

## Regional food hub for local products, Romania

Laura ALBU, Community Safety and Mediation Center

- **Scale of activity:** national
- **Actor/s:** farmers, citizens, NGO
- **State of the activity:** started in August 2017, ongoing
- **Keywords:** local products; small farms; agritourism  
slow and good food; traditional products,  
consumer producers partnerships, CSA,



### Summary

The project addresses the needs of peasant farms by establishing a regional food hub in North East region of Romania, as a social enterprise. This food hub contribute to viable development for 100 small farmers in the region, having alongside the classic role of aggregating production "Farm-to-consumer" - by building a direct sale system, supporting the individual development of the peasant farms involved, offering information on how to address new functions in peasant farms, of conversion to local products, traditional products, Slow Food production, ethical products, conversion of social capital into tourism and diversification of the farm through specific activities.

### Description of activities

The present project address the needs of farmers and peasant farms by establishing a regional food hub in North East region of Romania, as a social enterprise of our NGO-Community Safety and Mediation Center (CMSC), having 100% of shares, under the name Local Hub srl.

This food hub, together with technical assistance provided by CMSC contribute to viable development models for some 80-100 small farmers in the region, having alongside the classic role of aggregating production "Farm-to-consumer" - by building a direct sale system, also the role of supporting the individual development of the peasant farms involved, offering multiple alternatives, through the training sessions, on how to address the following new functions in peasant farms:

- Conversion of the peasant farm to local produce;
- Conversion of the peasant farm to the production of traditional products
- Conversion of the farm into Slow Food production
- Conversion of the farm into the production of ethical products
- Conversion of social capital into tourism offer
- Diversification of the farm through specific farm activities

The project aims at creating and consolidating a partnership between producers and consumers aiming to contribute to the development of a sustainable agriculture and to promote a solid economy between Iasi municipality and the neighbouring villages, which will ensure consumers a healthy diet at a price fair. We are pursuing the development of the Romanian agriculture by reducing the imports of agricultural products, products with a chemical content.



The project wants to promote the transparency in the production mode, in the sale of agricultural products, the consumer having the right to visit the farms and lots in which the products that are found in the "Local Hub" package are produced at any time during the project, being also informed with all the activities and materials used in the production process. In addition, the project wants to introduce the concept of - Slow Food - to consumers, who promote the idea of a co-producer, ie goes beyond the passive consumer role and is interested in those who produce food, how it produces problems with who are facing them. This project aims to establish relationships with producers, to campaign for the protection of traditional food, to organize tastings and workshops, to encourage chefs to use local products, and to select producers to participate in local and international events, to contribute to education taste in schools.

This project is built after the models taken from the American Food Hub model, visited by CMSC representatives at the Romanian American Foundation Regional Study Tour February 20-21, 2014 and further documentation on adaptation to Romania context.

### Results achieved

Since August 2017 until present we have gathered around 40 farmers selling their products through the online platform and direct selling to the houses and offices of over 1000 families from Iasi city registered in our database and receiving our bi-weekly newsletter (<https://www.facebook.com/roadesimerinde/app/100265896690345/>)

First events of food tasting have been organized with big participation from local community, and visits to the local farms are just starting in the weekends for families interested to see directly the process of growing of

vegetables or how the farm animals are living in their natural environment.

### Outlook

#### Challenges.

The main challenges for the moment are to be able to bring more producers around the food hub, while also increasing the number of customers who order on a constant base. Another challenge is linked to the fact that while being an enterprise supported by an NGO, we face the real competition on the market of imported foods and supermarket chains and keeping a fair price for farmers is not always an easy task.

#### Next steps.

We are promoting our project through non conventional channels, and participating in exhibitions and events where our concept and producers can be known and their local products appreciated. We will be present on a conference focused on good nutrition for children as speakers and co-organisers in May 19<sup>th</sup> 2018 and started to promote our products on European markets of small cities in Belgium, France and Scotland.

### Source and contact

**Information gathered at:** the European Rural Parliament 2017 Market of initiatives (20 Oct. 2017)

**Contact:** Laura Albu

**Organisation:** Community Safety and Mediation Center (CMSC)

**E-mail:** lalbu (a) cmsc.ro

**Website:** [www.romerinde.ro](http://www.romerinde.ro); [www.cmsc.ro](http://www.cmsc.ro)

**Available on Forum Synergies' website:** [http://forum-synergies.eu/bdf\\_fiche-experience-183\\_en.html](http://forum-synergies.eu/bdf_fiche-experience-183_en.html)

