

# **Enacting Resilience: the Response of Local Solidarity-based Partnerships for Agroecology to the Covid-19 Crisis**



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# Executive Summary

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URGENCI is a network of citizens, small-scale food producers, consumers, activists, and researchers representing Local Solidarity-based Partnerships for Agroecology (LSPA) networks and initiatives in over 40 countries. We wanted to gain a detailed understanding of how solidarity-based short supply chains and territorial food distribution systems support people's access to food during the Covid-19 crisis throughout the world. It is of considerable importance to understand and to share the role these initiatives and schemes play in crises.

- The practitioners of LSPA, producers and consumers alike, have been enacting their own vision of resilience: they have been emphasizing the importance of social connections in their everyday commitments, rather than relying solely on technological solutions like click and collect. This is demonstrated by the observation of an increased level of commitment of members, through farm visits, help given during distribution and work on the farm. The partnerships have been strengthened in the Covid-19 period.
- LSPAs have been providing reliable and solid grounding for producers in a period marked by panic buying, high volatility and the disorganization of long supply chains.
- LSPAs have also been extending support to consumers. For many groups this is nothing new. The importance of social cohesion and access to healthy local food for all has been stressed, including by international institutions.
- Many actors of conventional food markets have been trying to capture the momentum, but the LSPA movement is confident it cannot be co-opted as long as its principles are clearly stated and followed.



# Introduction

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Since the beginning of the outbreak in December 2019, the on-going Covid-19 crisis has had multiple impacts on how our food systems work and operate, from the closing of covered food market halls and open-air markets to the prolonged school shut-downs (up to 10 weeks in many European countries). The weaknesses and gaps in the global food distribution system have never been so obvious. The exploitative reliance on migrant labour on large-scale industrial farms, and the related fear of countrywide food shortages and gaps in distribution in long supply chains amongst consumers and businesses alike (especially during the early stages of the pandemic in February and March 2020), also highlight the urgent need to adapt collective production and consumption food patterns.

In the midst of the crisis, the need for solidarity-based, resilient food systems became increasingly evident. Long-standing and viable models such as Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) and other types of Local Solidarity-based Partnerships for Agroecology (LSPAs) have played a critical role in feeding local communities safely and efficiently. The crisis also amplified the connection between production of and access to local food, climate change, and the potential of sustainable agroecological practices of small-scale family farms to provide healthy, nutritious food for all. The relocalisation of our food systems and grounding them more strongly in direct short supply chains between producers and consumers can play a key role in ensuring that solidarity economy and food sovereignty - two of the critical levers in this essential struggle for the survival of humanity - become recognized and normalized around the world.

Through surveys, targeted interviews, and research we have worked to find innovative responses and experiences of LSPAs and its supporters to address challenging questions such as:

- *Do the initiatives maintain the weekly food distributions?*
- *Is there an increase in the number of persons involved in LSPAs ?*
- *How responsive is the reaction of both producers and consumers in ensuring that distribution is carried out in accordance with new, highly rigorous health and safety regulations?*
- *How do LSPAs support marginalised and vulnerable people in their communities, and do LSPAs take further actions to support people in need outside their initiative?*

Most importantly, we wanted to learn how LSPAs remained resilient and what emerging steps forward were taken to thrive. This research presents a large collection of innovation, practices, methods, and approaches deployed during Covid-19 by LSPAs around the world. It was conducted by a team of committed activist-researchers in the movement. Most of them have been involved in LSPA initiatives on an everyday basis. They are the best-placed and the most legitimate to draw a trustworthy image of the response of LSPA. The highlight in this report is thus on voices from the field.

***“We gave many people a meaning to their life, at a moment when they were lost and did not know how to act”*** (Boulongne, France, 2020)

# 1. Depicting The Global LSPA Movement in 2020

## Finding common ground between diverse initiatives

URGENCI as a social movement represents all forms of direct partnerships between producers and consumers, particularly Local Solidarity-based Partnerships for Agroecology (LSPAs), of which Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) is the best-known iteration. One of the core missions of URGENCI is to raise awareness of the social impact of these alternative farming and consumption systems and make them more visible and widely recognized.

Community Supported Agriculture was defined by the European CSA Research Group of URGENCI as “a direct partnership based on the human relationship between people and one or several producer(s), whereby the risks, responsibilities and rewards of farming are shared, through a long-term, binding agreement” (Volz, Weckenbrock, Cressot, & Parot, 2016).

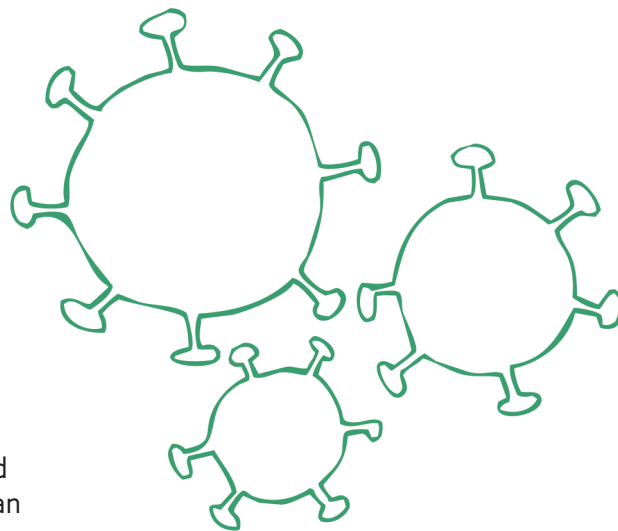
In most countries where it has taken root, CSA can also be described as a contract-based direct sales system. The key characteristics for CSA also include up-front payment of a share of season’s worth of vegetables and long-term commitment to a farmer. However, CSA is just one of the various forms of LSPA. There are other types of LSPA. Three are clearly identified and were chosen as options to be selected for the on-line survey. For example, some farmers’ markets can reasonably be considered as LSPAs, if farmers effectively come to sell their own products, and if the farmers’ markets are established on a set of commitments. Similarly, some food cooperatives are based on partnerships. Even if most of them are not direct sales, but rather function as intermediaries, they provide a logistical platform, buy from multiple farms and sell to multiple groups, and some can effectively be considered as LSPAs.

In the research and subsequent report, the term **Local Solidarity-based Partnerships for Agroecology (LSPA)** was finally chosen. This concept was coined by the participants to the first URGENCI symposia in 2004 and 2005. Instead of setting technical standards or set operational mechanisms or schemes, LSPA merely expresses a set of key common values:

- **Local:** the idea is to build a close and trusting relationship between the producer(s) and the “eaters”. This is best done through frequent face-to-face encounters that require geographical proximity.
- **Solidarity-based:** the key motivation in this model is to support producers from the same area.
- **Partnership:** food activists forge a new type of alliance between producers and the people they feed.
- **“For Agroecology”:** a partnership relies on a mutual relationship, where the main counterpart for the consumers’ support is the producer’s commitment to agroecological principles. According to the FAO, Agroecology includes 10 elements e.g. solidarity economy<sup>1</sup>.

The LSPA movement counters the problems of intensive agricultural production and distribution with the solution of connecting family farmers to just, equitable and supportive markets. The LSPA practitioners are committed to partnership, local exchange, and direct relationships where producers are fairly paid and consumers share the risks and rewards of sustainable agriculture in return for their share of healthy, nutritious, locally-grown food. They frequently have mechanisms for social inclusion of marginalised families. Both LSPA farmers and consumers are also committed to agroecology and all farming practices

that protect healthy soil and biodiversity, fight the climate crisis and foster social solidarity economy. As a result, we decided not to restrict the scope of this research to Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) alone, but to open a wider perspective.



It is important to note that some initiatives that are inspired by LSPA but do not fully meet the criteria to be considered a partnership based on mutual commitment, were however included in the research. One example is the REKO2 model, which is mostly widespread in the Nordic countries. REKO was started in Finland by an organic farmer who had toured some French AMAP<sup>3</sup> initiatives. It now mainly consists of Facebook-based pop-up markets: prior to the distribution, each producer sends out a list of products available for sale, and Facebook group members place their orders. The buyers are Facebook group members, and they buy directly from the producers. A small portion of the members (core group members) are committed in a long-term perspective, as in local Solidarity-based partnerships, but the majority are occasional buyers. We chose to take this model on board because it claims to be inspired by and linked to the CSA model, and because it can be considered as a form of local direct sales partnership.

There were several options offered to the respondents in question 8 “*How would you describe your initiative?*”: Community Supported Agriculture, Food co-op, Direct sales scheme and Community Supported Fisheries (CSF). A cell was left open to add “Other”. Through this cell, we collected other types of initiatives, described by the respondents such as “urban farms” and “community gardens”.

## How was the research conducted?

Due to Covid-19 restrictions and health risks, this research was conducted as a desktop-based remote study based on first-hand account and analysis. Four main research fields were identified: The **resilience and reliability of LSPAs**, the **enhanced role of LSPAs for food producers**, the **role of LSPAs in supporting marginalised people** and the **extent to which co-optation attempts, competing or undermining models arose during the crisis**.

The analysis relied on three main categories of sources. We first conducted a **literature review**. It consisted of compiling existing materials published by the various LSPA platforms about how Covid-19 affected their members, as well as relevant material from other organisations in the field of agroecological food systems, food security, agricultural and food policy and reports of the impact of Covid-19 on different areas of the food system (FAO, Global Network for the Right to Food and Nutrition, CSM report on the Covid-19 situation etc.).

Then, a short online survey to collect information from LSPAs or CSA initiatives around the world was designed and circulated. This survey is available in 10 different languages: English, Chinese, Spanish, French, Arabic, Portuguese, German, Japanese, Turkish, Italian and Polish<sup>4</sup>. A major translation effort was crucial to ensure the geographical and cultural diversity of respondents. The survey was built around 9 keywords or multiple-choice questions about the identity of the respondents, and of the responding LSPA initiative. In addition, there are 3 yes/no questions, 2 questions on scale about the increase or decrease of the number of people participating in the initiatives, and about the difficulty to adjust to the new

2 REKO is the Swedish abbreviation for Fair Consumption. It started in a mostly Swedish-speaking part of Finland. For an account on how it started: <https://urgenci.net/reko-a-winning-concept-in-finland/>

3 AMAP stands for *Association pour le maintien d'une Agriculture paysanne*, literally “Association for maintaining small-scale family farming”. It is the French iteration of Community Supported Agriculture. The first AMAP partnership between a producer and a group of committed consumers was created in 2001.

4 The on-line survey can still be consulted there: [pollen.urgenci.net/sosfi](https://pollen.urgenci.net/sosfi) (last visit 8 December 2020)

health and safety requirements, and 4 open questions to further inform the preceding answers, such as the way in which the outside food producers could be supported, and how marginalized or vulnerable consumers could be helped.

The third main source of information are the in-depth interviews conducted with relevant actors defined as: 1) national network coordinators, 2) best practitioners and long-term LSPA members 3) members of LSPAs supporting access to healthy local food for marginalised

people in particular. These interviewees were chosen for their breadth of expertise, knowledge and experience of working as/or with LSPAs initiatives. These interviews were conducted by URGENCI or one of the “Regional Coordinators” (North America, Latin America, Europe, Africa, Mediterranean Region, Asia) that supported the research.

These regional coordinators were selected and organized into a team that received a specific prior on-line training on documenting successful innovation, practices, methods, and approaches of LSPA responses to Covid-19. This team conducted the research, and ensured all the material collected was translated into English.

## A young, growing and increasingly diversified movement

There is no existing global survey on LSPA around the world. There are surveys to monitor the number of initiatives in different parts of the world, but their focus has not been defined in a homogeneous way. We can therefore only rely on scattered data to develop rough estimates of the number of existing partnerships. Table 1 shows current figures primarily focused on CSA, the predominant declination of the many LSPA models.

