As a result, they have seen **their turnover increase by an average of 68% in two years thanks to direct sales to consumers** in urban centres of fresh pasteurised milk and sweetened curd (600CFA francs per litre sold compared with 800CFA francs per litre of milk imported into Dakar), yoghurt and thiacyr.





## AT REGIONAL LEVEL

- Reconnecting farming families and consumers
- Developing transport business (goods and customers)
- Dialogue and cooperation between POs and local public authorities
- Public funding for the development of agricultural production supplying short supply chains
- Improving the population's food and nutritional security
- Contributing to food sovereignty in rural and urban areas
- Protecting the environment by promoting and developing agro-ecological practices
- Job creation (in production, processing and marketing)

### IN HAITI,

thanks to public procurement to supply school canteens in particular, **the average price of fresh milk from producers** supplying the mini-dairies in the Let Agogo network has risen **almost fivefold in 10 years**, from around €0.08/litre to €0.38/litre.



## IN TERMS OF PUBLIC POLICY

- Participation of POs in the development of public policies (Participatory guarantee systems, organic farming, food sovereignty, etc.)
- Development of public training in agro-ecology, short supply chains, etc.
- Interdepartmental collaboration to develop short-circuit public procurement from POs
- Public funding for the development of short supply chains

### IN BOLIVIA,

farming families selling their products on self-managed agro-ecological markets took part, via the national organisations AOPEB and CIOEC, in **the drafting and approval of law N° 3525 on organic production** and its regulations, as well as **the recognition by the Bolivian government of the Participatory Guarantee System** (PGS) developed.



# 3

## MAIN OBSTACLES AND LEVERS IDENTIFIED

Firstly, the obstacles and levers within the short supply chains endorsed by AVSF are presented below. These aspects concern both the formulation of the product offering and, in the realms of marketing, collaboration with external entities and advocacy initiatives, particularly with public authorities. Following this, the document outlines the obstacles and levers identified during the design and implementation phases of AVSF's projects aimed at fostering the development of short supply chains.

### Building the product offering

#### DURING THE PRODUCTION PHASE

##### LIMITS

In order to develop short supply chains, the creation of a supply of quality products in sufficient quantity for marketing is obviously an essential element based on production. However, a number of constraints and limitations impact the production phase:

- When the short supply chain is based on agro-ecological production, which corresponds to the vast majority of cases supported by AVSF, **the adoption of new practices as part of agro-ecological transitions may require a long time-frame and come up against social** [acceptance by some producers] **and technical difficulties** [choice and control of associated crops, control of production and management of diseases and pests, which often lead to greater phytosanitary pressure, etc.].
- As far as livestock farming is concerned, the extensive farming methods widely used in many countries [particularly in the Sahel region and Haiti] mean that productivity is low, particularly in the dry season. This results in **periods when the supply of raw materials for mini-dairies is sharply reduced or even cut off**, undermining their economic viability and making them incompatible with certain markets [public purchases to supply school

canteens throughout the year, or demand for continuous availability from urban consumers].

- **The fear that farming families have of investing more time and financial resources to increase their production** [to build up enough volume to supply the target markets, such as the installation of stables for semi-stabling dairy cows, irrigation systems for market garden production, etc.], in the absence of sufficient guarantees of outlets to ensure the sale of all their production.
- **Sanitary conditions set by the State are often inappropriate for the installed capacity of farming families and their organisations**, and favour more industrial forms of production, post-harvest management and processing of agricultural produce.
- **The lack of infrastructure and equipment for processing and/or preserving perishable products** such as milk and its derivatives, meat products, vegetables, etc., which can force producers and breeders to sell their products to the first buyer who comes to their farm in order to limit losses and investments.
- **Increased production costs due to importing container** needed to package certain products.



## LEVERS

The majority of short supply chains are based on diversified and agro-ecological production systems as a guarantee of their environmental, social and economic sustainability, which helps to:

- **Build up a broad local offer from the family, or with the group in a given area**, based where appropriate on infrastructure and equipment for processing and/or preserving products collectively, and maintained throughout the year (uninterrupted sales).
- **Produce by drawing on and improving local knowledge and varieties**, with respect for the environment by optimising ecological cycles and at lower cost.
- **Contribute to the autonomy of farming families** through better management of seeds, soil fertility, pests and diseases, etc.
- **Reduce climate and commercial risks.**







## AT PRODUCER ORGANISATION LEVEL

In addition to direct farm sales, individual initiatives or initiatives by small groups of producers can be combined with other individual approaches to developing short supply chains, such as sales of farmers' baskets, door-to-door sales and sales in specialist shops. The organisation of producers is essential to the development of short supply chains, which require the constitution of a supply in sufficient volume to meet the demand of the targeted markets, in particular open-air farmers' markets and public procurement.



