

## **EMPIRICAL EXPERIENCES OF THE HUNGARIAN ALTERNATIVE FOOD BUYING COMMUNITIES**

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### **Abstract**

In our study we highlight the potential role of alternative food systems in local economic and community development through connecting literatures and good examples. We are focusing on a special short food supply chain form, named “buying groups”. These sales channels are an alternative and innovative type of Community Supported Agriculture. Buying groups are grass-roots initiatives that support local food production and sales. Farmers and their buyers are a community, so that cooperation is beneficial to both the producer and the consumer. The primary advantage of the producer is that it can build up a direct and long-term relationship with its customers, locally sell its quality products, so it can operate cost-effectively and optimally. The consumers' advantage is that they are able to acquire food from healthy and safe sources, contributing to the preservation of their health and the development of the local economy. These good practices can fundamentally reform the increasingly globalizing consumer behaviour, strengthen identity and community spirit. Buying groups are still in their infancy in our country but have latent potential for stimulating many local economies and tourism. We would like to give an overview of the main results of our primary research conducted among members of Hungarian Alternative Food Buying Groups. In order to explore the sociometrics and lifestyles of communities, we revealed general consumer behaviour, the consumer types based on food buying behaviour, the demand and attitude of local food by using questionnaire survey.

Keywords: food consumer communities, food consumer behaviour, questionnaire study, cluster analysis

### **INTRODUCTION**

As a result of concerns about the long-term sustainability of globalized retail trade and the stronger presence of health conscious consumer behaviour, governments and groups of conscious consumers worldwide are increasingly focusing on the promotion and development of local food systems and small-scale retail chains and the production of quality local food products to promote the market. Food purchasing is basically based on trust between the trader and the final consumer, which appears to be damaged due to the impact of the ever-changing and “non-personalized” retail trade, the various food scandals, environmental sustainability considerations, etc. In Hungary and worldwide the conscious consumer, the health trends and initiatives are trying to provide alternative solutions to this phenomenon. These initiatives and, in our view, good practices can be considered as a means of local economy and community development. According to Gébert, Bajmócy, Málóvics, and Pataki (2016) the classical local

economic development theories are means-oriented because their focus is on means and not ends (well-being). We believe that the local food systems and communities are part of the capability approach presented in their article. This theory is formulated by Amartya Sen in 1979s. The local economic development, based on the capability approach taking into consideration the human values, is value-driven and in opposite with traditional value-neutral development approaches it means a community-based development. (Gébert et al., 2016) “The central notion in Sen’s approach is the term “capability”, which refers to the actual freedom to achieve valuable doings and beings. For this purpose people need means (e.g. income, infrastructure). But the possession of means does not imply the freedom to achieve our goals. A number of conversion factors may influence how we can use our means. Conversion factors can be manifold, for instance, personal characteristics like age, gender; environmental characteristics, like pollution; and social behaviours, like racial discrimination” (Sen, 1999 in. Gébert, Bajmócy, & Málovics 2017, p. 8). As Csizmadia (2018) emphasized according to Nárαι-Reisinger (2016) statement warn that in Hungary the “we cannot achieve change” thinking is still strongly present, however, a “lot of small initiations”, sooner or later, evolve into social level, but for this, they must dare to act, while decision-makers must accept ideas, thoughts (p. 267.)

In Hungary, the demand for developing and improving a network of short supply chains, both supply and demand, has increased, so in the 2014-2020 Rural Development Program, Hungary has developed the Short Supply Chain Thematic Programming (REL) (Bakos, 2017). Local short food supply chains (SFSC) offer a direct or as short as possible alternative sales channel for small-scale food-producing farms, which are hindered in development due to global competition. These innovative and grass-roots forms of sales bring producers and end consumers closer together, contributing to the direct marketing of quality and high added value local food and supporting the local economy and tourism. There is little information available about typically grass-roots, community-driven local food systems, so we consider it important to examine good practices and development opportunities. In our view, there are many reserves for rural development and the local economy in these consumer-producer communities and channels. Many researches have proven the positive effects of local food products on local spaces (Káposzta, Ritter, & Kassai, 2015; Kassai et al., 2016; Péli-Némedi, 2016; Bakos-Tóth, 2016; Nagy, Káposzta, & Nagy et al., 2016; Bakos-Topa, 2016; Bakos, 2017, Kiss-Nagyné Demeter, 2018). For example, Káposzta et al. (2015) concluded during their research that local products have direct and indirect impacts on the product chain actors and locality.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