COUNTRY	REFERENCE	GROUPS	FARMS	CONSUMERS	NUMBER OF SURVEY RESPONDENTS
ARGENTINA	-	-	-	-	1
AUSTRALIA	-	-	-	-	1
AUSTRIA	(Volz et al., 2016)	26	30	1500	2
BANGLADESH	-	-	-	-	1
BELGIUM (Gasap model)	(Réseau des GASAP, 2020a)	101	36	4800	14



BRAZIL	(A. A. Molina, personal communication, November 2020)	150	450	6000	43
BURKINA FASO	(URGENCI, 2018)	5	at least 100	1080	1
CANADA (QUEBEC)	(Parot, Rühlmann, & Vallée, 2010)		103	9700	1
CHINA (ONLY CSA)	(URGENCI, 2019)	1000	1000	250000	38
CZECH REP. (ONLY CSA)	(S. Krcilkova, personal communication, 2020)	80	30	5000	2
FINLAND (ONLY CSA)	(Volz et al., 2016)	10		2000	3
FRANCE (ONLY CSA)	(MIRAMAP, 2019)	2120	3700	300000	34
GERMANY (ONLY CSA)	(Netzwerk Solidarische Landwirtschaft, 2020)	318	400	50000	35
GREECE (ONLY CSA)	2020	3	3	60	3
IRELAND (ONLY CSA)	(Volz et al., 2016)	7	7	485	6
ITALY (LSPA)	(Volz et al., 2016)	2000	3000	440000	13
JAPAN (ONLY CSA)	(Japan Organic Agriculture Association (JOAA), 2010)	300	1000-1200	?	44
KENYA	-	-	-	-	1
MEXICO	-	-	-	-	2
MAROCCO (LSPA)	(URGENCI, 2016)	5	20	500	2
NORWAY	-	35	35	6000	4
PALESTINE	(URGENCI, 2016)	3	3	300	1
PHILIPPINES	-	-	-	-	1

POLAND	(Volz et al., 2016)	8	8	800	2
PORTUGAL	-	-	-	-	4
ROMANIA	(Volz et al., 2016)	10	16	1000	1
SENEGAL	(URGENCI, 2018)	3	350	50	1
SOUTH AFRICA	-	-	-	-	1
SPAIN	(Volz et al., 2016)	75	75	7500	3
SWITZERLAND	(Volz et al., 2016)	60	60	10800	3
TAIWAN (PROVINCE OF CHINA)	-	-	-	-	1
TOGO	2018	2	30	250	2
TUNISIA	(URGENCI, 2016)	2			1
TURKEY	(URGENCI, 2016)	35	40	3000	20
UK	(Volz et al., 2016)	180	100	18000	8
URUGUAY	-	-	-	-	1
USA	(USDA, 2016)	6200	7398	1000000	24
TOTAL	-	12456	16319	2118975	327

Table 1 - Global figures on LSPA initiatives in 2020.

Of course, CSA, and more largely LSPA, have been taking root in many different parts of the globe, and the movement cannot just be limited to the countries mentioned above. There are CSAs in other countries in West Africa, Latin America, North Africa and the Near East, Central Asia and Oceania. But giving these estimates for the countries where the majority of the partnerships are established allows us to state a rather conservative estimate of a total of 2 million consumers around the world getting their food through LSPA.

Our sample reflects the geographical diversity of the LSPA movement, with more than 40 countries represented in the survey, and a majority of responses coming from Japan, Brazil, China, France and Germany (see figure 1).

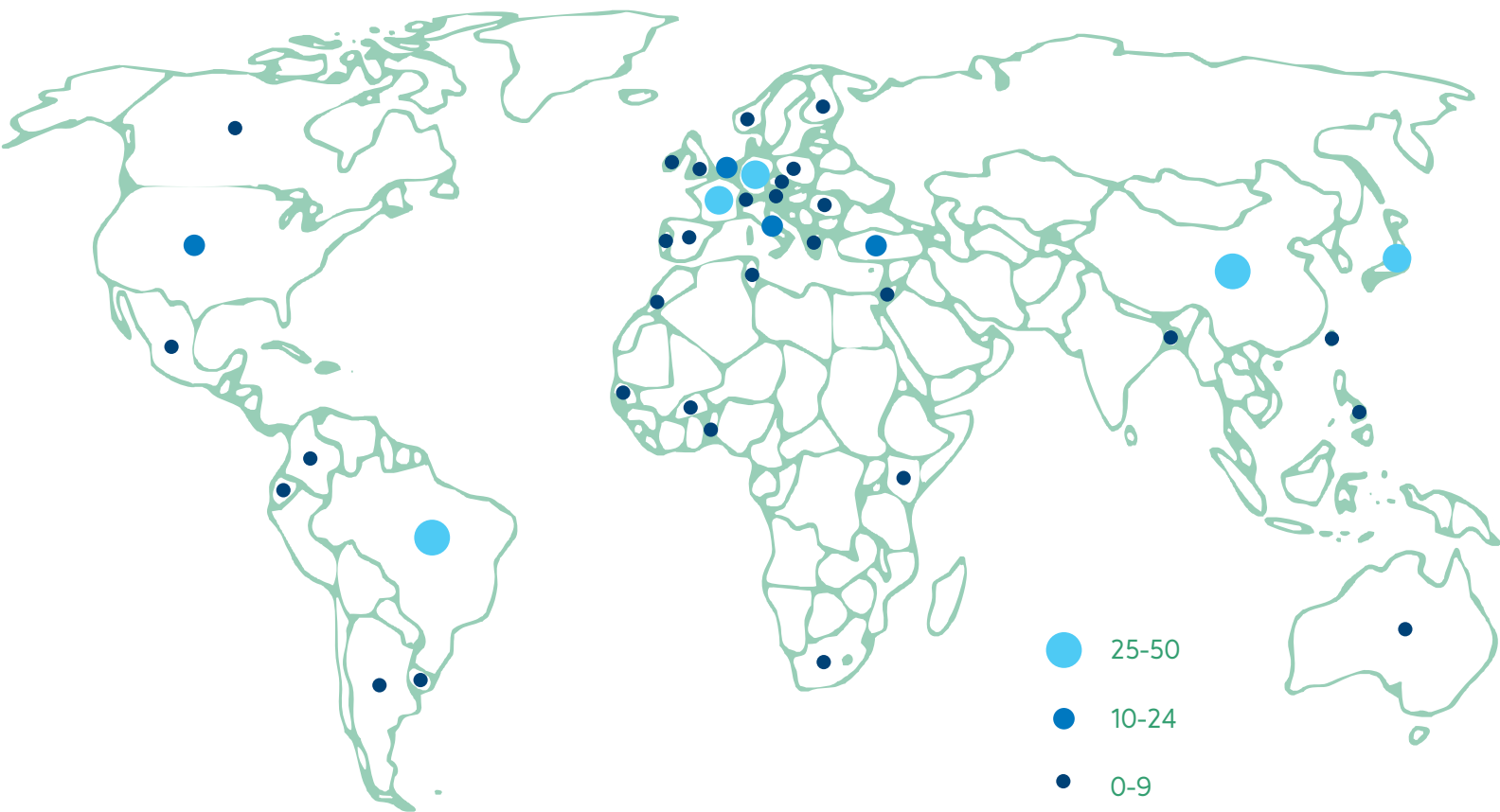


Figure 1 - Map of responses to the online survey. *SOSFI Research Team. (2020). SOSFI-Database: Online Survey Results 'The State of Community Supported Agriculture and other Local Solidarity-based Partnerships for Agroecology in the Time of Covid-19'.*

In Figure 2, we see that the sample reflects the youth of our movement and its on-going growth. There was an increase in LSPAs even in the midst of the Covid-19 crisis. 2020 is the most frequent answer to the question “when was your initiative created” (about 10% of the total number of answers). It seems the crisis did not undermine the growth of CSAs or dismantle existing groups. More than half of the responding initiatives were founded since 2013 (*SOSFI Research Team, 2020*).

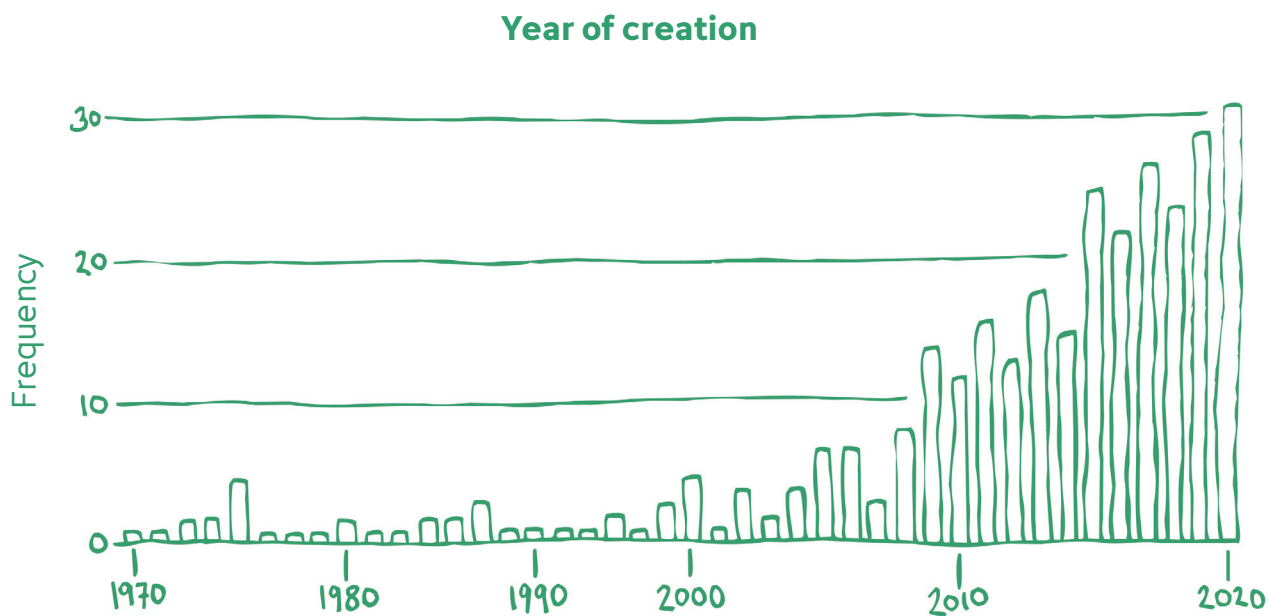


Figure 2 - Year of creation. *SOSFI Research Team. (2020). SOSFI-Database: Online Survey Results 'The State of Community Supported Agriculture and other Local Solidarity-based Partnerships for Agroecology in the Time of Covid-19'.*

The diversity of models is also reflected in our research: over 70% of the initiatives are CSAs, while the rest is composed of a diverse mixture of food co-ops, direct sales schemes, CSFs, farmers markets, and hybrids of different LSPA models<sup>5</sup> (see figure 3).

### How would you describe your initiative?

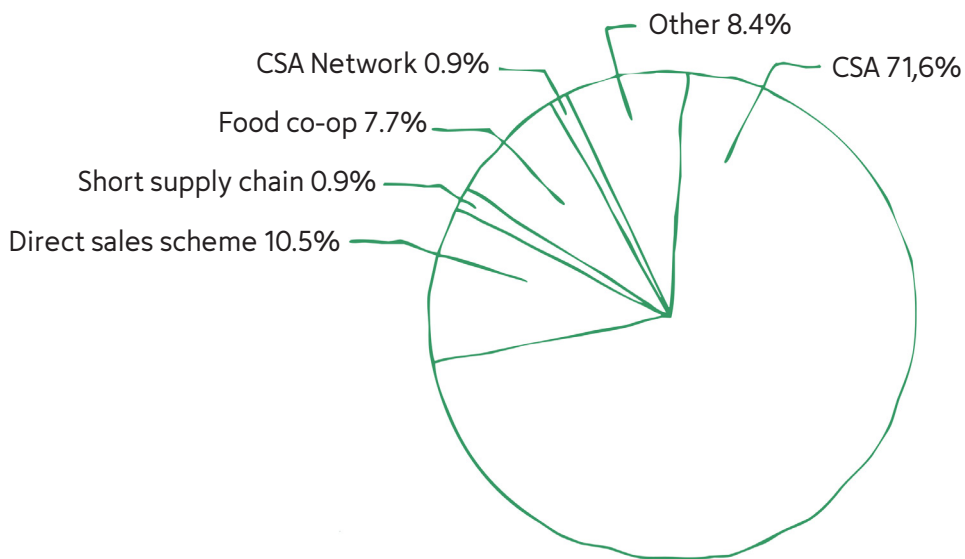
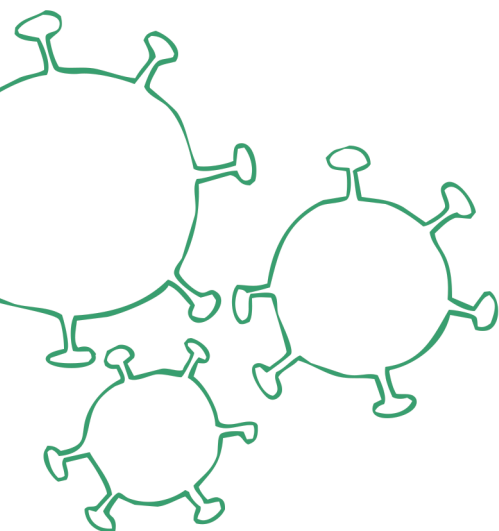


Figure 3: How would you describe your initiative *SOSFI Research Team. (2020). SOSFI-Database: Online Survey Results 'The State of Community Supported Agriculture and other Local Solidarity-based Partnerships for Agroecology in the Time of Covid-19'.*



5 The dominance of CSA can be due to several factors, including the fact that it is the dominant form used by most members of URGENCI in the framework of this study. New LSPA networks and initiatives were not as easily contacted as the networks and partners already clearly identified and known to the research team.