## OBSTACLES

As AVSF has experienced, there are many obstacles to implementing this stage:

- ➔ **Members' lack of time and sense of belonging to the organisation**, which limits their participation in multiple coordination and decision-making meetings, and in the tasks required to integrate various functions for the development of short supply chains.
- ➔ **The low level of literacy and training in rural areas**, which limits the active participation of members in the management of an organisation with an economic vocation based on the use of commercial, accounting and financial management tools.
- ➔ **The difficulty of clearly defining and enforcing the roles and functions of everyone within the organisation** [members, elected representatives, any technical team], with a view to empowerment and complementarity, while guaranteeing collective social control.
- ➔ **The lack of available resources needed to carry out the functions required to develop short supply chains:** working capital and vehicles for collection, cold stores for perishable or health-sensitive products (e.g. meat and dairy products), product processing tools, storage warehouses, transport logistics for routing and even delivering products [requiring the use of outsourced services that reduce margins], etc.
- ➔ **Financial dependence on public authorities and/or cooperation** for the provision of various services to members, in particular access to inputs, credit and technical assistance.
- ➔ **The lack of legal recognition of certain organisations**, which prevents them from accessing public procurement contracts.

## ACTION PRINCIPLES

Various action principles have been identified to help organise producers:

- ➔ **Promote a global vision combining the technical** [production services, product management], **economic** [entrepreneurial activity] **and political** [representation and advocacy] **dimensions**.
- ➔ **Promote a dynamic and participative internal operation**, based on democracy and transparency, autonomy and self-management, and encouraging the leadership of women and young people.
- ➔ **Strengthen entrepreneurial management skills:** collective management of sales outlets, sales management tools, transparent and efficient accounting and financial management, etc.
- ➔ **Develop processing capacity** – taking into account the technical, technological, entrepreneurial and financial capacity of the organisation – to enhance the value of farming production and local identity, ensure that farmers and their organisations capture greater added value and/or add value to their work [rural job creation], meet consumer demand, optimise surpluses, seasonality and optimise products [rejects].
- ➔ **Facilitate links between the producers organisation and other producers organisations and umbrella organisations or unions with a strong capacity for dialogue and political impact**, aimed at favourably orienting public policies to support the development of small-scale farming, agro-ecology and short supply chains [targeted budget support, provision of public spaces, standards and terms of tenders for public procurement, etc.].





# Product marketing

## LIMITS

The experiences of AVSF in its accompaniment of short supply chains have highlighted several limitations in terms of marketing:

→ **The low purchasing power of the majority of the population in countries where short supply chains have been developed** limits the ability of a large fringe of the population to buy products in short supply chains. This is especially true in cases where the products on offer are more expensive than mainstream products (higher production costs, product quality, economies of scale achieved by wholesalers and the agrifood industry with far more capital, competition with imported products that have been the subject of public subsidies, etc.).

→ Without an effective guarantee system in place (certification by a third party, participatory guarantee system), **the lack of guarantee of the products quality and of the agro-ecological production method promoted to consumers** (including sometimes with the help of signs, labels, etc.) does not visibly and credibly differentiate products in short supply chains and mainstream products. In fact limits the confidence of consumers and other buyers. And where guarantee systems have been put in place, the lack of information and explanation of the actual guarantees provided (content of specifications, inspection procedures) also limits consumer confidence.

→ **Lack of information and training for the majority of the population**, which limits their awareness and understanding of the issues at stake in small-scale farming, the sustainable management of natural resources and nutrition, and the solutions offered by short supply chains based on agro-ecological (and organic) production; and consequently also limits their demand for such products in short supply chains.

→ **The devaluation of small-scale farming products, which is still very common among part of the urban upper-middle class**, often against a backdrop of racism between economic and social classes and between origins (particularly in Latin America), and which fails to recognise the dedicated efforts of farming families and the quality of their products (varieties grown, agro-ecological practices, etc.).

