



SHERPA

Rural Science-Society-Policy
Interfaces

MAP Position Paper

TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE & RESILIENT VALUE CHAINS



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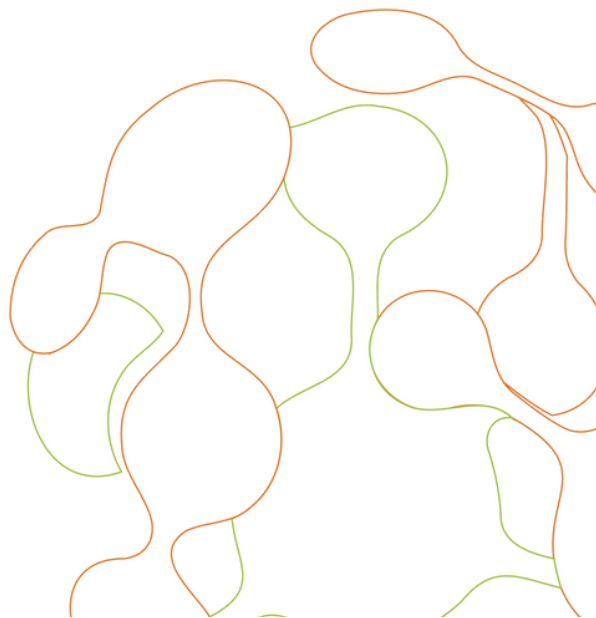
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Summary and key messages

According to the Dynamic Action Plan, "main challenges in rural areas of Iași County are the dual structure of the farming system (small number of very large holdings and prevalence of small farms), demographic shift, labour shortages, low integration of local farmers on food chains, lack of cooperation among farmers."

The Iași Multi-actor platform (MAP) aims to improve the value added to farming and agri-food activities by supporting the development of sustainable short food supply chains through rural-urban linkages and opportunities created by the consumers' appetite for local agri-food products.

1. Introduction

The rural space of Iași County, dominant as a living environment, is facing structural challenges such as seasonal and long-term migration of the young population, and the ageing process of the population. The older rural population is at risk of losing the help of the young, especially in cases such as household maintenance and noninstitutionalised support for everyday life. Furthermore, without the young population providing the necessary labour force and the energy for making changes, rural communities will have limited choices for local development.

Rural areas comprises 421.810 persons, which represented 53,13% of the total population of the county in 2020. The territorial distribution of the population shows significant differences among rural areas located near cities, towns, and municipalities of Iași and relatively remote areas to the urban centres and main roads as well. Most of the county's population is involved in subsistence agriculture and has a high degree of poverty (The Strategy of Economic and Social Development of Iași County for 2014-2020).

Figure 1



Source: https://ro.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fișier:Judetul_Iași_3D_map.jpg

The agricultural area of Iași County represents 69,6% of the county's total area, and the structure of the agricultural land resources is as follows: out of the 381.000 ha of agricultural areas, 70,8% are arable lands, 25% are grasslands and hayfields, and 4% are orchards and vineyards, according to the data provided by Iași Agriculture Directorate (2022). Additionally, there is 170.000 ha of non-agricultural land. The most fertile agricultural lands are located in the North-East area of the county which has a high potential and lands set in the second-quality class. The hilly areas are suitable for wine-growing as they are favoured by climate as well (Figure 1). This structure of the county's land resources clearly defines the agricultural nature of the county, particularly focused on field crops and animal breeding. Approximately 275.000 ha of agricultural

land is registered in payment with the Agency for Payments and Intervention in Agriculture (APIA), which stands for about 15,000 farmers. Year by year, this number is decreasing which shows a progressive merging of agricultural lands.

2. Current situation based on background research and evidence

The largest percentage of agricultural holdings from Iași County is held by small holdings under 5 ha, with an average of 1.1 ha per holding. Approximately 36% of the agricultural area of the county is under the management of small holdings, and, in this respect, Iași County is above the national average.

Of late, there has been a trend of consolidating large agricultural holdings that have more than 100 ha. Approximately 48% of the county's agricultural area is farmed by 0.27% of the large agricultural holdings from Iași with an average of 500 hectares per holding, indicators that come close to the national ones. Table 1 makes a comparison between the structure of the farms and utilised agricultural areas, based on size classes, from Iași County and the rest of Romania.

