



4. Fresh products from local growers

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Unit 4. Fresh products from local growers

A sustainable increase in demand for locally grown food lies in the desire of consumers to seek more transparency and connectivity with their food source. Interest in seeking nutritious, variety, fresh produce is primarily driven by concerns for one's health. Also, the growing desire for high quality, authenticity, care for the environment and willingness to invest in one's community stimulates a revival of interest in buying food near the house and products of known origin. People who explore rural cultures as visitors from other areas or countries are also interested in delicious local fare. There are many links between food, tourism and the environment that drive the demand for locally grown food.

Customers seeking local food, both current and prospective, care and want to stay informed about farm happenings and to know the farm story and feel part of its success. Traditional methods or typical recipes also reinforce messages of origin and the reputation of local products. These require investment by the farmer in branding, packaging and telling one's farm story. If not, the market edge of local food is lost.

The process involves expanding local food and selling to the broader market using the same principles of relationships and origins. Consumer demand for local produce drives institutional procurement and wholesale buyers' interests. Grocery stores also appreciate branded labels with farm logos that indicate locally grown products. A bag of potatoes branded with a farm's logo is a more valuable product on a grocery store stall than generic potato sacks that could have come from anywhere. A chef or restaurant may not care what the sack looks like, but they will want to know who the farm that grew potatoes is and to know the farm's story, so they can pass it on to their customers through the menu or otherwise. Thus, the principle behind local food is to emphasise that distinctive, offering the consumer a product that reflects the understanding of being locally provided.

Access to local food and the growth in consumption of foods produced close to home can be sustained by creating closer links between these areas and working together. Farmers can explore varying pathways to access these markets, highlighting the growing desire for fresher, higher quality food and the usefulness of local supply for the local economy. Many food producers can use farmers' markets, on-farm shops or specialised retail outlets as a starting point to access wider markets such as multiple retailers and food services, both in the public sector such as schools, hospitals, prisons and other institutions and in the private sector including hotels and restaurants.

Strengthening the Local Food Economy is reflected in stimulating consumers to look for local products, especially those from sustainable production systems and facilitating producers to respond to this demand, thereby helping to address local supply chain issues. Many small farms, working together, create a dynamic and powerful local food system ensuring everyone's success. In doing so, in a just and sustainable food system, fresh, healthy local food should be available to everyone.

Fresh Local Food for Everyone



Question: How to Build the Value Chain to Provide more Fresh, Local, Sustainable Food?

Questions that can help for further thinking:

