



Rural-Urban Outlooks: Unlocking Synergies (ROBUST)

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Snapshot: Expressions of Urban – Peri-Urban – Rural Relationships

Jarina – a Cooperative for Rural Development

Ljubljana Urban Region

1. Brief Description

In Slovenia, people value locally produced, possibly organic food from small farms, and would often buy produce directly from farmers. Most farms are small-scale and in Less Favoured Areas, thus extensive agriculture is the norm, making it easier to establish sustainable food systems.

Jarina is a cooperative established in 2004 that links the local supply with the demand in urban areas. Its objective is to support small local producers in the sale and promotion of local agricultural products and tourist programmes. Its members are entrepreneurs, restaurant owners and farmers. Jarina started in the two municipalities of Litija and Šmartno pri Litiji but quickly expanded across the entire Ljubljana Urban Region and is now operating nationwide.

Ljubljana Urban Region contains one third of population in Slovenia and is the country's largest urban area. It is difficult for small farmers to compete with intensive agriculture, but on the other hand appreciation of locally produced food and high food standards in educational and healthcare institutions, as well as gastronomic tourism create a demand for their products. Jarina connects the two.

Jarina helps the farmers with their skills, certification and collaborating to achieve economies of scale to supply their produce directly to kindergartens, schools, hospitals and restaurants, mostly in the Municipality of Ljubljana, which promotes healthy food in public institutions since its title of Green Capital of Europe in 2016. Moreover, Jarina provides support for agritourism development and linking farms to tourism and recreation in Ljubljana Urban Region, as well as nationwide.

2. Questions and/or Challenges

- > What motivates the farmers to join and stay in the Jarina cooperative?

Most of the small-scale farmers practice very diverse agriculture, resulting in a variety of products produced in relatively small and very variable quantity. Many find it

difficult to dedicate time and build skills needed to research the market, find reliable buyers and build long-term relationships with them. Moreover, product distribution can be difficult and time consuming. Jarina provides training, supports matching with buyers and ensures regular and timely distribution of products. In further analyses, it would be interesting to explore to what extent this fits the demand in urban areas, whether there is need/room for other similar initiatives, and whether the farmers grow with time and become independent of the cooperative.

- > How large is the demand for locally produced food? What are the main factors (e.g. the price, delivery service, quality, organic production)?

In Slovenia, kindergartens and primary schools have to provide a snack and lunch, and the quality of food in educational institutions, hospitals and retirement homes is heavily regulated. These institutions represent reliable buyers with stable and predictable demand, thus they are a popular marketing target. However, as public institutions, they also had to adhere to the “minimum cost” rule, thus often buying products from intensive agriculture and long distribution chains. In the Municipality of Ljubljana, this was resolved with strong initiative from Municipality management, local initiatives and coordination. Concerning hotels and restaurants, Ljubljana is increasingly becoming a gastronomic tourism destination where experimentation with local cuisine is popular – and to provide high quality, it has to be based on local products and a short supply chain. No research has been done on how successful these establishments are with this business model and to what extent they require organic food certification.

- > Why has Jarina started to deal with tourism? Is there demand for it or is Jarina trying to create the demand?

There are three factors behind Jarina’s involvement in tourism. First, outdoor recreation in the Ljubljana Urban Region countryside, such as cycling, hiking and visiting the local fairs, is a popular activity for urban dwellers and the farmers have adapted to accommodate visitors. Agritourism is blooming; Janče food trail is an excellent example. Second, Jarina also provides training on how to apply for Rural Development Programme funds, which includes agritourism. Third, EU-funded projects drive the creation of new products and demand, such as the SORT project funded by COSME in which Jarina prepared a tourist package for seniors over 55.

3. Main Insights

3.1. Indications of the application of the new concept of 'New Localities'

Jarina is helping the farmers in Ljubljana Urban Area establish stronger rural-urban interactions that reach beyond the closest urban or periurban centres. Although it started on a small scale in two municipalities, it has quickly expanded following the interest of the farmers in the region and opportunities provided by EU-funded projects. By providing support for marketing and sales particularly in Ljubljana, but also in other urban centres

nationwide, it has expanded the space of operation of the farmers of Ljubljana Urban Region. This has an ancillary effect of increased exchange on experiences and improved learning and assessment of opportunities. The growth of the network and operations are so far purely organic, but with specific focus on Ljubljana as the city with highest share of urban population without any family ties in rural areas and the highest demand for locally produced food.