## 2. Rooted in resilience: LSPAs remain stable during the crisis

One of the clearest results of our survey is that LSPAs have been standing firm in a stumbling world. LSPAs were able to maintain services in most countries, address increased demand in membership and volunteering and implement changes to their operations. The flexibility of these diverse models - namely advance payments, direct producer-consumer relationships, and accommodations to volunteer capacity in operations - supports the resilient nature of LSPAs surveyed, and their ability to navigate the varied unforeseen circumstances that arose within the crisis.

### Minimal to no interruption of deliveries

Food shortages and bottlenecks within the global food supply chains were some of the first signs of the impact of the Covid-19 crisis on the food system. Long supply chains were sometimes interrupted because of infection clusters and hotspots within industrial food processing facilities (HLPE, 2020).

Additionally, food availability was more strongly limited due to price increases, in particular for nutritious food and in import-dependent countries (*The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2020*, 2020).

In this volatile and uncertain context, the issue of interruption of deliveries is thus key to addressing the resilience of LSPAs. At least **90% of the LSPAs that responded to the survey didn't experience any interruption of deliveries at all**. This is the cornerstone of the dominant narrative in our sample concerning the proven resilience of LSPAs.

Since LSPAs mainly consist of direct partnerships between consumers and producers, especially CSAs, the ability to jointly develop solutions helps to maintain operations such as securing CSA memberships to provide critical up-front revenue to farmers, or members preparing and bagging shares at distribution sites. For example in Japan, Teikei's strong partnership and mutual trust provides guaranteed sales of their produce for Teikei farmers, while continued food delivery provides a sense of security in Teikei consumer members. Other LSPAs, such as direct sales schemes, food coops and farmers markets, have shown much resilience by providing markets for farmers and continued deliveries to consumers.

Only 32 out of 328 (around 10%) of those surveyed responded that they had experienced partial or full interruption. Interruptions were generally for rather short periods, such as 2 or 3 weeks. Many farmers markets closed temporarily due to customer concerns, while others, principally in rural and semi rural areas remained open. Once the markets did reopen, some markets experienced an increase in the number of customers compared to the period prior to the pandemic. Most of the interruptions reported occurred in particular circumstances. Strict lockdown measures like the mobility restrictions in Argentina or Greece forced the initiatives whose partners are spread around different parts of the country to stop distributing, as they were no longer allowed to cross borders between counties (Greece) or provinces (Argentina) (Ggiouki, Greece, 2020; Regional Comarca Andina - Tierra Linda, Argentina, 2020).

Community Supported Fisheries (CSFs) were particularly affected and had to stop their distributions: there was a 2-week period when it was either not possible to go out fishing, or the restrictions on sales were so severe that there was no opportunity to sell any seafood (LocalCatchNetwork, USA, 2020; Pleine Mer, France, 2020a). Most CSFs are organized as short supply chains rather than direct sales, and logistics intermediaries initially faced a grey zone in countries under strict lockdown before they could get an official permit to continue their operations. Furthermore, many CSF pick-up points are organized in conjunction with restaurants that were forced to close for several weeks (Pleine Mer, France, 2020b).

The issue of getting access to pick-up points has been a constant concern for our respondents. For example, in Belgium, one of the countries most hard-hit by the pandemic, and with some of the toughest lock-down measures, the GASAP-Brussels network, reported that only one group (out of over 100) had to stop because their weekly distributions normally took place in schools, which were closed. Other CSAs also had to change distribution sites due to concerns about the space available for indoor distributions. They either found new sites or moved outdoors for the rest of the season.

Brazil is the only country represented in this survey where distribution points were closed because of suspicions of Covid-19: "On more than one occasion, we had to suspend the delivery or collection of food from one of the agricultural organizations, due to suspicions of Covid-19 that were not confirmed" (CSA CEAFFIM, Brazil, 2020)

During an in-depth interview, a representative of the CSA network even reported the death of a farmer due to Covid-19 in the area of Manaus.

## Adaptive to new health and safety regulations

The fact that 90% of the responding initiatives did not experience any interruption demonstrates the capacity to adapt to the new health and safety regulations. This is a major finding, as the context was incredibly challenging everywhere. Here are some excerpts from the on-line survey, which underline some of the logistical difficulties faced by LSPAs. In particular LSPA coordinators were able to modify their procedures, but costs for additional materials such as bags and protective equipment/materials were noticeable. A respondent from a Brazilian CSA testifies to a cost increase linked to *"the use of disposable bags and to "hiring" workforce for the pick up activity"* (CSA Sao Jose, BR, 2020).

Other LSPA coordinators note that *"pre-packing the vegetables was extremely time-consuming; initially, procurement of disinfectants and masks was problematic"* (Solawi Kümper Heide, DE, 2020).

A Brazilian CSA's response illustrates this problem: *"Logistical issues became more complex and deliveries took longer. Food started to be delivered in pre-assembled shares and at 3 pick-up points. The previous method had involved a single pick-up point where members (co-farmers) took their food from boxes to assemble their own share."* (CSA CEAFFIM, Brazil, 2020).

Many CSA coordinators based in the USA complain about the inconsistency of sanitary protocols enforced by local officials, which also kept changing very fast, with a risk for practitioners not to be able to keep track of the changes. Most of the initiatives were able to adjust to the health and safety provisions. Depending on the ability of the initiative to adapt and to find quick alternative ways to organise the distribution process, the majority of the initiatives were easily able to adapt and consequently to remain functional.

## Keeping conviviality alive during Covid-19

Among the major adaptation obstacles mentioned by many respondents was the socio-cultural aspect, and the necessity to adapt to a new way of life which was very different to their own social culture.

*“It was challenging because we had to adapt to the new way of life, especially at community level. In Africa, and in our countries in particular, there is real human warmth, and thus being told that we should not greet others any more, that we should respect a one-meter physical distance from others... etc., was not easy at all” - (Burkina Faso, 2020).*

We chose this excerpt because the contrast depicted is the most striking, but the same applied to responses from other locations.

*“[...] Many challenges related to food safety [...] are difficult to face due to the lack of adequate infrastructure, knowledge / training and culture in general. The demand on consumers’ side has grown, however there is still considerable work to respond to all the requirements related to safety.” - (Colectivo Zacahuiztco, Mexico, 2020).*

In a different context, a French AMAP Board member regrets the fact that social interactions were drastically reduced, in particular that aperitif drinks could not be maintained (AMAPiens au Pays de Brive, France, 2020). Many respondents highlighted in the in-depth interviews, that the key value of the close relationship between group members, conviviality, or what some researchers have described as social embeddedness (Galt, 2013), could not be fully implemented in the same way during this period. Some of the interactions moved on-line. The nascent Italian CSA network, which had convened the first national CSA meetings in the last 2 years also reported that it was too difficult for such an organization to keep meeting, so that it stopped functioning during the crisis.

One difficulty mentioned however was that where the model switched to home deliveries, while this supported the on-going access to healthy food for consumers under lock-down, it detracted from the time available to producers to work in the field and increased their costs.



Despite these difficulties, there seems to be a widely shared narrative of a successful adaptation on the part of LSPAs. The question #12 of the online survey is *“How difficult was it for your initiative to adjust to the health and safety provisions?”*.

The respondents were asked to choose a level of difficulty on a scale, ranging from 1 to 5, 1 being “very difficult” and 5 “very easy”. Only 10 respondents, out of 326, chose 1, “very difficult” (3% of the total), and 63 “difficult” (19,3%). The average value given in response to this question is around 3,4/5, thus confirming that most of the respondents did not find it difficult to adapt. Even in countries with stricter measures, such as Belgium, Italy, France and China, the narrative seems to be one of successful adaptation.

In the interviews, a question was asked to explore whether the LSPA coordinators and farmers were anticipating the implementation of some adaptation measures on a permanent basis. The answer is clear: the members are adapting until the situation returns to normal without planning for long-term adjustments. There are however some notable exceptions. Some mechanisms that were inaugurated may be maintained in the future. For example, a CSA in Finland reported that a neighbourhood-based system to reach the elderly could be continued. Everywhere, there is a shared feeling among

respondents that it is easier for LSPA to adapt than it is for open-air markets, and that LSPA pick-up points are almost certainly safer areas than inside supermarkets.

Many coordinators are generous in providing details about how they organised to keep their initiative functioning during the period.

*“Our food distribution takes place in a large garden. The volunteers who prepare the shares just had to start wearing a mask and washing hands before assembling the shares. Otherwise, the eaters came as usual, respecting physical distancing and avoiding staying around” - (GASAP Panier au Guidon, BE, 2020).*

Some initiatives were already structured to fit the upcoming regulations. Some of the Portuguese and Brazilian CSAs were already implementing a pre-ordering system that helped producers to assemble shares up-front:

*“As the shares were already assembled before deliveries, we just introduced a drive-through delivery system for vehicles without physical contact. Ordering and choosing items was already done electronically via Google form” - (CSA Network Brazil, 2020)*

Based on the answers to this open question collected through the on-line surveys, an Info Box *Adjustment measures implemented by LSPAs* was created detailing the measures taken by responding groups and networks.

### Info Box #1: Adjustment measures implemented by LSPAs

Issue faced	Solution found
Closing of public and community buildings, restaurants	Distribution point moved to private garden / outdoor space, mobile pop-up markets
Elderly, vulnerable, or other homebound community members not able to go to distribution sites for food pick-ups	Home deliveries
Prohibited interpersonal contacts	Pre-packaging
Potential virus exposure on the farm or at distribution point	Wearing masks, gloves, minimizing number of people touching food, hand-washing stations, use of hand sanitizer
Social distancing	Scheduling differentiated pick-up times, home deliveries, change of site to offer space for preparing packing shares and pick-ups, outdoor pick-ups

The ability of LSPA to keep functioning in this unstable period is a major sign of a high level of resilience.



## Did a boom in demand translate into a boom in LSPA membership?

One of the core interests of the research was the evolution in the numbers of people participating in LSPA initiatives. The results from the online survey reveal that since the outbreak of the pandemic, **the number of people**, i.e. members or volunteers, **increased on average** (see figure 4).

