GENEVA GRADUATE INSTITUTE

APPLIED RESEARCH PROJECT

MAPPING SUCCESSFUL INITIATIVES FOR MARKETING AGROECOLOGICAL PRODUCTS FROM SMALL-SCALE FARMERS

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TABLE OF CONTENT

List of Cases Studied

22. **Quezon Participatory Guarantee System** – Philippines (p.29)

23. **Lindros South Africa** – South Africa (p.46)

24. **South African Organic Sector Organisation (SAOSO)** – South Africa (p.28, 45, 64)

25. **De Aquí para Ti / Hemengoa, Zuretzako** – Spain (p.15)

26. **Prolegara Project** – Spain (p.23)

27. **Femmes Vaillantes Cooperative** – Togo (p.59)

28. **Recherche Appui et Formation aux Initiatives d'Auto-développement (RAFIA)** – Togo (p.51, 53)

29. **FreshVeggie PGS** – Uganda (p.21, 34)

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

ABOUT THE PROJECT

Agroecology is increasingly recognized as a viable pathway toward **sustainable food systems**, offering ecological, social, and economic benefits. It promotes farming methods that **regenerate ecosystems, empower communities**, and respect **local knowledge**. Yet, despite its promising framework, agroecology has **not reached its full potential**, particularly regarding **market integration** for small-scale farmers.

A critical barrier to scaling-up agroecology is the **lack of effective commercialization strategies** that align with its core values. Conventional markets frequently **undervalue agroecological products**, making it difficult for farmers to compete without compromising their principles.

This report seeks to **identify and analyze successful commercialization initiatives from diverse global contexts.** It aims to understand what **enables** these models to succeed, what **challenges they continue to face**, and how their **lessons** can inform future policy and practice. The ultimate goal is to provide a **set of actionable strategies** that support inclusive, fair, and sustainable agroecological markets.

METHODOLOGY

The research combines a comprehensive **literature review with qualitative case study analysis**. It examines over **29 real-life initiatives** through **interviews, institutional documents,** and **online content** from community-supported agriculture programs, cooperatives, NGOs, and local governments. The team conducted **13 semi-structured interviews** with **practitioners and stakeholders** from different regions, providing grounded, context-sensitive insights.

KEY CHALLENGES IDENTIFIED

3 systemic obstacles emerged as critical barriers in the literature review, across most contexts:

- **Consumer awareness and certification:** Agroecological product **quality is not directly visible** at the point of sale, making **consumer trust essential**. However, trust is often hindered by the **lack of affordable, credible certification**, especially for smallholders. **Perceived health and environmental benefits** also influence purchasing decisions.
- **Supply chain instability:** Small-scale producers struggle with **consistency in product volume, quality, and delivery**. Moreover, limited access to **transportation, storage, and processing** infrastructure hinders their ability to meet consumer and institutional demand.
- **Institutional and policy gaps**: Agroecological initiatives receive **minimal public support** compared to **conventional agriculture**. This includes a lack of favorable regulations, subsidies, credit access, or extension services, elements that are essential for scaling agroecological markets.

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6 COMMERCIALIZATION STRATEGIES

A core framework of **six commercialization strategies**, originally outlined in the guide *Boas Práticas para a Comercialização de Alimentos Agroecológicos* (Instituto Regenera & Instituto Fronteiras do Desenvolvimento, 2024), was used to **analyze and organize the findings.** This model served as the basis for **evaluating how agroecological initiatives address market constraints** while upholding their core principles :

1. **Strengthening Local Food Systems:** Emphasis is placed on **short supply chains** (e.g., farmers' markets, CSA models) that foster **stronger relationships** between producers and consumers, **reduce dependence** on intermediaries, **increase profits** and promote **transparency.**

2. **Fair Trade and Transparent Pricing:** Transparency around pricing helps consumers **understand the value of agroecological products** and encourages them to **support** ethical purchasing. **Involving consumers** in price setting, logistics, or educational activities can encourage them to **accept higher prices**.

3. **Participatory Certification and Community Engagement:** Participatory Guarantee Systems (PGS) offer **low-cost, community-led alternatives** to third-party certification. The participatory structure of PGS, including peer reviews and multi-stakeholder committees, enhances **transparency, shared governance, and trust** between producers and consumers, increasing **legitimacy**. However, despite its affordability, PGS is **labor- and coordination-intensive**, needing consistent **investment** in training, monitoring, and logistical support to remain functional, which can represent a barrier

4. **Consumer Education and Awareness:** Raising awareness about agroecology's **environmental and health benefits** is crucial for market expansion. **On-site experiences** such as field visits, center tours, and demonstrations are powerful educational tools. These allow consumers to **understand the agroecological process**, building trust, transparency, and product appreciation.

5. **Diversifying Market Access and Distribution Channels:** Successful models combine **multiple channels,** including **farmers' markets, online platforms, home deliveries, consumer groups, physical stores, intermediation** and **value-added** processing.

6. **Institutional Support and Policy Advocacy:** Strong public policies, such as Brazil's National Policy for Agroecology and Organic Production (2013), provide **critical support** through credit, technical training, and procurement programs. **Advocacy** at the local and national levels is key to **scaling-up agroecological products' commercialization** and ensuring **legal recognition**.

PRACTICAL RECOMMENDATIONS

Rather than prescribing a one-size-fits-all solution, this study concludes with a **practical, flexible framework** designed to **guide the implementation of marketing strategies** for agroecological products. Drawing from a diverse range of **case studies across Africa, Latin America, Asia, and Europe,** and existing guides, the final section of this report offers a **"menu"** of actionable **initiatives** that producers, cooperatives, and supporting organizations can consider according to their specific context and needs.

Recognizing that **every territory presents its own constraints and opportunities**, be it in terms of consumer awareness, infrastructure, political will, or cultural values, this framework is **not intended to be exhaustive or rigid.** Instead, it is an **invitation to reflect** on what has worked elsewhere and to thoughtfully **adapt these ideas to local realities.**

Based on both empirical evidence and existing literature, the study identifies **7 key initiatives as particularly strategic in advancing the commercialization of agroecological products.** These initiatives are **not linear steps,** but rather interconnected **pathways** that can be pursued independently or in combination, depending on the actors involved, the scale of production, and market conditions :

- Forming a **Responsible Consumer Cell**
- Establishing a **Network**
- Raising consumer **awareness**
- Improving **logistics**
- **Policy** coordination
- Creating a **verticalization** plan
- **Communicating** around commercialization

This process is designed to be **adaptable to a wide range of geographies and socio-economic contexts**, prioritizing co-creation with local communities and alignment with agroecological values.

29 CASES STUDIED

1. Introduction

Agroecology is a sustainable farming approach that aligns with solutions for mitigating climate change, soil degradation, and environmental damage caused by conventional farming. Agroecology is not just about farming practices and production techniques. It promotes a more comprehensive vision of agriculture, which supports local communities, protects the environment, and revives struggling food systems. Despite its potential, agroecology has not been widely mainstreamed. One of its biggest barriers is the lack of effective commercialisation, particularly for small-scale farmers who often struggle with access to reliable markets, infrastructure, and certification systems that would enable them to market their agroecological products efficiently.

This research explores how the commercialization of agroecological products can work more effectively by mapping successful initiatives from different parts of the world. The work focused on real-life cases that have managed to overcome key challenges such as lack of certification, unstable demand, limited infrastructure, etc. in order to identify what makes these models work and how they might be adapted to other regions.The research identified a model that enumerates six key commercialization practices and analysed them through a series of case studies. Additionally, it described both the enabling factors that contributed to their success and the common roadblocks or blockages they faced.

While the literature review provided a general overview of the broader trends and structural factors, the next part of the research goes further. Through semi-structured interviews and deeper case analysis, the goal is to understand how these initiatives actually function day to day. This study pays close attention on how people on the ground collaborate, solve logistical challenges, and build lasting relationships with consumers. These insights are key to finding practical, adaptable strategies that can support the future of the commercialization of agroecological products globally. Furthermore, for the purposes of definition, in the case of this work, success is defined as any initiative or project that has been able to overcome an existing problem in a specific context. Although it has not been possible to measure success, especially considering the lack of available materials with different time frames, the fact that organizations share such initiatives as mitigators or problem solvers constitutes success in this particular context.

This report is structured as follows:

The first section explains the research methods used to explore successful commercialization of agroecological products. We will then present the qualitative methodology that was chosen. Later, the main challenges that farmers and organizations face in bringing agroecological products to market will be discussed, drawing on both existing research. The fourth section explores the commercialization pathways with successful real-world case studies in different regions across the globe. These practical, successful initiatives were critically analysed in order to unearth what the enabling factors attached to their success were, and what roadblocks or blockages they faced that hindered their effective implementation. Section five brings these insights together in a comparative

framework. The report concludes in Section six with practical solutions and lessons that could inform future efforts and policy decisions.

1.1 Commercialization of Agroecological Products : An Overview

Commercializing agroecological products goes beyond selling produce, it involves creating market channels that align with the core values of agroecology, such as fairness, sustainability, and community participation. Unlike conventional agriculture, which often relies on long supply chains and heavy external inputs, agroecological systems are usually rooted in local production, seasonal cycles, and social networks (AFSA, 2016; Snapp & Pound, 2017).

For small-scale farmers, however, entering the market with agroecological products can be especially difficult. Many lack access to stable buyer relationships, transportation and storage infrastructure, or recognition through certification. Pricing is another major challenge: agroecological products often cost more to produce, but consumers may not always be willing or able to pay higher prices especially when the benefits aren't clearly communicated (Coulibaly et al., 2011; Tabe-Ojong et al., 2021).

Still, across different regions, farmers, cooperatives, NGOs, and communities have developed creative ways to overcome these barriers. These range from short food supply chains and farmers' markets to community-supported agriculture (CSA), participatory guarantee systems (PGS), digital sales, and collective branding (Urgenci, 2018; Loconto et al, 2018). Some initiatives focus on local consumer education, while others leverage logistics partnerships or work through public procurement systems.

1.2 Literature Review Insights

Our literature review pulled together existing research, project reports and practical guides related to the commercialisation of agroecological products. Part of the literature confirms that successful marketing efforts depend on a few elements like strong farmer-consumer relationships, transparent pricing, reliable logistics and cooperative structures(FAO & INRAE, 2018; Urgenci, 2018). For example, short food supply chains such as local markets and direct-to-consumer deliveries are commonly cited as effective ways to preserve value for producers and build trust with buyers (AFSA, 2020; Martin, 2017). Moreover, logistical challenges such as high transport costs or lack of storage, are often major barriers to success (Epule & Bryant, 2017; Nchuaji Tang et al., 2022). Participatory Guarantee Systems (PGS) have also been recognised as a more accessible form of certification for small-holders, helping increase product credibility without the financial burden of third-party certification (FAO & INRAE, 2018; Tapsoba et al., 2020).
Another key theme in the literature is the importance of community engagement and consumer awareness. When consumers understand the social and environmental benefits of agroecological products, they are more likely to support and be willing to buy them even if the prices are higher compared to conventional agricultural products (AFSA, 2020; Coulibaly et al., 2011; Tabe-Ojong et al., 2021). However, there is still a noticeable gap in the literature

when it comes to how different commercialization models perform across diverse socio-economic and geographic contexts.

This gap is where our project hopes to contribute, not by offering a one-size-fits-all solution, but by mapping and comparing different successful initiatives with a focus on the tools they use, the conditions that support them and the lessons they offer.

1.3 Objectives

For this research project, a broader geographical view was chosen to identify common threads and adaptable approaches that support small-scale farmers in accessing markets.

More specifically, it aims to:

- Collect and examine a range of real-world initiatives that help commercialize agroecological products.
- Understand the different tools, strategies, and formats used—such as direct sales, certification schemes, cooperatives, and digital platforms.
- Identify the key enablers that help these models succeed, as well as the challenges that limit their effectiveness.
- Highlight practical lessons and insights that could be useful to farmer groups, NGOs, and other actors looking to strengthen agroecological value chains.

At its core, the project is about learning from what is already working on the ground so that others, working in similar or entirely different contexts, can build on those experiences and design better, more resilient systems for marketing agroecological products.

2. Methodology

To understand how the commercialization of agroecological products works in practice, this study adopted a combination of different research methods that allowed us to examine both the broader context and the real-case details behind successful initiatives. We started with a literature review, exploring academic articles, policy papers, and institutional reports to understand key trends, challenges and frameworks in agroecological marketing.

Moreover, we identified and analyzed a series of case studies of practical examples of initiatives supporting the marketing of agroecological products. These included various models such as direct sales, certification, delivery systems, or digital platforms. Each case was selected based on its relevance, success, and replicability.

To add depth to the analysis, thirteen semi-structured interviews were conducted with relevant stakeholders, such as farmers, coordinators, cooperative leaders, and NGO staff, coming from different geographical regions and involved in these initiatives.

Finally, we went through a series of revisions of websites, social media pages, LinkedIn profiles, and other public communication materials shared by these initiatives. This offered a clearer picture of how they present themselves, engage with their communities, and communicate their values and goals.

By combining these different methods, the study was able to cross-reference our findings and build a more grounded understanding of what makes the commercialization of agroecological products work and where improvements are still needed.

3. Main Challenges for the Commercialization of Agroecological Products : state of knowledge

3.1. Willingness to pay, trust, certification and awareness in the development of agroecological markets

Willingness to pay (WTP) for agroecological products is a key element in the sustainability of agroecological marketing channels. Several factors interact to influence this behavior: confidence in the products, recognition of their benefits (health, environment), and the level of consumer awareness (Katt & Meixner, 2020).

Agroecological products, like organic products, fall into the category of “credence goods”, i.e. goods whose qualities, such as absence of pesticides, local origin or sustainable methods, cannot be verified by the consumer at the time of purchase or consumption. This situation makes trust essential to the purchasing decision (Nuttavuthisit & Thøgersen, 2017). The lack of market recognition of the value of agroecological products means that a significant proportion of production is often sold on the conventional market (Loconto et al., 2023).
Market development requires strengthening personal trust, i.e., the direct relationship with the producer or distributor, but also systemic trust based on institutions, labels, certifications, notably by ensuring perceived quality (Nuttavuthisit & Thøgersen, 2017). This element is self-reinforcing, since the higher the quality of an agro-ecological product, the greater the trust in the producer or distributor (Ladwein & Sánchez Romero, 2021). It seems that markets based on proximity and direct exchange can compensate for the absence of certification (Loconto et al., 2018). This corresponds to the observation of Katt & Meixner (2020), who note that repeat customers of agroecological or organic products, especially for higher-income households, are willing to spend a higher price for this type of product.
However, institutional trust via certification schemes has a greater influence on customers' purchasing decisions than personal trust (Nuttavuthisit & Thøgersen, 2017). But access to standard certification mechanisms, such as third-party certification, is expensive and therefore often unsuitable for smallholders, which can exclude them from the organic or agroecological market (Canwat & Onakuse, 2022). To overcome this barrier, alternatives have emerged, such as participatory guarantee systems (PGS) or internal control systems (ICS), which seek to combine cost reduction with a certain reliability perceived by consumers (Canwat & Onakuse, 2022).

Health and environmental concerns are often important motivators for the consumption of agroecological products, as the use of chemicals is perceived as harmful (Katt & Meixner, 2020). However, these motivations are often hampered by barriers such as high prices due to “premium pricing” or other transaction costs (Dalmoro et al., 2023). Nevertheless, the development of agroecological markets depends heavily on consumer awareness of the health benefits of agroecological products, particularly in rural or peripheral areas where the level of information is often lower (Dalmoro et al., 2023; Coulibaly et al., 2011; (Tabe-Ojong et al., 2021). Saamoura et al. (Samoura et al., 2024) also put forward the idea that targeted educational programs can strengthen local markets by increasing product recognition.

3.2. Stabilizing agroecological supply through collective organization: between necessity and structural obstacles

Another challenge in marketing agro-ecological produce is the difficulty of guaranteeing regularity and reliability of supply in terms of volume, diversity and quality of produce to ensure a degree of market stability, which can be detrimental to meeting consumer expectations and building consumer loyalty (Dalmoro et al., 2023). Producers face competition from conventional market gardening in terms of visibility and price, and consumers' difficulty in accessing produce can discourage them from buying (Dalmoro et al., 2023). On the other hand, structural logistical problems, particularly in southern countries, involving lack of transport, storage and processing infrastructure exacerbate post-harvest losses and prevent producers from efficiently reaching markets (Loconto et al., 2018; (Nchuaji Tang et al., 2022)).

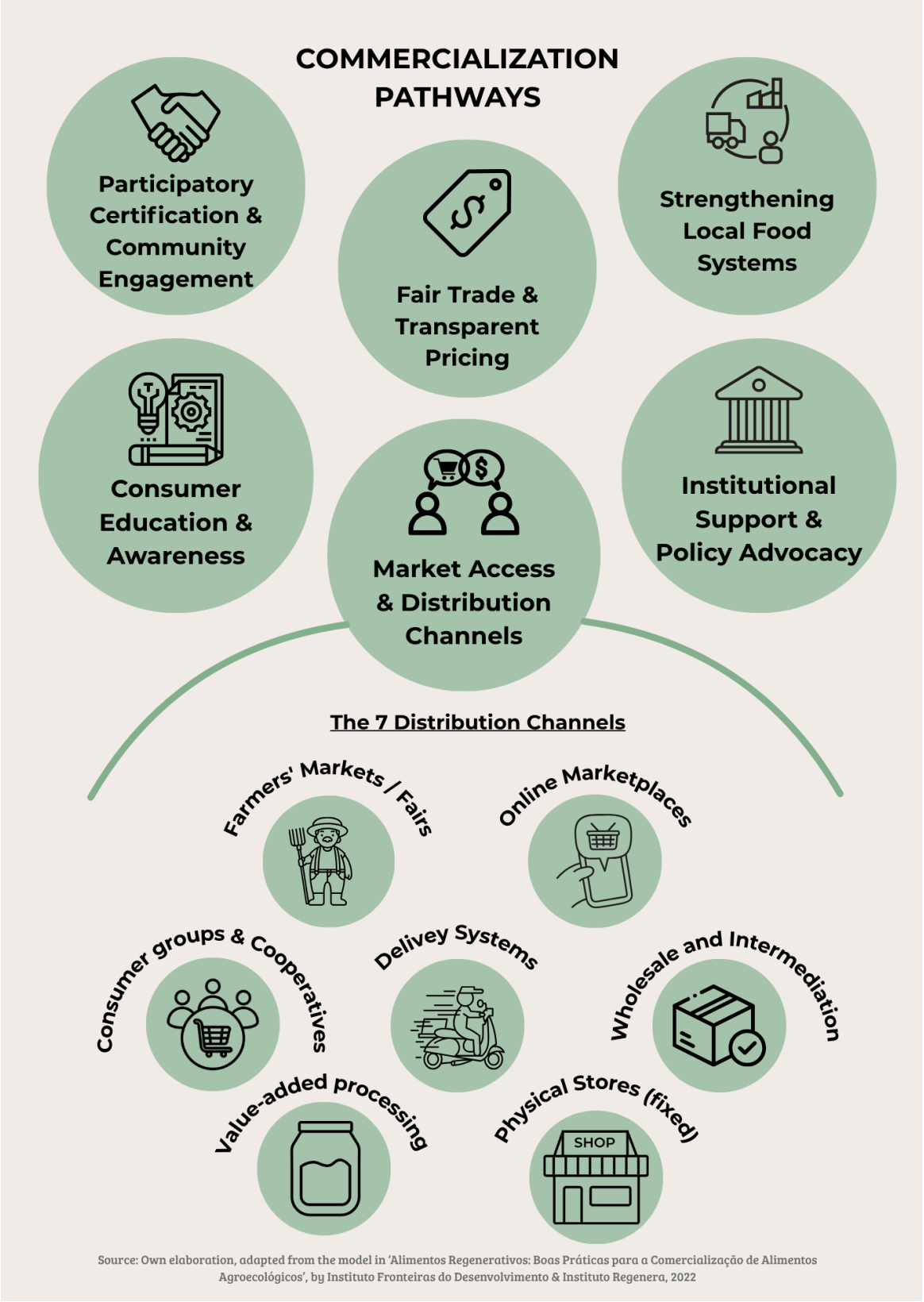
In the face of these difficulties, collective organization appears to be a strategy for resilience and improved market access, since it makes it possible to pool resources, structure supply, strengthen logistics and add value to products in their local and sustainable dimension (Canwat & Onakuse, 2022). In particular, collective organization can provide access to certification and group marketing actions (Dalmoro et al., 2023). According to Mier y Terán Giménez Cacho et al. (2018), the level of organization is a key element in the process of bringing agroecology to scale. Various concrete initiatives, such as that of the NGO Sécurité Alimentaire, Résilience et Agroécologie (SARA) in Guinea, have demonstrated the positive impact of investment in collective infrastructure (silos, warehouses, processing equipment) on controlling production cycles, reducing losses and accessing new markets (Camara et al., 2011). However, the establishment and maintenance of these collective organizations can be hampered by various factors, such as lack of trust between members, lack of available time or tensions between individual and collective logics complicating the construction of common projects (López-García & Carrascosa-García, 2023). The role of neutral intermediaries, such as technicians or NGOs, can help by accompanying collective structuring and creating a climate of lasting trust, since they are considered neutral actors (Vergote & Tanguy, 2021).