Table 1. The structure of farms on size classes of the utilised agricultural area in Transylvania and nationwide

Structure of the number of holdings						
	Year	<5ha	5 ha – 50 ha	50 ha - 100 ha	>100 ha	Total
Iași	2005	95.5%	4.77%	0.03%	0.15%	100%
	2016	96.17%	3.45%	0.11%	0.27%	100%
Romania	2005	89.91%	9.56%	0.17%	0.27%	100%
	2016	91.58%	7.87%	0.18%	0.37%	100%
Structure of the utilised agricultural area on size classes						
	Year	<5ha	5 ha – 50 ha	50 ha - 100ha	>100 ha	Total
Iași	2005	49.67%	12.55%	0.58%	37.2%	100%
	2016	36.14%	13.43%	2.67%	47.77%	100%
Romania	2005	36.69%	23.34%	2.42%	37.55%	100%
	2016	28.70%	20.17%	3.35%	47.78%	100%

Source: NIS, Farm Structure Survey, 2005, 2016

At county level, there is little interest for shifting to environmentally friendly agricultural systems. This reality is also revealed by the small percentage of organic certified agricultural enterprises. As seen in the following table, according to the data released by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, in 2020 in Iași County, only 22,601 ha of agricultural areas were organically cultivated which is 4.8% of the national total. The number of agricultural producers who are organically registered is also very low, merely 2.8% of the national total. The same low percentage (1.5%) is registered in the sector of organically certified apiculture in Iași County (Table 2).

Table 2. The structure of the organic system in Iași County and nationwide (2020)

	Total organic area (ha)	Conversion 1 (ha)	Conversion 2 (ha)	Conversion 3 (ha)	Certified Area (ha)	Producers (no.)	Bee families (no.)
Romania	471,927	102,232	90,613	8,425	270,656	9,815	203,167
Iași county	22,601	2,387	2,041	14	18,158	275	3,024
% (IS of RO)	4.8	2.3	2.3	0.2	6.7	2.8	1.5

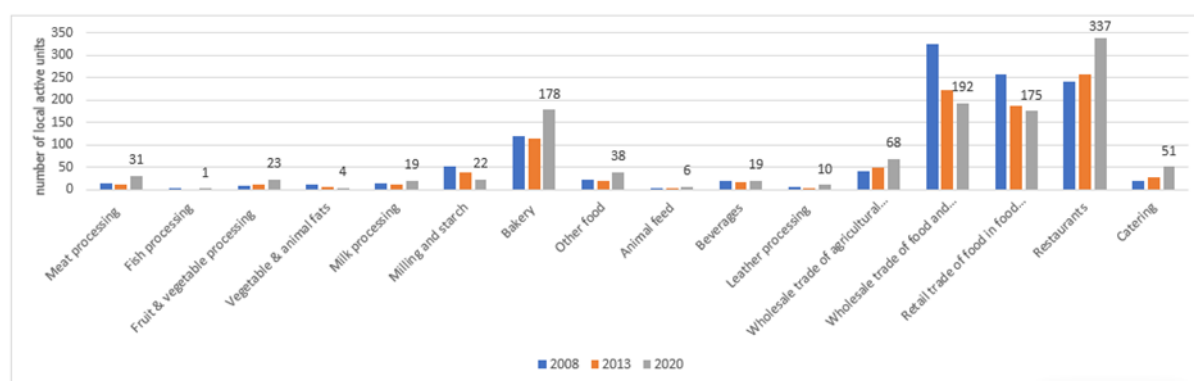
Source: data processed after MADR, <https://www.madr.ro/docs/agricultura/agricultura-ecologica/2021/centralizator-AE-counties-2020.pdf>

The farmers of Iași County have shown a moderate interest in cooperation. In 2020, only 39 agricultural cooperatives were registered, just 7 more in comparison to 2018. The number of members of these cooperatives is low, with roughly 127 farmers who decided to associate under this form of organisation.

In Iași County, there are only 2 groups of producers, one party from Victoria commune and another one from Târgu Frumos. Both producer groups are active in the vegetable sector, which fact makes it almost impossible the representation of the farmers' interests in relation to the decisional factors at the local or national level. The agricultural producers from Iași County have not shown interest in certifying their products on various optional quality schemes. In 2022, only 20 products have been certified so far, of which meat products are predominant (10 products), and all got the traditionally certified attestation (AFIR) [<https://cpac.afir.info/ToateProdusele> (accessed on 23rd of August 2022)]. Worth mentioning might be the fact the geography of the county does not create the possibility of having mountain-certified products.