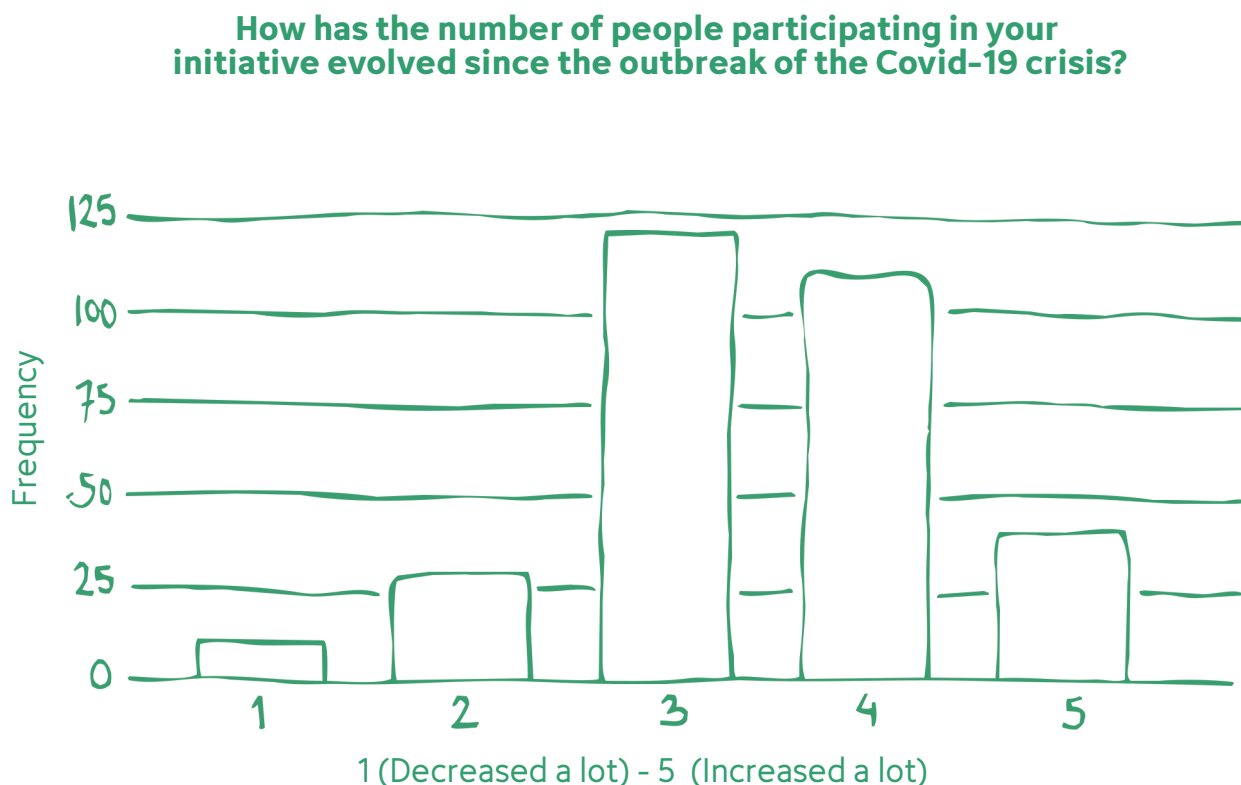


Figure 4: How has the number of people participating in your initiative evolved since the outbreak of the Covid-19 crisis? *SOSFI Research Team. (2020). SOSFI-Database: Online Survey Results 'The State of Community Supported Agriculture and other Local Solidarity-based Partnerships for Agroecology in the Time of Covid-19'.*

In Chinese LSPAs the survey revealed a striking 42% average increase in participation, as they added percentages of the de- or increase to their response. The example of Shared Harvest Farm in Info Box #2 shows how Chinese LSPAs organised under new circumstances and increased their consumer base also through more home deliveries; this was already common in China prior to the crisis (CSA Network China, 2020).

## Info Box #2: Increased box scheme deliveries balance income losses in China

*“During the epidemic, the number of orders for Shared Harvest Farm increased significantly. Moreover, due to traffic control, many suppliers that cooperated with the farm were unable to deliver goods normally. Some employees were trapped at home and could not return to work in time, resulting in shortage of labor. Farm visits and activities could not be carried out either. In order to cope with the challenge of the epidemic, the farm decided to increase the number of deliveries. All members changed to unified delivery standard boxes, and the product prices remained unchanged. All employees and workers who live in Beijing had to return to work and to wear masks. Employees in other positions participated in the product packaging and delivery process, and delivered fresh vegetables to member families. In order to solve the problem of insufficient rice supply, the farm sold the rice stocked in 2018 as rations, preventing panic of some citizens. During the epidemic, the income from farm visits and activities of Shared Harvest Farm was zero, but the orders for agricultural products increased significantly, which balanced the income and labor of the farm, thus effectively avoiding the risks of the epidemic” (Rui Yin, CN, 2020).*

Beyond the issue of increased membership within LSPA, there are multiple reports that the members or external volunteers became more involved. Farmers in the Netherlands, in Finland, France, the USA, in Austria and elsewhere, noted a sudden **influx of volunteer hours committed by members** (CSA network Netherlands, 2020; GeLa Ochsenherz, Austria, 2020; Oma Maa, Finland, 2020). It was actually often a challenge to organize a work plan that would be appropriate for volunteers with little practical experience of farming. One of the reasons for such a remarkable interest was that volunteering on the farm became the only authorised form of outdoors excursion and exercise for those who could not otherwise break the lock-down without an official permit. This shows the social importance of LSPA farms. An interviewee from Oma Maa (2020) in Finland recalls that “there were up to 5 tents on the farm. It started to look like a summer camp!”

## Rise in awareness, interest and social recognition

Some survey respondents however stated that the awareness and interest in CSA increased strongly due to the pandemic (e.g. Carnegie Hill CSA, USA, 2020; Poiscaille, France, 2020; SoLaWi Bonn / Rhein-Sieg, Germany, 2020; Uozumi Farm, Japan, 2020). The interest in LSPA rose on both the consumers’ and the food producers’ sides, and gave a significant push to the creation of new partnerships (Agroecopolis, Greece, 2020). A study published by the HLPE (2020) of the FAO underlines an increase in awareness:

*“At the same time, in North America, there was a resurgence of interest in community supported agriculture (CSA) subscriptions, as people increasingly grew concerned about the safety of shopping in supermarkets and desired more direct access to fresh fruits and vegetables (Worstell 2020), meat and fish products”.*

There therefore seems to be a gap between the perceived increase of awareness and interest versus the actual increase in numbers.

## Increase in creation of new LSPAs

However, **one third of the interviewees noted an increase in the creation of new LSPA initiatives** e.g. CSAs, REKO-Rings<sup>6</sup> and small-scale farms practicing direct sales in their environment. Many new CSAs were created at a global level in 2020, e.g. in Brazil, Finland, Poland and Germany (CSA network Brazil,

2020; FER Fundacja Ekorozwuj, Poland, 2020; Netzwerk Solidarische Landwirtschaft, Germany, 2020; Oma Maa, Finland, 2020; SOSFI Research Team, 2020). Especially in Brazil, the pandemic accelerated the growth in numbers of CSAs and other types of LSPAs (CSA network Brazil, 2020); see Info Box #3.

### Info Box #3: Rapid Growth of the CSA Movement in Brazil

*“The CSA movement is rapidly growing in Brazil, a trend that has been observed since before the pandemic affected all of us. By acting with effectiveness, the Brazilian CSA network members were able to make the health and safety changes needed to continue safe[ly] with food production and distribution, and to share the recommendations with everyone in their CSA. Recently, there has been an increasing demand for CSAs and other LSPAs. There are new consumers who wish to access quality food, who are interested in giving a chance to local and solidarity economy and also want to learn more about agroecology and more harmonious relationships between urban and rural people.[...]” - (A. A. Molina, personal communication, November 2020)*

The informal Turkish CSA network reported that young and old people left big cities, in particular Ankara, to renew their connection with farming or start farming in their villages. This migration from cities to the countryside resulted in a threefold increase in production in the villages. They identified a *“rapid increase in the number of initiatives”* and a rising awareness of agroecology in urban populations (CSA network Turkey, 2020).

### Interpretations: Why is there no clear-cut increase?

Assessing the role of the Covid-19 crisis in boosting the growth of the LSPA movement is not easy. The general dynamic of the trend was already upwards, and it is delicate to segregate growth due to Covid-19 from the pre-existing growth. In Germany, for example, there has clearly been an increase in the number of groups, and in the number of shares within existing groups, but this was already the case before the Covid-19 crisis (Netzwerk Solidarische Landwirtschaft, Germany, 2020; Wild & Heintz, Veikko, 2020). Why the fertile environment didn't translate into a clear increase in demand could be largely due to the fact that it is not possible to increase the size of a CSA at short notice. Additional land is not readily available, seasons have already started and the CSAs are planned beforehand, i.e. on-demand delivery isn't foreseen and easily feasible in a CSA concept. Furthermore, CSA development is essentially based on a logic of scaling out rather than scaling up, i.e. develop more CSAs rather than increase the size of existing ones.

We should also underline the fact that the evolution of LSPA customers or members depends - among other factors - on two key aspects: the legal situation in any given country or Local Government on the one hand, and the characteristics of the partnerships on the other. As shown earlier, the response of Local Governments has been heterogenous: in some countries, open-air markets were forced to close down in the first days of the lock-down, and this indirectly boosted the demand for LSPAs (FAO 2020; France Urbaine, Terre en villes, Résolis 2020). In other parts of the world, the open-air markets were not closed, but smallholders transporting food did not have any special authorization for quite a long time (Ggiouki, Greece, 2020). This prevented them from continuing their distributions.

The modes of operation of LSPAs are quite diverse. CSAs in many countries maintain consistent principles such as advance payment and full season member commitment (6 months or even one year). Shares of the harvest are paid up-front by members; farmers are thus able to plan production based on pre-sold shares. There is practically no room for massively integrating new members at certain times of the season. In most cases, it is difficult to quantify the evolution in CSA membership with precision. In countries where CSAs have already been recognized, and where the movement is well structured, with an established network, the CSA coordinators report an important increase of the speed with which CSA farms and groups are selling out their shares (Carnegie Hill CSA, USA, 2020; JustFood network, USA, 2020). An American CSA group member noted that *“Many NYC residents left the city due to the virus so they didn't sign up this year. However we had many new members and ended up sold out despite those who*

*left the city*” (West Harlem CSA, New York USA, 2020). Carrie Sedlak, from FairShare CSA Coalition and from the CSA Innovation network reported that *“in fact most CSA farms in the US sold out for the first time ever or earlier than ever before”* (CSA Innovation Network, USA, 2020).

Chinese CSAs seem to be able to translate the increase in demand more easily into an increase in membership through an order system (see chapter *Did a boom in demand translate into a boom in LSPA membership?*). On the other hand, the crisis began in China in 2019, i.e. Chinese LSPAs have had a longer time span to translate the demand into new members.

In Brussels, the GASAP network noted that some groups, although sticking to the CSA principles, decided to integrate some additional members. The needs on both sides were well-matched: some producers, who sell part of their production to CSA groups and the rest to restaurants and markets, suddenly had substantial additional supplies to deal with. At the exact same time, the GASAP consumers were facing an increase to their food consumption at home, since schools and offices were closed. The groups managed to organize the delivery of a substantial amount of harvested vegetables in less than 24 hours (Réseau des GASAP, BE, 2020).

This increase is confirmed by the in-depth interviews: almost all the interviewees underlined the increase in the demand (CSA network Brazil, 2020; CSA network Netherlands, 2020; CSA network Turkey, 2020; LocalCatchNetwork, USA, 2020; Pleine Mer, France, 2020a). Even if many LSPAs, and more specifically CSAs, chose not to include more members, a growing demand was observed everywhere. This went hand-in-hand with higher media coverage and recognition by Local Government authorities. Where it was possible, this demand was expressed in growth in the number of shares and sales, but elsewhere it was by a multiplication of the visits to the Internet pages, or the capacity to create new groups (CSA network Ireland, 2020; CSA network Turkey, 2020; GeLa Ochsenherz, Austria, 2020). In Mexico, the pandemic accelerated networking processes to *“[...] link with other initiatives of the City of Mexico and other states, to coordinate our activities and exchange experiences”* (Colectivo Zacahuizco, Mexico, 2020) to build an URGENCI network in Mexico.

## The “Bump” phenomenon in ‘trial’ systems

While the growing demand during the lock-down period is a constant in the sample, a “Bump” phenomenon seems to have occurred for some initiatives, especially those that set up a ‘trial’ system<sup>7</sup>. These initiatives recorded an impressive increase during the lock-down that was followed by immediate fall off, returning to almost the same level as before the pandemic began, once the lock-down was eased. There does however appear to be a kind of sedimentation effect: at the time the data collection was conducted, between mid-July and the end of September, there was still a new group of members who had been attracted by the “trial” system.

The example of Oma Maa CSA, in Finland, is quite representative. It was decided to set up a “trial” system. The core group soon realized this could give an ambiguous picture of what CSA means in terms of long-term commitment. The trial membership period was therefore reduced. The trial system allowed an increase from 65 to 95 shares (about a 40% increase). But after the restrictions were eased at the beginning of the summer, the figures went down to 84 in August, when the in-depth interview was conducted.

