

# Local food systems and community development: a symbiotic relation? A case study of three rural municipalities in Norway

Paper first received: 27 May 2023; Accepted: 20 March 2024; Published in final form: 20 April 2024

<https://doi.org/10.48416/ijaf.v30i1.534>

Hege WESTSKOG,<sup>1</sup> Mette Talseth SOLNØRDAL,<sup>2</sup> Mikkel VINDEGG,<sup>3</sup> Anders TØNNESEN,<sup>3</sup> Thea SANDNES,<sup>1</sup> Bård Sødal GRASBEKK<sup>4</sup> and Ingrid CHRISTENSEN<sup>3</sup>

## Abstract

Policy makers and researchers are increasingly emphasising the need for more diversified and localised food systems. This study investigates relations between local food systems and community development, revealing how local food is linked with identity, social relations, and community pride. We also address barriers and enablers for developing such links. We conducted an in-depth case study of local food systems in three Norwegian rural municipalities. Our results show how local food systems are linked to geographical location, and how they strengthen social relations by bringing actors in the food system closer together, fostering mutual responsibilities, pride, and a sense of belonging in local communities. We argue that local food is not only for somewhere, but from here, thus adding meaning and accountability to local food regimes. Local food exchange is motivated by mutual moral obligations and value-driven preferences, enabling reconnection between different actors in the food system. This is a central factor in local food's contribution to community development and sustainability in food systems. Our findings furthermore demonstrate the importance of non-conventional exchange channels for local food distribution and exchange. Some findings nevertheless also show a need for efforts to make local food more affordable and available for most citizens. Together, the cases studied show that a holistic and context-dependent development of local food systems is necessary to provide pathways for communities to expand the role of local food as part of their community development and in order to enhance sustainability.

<sup>1</sup> Centre for Development and the Environment at the University of Oslo, Norway

<sup>2</sup> School of Business and Economics, UiT The Arctic University of Norway, Norway

<sup>3</sup> CICERO – Center for International Climate Research, Norway

<sup>4</sup> National association of Norwegian architects, Norway

Corresponding author: Hege Westskog, [hege.westskog@sum.uio.no](mailto:hege.westskog@sum.uio.no)

## Bibliographical notes

**Dr. Hege Westskog** is an economist and senior researcher at the Centre for Development and the Environment at the University of Oslo. She heads the thematic area Municipalities as change agents in Include – a research centre for socially inclusive energy transition.

**Dr. Mette Talseth Solnørdal** is an economist and associate professor at the School of Business and Economics, UiT The Arctic University of Norway. Her research focuses on organisation management and environmental innovation processes in organisations.

**Dr. Mikkel Vindegg** is a social anthropologist and senior researcher at CICERO – Center for International Climate Research. His research focuses on social and environmental aspects of energy transitions, climate adaptation, and food systems.

**Dr. Anders Tønnesen** is human geographer and senior researcher at the CICERO – Center for International Climate Research. His research focuses on environmental policymaking, local conditions for climate policy and the role of municipalities as change agents.

**Thea Sandnes** is a research assistant at the Centre for Development and the Environment at the University of Oslo working on food and sustainability.

**Bård Sødal Grasbekk** is landscape architect and worked as a consultant at the management consultancy firm Insam when the study was conducted. He now works at the National association of Norwegian architects as an advisor.

**Ingrid Christensen** is a PhD Candidate at the University of Oslo and CICERO - Center for International Climate Research, working on local climate policy and collaborative governance.

## Acknowledgements and Data Protection

The authors wish to thank the informants for sharing their thoughts and experiences with us. We are also grateful to the user partners linked to the project (Tromsø, Hurdal and Oslo Municipalities, Spire, KS and A-lab) for their comments on the research questions, research design and indicative results. These were valuable in moving the research forward. We would also like to thank the two anonymous reviewers for insightful suggestions and comments on the paper. The project is part of the Research Centre Include – Research centre for socially inclusive energy transitions – funded by the Norwegian Research Council, project no. 295704. This support is highly appreciated. We obtained permission from the Norwegian Centre for Research Data (NSD) to conduct this research. We have followed their guidelines for data management and protection. The permission reference at NSD is 102299.

## Introduction

*For me, the more I know about a product, the stronger my attachment to it. It becomes 'mine' to a larger extent and part of my life. It gives me a strong sense of belonging. (...) The local apple juice becomes like a wine to be savoured. (Household informant, Hurdal)*

The panel of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES, 2019) and the International Panel of Experts on Sustainable Food Systems (IPES-Food, 2023) draw attention to the many challenges with today's highly globalised and industrialised food system, including its detrimental impacts on biodiversity and ecosystem functions. They argue for a more diversified and localised agriculture that engages more actors than just producers in food systems (public sector, civil society consumers and grassroots movements) to enhance sustainability (IPBES, 2019; 882, IPES-Food, 2023).

Previous research argues that the physical and psychological distancing between food production and consumption caused by globalised food systems generates disconnection, with consequences including a 'loss of agricultural resilience and diversity, degradation of the environment, dislocation of community, [and] loss of identity and place' (Feagan, 2007: 38). Furthermore, supermarkets and large retailers that emphasise low-cost production and standardisation choose conventional food supply chains over local food suppliers and thus reward disconnected industrialised production (Dimitri and Gardner, 2019). As a result, customers lose control over the source and quality of their food and become increasingly distanced from food practices and knowledge (Campbell, 2009; Allen, 2010; Eriksen, 2013).

This study investigates relations between local food systems and community development. We also address barriers and enablers for development of such links. We aim to contribute to a research area that IPBES (2019: 882) has characterised as inadequate, by enhancing the understanding of localised food systems, their community dimensions, and how they may work to engage other actors.

The literature reports contradictory conclusions as to the advantages of localised food systems. Focusing on the local scale and assuming that there are benefits to the mere fact of being local – such as benefits for social and environmental sustainability, compared with the 'global' level –, has been termed the 'local trap' because there is nothing inherent about any level of scale (Born and Purcell, 2006). Winter (2003) warns of the dangers of becoming too obsessed with 'the local' and the risk of 'defensive localism', where people celebrate the local and reject outside influences. However, several authors who discuss the 'local trap' also believe that local food systems may foster and develop social relationships and re-spatialise and re-socialise food, which are among the benefits for community development (DuPuis and Goodman 2005; Venn et al., 2006). The solution to the 'local trap' is to perform 'reflexive localism', emphasising social justice for all, avoiding elitism, and ensuring that local alternatives are not co-opted by corporations (DuPuis and Goodman, 2005). As Sonnino (2010) argues, localisation can mean empowerment if it is implemented in the right way.

Schnell (2013) argues that in contrast to a global food system, which may produce disconnections between different actors in food supply chains, local food systems may enable connections to place and local ecologies (Dowler et al., 2009; Harris, 2010). Schnell (2013) also disputes claims against the environmental advantages of the local food movement. DeWeerd (2009) argues that food transported over long distances does not necessarily have a larger ecological footprint or climate impact; its impact depends on how it is transported and produced. Although this might be correct in many instances, this instrumental focus may lead to an oversimplification of the local food debate. 'Eating locally' often entails 'a desire to reintegrate food production and consumption within the context of place' (Schnell, 2013: 615). In other words, strengthening local food systems is also about social innovations, not just in the agricultural sector but in society beyond (Chiffolleau and Loconto, 2018).