3.3. Lack of institutional support and insufficient public policies for the development of agroecology

A lack of political recognition and institutional support represents another barrier to the commercialization of agroecological products, with the persistence of support for conventional agriculture, which still benefits from the majority of public support (subsidies, research, agricultural policies), to the detriment of agroecological approaches (Bruil & Gubbels, 2019). Moreover, there is a need for support from the government through technical advice, capacity building as well as better access to credit for households with marginal land ownership, since land size can be an important factor in market participation (Abera, 2009). Public policies can have a transformative effect on agroecological value chains in order to combat the various challenges of transition and market access, notably through the recognition of agroecology (Loconto et al., 2018). For example, Brazil represents an emblematic case of structuring public intervention: the implementation of the National Policy for Agroecology and Organic Production (2013) has stimulated production through targeted aid, green credits and training programs (Dalmoro et al., 2023). The involvement of institutions can also ease access to agroecological products' certification, which is often costly and complex (Canwat & Onakuse, 2022). The support of various allies, including the government, in the agroecological transition can represent an important driver to scale-up (Giménez Cacho et al., 2018).

4. Commercialization Pathways : 6 Best Practices for the commercialization of agroecological products - General Strategies

The commercialization of agroecological products presents both opportunities and challenges, requiring innovative strategies that align sustainability with economic viability. The guide *Alimentos Regenerativos: Boas Práticas para a Comercialização de Alimentos Agroecológicos* (2024) outlines **six key** practices to ensure the success of the commercialization of agroecological products , emphasizing fair trade, transparency, and consumer engagement. While many of these strategies have been implemented in various contexts, they continue to serve as a foundation for the development of new models that support agroecological food systems. This study adopted this model as the main lens through which the case studies will be analysed.



Source: Own elaboration, adapted from the model in 'Alimentos Regenerativos: Boas Práticas para a Comercialização de Alimentos Agroecológicos', by Instituto Fronteiras do Desenvolvimento & Instituto Regenera, 2022

4.1. Strengthening Local Food Systems

The strengthening of local food systems is prominently addressed in the guide as a means to enhance the resilience and sustainability of agroecological production. By prioritizing short supply chains—such as farmers' markets, local cooperatives, and direct-to-consumer models—agroecological producers can mitigate logistical challenges through the establishment of closer ties with consumers. The guide emphasizes that local markets not only support small-scale farmers, but also contribute to food sovereignty by ensuring that production remains community-oriented and less reliant on external intermediaries (Instituto Regenera & Instituto Fronteiras do Desenvolvimento, 2024, p. 9).

When conducting interviews with different people working in various areas of agroecological practices, it becomes clear that an important strategy is the adoption of **Short Commercialization Circuits**. These statements by interviewees support the argument found in the literature (Vecchio, 2013). Although this model presents several challenges related to costs and the coordination of multiple stakeholders, it proves to be one of the most effective ways to strengthen lasting connections between the field and the table. Additionally, Short Circuits increase profit margins for small producers, while ensuring that intermediaries—often more than one per circuit—do not take advantage of the sales process. This short value chain allows to increase the incomes for producers, while keeping the products affordable for consumers (Loconto et al., 2023).

According to our interviewee Ruth Nabaggala, working at Alliance for Food Sovereignty in Africa (AFSA) "*food is not a transaction, it's an interaction*". She emphasizes that making the supply chain shorter is capital to build trust and a relationship between the consumer and the producer (R. Nabaggala, personal communication, 28 March 2025).

Christian Crespo, specialist in Rural Development in Ecuador, points out during our interview that, for agroecological systems *"...All the people that are in the in the commercialization exchange try to have a benefit and the producer is the last person to have access to the income"* (C. Crespo, personal communication, 25 Febuary 2025). However, in order to establish these circuits, it is essential to work cooperatively, in a network, with organization, to overcome the high logistical and storage costs. One of the examples Crespo offered as an alternative to overcome high transportation costs was the case of small farmers in Mali, who made agreements with transportation companies that were already delivering essential goods to villages. On the return trip, these companies would transport the farmers' products to the big cities for a lower cost. This way, it became possible to optimize transportation cycles (C. Crespo, personal communication, 25 Febuary 2025).

Similarly, another interviewee, João Ávila, project and service coordinator at Imaflora, discussed the need to be creative and to take an extensive look at the local context to understand the main transportation flows in the city and identify nearby actors in order to figure out the most efficient way to "exploit" them (J. Ávila, personal communication, 25 February 2025). For example, he mentioned that in cities far from major urban centers, there is still a need to deliver essential items, whether they are health supplies, inputs, or food. In this way, it would be possible, for instance, to take advantage of refrigerated milk trucks that

travel between cities, filling them on the return trip with vegetables and fruits, which could then be delivered to fairs, restaurants, or partner markets, integrating different supply chains. Furthermore, he suggested partnering with large families, companies, farms or ventures in the region, which could supply food for their employees and animals, covering logistics costs while benefiting from the frequency, freshness, and competitive prices of agroecological production (J. Ávila, personal communication, 25 February 2025).

Case Studies

For 'Strengthening Local Food Systems', five study cases were selected to exemplify the structures of different initiatives that incorporate the principles presented in this section:

Case Studies for 'Strenghtening Local Food Systems'

Case Study	Key Features	Enablers	Blockages
Rede Ecovida de Agroecologia – Brazil	• Decentralized network of farmer hubs • Product exchange between regions	• Networked hubs reduce transport costs and waste	• Coordination across many hubs complicates logistics and quality control • Diverging stakeholder interests.
Instituto Regenera – Brazil	• Mapping consumer demand to optimize agroecological fairs	• Strategic market placement increases sales	• Requires constant consumer demand monitoring • Funding such studies can be difficult.
Central da Caatinga – Brazil	• Cooperative model • Use of warehouses • Online and physical store	• Consolidated shipments reduce costs • Physical and online stores expand access.	• Poor infrastructure increases delays • Limited internet and power outages affect operations.
De Aquí para Ti / Hemengoa, Zuretzako – Spain	• Direct-to-consumer model • Proximity and authenticity logos	• Bypasses intermediaries • Certification logos build consumer trust • Producers control logistics.	• Transport depends on local services • Managing production & distribution strains small farmers.
Beijing Farmers' Market – China	• Rotating venue model • Strong digital coordination	• Free access to venues lowers costs • Strong online engagement via Weibo • Community-driven decisions.	• Vendors must transport/setup at each event • Varying venue demands increase logistical effort.

In Brazil, the Rede Ecovida de Agroecologia (Ecovida Network), founded in 1998 in the southern region of the country, works as a mobilization and coordination network for NGOs and agricultural organizations. According to its online page, it currently has 34 regional hubs, covering more than 352 municipalities, 436 farmer family groups, with 2,848 families involved, including the participation of 20 NGOs. It also supports over 120 ecological fairs and other forms of marketing. Small farmer families from nearby areas come together to form a group. Several family groups from the region unite to form a hub. The hubs then engage with various actors, such as processors, cooperatives, consumer groups, street vendors, etc. The Ecovida Network defines itself as a "network of networks." (Ballou, 2004; Siqueira, 2017).

Considering the logistics of the Southern Circuit of the Ecovida Network, the system facilitates the distribution of seasonal and certified organic products while enabling the exchange of goods between regions. The network's central platforms enable farmers to deliver their local produce and, in exchange, acquire goods that are not produced in their own region. For example, a farmer from a southern area primarily cultivating oranges may bring their harvest to a regional hub and exchange it for bananas from a northern region, where bananas are the main crop (Ballou, 2004; Siqueira, 2017).

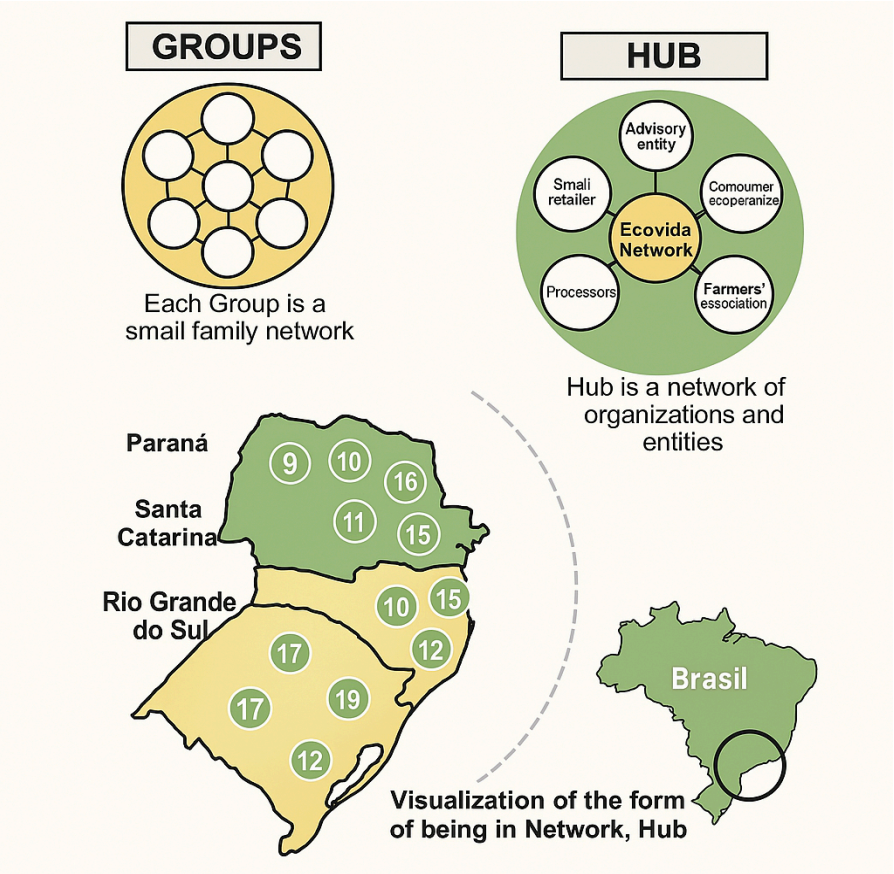
The Circuit Sud links farmers from different regions, which helps them reduce surplus and food waste and promotes a more balanced distribution of agricultural products. Logistical efficiency is also improved, as farmers can deliver and receive produce at lower cost, minimizing transport costs associated with distribution. The decentralized nature of the network, supported by flexible communication and information channels, guarantees its dynamism and responsiveness. It is present in four states in southern Brazil and has a distribution network of over 1,600 kilometers. Farmers' participation is, however, encouraged by biannual "extended meetings" during which they can actively participate in decision-making processes and contribute to the organization's development (Ballou, 2004; Siqueira, 2017).

Enablers:

- *The decentralized hub system facilitates efficient product exchange and reduces transportation costs and food waste.*
- *Flexible communication ensures the network remains responsive across regions, supports sustainable agricultural practices, and strengthens social ties.*

Blockages:

- *Coordinating across 34 hubs can cause logistical challenges and complicate quality control.*
- *Diverse stakeholder interests may hinder decision-making and resource allocation.*



Source: Caderno Ecovida, p.16, 2007 - Image adapted and translated with ChatGPT

*The Brazilian organization **Instituto Regenera** set up a study to identify "hot zones" for trade, a term used to designate areas where consumer demand is strongest and where the potential for successful agroecological markets is therefore highest. This strategic approach helped maximize sales by establishing markets in areas where consumer interest already existed (F. Muriana, personal communication, 12 February 2025).*

Enablers:

- *Allowed for targeted market placement, aligning agroecological fairs with areas of high consumer demand. This strategic focus optimized sales and ensured market success.*

Blockages:

- *There is a challenge regarding accurately mapping consumer interest and adapting to fluctuating demand, which may require constant monitoring and adjustments to market locations, also in finding funding to conduct such study.*

*The **Central da Caatinga** in Brazil is a network of cooperatives promoting sustainable development and agricultural biodiversity. It links family farms in the semi-arid region of the country, particularly in the north-east. The network comprises 9 cooperatives and over 25 production groups, benefiting over 1,000 families. In terms of logistics, the network relies on community warehouses to store products properly before distribution. Distribution itself is facilitated by a warehouse in Juazeiro, in the state of Bahia, which serves as a central access point for products. In addition, an online store delivers throughout Brazil, enabling small farmers to reach a broader consumer base (Central da Caatinga, 2025; Crispim, 2022).*

As mentioned, Central da Caatinga's logistics are organized jointly by the cooperatives, which also helps to optimize the distribution process. This collective organization guarantees efficient transport of goods from farms to warehouses, and then on to consumers. Overall, this system reduces costs, improves coordination between stakeholders and promotes fair trade practices between farmers and consumers (Central da Caatinga, 2025; Crispim, 2022).

Despite the success of the network, logistical problems still exist. Particularly in the remote areas of the semi-arid region, conditions for transportation and distribution remain difficult due to the lack of adequate infrastructure. The solution proposed by Central da Caatinga is to address these obstacles through a cooperative structure based on the support of the community and government organizations in order to strengthen the network and improve logistical possibilities. By maintaining a decentralized, cooperative logistics model, the network guarantees efficient distribution of agroecological products, while providing a sustainable and fair market for family farms in Brazil's semi-arid region (Central da Caatinga, 2025; Crispim, 2022).

Enablers:

- *The cooperative logistics system reduces transportation costs by consolidating shipments, an essential factor in the semi-arid region.*
- *The physical store in Juazeiro and the online platform expand market access, connecting farmers to a wider consumer base.*

Blockages:

- *Poor road infrastructure and unreliable transportation in areas like Sobradinho increase costs and delays.*
- *Intermittent power outages and limited internet in Juazeiro disrupt operations and online sales.*

*The **"De Aquí para Ti / Hemengoa, Zuretzako"**, is an example of a direct sales model for local food products that effectively addresses logistical and storage challenges, particularly in contexts where institutional support is limited.*

On-farm sales and sales in small local stores reinforce direct interaction between producers and consumers, reducing dependence on intermediaries. Producers manage storage in their own facilities or use small community centers, guaranteeing product freshness and quality. Sales take place at markets, fairs or via online platforms, and transport logistics are then handled by the producers themselves or in collaboration with local service providers. This approach minimizes logistical obstacles and associated costs, thus improving the profitability of small-scale farmers. In addition, the introduction of certification logos, blue for direct sales and yellow for local sales, guarantees to consumers the authenticity and origin of products, boosting confidence and encouraging local consumption (Pamplona, 2024).

Enablers:

- *By bypassing intermediaries, the "De Aquí para Ti / Hemengoa, Zuretzako" initiative reduces distribution costs, with producers handling logistics themselves or partnering with local providers.*
- *Small collective storage centers guarantee product freshness.*
- *The blue and yellow certification logos directly signal authenticity and proximity, which builds trust with consumers.*

Blockages:

- *Farmers' dependence on local transport services, which often lack institutional support, can lead to delivery delays.*
- *Managing both production and distribution increases operational pressure on small-scale producers, who lack external logistical assistance.*

*Founded in 2010, the **Beijing Farmers' Market (BFM)**, is a mobile agroecological market that sets up in various locations around Beijing. Initially, it had fewer than ten vendors and was mainly frequented by people in direct contact with the organizers. Over time, the market has grown considerably, and by 2013 had over 200 vendor applications and more than 40 regular exhibitors. Thanks to this growth, the BFM now has a strong web presence, with over 80,000 subscribers on Weibo, a Chinese social media platform that plays an important role in the market's communication and organization.*

One of the key point of the BFM is the rotation of exhibition venues, which are not fixed.The market is held in various public and private spaces throughout the city, such as the BMW 4S Event Centre, Canadian International School of Beijing, Iron Chef Kitchen, Vintage Arts Square, Beijing New World Women's Shopping Mall, the Children's Event Centre at Chongguang Mall, Nali Patio at Sanlitun Bar Street, Red Wall Garden Hotel, and Shijia Hutong, among others (FAO and INRAE, 2020).

The site selection process is community-based: consumers actively suggest locations and, in many cases, provide the premises free of charge, helping to reduce operating costs. The organizing team communicates market dates, times and locations primarily via social networks, where followers can keep being updated on market developments. Each venue

requires different logistical considerations, as farmers are responsible for transporting their products and setting up temporarily for each event. There is no central storage, and vendors manage inventory from their respective farms. The market emphasizes transparency and trust between producers and consumers. In addition to offering a platform for the sale of agroecological products, BFM has also developed into a collaborative space where consumers contribute to organizational development and information-sharing, helping shape not only the physical form of the market but also its internal decision-making processes (FAO & INRAE, 2020).

Source: *The Beijinger*, "Beijing Organic Farmers' Market," April 2017, photograph, https://www.thebeijinger.com/events/2017/apr/beijing-organic-farmers-market.

Enablers:

- The mobile model and community-driven venue selection reduce costs, with free access to spaces and active consumer involvement.
- BFM's strong digital presence on Weibo helps maintain engagement and efficiently communicate market details.

Blockages:

- The lack of central storage and the need for vendors to transport and set up products at each rotating venue increase logistical complexity.
- Varied venue requirements also demand flexible, often costly, arrangements for transportation and setup.

To summarize

- **Decentralized and cooperative logistics models** (ex: hubs, rotating markets, community-managed logistics) enable greater efficiency through **improved flexibility** and **resilience**, particularly due to strong **participant involvement** and **adaptation** to local contexts;
- **Direct-to-consumer sales models** through farm sales, markets, or online platforms **reduce dependence on intermediaries**, **increase profits**, and improve **transparency**, thereby fostering a relationship of **trust** with consumers.
- **Mapping areas where consumer demand is high** (ex: Instituto Regenera) allows markets to be established in a more efficient and successful manner.
- **Digital tools and social media** are a great help for real-time **coordination**, particularly in mobile or decentralized models (ex: the Beijing farmers' market), but also for enabling greater **community involvement**, which promotes the sustainability of the system.
- Decentralization increases adaptability but can also create **coordination problems,** particularly with regard to quality control and logistics. Many small producers face **capacity constraints** when managing both production and distribution without institutional support.

4.2. Fair Trade and Transparent Pricing

Price transparency represents a key element in building trust between producers and consumers. The guide highlights that a clear communication on the cost structure of agro-ecological products can help justify price differences compared with conventional products. One of the strategies put forward is to detail prices so that consumers can understand how their purchases contribute to fair wages, sustainable practices as well as community development. This approach strengthens consumer loyalty, but also informs the public about the true value of agroecological products (Instituto Regenera & Instituto o Fronteiras do Desenvolvimento, 2024, p. 10).

In an interview, Fabrício Muriana, co-founder and collaborator of Instituto Regenera, pointed out that consumers often hear about organic products from others, but never had direct access to information. With the growing amount of information available on the Internet and the constant competition for attention, it is becoming increasingly difficult to reach potential target groups in a meaningful and in-depth way. Every opportunity must therefore be taken to publicize and explain the concept of agroecology (F. Muriana, personal communication, February 12, 2025).

Among the examples cited by Fabrício is the direct training of all delivery staff, farmers and distributors so that they feel ready to explain the main advantages and distinctive features of agroecological products. He also stressed the importance of creating simplified brochures comparing agroecological products with those from conventional agriculture, and explaining the pricing system. Furthermore, one of Fabrício´s recommendations is that, at fairs, direct sales, and other marketing channels, such as WhatsApp groups, short videos should be made available showing the production process, and that labels or packaging should feature photos of the farmers or some explanatory text about the production practices (F. Muriana, personal communication, 12 February 2025).

In this way, it becomes possible to strengthen the bonds between the farmer and the consumer, increasing the trust relationship and understanding of the pricing policy, which promotes a greater understanding and, consequently, greater awareness of these types of products.