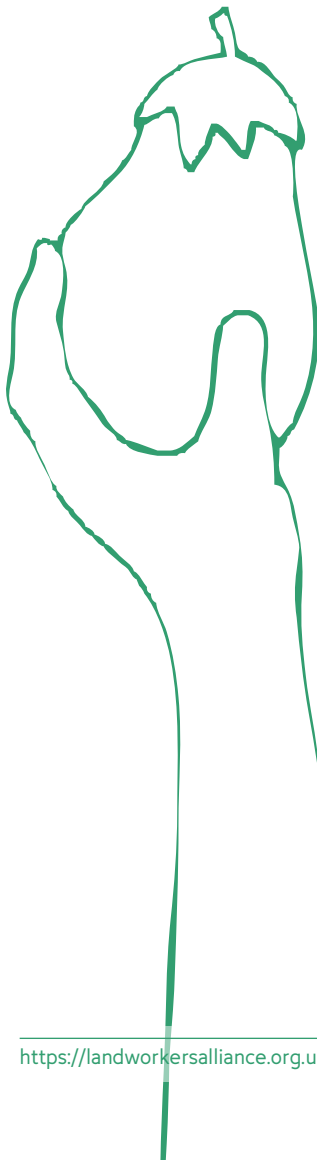
This “Bump”-like phenomenon has obvious far-reaching consequences for the farms in question. It poses the key question of how to deal with a major drop in demand after the lock-down period. In the interviews, those who chose to adopt a stricter line, rejecting massive trial strategies, made it clear that they felt comforted by their approach of a partnership based on a stronger commitment where the number of participants remained the same. An American respondent also conveyed “cautious optimism” of farmers as to whether consumers will sustain patronage of direct farm sales models or eventually shift back into “patterns of convenience” such as more buying at grocery stores and less home cooking (Kitchen Table Advisors, USA, 2020).

### 3. LSPA networks support food producers throughout the crisis

Food producers and food chain workers have been deeply affected by the pandemic and many have already or are expected to lose their jobs: *“Food systems are estimated to lose 451 million jobs, or 35 percent of their formal employment (Torero, 2020). Similarly, the UN estimates that around one third of food system livelihoods are at risk due to the pandemic (UN, 2020b)”* - (HLPE, 2020)

Many food producers have already lost their access to markets (Wetherell, 2020)<sup>8</sup>. **Governments and municipalities have shut down open air and informal markets**, which are crucial especially for the poor populations (Douwe van der Ploeg, 2020; ECLAC-FAO, 2020; ECVC, 2020). This has led to a major loss of sales’ channels for the food producers. **Migrant workers** have been the most deeply affected and exposed due to the nature of their work, the need to travel (borders closed and other travel restrictions), their working and living conditions and consequently because of the high exposure to Covid-19 in cramped working or living conditions where no adequate health and safety measures such as physical distancing could be implemented.

Furthermore, they “[...] frequently face poverty and food insecurity and have little access to healthcare and social protection measures.” (HLPE, 2020). Various serious cluster outbreaks all over the world occurred in labour-intensive food production units, both processing plants and in the fields, where migrant workers are usually employed. **Fruit and vegetable producers** also belong to a more vulnerable group of food producers. Because of their labour-intensive production and their perishable products, supply chain interruptions and labour shortages more easily aggravate their financial stability. However in the case of LSPA, agroecological production is less intensive, more biodiverse and more respectful of both planet and people and these issues do not correspond to the reality of most farms production modes and consequently have had a far lesser impact.



#### Integration of new food producers

LSPA initiatives have received many requests for help from non-LSPA producers and have been trying to include new food producers in a short or long term perspective. To ensure the financial stability of the producers after an abrupt decrease in sales due to the closure of restaurants and open-air street markets, several LSPA networks and initiatives decided to buy their surplus production.

Questions 14 and 15 asked whether LSPA initiatives had been approached by other food producers who had lost their access to market, and what responses were made by LSPAs. **44% of the respondents answered that they were approached by food producers who did not belong to their initiative.** 32% of the total respondents report that they were able to accommodate other food producers who approached them. A CSA in Brazil formed a partnership with fishermen in response to their loss of markets (CSA Demétria, Brazil, 2020). In Switzerland and other

8 <https://landworkersalliance.org.uk/lwa-measures-food-resilience>

countries, CSAs bought food from other producers who could not sell fresh produce at the open-air markets, and sold their produce to their own members (Biohof Fondli GmbH, Switzerland, 2020). **8 out of 14 Belgian CSAs** managed to integrate food producers who sold mushrooms, meat and fruit into the consumer groups. A network coordinator of the Belgian GASAP network reported:

*“We were really surprised ourselves by the speed with which the groups adapted. During the lockdown period a producer who was selling both to GASAP groups and to the market called us saying something like ‘I just learnt they are closing the open-air market, I have already harvested my vegetables, what can you do to help me?’. 24 hours later, all the harvest had been sold and distributed to 62 families!” - (Réseau des GASAP, 2020b)*

The same happened in very different contexts in other countries. In an initiative in Burkina Faso (2020) they *“added some fruit to the usual vegetables. They were from a producer who is a friend of our vegetable grower, because he couldn’t sell them at the markets any more.”* In the USA, the case of Black Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) is mentioned as a specific group of farmers in need of help from the CSA groups and networks (see Info Box #4):

*“We accommodated them through aggregated CSAs / box programmes, especially to feed into federally funded emergency food relief efforts. Coordination was really needed. Small farms, especially farms owned by Black Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC), were very impacted and needed support. Consumers seemed to really want to support BIPOC farms during the pandemic”. - (CSA Innovation Network, USA, 2020b)*

#### Info box #4: USA BIPOC

In the USA, Black, Brown, and Indigenous people have been disproportionately impacted by Covid-19<sup>9</sup>. People of colour (also known as BIPOC) LSPAs developed diverse solidarity-based efforts to help each other get through the pandemic. Some highlights of BIPOC efforts in Covid-19 include the California BIPOC Farmer and Land Steward Relief Fund created by KitchenTable Advisors (Bay Area, CA) along with 5 other organizations that raised close to a million dollars to support BIPOC farmers. KitchenTable Advisors work with 60% farmers of colour and approximately 40% Latino monolingual Spanish farmers. In the Washington D.C. area Dreaming Out Loud, a Black led urban farm and food hub, in addition to their CSA model created relief meals with their community chef graduates, delivered CSA shares to homebound seniors, and supported a herbal mutual aid initiative to complement their immediate response efforts. They collaborated with local herbalists to harvest and dry herbs. Dreaming Out Loud developed a product line of teas, herbal steams (for lung health) and glycerin for nervous system health and to combat stress. This was an all-volunteer effort to harvest, process, and pack. These efforts created an opportunity to gain a skill-set and a unique way to offer a well rounded health approach based on food in an impacted community.

## Immediate funding and logistical support

In several countries, national and local LSPA networks set up platforms to connect food producers and consumers, “did match-making with farmers-buyers and facilitated aggregation” (CSA Innovation Network, USA, 2020b). The CSA network in Greece and 30 cooperating farmers began to launch a nationwide programme “to investigate the immediate local interaction between farmers and consumers” (Ggiouki, Greece, 2020). They also set up a platform for direct interaction of local producers with local consumers to create new CSAs, which created 36 new groups.

The UK CSA network and the Organic Growers Alliance (OGA) initiated a spread-sheet to connect farmers with excess produce to buying groups with increased demand for their products (CSA network UK, 2020). In the USA, some CSA networks and other farmer-led businesses developed new relief funds and technical assistance approaches to help food producers stay afloat and adapt their course of action during Covid-19 (Reardon & Swinnen, 2020).

In the USA, some CSA networks and other farmer-led businesses developed **new relief funds and technical assistance** approaches to help food producers stay afloat and pivot during Covid-19. The Community Alliance for Family Farmers (CAFF) “started a farmer relief fund [in California] and awarded \$230K to farmers in need, mostly undocumented and under-served farmers” (CSA Innovation Network, USA, 2020b).

Similarly, KitchenTable Advisors (2020), along with five other organizations that work with farmers of colour started up a California BIPOC Farmer and Land Steward relief fund: “A farmer got a \$10,000 grant, just to be able to pay rent and basic expenses that help them through this time. We are partnering with the community groups, like the Native American Health Center to help get other people signed up on CSA.” The coordinator of the CSA Innovation Network (2020a) underlines that “[Technical Assistance] providers have been providing technical support to food pantry + CSA programs. Both [Technical Assistance] providers and farmers have expanded CSA food access programs to more households. Farmers have been offering more home delivery options to meet the safety needs of high risk populations.”

**Food Co-ops** more frequently include new food producers as they often serve as food hubs<sup>10</sup>:

*“We’re a food hub, so taking on more suppliers is often very easy. We had cheese and meat people who normally supply restaurants asking if we could move their products. We couldn’t, because we’re not set up to handle dairy and meat. But others, veg, fruit, and household cleaning items, yes.” - (Cultivate Oxfordshire, UK, 2020)*

As expressed by the initiative from the UK, new food producers couldn’t be taken on board when a complex infrastructure was required for the distribution, e.g. to maintain a cold chain. For this and other reasons, **29% of the initiatives that were approached didn’t support new food producers**. In particular, although over 80% of the Chinese CSAs involved in the survey were contacted, only a small number were able to integrate them. One issue is the type of production of these producers, who fail to meet the organic standards set by most of the CSAs in China (CSA Network China, 2020).

In Greece, a decision was made not to host new food producers who were not aligned

<sup>10</sup> A regional food hub is a business or organization that actively manages the aggregation, distribution, and marketing of source-identified food products primarily from local and regional producers to strengthen their ability to satisfy wholesale, retail, and institutional demand (Barham et al., 2012)

with the organic regulations and values of the CSAs (Agroecopolis coordinator, 2020). Other reasons for having no capacity to integrate additional food producers were either that the groups were already at their full capacity (CSA Cultivada, Brazil, 2020) or, as in the case of Colectivo Zacahuitzco (2020) in Mexico, to avoid conflicts with farmers who were already involved.

## How LSPA networks played their role as advocacy platforms for food producers

From the very start of the crisis, existing LSPA networks liaised with local or national government authorities. In France, the national network MIRAMAP and its regional networks have interacted with the State authorities to define the conditions under which AMAP distributions could be authorised to continue operating. Guidelines for establishing safe pick-up points were drafted and validated by the authorities.

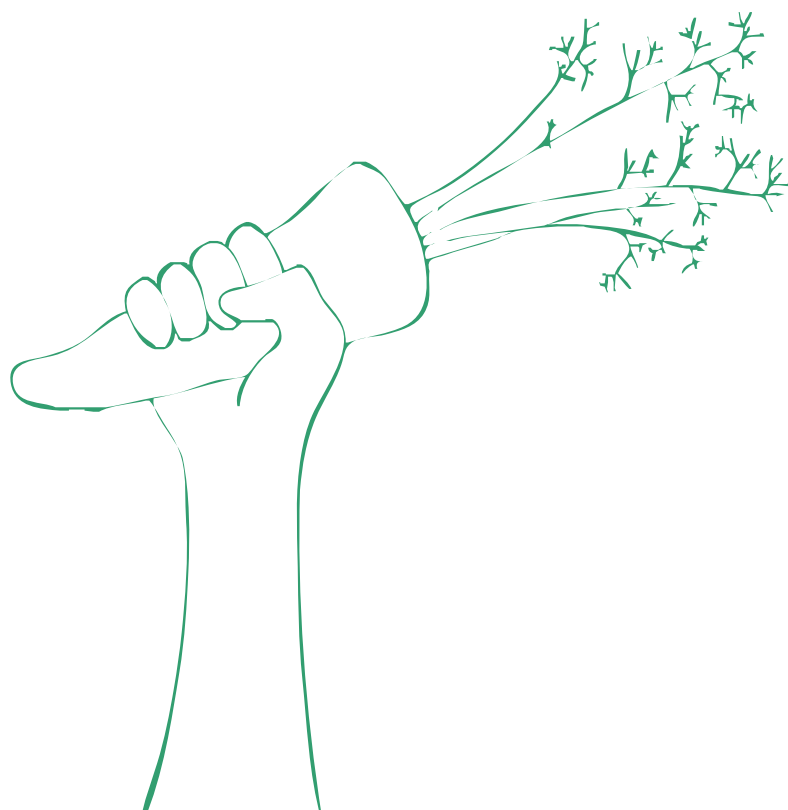
LSPA networks also increased their work as **advocacy platforms** for local production and sustainable territorial food systems. Coopérative Sell Sellal (2020) from Senegal hopes the authorities will recognize the increase in demand for local products and will prioritise local production more: *"I think the numerous publications in the media in Senegal have finally pushed the authorities to prioritise buying the produce from family farms rather than imported products in order to help the families who benefit from public food aid"*

Official **emergency food relief** mechanisms are criticised in other countries. In the USA for instance, a CSA network coordinator regrets that emergency food aid programmes are based on large industrial food corporations and large-scale organisations and are not transparent (JustFood network coordinator, 2020). The CSM Global Food Governance Working Group (2020) emphasises that *"official policies, financial support and stimulus measures"* are favouring *"corporations, large producers and global supply chains"*, which contradict local food system approaches. However, many of the LSPA coordinators seem to remain optimistic. As Joshua Stoll, from the LocalCatch Network, a network that supports Community Supported Fisheries in North America, puts it *"though not completely transformative, [the crisis] has kick-started system-wise institutional shifts with long term implications"* - (LocalCatchNetwork, USA, 2020).

