

Mapping process to identify suppliers and interested buyers of regional food

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In the first phase of the REFRAME project, the district of Wesermarsch made a mapping of supply and demand of regionally produced food. The aim was to get an overview of available suppliers and interested buyers of regional food products, in order to be able to do a proper project planning.

What has be done

Initially, the district of Wesermarsch was defined as the region to study. Due to the higher purchasing power in the neighboring counties Oldenburg and Bremen, these regions were also included. Another reason for including a larger geographical area in the study was the limited product range in Wesermarsch (predominantly milk and meat production) and the small number of food producing companies that market their products themselves.

The target groups for the study were mainly food producers that market their products themselves, processing companies (dairies, butchers, bakers), distributors and large purchasers (hospitals, retirement homes, company canteens, restaurants, cafés, schools and nurseries).

Guidelines for a mapping process

- 1) Define the geographical area for the study and develop a schedule for the work process. Are there big cities in the immediate area that should be included because they have a high purchasing power?
- 2) Define your target groups (for example producers, distributors, large purchasers).
- 3) Contact associations, institutions and experts in the area which have established networks you can access for your study. For example farmer associations.
- 4) Do internet-based research to find SMEs and get useful information about them.
- 5) Contact appropriate SMEs directly through phone calls and in-person interviews. Communication via newsletters and emails are not as effective, due to lack of responses.
- 6) The survey should be short and well prepared due to the limited time of the SMEs. It is important to be open, listen carefully and let the respondents tell their stories to get valuable information in addition to the survey.

Results

As a total 34 producers, 33 food processors, 33 distributors, 47 large customers and 9 schools expressed interest in the REFRAME project.

The study showed that there is no common marketing initiative to support small and medium-sized food producers to reach the regional market. There is six regular weekly markets and one monthly „rural women market“ with regional products.

The producers expressed their need for support for marketing and for building long-term partnerships with regional customers. They also saw a problem in the consumers limited appreciation and willingness to buy products from the local area.

The customers was prepared to cooperate with regional food producers under certain conditions, such as good quality, delivery service, adequate price and enough quantities. The potential buyers also saw the centralized purchasing practises, strict legislation and far too small staff capacity for processing raw materials, as barriers for using regional products in canteens and food retail markets. The schools and kindergartens were mainly supplied by an external catering company, that made it difficult to switch to more regional products.

Next step

Landkreis Wesermarch is working on developing networks in the regional food chain and building collaborations between regional food producers and large purchasers. To achieve this we will organize meetings, workshops and disseminate good practises. The main topics are logistics, food education, marketing, creating a higher understanding for the different needs and networks.

Do you want to learn more

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