In Slovenia, family ties are a strong interaction factor between rural and urban and Jarina is operating beyond the usual localities determined by family ties. As a result, urban dwellers are discovering the countryside unknown to them before, while the farmers increasingly interact with urban areas beyond their nearest town. No particular mapping of activities, supply and demand was done so far, except for planning of the pick-up and supply routes.

Real estate in Ljubljana is very expensive, therefore it has been a trend for a long time to move out of the city, particularly of young families. Learning of the rural areas in Ljubljana Urban Region, local food supply and lifestyle choices might contribute to increased interest and influx into the rural areas, including the ones on the fringes of Ljubljana Urban Region. To what extent Jarina could contribute to that, is yet unclear.

3.2. Insights related to the broad area of 'Smart Development'

The main issue of smart development in Jarina's core business is timely coordination of supply and demand by matching the small farmers and their products with the buyers/consumers and organizing an optimal distribution network. This requires timely and accurate input from the farmers, strong databases, direct contact and internet-based ordering, as well as an algorithm to organize suitable transport both in terms of volume and timing. This is of course also related to the system of payment to the farmers and for the transport and distribution costs.

The Rural Development Programme provides strong support for investments in farms, including modernization and introducing new technologies. No data are available about what extent the farmers are developing smart agriculture, for example by improving fertilization, introducing irrigation and modernized harvesting and packaging. New methods require also different skillsets and possibly labour flexibility, but no research has been done on this so far.

Another aspect of urban-rural relations in Jarina operation is the development of tourism in rural areas of Ljubljana Urban Region. While Ljubljana has well developed tourist packages for visitors to the city and attractions beyond the region, tourist packages in rural areas are still rare. Some branding is present, such as Janče Fruit Trail and Heart of Slovenia, but it is not that well known among the urban inhabitants and rarely reaches beyond maps, leaflets and basic information. It is expected that further services related to tourism will be developed and marketed, such as gastrotourism packages, "adopt a farm"/"friends of farm" with membership to farm's activities and discounted food supply and similar.

3.3. Other insights that could be relevant for further work

The activities of Jarina contribute to more beneficial economic and social relations. The farmers using their support have more stable and possibly better income, while the inhabitants of urban areas are learning about local food production, its seasonal patterns and life in rural areas in general. Tourism coupled with recreation also helps to bring the rural and urban areas together. While most of the visitors are local urban inhabitants, tourist packages for visiting the countryside including seasonal local food experiences are an option.

Jarina is focusing on farms and enterprises with up to five employees. No comparison has been done so far on how their members/users fare compared to similar farms, but it would be interesting to see whether their income has increased, became more stable, whether they have changed the production and what impact that had on jobs as well as schooling of the children in the farming households. Considering the current economic situation of Slovene agriculture, it is unlikely that the activities in the cooperative have increased employment in rural areas, but it is very likely that they have helped stabilize and preserve jobs.

Lately a number of local farmers' markets have been established in the smaller towns in the Ljubljana Urban Region, such as Domžale and Vodice. While these mainly operate once or twice a week, they provide good opportunity to local farmers for direct sales of their products. Jarina is not directly involved with them, but the farmers' markets are an indication of preference for locally produced food and increased demand. It would be interesting to analyse the level of participation of Jarina's members at these farmers' markets.

In Slovenia, pulling together the resources and products of small farmers to provide joint supply of locally produced food is a social innovation. While similar models have been applied in other countries, the model Jarina established is adapted for the specifics of rural areas in Slovenia, where small farms with extensive agriculture and mixed production systems are dominant. It successfully builds on proximity of urban areas and appreciation of locally produced food that is typical of Slovenia. Participation in joint supply and distribution coupled with improved skills gained in Jarina's trainings help the small farmers to get organized, plan better their activities and development of their farms, and stimulate them to meet farmers from other localities, exchange information and generate new ideas. Moreover, Jarina is filling in the gap that is widening with each generation of urban dwellers being more detached from their rural roots.

New technologies play an important role in the organization of Jarina's activities. The relatively good coverage with broadband internet helps to keep communication quick and organization of activities and food delivery efficient. Digital data also help to plan the distribution patterns, pooling of resources and organization of tourist activities up to date with the local offer and availability. It is yet to see how new technologies can be developed and used to allow the buyers to track the source of food bought from Jarina. While ICT

allows to share information on available produce, events and sights in real time, it has not been fully tapped yet. There are some local websites providing information on local events and typical products, however, they are often quite difficult to navigate and contain outdated information. While it is easy to create a website with the aforementioned information, it is difficult to keep it updated with fresh information without strong awareness and contribution from all the farmers and others involved in local food supply and tourist activities.