Case Studies

For 'Fair Trade and Transparent Pricing', five study cases were selected to exemplify the structures of different initiatives that incorporate the principles presented in this section:

Case Studies for 'Fair Trade and Transparent Pricing

Case Study	Key Features	Enablers	Blockages
Canasta Comunitaria Utopia- Ecuador	• Fixed-price baskets • Prices set in assemblies • Shared consumer–producer management.	• External funding • Establishment of direct consumer links • Collective organization	Regular attendance; lack of free time to participate; struggles with transportation.
AMSD – SPG Bio Local - Mali	• Prices set 10–30% above conventional • QR codes for traceability • Customer feedback system.	• Regular, strucutured market • Traceability and PGS justifies premium • Customer feedback for trust.	• Constant consumer education needed & prices still a barrier for some. • Lack of institutional support.
FreshVeggie PGS - Uganda	• Collective planning • Internal PGS • Direct marketing • "home garden" kits add value.	• Backed by NOGAMU • Consumer education	• Poor farm-area market access • Supply irregularities • Costly logistics.
Instituto Chão - Brazil	• Sells at cost • No profit • Costs covered by voluntary contributions • Full transparency.	• Deep trust via transparency • No intermediaries • 500+ producers supported.	• Relies on voluntary donations • High operational demands.
Prolegara Project - Spain	• Premium heritage legumes • Cooperative pricing • Storytelling and direct sales.	• Strong consumer ties • PDO/PGI certifications • Tastings and farm visits to build trust.	• Local pricing limits scale • High communication demands.

*The Ecuadorian organization **Canasta Comunitaria Utopia** facilitates commercial relations between a group of small-scale producers located in Tzimbuto and 100 families who regularly consume fresh products. One of the main mechanisms of this initiative is the sale of a vegetable basket delivered every two weeks at a fixed price. In addition to their role as consumers, families participate in packing, cleaning, and administration of the distribution space. This demonstrates a bilateral relationship in which both parties are engaged and committed to maintaining an open and collaborative dialogue. A noteworthy example is the general assembly, which brings together producers, consumers, partner associations, and foundations to jointly establish a budget and determine product prices. These prices remain unchanged throughout the year, unless exceptional circumstances arise that necessitate the convening of an extraordinary assembly. This system not only enables annual planning and ensures financial stability for both consumers and producers, but also fosters strong social bonds and increases trust and willingness to pay among consumers (FAO & INRAE, 2018).*

Enablers:

The National Agroecological Collective, the EkoRural Foundation, and the Utopía Foundation serve as the primary supporting and endorse the role of controlling organisations. Their support is provided through funding, knowledge exchange, and the promotion of agroecological values.

Blockages:

Consumers mentioned lack of free time to participate regularly on Canasta Day and producers referred to lack of transportation, as well as struggles to plan the production in accordance with the demand

*The **NGO Association Malienne pour la Solidarité et le Développement (AMSD)**, founded 12 years ago, is supporting Mali's green transition notably through the support of agroecological practices and marketing products. The organisation implemented a Participatory Guarantee System (PGS) called SPG bio local Mali and were able to certify 1658 producers between 2022 and 2024, representing 150.8 hectares of land produced respecting the PGS. Since 2021, they created a market, open Monday to Saturday from 9am to 4pm, to allow the certified producers to sell their products. When setting the prices, AMSD asks the farmers to fix them at least 10 to 30% above the conventional ones. During our interview, the NGO's president, Hamidou Diawara, explained that this allows the products to stay accessible for consumers while remunerating the producers fairly, encouraging them to transition to agroecology. Some QR codes were created to inform the market's consumers about the traceability of the products, by elaborating the technical production itinerary for all producers, right through to marketing. This demarche contributes to building trust and justify the higher prices. A customer feedback mechanism has also been put in place, with twice-yearly questionnaires sent out to obtain customers' opinions on product quality, needs and areas for improvement. A customer database has been created and is maintained with the addition of contact information for each consumer (H. Diawara, personal communication, 26 March 2025).*

Enablers:

- *The PGS certification creates accountability and trust from the consumers which can help justify the "premium" prices.*
- *A regular, structured and accessible market helps increase its visibility and allows consumers to build consistent purchasing habits.*
- *The creation of QR codes with traceability builds consumer trust and helps justify the prices.*

Blockages:

- *A lack of institutional support prevents the development of more infrastructure to further develop this agroecological products' market.*

- *The lack of awareness and higher prices can still represent a barrier for some customers.*

*Near Kampala, **FreshVeggie PGS**, established in 2009, is a private agroecological production and marketing initiative regrouping 3 autonomous farmers groups, majorly women. Its central features are collective production planning and marketing through social networks regrouping 88 producers and 88 households. Farmers agreed to work together as a "network of autonomous protocol community groups", and set up their internal standards through a PGS created by the members. This certification was implemented with the help of the National Organic Agricultural Movement of Uganda (NOGAMU), which strengthened the capacities for producers to mobilise each other, taught PGS techniques and eased the linkage to markets. A secretariat of three employees are coordinating the management of PGS activities, and different farmers are divided in groups that have specific roles (FAO, 2018). The producers located in Wakiso bring their product from the fields to the main collection point weekly, while the ones in further locations send it via trusted public transports to other collection centers, where they will be redistributed depending on orders. At each cluster, a marketing team composed of three people are in charge of the sales, while a delivery team takes care of offices and home deliveries (FAO/INRA et al., 2016). It is however mentioned that according to the producers, there is a need to have access to more trading spaces closer to the fields thus reducing transportation costs and food losses associated with it. But the consumer noted inconsistent supply of products and therefore uncertainty about the availability of certain products when going to the direct market, already considered to be far (FAO & INRAE, 2018).*

To sensitize customers about the value and prices of their products, one of the techniques developed (supported by a private consultant) was the creation of an "at home gardening package". This 57 USD pack contains an assortment of vegetable seeds, as well as a training session with one of FreshVeggies experts' to start the garden. This allowed the organisation to show consumers the fruits and vegetables' production processes, with their share of success and failures, justifying agroecological products' prices. This initiative was also a way to create more links between consumers and producers since they exchanged different advice on the production (FAO & INRAE, 2020).

Enablers:

- *The development of a PGS, with NOGAMU's support, helps reassure customers about the products' quality.*
- *The "at-home gardening package" creates emotional and educational links between producers and consumers, while showing consumers the difficulties linked to production.*

Blockages:

- *The lack of trading spaces closer to farms adds cost, can increase food waste during the transportation and limits producers participation.*

- *An irregular availability of products can limit consumer trust in the supply's reliability, thus reducing their consistency in their purchases.*

Instituto Chão *is a non-profit association located in São Paulo, Brazil, dedicated to promoting a solidarity economy by offering organic and artisanal products at cost price. Established by a group of six founding members and supported by approximately 24 managing associates, the organization fosters direct relationships between over 500 producers spread in the country and consumers, ensuring that high-quality goods are accessible to the local community. Their product range includes fresh produce, grains, and handcrafted items, all sourced from certified organic producers and cooperatives (Instituto Chão, 2025).*

A fundamental aspect of Instituto Chão's innovative approach is its commitment to fair pricing and transparency. Unlike traditional retail models that incorporate profit margins into product prices, Instituto Chão sells items at their exact cost. Operational expenses such as rent, utilities, and staff salaries are not embedded in product prices but are instead covered through voluntary contributions from customers. To facilitate this, a detailed breakdown of operational costs is prominently displayed on a board above the cashier (image below), encouraging patrons to contribute toward these expenses. This model not only demystifies the pricing structure but also cultivates a sense of community ownership and collective responsibility (Eu Sem Fronteiras, 2023).

From a logistical standpoint, Instituto Chão manages its operations with a focus on efficiency and collaboration. Each item is stored at the organization's facilities, where it is organized and prepared for sale. Subsequently, products are delivered either directly by producers or through logistics coordinated by the association itself, ensuring freshness and reducing intermediary costs. This streamlined supply chain reinforces the organization's commitment to product quality, while supporting local producers and providing consumers with direct access to sustainably sourced goods (Eu Sem Fronteiras, 2023).

Enablers:

- *Instituto Chão's transparent pricing model—where operational costs are always explicitly displayed—fosters consumer trust and encourages community contributions.*
- *The direct relationship with over 500 producers eliminates intermediaries, helping to keep prices affordable and ensuring access to high-quality organic products.*

Blockages:

- *Relying on voluntary contributions from customers to cover operational expenses may result in inconsistent funding, potentially jeopardizing financial stability.*
- *Managing direct logistics and storage without external support can strain resources, especially as the association grows.*

Source: Eu sem Fronteiras https://www.eusemfronteiras.com.br/conheca-o-instituto-chao-uma-associacao-sem-fins-lucrativos/ and Instituto Chão https://www.institutochao.org/

*The **Prolegara Project**, in Aragon (Spain) focuses on the recovery and development of unique local vegetables such as boliches, caparrones and other traditional varieties native to the region. These are grown by small-scale farmers, mainly organized into agricultural cooperatives. In concrete terms, the project aims to recognize the cultural and ecological value of these legumes and position them on the market not as cheap staples, but as high-quality products with a strong territorial identity. The initiative is supported by regional development programs that promote training, marketing strategies and develop storage as well as distribution infrastructures (Radio Jaca SER Pirineos, 2024).*

One of the most important pillars of the initiative is its fair pricing strategy which is based on decisions taken collectively within the cooperatives. Farmers work together to calculate production costs (seed, labor, post-harvest processing) and on this basis agree a minimum price that reflects these costs while guaranteeing a decent income. These prices are not determined by the general raw materials market, but are set locally and maintained jointly. What's more, cooperatives negotiate directly with local restaurants, retailers and event organizers, enabling them to bypass intermediaries and thus retain a greater share of sales profits. At fairs and markets, prices are also communicated transparently through posters and direct discussions with consumers (Radio Jaca SER Pirineos, 2024).

Thus, transparency permeates the entire structure of the initiative. First, product packaging and promotional materials frequently include the name of the variety, its place of origin, the cultivation method, and information about the farmer or cooperative. This narrative approach fosters trust and raises consumer awareness of the value of the products they buy. In addition, cooperatives often organize open days, tastings or farm visits, during which consumers and chefs can discover the production process, helping to justify prices. Finally, the project uses certifications of origin and quality (such as PDO or PGI) to confirm the authenticity and local origin of these products, reinforcing trust and fair market value. This integrated system not only allows farmers to be visible and valued, but also to participate

actively in the development of a local food economy based on dignity and sustainability (Radio Jaca SER Pirineos, 2024).

Enablers:

- *Collective decision-making within the cooperatives can allow farmers to set prices according to their real production costs and local needs, rather than market fluctuations.*
- *Direct communication with consumers, products' stories and open-door events reinforce price transparency and create trust as well as loyalty.*
- *Certifications such as PDO or PGI helps confirm a product's authenticity.*

Blockages:

- *The reliance on collective decisions and local pricing can limit scalability since markets' conditions can change and require more flexible pricing strategies.*
- *While direct selling is an advantage, it also requires constant community involvement and marketing efforts that can be resource-intensive.*

To summarize

- Pricing models based on **collective decision-making** and **transparent communication** (ex: Prolegara Project, Canasta Comunitaria Utopía) foster **trust** between producers and consumers, as well as help **ensuring fair and predictable incomes.** It makes **costs visible and understandable**, enabling consumers' **willingness to pay higher or consistent prices.**
- **Involving consumers directly in logistics, decision-making, or educational activities** (ex: FV PGS and Canasta Comunitaria Utopia) increases their **understanding** of agroecological practices, reinforces the **perceived legitimacy of higher prices** and supports ethical consumption .
- Transparent communication **tools like QR codes, signage, storytelling, and cost breakdowns** reinforce **consumer confidence and price acceptance**, elements essential for maintaining higher price points in competitive markets.
- The reliance on **voluntary models or consumer engagement** (ex: Instituto Chão, Prolegara Project) require ongoing, **active consumer participation and engagement**, which can be **fragile or difficult to sustain**.

4.3 Participatory Certification and Community Engagement

Traditional organic certification procedures are often costly and unaffordable for small farmers. To overcome this obstacle, the guide recommends the use of participatory guarantee systems (PGS), which guarantee community certification based on mutual responsibility (Instituto Regenera & Instituto o Fronteiras do Desenvolvimento, 2024, p.11). Certificaton is an important element for agroecological products' commercialisation. As Amaury Peters, working for the Coopération de Louvain, told us during our interview, it is important for producers to differentiate their products from conventional ones: “If the product can be differentiated, then there is a potential for value” (A. Peeter, personal communication, 14 April 2025).

PGSs are local certification systems that incorporate aspects of self-assessment and second-party verification. These systems rely on the active participation of farmers, consumers and other local stakeholders on committees. They are responsible for examining inspection reports and then deciding whether or not to grant product certification. Farmers voluntarily undertake to comply with organic production standards, and to be subject to regular on-site inspections by designated evaluation groups. These groups may be composed exclusively of farmers , or a combination of farmers, consumers and agronomists. Inspections, carried out at different intervals (monthly, half-yearly or annually) will form the basis for certification decisions (FAO & INRAE, 2020; López-García & Carrascosa-García, 2023). This system is designed to include farmer education through information sharing between producers, groups and intergroups, during different types of events such as meetings and workshops (Canwat et Onakuse, 2022). While some SGP initiatives operate independently, guaranteeing compliance with private certification labels, others act in collaboration with public institutions to align with national organic certification standards (FAO & INRAE, 2020).

By involving consumers directly in the certification process, or through farm visits and community events, these systems improve trust and transparency, thereby strengthening local food networks. In addition, this model promotes local economic development, social responsibility and farmer empowerment through collective governance structures (FAO & INRAE, 2020).

Despite its advantages, PGS faces certain limitations. It is not universally recognized by public regulatory bodies, which can restrict farmers' access to larger or international markets. Many producers are unaware of PGS, unless informed by NGOs or researchers, underlining the need to intensify dissemination efforts. On the other hand, implementing a truly participatory mechanism requires considerable time and effort on the part of farmers, consumers and other stakeholders, which may require financial support (FAO & INRAE, 2020). The argument found in the literature is supported by our interview with Hamidou Diawara, President of AMSD. As he himself says: “To get started, you need logistical support, you need to take charge of the operation, the monitoring of the plots, you need to put people in touch, create trust around an ideal and share this vision with others. And I think human and financial resources are essential” (H. Diawara, personal communication, March 26, 2025).

Table 10 **How is trust built in different guarantee systems?**

Which guarantee system?	How is trust built?	Which market?
Self-declaration	Trust relies on direct and repeated interactions between producers and consumers.	Neighbourhood and local markets with direct relations between producers and consumers.
Actors' audit	Trust relies on direct and repeated interactions between the transparent intermediary or processor and consumers.	Local or national markets with direct relations between transparent intermediaries or processors and consumers.
Third-party audit	Trust relies on the independence of the certification body and on the accreditation by public authorities.	National and international markets where consumers have few possibilities to directly meet the operators of sustainable food systems; trust is built via professional certifiers.
Participatory Guarantee Systems	Trust relies on the direct participation of all actors, meaning that consumers trust this system either because they actively participate in the certification process or because they have direct relations with other actors participating in the guarantee system (producers, transparent intermediaries or other consumers).	Local and national markets with direct relations between the actors.
Others?	...	...

Source: FAO and INRAE. 2020. Enabling sustainable food systems: Innovators' handbook. p. 166 Rome. https://doi.org/10.4060/ca9917en

Case Studies

In order to demonstrate how Participatory Guarantee Systems and community engagement can work in practice, four case studies were selected:

Case Studies for 'Participatory Certification and Community Engagement'

Case Study	Key Features	Enablers	Blockages
Rede Ecovida PGS - Brazil	• Decentralized participatory certification • Hubs with Ethics Councils • Internal/external evaluations.	• External funding • Establishment of direct consumer links • Collective organization	• Regular attendance • Lack of free time to participate • Struggles with transportation.
GIZ PGS Support - South Africa	• PGS scaled from 4 to ~20 groups • 500 farmers engaged, 130 certified • Regional knowledge sharing.	• GIZ's Knowledge Hub and peer networks • Lower cost than third-party certifiers.	• Premature project end (Ukraine war) • No government support • GMO dominance.
Quezon PGS - Philippines	• Multi-stakeholder PGS for weekly farmers' market • Peer review and certification committee.	• Inclusive process builds trust • Farmers get time to improve practices.	• Inconsistent peer review due to limited training • 6 months may not be enough for resource-poor farmers.
FIFATA Relay Marketing & Certification - Madagascar	• Relay farmers coordinate sales • Internal agroecology control • Digital ordering & weekly deliveries.	• Strong farmer networks (7,000+ groups) • Urban links via trained relays	• Limited certification structure • Price sensitivity of Malagasy market • Need for more marketing training.

In Brazil, the ***Ecovida Network*****,** already *presented in the "Strengthening Local Food Systems" section, also offers a certification system through the network. In order to obtain a certification seal, farmers must join a network that is part of a regional hub. Each regional hub must have an Ethics Council, which includes representatives from each of the certified family groups. For each family wishing to be certified, the Council elects three internal and three external members, who will conduct an analysis and evaluation—through visits and forms—that will be submitted to the responsible hub* (De Oliveira & Rebelatto dos Santos, 2004).

Enablers:

- *This decentralized structure ensures transparency, accountability, and community involvement.*
- *The use of internal and external evaluators fosters trust and legitimacy among both farmers and consumers, enhancing the credibility of the certification.*

Blockages:

- *The participatory model, while fostering transparency, can be resource-intensive for both farmers and evaluators.*
- *The need for regular visits and form submissions can create logistical challenges, particularly in remote areas.*
- *The system may face resistance from farmers unfamiliar with the certification process or unwilling to engage in the required governance structures.*

Source: Rede Ecovida, 2016

Through the knowledge hub for Organic Agriculture in Southern Africa (KHSA), GIZ (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit) collaborates with local organisations like the ***South African Organic Sector Organisation (SAOSA)****. They implemented PGS which serves as the primary certification model for smallholder farmers, as third-party certification is often too costly and inaccessible. Recognizing this challenge, GIZ funded a four-year project to expand the reach of PGS and enable more farmers to obtain organic certification. At the start of the project, only four PGS groups existed; by the end, 19 to 20 additional groups had been established, involving approximately 500 farmers. However, due to the premature end of the project—caused by the war in Ukraine—only 130*

farmers were fully certified. Despite this, the initiative demonstrated that fully funded PGS programs have strong potential to connect more farmers to markets under an organic seal. The success of the GIZ-led PGS initiative in South Africa has inspired other African countries to adopt similar models. Countries such as Tanzania, Ghana, and Zimbabwe have benefited through regional knowledge sharing and capacity building, facilitated by the GIZ Knowledge Hub. This hub played a key role in disseminating best practices, tools, and training to scale agroecological certification across the continent (C. Anderson, personal communication, 14 March 2025).

Enablers

- *The Knowledge Hub and strong peer networks established by GIZ, with support from SAOSA were key enablers that contributed to the success of PGS certification in South Africa.*

Blockages

- *Lack of government support, the premature ending of the GIZ funded project, and the dominance of genetically modified organisms (GMO) were key blocages.*

The ***Quezon Participatory Guarantee System*** *(PGS) based in the Philippines, is an initiative that aims to ensure that all products sold on the weekly market meet the organic standards defined by a multilateral certification framework. The system relies on the active participation of various stakeholders, including farmers, peer reviewers as well as a certification committee (FAO & INRAE, 2020).*

At the start of the process, farmers need to undergo training to familiarize themselves with ecological standards, the PGS rules and the certification procedures. This preparatory phase allows producers to understand the requirements and therefore better prepare before submitting their application for certification. Once the application has been submitted, a peer assessor carries out an on-site inspection and writes a detailed report assessing the farm's compliance with ecological guidelines. This report is then examined by a certification committee made up of various stakeholders, who decide whether the farm meets the certification criteria (FAO & INRAE, 2020).

If the application is rejected, the peer assessor informs the farmer of the improvements required and gives a six months period to address any shortcomings before being able to apply for a new assessment. This cyclical process ensures compliance with ecological standards, but can also offer farmers the opportunity to improve their farming practices, and thus positively influence the value chain. In case the application is approved, the decision is forwarded to the Quezon PGS administrative committee, which will officially issue the certification (FAO & INRAE, 2020).

Once the certification has been obtained, the farmer is authorized to sell his products at the weekly market set up for this purpose. This system strengthens trust between producers and

consumers, guaranteeing transparency and accountability. Quezon's PGS model illustrates how participatory certification can provide a viable, low-cost alternative to third-party certification, meanwhile fostering cooperation between farmers, consumers and regulatory authorities (FAO & INRAE, 2020).