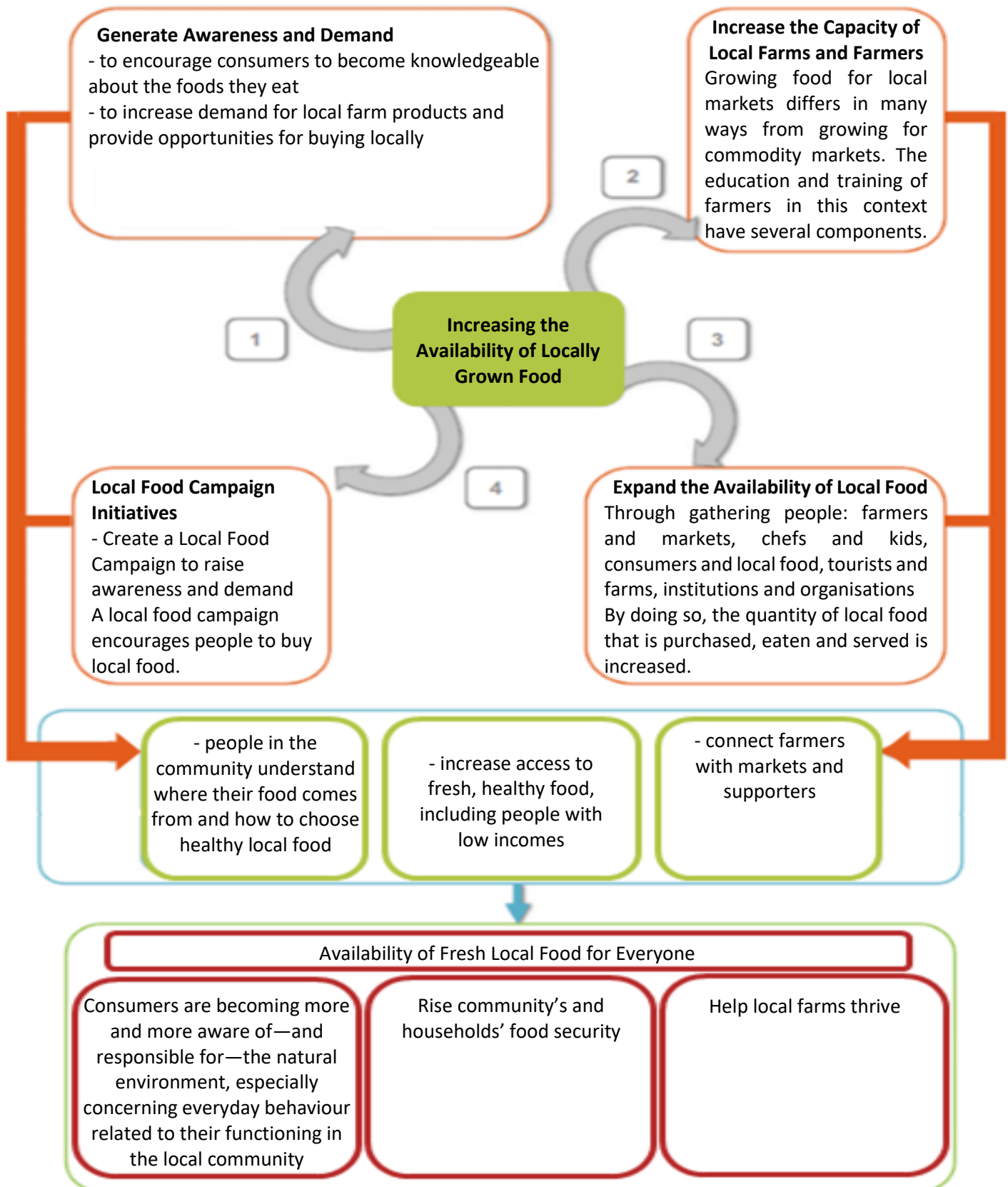
→ What types of food to make more accessible to the community?

(Producers of local Agri Products, types of farming production and operations, and species of locally grown food)

→ What should be involved in conveying awareness-raising messages to encourage a shift towards greater demand for local fresh food?



Increasing the Availability of Locally Grown Food - four key pillars:



Generate Awareness and Demand

Demand for local can only be met if consumers can find and identify local products.

According to food perception surveys, an overwhelming majority of people are willing to buy locally-produced food. On the other hand, consumers do not tend to actively source locally produced food in supermarkets. Especially if they are not recognisable, clearly labelled or certified as locally-grown or organic and placed at eye-level on shelves. So, if people are cannot identify local produce when buying groceries, their intentions to consume local products may not translate into actual consumption.

→ Hence, to compete effectively, local food must be identified in the marketplace.

Sometimes the problem of low demand for local products can be attributed to the fact that local farmers do not grow the types of vegetables that the majority of the population consumes on a daily basis. Overall, it is of utmost importance that farmers “match the demand for local produce with supply” instead of over-producing vegetables that not enough people like to eat.

Despite the general trend of increasing customer interest in locally grown food, there are areas where the lack of popular demand for local produce presents an issue. The lack of demand for local produce undermines the capability of local farmers to sell their products and reach critical mass. Without sufficient consumers "buying locally", there could be a surplus in production and subsequently farmers operating at a loss and more food wastage. If local food producers are to attain critical mass and break-even without further government support, it is crucial to address the problem of low local demand. After all, supply-side efforts will not be efficient if there are no consumers to drive the sustainable growth in local food production.

→ Creating awareness strengthens the local food system and increases the demand for fresh, healthy food.