Although we recognise the dangers of the local trap, we also see the potential of local food systems to contribute to community development and counter the negative impacts of globalised food systems. In responding to the climate and environmental crises and the urgency for a sustainable transition, researchers have highlighted the need to develop attractive local communities with qualities that enable the inhabitants to live, work and spend their leisure time there (Westskog et al., 2022). Moreover, research on local food systems in Europe has shown that ‘Local cultures clearly have an impact on the implementation of environmental policy’ (Häyrynen et al., 2022: 35), making local communities essential in ensuring sustainable food production. However, exploring the contributions of local food systems to community development is not straightforward. The term ‘community development’ is understood in many ways (Phillips and Pittman, 2008; Gilchrist and Taylor, 2016). Most authors have viewed a community as a set of practices in which people are linked or connected (Somerville, 2016). Moreover, the term ‘development’ has various connotations. These usually refer to change for the better (Cavaye, 2006). However, what ‘better’ involves is often unclear. In this study, community development is understood through the voices of the informants in three rural municipalities in Norway: Vågå, Inderøy, and Hurdal. Three categories of stakeholders are represented in our investigation: local governments, professionals, and households. To understand the relationship between local food systems and the development of their communities, we address their understanding of local food, motivations for engaging in the local food system, and related food practices in their respective communities.

In framing connections between local food and place, we build on previous food regime studies (Friedmann, 2005) that have identified a ‘food from somewhere’ versus ‘food from nowhere’ binary in global supply chains (Campbell, 2009). With reference to George Ritzer’s (2007) work, we argue that local food is socially connected in especially significant ways. We show how the socially substantive content of local food links it to identity, social relationships, and community pride. In our analyses we also draw on studies on exchange systems of local food (Arnalte- Mur et al. 2020), showing the importance of non-conventional distribution channels and how the exchange of local food is socially embedded (Polanyi, 1944/2001). Our study contributes evidence for how the exchange of local food is closely linked to local social, economic, and environmental considerations. These links constitute the core contribution of local food to community development. Thus, our study provides learning for debates on local food as a means to advance community development in the face of sustainability challenges, and for communities following this pathway.

Our analytical framework is presented below and guides the discussion of results. In the section on *Methodology and context*, we describe our methodology, including the data selection and collection, and provide a contextual background of the local food strategies in our case municipalities. The *Results* section presents our empirical results structured around the main perspectives from our analytical framework. The *Discussion* section, discusses the main results, with an emphasis on how local food systems contribute to community development, as well as barriers that hinder this development. We conclude in the last section

## **Framework for analysis**

### *Understanding ‘local’*

Local food systems are multifaceted, and the meaning of ‘local food’ depends on the research context. However, they all share socially substantive meanings and content that are often contrasted directly with larger food producers and national or international distributors. Using the concept territorial fitting, Tisenkopfs et al. (2020) analyse and discuss how small farms take advantage of local assets and connections to operate. Farmers’ activities are fitted to their surroundings (the territory), as opposed to bigger farms that operate detached from local communities and geographies. Territorial fitting operates in the form of social, environmental, and economic embeddedness, which contributes to its substantiveness.

Local food systems may be related to three domains of proximity: relational, value-oriented, and geographical

(Eriksen, 2013). Relational proximity refers to relationships between local food actors who are connected through production and distribution practices. Values of proximity refer to values (e.g., place of origin, traceability, authenticity, freshness, and quality) that different actors attribute to local food. Geographical proximity may be the most distinct feature of 'local' (Adams and Adams, 2011; Onozaka et al., 2010). It commonly refers to the explicit spatial and geographical location (e.g. area, community, place, or geographical boundary), distance and/or radius within which food is produced, sold, consumed and/or distributed (Eriksen, 2013). Local food is often associated with quality, a notion based on local traditions (Venn et al., 2006) and niche businesses (Yalçın-Heckmann, 2021). This signifies the importance of values and relational proximities for local food consumers. The term local food connotes attention to detail, quality control and even a moral obligation between seller and customer (Berta, 2022).

Some authors have suggested that local food movements may educate consumers to be responsible for and aware of local food traditions by improving their cooking skills, strengthening their local community, and ensuring environmental sustainability (Albrecht and Smithers, 2018; DesRivières et al., 2017). In other words, local food enables a broad range of connections to place (Schnell, 2013), which can foster changes in the fundamental priorities of life. Seen as a whole, this shift in priorities can also provide further impetus for an eco-economic recalibration in rural areas, that can contribute to 'realign production-consumption chains and capture local and regional value between rural and urban spaces' (Kitchen and Marsden, 2009: 275).

#### *From "food from somewhere to 'food from here'*

Friedmann (2005) analyses a shift to a global 'corporate-environmental food regime'. She argues that this led, amongst other things, to a form of greenwashing of certain supply chains based on selectively appropriated demands from environmental movements. Environmentally destructive supply chains were kept intact in parallel with higher quality products – products often presented through a veneer of environmentally friendly audits and traceability of suppliers. According to Campbell (2009) this led to an (only) nominally socially and environmentally responsible 'food from somewhere'. Campbell identifies an implicit argument in Friedman's (2005) analysis that 'to become sustainable, small-scale food systems need to be both socially and environmentally embedded' (Campbell, 2009: 313). In this article, we identify such a perception of 'local food' in the three Norwegian rural communities.

We introduce Ritzer's (2007) dialectic of international capitalist goods as existing in a tension between traits related to 'something' and 'nothing' qualities, as a parallel to Campbell's (2009) analysis of global food regimes. In Ritzer's terms (2007: 36), nothing is 'a social form that is generally centrally conceived, controlled and comparatively devoid of distinctive substantive content'. From a food consumer perspective, then, nothing food is generic (e.g., store brands of supermarket chains). In contrast, something is 'generally indigenously conceived, controlled and comparatively rich in substantive content' (Ritzer, 2007: 38). Local food is a quintessential something. It cannot share social forms related to nothing and still be local food (Schnell, 2013). We show that local food is socially and environmentally embedded in ways that go beyond previous corporate-environmental 'food from somewhere' in what may be 'genuinely novel ways' (Campbell 2009: 318). Succinctly put, one might say that local food is 'food from here'. In line with our research participants' perspectives, we understand local food as being 'from somewhere' – a more substantive understanding than Campbell's (2009). Thus, 'local food' is not only traceable back to its origins, it is traceable to a specific location, and often a specific individual, that the consumer knows personally. This adds social meaning to the food as a product, and an added layer of meaning and accountability to (local) food regimes. By contrast, this meaning and accountability exist only in abstract forms in the powerful audit cultures (Campbell 2009: 316) of 'food from somewhere' regimes. Local food in Hurdal, Inderøy, and Vågå is not just from 'somewhere', it is from 'here' – a specifically known place. Although tentative, our findings indicate that local food as a 'food from somewhere' is less dependent on 'food from nowhere' as its binary opposite because it is more intrinsically valued, both socially and environmentally. It therefore potentially contributes to an eco-economic shift (Kitchen and Marsden, 2009) as the need for environmental transformation becomes ever more pressing.



How general this tendency is across Norway and internationally is however beyond the scope of this article and requires further research.