Enablers:

- *The effectiveness of the Quezon PGS lies primarily in its participatory model, wherein farmers are directly involved in the certification process, fostering trust and a sense of local ownership.*
- *The six-month correction period provides farmers with the opportunity to improve their practices, promoting ongoing compliance and generating positive market outcomes.*

Blockages:

- *Challenges include the reliance on peer reviewers without formal training, potentially leading to inconsistent evaluations.*
- *The six-month period may not provide enough time for farmers with limited resources to make necessary improvements.*

The umbrella farmers' organization "FIkambanana Fampivoarana ny Tantsaha" or FIFATA is a national organization that brings together regional farmers' organization federations from 12 regions of Madagascar. This represents 369,500 family farms, 29 regional commodity unions, 13 regional farmers' organizations and over 7,000 grassroots farmers' organizations (O. Fenohanitra, personal communication, 14 April 2025).

Its aim is to improve farmers' living conditions and incomes, while respecting the environment. To achieve this, its technicians provide support and guidance to member regional farmers' organizations by setting up various training courses for relay farmers. The latter are responsible for coordinating producer groups, particularly in terms of production planning. The organisation also set up an internal control system for agroecological producers, enabling them to use this term when marketing their products. However, our interviewee Onja Isaac Fenohanitra, a technician working with FIFATA, explains that this certification has not yet been issued to farmers with labels. This is due to a lack of organizational means to assiduously monitor all producers. Much of the assurance of agro-ecological product quality for consumers is based on trust and their past experiences of products quality. A marketing model has been set up to connect producers to markets, reducing middleman costs and increasing farmers' incomes (O. Fenohanitra, personal communication, 14 April 2025).

This marketing system is based on a collaborative organization between producers, agricultural technicians and relief farmers, in order to connect local producers directly with consumers, usually urban. The first stage consists of prospecting customers, by participating, for example, in local fairs. Interested consumers can communicate their contact

details to become customers. The list of available products is then centralized in a Google form that is distributed via WhatsApp, Facebook or email. The farmer organization's technician centralizes the online orders from the Google form and forwards them to the interested producers. The latter deliver their products to a local relay point, usually once a week, to ensure product freshness (O. Fenohanitra, personal communication, 14 April 2025)..

The marketing relay himself, a producer trained by the Farmers' Organisation, plays a central role in this circuit: he coordinates the collection, prepares the orders and ensures delivery to a fixed distribution point in the city. Payment, managed by the marketing relay, is usually deferred, except in cases where the producer expresses an immediate need, in which case partial payment can be made quickly. Each kilo of product sold generates between 50 and 100 arias of margin for the relay, part of which also contributes to financing the farmers' organization, and that represent a smaller margin than what collectors usually keep. To ensure the sustainability of the model, trust between the actors is essential, and producers must have a real economic interest in participating, especially by earning a higher income than in the conventional channel (O. Fenohanitra, personal communication, 14 April 2025)..

The network is structured around 1,500 relay farmers spread across some 7,000 farmer organizations, with an average ratio of one relay farmer for every 20 producers. Of these, 52 are specifically dedicated to marketing. This approach is based on strong local cooperation, reinforced by technical support, advice and field leadership provided by the relays. However, the technician Onja Isaac Fenohanitra finds it difficult to estimate the level of success of this type of marketing due to a lack of hindsight and data on the level of marketing (O. Fenohanitra, personal communication, 14 April 2025).

One of the difficulties of marketing remains the limited purchasing power of the Malagasy people, which means that the prices of agroecological products must remain almost equivalent to those of conventional products in order to keep customers. There is still a need to train farmers as marketing intermediaries in order to diversify marketing chains. It should be pointed out, however, that the organization is supported by various sources of funding, including the Agence Française de Développement and CIRAD (O. Fenohanitra, personal communication, 14 April 2025).

Enablers

- *The network of cooperatives enables economies of scale in marketing, coordination, and capacity building for agroecological producers.*
- *Relay farmers as intermediaries facilitate effective communication, the aggregation of products, and their delivery, while ensuring a more equitable distribution of benefits among the various actors.*
- *Although still informal, the internal control system is an important step toward building consumer confidence and providing low-cost certification.*
- *The use of digital tools supports the coordination of cooperatives by facilitating the aggregation of demand and connecting rural producers to urban markets.*

Blockages

- *The lack of organizational resources to closely monitor all producers prevents cooperative networks from properly developing their certification systems.*
- *The limited purchasing power of Malagasy people does not allow for prices higher than conventional prices, which limits the economic incentive for farmers to adopt agroecological practices.*
- *Farmers' lack of marketing capacity limits the diversification and resilience of trade channels, threatening the long-term viability of cooperatives' marketing efforts.*

To summarize

- PGS significantly **lowers the barrier to certification** for small-scale farmers, making agroecological products' market participation more feasible.
- PGS models that provide **grace periods for farmers to improve their practices** (ex: Quezon PGS) foster **inclusion rather than exclusion**, encouraging farmers to evolve progressively.
- The participatory structure of PGS, including **peer reviews and multi-stakeholder committees, enhances transparency, shared governance, and trust** between producers and consumers, increasing legitimacy.
- Despite its affordability, PGS is **labor- and coordination-intensive**, needing consistent investment in **training, monitoring, and logistical support** to remain functional, which can represent a barrier (ex: FIFATA). Many PGS systems only reach operational capacity with the **technical and financial backing of NGOs, development agencies, or public institutions**.
- PGS is often **not formally recognized by public institutions** and remains **unknown** to many producers, restricting its ability to open broader market opportunities.

4.4. Consumer Education and Awareness

A key factor in expanding the market for agroecological products is increasing consumer awareness about their benefits. The guide B*oas Práticas para a Comercialização de Alimentos Agroecológicos* highlights the importance of education campaigns that address health, environmental, and social advantages of agroecological food systems (Instituto Fronteiras do Desenvolvimento & Instituto Regenera, 2024, p. 12). This concern coincides with similar statements in the literature (Dalmoro et al., 2023; Saamoura and al, 2024; Loconto et al., 2018).

Our interviewee Ruth Nabaggala, working on the marketing aspects in AFSA, emphasises the importance for producers to explain to consumers the benefits of their products for the health and the environment : “You make sure you communicate the difference between the agroecological produce and any other products. So, I normally call it sensitization marketing. You market while sensitizing” (R. Nabaggala, personal communication, 28 March 2025).

Effective communication strategies include labeling initiatives, storytelling techniques that demonstrate farmers’ experiences, and public engagement through workshops and food

fairs. Additionally, integrating agroecological themes into school programs and institutional procurement policies can contribute to long-term behavioral changes in consumption patterns (Instituto Fronteiras do Desenvolvimento & Instituto Regenera, 2022, p. 12).

Case Studies

Four case studies were selected to demonstrate good practices of Consumer Education and Awareness.

Case Studies for ' Consumer Education and Awareness'

Case Study	Key Features	Enablers	Blockages
Familia de la Tierra - Colombia	• Network of ~100 families linked to restaurants, shops, and schools • Consumer field visits • Promotes health and environmental benefits.	• School and chef partnerships • Consumer visits • Strong restaurant sales.	• Low consumer awareness • Delayed restaurant payments • Limited fresh produce.
FreshVeggies - Uganda	• Shares recipes and nutrition info to raise awareness of agroecological products.	• Direct education to clients • PGS builds trust.	• Irregular availability of products • Lack of trading spaces closer to farms
Songhai Center - Benin	• Integrated model: production, processing, marketing • Farm visits, demos, and tastings.	• Strong brand • Control of the whole chain • Direct consumer interaction.	• Complexity to understand the full value chain for consumers
AMSD - Mali	• Distributed free baskets • School tastings • Mobile tricycle to reach consumers.	• Targeted outreach • Consumer profiling • Face-to-face engagement.	• Funding challenges • Hard to convert interest into steady demand.

Familia de la Tierra *is a network of agroecological producers based in Colombia. It regroups around 100 peasant and indigenous families from 20 social organizations around the country, as well as 18 restaurants, 7 organic shops, a network of public and cooking schools, to mitigate the challenges producers face when transitioning to agroecological practices. The board, composed of 3 people, organises the certification of producers through their PGS, but are also involved in processing, marketing and participating in research. Their main market channel is through restaurants, representing 80% of their sales, but they also sell their products to organic stores, bakeries and university fairs, which allow them to be financially viable. The delayed payments imposed by some restaurants can however represent a challenge, especially for the small farmer. The network also participates in raising awareness around the health and environmental benefits associated with agroecological products' consumption. Their collaboration with elementary and cooking schools allow them to share their values to a broader public (FAO & INRAE, 2018). One of their strategies is the organisation of 2 hour long field visits with groups of 10 to 15 existing consumers, usually students and chefs. The whole production process is presented to them as well as different culinary uses of their products (FAO & INRAE, 2020). However, one of*

their principal challenges is still the lack of consumer awareness, as well as shortage in the supply of fresh vegetables and fruits (FAO & INRAE, 2018).

Enablers:

- *Collaborations with schools promote education on agroecology, helping future consumers (students and chefs) understand and value sustainable food systems.*
- *Field visits promote trust, transparency, and appreciation, allowing consumers to observe the work and care that goes into agroecological products, which helps justify higher prices and encourages loyalty.*
- *The high proportion of sales to restaurants provides economic support but also increases the visibility and credibility of the products, positioning agroecological foods as a desirable and common choice for customers.*

Blockages:

- *Many consumers turn to cheaper conventional products because they are unaware of the value of agroecological products. This reduces demand and makes market development more difficult.*
- *Difficulties ensuring the reliable supply and diversity of fresh products which can represent a problem when consumers want to shop all their goods in the same place.*
- *Although restaurants are important buyers, their late payments can be a challenge and put in danger the supply chain's financial viability.*

***FreshVeggies Uganda**, apart from creating their own PGS and organising their different market channels, does an important work of raising awareness around this agroecological products to consumers. To reach this goal, one of their actions is to share different recipes with their clients, they also give information about nutritional values of their products (FAO, 2018).*

Enablers:

- *Providing recipes gives consumers some inspirations and ideas on how to prepare and enjoy agroecological products, especially lesser-known varieties. It allows to reduce barriers to purchase, creates new regular consumption habits, and builds links with producers.*
- *Nutrition information highlights the health benefits of agroecological products, increasing their value and positioning them as superior alternatives to conventional foods.*
- *Direct interactions between producers and consumers through PGS certification creates new relationships and promotes transparency, thereby contributing to consumer education.*

Blockages:

- *The lack of trading spaces closer to farms adds cost, can increase food waste during the transportation, and limits producers participation.*
- *An irregular availability of products can limit consumer trust in the supply's reliability, thus reducing their consistency in their purchases.*

*The **Songhai center**, based in Benin, established in 1985, represents an extensive model that integrates agroecological practices with diverse market access strategies. This organization brings together 7 satellite farms with 100 employees and 1700 active students, young agro-entrepreneurs, divided into 230 model farms. The center leverages a combination of local, regional, national, and international market channels, and is benefiting from a regional recognition of their Songhaï brand for the quality of their product. A key approach involves effective coordination along the entire supply chain, from research and production to consumer engagement, which fosters long-term and stable markets for agroecological products, in the concept of an integrated "green rural town" (FAO & INRAE, 2018). They are responsible for the primary production, the processing, and marketing of their products. To raise awareness, they organise different visits of the center showing the whole process of production from the growing stage to the processing, but also put in place demonstrations and testing sessions for old and new consumers to know more about agroecological practices (FAO & INRAE, 2018).*

Enablers:

- *Visits to the production center and demonstrations enable consumers to observe and better understand agro-ecological practices, boosting confidence, transparency and appreciation of product value.*
- *The Centre's control of the entire value chain enables consumers to understand every stage of production, reinforcing customer confidence on the one hand, and ensuring stability and reliability of supply on the other.*
- *The Center's recognition for their products facilitates consumer's trust in them.*

Blockages:

- *Given the complexity of this production model, it can be difficult for the public to fully grasp the various benefits of agro-ecological products.*

*The **AMSD association**, in Mali, presented earlier, organised the distribution of 150 baskets of certified fruits and vegetables to vulnerable families as a way to raise awareness about the benefits of those products. This was a way for the association to reach possible new consumers that are not necessarily sensitise to these practices, and expand their network. They also organise other activities such as free degustations of PGS certified products in schools, in order to open the dialogue and raise awareness with the families. Another element is the project to set up a mobile tricycle that would enable the sellers to go directly to meet potential customers. A categorization of target customers, and those inclined*

to buy, has been made, in order to move the tricycle to their workplaces and thus increase the visibility and access of agroecological products. According to our interviewee, the AMSD's president, "it allows us to renew dialogues and reinforce contact, and it creates more interaction". The idea is to showcase the product range to encourage future orders (H. Diawara, personal communication, 26 March 2025).

Enablers:

- *Free distribution of baskets makes agro-ecological products accessible to unaware communities, creating new links with groups of potential new consumers*
- *Targeting children and their families with tastings and information dissemination in schools, encourages early awareness, and multi-generational conversations about food choices.*
- *The mobile tricycle strategy removes barriers to access and encourages direct interaction with consumers to explain the benefits of agroecological products.*
- *By identifying specific customer profiles, AMSD can maximize the effectiveness of its awareness campaigns.*

Blockages:

- *Without a long-term strategy to keep consumers engaged, initial awareness does not necessarily translate into repeat purchases or profound behavioral change.*
- *Even though initiatives such as the distribution of free baskets can be impactful, they require continuous funding often from external support.*

To summarize

- **On-site experiences** such as field visits, center tours, and demonstrations are powerful **educational tools** (ex: Familia de la Tierra, Songhaï Center). These allow consumers to **understand the agroecological process, building trust, transparency, and product appreciation**.
- Integrating agroecological **education in school environments** (ex: Familia de la Tierra, AMSD) helps build **long-term consumer awareness** and influences **household food choices** by stimulating **critical conversations** about health, environment, and food systems at home.
- Practical tools like **recipes and nutritional information** (ex: FreshVegies) help consumers integrate **agroecological products into their daily lives** and see their health value.
- Impactful strategies like school tastings or basket distributions are **often short-term and resource-intensive,** which affects their sustainability and ability to produce lasting behavioral shifts.

4.5. Diversifying Market Access and Distribution Channels

To increase the reach of agroecological products, the guide *Alimentos Regenerativos: Boas Práticas para a Comercialização de Alimentos Agroecológicos* suggests adopting multiple distribution channels, including both traditional and digital platforms. While farmers' markets and specialized stores remain crucial, integrating e-commerce solutions, home delivery services, and subscription-based models can enhance accessibility. The use of digital tools, such as mobile applications and online marketplaces, can further facilitate direct interactions between producers and consumers, streamlining sales processes and reducing dependency on intermediaries (Instituto Fronteiras do Desenvolvimento & Instituto Regenera, 2024, p. 13). Alison Loconto et al. (2018) note in their research that the diversity of marketing channels is an important element in the sustainability of the marketing initiatives studied, as it allows for greater stability in their networks.

Seven Commercialization Models for Agroecological Products

The guide *Alimentos Regenerativos: Boas Práticas para a Comercialização de Alimentos Agroecológicos* identifies seven key commercialization models that can be used individually or in combination to improve market access for agroecological products (*Instituto Fronteiras do Desenvolvimento & Instituto Regenera, 2022, p. 12*). Each model presents unique advantages and challenges, requiring careful planning and adaptation to local contexts.

To identify the key features of the seven main agroecological marketing channels, a variety of case studies were gathered under each category : *Markets and Fairs; Delivery Systems; Online Marketplaces; Physical Stores (Fixed); Wholesale and Intermediation; Value-Added Processing and Sales (Verticalization); Consumer Groups and Cooperatives.*

4.5.1 Farmers' Markets/Fairs

Farmers' markets are one of the most traditional and effective ways to commercialize agroecological products. The guide emphasizes that this model allows producers to sell directly to consumers, reducing intermediary costs and fostering trust-based relationships However, logistical challenges such as transportation and market space availability must be addressed to ensure regularity and financial viability (*Instituto Fronteiras do Desenvolvimento & Instituto Regenera, 2022, p. 12*).

Moreover, farmers' markets implying a direct relationship with the final consumer, allow the producer to explain to the consumer the characteristics of organic foods and their benefits (Dalmoro et al., 2023). Similarly, during our interview, Ruth Nabaggala shared that the element that encourages purchase is the trust between the consumer and producers : " Interacting directly with the consumer is quality control on its own. When I used to work with farmers, people used to say, farmers don't lie. The person who lies is the person between the farmer and the consumer "(R. Nabaggala, personal communication, 28 March 2025).

João Ávila, in the interview, shared insights about the success of agroecological fairs in Florianópolis, Brazil, emphasizing the importance of building trust and customer loyalty over time. He highlighted that farmers were able to establish strong relationships with consumers

by consistently attending the fairs, even when initial sales were low. Through their regular presence, customers began associating specific farmers with high-quality produce, which reinforced the value of trust and reliability in direct selling. This approach not only fostered loyalty but also contributed to the overall success of the fair. Ávila further pointed out the significance of the weekly decentralized organic fairs, which were organized by producer associations in collaboration with municipal governments. These events helped ensure stable consumer demand, making it possible for farmers to compete on price while maintaining the integrity and quality of their agroecological products. The model demonstrates how such fairs can create a sustainable and competitive market environment, benefiting both producers and consumers (J. Ávila, personal communication, 25 February 2025).

Case Studies

To demonstrate different practices for the Farmer's *Markets and Fairs* category, three cases were reviewed.

Case Studies for ' Farmers' markets and Fairs'

Case Study	Key Features	Enablers	Blockages
AMSD - Mali	• Agroecological markets with direct sales and WhatsApp orders • Biannual events increase visibility.	• Long opening hours • Risk-reduction mechanism • WhatsApp and meal baskets • NGO support.	• Limited infrastructure and institutional backing.
Carcelén Fair - Ecuador	• Market with cultural and educational focus • Monthly farm visits connect rural and urban actors.	• Strong community ties & cultural engagement.	• Hard to scale • Relies on staff/volunteer capacity.
Instituto Feira Livre - Brazil	• Connects 200+ organic producers to urban consumers • Voluntary surcharge supports operations.	• Large urban base • Transparent pricing.	• Financial instability due to reliance on voluntary fees.

*The organisation **AMSD** created 2 agroecological markets in Bamako that are open from 9am to 4pm, Monday to Saturday exposing 56 certified products. According to them, having a market opened for this long allows agroecological market channels to be more visible and prevent consumers from going to conventional ones because of a lack of accessibility. The organisation regularly contacts the producers to estimate the availability of the products for a better functioning of the market. To ensure that the farmers sell at least part of the products they bring to the market, the NGO buys in advance a certain quantity of their goods. It is worth mentioning that to implement its activities the NGO received support from different organisations such as Humundi, Ricolto and the Comité français pour la solidarité internationale. The transports from the field to the selling point, a subcontractor is contacted, representing approximately 1% of the final's products' price. Direct sale through the market allows the consumers to interact with producers and build trust on the quality of the*

vegetables, necessary for future sales that can be through other and less direct market channels. Sometimes these same customers then order via the market's whatsapp group. The market manager announces product availability on the whatsapp group every week, and during opening hours, organizes the preparation of orders as well as deliveries, which are made by motorcycle cab and paid for by the customer. Some of these orders are evening meal baskets containing all the ingredients for a complete dinner. According to Hamidou Diawara, this technique means that customers don't have to supplement their meals with products bought on the conventional market (H. Diawara, personal communication, 26 March 2025).

A "Weekend BIO" is also organized every six months, attracting a larger number of visitors. On this occasion, institutional representatives, researchers and students come to the market, and a larger number of producers (around 40) come to present their products. Debates and media coverage are also organized, giving greater visibility to the organization and the products presented (H. Diawara, personal communication, 26 March 2025).

However, our interviewee, the AMSD's president mentioned a lack of institutional support to develop more infrastructure and give access to more agro-ecological products as one of the key blockages to develop the market (H. Diawara, personal communication, 26 March 2025).

Enablers:

- *Long opening hours make agroecological products more accessible which allows consumers to plan their purchases with more flexibility, a crucial element to build customer loyalty and conversion.*
- *The risk-reduction mechanism encourages producer participation and trust, thus reducing post-harvest losses and encouraging regularity of supply.*
- *Communication via WhatsApp and meal baskets simplify the purchasing process, making it easier for customers to change their purchasing habits towards organic products.*
- *Events bring high visibility and help make agroecological products a topic of public interest.*

Blockages:

- *Dependence on external funding can jeopardize the long-term viability of the market infrastructure if funding is reduced or redirected.*
- *A lack of institutional support prevents the development of more infrastructure to further develop this agroecological products' market.*

*The **Carcelén Agroecological Fair** is an initiative that takes place in Quito, Ecuador, more precisely in the parish of Carcelén, which serves as a space provided to strengthen connections between producers and consumers and, consequently, promote responsible*

consumption. In other words, in a deeper way, the fair's function goes beyond commercial purposes, as it functions as an educational and cultural center, where various activities are organized - such as cooking demonstrations, natural cosmetics workshops and visits to farms - with the aim of raising public awareness about sustainable food production and traditional values (FAO & INRAE, 2020).

