



Rural-Urban Outlooks: Unlocking Synergies (ROBUST)
*ROBUST receives funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020
research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 727988.**



October 2018
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Snapshot: Expressions of Urban - Peri-Urban - Rural Relationships

Tukums food market

Tukums, Latvia

1. Brief Description

Tukums market is a famous regional food site. Organised three days per week in the urban centre of Tukums, it is a very popular meeting place for food producers and providers (people gathering and selling wild food, like berries, mushrooms, etc), and consumers. The market brings together producers and consumers from rural and urban, and regional and extra-regional territories. It is governed by a kind of public - private partnership: the market is run by a private company, and it is located on municipal land. As an interface of direct interactions between various actors, the market facilitates food-related innovations and new initiatives, such as new products, cooperation between producers, and food events.

Further developing the market is integrated in Tukums municipal food strategy. It is seen as an instrument to improve (i) access to healthy and high-quality food for local consumers and (ii) local farmers' market access. In addition, the market has a strong cultural meaning: it continues a long historical tradition. The current "new" marketplace was constructed at the beginning of the 20th century, and the specific area has been known as a marketplace for approximately 600 years. The historical and socio-economic importance of the market has urged the municipality to consider it as an object of the city-region's brand.



Source: www.zudusilatvija.lv



Source: www.visittukums.lv

2. Questions and/or Challenges

Two central issues emerge in the reviewed documents on Tukums market:

> Local producers' market access

Industrial food chains dominate the regional food system, with big retailers and processors being the principal actors setting the rules. In particular, small farms have difficulties accessing the market, but medium and larger ones also struggle to remain competitive and profitable (Grīviņš et al 2013). Various forms of direct selling, including selling on Tukums market, are seen and practised as solutions (Tisenkopfs et al 2015; Korpa et al 2015; Fjodorova 2009). The advantages of direct selling include meeting consumers face-to-face, selling products for a better price (than provided by processors) and developing food products based on what regional consumers demand.

> Access to high-quality food for regional consumers.

Providing a space for local producers to sell their products directly to local consumers is seen as beneficial for consumers' food regimes and health, as consumers have better access to diverse, fresh, organic, seasonal food.

These two issues are considered in the broader context of the development of (i) the local economy and (ii) a sustainable regional food system, where regional food system actors, producers and consumers in particular, are better connected. Although Tukums market appears as a connector of food demand (urban) and supply (rural), an analysis of these connections, interactions and their impact is missing.

3. Main Insights

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

As stated above, in Tukums, local producers struggle to access consumers, largely because of structural conditions (Grīviņš et al 2013; Korpa et al 2015). In this regional food chain landscape with disrupted links between local actors, new localities emerge through improved connections and strengthened relations between regional food chain actors, producers and consumers in particular. A direct link between them would allow establishing more personal and trustful relations, and improve transparency and traceability in the local food chain. Direct communication with producers allows consumers to develop a more personal link to rural areas and farms, and reduce the social distance between producers and consumers. In Latvia, consumers generally have a preference for local food, and demand for local food is growing (BNN 2017; Šteinfelde 2015). This preference for local products and supporting local producers reflects a (re)connection with local territories and identities (Litavniece 2017). Through these direct relations and communication between producers and consumers a range of regional food and rural resources, that originate in farms, also in woods, meadows and the sea, are given greater value (Upīte 2015).

However, there are also some barriers that hamper the development and consolidation of these new relations. Producers, in order to install themselves on the market, have to make financial and personal (time, energy) investments (Fjodorova 2009). As participants of an interconnected global food system, local producers face competition from cheaper imported food products also on Tukums market. Consumers have difficulties recognising and distinguishing local products from imported ones (Tukuma novada pārtikas stratēģija 2015-2020).