### *Exchange of local food: the importance of non-conventional markets*

Arnalte-Mur et al. (2020:5) emphasise ‘integration into non-conventional value-chains’ as one of the key drivers of small farmers’ contributions to food systems and food security. Non-conventional value chains are both individual and collective. Farmers may sell directly from their farms or through marketplaces such as farmers markets or digital platforms. What those non-conventional exchange systems have in common is their ability to re-spatialise and re-socialise food (Venn et al., 2006). Several previous studies have shown that consumers of local food are motivated by social attitudes and local identity (Adams and Adams, 2011). Thus, local food exchange may contribute to restructuring food systems by connecting consumers, producers, and food in different economic spaces where social embeddedness and trust are key, and where the producer and consumer take back the power currently held by large corporations in the industrialised food system. In this way, local food may facilitate the development of a socially embedded commodity (Polanyi, 1944/2001) where exchange incorporates principles of mutual moral obligations, trust, bonding, and redistribution alongside that of barter based on profit maximisation.

Polanyi (1944/2001) does not distinguish between barter of something versus nothing products (i.e. products with or without socially substantive content). Barter of something is shown to be of importance for local food exchange and small farms. Galli et al. (2020) argue for instance that small farms directly contribute to their local communities through local supply markets, off-farm labour markets, and participation in activities in their communities – all factors that also ensure their livelihoods. Hence, for these types of markets the economy is embedded in social relations rather than being disembodied – a nuance not captured in how Polanyi characterises barter in general (Polanyi, 1944/2001: 60). This embeddedness-somethingness is inimical to ‘food from nowhere’ and can further eco-social tendencies previously identified in ‘food from somewhere’ regimes (Campbell, 2009).

An important potential barrier for local food systems’ contribution to community development is related to food justice. High prices may for instance prevent disadvantaged groups from taking part in local food systems. Hinrichs (2000) examines the tension between instrumentalism and embeddedness in local food exchange, exemplified by the farmer’s market and community-supported agriculture. Inequality still exists in these places, regardless of how socially embedded they may appear to be, particularly because many of these markets offer ‘exclusive products’. DesRivières et al. (2017) argue that for systemic changes to take place in the food system, food justice must be addressed as a broad goal to allow for the availability of local food for all types of consumers.

## **Methodology and context**

### *Case selection*

The municipalities of Vågå, Hurdal, and Inderøy were selected as the cases for the study. As selection criteria we considered similarities regarding centrality and demographics, and variation in promotion of local food strategies. The latter selection criteria were informed by prior research on local food (see *Data analysis*). Table 1 summarises the core features of the case municipalities based on data from Statistics Norway (SSB, 2023). The National Centrality Index (Høydahl, 2017) describes concentrations of inhabitants, workplaces, and service. It ranges from 1–6, where 1 denotes the highest concentration. The three case municipalities were indexed from 4–5, and were rural communities characterised by small populations, low agglomerations in their administrative centres and distant from larger municipalities with over 50,000 inhabitants.



Table 1: Core features of the case municipalities

	National Centrality Index	Population 2021 (number of inhabitants)	Population changes in period 2011–2021	Administrative centre (inhabitants)	Nearest municipality with > 50,000 inhabitants (distance*)	Agricultural properties
Inderøy	4	6,700	0.7 %	Straumen (1600)	74 km	642
Vågå	5	3,700	-4.1 %	Vågåmo (1500)	162 km	445
Hurdal	4	2,600	8.4 %	Torget (700)	57 km	235

\*Measured in km overhead line between administrative centres.

### Data collection

Data were collected from June 2021 to November 2021. Our methods involved document studies, observations, and qualitative interviews. The document studies comprised a screening of municipal plans and strategies with a focus on initiatives to promote local food and environmental issues associated with local food. This information was pertinent when selecting case municipalities, and for understanding the local context.

We also reviewed web pages and material on local food initiatives and producers in the case communities. By visiting the communities and the local food distributors (grocery shops, markets, cafés, and restaurants), we noted the types of local food that were sold, as well as where and how they were sold. This contextual understanding also informed us about target groups. In addition, we conducted eight background interviews with municipal employees and politicians in Trøndelag County (where Inderøy Municipality is located), who had worked extensively with local food strategies. These interviews increased our overall understanding of the central challenges and opportunities surrounding local food systems, and were valuable input to the empirical fieldwork.

We focused on three main categories of informants: local governments (i.e., politicians and municipal employees); professionals (i.e., farmers, local food producers and distributors); and households (consumers). We aimed at recruiting households of different social backgrounds, ages, and sizes (i.e., number of members). In total, 52 interviews were conducted. The household informants received a gift card of 500 NOK (approximately 50 euros) to ensure the participation of a broader range of informants. Table 2 provides an overview of the numbers and types of informants.

Table 2: Number of informants by category and municipality

Category of informants	Inderøy	Vågå	Hurdal	Total
Local government*: municipal employees and local politicians	6	5	4	15
Professionals: farmers, food producers, distributors	6	5	4	15
Households**	10	6	6	22
Total	22	16	14	52

\* The number of informants from local governments varied because employees in different municipalities had different areas of responsibility of relevance for our study.

\*\* The number of household interviews in Inderøy was higher than that for the other case municipalities because some interviews were conducted as part of research for a Master's thesis.



We adjusted the interview guide according to the informant and different case contexts. In interviewing the municipal employees, politicians, and professionals, we aimed to elicit the respondents' conceptualisation of 'local food', their engagement with local food and their motivations for this engagement, as well as their views and experiences with local food development in their communities. We also addressed the climate and environmental issues associated with local food. In interviewing the households, we addressed the same main topics, along with food practices and factors affecting the consumption of local food.

### *Data analysis*

All interviews were recorded, and detailed notes were taken covering the main topics of the interview guide to facilitate the analysis of the data. In most interviews, at least two researchers were present; one led the interview and the other took detailed notes. Summaries of the interviews were also distributed to the informants for their comments and approval.<sup>1</sup>

Case studies focus on 'relation to environment', that is, 'context' (Flyvbjerg, 2011: 301). We start with the assumption that while the structures and processes described here may manifest differently in other contexts, they are relevant to the overall tendencies that apply in other settings. In analysing the empirical data, the authors conducted a thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006). In conjunction with a set of main questions from the interview guide, they identified and summarised key themes highlighted by the informants. At least two authors contributed to the extraction of data from each case study, and one author contributed to all three cases.

We began the study with a review of the central literature on local food (see *Introduction and Framework for analysis*). This guided the formulation of our research question, as well as the case selection and the collection of empirical data. Based on themes emerging from the thematic analysis of our empirical findings, the authors developed the analytical framework for the study, bringing further insights to relations between local food systems and community development. By using this theoretical framework for analyses to further understand the relations between local food systems and community development, we aim to offer lessons to other communities wanting to strengthen their strategies in this field.

### *The empirical cases: contextual descriptions*

As in most other countries, the industrialisation of the food system has been prevalent in Norway. Traditionally, Norwegian agriculture has been characterised by small-scale farming, often in combination with fishing or forestry. However, in recent decades, the sector has been restructured, and the number of farms in Norway has declined steeply (Eldby, 2016). This was true in our case municipalities, although they had also been recognised for their explicit promotion of local food strategies. Because of geographical, historical, and cultural differences, there were large variations between the cases regarding how these strategies were operationalised and promoted.