In this way, one of the factors that adds value to the fair's cultural role is the engagement of the consumers who attend, as they are encouraged to take part in farm visits, allowing them to directly observe the farming practices used by the producers they wish to sell to. In addition, at the fairs themselves there is an information tent where consumers can ask questions about the products on sale, bringing greater transparency and trust to the process (FAO & INRAE, 2020).

The initiative is also part of a broader effort to revive traditional practices in rural communities that once hosted migrant populations. The term allin ruway, a phrase in the Indigenous Kichwa language meaning "doing well," has been incorporated into the initiative's activities as a way to reinforce cultural ties between consumers and farmers. Every month, large groups of around 40 people visit the producers' fields, further strengthening the direct relationships between rural and urban communities (Borja, Fundación Ekorural, Ecuador, as cited in FAO & INRAE, 2020).

Therefore, the Carcelén Agroecological Fair exemplifies how agroecology transcends purely commercial interests, functioning as a transformative force across multiple layers of society. When embedded in platforms of education, cultural exchange, and community building, agroecological initiatives not only foster social cohesion but also contribute to the economic sustainability of small-scale producers (FAO & INRAE, 2020).

Enablers:

- *The Carcelén Agroecological Fair thrives by integrating educational and cultural activities, such as farm visits and workshops, which deepen consumer understanding and trust*
- *The fair's community-building focus, particularly the use of the Kichwa term "allin ruway," strengthens connections between rural and urban populations, enhancing the fair's long-term sustainability.*

Blockages:

- *A potential blockage lies in the limited scalability of this model, as organizing monthly farm visits and workshops may strain resources and require significant volunteer or staff commitment*
- *Relying on the cultural engagement of a specific local community may limit broader appeal or accessibility for urban consumers.*

*The **Instituto Feira Livre**, founded in 2017, is a non-profit organization located in São Paulo, Brazil. Its main mission is to promote the solidarity economy by acting as an intermediary between small organic producers and urban consumers. The institute offers a wide range of organic products, including fresh fruit and vegetables, breads, kombucha, mushrooms and hearts of palm. It also offers lesser-known items such as Non-Conventional Food Plants (PANCs) like azedinha, ora-pro-nóbis and taioba, as well as different varieties like purple carrots and okra.*

In terms of logistics, the institute buys its products directly from more than 200 small producers, including cooperatives. These partnerships guarantee a continuous supply of food grown sustainably and without pesticides. The producers themselves are responsible for organizing and financing the transport of their goods to the institute, with some even investing in their own vehicles to facilitate deliveries (Diniz, 2019; Instituto Feira Livre, 2025; Redação Guia da Semana, 2017; Welter, 2023).

The institute's distinctive feature is its transparent pricing system, in which the producers themselves set the sale price, guaranteeing them a fair wage. Consumers, on the other hand, are encouraged to pay a voluntary 35% surcharge on their purchases to cover operating costs, such as rent and the salaries of the producers' employees. This two-way dynamic promotes community involvement and contributes to the institute's sustainability. However, the reliance on voluntary contributions presents challenges, especially in downturns, as occurred in 2022, when the institute faced financial difficulties and accumulated debts with producers. To deal with this situation, charity events were organized to raise funds and maintain activities *(Diniz, 2019; Instituto Feira Livre, 2025; Redação Guia da Semana, 2017; Welter, 2023).*

Overall, the Instituto Feira Livre exemplifies a strong commitment to fair economic practices, environmental responsibility and strengthening the bond between rural producers and urban consumers through innovative organizational and financial strategies.

Enablers:

- *Being in São Paulo, a large urban market, allows Instituto Feira Livre to reach a wide consumer base.*
- *Its direct partnerships with 200 small-scale producers and a transparent pricing system foster community engagement and fair compensation.*

Blockages:

- *The reliance on voluntary contributions for operational costs creates financial instability, as evidenced by the challenges faced in 2022 due to decreased consumer traffic and accumulated debts.*

To summarize

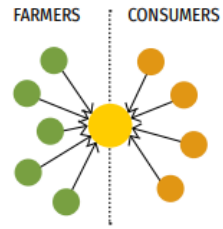
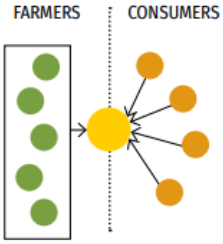
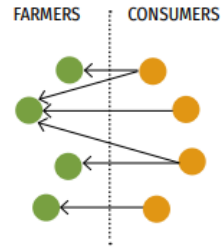
- Markets that are **open regularly and for long hours** (ex: AMSD) can increase the **accessibility** and convenience of agroecological products, encouraging **consumers to integrate them into their routines**.
- Farmers' markets **facilitate direct contact between producers and consumers**, increasing **confidence in product quality** and creating **long-term relationships** that support repeat sales.
- **Public events** such as food festivals, cooking demonstrations or institutional visits (ex: AMSD, Carcelén Fair) **raise awareness** among wider audiences and can **attract institutional actors** and **media** attention, legitimizing agroecological products in the public eye.
- **Without municipal or national support**, many agroecological markets **struggle to develop** the infrastructure needed for scaling and consistent operation.
- When markets **rely on donor funding or voluntary consumer** contributions, they face **vulnerability** in times of financial downturn or fluctuating attendance.

4.5.2 Delivery Systems

Direct delivery services provide convenience for consumers while ensuring predictable sales for producers. It can include subscription-based models or just one-time order delivery requests. According to the guide, this model requires a well-organized logistics, that has digital ordering platforms added to efficient distribution networks. But there are challenges, mainly related to managing delivery costs and being able to ensure that the quality of the product will continue throughout transportation (Instituto Fronteiras do Desenvolvimento & Instituto Regenera, *2024, p. 13*). Farmers can organise themselves collectively to complete each other's productions for the fulfillment of demand and to diversify the supply (Canwat & Onakuse, 2022).

Subscription models create financial predictability for farmers by pre-selling weekly or biweekly product baskets. The effectiveness of this model lies in securing committed consumers who provide steady income, reducing the risks of market fluctuations.

Table 7 **Typology of different delivery systems**

Delivery system	Examples	Benefits	Challenges
	Farmers markets	▸ Allows consumers to know their producers. ▸ No intermediaries in the supply chain. ▸ More quantity and variety available for consumers. ▸ Storage may or may not be included.	▸ No guarantee that what the producer brings to market will be sold. ▸ Both producers and consumers have to use their own transportation, meaning higher costs.
	Co-op shops; farmers shops; CSA drop-off; food assemblies; collective purchasing groups, Box schemes	▸ Can enable farmer-led prices. ▸ Can be a useful regular outlet for local producers. ▸ More quantity and variety available for consumers. ▸ Farmers can organize to minimize transportation costs to the collection point. ▸ Box delivery to consumers can be organized to minimize costs. ▸ Storage may or may not be included in this model.	▸ Minimum storage has to be included in this model. ▸ It may be difficult to manage timing since it depends on the influx of consumers. ▸ Supply is seasonal, so it may be difficult to securely and consistently supply regular consumers. ▸ Demand can be very low during some periods of the year (e.g. during summer holidays).
	Farm-gate sales, Farm shares in a CSA	▸ Farmer-led. ▸ Local consumers. ▸ No transportation costs for farmers. ▸ No storage required.	▸ Irregular and seasonal supply can be hard to secure regular consumers.

Source: M. Vicovaro, FAO and the authors

Case Studies

To illustrate different practices of *Delivery Systems*, four cases were selected.

Case Studies for ' Delivery Systems'

Case Study	Key Features	Enablers	Blockages
Raízs - Brazil	• Direct online sales of organic baskets with home delivery.	• User-friendly platform • Fair prices.	• Difficulties to maintain the model without subisidies • Complex logistics at scale.
SAOSO & GIZ - South Africa	• Aggregated farmer deliveries using local vans.	• Group coordination supported by GIZ • Low-cost transport.	• NGO-dependent • No state support.
Lindros - South Africa	• Farmers share transport and sell locally.	• Local focus • Collaboration on the transportation	• No formal logistics • Limited reach.
Cesta Camponesa - Brazil	• Regional basket schemes via online/co-op delivery.	• Flexibility • Partnerships with NGOs, universities, municipalities • Strong networks.	• Irregular supply and delivery • Lack of infrastructure.

Raízs *- founded in Brazil - is an initiative that aims to deliver high-quality, sustainably produced food directly to consumers, i.e. by connecting them with more than 900 family farmers aligned with organic and agroecological practices without the involvement of intermediaries, avoiding traditional retail chains that often reduce farmers' profit margins. Therefore, the aim of Raìzs is to establish a direct link between producers and the urban population, promoting healthy food and empowering small producers by offering them a fair and stable source of income (Raízs, 2025a).*

This direct connection occurs with consumers accessing the initiative's website, which contains a variety of organic products available for delivery, ranging from fresh fruit and vegetables to pantry items. This platform is dynamic, and allows consumers to make the best choice of quantities according to the demand in their home. In this context, one of the options on the site is to order a basket, which generally contains seasonal and locally produced items, and has proved to be a success for Raízs. Whenever a basket is ordered, the system automatically selects the most suitable products, based on availability and customer preferences, and farmers linked to Raízs prepare them according to the specific requirements of each order, ensuring that only the freshest items are included (Raízs, 2025b).

They are then shipped via the organization's own logistics, which works in partnership with local cooperatives to ensure timely and efficient distribution. This logistics system is

designed to preserve the quality of the products, with specific care taken in packaging to avoid losses during transportation. This delivery model seeks to minimize food waste by aligning supply and demand, reducing excess inventory, and ensuring consumers receive exactly what they ordered. Moreover, it facilitates the maintenance of a sustainable model in which farmers are compensated directly and fairly, creating a mutually beneficial relationship between producers and consumers. As demand grows, Raízs plans to expand its model by incorporating more farmers and consumers, contributing to the development of a more equitable and sustainable food system in Brazil (Raízs, 2025).

Enablers:

- *Raízs connects over 900 agroecological farmers directly with consumers, bypassing intermediaries and ensuring fair compensation.*
- *The platform's ease of use, offering customizable organic baskets, and its efficient logistics with local cooperatives for timely delivery of fresh produce are key to its success.*

Blockages:

- *The logistical complexity of coordinating deliveries with multiple farmers and ensuring consistent product quality may pose challenges, especially as demand increases and the platform scales.*
- *Maintaining a sustainable financial model without relying on subsidies can be difficult if consumer demand fluctuates.*

*The **South African Organic Sector Organisation** (SAOSO), in partnership with GIZ, implemented a strategy by grouping small-scale farmers in order to enhance the marketing of their products. This strategy enables them to collectively transport farm produce, which is more cost-effective and easier compared to individual farmers transporting small quantities. They introduced aggregators who are responsible for collecting diverse products from different farmers. Aggregators, for instance, can collect cabbages from one farmer and collect beans, carrots, and tomatoes from other farmers, and then label and package these various products to be transported collectively. This strategy has eliminated intermediaries, shortened the supply chain, and increased farmers' profitability. SAOSO and GIZ play a key role in facilitating the coordination and support structure. Transportation is done using local logistical solutions.(C. Anderson, personal communication, 14 March 2025).*

Enablers:

- *A key enabler is the establishment of aggregators.*
- *The availability of local vans for transportation helps improve logistics and ensures timely delivery to local markets.*
- *The model has benefited from strong coordination among farmer groups, supported by the collaborative efforts of the South African Organic Sector Organisation*

(SAOSO) and GIZ, which played a central role in organizing and sustaining the system.

Blockages:

- *There is no support from the government and the model relied on external support, GIZ, which raised concerns about its sustainability.*

Lindros South Africa. *At Lindros South Africa, farmers work together by coordinating and collaborating to overcome logistical challenges. They contribute resources and transport their products to the market. The advantage of this approach is lower transportation costs, as shared transportation is arranged, with each farmer contributing some resources, which has lessened the total cost for individual farmers. They focus on nearby markets, which has further reduced their overall logistics costs, allowing the money to circulate within the local economy. (A. Rosenberg, personal communication, 28 February 2025).*

Enablers

- *Mutual cooperation, and collaboration are key to successful implementation enabling them to reduce distribution costs.*
- *Targeting nearby markets is another enabling factor which makes them curb logistical challenges. This strategy not only eases the transportation burden but also allows the farmers to retain the revenue within the local communities.*

Blockages

- *The main blockage detected in the Lindros case is the lack of an effective transportation system that would enable small-scale farmers to channel their produce to the market. Inadequate logistical infrastructure causes frustration, leaving the farmers to figure things out on their own by relying on improvised, community-based solutions such as pooling transport or limiting sales to nearby communities. While improvised solutions help them, they limit their potential and undermine expansion efforts.*

The ***Cesta Camponesa*** *is a Brazilian collective initiative for the direct distribution of agroecological food baskets from family farmers to urban consumers. It is important to clarify that there are multiple initiatives under the name "Cesta Camponesa", notably organized by MTST (Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra) in Minas Gerais and MPA (Movimento dos Pequenos Agricultores) in other states such as Bahia, Rio Grande do Sul, and Piauí. And even though each regional version maintains its autonomy, all are grounded in agroecological principles, solidarity economy, and non-hierarchical logistics, as they prioritize short supply chains and promote direct relationships between rural producers and urban families (Sintufrj, 2021).*

In the Minas Gerais model, coordinated by CEDAS and MTST, the delivery system is structured through an online ordering platform, which is updated weekly with available seasonal products. Consumers can access the site, select the products they want (rather than receiving a pre-composed basket), and finalize payment digitally. The flexibility in basket composition, allows consumers to select their own products, while minimizing food waste and catering to consumer preferences. Once orders are placed, the products are harvested, pre-packed by producers, and delivered to a central hub called Raízes do Brasil, which serves as a storage, sorting, and dispatch center. From there, deliveries are made either directly to homes or to designated urban pickup points (Sintufrj, 2021).

In other states where the initiative is coordinated by the MPA, which is another organizer, such as Bahia and Piauí, a similar model is employed but relying more on solidarity networks and cooperative vehicles for distribution. Then, logistics are managed collectively by farmers' associations and cooperatives that use shared transportation resources. In some cases, deliveries are made biweekly, and are droped-off at points such as schools, churches, or community centers. Participatory certification is often implemented, engaging both producers and consumers in mutual trust and transparency processes, reinforcing the social and agroecological principles of the movement (Sintufrj, 2021).

From a financial and operational point, Cesta Camponesa avoids dependence on intermediaries. Revenues go directly to the producers, and many initiatives reinvest part of the income in infrastructure, education, and logistical improvements. Challenges still include ensuring product diversity and delivery regularity, especially in regions with limited cold chain or road access. However, support from universities, NGOs, and municipal policies has helped build resilient, low-cost delivery systems that are adaptable and community-anchored (Sintufrj, 2021).

Enablers:

- *The initiative stands out for its decentralized format, which relies on a non-hierarchical logistics model that influences the creation of a solidarity economy and the empowerment of farming families.*
- *The flexibility in basket composition, allowing consumers to select their own products, minimizes food waste and caters to consumer preferences.*
- *The complementary or exclusive use of online platforms, combined with cooperative delivery networks, increases both accessibility and adaptability.*
- *Strong partnerships with NGOs, universities, and municipalities provide infrastructure and logistical support, ensuring the sustainability and resilience of the initiative.*

Blockages:

- *Challenges include maintaining consistent product diversity and ensuring reliable deliveries, particularly in rural areas with limited access to cold chains or poor road infrastructure.*

- *In regions with less-developed solidarity networks, logistical coordination and the need for biweekly deliveries can result in irregularities, complicating consumer satisfaction and timely distribution.*

Source: ***"Conheça a Cesta Camponesa: Alimentos sem agrotóxico à sua mesa."*** *Sintufrj, July 2021. https://sintufrj.org.br/2021/07/conheca-a-cesta-camponesa-alimentos-sem-agrotoxico-a-sua-mesa/.*

To summarize

- Direct delivery systems **increase farmer's incomes by removing intermediaries** while enhancing consumer trust through **transparency and traceability** (ex: Raízs, Cesta Camponesa).
- **Grouping logistics activities at the producer level** (ex: SAOSO, Lindros) simplifies distribution, lowers transport costs, and improves delivery reliability, especially for smallholders with limited individual capacity
- **Online interfaces paired with customizable orders** (ex: Raízs, Cesta Camponesa) enable **demand-driven delivery,** which increases efficiency and matches consumer preferences.
- As delivery networks scale, **managing consistency, freshness, and variety** can become more **difficult,** especially across fragmented regions with limited infrastructure.
- The **absence of robust logistics infrastructure**, such as cold storage, good roads, and distribution hubs, **constrains delivery efficiency and limits access** to distant or urban markets.
- Without **long-term institutional or financial autonomy**, delivery systems are at **risk**, especially in contexts lacking public investment or cooperative capital (ex: Raízs, SAOSO).

4.5.3 Online Marketplaces

Online platforms are an excellent way to increase consumer reach as they centralize the sale of agroecological products from multiple producers. In this way, online marketplaces, as described in the guide, facilitate direct sales and allow consumers to compare products and prices in a transparent way (Instituto Fronteiras do Desenvolvimento & Instituto Regenera, 2024, p. 13). Similarly, Doyle et al. (Doyle et al., 2022) highlight how online marketplaces can strengthen the territorial development of commercialization. However, they also add that it is essential for producers to be well equipped and prepared, with digital knowledge and marketing skills to make the most of their online presence, which usually requires financial investment (Doyle et al., 2022).

Case Studies

To examine good practices for *Online Marketplaces*, four cases were analyzed.

Case Studies for ' Online Marketplaces'

Case Study	Key Features	Enablers	Blockages
Reko - Finland	• Facebook groups connect consumers and local farmers for direct • Pre-ordered weekly sales.	• No logistics cost • Trust-based • Pre-orders facilitate deliveries	• Admin based on volunteers labor
Shambass - Kenya	• Farmers sell directly via WhatsApp/Facebook • Payments via M-Pesa.	• Popular platforms • Secure mobile payments.	• Need access to technology • Need digital literacy • Poor delivery infrastructure.
RAFIA - Togo	• WhatsApp group links farmers and 140 clients • NGO manages orders and delivery.	• NGO support • Consumer feedback loop.	• E-commerce skills gap • Products availability.
EcoAgro - Paraguay	• Orders via WhatsApp/email • Centralized packaging and home delivery by APRO.	• Widely used platforms • Streamlined logistics • Local partnerships & certification	• Logistical challenges • Donor dependence.

The Reko circles or Reko rings is an initiative that started in western Finland in 2013, that has reached more than 400 000 participants in the country. They consist of closed Facebook groups that gather consumer and local producers. To participate, the farmers interested must request group membership (for free) and their demand needs to be validated by Administrators, composed of a small group of consumers, to verify if they respect the Reko principles. Some of the key principles are the sale of local products only, producers need to sell their own products without intermediaries, and trust which is at the heart of the system implying honest and objective dialogue between parties. The administrator group sets weekly or bi-weekly delivery dates and producers can then post their products via

announcements on the Facebook group, specifying the preferred mode of payment (credit card, cash, bill). Consumers can order directly in the comments section of those announcements, and will then take their products at a common delivery point using their command number. This solution has the advantage of being very cost efficient since there are no logistical fees associated with the participation, it allows direct-sells reducing the cost of the products as well as creating a relationship and trust, and no certification is needed (Sevón, 2023; FAO & INRAE, 2020).