→ **The high logistics costs of collecting and transporting an organisation's** waste, in cases where volumes are limited (no economies of scale are possible to reduce unit costs) and scattered over a vast area, and where service providers charge high prices (distances travelled, road conditions, etc.).

→ **The inadequate capacity of a number of short supply chains to sell their produce**, whether in agro-ecological open-air markets, kiosks, shops, farmers' baskets, through direct sales on the farm or in the home, or even for public procurement; this means that farming families lose out or the surplus is sold through conventional channels under unfavourable commercial conditions that do not enhance the quality of the products on offer.

→ **Insufficient working capital at the level of farmers' organisations**, preventing them from collecting products for subsequent sale (members' cash requirements often lead them to opt to sell to local intermediaries).

→ **The unavailability of products all year round**, preventing the continuous supply of markets requiring a permanent supply.

→ **The impossibility of preserving perishable products and the transport difficulties** (lack of suitable equipment, particularly refrigerated vehicles), which means that such products have to be sold quickly on closer markets.

➔ **The absence or lack of certain products on the farmers' markets that are important to consumers and their regular consumption**, forcing them to go to conventional markets as well, incurring additional transport costs and time compared to their supplies on a single conventional market that brings together all the products they are looking for.

➔ Linked to the previous point, **the poor location of short supply chain markets and sales outlets**, which are too far from the conventional markets where the majority of people go to make their purchases, limiting the possibility of complementary purchases between two different types of market.

➔ **Strong competition from imported** (and in many cases subsidised) **products** in terms of price, continuity of supply and shelf life, also in the case of milk powder.

➔ **Unequal means of communication and marketing promotion between farmers' organisations and agribusiness**, constituting a form of unbalanced competition between product marketing operators.

#### IN THE SPECIFIC CASE OF PUBLIC PROCUREMENT

➔ **Lack of resources and payment difficulties (delays)** on the part of central or local government for public procurement.

➔ **The cessation of public procurement for school canteens during school holidays** (when schools are closed), which means that production has to be sold on other markets (especially when school holidays coincide with production peaks).

➔ **Public procurement standards and criteria that are ill-suited to farmers' organisations and favour large companies** (knowingly in certain cases of economic collusion between political decision-makers and agri-food companies).

#### IN THE SPECIFIC CASE OF OPEN-AIR MARKETS

➔ In some cases where open-air markets have been set up, **the desire for these markets to be appropriated and politicised by the public authorities in place**, destabilising the dynamics of self-management by farming families and their organisations.

#### IN THE SPECIFIC CASE OF FARMERS' BASKETS

➔ **The lack of their own means of transport to get the produce to the place where the baskets are prepared** (the cost of third-party transport services reduces the margin for producers, as mentioned above), **and the lack of premises for preparing the baskets.**

➔ **The difficulty of developing a sufficient network of consumers with whom basket systems can be set up**, in order to sell a significant proportion of production and make this commercial alternative attractive and profitable for the groups involved, given the agro-ecological production and organisational efforts made and the costs incurred.

➔ **The lack of organisation and awareness among consumers to support such a dynamic of farmers' baskets.**



## LEVERS

The following levers have been identified to develop the marketing of short supply chains:

→ **Organising producers to provide a diversified supply and/or sufficient quantities** for short supply chains, and organising business activity [collection, transport of produce, any processing, commercial negotiations, management of the point of sale], particularly for open-air markets and public procurement.

→ **Clarity in the collective management and operation of farmers' markets** by drawing up operating rules and training producers in their respective roles and functions.

→ **Negotiating agro-ecological spaces for farmers in traditional markets**, so as not to increase the number of places where consumers shop.

→ **The availability of equipment at open-air markets**, such as stalls, scales, etc.

→ **The availability of vehicles to transport products** to urban markets.

→ **The creation of dedicated sales areas in strategic locations** [based on market studies, taking into account the logistical constraints of transport for producers and consumers, etc.], whether open-air markets, kiosks or shops.

→ **Differentiating products from "long supply chains"**:

- By selling processed or prepared products.
- By promoting the use of more environmentally-friendly farming and livestock rearing practices, using the prefixes "organic" and "eco" in market names.
- By highlighting the various quality aspects of the products: small-scale, chemical-free, agro-ecological, local origin and locally grown, identity.
- By introducing local certification [a participatory guarantee system] to promote cultivation or breeding practices, the locality of origin of the products, and the specificity and quality of the products; or by

introducing fair trade certification, which can sometimes be more credible in the eyes of consumers because compliance with the specifications is checked by an approved third party, and which also makes it possible to promote methods of calculating prices based on production costs and fairness in commercial relations.