Awareness-raising leads to fresh products from local growers arriving on consumers' plates, strengthening a local food system that is convenient for both farmers and consumers. It helps customers learn the value of local food and connect with local producers. Greater consumer awareness of the benefits of local food and a passion for wholesome produces of fully traceable origins creates increased demand for locally grown food.

→ Featuring and offering fresh local foods and farm-related educational programming improves public health and sustains farms.


These programs include services such as the distribution of local food guides and support for sourcing local foods, as well as educational programs such as cooking classes, wellness programs, field trips, marketing, and promotions.

→ Increasing public awareness and generating further demand from individual consumers, taking into account consumer feedback.

If consumers enjoy their 'eating local' experience, they might choose to 'buy locally' in the future as well.

→ Awareness-raising can further help to rebuild the bond between consumers and food growers and, likewise, to maintain that connection throughout the year.

Finally, within the context of the Local Food System, farmers and buyers must be appropriately matched and aligned. The appropriateness of this connection is crucial to ensure the sustainability of the relationships. In this regard, it is important to develop relationships with local buyers and vice versa. In the Local Food System, these relationships are closer, longer-lasting and stronger. It is especially true for forms of direct sales.

 **TIPS** to provoke attention and demand; it is essential:

- ✓ to create awareness of product availability and seasonality
- ✓ to include tips for growers, farmers markets locations and highlight the seasonal availability of local food to help make the farm to plate path as smooth as possible

- ✓ to encourage people to think locally, buy locally and support local businesses
- ✓ to communicate the impact of food choices on health, the economy and the environment, which is pivotal to sparking changes in consumers behaviour
- ✓ to use every opportunity to boost public awareness of the local food ecosystem
- ✓ that local-grown produce in supermarkets and retailers be labelled as such (including the producer's name), allowing consumers to know exactly where their food comes from

Other supporting models to further encourage demand for local produce includes:

- ✓ adjusting the curriculum in primary and secondary schools to include local food story
- ✓ continuing financial support to local producers to increase productivity
- ✓ developing government-supported platforms to encourage partnerships between local food producers and institutions (public procurement of food)

Increasing the Capacity of Local Farms and Farmers

To meet the growth of demand for local food, capacity building of the producers and processors is necessary. It includes providing them with the necessary support and advice to help them grow and thrive by seizing advantage of new opportunities and markets.

Increasing the Capacity of Local Farms and Farmers to raise the availability of Locally Grown Food involves the need for skills and support for farmers.

Farmers need:

- technical support and information related to the cultivation of new crops or use of sustainable growing practices, which are generally more important in local markets
- information, knowledge and skills on packaging requirements, quality standards, delivery parameters, etc.
→ Farmers need to know standards for different types of local market outlets; packaging, labelling, food safety certification, distribution, quality standards, traceback standards, etc.
- skills or assistance related to marketing farm products locally, alternative routes to the market and marketing best practices
→ In this context, business and market planning, farm branding and promotion, customer engagement, salesmanship strategies, etc. – are critical skills for producers to effectively diversify their businesses and market their farm's products in local markets.
- information specific to each type of local market (i.e., retail, restaurant, institutional)
- knowledge and skills on how to communicate in direct sales or with large-scale buyers
→ Farmers need help in developing business relationships with local buyers and vice versa.
- increase local farmers understanding and awareness about different parts of the food supply chain and various ways of working together throughout the supply chain, including strengthening links between primary producers and other food industry sectors

Expand the Availability of Local Food

Farmers should choose the most appropriate and viable strategies to expand the availability of local food in a defined area, including the formulation of plans to bring local food and farms into restaurants, schools and hospitals.

Directly linking farms with businesses and institutions in the community can be a vital part of building a stronger, more sustainable Local Food Economy. It involves setting up programs such as Farm-to-Restaurants (Farm-to-Chef), Farm-to-Institution (school, hospital, prisons) and including other public bodies aimed at enhancing local production and local gastronomic traditions and culture.

Farm-to-Restaurant or Farm-to-Institution programs can foster mutually beneficial connections between farmers and communities through an increased focus on the origin of food offered during meals.