The cooperation initiatives between farmers, territorial administrative units, schools, universities, research units, and NGOs for the development of local markets based on short food supply chains, although funded through the PNDR 2014-2020 programme (sub-Measure 16.4), have proved to be of little or no interest since no project was yet implemented in Iași County.

Figure 2. Structure of processing industry and agri-food services in Iași County



Source: NIS, TEMPO online database

The added value increase of the agricultural products is done by local processing of raw material from agriculture and valorisation of processed food and other goods. In Iași County, there has been registered an increasing tendency to develop more processing facilities for dairy products, bakery products, cured meats, fruit, and vegetables. Even if there are large areas cultivated with various cereals and sunflower across the county, including organically cultivated agricultural areas, the processing plants (mills and oil mill plants) are

few, and on declined compared to the previous years (Figure 1). In Iași County, there is one oil mill plant for cold-pressed sunflower oil, Zorian, located in Oțeleni commune. The oil is organically certified and largely goes to bulk export.

Food commerce is no longer attractive to local entrepreneurs, and the number of operators in this field is on decline. This circumstance is partly caused by the expansion of supermarkets and hypermarkets. The growing interest of consumers in the products offered by restaurants and food catering businesses has led to the development of this sector in Iași in the last years, and part of HORECA operators turn to small local producers to get supplies from them with raw materials.

Of late, in the rural communities from Iași County, there have been noticed different early forms of informal association and promotion actions of small local farmers. These include short food supply chains that contribute to the valorisation of agri-food products made by small producers (most of them are located in the peri-urban area of Iași municipality) in the main market place of the county (Tanasă et. al., 2018). The development philosophy behind local agri-economy should change, so conventional and alternative agriculture can coexist without impairing one another. The chain connecting producers and final consumers should integrate into a socio-economic ecosystem built on sustainable and durable foundations, while the local agri-food market should adjust to the novel developments and demands.

Regarding education institutions on agriculture, unfortunately, since 2000 there has been a constant regression, mainly caused by the conversion of agricultural high schools into technological high schools and by the population migration in the last 15 years. These factors led to a severe shortage of labour force and a dire need for skilled workers mirrored by the entire agricultural sector of Iași County. Presently, there are talks about reinstating these agricultural high schools.

3. Position of the Multi-Actor Platform

Data collection and its processing for statistical interpretation has generally required the following steps:

- Development of a working methodology suggested in MAP Iași
- Interaction with stakeholders, held on 2 workshops
- Action of analysis and data synthesis.

The following subchapters will introduce the 2 workshops with stakeholders.

3.1. Identified needs. The first workshop with stakeholders

To identify the challenges faced by farmers of Iași County, firstly, there was held a meeting with the MAP members. These stakeholders have different experiences and backgrounds, such as business environment, academia, public administration, producers, and consumers. The meeting was held on the 5th of August 2022, and it was attended by 10 stakeholders. The debates were structured after the following work scheme:

THE MAIN CHALLENGES faced by farmers of Iasi County when they are valorising their production

11 topics for debate were proposed, from which the participants had to choose 5. The 11 topics were as follows: Access to the market, Competition, Fair price, Labour force, Seasonality of production, Legislation, Processing, Storage, Associative culture, Certification, and Marketing). Out of the 11 topics suggested for debate, the stakeholders opted for the following 5: Processing, Labour Force, Marketing, Association Culture, and Storage.

EXPERIENCED SOLUTIONS

Experienced solutions are policies, programs, individual or collective, and private or public actions that had an impact on Iasi County.

RECOMMENDED SOLUTIONS for the future

Recommended solutions are those that can be implemented to solve the main problems of the sustainable integration of Iasi farmers in the agri-food chains (measures, public and private interventions at the local, regional, national, and European level).

KNOWLEDGE NEEDS/ INFORMATION NEEDS/ RESEARCH NEEDS for the future recommended solutions.

3.1.1. Marketing

Specific Challenges. One of the most debated topics of the meeting was marketing. The discussions focused on the limited marketing knowledge of small producers, the necessity for adequate marketing information and training, need for a more dynamic, integrated, and ethical promotion. Last but not least, it concentrated on the need for production valorisation through direct-interaction events that can help to improve the trust degree of consumers towards local producers.