4. Data Sources and Indicators

Jarina does not use particular indicators, thus this appraisal is based on qualitative data. However, some information can be gathered to quantify their activities, such as the number of members or occasional users of their activities, number of participants of trainings, volume of sales and earnings etc.

Variables and datasets from European and national data systems on population, daily migration, and agriculture and food production in Ljubljana Urban Region could be used to check the trends and estimate the effect of Jarina's activities.

Table 1 Data / Indicators for Jarina Cooperative

Data / Indicator	Source
Number of members of Jarina cooperative	Jarina cooperative
Number of institutions and individuals supplied by Jarina cooperative	Jarina cooperative
Number of participants of jarina trainings	Jarina cooperative
Volume of sales of locally produced food by type	Jarina cooperative
Location of sales of locally produced food by type	Jarina cooperative
Number and geographical area of tourist packages	Jarina cooperative, The public institute Ljubljana Tourism (Zavod za turizem Ljubljana) https://www.visitljubljana.com/sl/turizem-ljubljana/
Number of local farms and other institutions involved in tourist packages	Jarina cooperative, The public institute Ljubljana Tourism (Zavod za turizem Ljubljana) https://www.visitljubljana.com/sl/turizem-ljubljana/
Number of tourist visitors to rural areas of Ljubljana Urban Region	The public institute Ljubljana Tourism (Zavod za turizem Ljubljana) https://www.visitljubljana.com/sl/turizem-ljubljana/
Volume and type of food purchased by kindergartens, schools and hospitals from local farmers	Jarina cooperative, Regional Development Agency of Ljubljana Urban Region, City Council of Municipality of Ljubljana

Number and type of projects supported by Rural Development Programme in Ljubljana Urban Region since 2004	Agency of Republic of Slovenia for Agricultural Markets and Rural Development, http://www.arsktrp.gov.si/
Volume of support (in EUR) by Rural Development Programme for projects in Ljubljana Urban Region since 2004	Agency of Republic of Slovenia for Agricultural Markets and Rural Development, http://www.arsktrp.gov.si/
Population in settlements in Ljubljana Urban Region with less than 10.000 inhabitants	Statistical Office of Republic of Slovenia, https://www.stat.si
Population in settlements in Ljubljana Urban Region with less than 5.000 inhabitants	Statistical Office of Republic of Slovenia, https://www.stat.si
Earnings from farming in Ljubljana Urban Region	Statistical Office of Republic of Slovenia, https://www.stat.si
Gross added value on farms in Ljubljana Urban Region	Agricultural Institute of Slovenia, https://www.kis.si
Structure of farms in Ljubljana Urban Region	Agricultural Institute of Slovenia, https://www.kis.si , Chamber of Agriculture and Forestry

5. Critical Appraisal of Data Use

The data available from the Statistical Office may not be available for individual settlements, only on the regional level. In this case, it would be difficult to distinguish between urban and rural areas. It is possible to ask for less aggregated data for a fee.

The data available at Jarina and Ljubljana Tourism are more detailed and are likely to be accurate but will likely need more work as they are unstructured and need to be processed for use in large databases.

Both the Agricultural Institute of Slovenia and the Agency of Republic of Slovenia for Agricultural Markets and Rural Development have access to a wealth of information, including detailed information on structure and production on farms. However, it has yet to be seen whether they are allowed and willing to share this information for research purposes beyond the national analysis of agriculture, such as ROBUST.

Certain information that would enable comparison between the members of Jarina cooperative and other farmers can be obtained only by using qualitative methods such as interviews and surveys.

6. References

European Commission (2010) Europe 2020: A Strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2020:FIN:EN:PDF>

Website of Jarina cooperative: <http://www.jarina.si/english>

Statistical Office of Republic of Slovenia - <http://www.stat.si/statweb>

Fruit Trail: <http://sadmacesta.si/>

Project SORT - Seniors on Reciprocal Tourism: <http://sort.mentores.eu/>

Chamber of Agriculture and Forestry: <http://www.kgzs.si/>

Agency of Republic of Slovenia for Agricultural Markets and Rural Development:
<http://www.arsktrp.gov.si/>

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