

Local food strategies for the future: Experiences from Gothenburg

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Abstract

Ongoing climate change, demographic pressures, and socio-economic differences are likely to increase vulnerability to food insecurity, whilst the challenge of providing sufficient, nutritious, and affordable food for everyone has never been greater. In this sense, the concept of food justice is gaining prominence in urban strategies and decision making worldwide. Gothenburg, like several other European cities, grapples with significant gaps between its geographical areas and various sectors of society. One of these gaps relates to the need of developing a sustainable food system, which would comprise the whole chain from food production, via processing, distribution and marketing, to consumption. In this dimension, many research studies have identified unutilized social capital and natural resources as the main causes of fragmentation, stressing the need for strengthening bottom-up initiatives through projects that could affect the local food strategy in a positive way. Here, participatory approaches have shown to be useful tools for joint development of possible futures and have laid bare overlooked possibilities for successful implementation of food strategies. In this vein, the City of Gothenburg has developed a project (Urban Rural Gothenburg¹) that systematically tests and demonstrates innovative methods for new creative interactions between the city and the country, some of which explore novel developments within food security, food affordability and access to food. This presentation focuses on the role of Gothenburg's food strategy for local production and logistics, and as a green basis for rural-urban linkages by focusing on the employed assumptions and methods set out to create beneficial environmental, social and economic effects.

Key words:

urban-rural, cooperation, green innovation, green business development, local food production, food security, Gothenburg

¹ 'Urban Rural Gothenburg' is a three-year (2017-19) EU-sponsored project for sustainable development with the overarching aim to create improved conditions for green innovation and green business development between the city and the countryside. Operating in five testbeds in four local hubs in north-eastern Gothenburg, the project seeks to develop and implement new low-carbon approaches to local development, with particular linkages to food, logistics, tourism, and ecological business models. By using co-creative methodologies (the so-called 'penta-helix model'), 'Urban Rural Gothenburg' aims to contribute to the fulfillment of Gothenburg's 2017 sustainability goals. This involves combining innovations for social improvement with a reduction of environmental and climate impact to become a sustainable city of globally and locally equitable emissions. 'Urban Rural Gothenburg' is funded partly by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) via The Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth (Tillväxtverket) and is led by Business Region Göteborg (BRG) in collaboration with seven other municipal units as partners and co-financers. The project targets primarily small- and medium-sized enterprises by making use of the local communities in north-eastern Gothenburg and their socio-economic potential to transition into a more sustainable society. The targeted companies involve food producers, conveyors and logisticians, distributors, marketing, communications and IT specialists, stores and local markets, restaurants, hotels and other tourism-related businesses, as well as recycling and knowledge enterprises. In other words, 'Urban Rural Gothenburg' is meant to serve as an accelerator for circular economies and green business development with a strong local anchoring.