- By bringing producers and consumers closer together.

→ **Price management**: competitive products due to prices that are sometimes lower than those of imported products; prices that are negotiated and reviewed each month between producer organisations and consumers to adapt to their respective needs [for producers, fixed minimum prices, and for consumers, prices that cannot exceed or equal those of the conventional market] or competitive prices based on consumer surveys; monitoring of conventional supply; etc.

→ **Developing trust between producers and consumers**, particularly with regard to product quality, through various strategies: regular presence of producers at points of sale and inviting groups of consumers to the farms where the products sold come from to show them the farming practices used.

→ **Visibility and product promotion initiatives** via :

- Agro-ecology events [organisation of festivals, promotional fairs, prize-giving ceremonies in line with the methodology of farmers' competitions developed by AVSF to structure the setting up of agro-ecological farmers' markets].
- Promotion of farmers' markets on the radio, in informative flyers, via videos, on a dedicated website, etc.
- Kiosks at various locations in the city, sometimes in addition to a central sales point.
- Participation in regional and national product promotion events.
- The presence of logos, brands or labels on products.
- Better packaging and product presentation.

- **Raising awareness among consumers** (particularly the middle class) **about the nutritional aspect of the food available** on the markets and the benefits of a healthier diet (including sharing recipes and organising cooking workshops), **the impact on farming families, their organisations and natural resources** (with the production of guides and manuals distributed to consumers, promotional videos, etc.).
- **Building consumer loyalty** by organising on-site tastings and workshops on responsible consumption, and by allowing consumers to visit farms and take part in certain agricultural activities.
- **Controlled and conditional integration of producers into markets** (becoming members of the organisation marketing the products in short supply chains or managing the sales outlet, collective price setting and collective crop planning, participation in entrepreneurial activities according to defined roles and functions, etc.).
- **The inclusion of products on the national health register**, implying compliance with established health standards.







# Collaborations with third parties and advocacy work

Developing short supply chains also requires a wide range of different types of collaboration, particularly with public authorities. These are essential in the case of open-air markets (provision of public spaces, support for communication and promotion, contribution to site security and cleaning, etc.) as well as of public procurement (definition of supply rules and standards, negotiation of contracts, etc.).

## DIFFICULTIES

These collaborations often come up against a number of difficulties:

- ➔ **The recurrent change of elected representatives and other key human resources within the departments concerned**, creating a risk of discontinuity in the commitments made by the public authorities (at national or local level), and sometimes leading to abrupt interruptions in the collaboration and support received.
- ➔ **The orientation of public procurement through the voluntary development of rules and standards for supply and contractualisation of purchases favouring medium-sized and large producers, and large companies** (including state-owned), due to a devaluing by certain public authorities of farming families and their agro-ecological products, and/or existing personal business links.
- ➔ **The failure of the public authorities to make accessible resources that are nonetheless available** (unoccupied public spaces, media and public means of communication), for the reasons given above.
- ➔ **The difficulties encountered by the public authorities in obtaining supplies from organised farming families**, due to the inadequacy of the public procurement procedures imposed on them (eligibility criteria in particular, in administrative requirements, continuity of supply, etc.), and which they must comply with on pain of legal action, and the lack of budget available to develop them.
- ➔ **The inability, during school holidays, to maintain partnerships with farmers' organisations to supply school canteens.**
- ➔ **Setting purchase prices for producers that are lower than those on the local market** (sometimes imposed by the budget available for public procurement).
- ➔ **The recurring inability to pay producer groups promptly for purchases**, due to a lack of liquidity and/or red tape.
- ➔ **Political instability at national or local level**, which hinders the continuity of collaborations and the long-term development of short supply chains.
- ➔ **The politicisation of public support, and in some cases of the farmers' own organisations that work with the public authorities, which leads to tensions or even breakdowns in collaboration in the context of short supply chains** (particularly for the provision of public spaces for open-air markets, or the contractualisation of public procurement).
- ➔ **Difficult recognition of participative guarantee systems by public authorities**, due to a lack of knowledge of such approaches, a lack of credibility, etc.