Other challenges:

- The limited marketing knowledge of small producers. In their particular case, marketing is often performed by younger members of the business family. This circumstance is a major obstacle to market access.
- The small producers are more and more pressed to develop their own identity which is attractive and in line with the market demands.

Experienced Solutions. During the meeting, stakeholders were asked to present experienced solutions as models of good practice. The following feature should be noted down here: (1) solutions presented are entirely related to product promotion; (2) some solutions show a high degree of creativity, by integrating classical promotion solutions with modern technologies.

Recommended Solutions. The recommended solutions related to the assistance provided (to different extents) by public authorities, knowledge transfer coming from academia, and the constant interaction with consumers for educating them in terms of valorising production on short food supply chains.

Other recommended solutions:

- Marketing should be run according to the "Price, Product, Market, and Promotion" model. To this purpose, marketing should be correlated with the value of the products for sale, having the fair price and an ethical approach to production valorisation.
- Necessity of developing an umbrella superbrand in the area has been another topic of discussion. What is interesting is that umbrella brands were perceived by MAP members as having a contribution, even indirectly, to the development of an associative culture.

Knowledge Needs. As was to be expected, about the need for knowledge transfer, there were talks about developing tools that provide information in an open-source operating system.

Table 3. Discussions about Marketing topic

Specific Issues	Experienced Solutions	Recommended Solutions	Need for knowledge, information, and research
Producers lack the necessary information and knowledge to have a fair marketing (5 answers)	Direct-interaction events between producers and consumers: HAI LA NOI (Come to Us), Micul prânz (Little Lunch), online tasting (Gust de Iași translated as Taste of Iași), fairs (3 answers)	Financing, activities, and tools for developing marketing strategies for producers (4 answers)	Free information on open-source platforms
Quality standards for products do not exist, and if they do, they are unknown to the consumers (2 answers)	Promotion through social media channels (2 answers)	Constant interaction with consumers (2 answers)	Market research
Lack of a budget for marketing activities or setting an unrealistic budget (2 answers)	Distribution of products directly to consumer	Campaigns to attract the youth and inform them about local and season food (2 answers)	Support for producers with the assistance of tutors
Creating a modern wholesale market and promoting local products under a single brand (2 answers)	Press and TV interviews, debates, published scientific articles, press releases (eg., Iașul Nostru, meaning Our Iași)	Street banners	Organising events that can make more clear to producers what marketing actions mean
It is difficult to promote local food and seasonal food as long as competition draws clients with promotions and discounts.	Online tasting during pandemics	Planning a budget for marketing	Models of good practices
Producers are not in contact with the marketing service providers.	Promotion through street banners	Attractive packaging	Promotion and consumer education about the principles of zero waste management
Difficulties in identifying clients and maintaining a stable relationship with them	Collaboration between producers, academia, public administration, and civil society.	Adjusting the particular features of the product to the market demands	
Setting unrealistic prices		Setting a realistic price	

3.1.2. Associative Culture

Specific challenges. Specific challenges are almost entirely generated by psychosocial factors, namely lack of trust, prejudgement, lack of information, and over-evaluation of one's own possibilities. The absence of an associative culture is also felt like an issue created by the local culture. Also interesting is the fact that the associative structures under the administration of the ex-communist state were not brought up, since they were truly abhorred by the rural population. This could be a sign that the collective mentality of local producers starts being influenced by the younger generations of producers.

Experienced Solutions. Experienced solutions are more related to jointly or informally organised events rather than associative structures with legal personality. However, there were mentioned a local association of producers (Produs în Iași, translated as Made in Iași) and two stores owned by local producers (Magazia Morăreței translated as The Miller's Wife Grocery Store and Eco Băcănia Happy Copou as in Happy Copou Organic Grocery Store).

Recommended Solutions. Recommended solutions do represent the producers' needs in relation to local administration, in terms of market access. Producers wish to receive stronger support from authorities, although the ways of support are not quite well defined. It is necessary an open direct debate between producers and administration to define in a concerted manner the possible ways of supporting producers. Another recommended solution was: in the specialised fairs, the authorities and representatives of academia can run informative activities related to the benefits of the associative structures.