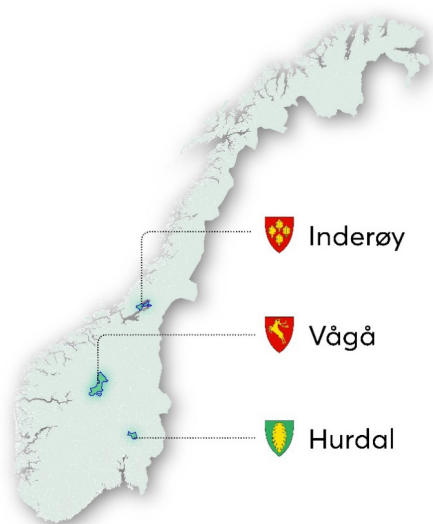
Inderøy Municipality is located on the coast in the middle of Norway (see Figure 1), in a region called Innherred. Inderøy is in the distant northern outskirts of Trondheim City. Local food has been a central part of business development, and its success is referred to in Inderøy's municipal plan (Inderøy Municipality, 2023). The Golden Road (TGR) was established in 1998 as an initiative by local food producers and supported by Inderøy Municipality. TGR is a cooperative of 22 members who collaborate on tourism in Inderøy; 'quality at all levels' is their central tenet. It has become a nationally and internationally renowned tourist destination, with a focus on food, art, and cultural experiences. Since the inception of the TGR, several local food initiatives—both traditional and innovative—have been implemented and developed into professional businesses.

Vågå Municipality is in the mountainous part of southern Norway (see Figure 1), far from larger cities in the Gudbrandsdalen Valley. Vågå is characterised by its picturesque shieling landscape and rich food culture. Arne

<sup>1</sup> This was not done for the household interviews because they were more easily anonymised.

Brimi, a nationally renowned chef and food pioneer from Vågå, has been an important figure in generating knowledge about and pride in local food. His entrepreneurial activities have elevated the role of local food as a business development strategy and have influenced perspectives on the importance of continuing local food traditions.

Figure 1: Map of Norway showing the case municipalities



Hurdal Municipality is in the eastern inland part of Norway (see Figure 1), at the fringe of the housing and labour market of the capital city of Oslo in the Øvre Romerike region. Hurdal has attained status as a sustainability forerunner because of its local ecovillage, a community-driven initiative adopted into public policy through a zoning plan. In 2014, Hurdal Municipality adopted sustainability as a basis for its community development, branding itself as the ‘Sustainable Valley’. Hurdal has many small farms that mainly provide part-time employment for farmers. The municipal plan underlines the importance of maintaining local food production for food security and the varied cultural landscapes it fosters (Hurdal Municipality, 2023). The municipality has promoted local food in its sustainability work by supporting a local food network called Hurdalsmat (food from Hurdal; not currently operational).

## Results

### *Food from here and for someone*

Most of the informants in this study defined local food as food produced within a certain distance from their communities and linked to their regions. This food was perceived as high-quality (all cases), and in environmentally conscious ways (most prominent in Hurdal). In Inderøy, the perception of local food was delimited by geography:

*Local food is food that’s produced and processed in the vicinity. That means Inderøy and Innherred. (Municipal informant, Inderøy)*

In Vågå, the understanding of local food was based on products originating from the geographical region of Gudbrandsdalen. A national meat distributor was commonly mentioned as being incommensurable with local food. In both Vågå and Hurdal, informants mentioned that the national distributor had sought to maintain a dominant position in the Norwegian meat supply by buying local slaughterhouses. It was also stated that meat bought and sold by this company was not local, even if it was produced by locals.

Several informants emphasised that local food production fostered food quality, animal welfare and less food waste. In Vågå, consistent references were made to the food perspectives of the celebrity chef Arne Brimi, who came from this area. Regarding the use of local resources, outfield pastures were referred to as a core component of agriculture in this mountainous part of the country. In Hurdal, most informants still considered that ‘local’ was limited to their region, although the geographical demarcation was not as specifically defined as it was in the other two case municipalities. Many informants added another perspective to the understanding of ‘local food’, associating it with organic and environmentally conscious production.

Local food producers reported that their main motivation for food production and processing was to make a living from the family farm and improve the farm’s economic and social conditions. They considered local food production an important facilitator of sustaining economic and environmental activity and maintaining





family togetherness at the farm:

*When I pass the farm on to my children, the land should be in better shape than when we started. (Farmer, Inderøy)*

As motivations for their work, farmers also stressed the importance of bringing traditions forward and protecting the local culture and landscape. Some local food producers emphasised that producing food for local inhabitants was their primary motivation, rather than attracting tourists or contributing to economic growth. A fruit business in Hurdal refused to sell the business' entire stock to a large buyer; they wanted to sell their products to locals first. A farmer in Vågå commented:

*It seems like many [people] think that what's produced here is mainly for tourists. That's a key issue for me. I want my vegetables to go to the locals.*

Another farmer in Vågå did not want to expand production by taking over more farmland, despite an offer to do so. Expansion would require extensive mechanisation, which would not be in line with distinguishing features of local food production.

Households were motivated to buy local food because of its perceived superior quality and taste. Many informants also emphasised the importance of supporting farmers and the community by 'purchasing locally'. Such support was often motivated by the perceived injustice of farmers' (low) incomes and the desire to ensure rural vitality. The informants also highlighted the importance of supporting local producers in creating job opportunities. The community dimension as a motivation for local food purchases was the most prevalent in Inderøy, which was motivated by an overall spirit of support and cooperation in the community (as inspired by the municipal motto, 'best – together'). In Hurdal, some household informants emphasised a close connection between local food and a sense of belonging to a community, which increased their appreciation of food consumption:

*For me, the more I know about the product, the stronger my attachment to it. It becomes 'mine' to a larger extent and part of my life. It gives me a strong sense of belonging (....) The local apple juice becomes like a wine to be savoured. (Household informant, Hurdal)*

In Hurdal, household informants also highlighted that they were motivated to buy local food because of its perceived environmental friendliness and better animal welfare performance compared with supermarket products.

### *Exchange of local food*

The local governments supported local food businesses for various reasons, especially regarding the degree to which local food was considered a pathway to economic growth and community development. In Vågå, local food was often included as a strategy to develop employment and business opportunities (e.g., by attracting tourists). In Vågå's municipal master plan, local food was included as part of a business development strategy and an opportunity for the economic growth of the community (Vågå Municipality, 2023). This was echoed by a municipal representative in Vågå:

*The tourism industry has a direct impact on the establishment of local food producers—it stimulates demand for local food.*

Local food initiatives in Vågå can be seen in relation to the municipality's challenging population decline (see Table 1) and the need to create new business opportunities to spur local economic development and promote the attractiveness of small-scale farms that typically engage in local food production. In the interviews, municipal officers also mentioned that jobs and business opportunities were motivators for engagement in local food in Inderøy and Hurdal. However, in Inderøy, local food was also important for place development connected to the municipal centre (see *Barriers and enablers*). In Hurdal, local food was promoted as part of the municipality's overall sustainability strategy (see *Methodology and context*).