## LEVERS

Various levers have been identified in terms of collaboration and advocacy:

- **The development of partnerships between producers and breeders on the one hand and processing units on the other** (breeders and mini-dairies, cashew nut producers and shelling plants, etc.).
- **Alliances between cooperation institutions** to be able to respond to the diversity of needs inherent in the development of a short supply chain.
- **Upstream collaboration with local governments prior to the setting up of open-air markets**, to secure locations for these markets, and to benefit from logistical and promotional support for these markets.



# Projects to support short supply chains

The development of short supply chains can be hindered or, on the contrary, facilitated by various elements in the design and implementation of cooperation projects that aim to contribute to them.

## OBSTACLES

The main obstacles identified include:

→ **The lack of detailed, analysed data on supply and demand** (market research), which is essential for designing and implementing effective support, and which is either non-existent or of insufficient quality when such research is carried out (particularly by students), due to a lack of methodological or conceptual expertise. This is sometimes compounded by a lack of knowledge of the territories concerned.

→ **Little existing capitalisation on successful experiences and methodological elements for the development of short supply chains**, which would help to draw lessons for the identification and implementation of actions.

→ **Insufficient importance given to the often central need to strengthen organisations** (in the face of internal dysfunction, the difficulty of managing sales outlets collectively, etc.), **and to the structural limitation represented by illiteracy** (an obstacle to training, to the adoption of entrepreneurial management tools, etc.).

→ **Underestimation of the time required, the importance of the methodologies used and the technical difficulties encountered by producers**, to effectively support the ecological transition in agricultural production methods at the heart of the development of short supply chains.

→ **Failure to take account of the need to set up a guarantee system to promote** (through visibility at open-air markets and communication) **the differentiated quality of the products on offer**, on the basis of sufficient credibility in the eyes of buyers, and in particular direct consumers.

→ **The concentration of support on a single type of short supply chain**, and the lack of diversification in the targeted short supply chains, which often means that not all existing supply can be sold, and which is a source of commercial dependence and therefore vulnerability for producers.

→ **The poor location of the short-distance sales outlets that have been set up** (open-air markets, shops, kiosks), in isolated areas or too far from conventional markets where consumers make most of their purchases.

→ **Volumes of commercial transactions and business models that would be unviable** without cooperation to subsidise part of the costs incurred.

→ **Underestimation of the marketing promotion, information and consumer awareness resources** needed to promote short supply chains.

→ **Lack of consideration for the need for working capital** to collect and market products, either as an initial subsidy or through links with suitable financial organisations.

→ **Underestimation of equipment and infrastructure requirements, and the difficulties involved in transporting products**, especially perishable products.



→ **The lack of consideration often given to the need for packaging materials and product presentation**

→ **The lack of links between the experiences supported and similar successful experiences** [structuring of supply, introduction of local certification, training content for producers, management tools, etc.].

→ **The lack of human resources needed** to effectively support the introduction and development of short supply chains, and to deal with the many issues involved.

→ **The insufficient duration and continuity of support projects for short supply chains, caused by the funding arrangements for cooperation**, given the diversity and complexity of the issues to be addressed, the processes to be supported and the results to be consolidated in order to make them viable.

#### IN THE SPECIFIC CASE OF PUBLIC PROCUREMENT

→ **Lack of detailed knowledge of existing laws**, as well as procurement standards and criteria, and of plans for advocacy initiatives aimed at (re)directing them towards farmers' production and producers' organisations.





## LEVERS

Various levers have been identified that are specific to projects to support farming families and their organisations and encourage the development of short supply chains:

### TARGETING INTERVENTION AREAS

- **Geographic targeting of areas with a strong agricultural vocation** (with products that are particularly in demand in short supply chains), not too far from areas with high consumer potential (catchment area).
- **A good knowledge of the area and the players involved** as a result of previous actions, studies and diagnoses (see next section).
- **Pre-existing processes for the development of production or livestock farming, collective dynamics** or even the organisation of producers, packaging, processing and/or storage infrastructure, production services, transport, etc.
- **The presence of dynamic players** involved in agro-ecology, the social and solidarity economy, alternative marketing, healthy consumption and more.
- **A favourable political context** for promoting local food and local products.