Farm-to-Restaurant promotes serving local food at restaurants through supplying their kitchen directly from local farms and emphasising a direct relationship between a farm and a restaurant. The offer of local food can attract customers, highlighting the local provenience and typicality of prepared food, along with local recipes, values, traditions and habits – as a part of the heritage and historical memory of the local community.

Farm-to-Institutions

Institutions, such as hospitals, schools or prisons, have the potential to serve as community role models for proactive healthy choices. Featuring fresh local food in school meals or cafeterias and offering educational programs related to food and farm sustains farms and improves public health.

Farm-to-School programs can provide students and teachers with healthy nutrition and learning opportunities to know where their food comes from (building student food literacy). Schools, colleges, and universities represent a largely untapped opportunity to strengthen the market for farmers and increase access to locally grown, high-quality foods for young people.

Incorporating locally grown food into school meals and focusing on fresher, healthier food in schools is an excellent opportunity for local producers and students. The program of serving local food in schools can expand its capabilities by organising farm field trips, experiential nutrition education, school gardens, including working with farmers, educators and the community. So, Farm-to-School programs can cultivate mutually beneficial relationships and create dynamic, wellness-focused learning environments for learners.



TIPS Farm-to-School

Connect local food producers with cafeterias to increase opportunities to sell local food to schools and provide healthier choices for students

Curriculum Connection — for example, provides teacher training and an integrated curriculum that brings fresh food, school gardens into the classroom

Teacher's Guide — create a teacher's guide that lists local farms able to accommodate school field trips

Fresh Food Calendar — highlights various local products available in the cafeteria throughout the calendar year and provides advice and training on preparing local food for school canteen staff

Farm-to-School Cooking Conference — to connect local chefs with teachers for cooking demonstrations and training for classroom learning applications

Farm-to-Hospital programs can offer a range of hospital nutrition services and benefits patients and staff.

These initiatives are a way to introduce new market opportunities for local producers – the food chain from ‘the field to patient tray’. Also, programs such as these can offer a range of services and benefits to the broader community. Involving local food and educating the community on the health benefits of eating fresh produce allows the county to expand its support network by re-emphasising lessons to the community as a whole.

TIPS – critical success factors

- ✓ Market information and understanding of customer and end-consumer requirements
- ✓ Product lists, contact information and cross-referencing index – make it easier for growers and buyers to form mutually beneficial partnerships
- ✓ Promote the programs throughout the community

Farm-to-Chef

Some tips that farmers can consider to develop linkages:

- A Farm-to-Chef directory can be a useful tool for generating successful between farm-restaurant relationships
- Provide restaurants with marketing materials that advertise their use of locally grown food
- Engaging restaurants and chefs in a local food campaign

It affords visibility of locally grown food and helps brand the participating restaurants, which can stimulate sales. Chefs can also participate in community education efforts, especially through cooking demonstrations in schools.



Farm-to-Institutions

Steps for a Farm-to-Institutions program in a community:

- Partner with regional institutions to increase purchases of local food
- Work with local farmers to provide information, tools, and assistance to access institutions markets
- Work with institutions to adapt their food procurement and distribution systems to accommodate local purchasing
- Implement other Farm-to-Institutions local food initiatives such as CSAs, farm field trips for personnel, and improved access to farmers markets

Some producers choose to try to target new markets individually, building up their own business to be able to ensure consistency in scope, service and quality required by larger market areas. Others will find strength in numbers through cooperation or a single point of access, communication and administration that groups provide. Networks may also provide consistency of supply and greater volume, which broader markets anticipate in their service requirements.

Small-scale, local processing

Farmers can expand market access and earn extra income by selling value-added products — processed crops and animals — to increase their value. Consumers are often willing to pay more for finished products that they are not used to making themselves. Once established, food processing can add profit for a farmer and provide convenience for customers.

The added value can range from post-harvest handling (e.g., cleaning, processing and packaging) to developing a convenience or finished product (e.g., flour, yoghurt, cheese, jams or pickled goods) to meat processing and packaging. Also, farmers can process oilseeds into delicious oils, while cattle breeders can add value to their sheep operations by processing and selling wool and yarn. Farmers who want to sell their vegetables to institutions (schools or hospitals) or restaurants will probably be more successful if they offer them pre-cut and packaged.