Inderøy stood out among our case municipalities as the place where local food initiatives and engagement were the most visible and developed. Here, the informants expressed a sense of pride that their municipality had accomplished so much and had become famous for their local food culture. Household informants appreciated the possibility of visiting local farms and buying local food. Some said they proudly showed Inderøy's local food farms and shops to visitors, and they frequented restaurants that served local food. In all three case municipalities, household informants often bought local food on exclusive occasions when they were willing to spend more time and money on food:

*[Grocery chains] have lots of offers and discounts, so that's all right for everyday stuff. But if I have a guest over or there's a birthday, I might buy cheese from [a local cheese producer]. (Household informant, Inderøy)*

The distribution of local food through alternative and informal channels (i.e., beyond local grocery stores and restaurants) increased the availability of local food to the household informants:

*I buy one sheep a year from [local farm A] and keep [it] in the freezer ... beef from [local farm B]—nice, long-hoofed outdoor cattle. And pork down at [local farm C]—free-range pigs. (Household informant, Hurdal)*

Because of Inderøy's well-developed local food market, these channels were not as important there as in the other case municipalities. However, there were also traces of an informal market in Inderøy, exemplified by fishermen who sold fish from their boats. When we visited a small community nearby, we encountered men who were gutting fish and informally selling their recent catches to locals. However, accessing such channels requires knowledge of both the producers and the seasonality of their products:

*If you're aware of and interested there are offers [of local food]. You need to get in touch; no one is pushing it. Local products are shared only on Facebook. (Household informant, Vågå)*

Local food producers engaged in multiple activities to secure their income, such as food production in addition to running a distillery and providing activities and accommodation for tourists. Some also had regular jobs off their farms. Many farmers sold products through alternative market channels, ran farm shops, offered 'pick your own' berries, and directly distributed farm products through REKO-rings (a retail and distribution model)<sup>2</sup> and farmers' markets. Opinions varied regarding the importance of local grocery stores as distribution channels for local food producers.

All three case communities had strong traditions of producing red meat. Although the literature clearly states that reductions in the production and consumption of red meat are necessary to reduce climate emissions (e.g., Willett et al., 2019), many informants expressed scepticism regarding the extent to which reducing local red meat production and consumption should be part of a climate transformation strategy:

*I'm all for eating Norwegian food.... We need to support what [type of] agriculture we've got. I eat all the red meat I want. That's not where we need to make cuts in greenhouse gas emissions. (Household informant, Inderøy)*

Instead, the use of local resources was seen as crucial for a sustainable future:

*People buy almond milk and think that's sensible. The almonds are from California, where there's water scarcity. In those cases, it's better to buy milk made from Norwegian resources. That's more sustainable. (Municipal informant, Vågå)*

### Barriers and enablers

A main barrier to increasing the consumption of local food was the price of local food sold in grocery stores and restaurants. These prices meant that only some local foods were considered everyday products

<sup>2</sup> REKO is a model for selling and distributing food. Customers order local food directly from producers. Producers deliver the food to agreed marketplaces where customers pick up their orders. Those administering REKO-rings are usually volunteers. The original phrase behind the acronym is 'Rejäl Konsumtion' from Swedish, meaning 'fair consumption'.



(e.g., potatoes from a local farm or locally produced meatballs in Vågå; vegetables from the garden centre or soup from the butcher in Inderøy). Another barrier mentioned by nearly all household informants was convenience. To buy everything at the grocery store was considered to be far more convenient compared to driving between localities to buy local food.

To some extent, in both Vågå and Hurdal, household informants saw limited availability of local food as a barrier, even though, as described above, non-conventional exchange channels did improve this situation. In Vågå, the availability of local food products in grocery stores was limited, and restaurant opening hours signalled that they were marketed for tourists rather than locals. We observed this when we wanted to taste local traditional food; it was late August and just off high season, but most restaurants had already significantly reduced their opening hours. Locally produced Vågå ice cream was available only at the tourist information office. In Hurdal, the local food available in the grocery store was obviously marketed to high-income groups and cabin owners. In contrast, in Inderøy, locals have regular, easy access to local food. Many destinations that serve local food are open all year round.

In Vågå and Hurdal, several farmers and local food business owners emphasised that local food deliveries were challenging. Although some local businesses in Vågå (i.e., a guesthouse) and Hurdal (i.e., a hotel) tried to accommodate local food deliveries, many informants said it was challenging for small-scale farmers to provide the large quantities required to cater to the large volume of tourists and deliveries to grocery stores. Producers and other informants emphasised moreover that local food producers needed to be good at many things. In addition to producing food, local food producers also had to be good at marketing their products, processing food, running a business and welcoming visitors:

*We're noticing a considerable favouring of [producers] who are the best at marketing and storytelling (...) This is a considerable barrier for farmers who are used to selling through their cooperatives. Handling sales themselves has a high threshold. (Municipal informant, Vågå)*

In all case municipalities, the informants pointed to the potential for local food production to contribute to a lively local community and higher food quality. However, the involvement of the three municipalities studied in promoting local food systems varied. Inderøy Municipality had worked intensely to develop the town centre as an attractive and more densely populated place. In 2020, they won a state prize for 'Sustainable cities and communities'. An important motivation to win the prize was to facilitate the development of small-scale businesses that were central to local food initiatives in the municipal core. This enabled local farmers to flourish through the production of local food side products, such as jam, cheese, soups, and drinks that were sold in shops to visitors and locals. In 2023 a blue mould cheese from a local cheesemaker in Inderøy was crowned 'cheese of the year' in the World Cheese Award competition. Furthermore, in Inderøy the ability to visit farms through TGR was well developed, allowing guests to directly encounter farming activities and food production. The Vågå and Hurdal Municipalities had not promoted local food to the same extent. In Vågå, local food was promoted to a certain extent as part of the municipality's business development strategy. In Hurdal, the only involvement of the municipality in promoting local food was to support a nascent regional food network, which was still in the pilot stage at the time of this research (Romeriksmat). There had been a previous effort to establish a cooperative with a local food brand, but this was not successful.

Many informants pointed out that a precondition for successful local food initiatives was local conventional food production, as well as related national food cooperatives that provided knowledge and predictability in terms of access to raw materials and infrastructure. Local customers were also important, particularly before local food producers and businesses had established marketing and sales channels:

*Most is sold through my own farm shop, and we deliver local vegetables to restaurants and hotels. (...) We don't have enough products to sell through grocery stores. We don't have enough volume to be interesting to [a nationwide store chain]. (Farmer, Inderøy)*

The informants described regional business incubators (Vågå), regional distribution companies (Inderøy and Vågå), and national support schemes for innovation and entrepreneurship (Innovation Norway, all case municipalities) as factors that enabled the development of local food systems.

### Overview of results

Table 3 provides an overview of our results, showing similarities and exceptions between the case municipalities, which are found in the *Discussion*.

