



Supporting Direct-to-Consumer and Short Supply Chain Farming

Policy Brief

The Netherlands

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“The shorter the distance between farmer and table, the stronger our rural future”

Executive Summary

Direct-to-consumer (DTC) and short supply chain (SSC) models offer critical pathways toward more sustainable, equitable food systems in the Netherlands. Women farmers and rural entrepreneurs are key drivers of these models, enhancing food sovereignty, reducing carbon footprints, and revitalizing local economies. Yet, these initiatives remain under-supported in existing CAP and national policy frameworks. A targeted effort is needed to foster DTC and SSC farming, integrating them fully into the mainstream rural and agricultural strategies.

The Challenge

- 🏠 Dutch farming is a highly successful player in producing for the world market. This is being supported by current agricultural subsidy frameworks and food market structures that favor large-scale production and long, centralized supply chains. To stay competitive, farmers need to enlarge their scale (more hectares per farm), resulting in less and less farms in the Netherlands, contributing to an alienation between farming and society.
- 🏠 Next to this there is space for farmers with more direct relationships with local and regional customers using DTC and SSC models—such as CSA (community-supported agriculture), farm shops, online farm-to-table services, and farmers' cooperatives—often operate at smaller scales and face challenges accessing investment, scaling logistics, and navigating complex food safety regulations.
- 🏠 Female-led initiatives play a larger role in these more local-in particular often lack tailored financial, technical, and legal support.



Policy Solutions

- Create dedicated CAP and LEADER funding windows** for DTC and SSC models.
- Simplify food safety and logistics regulations for small-scale, direct-selling farmers.
- Support digital infrastructure investments** (e.g., online ordering, logistics platforms) for rural farms.
- Promote consumer awareness campaigns** highlighting the benefits of short supply chains and women-led initiatives.
- Establish mentoring and training programs** for farmers shifting to direct sales models, with special outreach to female entrepreneurs.
- Pilot public procurement schemes** prioritizing SSC suppliers for schools, hospitals, and municipal services.

Supporting Evidence & Best Practices

- Many of the female innovators interviewed by FLIARA show a strong combination of local networking and innovation.
- Regional food hubs** in Germany and Belgium demonstrate that strategic logistical support can scale SSC models effectively.
- French public procurement laws** now encourage sourcing from local, small-scale producers—a model adaptable to the Dutch context

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Conclusion & Call to Action

The following actions can support a higher share of local food production and establish closer links between consumers and food production:

CALL TO ACTION:

- Prioritize support for direct-to-consumer and short supply chain models.
- Recognize and nurture the leadership of rural women in innovating local food systems.
- Adjust legal, funding, and regulatory frameworks to match the needs of diverse, community-centered farming models.
- To call for organizations (local authorities, schools, offices) to buy food at local farms; adopting local producers as key suppliers.

Short supply chains are not a nostalgic return to the past—they are a vital part of sustainable rural futures.



Further Reading

www.fliara.eu

[Innovators - FLIARA Project](#)

[Ambassadors - FLIARA Project](#)

European Commission (2020). Farm to Fork Strategy.

International Panel of Experts on Sustainable Food Systems (IPES-Food, 2019). Towards a Common Food Policy for the EU.

Dutch Platform Short Chains (Platform Korteketens.nl).

About FLIARA

The project is on a mission to create a more sustainable future by highlighting the role of women in agriculture and rural areas. FLIARA will boost understanding of the needs and challenges facing women leading innovative environmental and rural development practices in EU farming and rural areas.

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Female-Led Innovation in Agriculture and Rural Areas

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