Knowledge Needs. In this chapter, the need for knowledge about associative culture is related to models of good practices. The producers need more and more good practices to be presented and demonstrated.

Table 4 - Centralised discussions about Associative Culture

Specific Issues	Experienced Solutions	Recommended Solutions	Need for knowledge, information, research
Prejudgements	Gust de Iași (Taste of Iași) Platform, Hai la noi (Come to Us) Festival, Iașul în bucate ecologice, tradiționale, locale (The Fair of Iași in organic, traditional and mountain dishes), Piața Verde de Weekend (The weekend green market) (4 answers)	Partnership between local producers and bistros on a larger scale	Mapping of the local producers
Reluctance towards association	The association of local producers, namely Produs în Iași (Made in Iași)	Description and presentation of association done as simple and concise as possible (2 answers)	Presentation of good practices in specific fairs and of association benefits.
Lack of trust in the correct management of the association	Eco Băcănă Happy Copou (Happy Copou Organic Grocery Store)	Local administration should support the signage for local producers on fairs and wet local markets	Drawing conclusions with the financial benefits of the producers who attended the fairs. Passing these conclusions to all local producers.
Low level of trust between consumers and producers	Opening Magaziei Morăreței (The Miller's Wife Grocery Store)	A better indicator of local producers	
Lack of correct information, misunderstanding of mechanisms behind the associative forms	European Projects (SHERPA, for example)	Local municipality should offer benefits for social enterprises or businesses that support and buy from local producers	
Reluctance towards collaboration with digital platforms	The management of the association is made through a directory council	Signals the logos at events	

3.1.3. Processing

Specific Challenges. Identified challenges come from the technological area, labour force qualification on processing technologies, and lack of infrastructure. It is worth pointing out that processing is the single topic brought up in the Romanian education system since nearly all vocational schools were dissolved in 2009. This fact brought about discontinuities in terms of supplying a qualified labour force for the food processing industry. Processing is seen as a solution for small farms' production valorisation. Still, it is difficult to break into the market since foreign producers have already developed a rather large infrastructure for processing.

Experienced Solutions. These are more related to the models of good practice, by visiting processors in Romania and abroad.

Recommended Solutions. These are rather related to the necessity of producers' multiple qualifications, consumers' education for purchasing local products, and promotion platforms for local producers.

Knowledge Needs. The need for knowledge is mostly determined by the current global trend of digital transformation. At the same time, the absence of vocational schools is a drawback for the food systems of Iași.

Indirectly, there were other discussions that give a full picture of the scheduled debates:

- In the discussions during the workshop, the importance of technological flows stood out, and this feature makes investments (in the processing infrastructure) effective.

Table 5. Centralised discussions on the topic of Processing

Specific Issues	Experienced Solutions	Recommended solutions	Need for knowledge, information, and research
Lack of qualified personnel in processing technologies (3 identical answers)	The vegetable producers visited farms abroad	Multiple qualifications	Digital transformation - integrated and user-friendly digitalisation
Lack of authorised processors (2 identical answers)	Fruit growing - visits abroad	Visits to other factories, for learning about models of good practices in the technological fluxes	
Perishability of fruit and vegetables	Connections between producer associations and schools to educate children about food consumption.	Identifying solutions through European projects	
Food safety		Encouraging activities such as visits paid to the processors Authorities should have a firmer stand when verifying producers and traders	
Tendency of avoiding extra risk-related investments		Authorities should have an extended work schedule and work on weekends as well	
Technological flows		The consumer education in quadruple helix system	
Authorities are overwhelmed by the verifying activities		Open access platforms	
Reluctance towards novel activities		The websites of the public administration are not user friendly.	
Lack of processing spaces in the case of certain companies			
Problems in terms of mediation stand between producer and consumer			
Prices			
Vocational schools			
Input quality			
Lack of predictability			
Unloyal competition			
Waste Management			

3.1.4. Labour Force

Specific Challenges. Identified issues come from the labour force area, especially the lack of qualified staff for marketing, high salary taxes, and fluctuation of the qualified labour force.

Experienced Solutions. Experienced solutions were educational, training, and information activities.

Recommended Solutions. The following solutions were recommended: a more active engagement of academia in the training and information activities of the labour force. At the same time, there were talks about the necessity of well-adjusted, realistic budgets that make possible fair payment for employees.

Knowledge Needs. The need for knowledge is related to the necessity of training the labour force.