**Table 3: Overview of main results by case municipality**

	Inderøy	Vågå	Hurdal
Substantiveness/ Somethingness - The understanding of local food.	Emphasis on the geographical region, Innherred, and community. Little focus on production methods.	Emphasis on the geographical region Gudbrandsdalen, and local food traditions rather than production methods.	Regional, organic, and environmentally conscious production commonly associated with local produce.
Substantiveness/ Somethingness - Motivation: professionals	Make a living and a community, continue traditions.	Make a living, continue traditions.	Make a living, continue traditions.
Substantiveness/ Somethingness - Motivation: households	Quality, supporting local farmers and community.	Quality, supporting local farmers.	Quality, environmental aspects, supporting community.
Exchange of local food - Strategies: local government	Employment and business opportunities, place development.	Employment and business opportunities.	Part of sustainability strategy; employment and business opportunities.
Exchange of local food - Distribution channels	Alternative and informal channels for distribution of some importance.	Alternative and informal channels for distribution important.	Alternative and informal channels for distribution important.
Barriers	High prices. Local food for exclusive occasions, but some local foods considered as everyday products (e.g., Inderøy "Sodd")	High prices. Local food for exclusive occasions, but some local foods considered as everyday products (e.g., potatoes). Local food availability, local food deliveries.	High prices. Local food for exclusive occasions. Local foods not considered as everyday products. Local food availability, local food deliveries.
Enabling conditions	Strong sense of community, established structures for promoting and distributing local food, national financial support systems.	Legacy of Arne Brimi; well-established regional food distributor, alternative food distribution channels, national and regional financial support systems.	Sustainability engagement, alternative distribution channels, national financial support system.



## Discussion

### *Local food as 'food from here'*

Our results show that the substantive content of local food is linked to place, bringing producers and consumers closer together, and developing a sense of pride in the local community. Within the context of a global 'food from somewhere' regime, local food stands apart as 'food from here'. In addition to local food adding to consumers' wellbeing (taste, feeling of exclusiveness), buying local is also a citizen act (Sagoff, 1988) of supporting farmers and the development of the local community. Factors like protecting local culture and landscapes strongly motivated farmers' work. Some farmers even explicitly stated that they produced food for their local community, not for tourists. In this way, local food is socially embedded.

Categorisations of local food are however diverse, since definitions depend on context. Consistent with other research, we find that the term 'local' often implies geographical limits (Eriksen, 2013; Onozaka et al., 2010), but specific boundaries are subjective. Distribution in nationwide channels is the main way that locally produced food loses its social substantiveness (e.g., a domestic meat corporation was mentioned in both Vågå and Hurdal). However, a local producer could also buy nothing milk from a nationwide dairy producer and use it to make local cheese, such as in Inderøy, which would regain the status of local food (i.e., something). The distribution channel and direct producer–consumer interactions are important to regain this status (Venn et al., 2006). Yet relationships between established large-scale actors and new small-scale local producers are ambivalent and go beyond the issue of simple categorisation: large-scale actors can serve as an important factor in the economic viability of local food production, such that consumers see the higher prices of local products as justified.

As previously noted, applying Campbell (2009) and Ritzer's (2007) differentiation between something and nothing distinguishes local food as 'food from here'. This entails an especially strong social and environmental connectedness which can contribute to changing and maintaining more sustainable food production through greater accountability in production, distribution, and consumption. This again has direct potential for community development. However, the specific ways local food figures in a given community will differ. Local supply chains can make the most out of local conditions, but this comes with the recognition that the conditions for making local food vary and will be less suitable or even unfeasible in some locations.

### *Exchange of local food embedded in social relations*

Like Arnalte-Mur et al. (2020), we show that local food producers are highly dependent upon non-conventional exchange channels to sell their products. The REKO retail and distribution model operated by volunteers is one way of directly connecting producers and consumers to local food exchange channels. Visiting farms, farmers' markets, farm shops, hunting cooperatives, the sale of small quantities of food by word of mouth and the personal production of vegetables and fruits constitute other distribution channels. These have in common that they restructure institutions for food exchange into systems that rely on social relationships and trust (Venn et al., 2006). Non-conventional distribution channels facilitate local food's embeddedness in social relations, rather than disconnection from them, which is the case in global food systems. Polanyi (1944/2001) argued that market exchange motivated by for-profit caused social relations to be subsumed under markets. However, our results demonstrate that non-conventional market exchange constitutes a central element for re-connection between different actors in the food system, thus fostering social relations in communities. Hence, it nuances the argument that market exchange is disembedded from social relations (Polanyi, 1944/2001) – a disembeddedness considered to be a consequence of the globalised food system (Feagan, 2007).

A striking result of our investigation is the degree to which producers and consumers selling and buying local food were motivated by factors other than profit maximisation and the minimisation of food costs in



(for instance supporting their local communities, protecting the local culture and landscape). This motivation is consistent with 'the moral economy' (Yalçın-Heckmann, 2021) and citizens' preferences (Sagoff, 1988). Furthermore, the motivations of local food producers overlap with the literature on niche businesses (Berta, 2022). Niche businesses focus on selling 'quality' products that can be recognised by customers as distinct from mass-produced goods. This focus parallels our something–nothing perspective (Campbell, 2009; Ritzer, 2007). The focus on quality often presupposes strict control over production, which can be difficult to maintain if the business becomes too large for the owner to oversee (Berta, 2022). This may lead to the motivation to not expand or even to scale down operations, which was an argument expressed by one informant who was a producer. Although a tentative result, the same principles of moral obligation and quality control may be extended to the local environment, facilitating local sustainability through the food system (DesRivières et al., 2017).

IPBES (2019) and IPES-Food (2023) argue for engaging actors other than producers in developing sustainable food systems. Our results show that the exchange of local food outside the conventional food system engaged consumers, promoted volunteer work (e.g., organising REKO-rings), and to some extent involved local governments (e.g., providing space for farmers' markets and REKO-rings). In this regard, following IPBES (2019), it could be argued that compared with conventional markets, these forms of exchange contribute to developing more sustainable food systems.

#### *Barriers: local food for special occasions or as daily fare?*

The results of our study indicate that local food is often considered a luxury aimed at high-income consumer groups and for purchase on special occasions. However, results also demonstrate that some types of food in the case municipalities were considered everyday products (e.g., potatoes in Vågå and vegetables from a greenhouse producer in Inderøy). The prices of most local food products were perceived as high by most informants compared with those of generic and mass-produced ones in grocery stores. In addition, lack of convenience and availability were barriers to buying local food. This raised the questions of who local food is aimed for and who benefits from local food offers? Inequality still exists within distribution channels that directly link consumers and producers of local food, despite its social embeddedness (Hinrichs, 2000). Critiques of the argument that 'local' is superior to national and global have emphasised the risk that inequalities are reproduced at a local level. Hence, for local food to contribute to community development, it must address this issue by for instance ensuring that local food is to a larger extent daily fare for everyone.

Finally, many informants see local food systems as more sustainable than globalised food markets. However, surprisingly few informants suggested that reductions in the consumption and production of red meat should be part of Norwegian climate strategies. Instead, red meat was considered intertwined with local culture and impossible to replace with other agricultural products. Hence, resistance emerges when community development is viewed as changing the values and goals that underpin the local food system. Such resistance may diminish the potential of local food to contribute to community development, at least regarding the climate dimension (Willett et al., 2019) of an environmentally friendly food system.

#### *Local food and its contribution to community development*

Local food is tied to its territory (Tisenkopfs et al., 2020) and contributes to the connection to place (Schnell, 2013). Through our study we have revealed what this subjectiveness of local food entails and how it is directly linked to the communities in which its produced and consumed. First of all, local food systems connect different actors in the food system and enable development of social relations in communities. Secondly, the non-conventional exchange channels central to local food distribution are not motivated by profit alone, but rely on trust, social relations, and a sense of belonging which may constitute a potential for community development.