## Typology of Support Actions by networks and initiatives

### Support to food producers

- Buying all surplus from farmers who lost part of their marketing channels
- Integrating new food producers
- Matchmaking between producers and consumer groups (primarily by LSPA networks)
- Setting up financial support for food producers in need (LSPA networks)
- Advocating for producers at the level of local or national authorities (LSPA networks)
- Advocating for buying emergency food relief from local producers rather than buying industrially processed foods





## 4. In solidarity with consumers: reaching the most affected by the crisis

In this chapter, we investigate whether and how the LSPA actors organize themselves to support those suffering the most from the consequences of Covid-19. These questions address the claim of LSPAs and Agroecology to respond to ecological and social crises and counteract inequity (Anderson, Bruil, Chappell, Kiss, & Pimbert, 2021). Since the beginning of the crisis, various institutions have been warning that the number of people suffering from acute hunger would almost double as a result of the pandemic (WFP, 2020). According to the FAO (2020), up to 132 million more people will face food insecurity due to Covid-19 in 2020<sup>11</sup>. In Latin America, food aid tripled in 2020<sup>12</sup>. Indeed, as businesses and factories close, *“the resulting drop in purchasing power among those who have lost income has had a major impact on food security and nutrition, especially for those populations that were already vulnerable”* (HLPE, 2020). The strict lock-down measures implemented in order to slow down the pandemic and to reduce the pressure on hospitals have severe social and economic effects that will not be fully assessed for many months to come<sup>13</sup>. Marginalised and vulnerable people, like BIPOC people or migrants, were particularly affected (Global Network for the Right to Food and Nutrition, 2020).

### Extending LSPA solidarity beyond the primary meaning

#### Info Box #5: Spanish CSAs demonstrate solidarity within and outside the movement

*“During the Covid-19 in Spain the “hunger lines” (queues for food aid) have multiplied. People who were already in a precarious situation have seen their situation worsen in recent months. This situation has also been a surprise test for the social movements that work for food sovereignty and with the right to food perspective. The social movements have been able to demonstrate that we have good articulation and have achieved synergies, both between the movements that work for food sovereignty, and with other support groups and small shops in the neighborhoods. We showed where resilience lies. Infrastructures and energies were shared, thus successfully responding to the needs of people that the institutions were not able to reach, or where they provided products that were not at all healthy. The movements that were born under the umbrella of Community Supported Agriculture had already had a debate about their role, which is not only to support those who produce, but rather for the whole group to mutually support one another. The Covid-19 virus has been the practical test of how we put this into practice.” - (I. Alvarez, personal communication, November 2020)*

The impact of Covid-19 on LSPAs in Spain gives an example of how LSPAs stood together during the crisis and mutually supported one another as well as those outside the initiatives (see Info Box #5). **51% of the respondents of the online survey said that they supported marginalised people and those affected by Covid-19.** Some justified their negative answer by the very nature of their initiatives. Others, like the Brussels-based **GASAP network coordinator**, for example, stated that *“[...] our core job is to*

11 <http://www.fao.org/3/ca9692en/CA9692EN.pdf>

12 <https://unsdg.un.org/resources/policy-brief-impact-Covid-19-latin-america-and-caribbean>.

13 In France there has been an over 30% increase in food bank recipients combined with an increase of one million people experiencing food insecurity.

*support farmers, not consumers. Other organisations are doing much better than we would do”* (Réseau des GASAP, Belgium, 2020). The primary goal of LSPA is indeed solidarity towards the food producers. However, one of the results of our research is that many LSPAs have reacted strongly to support everyone in the current pandemic. Another result is that solidarity with consumers is nothing new. Home deliveries for isolated, elderly, vulnerable and disabled people are the baseline, but much more has been done throughout the LSPA movement in terms of food donations and solidarity mechanisms.

## Direct and indirect food donations

Direct and indirect food donations account for around 26% of the online survey respondents and are thus the most common type of support action that has been taken by LSPAs during the Covid-19 pandemic. They were implemented in many countries including the Czech Republic, China, USA, Norway, the Philippines and India (see Info Box #6).

### Info Box #6: Compilation of LSPA food donations in various countries

*“CSAs collect surpluses from organic on-line sales and distribute them to elderly people in the villages”* (AMPI, Czech Republic, 2020)

*“Many CSA farms supplied/donated to migrant workers’ organisations in Beijing; in some hospitals, CSA farmers donated food for free to nurses and doctors”* (CSA Network China, 2020)

*“A local egg producer donated thousands of eggs to 65 poor families. This helped local female farm workers whose salary was delayed due to the pandemic.”* (PGS Nueva Ecija, Philippines, 2020)

*“During the Covid-19 crisis, [...] food and relief support for urban communities also increased. Yes, farmers donated their grains and some other forms of relief for distribution to marginalized people and those most affected by the Covid – the elderly, disabled persons, unemployed youth, and landless laborers.”* (Lipok Social Foundation, India, 2020)

*“The food grown in the community garden provides food for free to community residents. The Covid food boxes were subsidized food from the State.”* (Kelly Street Garden, USA, 2020)

Food donations include donations of unclaimed shares - i.e. if a share is not picked up at distribution time, it can be donated to charities and those in need. As also expressed in the Info Box #7, the majority of responding initiatives report that food donations are given to vulnerable and marginalised people. For some of them, this is nothing new, they were already regularly giving food surpluses to people living on the streets: *“We always have food that exceeds the shares harvested, so usually we give it to people we find living on the streets”* (CSA Nirvana Lauro de Freitas/ Bahia, Brazil, 2020). Especially in Brazil, more than 30% of the CSAs that responded are helping through direct food donations, while others supply social projects and organisations like public schools, solidarity kitchens and artists. These food donations may have been even more important, as Latin America is one of the regions the most affected by the pandemic. Support for public schools is especially needed, because Latin America and Brazil in particular belong to the regions of the world where almost all schools have been closed<sup>14</sup>.

## Info Box #7: LSPAs developing collective support through donation schemes in Brazil

“[...]It was even more notable in the social actions carried out by CSA and LSPA in Brazil, that many of them have been promoting food donations, financially contributed by the groups of consumers, bought from agroecological family farmers and benefitting the socially vulnerable living in cities. This shows that by practicing agriculture as a community effort, the notion of collective actions can change the reality for people that are outside the circle of a given group of actors, people that are really in need of care, and cannot even afford to buy food. It creates a feeling of gratitude to see all these things happening, and also to see increasing numbers of young people coming closer to these actions. The experiences that have taken place in Brazil have also inspired and provided the opportunity to further develop CSA and LSPA throughout Latin America. We remain strong, as there is hope everywhere!” - (A. A. Molina, personal communication, November 2020)

In Turkey, the informal LSPA network initiated a “donation box scheme” in order to give donors the possibility to pay for an LSPA share to be donated (Çevre ve Arı Koruma Derneği, Turkey, 2020; CSA network Turkey, 2020). Other CSAs started to function like a welfare organisation, collecting donations from a wider public, and donating shares to people in need. The CSA Lins in Brazil has started a food relief project<sup>15</sup>:

*“Through the CSA Lins project, we collect donations in cash from community members and also third parties, through a virtual account. We then donate agroecological baskets to socially vulnerable families. More than 600 baskets have been donated, that is equivalent to more than 2 tons of healthy food. The project continues to serve many families in the cities of Lins and Promissão. [...]”* - (CSA Lins, Brazil, 2020)

During the pandemic in Japan, many of the food co-ops have increased the amount of food donated to food banks, and others have been providing food directly to people in need, including college students who have lost their part-time jobs due to the pandemic.

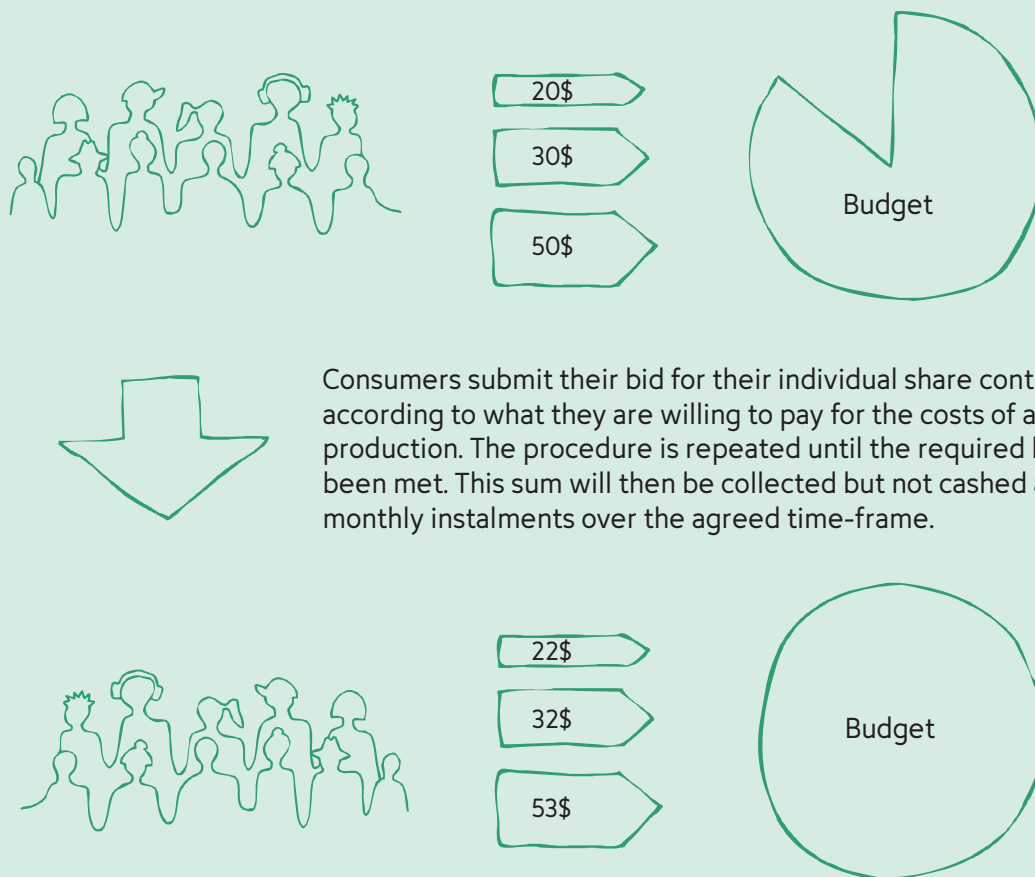
One of the target groups identified for support are healthcare workers. Chinese CSA farms are making food donations to hospital staff (CSA network Turkey, 2020, CSA network China, 2020). In Japan, Uozumi Farm (2020) thus explained that during the lock-down period, their farm donated food to a restaurant that prepares lunchboxes for hospital workers: *“We provided vegetables and eggs for free to the restaurant delivering packed lunches to local hospital workers for two months. As a community member, I simply and sincerely wanted to do that.”*

## Reinforcing the pre-existing solidarity mechanisms in LSPA

The German coordinator of “Netzwerk solidarische Landwirtschaft” explained that CSAs support marginalised people in general through solidarity mechanisms. The most common instrument of “bidding rounds” is used in Germany, whereby people pay a discretionary amount for the seasonal or annual share, based on their means (Netzwerk Solidarische Landwirtschaft, Germany, 2020; see illustr. *Bidding rounds in Germany*). However, the subsequent open question #17, “If yes, how?” exposed the diversity of vulnerabilities and responses. We can see from these answers that the terminology “marginalized people” is considered in different ways and is not uniform: some refer to people who are physically vulnerable to Covid-19 because of a pre-existing health condition, others rather refer to marginalized social groups like refugees and unemployed. Most of the cases seem to evoke a **continuation or extension of pre-existing solidarity mechanisms**, rather than a new action initiated during the crisis.