Expanding the range by including value-added products requires knowledge and skills, processing methods and equipment.

Additional services – Farm Tours and Farm Tourism

Local food and farmers' markets are vital segments of the cultural and tourist experience.

When proffered the occasion, people are thrilled to visit surrounding farms and learn the personal stories of farm families who provide them with food. Farm tourism contributes to the 'authentic experience' of visitors — both urban, suburban and locals alike, and is an excellent economic opportunity for many rural areas. Also, it is an inspiring way to increase and expand the availability of local food. Organising on-farm events while serving fresh produce and including many creative offerings can highlight the farm. These opportunities can combine tours, farm stays, food festivals and other local food experiences.

Broader partnerships - by connecting local food producers and providers with tourism authorities, food services and other cultural and heritage attractions – can lead to building food tourism with positive benefits in both local food production and consumption.

Linking local produce with tourism resources – occasions can be seen in European food routes and region's trails

Food tourism – an opportunity to place value-added products for visitors and tourists within a region, so they identify a distinctive style of cuisine and consider local food as part of their visiting experience. It is an influential element in providing vibrancy and variety to the local area, thereby enhancing its attraction as a tourist destination. Initiatives linking tourism to food – local ventures linking farming, food processing, tourism, retail and food business to promote regional produces – include:

- ✓ Using food as a means to create cultural capital and social cachet
- ✓ Forming a density of food and beverage suppliers that create a tourist experience in eating and shopping
- ✓ Creating an authentic local promise based on quality and fair prices
- ✓ Creating a unique product that is better than other regional food destinations

Visitors' experience of local food should be from simple, fresh, high quality and environmentally friendly products. Local food and drink linked with tourism reinforce the message of authenticity, where food is a representation of the destination. Food is, therefore, a critical part of the visitor experience and provides a key opportunity for food producers and tourism providers to create links or diversify their offerings.

Local Food Campaign Initiatives

The local food campaigns encourage people to buy local food. Various options are available to pursue initiatives.

- Marketing materials such as recipe cards, posters, check stuffers, coasters and food mats - through distribution to restaurants/chefs, schools and other organisations to promote year-round opportunities to purchase and use

local food products. The promotional campaign of the local farms can spotlight various local products each month of the year. Other good options include photos of the farm or farm flyers placed by products.

- Farmer profiles in the area, charts of seasonal products, area maps and a regional calendar of events can further help rebuild the link between consumers and food growers or maintain these connections throughout the year.
- Educational events at farmers' markets (or farm tours) – allows visitors, through describing and demonstrating methods of growing meat, poultry, fruits and vegetables, to learn about the benefits of fresh and seasonal local food and the impact of their choices on the people, animals, economy and planet. Additional incentives for people to come to farmers' markets can be weekly kids' activities — such as scavenger-hunting, small craft projects or cooking demonstrations — and appropriate coupons. It is also helpful to invite businesses and institutions vital to building a local food economy, such as restaurants, schools and hospitals.
- Introduce recipe cards to the market by local celebrity chefs – to show consumers how straightforward it is to use the wide range of products on offer, using the ethos of variety and local ingredients. A striking way is for chefs to come to the market to do demonstrations, and at the same time, they can promote their restaurant by creating recipe cards and/or selling the "dish" in their restaurant. These recipe cards should contain the names of local food producers, thus helping to educate younger customers, and can be collected and used to form a seasonal collection of recipes.
- Local Food Guides can educate locals and tourists about local food, farmers and food traditions in the region. It can include listings and information about farms, farmers markets, CSAs, u-pick farms, including grocers, bakers, restaurants, caterers sourcing directly from the farm, or suggestions about farms to visit. The created guide should be updated annually, while local businesses can sponsor and advertise in the guide to gain visibility.
- Guides and tours 'Touch and Taste' for children to get directly involved in farms are also a great way.
- An online arena is a magnificent place for messages and stories – it can be used for announcements, like contests and events, and to garner excitement about campaigns and initiatives. It is an excellent outlet for messaging and publishing news and provides a vast opportunity for reaching consumers. It can be used to share photos, short articles about local food products and farmers, what local foods are in season, farmers market news, happenings and recent accomplishments, local farm occasions and food's events, contests, and more.