Enablers:

- *The use of a free and familiar plateforme such as makes the system technically and financially more accessible to small farmers, promoting a larger inclusion and replicability of this system.*
- *The use of community quality control and transparent communication to build consumer confidence reduces the costs and other access barriers.*
- *The pre-orders allow farmers to harvest and prepare only what is sold, thus minimizing food waste and facilitating delivery logistics.*

Blockages

- *The system relies on volunteer labor for quality control and coordination, which may limit long-term viability.*

Shambas Project *Kenya introduced digital marketing with the help of social media platforms such as WhatsApp and Facebook. This strategy enables farmers to market their agroecological products. This was uncovered during the interview with the CEO of the Shambas project, where he emphasised the importance of Facebook and WhatsApp in shaping the strategic marketing of agroecological products in Kenya. Farmers are now using social media as digital shops. The widespread use of social media works in favour of small-scale farmers, allowing them to utilize opportunities for effective marketing strategies, leading to higher profitability as farmers can directly channel products to consumers without intermediaries. Payments are made through the M-Pesa mobile money system, enhancing transparency, secure payment, and reliability.(E. Anjere, personal communication, 14 March 2025).*

Enablers

- *The use of social media platforms such as WhatsApp and Facebook are major enablers, as these tools are widely used among Kenyan people, making the selling of farm produce much more convenient.*

- *M-Pesa mobile money transfers are commonly used to send money from person to person, making it easy and secure for customers to transfer payments directly to farmers—making the strategy both sustainable and effective.*

Blockages

- *The major blockage is that not all farmers have smart phones and reliable internet particularly those living in rural areas which has hindered the wider use of digital tools for marketing agroecologiacl products.*
- *Lack of formal education and literacy among small-scale farmers further hindered the wider use of digital tools like facebook and whatsappp. Most especially older farmers who lack confidence navigating social media apps, this was manifested during one of the interviews where it was mentioned that most farmers are burned before technology (BBT) making it difficult for them to use them for marketing purposes.*
- *Another challenges of this solution is to deliver products to consumers after an order is made due to poor road conditions. While digital marketing has a great potential, these barriers that are highlighted affect its effective implementation.*

*The **NGO Recherche Appui et Formation aux Initiatives d'Auto-développement (RAFIA)**, located in northern Togo, is an organization that supports producers in the process of marketing their products, with a particular focus on agroecology from 2022. They help farmers gain access to PGS certification and organize various workshops to promote agroecological practices and consumption. The organization is part of the Réseau des Acteurs de l'Agroécologie des Savanes. One of the employees we have interviewed, Pagna, explained that during their market research to determine consumer needs, the organization identified 140 customers composed of individuals as well as hotels and restaurants, who they then grouped together in a WhatsApp group. This group is fed by the store manager, who provides updates on product availability, but it also represents a means of asking consumers directly about their needs and feelings regarding product or service quality. This regular interaction helps build customer loyalty by creating links. Once orders have been placed on the whatsapp group, the store manager takes care of delivery by couriers, paid for by the customer. A website was set up by the NGO at the end of 2024, so that customers can order directly online, but difficulties have been encountered in ensuring its smooth operation (Pagna, personal communication, 21 March 2025).*

Enablers:

- *RAFIA works in collaboration with different organisations such as Louvain cooperation, offering technical support, training, and funding, which are critical for building capacity and improving digital systems.*
- *Having a pool of consumers giving feedback through WhatsApp helps establish a customer base with whom a relationship of trust and loyalty can be built.*

Blockages:

- *A lack of mastery of e-commerce concepts by the manager which undermines the platform effectiveness.*
- *Difficulties in ensuring the availability of products, especially market garden products which are rapidly perishable, were mentioned as a difficulty encountered.*

Founded in 1999 by the Asociación de Productores Orgánicos (APRO) in Itauguá, Paraguay, ***EcoAgro*** *is a non-profit organization that seeks to leverage the practice of organic agriculture by connecting it to the 289 families associated with the program. This connection takes the form of a comprehensive system for delivering organic products directly from small farmers to urban consumers, and begins with consumers selecting items from a list provided by EcoAgro. Once the selection has been made, the orders are formalized using platforms that are common to the population, bringing interaction between the parties closer and easier, such as WhatsApp and email. Finally, after receiving the order, APRO coordinates the collection of the products with its network of associated farmers, ensuring that each item complies with the organization's organic standards (EcoAgro, 2025).*

The products collected are taken to distribution centers associated with APRO - thus guaranteeing their integrity - where they are organized and packaged to be sent out according to each order. APRO then delivers the packages directly to consumers' homes, using a fleet of vehicles operated by the organization itself. This logistical structure guarantees punctual deliveries, preserving the freshness and quality of the organic food (EcoAgro, 2025).

In terms of financial sustainability, APRO bears the operational costs related to the collection, packaging, and delivery processes through a diverse array of funding sources. These include partnerships with institutions that support EcoAgro's initiatives, such as campaigns promoting responsible consumption and the advancement of organic certification among small-scale producers. This integrated system not only facilitates market access for family farmers but also promotes sustainable agricultural practices and strengthens the bond between producers and consumers (EcoAgro, 2025).

Enablers:

- *EcoAgro benefits from using communication channels that are both accessible and widely used by consumers, such as WhatsApp and email, thereby simplifying the ordering process.*
- *The centralization of collection, packaging, and delivery ensures both operational efficiency and product quality.*
- *Local partnerships and a strong emphasis on organic certification contribute to the program's sustainability and enhance producer–consumer relationships.*

Blockages:

- *Logistics are a major challenge, particularly with the reliance on an in-house fleet for deliveries. As demand grows, distribution may become less efficient.*

- *Financial sustainability depends on external funding sources, which could lead to instability.*

To summarize

- The use of **plateforms already integrated into daily communications reduces technical and financial barriers** for farmers and consumers.
- Combining **demand-driven logistics** (ex: RAFIA & EcoAgro) **with real-time consumer feedback** (ex: Reko) reduces unsold stock and increases customer satisfaction.
- These models **protect producers' margins and promote transparency** by reducing the number of intermediaries.
- **External support** boosts organizations' ability to manage complex logistics and digital platforms, which are **often difficult to set up and maintain in resource-poor environments** (ex: RAFIA).
- **Digital literacy and training are essential** to fully exploit the potential of digital platforms and guarantee a professional service.

4.5.4 Physical Stores (fixed)

Specialized agroecological products shops offer a stable retail environment where consumers have access to a consistent range goods. The guide notes that physical stores improve product visibility, however, they also require significant financial investment and depend on high customer trafic to remain viable (Instituto Fronteiras do Desenvolvimento & Instituto Regenera, 2024, p. 14).

Case Study

Case Study for ' Physical Stores (fixed)'

Case Study	Key Features	Enablers	Blockages
RAFIA - Togo	• Physical store selling PGS-certified agroecological products • Includes fresh, processed products, and cereals.	• Centralized producer database • PGS certification • Direct contact with consumers • Home delivery option.	• Low consumer awareness • Unattractive packaging • Unreliable and unsustainable supply

The NGO RAFIA set up an organic store featuring PGS-certified products, including fresh, processed and cereal products. Our interviewee, Pagna, explained that the boutique manager acts as a link between the producers and the market. Thanks to her database of certified producers, she can organize the store's supply by contacting them to know the state of their production. The farmers themselves take care of transporting the various products to the boutique, where they will be stocked, which also helps preserve the food. Moreover, the

manager can put consumers in touch with producers to create direct sales. Customers also have the option of calling the boutique for home delivery. However, the technician working for the NGO shared with me difficulties to have clients willing to pay premium prices for agroecological products due to lack of awareness, as well as attractive packaging. There is also a need for sustainable supply to be reliable and meet demand (Pagna, personal communication, 21 March 2025).

Enablers:

- *A centralized database of producers facilitates coordination of the product supply chain.*
- *The credibility of the store's offer is reinforced by the PGS certification of products.*
- *Delivery extends the store's reach to consumers who cannot physically visit.*

Blockages:

- *Consumers' lack of awareness of the benefits of agroecological products and their limited purchasing power make it difficult to develop and maintain the store.*
- *Agroecological products may be perceived as being of lower quality, if there is no investment in attractive packaging, which can represent a barrier.*
- *Constant stock availability is necessary to maintain consumer confidence and loyalty, but is difficult to achieve.*

4.5.5 Wholesale and Intermediation

This model facilitates the inclusion of agroecological products in conventional retail networks by connecting producers with supermarkets, restaurants, and institutional buyers. The guide emphasizes the importance of negotiating fair trade agreements and ensuring that the values of agroecology are not compromised by large-scale distribution demands (Instituto Fronteiras do Desenvolvimento & Instituto Regenera, 2024, p. 14).

Case Study

Case Study for ' Wholesale and Intermediation'

Case Study	Key Features	Enablers	Blockages
Solidarité Suisse Guinée - Guinea	• Establishment of mother farms • Training of producers • Direct marketing to restaurants and hotels • Sample-based quality assurance,	• Direct engagement with buyers • Quality-focused clientele • Credibility and funding thanks to NGO partnership	• Ensuring regular supply • Limited awareness among average consumers

The organisation Solidarité Suisse Guinée (SSG) has been involved in setting up agro-ecological farms in various regions of Guinea, where mother farms are set up to serve

as training and test centers for the development of sister farms by trained producers. The organization makes preliminary visits to future students to see their practices, raises awareness of agro-ecology, trains producers and supports them in their transition. One of these farms, located near Lomé, has managed to sell part of its production through hotels and restaurants. The employees went directly to these potential consumers, presenting their projects and the agricultural practices they were following. Samples of their products were then sent to interested customers so that they could test the products and attest to their quality. This procedure guarantees quality, without the need for certification. It is worth noting that the financial and practical collaboration with external NGOs such as the Antenna Foundation may also be a factor in enhancing the producers' credibility with consumers. Restaurants and hotels then place their orders by telephone, and the produce is harvested directly before delivery, to optimize preservation. One of the challenges is to ensure the supply of the products ordered to maintain customer loyalty. Our interviewee Korka Bah, a technician working for the NGO, specified that this type of customer is often more aware of the benefits in terms of taste and quality of agro-ecological products, and is not only interested in their physical appearance. They are also prepared to pay a higher price than for conventional products. This isn't necessarily the case for the average customer, who is less likely to go to an agroecological store because of their lack of awareness, and often higher prices (K. Bah, personal communication, 2 March 2025).

Enablers

- *Face-to-face awareness-raising and the offer of product samples help to establish a degree of credibility and transparency without official certification.*
- *Restaurants and hotels are customers who value freshness and quality, and are more sensitive agroecological products' benefits.*
- *Support from NGOs not only provides financial and technical resources, but also provides a certain institutional legitimacy to producers, reassuring intermediaries.*

Blockages:

- *Irregular or insufficient supply threatens trust and long-term relationships with intermediaries, who need regular, predictable deliveries to be able to plan their menus and avoid service interruptions.*
- *General customers are often unaware of the benefits of agroecology and are price-sensitive, which can limit market development.*

4.5.6 Value-Added Processing and Sales (Verticalization)

Processing agricultural products into market-ready goods, such as jams, dried fruits, or organic snacks, can significantly increase producer's profitability. This strategy focuses on different activities that modify or transform a basic product into goods with added value. At the most basic level, value addition can be processes such as washing, cleaning, sorting, packaging, and storing. These processes are usually managed by farmers' groups, and focusing on them can strongly increase their income. More advanced processing includes activities such as ginning, roasting, refrigeration, milling, cutting, mixing, dehydration, cooking, and packaging. In rural areas, increasing the value of products creates more local

employment opportunities and boosts income, which in turn positively influences the local economy through both upstream and downstream connections (Ostertag et al., 2007).

The guide recommends this approach to diversify income sources and reduce food waste (Instituto Fronteiras do Desenvolvimento & Instituto Regenera, 2024, p. 15).

Case Study

Case Study for 'Value-Added Processing and Sales'

Case Study	Key Features	Enablers	Blockages
Shambas Project - Kenya	• Use of solar dryers for tomatoes, mangoes, and groundnuts • Reduction of post-harvest losses • Local processing into dried goods and snacks	• Affordable power-free technology • Fast and efficient technology • Collective organisation • Added market value, • Enhanced shelf-life, improved hygiene and food safety	• Initial investment cost • Lack of transport infrastructures • Need for farmer training, seasonal variability in production

Shambas Project *in Kenya, solar dryers have been introduced to overcome post-harvest losses, which are one of the major challenges small-scale farmers face, particularly during peak harvest seasons. Crops like tomatoes, groundnuts, and mangoes are transformed into ready-made market products. This has significantly reduced spoilage and increased shelf life (E. Anjere, personal communication, 14 March 2025).*

Mangoes, which are easily spoiled during harvest seasons, can be processed into dried mango slices and chips, which are highly marketable locally. Groundnuts are also dried to make peanut butter or roasted snacks. While providing solutions to mitigate post-harvest losses, this also enhances revenue for farmers, as these value-added products are in high demand among consumers (E. Anjere, personal communication, 14 March 2025).

Before the inception of solar dryers, it took farmers a couple of days to dry these farm products but with the help of local technology like solar dryers, it can be done within a few hours. As it was mentioned during the interview that " solar dryers could dry groundnuts in 6 to 7 hours, compared to 2–3 days in traditional open-air methods (E. Anjere, personal communication, 14 March 2025).

Enablers:

- *Solar-dryers offer a low-cost solution for farmers to conserve their production, compared to refrigeration.*
- *This technology runs on solar-power alone, making them incredibly useful in rural areas where electricity is either unreliable or not available.*
- *This solution allows farmers to dry their crops in a single day, instead of waiting for days and risking spoilage.*
- *Anjere Evershed explained that these dryers can store crops from around 100 farmers. This collective use brings the costs down and eases their management.*

- *Another big enabler is the energy coming from youth-led startups and local innovators. These are people who understand the needs on the ground and are coming up with smart, practical designs that really work for farmers.*

Blockages:

- *Even though they are more affordable than cold storage, the upfront cost of buying solar-dryers is still a challenge for farmers who don't have financial support such as loans, or who are working alone.*
- *Poor roads and lack of transport options make it difficult to deliver dried products to markets.*
- *There's no solid national policy specifically backing solar drying or agroecological processing, but as explained by Anjere Evershed "without the policies, it's hard to implement anything on the ground."*
- *In some areas, especially where there is less support or awareness, farmers don't have access to these technologies due to a lack of exposure, startup funds, or training.*

4.5.7 Consumer Groups and Cooperatives

Consumer cooperatives allow individuals to collectively purchase agroecological products, creating a stable demand base. The guide highlights that cooperative models promote community engagement while reducing costs through bulk purchasing (Instituto Fronteiras do Desenvolvimento & Instituto Regenera, 2024, p. 15).

Case Studies

To illustrate the different practices of *Consumer Groups and Cooperatives*, three case studies were examined.

Case Studies for 'Consumer Groups and Cooperatives"

Case Study	Key Features	Enablers	Blockages
Células de Consumo Responsável - Brazil	• Organized consumer groups pre-order weekly baskets from family farmers, with monthly prepayment and centralized pickup points.	• Guarantees income for farmers • Fresh and affordable food for consumers • Reduced logistics	• Low flexibility in product choice • Logistics become harder at scale • Need for ongoing consumer commitment.
Femmes Vaillantes - Togo	• Women's rice coop improved quality and tripled output with new parboiling tech and WAAPP training.	• Modern equipment • Shared governance • Reinvestment of profits • Strong community ties.	• Scaling infrastructure and quality control • Need for continued support and planning.
Shared Harvest - China	• CSA delivers weekly organic boxes in Beijing • Community events • Trust-based quality systems.	• Subscription model • Consumer visits • WeChat engagement • Support from universities and local government	• Low awareness among older adults • Transport from farm to city is challenging.

*The **Células de Consumo Responsável**, in Brazil, Responsible Consumer Cells (RCCs) are a social technology initiative developed by the Family Agriculture Commercialization Laboratory (LACAF) at the Federal University of Santa Catarina (UFSC) since 2017. The primary objective is to strengthen short supply chains in the Greater Florianópolis region by promoting direct sales of organic and agroecological food from family farmers to organized consumer groups. This initiative operates through a model of pre-ordered weekly baskets that are paid monthly, in advance, in a way that ensures farmers will have guaranteed sales, which supports income stability and, consequently, in production planning (Células Responsáveis, 2025). In this model, consumers benefit from fresh products at fair prices, which have reduced logistical costs through common pickup points. Currently, there are 12 RCCs in the Greater Florianópolis area, that distribute approximately 7 tons of food monthly. These baskets are produced by 54 farming families across 16 municipalities, serving around 400 urban families. RCCs are usually recognized as an effective model of social technology that articulates new production and consumption arrangements, integrating into the logic of Civic Food Networks (CFNs). They represent a form of resistance in agrifood markets, contributing to the redesign of food supply chains in large cities (Pugas et al., 2024).*

Enablers:

- *RCCs facilitate direct sales between small farmers and organized consumer groups, ensuring a steady market for farmers through pre-ordered baskets with advance payments.*
- *This model guarantees fresh, fairly-priced products for consumers and reduces logistics costs through centralized pickup points.*
- *The initiative is well integrated into Civic Food Networks (CFNs), promoting food sovereignty and sustainable agriculture.*

Blockages:

- *The reliance on pre-ordered baskets and monthly payments could limit flexibility for consumers, especially in terms of product variety.*
- *Logistics may become more challenging as the model scales, with the need to maintain efficient distribution systems for larger volumes.*
- *There are also potential challenges with maintaining consumer engagement and securing consistent participation.*

*The **Femmes Vaillantes Cooperative**, located in Anié, Togo, exemplifies a successful model of a women-led agricultural cooperative that has significantly boosted rice production and processing. Founded in 2007 by twelve women farmers, the cooperative initially faced challenges with traditional parboiling methods, which were very labor-intensive and resulted in considerable product losses. With the support of the West African Agricultural Productivity Programme (WAAPP), the cooperative received modern parboiling equipment and specialized training, which resulted in a substantial increase in production efficiency and the quality of the processed rice. This progress has allowed the cooperative to triple its production, reaching around 800 kilos of parboiled rice per week without losses. Thus, the*

improvement in rice quality has attracted a wider and diversified customer base, including buyers from the capital, Lomé, and religious institutions. Taking advantage of this boom, they reinvested the profits generated in the cooperative itself, enabling it to acquire more land and plan its own processing center, further consolidating its presence on the market (World Bank, 2020).

The cooperative's operational organization is distinguished by the following central aspects:

- *The prioritization of collective decision-making and the equitable distribution of responsibilities among the members;*
- *The implementation of modern equipment, which not only increased production efficiency, but also significantly reduced the physical effort required of the women involved, allowing them to devote more time to other tasks, such as packaging and marketing;*
- *The provision of training in intensive rice cultivation techniques, acquired through initiatives such as WAAPP, which has contributed to an increase in overall productivity.*

Therefore, the cooperative's success can be related to its capacity for technological adaptation, effective internal governance and a strong sense of community among its members. And this has consequently translated into increased family income and improved living conditions for the women participating in the initiative (World Bank, 2020).

Enablers:

- Access to modern parboiling equipment and specialized training provided by WAAPP has significantly improved the cooperative's operational efficiency and product quality, enabling a threefold increase in rice production without losses.
- The adoption of collective decision-making and shared responsibilities has facilitated production optimization, reduced the physical strain on members, and strengthened community cohesion.

Blockages:

- Despite these successes, the cooperative faces challenges such as the need for continuous investment in infrastructure to keep up with growing demand, as well as the difficulty of maintaining product quality at larger scales
- The cooperative must also manage the complexities of scaling operations effectively, which requires sustained external support and strategic internal planning to ensure long-term growth and stability.

***Shared Harvest Farm**, created in 2012, is a social enterprise based in Beijing that adopted a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) model. The payment of a subscription fee from the members allows farmers to be protected from instability and risk related to the production of agroecological products, and makes the initiative financially autonomous. It*

regrouped, in 2018, 500 CSA members and 17 employees, operating with 2 Shared Harvest farms, located in Tongzhou and Shunyi districts hiring seasonal labourers, as well as a partnering rice farm, and peach and mushroom producers. It is also active in promoting sustainable agriculture through the organisation of seminars and conferences, by taking part in the URGENCI CSA network or allowing exchanges of experiences through farm visits. By participating in the CSA, the members can have access to a delivery of a weekly box containing fresh and local, organic food, as well as participating in Farm Days, educational programs and various events organised. The box can be picked in 6 different drop-off points around Beijing city. The model is highly based on trust and reputation with an informal verification system for the quality of products, through different mechanisms such as on farm-visits by consumers and universities The creation of a WeChat by the enterprise allows the members to access deliveries, can share about the products quality, pictures and recommendations. We can note that the initiative receives other types of funding than the CSA, through various market channels and via the cooperation with institutions such as universities and the local government, which could be considered an enabler for the development of the initiative (FAO & INRAE, 2018).

