

Needs analysis Sweden

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1. What is the current situation with respect to SFSC in my country (specifying from whose point of view)?

From the beginning of 2000s, initiatives to strengthen SFSC has been done, mostly financed by EU:s rural development funds. The first period (until 2020) focused on building entrepreneurial activity in rural areas, and on satisfying consumer interest in locally produced foods.

Short food supply chains have recently (from 2020) become more in focus for creating a more robust and resilient food supply chain by the Swedish Board of Agriculture, a state agency/authority.

Advisory services and knowledge support to SFSCs

Advisory services regarding SFSC production and product development, are mainly provided by the Swedish Resource Centre for Artisan Foods (Eldrimner), and various regional organisations. These are mainly funded by the CAP Strategic Plan and other public sources. The funding goes through the Swedish board of agriculture, which also have had some dedicated calls to fund knowledge development and/or services to SFSC.

The Swedish Rural Economy and Agricultural Society is a farmer-based advisory organisation, who provide advice to SFSCs mainly regarding finance, marketing, and legislation.

Eldrimner and the Swedish Rural Economy and Agricultural Society offer a 40 week education program for artisan food production, at two different locations in Sweden. They also offer shorter online courses and one day courses on digitisation, legislation, financing, marketing, branding etc.

At the regional level, the county administrative boards (Länsstyrelsen) have also initiated projects for supporting SFSCs. They offers/procures day courses in, for example, food hygiene, start-up farm shops, charcuterie production etc., as well as study visits. They have also supported digitalisation of SFSCs.

Policy, national level

In 2017, the Swedish government adopted a Food Strategy, for the first time since WWII. The food strategy aims to form a competitive food chain where the total food production increases, while relevant national environmental goals are reached, and sustainable growth and employment are created throughout the country. The strategy contains three areas of efforts;

- 1) Regulations and Conditions
- 2) Consumer and Market
- 3) Knowledge and Innovation.

The OECD (2018) has noted that while existing agricultural technology and production methods are internationally well-performing in terms of sustainability, the ability to innovate in the primary production and the food industry is weaker than in other Swedish business sectors.

Therefore, the need to invest in a well-functioning knowledge and innovation system has received increasing focus in Sweden in recent years.

While there is no specific policy addressing the needs of SFSCs in particular, the area of “Food and tourism” is included in measures for CAP Strategic Plan, articles 77 and 78. The Swedish CAP Strategic Plan is found on web address: <https://www.regeringen.se/regeringens-politik/landsbygd-livsmedel-och-areella-naringar/sveriges-strategiska-plan-for-den-gemensamma-jordbrukspolitiken-20232027/>

The policy interventions that are of main interest for SFSCs are the following:

- 1) Support for knowledge exchange and dissemination of information (competence development) (article 78)
- 2) Support for cooperation (article 77).
- 3) Support for cooperation, specifically EIP-Agri (article 77).

Regarding article 78, the aim is to increase the skills of those active in rural areas and thereby also increase efficiency and improve the achievement of goals for other measures in the strategic plan, as well as contribute to the fulfilment of national goals and EU common goals, directives and regulations. Advisors and firms in the sector of “Food and tourism” are included as one of target groups, even though the budget for them is low, compared to other target groups.

The activities can include, for example, inspiring the use of new technology and new methods based on research and trials and exchange of experience, as well as returning knowledge needs to research. In the CAP Strategic Plan, the compilation and making available of knowledge and continuing training/education of advisors and farmers are highlighted activities. This can take place in groups, individually or through activities such as information, demonstrations and seminars. Generally, the results of the activities should be easily accessible and freely available digitally for everyone. Regarding “Food and tourism”, the funding provided within article 78 is managed at the regional level by the 21 County Administrative Boards. This can include the provision of advisory services, however, for “Food and tourism”, the budget is low.

Regarding article 77, the purpose is to support cooperations in areas where the joint benefit of a collaboration is great for society, but where the incentive for an individual actor is too small to be able to finance development work. Rural areas cannot offer the same supportive conditions to people and firms, as in more densely populated areas. In combination with longer distances between actors, support for collaborations therefore becomes necessary.

The support for cooperation can be used to support practical trials, tests and evaluations and stimulate increased collaboration on development issues in agriculture and rural development. The measure fills a gap between the knowledge development that is financed via research grants and the knowledge development financed by firms themselves. The measure can also be used to support development and innovation projects that have a lower degree of innovation than projects which fit within EIP-Agri. Regarding the area of “Local and tourism”, the funding provided within article 77 is managed at the national level by the Swedish Board of Agriculture.