<sup>15</sup> Project description: <https://benfeitoria.com/csa-lins-compartilhar-saude-egf>

## A system of solidarity funding: the Bidding Round Scheme - applied in Germany



Illustr. 1: A system of solidarity funding: the Bidding Round Scheme - applied in Germany. Netzwerk Solidarische Landwirtschaft e.V. (2020).

Partnerships in Germany and the USA generally function using a **sliding price scheme**. Instead of setting a single price for the shares, members pay a price of their own choice (URGENCI 2019). In the USA the scheme is slightly different: members can choose between several prices based on the income they declare. Many groups combine several types of action, as in this reply to the on-line survey from West Harlem CSA, New York City:

*“We have a sliding scale and can accommodate folks who are experiencing financial difficulty due to Covid-19. We also have a special time that folks who are immunocompromised can pick up so that they aren’t there when other folks are also there.” - (West Harlem CSA, USA, 2020)*

## Solidarity actions beyond LSPA

One of our interviewees, a member of an AMAP<sup>16</sup> operating in Saint-Denis, North of Paris, explains that several of the AMAP members not only **co-ordinated solidarity actions** in the framework of the AMAP group, but also joined other solidarity food initiatives. Together with other people, he joined the People’s Solidarity Brigades, which were first formed in Italy at the beginning of the lockdown period (Souchal,

France, 2020)<sup>17</sup>. 53 brigades formed in different parts of the world during the Spring of 2020. Their actions consist of collecting food from different sources and distributing it for free. This example shows that many CSA activists were probably engaged in solidarity food actions outside the framework of their CSA group, although it is impossible to quantify the proportion of this phenomenon.

In large cities, CSA farms and groups worked more than ever with emergency food organizations, because these organizations were facing shortages. According to a respondent from New York city, this cooperation was not very successful:

*“Food pantries and the emergency food system faced shortages in their regular supply chain so they have sought to purchase local produce to fill these gaps, especially with incredibly high demand because of so many un- or under-employed households. CSA farms have certainly been plugging into this landscape, and with varying success. Some pantries have made it easy for farms by buying at the price that the farm desires, and by having the farm offer produce in boxes just like their regular CSA. Other pantry situations have not been so smooth - but, also, this is a really busy and difficult time for everyone.”* - (CSA Innovation Network, USA, 2020a)

A French national AMAP network board member, E. Bouloungne (2020), noted that *“all public institutions, political parties, charities, NGOs, associations worked in the same direction during the lock-down period, and the AMAP movement was part of it”*. Moreover, the situation made the network realize that the issue of food justice should become a priority topic for action. This led to the organisation of a ‘3-Euro-share’ operation coordinated by the AMAP network in the suburbs that were the most affected by Covid-19. It is however well recognized that the actions taken thus far are not systemic, but rather based on independent voluntary actions and with impact only at micro-level. This reignited a long-term reflection on the creation of a “Food safety net” (*Sécurité sociale alimentaire*): MIRAMAP has joined a broader coalition that is advocating for a universal monthly food income, a stable amount provided to every citizen, and whose purpose would be to ensure people can afford to buy food. The Covid-19 crisis motivated the AMAP movement to jointly sign a call for a systemic answer to food poverty (ISF-Agrista 2020)<sup>18</sup>.

An American LSPA demonstrates what actions can be taken to support migrants, a population that has been particularly affected by the crisis (see Info Box #8).

### Info Box #8: Solidarity with Migrants

*“Mill City Grows in Lowell, USA partnered with 2 community-based organizations - one works with refugee settlement in the community named International Institute New England. Mill City Grows during Covid-19 initially provided 30 families with a free CSA share and then worked with the families to help them sign up for government food and health safety net initiatives such as USDA Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and Health Incentive Program (HIP) benefits. These programs offer funding to people to purchase food at LSPA such as CSA and farmers markets in addition to grocery stores.”* - (Q. Mickie, personal communication, November 2020)

A study by the HLPE (2020) underlines the situation of women as one of the populations most affected by the crisis: *“Gender inequities have also been exacerbated by the crisis, as women face additional burden during Covid-19, as frontline health and food system workers, in unpaid care work, community work, which has increased during lockdowns (McLaren et al., 2020; Power, 2020)”* Yet, in our sample, women were not mentioned as a specific focus for solidarity actions.

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.brigades.info/>

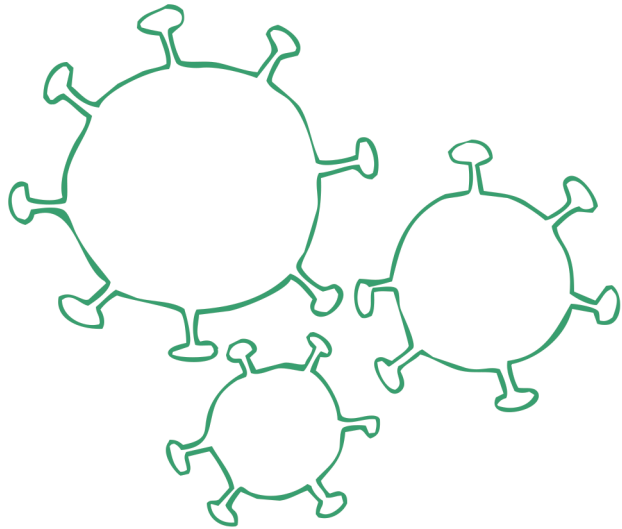
<sup>18</sup> <https://reporterre.net/Creons-une-securite-sociale-de-l-alimentation-pour-enrayer-la-faim>

# Typology of support actions

Based on the previous sections, we can draft a table presenting a typology of support provided to different target groups.

## Typology of support actions

- Support to marginalised and vulnerable people
- Food donations to marginalised and people in need
- Food donations to soup kitchens, pantries, charities
- Integration of migrants, asylum seekers in the group
- Offer discount shares in poor neighborhoods
- Home deliveries to vulnerable and disabled people
- Cooperation with social projects and social organisations: e.g. Join ad hoc solidarity groups



# 5. Co-opted? New business models but no competition

The response of the LSPA movement is not developing in a vacuum. A whole range of new business models have been mushrooming at the same time, sometimes using the same language and the same semiotics as the LSPA movement. Are these initiatives co-opting the LSPA movement? Are they competing for the same markets?

## “Local Washing” and “Community Washing”

Question 12 “Have you noticed an increase in competing initiatives undermining yours? If so, where are they coming from? Who is involved?” of the in-depth interview refers to non-LSPA models that co-opt LSPA members by attracting the same consumers without applying the basic principles of LSPAs.

In general, food delivery companies, supermarkets, and e-commerce schemes are benefiting from the current situation in many countries and are perceived as competing actors (Agroecopolis, Greece, 2020; CSA network Ireland, 2020; Wertheim-Heck, Raneri, & Oosterveer, 2019).

On-line sales schemes are booming globally (Burnett & Owen, 2020; Saitama Prefecture Teikei Network coordinator, Japan, 2020). Generally speaking, many interviewees recognize the multiplication of on-line sales ventures, and noted that many companies were using the same terminology as the LSPA, without however applying the same principles (JustFood network, USA, 2020; Oma Maa, Finland, 2020). An interviewee said that this is linked to an on-going phenomenon of “local washing”, a term coined to mirror the concept of green washing<sup>19</sup> and used by different food organisations and actors (LocalCatch Network, USA, 2020).

The Chinese search engine and e-commerce giant Ali Baba uses an organic label, which is not considered to be “trustworthy” by the Chinese CSA network representative (CSA Network China, 2020). British box schemes sales have been booming with “box schemes composed of food just bought at the wholesale market and box schemes that do not attach any importance as to whether they are organic or not” (CSA network UK, 2020). The same interviewee knew of a grower in Scotland, who was contacted amidst the Covid-19 crisis by a businessman interested in franchising CSAs. There is also a serious critique of the common habits of big food aid organisations who work “without supporting principles” by buying processed, non-regional food from the Just Food organisation in the USA (JustFood, 2020).

An Austrian CSA consumer representative noted that a developing food coop was retailing both sustainable goods as well as non-regional fresh produce from organic wholesalers (GeLa Ochsenerz, Austria, 2020). In Turkey, competition with initiatives close to LSPAs takes place at a political level. The government and national entities adopted the term Food Sovereignty for their purposes. “Central cooperatives from government networks” and “State-backed cooperatives” use competing methods and eat into solidarity schemes of organisations or municipalities (CSA network Turkey, 2020).

*“Yes, a lot of people started creating new box schemes. We try to explain that there are options with commitment, and others with less commitment, more or less activist initiatives. There are a lot of small enterprises, with people who are really trying to do something interesting, but there are also bigger companies that propose something without any commitment. Producers’ profit margins are not the same.” - (FRACP, Switzerland, 2020)*

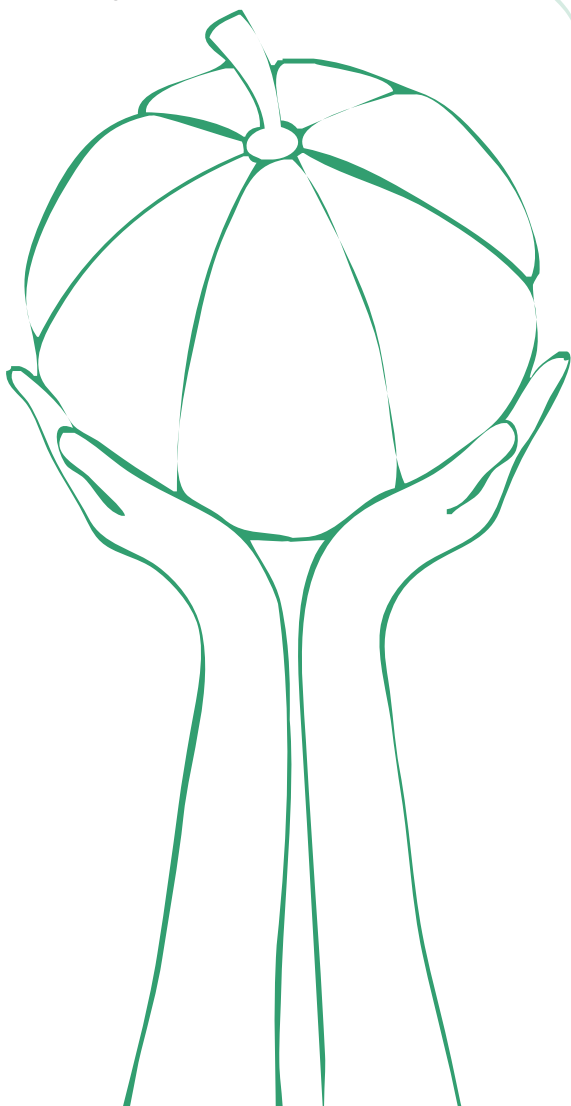
19 Brouwer, Brook O., Kevin M. Murphy, et Stephen S. Jones. “Plant breeding for local food systems: A contextual review of end-use selection for small grains and dry beans in Western Washington”. *Renewable Agriculture and Food Systems* 31, n° 2 (19 juin 2015): 172-84. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1742170515000198>.

As highlighted in the above quote, many blossoming initiatives, although not fully aligned with the LSPA principles, can still be identified as part of an ongoing transition towards more sustainable food systems. More generally speaking, “innovations such as digital e-commerce platforms that are specifically designed for small- and medium-scale enterprises and not subject to control by large corporations can also support locally embedded markets that are better able to respond to supply chain disruptions unleashed by Covid-19” (Reardon and Swinnen, 2020). Similarly, the actors from the LSPA initiatives do not consider the other models as competitors. They see themselves as part of a larger movement that embraces many different innovative models.