Table 6. Centralised discussions on the topic of the Labour Force

Specific Issues	Experienced Solutions	Recommended Solutions	Need for knowledge, information, and research
Lack of necessary marketing knowledge in the labour force area (5 answers)	Internship	Knowledge transfer from academia to (research institutions and universities)	Staff training and legislative modifications that allow the mandatory hiring for a certain period of time.
High charges of marketing specialists or companies that deliver services of marketing, compared to the incomes made by producers (taking into account the fact that 96% of the farmers from Iași County have less than 5 ha) (3 answers)	Courses at the University of Life Sciences of Iași	Promotion of the department from Iași University of Life Sciences	Need for knowledge transfer
Lack of labour force in the commercialisation area	Micro credentials or mini-qualifications	Signalising the micro courses for the general public	
Staff fluctuation	Integrators	Promotion on Gust de Iași (taste of Iași) platform	
		Making realistic budgets at producer level so that labour force can be paid correctly.	

3.1.5. Storage

Specific challenges. Identified challenges come from the following areas: limited space for storage infrastructure, food waste, and legislation ambiguity.

Experienced Solutions. They are generally related to the models of good practice regarding recycling behaviour: avoiding plastic packaging and using reusable packaging.

Recommended Solutions. They are associated with consumer education on purchasing organic behaviours and food consumption, legislative enhancements, and developing storage infrastructure for building associative structures.

Knowledge Needs. There were no discussions in this chapter. The participants did not identify any knowledge needs.

Indirectly, there were collateral discussions that complete the picture of the scheduled debates:

- There were also discussions about the fact that, in other regions of Romania and the EU, there is already a well-developed storage infrastructure and about difficulties in entering the market of the large supply chains.

Table 7. Centralised discussions on Storage topic

Specific Issues	Experienced Solutions	Recommended Solutions	Need for knowledge, information, and research
Limited storage space in the case of some urban companies (4 answers)	Avoiding plastic packaging	Consumer education about packaging (2 answers)	
Food waste (2 answers)	Reusable/ recycling packaging	Improvement of legislation (2 answers)	Composter for food waste
Consumer behaviour towards packaging		Improving the storage infrastructure for fruit and vegetables	
Legislative ambiguity		Association for the purpose of building storage facilities	
		Supporting the private initiatives for expanding the storage capacity	

3.2. Authentication of identified needs. The second workshop

The identified needs in the first workshop with stakeholders, along with the main topics of debate of the same workshop, were subject to assessment and verification. Accordingly, the draft of this report was emailed to the stakeholders who replied and provided suggestions in writing. The second part, namely the second workshop, was held on the 1st of November 2022. At this event, the draft of this report was presented which raised extremely interesting comments from stakeholders.

The draft of this report was presented in the first part of the meeting, and the focus was on the synthesis of discussions from the previous workshop. Accordingly, once again there were presented the five themes under debate with stakeholders from the first workshop, yet, this time, the starting point was based on the analysis and synthesis of these debates. It concerns Labour Force, Marketing, Processing, Storage, and Association Culture.

The participants of the meeting came up with essential information, especially from their field of expertise. Following the order of interventions, suggestions are listed below:

- Participants with administrative and consulting-related backgrounds stepped in and made topical corrections in terms of statistical data;
- On the other hand, there are certain similarities with the data recording. That is why it is recommended a more thorough data collection;
- In Iași County there are barely any requests for product certification;
- It is much needed a training programme on product labelling to provide consumers with all the necessary information;
- Participants from the administration have stated there is a merging tendency of agricultural lands
- Within the meeting there were synergies with several European and local projects, namely CITIES2030, RURALITIES, and Gust de Iași, and with the Association of Local Producers known as Made in Iași;
- A new round of discussion opened on the topic of ethics and jurisdiction of labelling;
- At the same time, among producers, there is an emulation of models of good practice. They learn from each other;
- The meetings with stakeholders will be held in the post-implementation period as well;
- In the city of Cluj Napoca, there has been an initiative of launching and promoting local producers on the market. This action could serve as a model of good practices;
- Concurrently, the relationship of local producers with supply chains of the supermarkets should be carefully considered in terms of shelf prices or even market competition;
- Another topic of debate emerged, the difference between producers (and vendor on short chains) and merchant or reseller (that buys and resells the goods of others);
- There is a tough negotiation between local producers and supermarkets, which often embraces an ethical aspect on the food market.