This can be used for funding projects that will strengthen the AKIS for SFSCs. and facilitate integration of SFSCs into the overall AKIS.

The aim of EIP-Agri (article 77), is to bring about new innovative solutions to common challenges in various fields in agriculture, horticulture and reindeer herding, by creating better connections between research results, new technology and practical work.

There are two types of support; for the formation of innovation groups (operational groups, OG's) and for innovation projects. By forming innovation groups around a potential innovation, innovations can be systematically identified, developed and spread. The work must take place in the form of collaborations between, for example, researchers, advisers and entrepreneurs, within and outside the agricultural sector.

All projects must be of a clear pilot nature and/or method-developing nature. When selecting projects, the long-term nature of the project content and the relevance and survival of the project results after the end of the project are of particular importance. Already several projects have been funded that relate to SFSCs.

In 2025, the new government launched an updated version of the Food strategy, called Food Strategy 2.0. Much more emphasis is put on food security and resilience than in the original strategy. However, there is still a clear focus on competitiveness and to promote premium food concepts. The 2.0 strategy has 3 focus areas; A more robust food chain, Increased export, and Swedish quality and gastronomy.

In the strategy, SFSC has a dedicated role in the focus area Swedish quality and gastronomy, while there are more implicit mentioning of SFSC in the other focus areas, except perhaps an initiative to support local storage of food supply.

Policy, regional level

Regional Food Strategies: Regional versions of the national Food Strategy have been developed in various ways in some of the 21 regions. Many of the regions are actively supporting SFSC, either as means to attract visitors through an attractive regional gastronomic profile, and/or to increase self-sufficiency and protect the regional culinary heritage. Some of the municipalities have also developed food strategies. These are mostly focussed on public meals, since the municipality level is responsible for meals in schools (free school lunches have been offered to all children since the 1960s) and in elderly care. But there are also some examples where Local food councils have started as a collaboration between municipal actors and grass roots movements, in which SFSC plays an important role.

The 21 County Administrative Boards (Länsstyrelsen) procure advisory services and other projects according to CAP article 78. In some regions, public bodies provide advice on public procurement of food from SFSCs.

2. What is the ideal or desired situation with respect to SFSC in my country (specifying from whose point of view)?

The renewed Food strategy calls for a more robust food chain, where SFSC may play an important role. The policy level also emphasizes the need of competitiveness of all food chain actors. SFSC that can deliver profit for the actors in time of peace, while contributing to resilience in times of crisis would thus be the ideal stage for the Swedish government.

3. How to get from the current to the ideal or desired?

A report funded by the Swedish board of agriculture concluded that there are a number of barriers for developing SFSCs in Sweden from consumers points of view, namely

- lack of knowledge and information
- it is perceived as time consuming to shop from SFSC
- perceived as expensive by consumers
- limited and irregular supply

Recommendations for actions to strengthen SFSC was to focus on 3 areas:

1. Improve accessibility to and information about SFSC. Use both digital and non-digital communication tools to facilitate both information and sales from SFSC
2. Communicate win-win benefits of SFSC (good for health, climate, local community etc)
3. Highlight the authenticity, safety and expertise that the producers in SFSC can offer to consumers.

In other reports and projects, the role of the public meal sector has been highlighted. Initiatives to raise awareness of the potential benefits to procure food from local SFSCs without violating the legislation for public procurement are important in this regard.

4. Who should do what? When should they do it? With what resources and in whose interest?

Invest in digital infrastructure for communication and sales from SFSC (Producers with co-funding from national and EU funds)

Invest in research and development of SFSC (Research funders have initiated calls on SFSC, which should be further developed)

Work to broaden the supply, simplify purchasing and offer more convenient ways of shopping through digital platforms. This point is relevant both for consumers through home or close-to-

home delivery and for public sector procurement (Producers in collaboration with specialised SFSC wholesalers)

Policies and taxes to facilitate the competitiveness of SFSC. Examples include facilitation of more food from SFSC in the public sector, and an alignment of the tax policies of other EU countries with tax reduction for some types of micro enterprises.

Integrate SFSC in the work towards a more robust food chain. The regional level should devote attention to the role of SFSC in times of crisis.