

Local Food Systems in the Rural Areas of Latvia

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Abstract

In the rural areas of Latvia, in addition to the conventional ways of growing, processing, producing and marketing agricultural products, organic farming, direct food supply farms and farm visiting opportunities as well as crafts and artisan food production businesses have been developed. Local food initiatives are now being promoted in response to the effects of globalization, thus revitalizing rural communities. Food is significant part of each country's unique cultural heritage and identity. Local food production can be seen as a system that focuses on the rational interaction between local people, policy makers, local businesses and the natural environment in an effort to preserve the natural, cultural and economic environment. Analysis of the results of document analysis, interviews and focus group discussions with local food producers, representatives of tourism information centres and municipalities revealed that cooperation is a significant phenomenon in local food systems. Cooperation is important for obtaining information, procuring raw materials, and selling products. The main partners in local food systems in rural areas are local food producers, municipalities and tourism operators. The role of tourism in local food systems is growing as the activities of food producers can be assessed as innovative and attractive to tourists as well.

Key words: local food system, rural areas, cultural and historical heritage, tourism.