### CARRYING OUT STUDIES

- **Studies on demand and the accessibility of public procurement for small-scale organised producers.**
- **Studies into existing short supply chains** to identify the factors that determine consumption by families (particularly those on low incomes).
- **Diagnostics of the functioning of production and marketing capacities** within partner producer organisations.

→ **Studies on the development and impact of agro-ecology and short supply chains**, to convince and mobilise public authorities and universities, among others, and to support the sales pitch for agro-ecological products sold in short supply chains (in particular for open-air markets, farmers' baskets, shops and kiosks).

### IN SUPPORTING PRODUCER ORGANISATIONS

- **Promoting the organisation of producers** – in particular for the collective management of collection and direct sales on open-air markets (rotating participation) – without a rigid initial model, favouring a minimum organisation to guarantee exchanges of experience/technology and analysis of supply/the market, and gradually making the organisation more complex according to the reality, capacities and wishes of the producers supported.
- **Paying attention to the progressive autonomy** of the organisation's operations in relation to the support project.
- **Strengthening internal operations and entrepreneurial management skills** (organisation of collection, product quality management, post-harvest processes, commercial, accounting and financial management) **within partner producer organisations**, so that they are in a position to manage open-air markets in particular, or to meet the demands of public procurement. Notably, through a wide range of training courses for managers, technicians and producers (including relay farmers) on alternative farmer marketing and food sovereignty, strengthening organisations and leadership, short supply chains, and so on. This training can be supplemented by exchanges of experience between producer organisations (on the collective management of sales outlets, on management tools, on the development of guarantee systems or the management of certifications, on the constraints specific to the different types of short supply chains possible, etc.).
- **Structuring of an adapted range of services for producer-members**, according to their needs, with a view to gradual diversification in line with the strengthening of

management capacities within the organisation, and financial sustainability with income generated by these same services and/or public subsidies.

→ **Searching for complementary services through strategic alliances** with other organisations, NGOs, public authorities, etc.

→ **Supporting the legal recognition of certain economic structures** (cooperatives, other types of economic groups, processing units), and the registration of products in national health registers.

#### FOR PRODUCTION SUPPORT

→ **The importance of technical support :**

- Training in agro-ecological practices and farm management (particularly (semi-)stalling of dairy cows).
- Setting up experiments in field schools and mini-dairy schools.
- Training on product development and processing techniques (such as sweetened curd, yoghurt or cheese in the case of dairy products), including technical control of processes, hygiene and product quality control.
- Setting up literacy courses for adults.
- Promoting the use of local seeds that are more resistant to pest pressure and improve the conservation of the products obtained, research into higher-yielding fodder, cross-breeding to increase productivity, etc., with the production of technical manuals and practical guides.

→ **The need to adapt the support provided to the different stages of agro-ecological transition in production systems** (traditional chemical-free producers; producers in the process of abandoning chemical products; intensive agro-ecological producers).

→ **Investment** to increase production and in the infrastructure and equipment needed for processing, packaging and storage.

→ **The provision of simple management tools for farmers** to determine the economic profitability of their commitment to agro-ecological production and marketing.

→ **Support for collective planning of production to be collected and marketed** (in terms of quantity and type of product) by groups of farmers, at set intervals, depending on market demand and the production capacity of the groups being supported.

→ **The provision of campaign credit to producers and working capital** to product collection **organisations**.

#### FOR MARKETING SUPPORT

→ **Drawing up management and operating rules for markets managed collectively by producers** (including criteria for integrating new producers or new producer organisations into an open-air market).

→ **Equipment required for direct sales** (scales, stalls, etc.).

→ **Logistical support**, in particular **the transport of produce** to enable producers to take part in urban markets.

→ **Support for the design and implementation of participatory guarantee systems.**

→ **Support with price calculations** (based on the costs of production, collection, processing, packaging and/or storage, marketing), taking into account the prices charged by competitors.

→ **Helping to find diversified outlets for products marketed via short supply chains**, so as to increase volumes and avoid dependence on a single sales channel. This may involve seeking out a multiplicity of sales outlets, or combining various types of short supply chains as part of a marketing systems approach.

→ **Setting up activities to foster links and trust between producers and consumers**, including by organising consumer visits and promoting of products and markets (festivals, fairs, informative flyers, videos on production conditions and markets, etc.).

→ **Support for the introduction of logos, brand names and labels on packaging, and training in product packaging and presentation.**

→ **Considering activities of consumer awareness to develop conscientious consumer habits**, via social networks and campaigns to raise awareness, provide information, promote sales and offer training.