Tukums market appears to be a facilitator of regional economic and social life. Social and economic activities increase in the region (especially in Tukums town) on market days, with intensifying traffic and a higher number of people visiting other commercial and public institutions. As a support measure to local farmers, Tukums market also contributes to the maintenance and regeneration of “traditional” localities - rural settlements populated by farmers. Improved market access reduces the risk that people will leave farming and the countryside, or become dependent on social assistance benefits (Upīte 2015; Krivašonoka and Siliņa, 2015). In addition, the biggest share of local producers’ revenue is spent in the region (Korpa et al 2015), therefore contributing to the regional economy.

Tukums market is one of the central places for regional cultural events and festivities, such as town festivals, traditional celebrations and other events with concerts, dancing, theatre and other performances, and daily social gatherings that bring together people from the region (Rozenberga 2015). Tukums municipality, in cooperation with a private company, is investing in the market’s infrastructure in order to maintain it as an attractive and comfortable space for users.

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

As stated above, the marketplace is a historical and central place in Tukums, known for its food market, and social and cultural gatherings. Some regional development actors invest in and use this symbol to boost the region’s economic and social development. The regional tourism agency advertises the marketplace as a tourist destination. Tukums municipality and the private manager of Tukums market have been jointly considering how to better use the image of the market to brand and popularise the region. As noted above, both partners have made investments in the improvement of the market place (reconstruction, amenities, infrastructure, visual image) in order to maintain its attractiveness. In the meantime, there is a limited exchange of information between the municipality and the private company, which makes the market’s development less effective. For instance, the municipality does not have information about the number and profile of sellers, number of consumers, etc.

Tukums market is integrated in the Tukums municipal food strategy, the first municipal food strategy in Latvia, which is aimed at developing a sustainable regional food system that (i) supports the local economy and (ii) improves environmental quality and human health. Tukums region has favourable conditions for farming - more than 60% of the region’s administrative territory is covered by agricultural land; the highest number of

economically active companies are registered in the agricultural sector. In order to use these agricultural resources more effectively, the municipality has listed local producers' market access as one of the priorities of the food strategy. Developing the Tukums food market is one of the instruments to implement this goal. Involvement of the municipality in the development of the market is also a response to local farmers' expectations of more direct municipal support of their market initiatives (Grīviņš et al 2013).

The market is a catalyst for bottom-up food innovations, as interactions between various food chain actors facilitate novel solutions. Producers receive information directly from consumers about their food preferences, which is helpful in developing new products and also facilitates cooperation between producers in order to respond to consumer demand (Tisenkopfs et al 2015).

Tukums market offers a great diversity of food and other products. But one of its "unique" specialisations that distinguishes it from other markets of this kind is seafood. Therefore, the market makes use of specific regional resources: the presence of the sea and the tradition of fishing.

As a short and direct food chain, Tukums market allows producers and consumers to reduce the costs of storage, packaging, transportation (Krivašonoka and Siliņa, 2015; Tukuma novada pārtikas stratēģija 2015-2020). Efficient use of resources and shorter distances covered to distribute food reduce the environmental impact of food system activities (Tukuma novada pārtikas stratēģija 2015-2020).

4. Data Sources and Indicators

Data / Indicator	Source
Food production (statistics on farming structure, types and volumes of agricultural products etc; food processing and retailing)	Tukuma novada pārtikas stratēģija 2015-2020, Central Statistical Bureau
Producers' marketing strategies	Tisenkopfs et al (2015), unpublished SALSA project data, Korpa et al. (2015)
Consumer food purchase and consumption habits	Central Statistical Bureau, BNN (2017); Šteinfelde (2015)

5. Critical Appraisal of Data Use

As no reports or studies focused on Tukums market were identified, the sources of this rapid appraisal include several studies and regional planning documents on the food system in Tukums region, and media reports on Tukums market. The data and indicators are general and descriptive. There are several examples of rural-urban connections in Tukums food market,

such as producers meeting consumers, flows of food and knowledge, gatherings of regional residents, socio-cultural interactions etc. There is little data and a lack of in-depth analyses on (i) how exactly rural/food supply and urban/food demand interact and (ii) the outcomes and impacts of these interactions.

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