According to a study of the European Parliament (2016), demand for short-term food chains and local markets has increased in all EU Member States in both rural and urban areas. The direct sales form is a common practice for only 15% of European economies. They sell more than half of their production directly to the final consumers. These farms are mostly small farms between 1 and 8 ESU. Only 3% of them exceed 100 ESU. There are many types of short food chains and local food systems in Europe such as producer markets, box systems or community-supported agriculture. Among their benefits, it is important to emphasize that farmers can work with fair prices, and consumers can get fresh and seasonal products. They have lower environmental impact on these food systems and contribute to higher levels of social cohesion at local level. These models are also beneficial for local economies, which also have the potential to create jobs. The EU's current rural development policy for 2014-2020 treats short food chains as a priority. Thanks to the co-financing of the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development, a number of measures are available for producers wishing to join the local food systems. With the help of the European Innovation Partnership in 2015, research on local development of food systems was developed to improve the position and income of producers. Following the examination of the European situation on short supply chains and local markets, the European Parliament decided to support these food systems. It wants to help local farmers and link food products to their place of origin.

According to a Eurobarometer 2016 survey, European residents are increasingly aware of this issue, as four out of every five European respondents believe that strengthening the role of producers in food supply is fairly or very important. Small farms are provided to multinational companies who often make their situation impossible due to their unfair commercial practices. Member States have significant discrepancies in the proportion of their sales through farms through direct channels. This rate is estimated to be nearly 25% in Greece, 19% in Slovakia and around 18% in Hungary, Romania and Estonia. Less than 5% in Malta, Austria and Spain, and 21% in France directly sells their products to farmers through short supply chains. Recent research has shown that these major differences are likely to be due to the lack of uniform short food supply chain and local food system definitions, as the EU has defined a general guideline definition, but the Member States themselves in their rural development programs can define what they mean under these systems.

As defined in Regulation (No 1305/2013) of the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development: “A short supply chain means a supply chain involving a limited number of economic operators, committed to cooperation, local economic development and close geographical and social relations between producers, processors and consumers.” Hungary, when formulating the thematic sub-programme for Short Food Supply Chains defined these phenomena as “... the grouping of producers and growers sells their food products to consumers or groups of consumers directly or via an intermediary.” (VP 2014-2020, p. 901.) In a broader interpretation of Red and Gemma (2011, p. 228.), local food supply systems are “unique, geographically-defined, economic-social formation and ecosystems that are specific in a particular region, with special natural (soil and climatic) endowments, microorganisms, plant and animal species and human, technical resources and infrastructure. The basis for its operation is that food producers living in a given region maintain close contact with local consumers, strive to exploit local production capabilities, nutrition habits, traditions and infrastructure, which enhances self-sufficiency. Based on “holistic” territorial development, it can be achieved through the division of labour between the city and the village, relying on the possibilities of multiple organic connections.

Small-scale producers in Hungary are typically composed of micro-enterprises, the majority of which do not have the appropriate skills, legal knowledge, attentiveness and ability to participate in the circulation of the short sales channel. Therefore, the sub-program focuses on the development of key areas, where very small deficiencies can be identified for small producers. These objectives have been harmonized and linked to further national strategies and development programs, which are as follows:

- Food Chain Security Strategy 2013-2022,
- National Rural Strategy,
- Hungary's medium and long-term food development strategy,
- Territorial and Settlement Development Operational Program 2014-2020

There is an increasing number of forms for consumer engagement towards local food systems. The first classification of SFSCs was carried out by Marsden, Banks, and Bristow in 2002. The SFSC types they created were based on the spatial dimension, which Renting and his team (2003) revised a year after, with a strong emphasis on timeliness and quality. The most cited categorization in international and domestic literature, Ilbery and Maye (2005) and Jaros (2008), based on Benedek and Balázs (2014), are shown in Tab. 1. The various manifestations of SFSCs were classified into three groups, based on the way of sales. Direct, “face to face”

sales include the producer markets with a popular and old history, road sales, bargain sales, “pick it yourself” opportunities, guest services, and delivery and box-like solutions to homes that have emerged in recent years. This category also includes web stores, although in my view this sales form is not really about direct connections, as orders are often delivered through delivery companies to final customers. A common characteristic of sales types in the community marketing-based sales group is that the various relationships are manifested in an institutional framework (Benedek-Balázs, 2014).