Enablers:

- *Using WeChat enables transparent communication, as well as offering consumers the opportunity to give feedback, which helps to establish a sense of community among consumers.*
- *The organization of events enables consumers to informally verify the quality of products, while creating opportunities for experiential learning, and promoting understanding of the value of agroecological products.*
- *Partnerships bring resources, visibility and institutional credibility to the program, which can reinforce its legitimacy.*

Blockages:

- *A lack of consumer awareness, particularly among older generations, can make it difficult for the group to expand.*
- *There are still logistic difficulties such as the transportation from the farms to the market.*

To summarize

- These systems offer **financial predictability, thus reducing uncertainty,** especially for small-scale agro-ecological farmers. They also enable **better planning of production and resource distribution,** while building **trust with committed consumers** (ex: Shared Harvest Farm, RCC).
- Cooperatives allows a **shared governance and workload pooling**, helping small producers to access markets more efficiently (ex: Femmes Vaillantes).
- **Digital platforms and community events**, such as farm visits (ex: Shared Harvest Farm, RCC), help to create **peer accountability, build shared values and promote feedback mechanisms**.
- **External support fromNGOs, universities or public programs** (ex: Femmes Vaillantes, Shared Harvest Farm) promotes access to technical training, infrastructure and greater visibility, enabling consumer cooperatives and producer groups to develop their activities.
- Subscription and fixed-basket models can **limit consumer choice**. (ex: RCC).
- **Delivery, storage and distribution logistics** can be factors **limiting the efficiency** of cooperatives and consumer groups (ex: Shared Harvest Farm, RCC).

4.6 Institutional Support and Policy Advocacy

For the expansion of agroecological markets, it is essential that governments, institutional structures and public policies are involved. In this way, it is possible to promote fairer conditions for producers while incentivizing consumer adoption. In this way, the guide underlines the importance of creating policy frameworks for the inclusion of agroecological products in public procurement programs, e.g. in schools, prisons and hospitals, food initiatives and food systems. In addition, collaboration between small-scale producers, civil society and local governments is crucial as they can incentivize sustainable production while improving market infrastructure and establishing tax mechanisms to support small-scale agroecological producers (Instituto Fronteiras do Desenvolvimento & Instituto Regenera, 2024, p. 14).

However, as emphasized in an interview with Sandile Sihlongonyane, Country Coordinator of PELUM in Eswatini, and as highlighted in the literature (Bruil & Gubbels, 2019), the integration of agroecology into public frameworks remains a significant challenge:

> “The entire agricultural legislative framework has been built and shaped in the context of conventional agriculture. Finding your space as an agroecological initiative is really difficult… The government subsidy package is fully conventional. There is no recognition of agroecological or sustainable agriculture initiatives. That’s a policy issue—you really need to work hard on political will and legislation to change that.”(S. Sihlongonyane, personal communication, 24 February 2025)

The commercialization of agroecological products depends on an integrated approach that balances economic sustainability with environmental and social benefits. The practices outlined in *Alimentos Regenerativos: Boas Práticas para a Comercialização de Alimentos*

Agroecológicos provide a valuable foundation for agroecological enterprises, offering practical solutions to improve market access, consumer engagement, and institutional support. While these recommendations build on past experiences, they remain crucial for the continuous evolution of sustainable food systems and the expansion of regenerative agricultural markets (Instituto Fronteiras do Desenvolvimento & Instituto Regenera, 2024).

Case Studies

To demonstrate how the institutionalization of governmental programs can support the commercialization of agroecological products, three case studies were selected:

Case Studies for ' Institutional Support and Policy Advocacy'

Case Study	Key Features	Enablers	Blockages
PNAE - Brazil	• National school feeding program reaching 40+ million students • 30% of food must come from family farms • Decentralized and non-competitive procurement.	• Strong policy support (PNAPO) • Local sourcing quota • Municipal-level flexibility • Active cooperatives and civil society.	• Complex procedures • Weak infrastructure in rural areas • Smallholder barriers with packaging and certification • Political shifts affect funding.
SAOSO - South Africa	• Government and SAOSO link smallholders to school meals • Supports local agroecological produce and child nutrition.	• Provincial support • Alignment between health and food systems • Procurement as market access.	• Not yet nationwide • Logistics in rural areas • Uncertain long-term policy support.
Catrapoa - Brazil	• Multisector initiative enabling Indigenous food in schools • 135+ farmers served 4,000 students • Cultural adaptation of procurement rules.	• Legal flexibility • Strong coordination • Local food system recognition • Training support.	• High logistics costs • Regulatory gaps for local foods • Long-term dependence on institutional backing.

The National School Feeding Program (PNAE) was developed in Brazil in the early 1940s, and is a government initiative that works by providing nutritious meals to students - mostly from public schools - across the country. As it has grown and evolved over the years, the programme has sought to prioritize the inclusion of local, organic and agro-ecological products, with the aim of encouraging and strengthening family farmers, especially in rural and marginalized areas, by giving them the guarantee that their products would be included in school meals. Through this initiative, Brazil not only meets the nutritional needs of students, but also promotes regional agricultural development, food security and social inclusion. The program serves more than 40 million students a year and is one of the largest and most comprehensive school feeding programs in the world (Ministério da Educação, 2022).

The PNAE's operational system is decentralized, with a large part of the financial resources passed on to state and municipal governments, so that each local office is responsible for

coordinating the programme's activities in its region, ensuring that meals are prepared according to local food preferences and nutritional guidelines. As mentioned, for the purchase of food, priority is given to family farming cooperatives and local agro-ecological producers, so that at least 30% of the food purchased comes from these fronts - this rate is determined by the PNAE itself (Ministério da Educação, 2022).

As for farmers, in order for their products to be taken into account in PNAE purchases, they must respond to public calls made by state or municipal education departments, and to be eligible, they must present the Family Farming Register (CAF) or the Declaration of Aptitude to Pronaf (DAP) - still accepted during the transition period. Farmers can participate individually, in informal groups or through formal cooperatives. The process begins with the publication of a public notice (which must remain open for at least 20 days), specifying the quantities, delivery schedules, fixed prices and delivery locations. It is worth noting that there is no competitive process - prices are set based on prior research into the local market, with a focus on fair trade and food diversity (Ministério da Educação, 2022).

When registering for the tender, farmers must submit:

- *A Sales Project (containing the products, quantities and delivery logistics),*
- *Compliance with the terms required, especially hygiene standards, delivery times and local food preferences,*
- *All the required documentation, which varies according to the nature of the group (formal or informal), but always includes proof of family farmer status, responsibility for production and, where applicable, registration of the organization.*

In addition, contracts can only be signed with farmers who respect the individual sales limit of R$40,000 per public institution per year.

Once this stage has been passed, deliveries are made directly to schools or defined collection points, and payment is made once delivery has been verified. This model aims to facilitate small producers' access to institutional markets, strengthen local economies and improve the quality of food in public schools (Ministério da Educação, 2022).

Enablers:

- *The success of PNAE can be attributed to its decentralized operational model, which allows for regional adaptation and flexibility—an essential feature given Brazil's significant cultural and geographic diversity. The requirement that at least 30% of food be sourced from local family farms promotes rural development and strengthens local economies.*
- *The program's strong integration with broader national policies—such as the National Policy on Agroecology and Organic Production (PNAPO)—ensures ongoing support for agroecological practices and smallholder farmers. This collaborative network, involving local governments, civil society organizations, and farmer cooperatives, contributes to capacity building for producers, enabling them to meet program requirements while fostering sustainable agricultural practices.*

Blockages:

- *Despite its strengths, the program faces logistical challenges, especially in remote and rural areas where infrastructure for transportation and storage is lacking, thus compromising timely and safe food delivery.*
- *Small-scale farmers also encounter difficulties complying with stringent requirements related to packaging, certification, and distribution, which can hinder their full participation.*
- *The procurement process is often overly complex, and shifts in political priorities following elections frequently result in fluctuating funding and support, creating uncertainty for both farmers and local authorities.*

***The South African Organic Sector Organisation (SAOSO)**, In partnership with the Department of Education, markets were created for rural smallholder farmers by linking them to school feeding programs. The rural government recognised the importance of providing nutritious, diverse diets for school children in rural areas. This has led rural small-scale farmers to collaborate with the Department of Education. Farmers now confidently grow agroecological products to supply rural schools, leading to the establishment of reliable markets for farmers. Collaborative efforts among the stakeholders have enhanced child nutrition and also strengthened demand for agroecological products, leading to the realisation of the core objective of agroecology—which is to promote healthy diets and wider adoption of its practices without relying on conventional farming (C. Anderson, personal communication, 14 March 2025).*

***Enablers*:**

- *The school feeding program was fully funded by the provincial government, which allowed schools to consistently purchase fresh, diverse, and organic produce from local farmers. This funding was the major enabling factor.*
- *Supply consistency is another key enabler, farmers collaborate by organizing their production and delivery collectively.This coordination helped ensure continuous supply, quantity, and product diversity, which are essential element for sustaining the school feeding program.With predictable demand and shared responsibility, farmers were able to plan better, reduce waste, and grow with confidence.*

Blockages:

- *Colleen pointed out that although standards were issued for organic produce, "there was no organic standard in the country" at the time, making it difficult to verify and fulfill such contracts.*
- *Colleen raised a real concern about how long these school feeding programs can last. "At some stage our government is going to run out of money and it's going to have to stop supporting all of these initiatives," she said, reflecting the financial uncertainty hanging over many public programs.*

- *Without a clear national policy that includes agroecological food sourcing, and with many farmers still uncertified, it's hard to grow these efforts in a sustainable way.*
- *On top of that, getting food to remote schools remains a challenge.*

*The **Commission for Traditional Peoples' Foods of Amazonas (Catrapoa)** was founded in 2016 and is a multisectoral initiative led by the Federal Public Prosecutor's Office (MPF) in the state of Amazonas, Brazil, with the goal of ensuring culturally appropriate and nutritious food in public schools serving Indigenous and traditional populations. Practically it works facilitating access to institutional markets like the National School Feeding Program (PNAE) and the Food Acquisition Program (PAA) by adapting public procurement policies to the social and cultural context of remote territories in the Amazon. Moreover, acting as a permanent forum, it brings together representatives from federal, state, and municipal institutions, non-governmental organizations, Indigenous leaders, and community-based producers (Ministério Público Federal, Brasil, 2023).*

One of Catrapoa's achievements was in São Gabriel da Cachoeira, a municipality located in the interior of the Amazon, where more than 135 local family farmers provided traditional foods, such as tucumã, pineapple, açaí, yam, banana, buriti, cassava flour and a pepper fish, to around 4,000 indigenous students in 42 schools. This required meticulous organization, which overcame logistical obstacles caused by remote access to the river and a lack of cold chain infrastructure. To make food supply viable in this complex scenario, Catrapoa organized training sessions with producers and school administrators, issued technical recommendations to align health standards with local food practices and promoted legal mechanisms that allowed schools to purchase processed proteins and vegetables from indigenous communities (Agência CNJ, 2021).

Enablers:

- *Strong inter-institutional coordination through Catrapoa's permanent working group model*
- *Legal adaptations that recognize the legitimacy of local food systems*
- *Inclusion of traditional foods, which strengthens Indigenous identity and boosts the local economy.*

Blockages:

- *High logistical costs to the detriment of the difficulty of access to schools, regulatory hurdles that fail to account for local food realities, and dependency on continued institutional support for the program's sustainability.*
- *This case highlights the critical role of inclusive governance, community-based coordination, and policy innovation in institutionalizing agroecological food systems within public procurement frameworks.*

To summarize

- **Institutional food programs**, such as school lunch programs or purchasing quotas, can represent **anchor markets for cooperatives and family farmers** by ensuring **reliable, recurring demand.**
- **Training, organizational guidance as well as legal clarity** for cooperatives and small-scale producers (ex: PNAE, Catrapoa) can bridge the gap between traditional food systems and formal supply frameworks.
- The **lack of adequate infrastructure** (roads, cold chains, storage) limits the possibility of fast, safe and affordable delivery of agroecological products, especially to isolated communities.
- This type of model is **highly dependent on political will and constant funding**, making them particularly vulnerable to policy changes, as well as budget cuts.

5. SYNTHESIS FRAMEWORK

By analysing all the case studies, especially considering the contexts in which they are inserted, it is possible to draw up a consolidation of the main enablers and general blockages in each category. The aim for the following figure is to summarise the main factors that contributed to or posed challenges for each of the marketing practices for agroecological products.

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ENABLERS AND BLOCKAGES FOR COMMERCIALIZATION

Strengthening Local Food Systems

- Building decentralized networks and regional logistics hubs to connect producers across territories;
- Coordinating collective deliveries and aligned planting calendars among family farmers .

- Promoting immersive educational experiences, like farm visits and food preparation workshops, to build stronger consumer engagement.
- Using social media or messaging platforms to tell stories behind the food and strengthen trust.

Fair Trade and Transparent Pricing

- Implementing clear and participatory pricing systems, where values are defined openly or in assemblies.
- Offering price premiums or differentials to reward agroecological practices and social values .

- Financial sustainability is vulnerable when systems rely on voluntary consumer contributions.
- Transparent pricing is often misunderstood or undervalued by consumers unfamiliar with agroecological systems.

Participatory Certification and Community Engagement

- Using Participatory Guarantee Systems (PGS) to ensure low-cost, trust-based certification with farmer and consumer involvement.
- Anchoring certification in local or national agroecological movements for broader legitimacy.

- PGS remains unrecognized by national regulatory bodies, limiting broader adoption.
- Participatory systems require consistent time and commitment from producers, consumers, and facilitators — often only possible with NGO support.

Consumer Education and Awareness

- Promoting immersive educational experiences, like farm visits and food preparation workshops, to build stronger consumer engagement..
- Using social media or messaging platforms to tell stories behind the food and strengthen trust.

- Outreach to older or disconnected consumer groups remains a challenge, especially outside urban centers.
- Sustained communication and education efforts demand time, creativity, and financial resources.

Diversifying Market Access and Distribution Channels

- Integrating e-commerce, storytelling, and last-mile logistics into a unified model.
- Coordinating weekly online orders with fixed pick-up points to streamline access.
- Offering personalized baskets with flexible delivery logistics to urban consumers.

- Heavy dependence on digital tools can exclude consumers unfamiliar with technology or without internet access;
- Informal platforms like WhatsApp may limit scaling and overwhelm teams without automation.
- Multi-channel initiatives may struggle to maintain regular supply and consistency.

Institutional Support and Policy Advocacy

- Ensuring structured demand through public procurement programs like school meals.
- Advocating for supportive local food policies and procurement frameworks.

- Bureaucratic procurement processes can exclude small cooperatives that fail to meet strict requirements.
- Local food initiatives risk collapsing with changes in political leadership or reduced institutional backing.
- Public infrastructure often lacks the logistical support needed to deliver food consistently to remote areas.

6. PRACTICAL STEPS FOR IMPLEMENTING KEY INITIATIVES

The purpose of this study is to present a range of possibilities and approaches for implementing marketing strategies for agroecological products. To achieve this, multiple case studies from different regions are provided, aiming to inspire agroecological producers to replicate these initiatives or, at the very least, to adapt certain features from these experiences. It is acknowledged that each context is unique, with various factors that can influence the effectiveness, success, or failure of such practices. Nevertheless, the extensive selection of case studies is intended to help producers identify examples with characteristics most relevant to their own situations.

This material should be viewed as a “menu” of options, allowing each producer to select strategies that make sense for their specific context and to assess what can be transferred and implemented locally.

In that sense, the final section of this study seeks to present, in a practical and concise manner, the possible pathways and next steps for initiating the marketing of agroecological products. Inspired by the case studies and a range of relevant literature, we outline below **seven initiatives** that can be considered strategic in this process. It is important to emphasize that this is a non-exhaustive compilation of ideas that may be replicated in various contexts, providing possible step-by-step approaches for each.

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RECOMMENDATIONS & PRACTICAL STEPS

1 Forming a Responsible Consumer Cell

- Form a **group of farmers** and a **coordination team.**
- Evaluate **production capacity** and define **basket** models.
- **Engage** consumers and agree on **roles** and advance **payments**.
- **Deliver** weekly baskets at common pickup points.
- **Share** logistics and financial responsibilities **transparently**.

2 Establishment of a Network

- **Mobilize 20+ interested families** with partner support.
- Set up a **coordination group** with shared leadership.
- Define **shared agroecological values** and decision **rules**.
- Create a **basic structure** (calendar, meetings, tools).
- Register in **broader networks** for visibility and training

3 Raising Consumer Awareness

- **Identify** local audiences and what they value.
- **Develop** simple, educational messages (health, justice).
- Use **diverse channels** (WhatsApp, posters, community events).
- Promote **face-to-face engagement** (field days, workshops).
- **Involve consumers** in operations and feedback loops.

4 Improved Logistics

- **Coordinate** shared **transport** and community **collection points.**
- Use **alternative transport** in remote areas.
- Keep **simple records** for orders and payments.
- Offer **flexible advance payment** models to stabilize planning.

5 Policy Coordination

- **Map** local public food procurement programs (e.g. schools).
- **Form farmer groups** and production **calendars**.
- **Submit** simple, clear **proposals** to institutions.
- Use **basic traceability** tools (manual records).
- **Coordinate deliveries** and maintain **regular** relationships.

6 Verticalization Plans

- **Identify** promising crops and market gaps.
- Choose **value-adding stages** (drying, pulp, flour).
- Map the **chain and plan investments** (packaging, processing).
- Formalize **group governance** and build simple **systems**.
- **Pilot, test, and scale** gradually with consumer feedback.

7 Communication Commercialization

- Define your **communication goals** (trust, sales, education).
- **Segment** your audience (consumers, schools, partners).
- Choose appropriate **platforms** (digital + community-based).
- **Plan timing** (aligned with seasons and events).
- Assign **clear roles** and create **impact** messages.
- Focus messaging on **values, transparency, and process**.

6.1. Steps for Initiative 1: Forming a Responsible Consumer Cell

The following step-by-step guide outlines how to establish a **Responsible Consumer Cell (CCR)**, a collaborative structure that connects small-scale agroecological farmers with organized consumer groups to facilitate direct, fair, and sustainable food distribution. This process involves coordination, mutual commitment, and shared values between producers and consumers. It is important to emphasize that this guide is not an original creation, but rather a synthesized and practical adaptation of the official manual *Sou agricultor(a)!: How to supply a Responsible Consumer Cell (CCR) with organic/agroecological food?* (2024), which presents the foundational methodology for implementing CCRs effectively. Implementing a Responsible Consumer Cell (CCR) involves a structured, collaborative approach among farmers, consumers, and supporting organizations (Pugas et al., 2024).

Essential Components for Ongoing CCR Operation:

- **Basket Models:** CCR model example, in Brazil, offers two basket models: small (starting from 7 items, approximately 4.5 kg) and large (starting from 12 items, approximately 7.5 kg). The basic basket includes leafy greens, fruits, vegetables, roots, herbs, and tea, with the large basket also containing a type of grain or flour.

- **Collective Production Planning:** Farmers plan production collectively to ensure regularity, quality, and diversity of products.
- **Communication:** Communication between consumers and farmers primarily occurs online via platforms such as WhatsApp, using a group for general announcements and a broadcast list for individual orders and payments.
- **Payment:** Consumers make advance payments via electronic transfer methods at the beginning of each monthly cycle, covering 4 to 5 weeks.

Step 1: Set-up a collective organization of farmers

- **Form a Group:** Farmers interested in participating in a CCR should collectively express their interest and be part of producer organizations such as groups or cooperatives.
- **Distribute Responsibilities:** All members should share responsibilities within the group.
- **Collective Sales:** CCR operates through collective sales, not with individual farmers.
- **Group Decision:** Discuss and decide collectively on participation in the CCR.

Step 2: Establish a coordination body

In the Brazilian model, the Laboratory of Family Agriculture Commercialization at UFSC (LACAF/UFSC) facilitates the connection between farmers and consumers. However, in regions without such institutional support, it is essential to establish a local coordination body. This entity will oversee the implementation and management of the CCR, ensuring effective communication, logistics, and adherence to the program's principles.

Step 3: Assess supply capacity

- **Evaluate Production:** Before engaging with consumers, assess the group's initial supply capacity.
- **Weekly Production Assessment:** Conduct a survey of production and weekly capacity to meet future consumer demand.
- **Logistics Viability:** Calculate the minimum number of baskets to be delivered weekly to cover delivery logistics costs.

Step 4: Engage with consumers

- **Facilitate Meetings:** The coordination body arranges meetings between interested consumers and the farmer group.
- **Define Operating Rules:** Establish the operating rules of the CCR and outline the responsibilities of both farmers and consumers.
- **Collective Agreement:** Form a collective participation agreement for the initiative.