## Too different to challenge

Around 25% of the interviewees also perceive new initiatives and rising business models such as box delivery schemes that are not based on solidary principles as not competing with LSPA (AMPI, CZ, 2020; CSA network Austria, 2020; CSA network Brazil, 2020). These companies do not undermine the positions of LSPAs, because they are too different to compete (AMPI, CZ, 2020). PGS representatives in South East Asia did not note competition either (Lipok Social Foundation, India, 2020; PGS Ben Tre & PGS Dong Thap, Vietnam, 2020; PGS Nueva Ecija, Philippines, 2020). According to another interviewee, the problem is rather the lack of transparency in these commercial initiatives (Réseau des GASAP, BE, 2020). This seems to corroborate one of the results of an earlier study about the financial sustainability of CSA by Parot & Volz (2018), where respondents recognized that the landscape of local food systems had changed dramatically in recent years, but stressed the fact that this did not affect their initiatives, as CSA do not compete in the same category, and clearly stand out thanks to their specific characteristics and values.

*“[...]Although new PGS programs started by the different groups of people in Northern Vietnam, there is no other PGS group in our region. Since organic food supply has not caught up with the demand in our region, there is no competition right now.” - (PGS Ben Tre & PGS Dong Thap, VN, 2020)*





## 6. Conclusion and policy recommendations

The objectives of this research were to find out how LSPAs have been coping with the current Covid-19 crisis. How resilient have LSPAs been in this period? How have they managed to adjust to the restrictions and meet the health and safety requirements? What kind of role have they been playing in supporting marginalised and vulnerable people, and producers who have in some cases been deprived of their habitual markets? After a detailed review of the results of the study, we can conclude three elements.

- **Yes, LSPAs are resilient.** Our survey demonstrates the continuity and stability of food production and distribution, the flexibility to adapt and the increase of awareness and participation. LSPAs are stable, because they have not had to stop food distributions. LSPAs are flexible and adaptable, as they have been able to rapidly implement new solutions like advance preparation of individual shares, extended pick-up schedules or home deliveries. The social recognition and awareness of LSPA initiatives and agroecology have been strengthened. There is definitely an increase in membership of existing LSPAs and CSAs and also of creation of new ones, but this will need further investigation at a later date.
- **Yes, LSPAs support food producers who have been deprived of their markets.** LSPA groups have been able to buy surplus production from food producers and sell it to the committed consumers. LSPA networks have established on-line platforms and coordinated the connection of supply and demand. This is sometimes done by building new LSPAs. In that sense, LSPA networks have been assuming the role of food hubs in mediating between food producers and consumers or consumer groups.
- **Yes, LSPAs support marginalised and vulnerable people.** A slight majority of the respondents state not having carried out any supportive actions. However, network representatives recall the general solidarity mechanisms that have existed for a long time in LSPAs. Most LSPAs already use simple mechanisms of various kinds to help those in need of support. Food donations to marginalised people or food aid organisations like soup kitchens, pantries and charities have been a recurrent common action of LSPAs during the pandemic. Home deliveries are becoming a basic adaptation to supply vulnerable people. LSPAs are joining ad hoc solidarity groups and LSPA networks cooperate with social organisations to achieve sustainable emergency food relief.
- **Various cases of co-optation** demonstrate that corporations and start-ups use the same image, but still lack basic LSPA principles like transparency, commitment or solidarity mechanisms. The co-optation through on-line businesses can be perceived as “local and community washing”. Nevertheless, a significant number of LSPA actors do not consider these developments as genuine competition for the movement.

### Policy recommendations:

- Ensure specific protection of peri-urban agricultural land to guarantee urban-rural linkages for sustainable territorial production and consumption and sustainable food systems as these have proven to be by far the most resilient to crisis.
- Support the introduction of legislation for Food Safety nets and solidarity actions that connect producers to those most in need of support through existing structures such as LSPA.
- Support systemic introduction of State food aid stamps/schemes that can be linked to farmers markets and LSPA shares.
- States should support local government solidarity procurement from small-scale food producers for schools and hospitals.
- Food loss and waste can be limited by Local Government support for producers and consumers to match needs using existing groups.

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## 8. Definitions

1. **BIPOC** - acronym that stands for Black, Indigenous, and People of Color<sup>20</sup>.
2. **Community Supported Agriculture (CSA)** - direct partnership based on the human relationship between people and one or several producer(s), whereby the risks, responsibilities and rewards of farming are shared, through a long-term, binding agreement (URGENCI, 2016).
3. **Community Supported Fisheries (CSF)** - *“Based on the community-supported agriculture (CSA) model, a community supported fishery (CSF) is a program that links fishermen to a local market. In a CSF, customers pre-pay for a “season” of fresh, local, low-impact seafood, and in turn they receive a weekly or bi-weekly share of fish or shellfish. CSFs [...] seek to reconnect coastal communities to their food system, encourage sustainable fishing practices, and strengthen relationships between fishermen and communities”* (LocalCatchNetwork, 2020<sup>21</sup>).
4. **Food Sovereignty** - Food sovereignty is the right of peoples to decide how to define their own food and agriculture systems. It requires restoring democratic control over a key aspect of our existence: how we feed ourselves. Food sovereignty values food producers, promotes the re-localisation of food systems and puts control locally. Food Sovereignty is not an objective or a condition, it is a process that adapts to the people and places where it is put in practice. “It is a “process in action” that strives for solidarity, not competition, and for building a fairer world from the bottom up” (Rioufol, Mammana, Sesum and Anderson (eds.), 2020).
5. **Local Solidarity-based Partnerships for Agroecology (LSPA)** - LSPAs are defined by a set of key common values: localness, solidarity towards the producers, commitment to agroecology, as well as a long-term direct partnership between producers and consumers based on a strong mutual commitment. LSPAs have been defined during the first URGENCI international symposium as including CSA, but also Community Supported Fisheries (CSF), social inclusion gardens, some Participatory Guarantee Systems, some farmers’ markets and food coops.
6. **REKO Model** - stands for ‘Fair Consumption’ and is a trade model originally created in Finland. In short, it is a Facebook-based pre-ordering system for local products (URGENCI, 2015; Henderson, 2019).
7. **Teikei** - Teikei is a Japanese version of CSA that started in the early 1970s and has provided many insights into CSA models around the world (Kondoh, 2015).
8. **Trial System** - A trial system can be defined as the mechanism to allow potential new members to join the partnership for a period shorter than a season, generally just a couple of weeks or months. The purpose is to lower the threshold to join and to attract new members.

**Note about the term Solidarity food initiatives** - The term “Solidarity food initiatives”, was initially chosen, in order to allow us to do justice to the on-going hybridization of practices and models on the ground. These partnerships are experiments in social innovation defined by their values rather than fixed operational mechanisms or schemes. “Solidarity food initiatives” was also a way of opening up our research, and being able to consider the newly created initiatives, born in the context of the pandemic. We thought this term could appeal to many grassroots practitioners who felt a sense of urgency in their need to provide various immediate responses to the crisis, but who had little to no previous food-related experience.

20 <https://www.vox.com/2020/6/30/21300294/bipoc-what-does-it-mean-critical-race-linguistics-jonathan-rosa-deandra-miles-hercules>

21 <https://localcatch.org/how-to-buy-direct/> (retrieved 8 December 2020).

This theoretical intention did not fully translate into practice. Firstly, during the in-depth interviews, several respondents criticized the word, by saying this term was too broad and not focused enough to cover their reality. Even more, they felt it could be misleading, since it could be understood as referring to “every kind of food charity or food emergency organization”, which are in their vast majority organized in conjunction with the industrial and large-scale food production and distribution systems. Secondly, when taking a closer look at the answers collected, Community Supported Agriculture initiatives represent the bulk of the movement (around 74% of the responses to the on-line survey), compared with other direct sales schemes and some food cooperatives.

Although the various iterations of LSPA, such as CSA, various direct sales models as well as food coops are recognized, the common frame of LSPA is not obvious for most of the respondents, with the exception of the most committed members of URGENCI. This is actually a challenge for the movement: it seems siloed approaches are dominant and they are not very well connected to each other.

## 9. Annexe

### Annexe A: SOSFI - Online Survey Template

1. Name of the initiative	[Open Answer]
2. Country	[Open Answer]
3. Postcode	[Open Answer]
4. Year of creation	[Open Answer]
5. Contact Person (Please add your email if you want to stay in touch with us)	[Open Answer]
6. What gender do you identify with?	[Male/Female/Other]
7. What is your age group?	[20-35/35-50/50+]
8. How would you describe your initiative?	[Community Supported Agriculture / Food co-op / Direct selling scheme / Community Supported-Fisheries / Other: include space for open answer]
9. What are the different products available in your initiative?	[Vegetables / Fruits / Meat / Fish / Dairy / Herbs / Processed products / Other: include space for open answer]
10. Did your initiative have to stop food distribution due to the Covid-19 crisis?	[No/Yes: include space for open answer]
11. How has the number of people participating in your initiative evolved since the outbreak of the Covid-19 crisis?	[Decreased a lot 1 ,,,,5 Increased a lot]
12. How difficult was it for your initiative to adjust to the sanitary provisions?	[Very hard 1 ,,,,5 Very Easy]
13. Please explain why?	
14. Were you approached by other food providers deprived from market access because of Covid-19?	[Yes/No]
15. Could you accommodate them, and if yes how?	[Open Answer]
16. Has your initiative been supporting marginalized people and those the most affected by Covid-19 (low or no income, isolated, or at higher risks to name a few)?	[Yes/No]
17. If yes, how?	[Open Answer]
18. Was your initiative affected by or changed because of Covid-19 in ways not covered by the previous questions? Please describe.	[Open Answer]

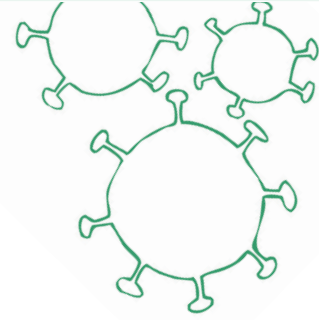
Online access: <https://pollen.urgenci.net/sosfi>



## Annexe B: In-depth Interview Template

Date and place of the interview
Name and contact of the interviewed person [gender/age/ethnicity]
Name of the interviewer

1. Name of the initiative/network
2. Location of the initiative/network
3. Year of creation of the initiative/network
4a. How would you describe your initiative/network? (CSA, CSF, direct selling scheme, food coop, etc.)
4b. How would you describe the people of your initiative? (Urban/Rural, Class, Ethnicity, etc.)
5. Did your initiative/ the initiatives of your network have to stop food distribution during the Covid-19 crisis? If yes, why?
6a. How did you/initiatives of your network adjust to the pandemic and to the regulations in your country?
6b. Do you foresee these changes continuing after the Covid-19 crisis subsides?
7. How has the number of your shares / customers / members evolved since the outbreak of the Covid-19 crisis?
8. More generally, have you observed, in your context, the creation of new direct selling schemes and local solidarity-based partnerships between producers and consumers?
9. Have you observed financial difficulties, or even closings, for producers or consumers involved in your initiatives? Why?
10. Were you approached by (new?) food providers deprived from market access because of Covid-19? Could you accommodate them, and if yes how?
11. Has your initiative/network been supporting marginalized people and those the most affected by Covid-19? Whom and how?
12. Have you noticed an increase in competing initiatives undermining yours? If so, where are they coming from? Who is involved?
13. Was your initiative/network affected by Covid-19 in ways not covered by the previous questions? Please describe.
14. Should political measures be implemented to cope with the consequences of Covid19 on the food system/ food resilience? If yes, what measures should be implemented?
15. What surprises did this crisis bring to you and/or your initiative that you would like to share?



URGENCI as a social movement represents all forms of direct partnerships between producers and consumers, particularly Local Solidarity-based Partnerships for Agroecology (LSPAs), of which Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) is the best-known iteration. One of the core missions of URGENCI is to raise awareness of the social impact of these alternative farming and consumption systems and make them more visible and widely recognized.

URGENCI conducted field research, through in-depth interviews with key actors, a comprehensive literature review and an online survey to gain a detailed understanding of how solidarity-based short supply chains and territorial food distribution systems support people's access to food during the Covid-19 crisis throughout the world. It is of considerable importance to understand and to share the role these initiatives and schemes play in crises.

How are LSPAs coping with the current Covid-19 crisis? How resilient have LSPAs been in this period? How do they manage to adjust to the restrictions and meet the health and safety requirements? What kind of role do they play in supporting marginalised and vulnerable people, and producers who are deprived of their marketing channels?

