

Press release

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## Local food is more available in Swedish supermarkets than in Dutch

**In Sweden you can find much more local products in supermarkets than in the Netherlands. This is one of the conclusions that was drawn based on a comparative study conducted by two students from the University of Groningen. But why is this the case?**

The study shows that there are several factors, which influence the availability of local food products in the supermarkets such as the supermarkets' motive for including local food in the assortment, the level of requirements suppliers have to meet in order to be able sell their products in the supermarkets, and the organisational structure of the supermarkets.

### **What motivates the supermarkets to include local food in the assortment?**

According to the study, the supermarkets' motives for including local food in the assortment differs in the two countries. The main motive for including local products in the assortment in the Netherlands is to differentiate the supermarket from the competitors. In Sweden, on the other hand, the main reason for including local food in the assortment is because there is a demand from the consumers as they value local products to a very high degree, compared to other countries.

### **Getting the local products into the supermarkets**

The study shows that it is easier for local food producers to get into the supermarkets in Sweden than in the Netherlands. In the Netherlands the suppliers must meet many formal requirements, whereas in Sweden the supermarkets only set a low base of criteria to the suppliers and only demand certification from an external party if the suppliers deliver to more than four stores. In addition, the supermarkets in Sweden organise fairs, where the suppliers are invited to participate so that they can meet the consumers and let them buy or try the products, even though the products are not available in the supermarket's assortment.

The organisational structure of the supermarkets also influences the availability of local food products in the supermarkets' assortment. Some of the large supermarket chains in the Netherlands are franchise organisations where the head offices only give limited space to include local products. In Sweden, many of the stores are owned by the entrepreneurs who sell via the head office, which means that the entrepreneurs are controlling the assortment themselves. This means they have greater opportunity to influence the assortment in the store, although, there is still a basic range that must be followed.

### **Giving local products attention**

In the Netherlands, the local food products are placed somewhere among the other products, whereas in Sweden local products are given extra attention by placing the products in prominent positions and clearly marking them as local.

The study is among other things, based on interviews with representatives from large supermarket chains and their local suppliers in West Sweden and in the north of the Netherlands. The two students behind the study, Laura Wessels and Tjalle Stoelinga, presented their findings to the partners of the European project REFRAME at their last partner meeting in Germany. In REFRAME the North Sea Region-partners Denmark, Sweden, Germany, the Netherlands and Belgium are working together to create or strengthen local food chains.

The study is particularly interesting to the REFRAME project partners, who are working towards creating better conditions for food related SMEs in rural areas. In fact, REFRAME has also played a role in getting more local food products in the ICA stores as the Swedish REFRAME partners Agroväst Livsmedel and Lokalproducerat i Väst are cooperating with the ICA-Maxi supermarket. Through the REFRAME project the partners have supported the stores in finding suitable producers as well as organised farm visits to create an increased understanding and interest among the supermarket personnel for the local producer. According to Agroväst Livsmedel, clear incentives to sell more locally produced food from a central level within the chains of grocery stores, have been a prerequisite for achieving success in the local grocery stores.

On the project website you can find other examples of how REFRAME is promoting locally produced food and thereby creating better conditions for food related SMEs in rural areas.

**For further information please contact**

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Photo: In the ICA store local products are given extra attention by placing the products in prominent positions and clearly marking them as local “Det bäst från trakten” (the best from the neighbourhood).





Photo: Sofia Kvist from AkSe Gårdsprodukter, a small producer delivering to ICA, is standing beside the carrots she has delivered to the supermarket.