However, the aspects of community development wished for by local government actors varied across



our case municipalities. The economic opportunities that local food could provide in terms of jobs and business development were clearly highlighted by local government informants in Vågå and Inderøy. In these municipalities, emphasis was placed on the economic opportunities that local food could bring to community development. In Inderøy, the opportunities that it could provide for place development were also emphasised, especially in relation to the community centre at Straumen. Here, unlike in Vågå, there were many offers for local inhabitants related to local food, even out of season, including restaurants and cafés serving local food and shops specialising in local food products. Informants from Hurdal highlighted the fact that sustainability was an important part of their community development. Local food was envisioned as a contributing factor by providing opportunities for food to be produced in an environmentally friendly way.

Our results also reveal how local governments may help to develop local food systems. They have an important role in supporting bottom-up initiatives of local food producers, and promoting local exchange and distribution systems for local food. As shown in the case of Inderøy, local food as a strategy for community development was strengthened by the bottom-up involvement of the local community through a strong cooperative culture. Community development is however not a unitary process, and it can proceed at varying rates in different areas in the same region, as in Hurdal. While Hurdal Municipality's support for local food systems is currently low, the municipality has made great progress in other areas, such as the sustainability-focused transformation of the municipal rural centre. Hurdal's overall sustainability transformation work has been strong (Westskog et al., 2022). In Vågå, the municipality has not been particularly engaged in developing local food strategies or supporting local initiatives. Nonetheless, private initiatives thrive in a strong food culture. Together, the cases show a two-way relation between local food and community development. Community initiatives and public sector actors can help develop local food systems, and conversely, local food systems can be a crucial contributor to community development. Or, aspects of local food and community development may mutually strengthen each other, creating a symbiotic relation.

## Concluding remarks

IPBES (2019) and IPES-food (2023) emphasise the importance of a diversified and localised agriculture that also engages consumers, the public sector, and others in the food system to establish a more sustainable food system. At the same time, they call for more research on the issue, emphasising that the research underpinning these conclusions is inadequate (IPBES, 2019). We explored relations between local food systems and community development in three rural municipalities in Norway, addressing both the ways in which the substantive content of local food links it to identity, social relationships and community pride, and barriers and enablers for such development.

Our results clearly indicate that local food is substantive by nature. This links it to geographical location and gives it social meaning by bringing actors in the food system more closely together and fostering pride and a sense of belonging to local communities. Accordingly, we argue that local food is not only from somewhere, but from here, thus adding meaning and accountability to local food regimes and lessening their dependency on global scale regimes (Campbell, 2009); it both re-spatialises and re-socialises food (Venn et al., 2006). More research on these relations is needed, but our results suggest that local food can contribute to an economic shift (Kitchen and Marsden, 2009).

We show furthermore how non-conventional exchange channels facilitate and are a prerequisite for local food distribution and exchange. As such, our results are in line with Arnalte-Mur et al.'s (2020) arguments that integration into non-conventional value chains is a key driver for small farms' contribution to food systems. We argue that these types of exchange are embedded in social relations rather than being disembedded; they are driven by factors consistent with the 'moral economy' (Yalçın-Heckmann, 2021) and not only for-profit. Hence, these findings add a nuance to Polanyi's (1944/2001) characteristic of barter as actions without socially substantive content. Market exchange of local food may build social relations and support community development through trade.

Our results broaden the understanding of how local food supports community development. Our three case municipalities emphasised diverse aspects of local food in their strategies. In two of the case municipalities, local food initiatives were considered opportunities for attracting tourists with a view to strengthening economic growth by creating jobs and increasing incomes. The place development dimension was also highlighted as a goal for local food initiatives. One municipality additionally emphasised local food systems' potential to foster sustainable development, including the environmental benefits local food might provide. Together, our cases show that the development of local food systems must be viewed holistically if they are to contribute to community development.

The findings nevertheless also demonstrate the need for broader engagement in making local food affordable and available for most citizens. A more localised food system has many benefits, beyond contributing to a more sustainable food system as called for by IPBES (2019), but attention to inequality issues is required to fulfil the potential of local food, both for sustainability and for community development.

A common finding across all our cases is local food systems' ability to nurture social relations and enhance environmentally beneficial outcomes by developing attractive local communities, thus enabling inhabitants to spend more time in their closest surroundings (Westskog et al., 2022). This leads us to the following recommendations for local communities wanting to expand the role of local food systems:

- Support non-conventional exchange systems, for instance by providing spaces for farmers markets, REKO-rings, or places where different food actors can meet.
- The production and consumption of local foods that are considered daily fare should be encouraged, to diminish factors of local food that may increase inequality, like being expensive and for special occasions.
- Local governments are important as facilitators of local food exchange, for instance by promoting networks for local food actors.
- A holistic and context-dependent development of local food systems is necessary to provide pathways for communities expanding the role of local food as part of community development.

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## Appendix A: Interview guides

Note: this version is translated from the original Norwegian by the authors

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### On interview structure

The interviews are semi-structured with room for flexibility. Topics that are relevant and not covered by the guide can come up in the interviews. We provide room for this in addition to covering topics in the guide. Questions that are less relevant to individual cases can be dropped. The interviews are recorded. During the interview, one researcher takes responsibility for the interview, another takes notes (i.e. at least two present at each interview). Interviews of approximately one hour are planned. We start with “obvious” interviewees in the municipality, for example business advisers, and recruit using the snowball method.

## Interview guide local food: government employees

### Information about the project given before starting

- About the sub-project and the Include research centre
- Ethics approval information and obtain consent
- Permission to record

### On the interviewee's work and the organisation

Purpose: Bring out the role and responsibilities of the interviewee.

- Role, responsibility and tasks
- Background

### *Sustainable transition and work on local food*

Purpose: To introduce the main theme in the interviews – transition and local food. Find out what is the motivation for investment (growth strategy/transition strategy) and how they see the connection between sustainable transition and a focus on local food, cooperation with business, importance for population and local development. Here it is important to also probe on whether they have plans/are prepared to also work for level three in climate transition (e.g. less meat production/more fruit and vegetables)

### Local food – business, customer groups and involvement:

- How have you (the municipality) worked to promote local food in the municipality?
- What is the background/motivation for promoting/not promoting? (including whether this is seen as a growth strategy or a restructuring strategy/strategy for changing an unsustainable development trend in the economy)
- Who would you describe as key actors (for example local food producers, distributors, business organisations, enthusiasts, etc.) within the field of local food in the region?
- How would you define local in this context?
- How does the municipality collaborate with business to promote/develop local food?
- Has the local population become involved in the development of local food?
  - If so, in what way? (including facilitating that the entire population can participate)
- To what extent is there cooperation with actors (business, other municipalities, regional and state actors) outside the municipality (geographically) on local food investment?
- How would you characterize the municipality/place (for example - how would someone from Vågå/ Inderøy/Hurdal talk about their place)?
  - Is local food linked to this?
  - Are there differences between different population groups when it comes to this?
- Which customer groups are the local food initiative(s) aimed at?
  - Local/visitors/age groups/income groups?
  - In what ways does the focus on specific groups apply?

### Climate

- Which units/sectors in the municipalities are normally involved in the work on climate transition?
- What is the municipality's:
  - main target for reducing greenhouse gases?
  - most important management tools/instruments for reducing greenhouse gases?
  - Knowledge of and possible use of the Climate Budget as an instrument?
- Is the work on reducing greenhouse gases linked to other municipal areas of responsibility, for example within health, the environment, schools?