The local food campaign promotion and communication plan should include:

- ✓ goals and metrics for measuring campaign results
- ✓ design directly related to the campaign purpose (what the campaign initiative will look like and how to use design elements to attract the audience)
- ✓ types of content to create and disseminate during the campaign (for example, blog posts, video ads, email newsletters, etc.)
- ✓ different channels to reach the campaign audience
- ✓ teams and people who will be part of the campaign plan from start to finish
- ✓ budget for running and disseminating the campaign (such as the amount to create content or advertising space in different areas)

Once a local food campaign is created and developed, it is necessary to spread the word.

Offline communication and promotional tools

- local media for advertising market promotions and ability to provide fresh food
- promotional materials such as flyers, posters, and/or rack cards that use images and appropriate language for recipients in the community

Online communication and promotional tools

Here are a few tools to consider: text messaging to advertise (SMS), website, blog, social media (like Facebook, Instagram and Twitter) and E-newsletters.



Worksheet: Increasing the Availability of Locally Grown Food

Increasing the Availability of Locally Grown Food – help make that happen

How can you support local communities to bring about change?

How can you do this in your community?

Start with what's there and be creative!

Explanation:

The created worksheet follows the previous section and is designed to help adult educators delve deeper into the topic. By filling out the form, adult educators individually develop the scheme "Increasing the Availability of Locally Grown Food" according to the conditions in their local environment. That will improve their understanding of how they can organise educational activities and contribute to Increasing the Availability of Locally Grown Food.

Short instructions for filling in:

- In what geographic area will you focus your efforts?

1. Generate Awareness and Demand
2. Increase the Capacity of Local Farms and Farmers
3. Expand the Availability of Local Food
4. Local Food Campaign Initiatives
5. Planned activities – describe the activities you would undertake and how to organise them.
6. Expected results and impact – state what you expect to achieve and desired impact on farmers, local people and the community.