#### COLLABORATION AND ADVOCACY

→ **The project team's close links with producers and POs through** regular monitoring and support for their actions, and a good understanding of their needs and the problems they encounter.

→ **Promoting alliances between producers organisations** with a view to building up a consistent supply, facilitating access to services, and joint advocacy (including within umbrella organisations or trade unions) in favour of short supply chains based on small scale farming products from agro-ecological practices.

→ **Considering local public authorities as important partners in the development of short supply chains**, for support in setting up open-air markets (transfer of space, logistics, promotion of markets) and for the orientation of public procurement aimed in particular at supplying school canteens.

→ **Strengthening the advocacy and negotiation skills of partner producer organisations** in their dealings with local and national authorities.

→ **Collaboration with public authorities on other aspects:**

- Demonstrating the importance and benefits of short supply chains (impact on families and regions) through surveys and studies.
- Providing specialist expertise and training in production certification systems, short supply chains, agro-ecology, etc.
- Contributing to the development of training courses for young people in agro-ecology and short supply chains, within technical institutes, universities, etc.
- At the end of the short supply chains support project, an invitation to a closing event to present the results obtained and mobilise them to support these short supply chains in the future.

→ **Collective construction, implementation, monitoring and evaluation** – between producers, between organisations, with NGOs and other possible allies – of public policy proposals to support the development of short supply chains.

→ **Developing alliances and networking** between producers and consumers.







# CONCLUSION

**The development of short supply chains generates essential results and effects** for farming families, their organisations, consumers and local areas. Of course, **it comes up against many obstacles**, and requires farming families, their organisations, the cooperation projects that support them and the public authorities involved or to be involved **to meet a multitude of challenges through a variety of complementary strategies.**

**Structural constraints are undermining small-scale farming and, as a result, the development of short supply chains.** Farming families' access to productive natural resources such as land and water for irrigation continues to be considerably restricted. Supporting farmers' struggles for access to land and water and their collective, concerted and equitable management, through local actions and political advocacy, is a priority. It is also a priority to help build women's capacity to influence control over the means of production, marketing, processing and organisation. [*Sistematización cadenas cortas*, Christophe Chauveau, AVSF, 2012]

**Important security, socio-political and health crises, as well as natural disasters, are of course further major obstacles to the smooth operation of short supply chains.** They can hinder the movement of products and people (producers and consumers), lead to the closure of sales outlets (particularly open-air markets) or the suspension of public procurement, or even cause the destruction or deterioration of production facilities, thereby interrupting supply.

For the development of open-air markets and public procurement, which in AVSF's cooperation countries have resulted in the highest volumes of exchanges to date compared to other types of supported short supply chains, **the organisation of producers and the development of their internal capacities is a central issue.** It can give member farming families access to production services to which they have little or no individual access (technical assistance, quality seeds, small-scale farming equipment, seasonal credit, etc.). It can also enable them to take on functions usually performed by networks of local intermediaries and other players further down the value chain at the expense of their own margins: collection, any processing, transport, etc. It is also a precondition for building up a potentially diversified offer in sufficient volumes to link more directly to the market, with greater commercial negotiating capacity. Lastly, it is a means of dialoguing and negotiating with the various players in the sector and the regions, and in particular the public authorities, at both local and national level, for public policies to support the development of short supply chains based on small-scale farming.









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This capitalisation, which makes the most of existing documents produced by AVSF, was written collectively under the coordination of Romain Valleur, with contributions from Marie Aubert, Anaïs Chotard, Guy Durand, Barbara Guittard and Pierre Dubuit.

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With the financial support from the French Agency of Cooperation - AFD.

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*Agronomes et Vétérinaires Sans Frontières* (Agronomists and Veterinarians Without Borders) is a French association for international solidarity that has been working for over 40 years with farming communities and organisations in developing countries to resolve food issues. The association puts the skills of agricultural, livestock and animal health professionals at their service: technical and financial assistance, training, access to markets, etc. *Agronomes et Vétérinaires Sans Frontières* runs more than 60 cooperation programmes in 20 countries in Central and South America, Asia and Africa, working alongside farmers, for whom agriculture and livestock farming remain a fundamental element of food security and economic and social development. AVSF is recognised as a charitable organisation in France.