Step 5: Initiate activities and delivery process

- **Commence Operations:** After defining the rules, begin CCR activities, including the weekly delivery process.
- **Internal Organization:** Farmers should organize internally to fulfill all stages of the process.

Step 6: Develop Basket Sales Process:

- **Coordinator Appointment:** Designate a sales coordinator to receive payment confirmations and organize consumer data.
- **Consumer Registration:** Compile a list of consumers who have paid, including details such as name, basket size, amount paid, and pickup point, along with an identification number.
- **Product Availability Assessment:** Weekly, gather a list of available products from farmers, prioritizing those with fewer sales alternatives.
- **Additional Products List:** Optionally, create a list of additional products from farmers or partners.
- **Product List Distribution:** Send the product (and additional items) list to consumers via communication platforms in advance.
- **Order and Payment Collection:** Receive and confirm orders and payments for additional products (optional).
- **Harvest and Basket Assembly:** Collect products and assemble baskets one day before delivery.
- **Basket Preparation:** At the designated location, assemble baskets according to the specified quantity and weight for each type, preferably using durable containers.
- **Delivery:** Conduct deliveries at the agreed-upon time and location (distribution point).

- **Cost Calculation and Distribution:** Calculate costs (mainly transportation) and distribute received funds among farmers proportionally to the quantity of products provided.

Step 7: Define Farmer Responsibilities:

- Provide a weekly organized list of basket products.
- Ensure approximate basket weight.
- Maintain minimum item diversity.
- Keep fixed basket prices, adjusting for local economic conditions.
- Verify and confirm payment receipts.
- Manage delivery logistics.

Step 8: Establish Shared Responsibility Agreement (SRA) and Logistic Details:

- Establish a **Shared Responsibility Agreement** between producers and consumers outlining operating rules and responsibilities. Consumers accept seasonal diversity, and farmers commit to weight, minimum number of items, and delivery schedules.
- **Coordination Activities:** The coordination body plays a crucial role, involving communication with consumers (order receipt, payment confirmation, general communication) and basket management with the farmer group (product assessment, list creation, harvest and delivery organization). Coordination also handles financial management (cost accounting and profit distribution).
- **Use of Durable Containers:** Farmers and consumers contribute financially to acquire durable containers, facilitating transportation and maintaining food quality.
- **Consumer Registration:** Maintain two registration lists: one with all participants and another for the delivery cycle, listing consumers who paid that month.
- **Utilization of Digital Platforms:** The coordination body may develop or adopt digital platforms to assist in managing payments, logistics, communication, and report generation.

This methodology seeks to foster cooperation among farmers and organize consumer groups, highlighting their role in the agro-food chain. While the Brazilian model benefits from institutional support, it is essential to establish local coordination mechanisms tailored to regional contexts, so that it becomes possible to overcome cost barriers by sharing responsibilities and roles.

6.2. Steps for Initiative 2: Establishment of a Network

Creating a network of agroecological producers is essential to ensure consistency in supply, collective strength, and mutual support. This step-by-step section, inspired by the webpage *'Visual Agroecology: Rede Ecovida'* provides practical directions to establish new local groups, based on minimum organizational structure and active community engagement (Visual Agroecology, 2020).

Step 1: Mobilise farmers and local allies

Gather at least 20 families interested in agroecological practices and identify partner organisations that can support them.

Step 2: Establish a coordination group

Form a small committee with representatives from families and support organisations to lead the initial process.

Step 3: Define common principles and objectives

Collectively build the core's values (e.g. agroecology, fair trade, food sovereignty) and the group's objectives.

Step 4: Organise the minimum structure

Create a simple organisational basis: calendar of meetings, ground rules, communication channels and forms of collective decision-making.

Step 5: Formalise and connect to the larger network

After initial consolidation, register the hub with the (regional or national) network for support, training and exchange with other groups.

6.3. Steps for Initiative 3: Raising Consumer Awareness

Raising consumer awareness is a key pillar for the success of agroecological commercialization. Educating the public on the benefits of fair, organic, and local food strengthens community ties and drives responsible consumption. The following steps outline low-cost, participatory strategies to communicate value, build trust, and grow consumer engagement in agroecological initiatives. Based on the *Communication Guide for Fair Trade in Agroecological Foods* (Rabello et al., 2024), drawn up by the Frontiers of Development and Regenera Institutes, with the support of the Climate and Society Institute.

Step 1: Identify your target audience

Map out who the region's consumers are (families, schools, local businesses) and their habits: where they shop, what they value (price, health, food origin).

Step 2: Create simple, educational messages

Develop short content that explains the benefits of agroecology (e.g. "Without poison, with flavour and justice") in accessible language, with examples from everyday life.

Step 3: Use multiple communication channels

Spread the messages via WhatsApp, community radio, social networks, posters in schools, health centres and churches - always adapting the language to each space.

Step 4: Promote face-to-face engagement activities

Organise small events or "field days" with tastings, talks, composting workshops or visits to the growing areas to bring consumers closer to the production process.

Step 5: Involve consumers in building the initiatives

Invite consumers to suggest improvements, take part in organising deliveries or fairs, and give feedback - this generates belonging and strengthens the bond with the project.

6.4. Steps for Initiative 4: Improved Logistics

Efficient logistics are critical to the viability of agroecological supply chains, especially in rural or remote areas. The guide *Boas Práticas para a Comercialização de Alimentos Agroecológicos (2024)* offers practical steps for smallholder farmers to organize transport, storage, delivery, and tracking systems using locally available resources. The focus is on cost-effective and community-based solutions that reduce waste, save time, and improve customer satisfaction (Instituto Regenera & Instituto o Fronteiras do Desenvolvimento, 2024).

Step 1: Organise public transport to urban markets

- Bring together producers in the region to plan fixed delivery days and times.
- Arrange the hire of shared vehicles (such as vans or pick-up trucks), sharing the costs.
- Make sure the vehicle always leaves full to make the most of the trip.

Step 2: Establish collection points in the villages/communities

- Choose strategic and safe locations in the community (e.g. schools, churches, support houses) as collection points.
- Use these locations to gather products from different farmers before the main transportation. This prevents losses due to delay or heat and facilitates efficient loading.

Step 3. Use alternative transport in remote areas

- Identify local bikers or car owners who can help with short journeys
- Arrange fixed times and fair prices.
- Where possible, encourage community solutions such as taking turns with bicycles or wheelbarrows.

Step 4. Organize orders and payments with simple tools

- Keep a physical notebook with a list of customers, products ordered and payment status.
- Create a WhatsApp group with customers and use messages to confirm orders on a weekly basis, as transparency and registration help maintain trust and avoid confusion.

Step 5: Adopt the flexible prepayment model

- Ask consumers to pay in advance for the week's delivery (via cash or mobile money).
- Offer monthly or fortnightly options for those with variable income. This helps plan production and reduces last-minute cancellations.

6.5. Steps for Initiative 5: Policy Coordination

Influencing institutional markets and securing supportive public policies requires proactive engagement by farmers and their allies. This Initiative outlines how smallholder collectives can approach schools and public institutions, organize their production to meet demand, and implement basic traceability and compliance practices, inspired with lessons from the Summary *'Engaging Policymakers and Making the Case for Agroecology - Lessons from the 2023 Biovision Partner Meeting'* (Biovision, 2024) and the manual for public purchasing *Caderno de Compras da Agricultura Familiar para o PNAE* (Ministério da Educação, 2022). These steps aim to foster stronger partnerships and greater inclusion in local food procurement programs.

Step 1: Identify local opportunities for institutional purchasing

- Check if there are active public purchasing programs (e.g. National School Feeding Program - PNAE).
- Visit local schools, nurseries or health centers and identify the person responsible for purchasing (principal, coordinator, education secretary).

Step 2: Form an informal group of farmers to meet demand

- Bring together producers from the region to agree on which products each can participate in.
- Set up a joint production calendar to ensure variety and regularity.
- The group can be informal, but it needs a focal point to communicate with the school.

Step 3: Present a simple and clear proposal to the school

- Draw up a list of available products, prices, quantities and delivery frequency.
- Include a harvest and delivery schedule to show planning.
- Make clear your commitment to quality, hygiene and regularity.
- If accepted, formalize it through contracts and legal specifications.

Step 4: Use simple traceability and registration practices

- Keep basic notes on the origin of products, harvest dates and deliveries. This helps show transparency and commitment to food safety, even without formal certification.
- It can be done in a printed notebook or spreadsheet.

Step 5: Organize group delivery logistics

- Set a fixed delivery day and meeting place to consolidate the products.
- Hire public transportation or take turns using a community vehicle.
- Ensure that the products arrive packaged properly and hygienically.

Step 6. Maintain the relationship with the institution

- Meet the agreed deadlines and let them know in advance if there are any problems.
- Ask for regular feedback on quality and suggestions for improvement.
- If possible, invite school representatives to visit the properties or take part in work parties.

6.6. Steps for Initiative 6: Establishment of a Verticalization Plan

Based on the guide *Identifying Market Opportunities for Rural Smallholder Producers* (Ostertag et al., 2007), it is suggested that a step-by-step **specific and practical** process be drawn up for the **Establishment of a Verticalization Plan** for small agroecological producers. This process aims to add value to products by strengthening control over stages such as processing, packaging and marketing, improving income and sustainability.

Step 1: Identify high-potential products

- Carry out a participatory consultation with farmers to identify the most widely grown products with the greatest market potential.
- Analyze which products have a balanced seasonality, good storage conditions and the possibility of transformation (e.g. fruit → pulp).
- Use tools such as mapping preferred products, local demand lists and interviews with consumers and local traders.

Step 2: Analyze market requirements

- Gather information on the quality required, minimum volume, delivery frequency and prices charged in local, institutional or urban markets.
- Consult potential buyers (fairs, schools, grocery stores, restaurants) to understand their expectations regarding the presentation and origin of the products.
- Assess whether there is direct competition with industrialized products or large suppliers.

Step 3: Map the value-chain and identify gaps

- List all the actors in the chain (from the input to the final consumer), identifying where the group can act to add value.
- Identify bottlenecks such as post-harvest losses, lack of packaging, or absence of visual identity.
- The market chain analysis (Ostertag et al., 2008, p. 14, Figure 2) provides a useful tool to identify points of value addition.

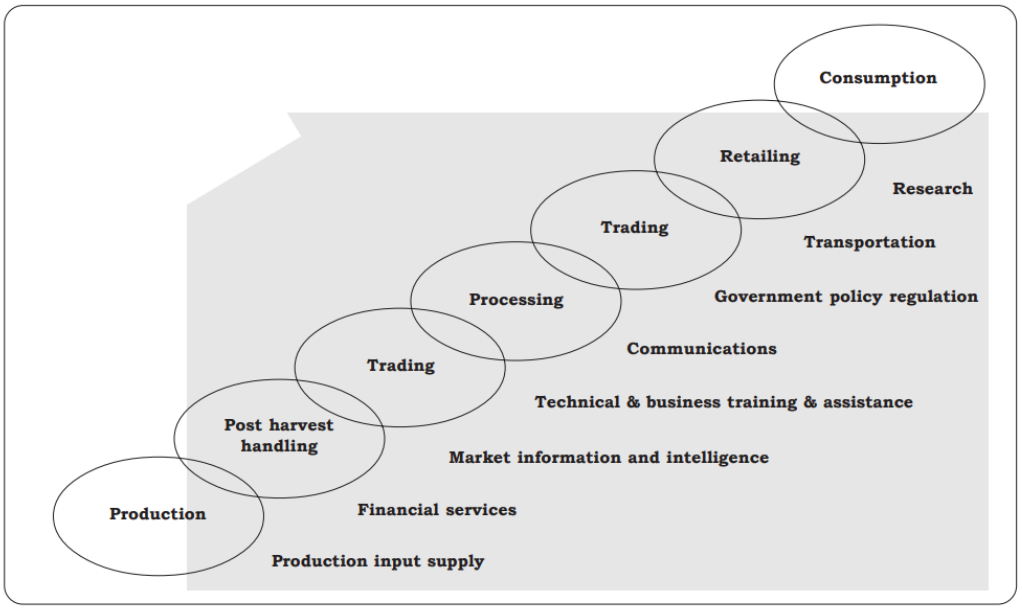

Figure 2. The market chain.

Source: Carlos Ostertag, Mark Lundy, María Verónica Gottret, Rupert Best, and Shaun Ferris, *Identifying Market Opportunities for Rural Smallholder Producers*, p.14, Figure 2 (Baltimore: Catholic Relief Services, 2008).

Step 4: Define the verticalization strategy

- Choose which value-adding stages the group can take on, for example:
  - Pre-processing: cleaning, drying, sorting, packaging.
  - Light processing: pulp, flour, preserves, dehydration.
- Identify the equipment, inputs and skills needed for each stage chosen.
- Plan ways to maintain minimum hygiene and food safety standards even in informal units.

Step 5: Plan for formalization and governance

- Choose the most suitable organizational model (cooperative, association, informal group with defined coordination).
- Check minimum requirements for issuing invoices or participating in public tenders.
- Start with basic production and sales records (simple ledgers or spreadsheets) to build transparency and reliability.

- Consider partnering with local institutions (municipality, NGO, technical assistance) for legal and administrative support.

Step 6: Evaluate investment needs and secure resources

- Evaluate implementation costs: machinery, packaging, labels, training and physical structure (if necessary).
- Explore sources of community financing, rural microcredit or partnerships with organizations that support family farming.
- Prioritize low-cost, high-impact investments, such as manual sealers, scales, reusable packaging materials.

Step 7: Build capacities and pilot the process

- Organize training workshops in:
  - Processing and quality control.
  - Hygiene and good handling practices.
  - Simple management and price calculation with a fair margin.
- Carry out pilot tests with small batches, evaluating production time, consumer acceptance and profitability.
- Adjust processes based on feedback from the group and the buying public.

Step 8: Scale and monitor the verticalized model

- Scale up verticalized production gradually, as capacity and demand increase.
- Keep systematic records of incoming and outgoing products, costs and financial returns.
- Re-evaluate the plan every 6 months with the group, adjusting targets, partnerships and market strategies.

Exercise 1.2

Visioning a Value-Added or Processed Product – Worksheet

Agroindustrial Product Matrix

Basic commodity: _____ Area: _____

Derived agroindustrial product	Use	Target market	Processing required

Source: Carlos Ostertag, Mark Lundy, María Verónica Gottret, Rupert Best, and Shaun Ferris, *Identifying Market Opportunities for Rural Smallholder Producers* (Baltimore: Catholic Relief Services, 2007).

6.7. Steps for Initiative 7: Communication Guidelines for Commercialization

Based on the *Communication Guide for Fair Trade in Agroecological Foods* (Rabello et al., 2024), drawn up by the Frontiers of Development and Regenera Institutes, with the support of the Climate and Society Institute, it is possible to outline a step-by-step process for creating **Communication Guidelines for Commercialization Initiatives**. These guidelines are essential for agroecological initiatives seeking not only market visibility, but also educational engagement with consumers and the strengthening of fairer and more transparent commercialization networks. The steps listed below are not our own, but a synthesized and translated reflection of the Guide used as a reference.

Step 1: Define the purpose of communication (Why ?)

- Reflect on **why** you want to communicate.
- Identify whether your objective is visibility, sales, trust-building, or education.
- Align the communication purpose with your broader organizational values and mission.

→ Check *pages 6–7 of the guide for in-depth reflections.*

Step 2: Identify the target audience (To whom ?)

- Ask yourself **to whom** you are communicating.
- Segment your audience (e.g., conscious consumers, local communities, policymakers, etc.).
- Adapt language, tone, and channels to suit each audience.

→ Read *page 7 of the guide for segmentation strategies.*

Step 3: Choose the right channels (Where ?)

- Decide **where** to communicate (e.g., social media, markets, newsletters, community radios).
- Consider both digital and analog platforms.
- Evaluate reach, accessibility, and resource needs for each channel.

→ *Pages 9–11 of the guide offer insights into channel selection.*

Step 4: Plan Timing and Frequency

- Define **when** to communicate (consider seasons, production cycles, events).
- Establish a calendar that includes periodicity and rhythm (weekly posts, monthly updates, seasonal campaigns).
- Use storytelling to synchronize with food cycles and cultural dates.

→ Consult page 12 of the original guide for temporal alignment.

Step 5: Assign Communication Roles (Who ?)

- Decide **who** will take care of communication.
- Allocate tasks based on available skills, interests, and time.
- Foster horizontal participation where possible.

→ Roles and coordination are discussed on page 13 of the guide.

Step 6: Define formats and style (How ?)

- Determine **how** to communicate.
- Use accessible language, visuals, testimonials, and videos.
- Balance emotional appeal with technical credibility (ex: use of infographics for transparency).

→ Pages 14–15 of the original guide give examples of inclusive and creative strategies.

Step 7: Craft the message content (What ?)

- Clarify **what** to communicate: values, processes, certifications, origin stories, social impact, etc.
- Emphasize the *why* behind agroecology, rather than just the product itself.
- Be transparent about challenges and limitations, building trust.

→ Extensive content recommendations can be found on pages 16–29 of the guide.

ENABLERS AND BLOCKAGES FOR COMMERCIALIZATION

Strengthening Local Food Systems

- Building decentralized networks and regional logistics hubs to connect producers across territories (Ecovida, Central da Caatinga).
- Coordinating collective deliveries and aligned planting calendars among family farmers (Cesta Camponesa).

- Promoting immersive educational experiences, like farm visits and food preparation workshops, to build stronger consumer engagement (Familia de la Tierra, Carcelén Fair).
- Using social media or messaging platforms to tell stories behind the food and strengthen trust (FreshVeggies).

Fair Trade and Transparent Pricing

- Implementing clear and participatory pricing systems, where values are defined openly or in assemblies (Instituto Chão, Canasta Comunitaria).
- Offering price premiums or differentials to reward agroecological practices and social values (AMSD).

- Financial sustainability is vulnerable when systems rely on voluntary consumer contributions (Instituto Feira Livre).
- Transparent pricing is often misunderstood or undervalued by consumers unfamiliar with agroecological systems (Canasta Comunitaria).

Participatory Certification and Community Engagement

- Using Participatory Guarantee Systems (PGS) to ensure low-cost, trust-based certification with farmer and consumer involvement (Rede Ecovida, Quezon PGS).
- Anchoring certification in local or national agroecological movements for broader legitimacy (SAOSO).

- PGS remains unrecognized by national regulatory bodies, limiting broader adoption (Quezon PGS, SAOSO).
- Participatory systems require consistent time and commitment from producers, consumers, and facilitators — often only possible with NGO support.

Consumer Education and Awareness

- Promoting immersive educational experiences, like farm visits and food preparation workshops, to build stronger consumer engagement (Familia de la Tierra, Carcelén Fair).
- Using social media or messaging platforms to tell stories behind the food and strengthen trust (FreshVeggies).

- Outreach to older or disconnected consumer groups remains a challenge, especially outside urban centers (Shared Harvest).
- Sustained communication and education efforts demand time, creativity, and financial resources (FreshVeggies).

Diversifying Market Access and Distribution Channels

- Integrating e-commerce, storytelling, and last-mile logistics into a unified model (Raízs).
- Coordinating weekly online orders with fixed pick-up points to streamline access (Reko Rings).
- Offering personalized baskets with flexible delivery logistics to urban consumers (FreshVeggies).

- Heavy dependence on digital tools can exclude consumers unfamiliar with technology or without internet access (Reko Rings, FreshVeggies).
- Informal platforms like WhatsApp may limit scaling and overwhelm teams without automation (Cesta Camponesa).
- Multi-channel initiatives may struggle to maintain regular supply and consistency (Songhai Center).

Institutional Support and Policy Advocacy

- Ensuring structured demand through public procurement programs like school meals (PNAE, SAOSO).
- Advocating for supportive local food policies and procurement frameworks (Ecovida, Catrapoa).

- Bureaucratic procurement processes can exclude small cooperatives that fail to meet strict requirements (PNAE in Brazil).
- Local food initiatives risk collapsing with changes in political leadership or reduced institutional backing (South Africa pilots).
- Public infrastructure often lacks the logistical support needed to deliver food consistently to remote areas (Catrapoa).

Ethical Considerations:

The authors declare that they have used generative artificial intelligence, such as ChatGPT and Perplexity, as tools for refining the phrasing, to systematize information, and to structure certain sections to enhance cohesion and clarity. More specifically, the final section of Practical Steps - derived from all the material produced and analysed by the authors - was structured with AI. Additionally, it was used to translate to English specific parts that were written in the original languages of the authors. The content, discussion and critical ideas of this report were conceived and developed by the authors, following the ethical guidelines of the Graduate Institute.

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