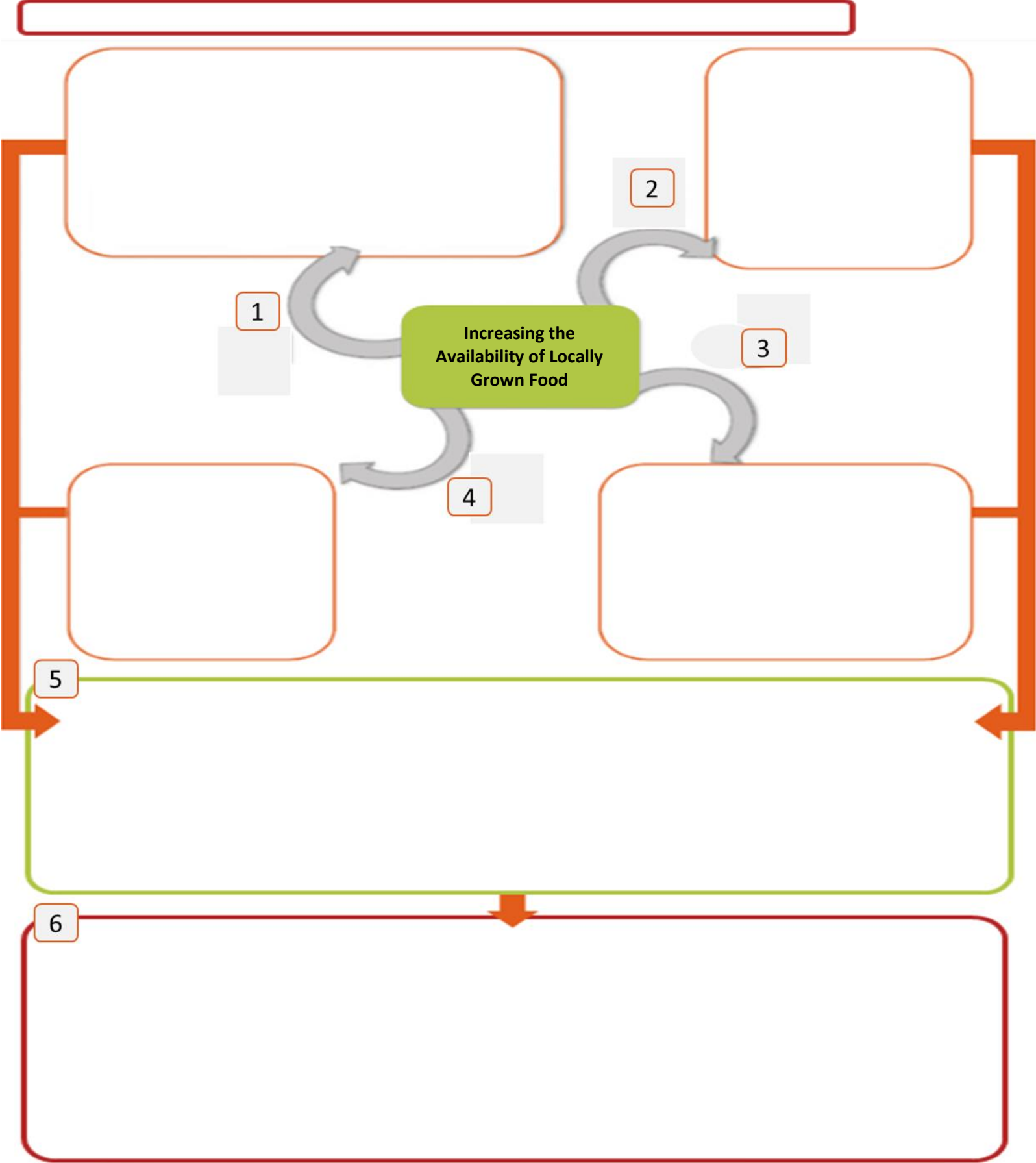


Recommendation for group work: let adult educators work in pairs so that both participants are from the same local community.

After filling out the form "Increasing the Availability of Locally Grown Food", it is desirable that participants demonstrate their scheme to the entire group.



Discussion topic: Encourage participants to comment and develop discussion in terms of presented schemas.





Suggestions for further consideration

How to make food choices meaningful to shift narratives?

- ✓ Initiate actions that contribute to increasing awareness and critical reflection about consumption, human-nature interdependency and sustainable living
- ✓ Create awareness-raising campaigns promoting diet diversification and the nutritional, environmental and economic benefits of locally grown food
- ✓ Support nutrition education using culturally and socially appropriate nutrition messaging, which can create a demand for locally grown food



A step forward

- task development to work on further elaboration and application of lessons learned in working with rural women
(Proposals for organising and developing a teaching unit)

Food from local production is part of the concept of sustainable consumption. Local food systems and short food supply chains (SFSC) also favour interaction and direct links between farmers and consumers, thus promoting the development of confidence and awareness of social capital. These can result in the development of community sense, co-existence and even cause behavioural changes in eating and shopping habits, enhancing social and environmental awareness.

Mirror games – or walking in someone else's shoes

→ **The local food concept greatly vary – try to define it according to the needs of consumers**

- ✓ include in your work strengthening self-awareness about responsible consumption
This could be, for example – Food Literacy / incl. nutrition, cooking and preparing food /
An idea is: to choose a few practical things – everyday procurement and to ask similar questions or topics as examples below and consider them, with an emphasis on personal attitudes and awareness of values, habits, etc.
 - why do we eat what we eat?
 - healthy choices, shopping & processing
 - origin of food: know where food comes from and what ingredients it is made of
 - waste minimising in consumer choices
 - how to properly prepare food (better for health)?
 - how to sustainably prepare meals?
 - how to prepare food in a safe way beneficial for everyone (safety skills and food security)?
 - a benefit for the environment (buy and cook in a sustainable way)
 - food waste management
 - understanding the role that food plays in families, communities and cultures
- * Apply skills-based food education and a cross-cutting approach linking multiple real-life areas and formal and non-formal education
The list can be extended (this is just a quick throw)