All these discussions can be the starting point for a future workshop with stakeholders.

3.3. Existing interventions and actions

Table 8 – Examples of actions taken by local actors

	<p>"Gust de Iași" is a platform aiming at promoting the local food producers from the peri-urban area of the city of Iași. It is also focused on raising the consumers' level of trust in short food supply chains and healthy food products as well. The platform engages knowledge transfer and public information and, at the same time, does not embrace a commercial approach. In 2022, 81 producers/processors from Romania's North-East Development Region registered on the "Gust de Iași" platform.</p>
	<p>Iașul în bucate tradiționale, ecologice și montane, translated as Iași in Traditional, Organic, and Mountain Dishes. Between the 9th and 10th of July 2022, in Iași municipality, there was organised the fair of producers from the North-East Development Region, known as Iașul în bucate tradiționale, ecologice și montane (Iași in Traditional, Organic, and Mountain Dishes). The fair was organised by Iași City Hall, Iași Branch of the Romanian Academy, and the Agriculture Directorate of Iași County. The event was part of the innovative hub known as Food for Iași Living Lab (www.fill.rdrp.ro), developed within the Cities2030 project (www.cities2030.eu) by Iași City Hall and the Romanian Academy, Iași Branch.</p>
	<p>Hai la noi! (Come to Us)</p> <p>The association of local producers as in <i>Produs în Iași</i> (Made in Iași), founded in 2020, organises a series of events under the brand <i>Hai la noi!</i> (Come to Us). These events are addressing the consumers from Iași municipality and are commonly held at the headquarters of the host producers. In 2022, so far two events of the sort have been held, namely <i>Hai la noi în lanul de lavanda</i> (Come to us in the lavender field) and <i>și Hai la noi in curtea morii</i> (Come to us in the mill's yard). Various local producers took part in these events, and a wide range of products was on display and for tasting, such as bakery products, cured meats, craft beer, different types of tea, lavender products, honey, gems, zacuscă (a vegetable spread made from many possible vegetable mixes, mushrooms included), wine, craft pasta and noodles, dairy products, etc.</p>
	<p>Magazia Morăriței (The Miller's Wife Grocery Store)</p> <p>Magazia Morăriței is firstly a bakery producer and secondly a grocery store that commercialises and promotes only Romanian certified food products in line with the principles of healthy food, tested products obtained in controlled environments, and with the purpose of inspiring trust to the consumer. The shelves of the grocery store are boasting traditionally, organically, and mountain-certified products. It is also the first producer that was traditionally certified for sourdough bread. Magazia Morăriței initiates various campaigns to raise consumer awareness about healthy food.</p>



Piața verde de weekend (The Green Weekend Market)

„Piața verde de weekend” is organised by Iași City Hall, Romanian Academy - Iași Branch, Agriculture Directorate of Iași County, „Ion Ionescu de la Brad” University of Life Sciences from Iași, Association of the local producers (Produs în Iași, aka Made In Iași), and Gust de Iași (Taste of Iași). It is also associated with living lab activities run within the Cities2030 project, funded by the European Union’s Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 101000640. „Piața verde de weekend” takes place on weekends (from Saturday to Sunday) in various public spaces in Iași city.

3.4. Recommendations from the MAP

3.4.1. Recommendations for future rural policies

- Many discussions were about the legislative framework, which should be improved to help both producers and consumers, as well as to boost and make more flexible the agri-food market in Romania.
- Another recommendation is connected to reducing the red paper in the case of funding programmes for the food systems.
- Food infrastructure, including the supporting infrastructure for the food system of Iași County, should be considerably improved.
- Development of training and information programs for both producers and consumers.

3.4.2. Recommendations for future research agendas

In regards to the knowledge transfer gap, this is closely related to the absence of actors that provide knowledge transfer from academia and administration to producers and consumers.

Concerning scientific research, there is an actual need for research programs in the following domains: biodegradable and reusable packaging, technological flows, storage solutions, agri-food legislation, labour force, and recipes for processing.

Conclusions

Local stakeholders of Iași have identified five key themes that determine how production can be valorised in the local market. These themes are as follows: Processing, Labour Force, Marketing, Associative Culture, and Storage. Their preference for these topics outlines a general profile of the producers from Iași in terms of issues they are ordinarily facing.