- o If so, in what way?
- To what extent (and how) is local food production linked to the municipality's climate and adaptation strategy? (also address whether there are plans/motivation to work on restructuring production/consumption towards more fruit/vegetables and level 3 climate transition).
- To what extent (and how) is local food production connected to the municipality's work with local development?
- What are your views on local food as a local development strategy and climate change strategy.
  - o Is this a good strategy?
  - o Do you have concerns?

### *Barriers, opportunities, and suitability*

Purpose: Uncover what the municipalities perceive as barriers in working with local food and more specifically - local food as a transition strategy. Bring out the possible disadvantages of local food.

- What is the scope for the municipality to promote local food?
  - o Barriers? (practical, political, cultural/value-based)
  - o Opportunities? (for example in the form of positive effects on other areas the municipality works with)
- Are there other policies/instruments the municipality should use to promote local food and what could be done more? Probe: What are the reason(s) why these have not been used? (e.g. political opposition)
- To what extent do you see the following three areas of responsibility in connection with promoting local food: place development, local business development and climate transition?
- To what extent are there challenges linked to the focus on local food (Note: first ask the question in general to possibly bring up global justice issues as well, then specify).
  - o Are there any groups/residents in the municipality who either do not benefit from the investment or are disadvantaged by it? Why?
  - o Are there any areas of responsibility in the municipality that either do not benefit from the investment or are disadvantaged by it? Why?

## **Interview guide local food: businesses**

### **Information about the project given before starting**

- About the sub-project and the Include research centre
- Ethics approval information and obtain consent
- Permission to record

### **On the interviewee's work and the organisation**

Purpose: Bring out the role and responsibilities of the interviewee.

- Role, responsibility and tasks
- Background

### *Promoting local food - what has been done*

Purpose: To introduce the main theme in the interviews - transition and local food. Find out how they see the connection between climate transition and possible promotion of local food, cooperation with the municipality, significance for the population and local development

### Local food - business, customer groups, engagement and networks:

- How have you worked to promote your concept for local food (both background for promotion/non-implemented measures and main measures that you have taken)?

- Is your local food promotion linked to experiences for visitors and locals?
  - If so, in what way?
- Have there been changes in your efforts over time?
  - If so, in what way and when?
- Who would you describe as key actors (for example local food producers, distributors, business organisations, enthusiasts, etc.) within the field of local food in this region?
- How would you define local in this context?
- Do you collaborate with any players on local food?
  - If so, in what way?
- Do you have a collaboration with the municipality on local food?
  - If so, in what way?
- How would you characterize the municipality/place (for example - how would someone from Vågå/Inderøy/Hurdal talk about their place)?
  - Is local food linked to this?
  - Are there differences between different population groups when it comes to this?
- Which customer groups are the local food initiative(s) aimed at?
  - Local/visitors/age groups/income groups?
  - Are have you targeted specific groups?
  - Have you been in dialogue with local residents about the development of local food concepts?
  - If so, in what way?

#### Climate

- Is promotion of local food included as part of a climate transition strategy locally?
  - If not - what is the background for promotion of local food?
- How can local food contribute to local transition to a more climate- and environmentally friendly direction and how can your production contribute in this respect?
- What opportunities are there in the region to change local food production towards more fruit and vegetables and if so, how do you see this?

#### *Measures and policy instruments*

Purpose: Find out which instruments/measures they envision could be useful for them and for other local food producers to promote local food

- What do you consider to be the most important instruments/measures to promote local food production (public and own/other industry players)?
- What are your views on investing in local food (public and own/other industry players).
  - Is this a good strategy for site development/local business development/climate change?
  - Do you have any reservations about it?
- What could be relevant measures to promote local food/local as experience and as part of local development?
  - What would be the most important measures for you?
  - How do you think the possibilities are for implementing such measures?

#### *Barriers, opportunities, and suitability*

Purpose: Uncover what the business operator perceives as barriers in working with local food and more specifically - local food as a restructuring strategy. Bring out the possible disadvantages of short journeys.

- What are the possibilities for promoting local food?
  - Barriers? (practical, political, cultural/value-based)
  - Opportunities? (for example in the form of positive effects on other areas the municipality works with)
- To what extent do you see the following three areas as connected to local food; place development, local



business development and climate transition?

- To what extent are there challenges linked to the focus on local food (Note: first ask the question in general to possibly bring up global justice issues as well, then specify).
  - Are there any groups/residents in the municipality who either do not benefit from the investment or are disadvantaged by it? Why?
  - Are there any areas of responsibility in the municipality that either do not benefit from the investment or are disadvantaged by it? Why?

## **Interview guide local food: households**

### **Information about the project given before starting**

- About the sub-project and the Include research centre
- Ethics approval information and obtain consent
- Permission to record

### **About the interviewee**

Purpose: Bring out the role and responsibilities of the interviewee.

- job/profession
- owner of a holiday home/access to a holiday home

### *Practice (food and experiences)*

To address participants' food practices, use of local food options and experiences.

#### Food practices

- What does a normal day look like for your family/you in terms of meals/what do you eat for breakfast, lunch and dinner?
- Who is responsible for preparing the various meals?
- Where do you usually do your shopping?
- Have you bought locally produced food? If so, where?
- What do you think of the local food options that are here?
- What are the reasons why you use/don't use the local options? Are there differences in the family on this? And what is your impression of friends/acquaintances' use of local food?
- Which local food actors do you know from your local community?
- Is local food a topic that may come up in conversations with friends/neighbours? If so, what might you discuss?

#### Experiences

- What do you do in your spare time and on holidays?
- Do you spend your free time and holidays with friends? Others from the community?
- Who makes the choices when it comes to leisure activities and holidays?
- How would you characterize your village/place/centre?
- What makes you proud of the local community and what is less appealing?
- Have you used any local leisure offers? If so, which ones?
- Have you used offers related to local food production (e.g. open farm etc.)? And if so, what did you think of the experience?
- Have you sought out such offers together with family and friends?
- What are the reasons why you use/don't use these local offers (including local food)? And are there any differences among family/friends on this?



### *Barriers*

The most important obstacles are addressed here - first openly, then connected to main categories (material conditions, experience/knowledge and attitudes)

- What do you think are the biggest obstacles for you/you when it comes to buying local food/using offers on local food as experiences?

Ask more about:

- Price/too expensive?
- Visibility? Knowledge of what is available locally?
- Facilitation of local experience offers (including local food as experiences) (outside the city centre, for example)
- Attractiveness of the offers?
- Other?

### *Values*

This section is to capture attitudes and values around climate, the environment and the importance of the local environment for leisure.

- What is the good life for you?
- How do you think that local experiences/the local environment/local food affect the good life?
- Would you describe yourself as environmentally conscious?
- Do you/any of you work with environmental and climate-related things?
- Are you member of any environmental organisations?

### *Measures and policy instruments*

Here elicit views on possible measures and policy to promote local food and dining experiences.

- Do you think that short-travel (*korttreist*) alternatives such as local food and local leisure offers will play an important role in climate transitions in the future?
- What do you think are the positive/negative aspects of local options (explain briefly)? Economic? Environmentally? Social/Cultural?
- What do you/you think are important measures for buying more locally produced food?
- And measures to promote short-travelled experiences including experiences related to local food?
- How can the municipality play a role in this?