To fully identify these challenges and understand the solutions proposed by stakeholders, the Iași MAP held an online meeting. Starting from the identified themes, the agenda of the meeting included four working panels: General Problems, Experienced Solutions, Recommended Solutions, and Knowledge Needs.

The general problems identified by the stakeholders, according to the five discussion topics, were related to the lack of knowledge, financing tools, precise rules and regulations, infrastructure, and qualified labour force. The identified challenges demonstrate that we are dealing with an emerging market, or otherwise stated, with a market that has certain deficits and yet does not lack opportunities. The debates are widely presented in Chapter 4.

The solutions experienced by the stakeholders are related to the challenges uttered by them. These solutions are rather coming from models of good practice and their adjustment to problematic situations based on a model of problem-based learning. This circumstance demonstrates that we are dealing with dynamic, highly adaptive, and innovative producers.

The solutions recommended by the stakeholders were particularly solutions that cannot be implemented by them without a certain amount of energy use, resources and time as well. Similarly, they cannot be implemented in the context of the failure of association and open collaboration in the market. Local, regional, and national authorities should be more actively involved in cooperating with producers and consumers, and producers should behave ethically in the market as well.

The knowledge needs are related to training and information needs on the local economy, local market, production technologies, and marketing. However, the debates have also brought up the lack of a well-structured infrastructure for knowledge transfer. It is necessary that stakeholders take a more active stand in the educational and research areas.

The work methodology fit this type of meeting and favoured a large information flow, stimulated the debates between stakeholders, and last but not least, allowed data collection in a structured manner. The methodology is based on a system thinking model, which allows a smart interpretation of information and the development of narratives that can constitute the basis for recommendations, strategies, and policies for developing sustainable food systems.

Producers are not exactly optimistic when it comes to production valorisation and mentioned many challenges they have encountered so far. Nevertheless, they have proven quite creative and resilient and managed to overcome the challenges they faced.

The food system of Iași city is the most developed in the North-East Development Region, but it is still an emerging system. This is the very reason why stakeholders should be more actively and effectively engaged in its development.

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Annex 1. Methodology used by the MAP

The SHERPA approach was used to build the platform and guide the research topics and questions.

Interaction with the MAP members was based on the systems thinking model (D3.3 Systems Thinking Methodology), developed within the Cities2030 project.

Stakeholders / participants	Stakeholders were invited according to the quadruple helix model: business environment, administration, academia, and civil society. 19 participants / 12 stakeholders took part in the discussions.
Anticipation in preparation for the MAP meetings	Information sheet and invitation
Implemented changes to the process	The work methodology was slightly altered during the meeting to respect the timeline.
Difficulties	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To keep discussions in the area of production valorisation. Stakeholders see issues in a structured manner, and during debates, they often talked strayed from the topic. This work methodology applied for the stakeholders is generally employed in European projects and results are not always as expected. Accordingly, a certain degree of mistrust can occur at times
What was particularly useful appreciated	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Topics discussed The open and transparent nature of discussions The fact that the meeting had a structured nature
What kind of reflections were facilitated (or not) by the methods used?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The methodology used is quite effective, but it needs adjustment depending on the type of meetings and its objectives, also correlated with other methods.
Ownership of results: is there any take-up of results by MAP members?	No
Key learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The quadruple helix model is suitable for meetings dealing with systemic approaches to food systems issues The Systems Thinking methodology used can also be adapted to other types of meetings. Collaboration between stakeholders must be more dynamic even in the area of these types of communication and learning actions

Annex 2. Impact on stakeholders

The two work meetings with stakeholders had, at least, the following types of impact on them:

- Stakeholders learnt and debated issues from their food system;
- Stakeholders who took part in these 2 workshops have become more aware of the issues within their own food system;

- Stakeholders learnt that these sort of activities run in the European-funded projects can provide channels of communication with local administration, civil society, academia, and business environment within a food system;
- Stakeholders learnt about the existence of novel courses addressing their community, and which are held at the „Ion Ionescu de la Brad” University of Life Sciences of Iași city.
- These 2 workshops have also contributed to the consolidation of the stakeholder community from the regional food system
- Local producers found out about the initiative supporting the commercialisation of their products, initiative developed by PROFİ supermarket chain
- Stakeholders learnt about other projects, actions, or specific interventions funded by the European Commission.



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