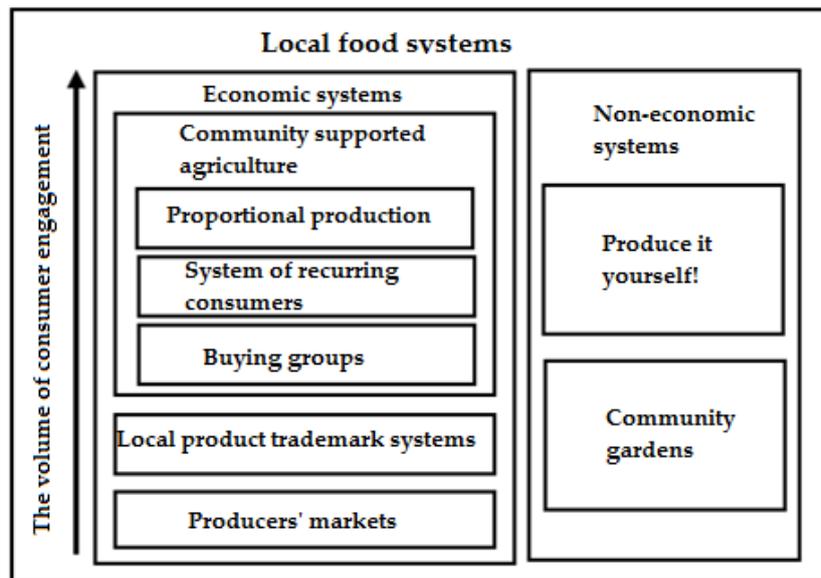
**Table 1** Types of SFSCs

<b>Direct sales</b>	<b>Community marketing-based sales</b>	<b>Extended supply chain</b>
Producers’ market	Shops of co-operatives	Protected origin, specialties
Selling along the road	Community Supported Agriculture	Quality assurance systems
Direct sales at the farmer	Selling to local catering facilities	Certifications
Pick it yourself activities	Selling through local product shops	
Guest tables	Regional products (raw and processed)	
House delivery	Thematic paths based on certain food products	
Webshops	Festivals	
Box programmes	Selling to emigrated people in special shops	

Source: Ilbery and Maye (2005), Jarosz (2008) in: Benedek-Balázs (2014, p. 4.)

For example, in this group, besides the traditional distribution channels, there are new and innovative types, such as the community supported agriculture. Within the extended supply chain, as the group's name suggests, we can find quality assurance systems, organizations of origin protection and trademarks. Based on the classification of Vadovics and Hayes (2007), in Réthy and Dezsény (2013, p. 5.) established the following food chain types (Fig. 1). The authors categorize local food systems into two large groups. They distinguish between so-called “economic systems”, which are based on cooperation between farmers and consumers, and “non-economic systems”, in which consumers produce for themselves in their homes or in the nowadays popular “community gardens”. Within the economic systems, “community supported agriculture” and their subtypes, as well as “local product trademark systems” and “producer markets” are distinguished. It can be seen that the degree of consumer engagement is the highest in the case of community-supported agricultural systems.

**Figure 1** Local food systems based on consumer engagement



Source: Réthy and Dezsény (2013, p. 5.), based on Vadovics and Hayes (2007)

The **European** Commission's JRC 2013 report summarizes the main benefits and disadvantages of short supply chains:

The advantages of SFSCs:

- The majority of final sales will remain at the producers compared to the conventional sales forms and this additional income can be used to develop the economy.
- Consumers can get traceable, fresh, healthy and seasonal foods at affordable prices, compared to the retail prices. This way, high added value food products are also available to those with lower incomes.
- There is a direct and trusted relationship between buyers and producers
- Increasing demand for local products will also boost the local economy and the local community
- Strengthen relations between actors in the short food supply chain, generating new jobs in agriculture and small-scale food processing, which is particularly important in peripheral and disadvantaged regions, regions
- A strong local food sector can support local tourism by providing local food products to a part of the cultural identity of a given area for tourists
- Environmentally friendly and energy-efficient (requires less packaging, energy for storage and transport)
- It supports social cohesion by maintaining and generating local jobs, which reduces migration from disadvantaged areas

- Bringing people in urban areas closer to the countryside and to affordable local food.

The disadvantages of SFSCs:

- Local food systems do not always meet the right amount of local demand
- Due to higher production costs, they can spend less on development and marketing, even if they receive institutional support

Development limits of SFSCs:

- For applying the direct sales form, producers do not always have the knowledge and skills required, and it is very common that additional training is needed
- The lack of entrepreneurial knowledge and culture is often a hindering factor
- Young farmers' generation is the most open to direct sales, but in most of the member states it is difficult to access land due to high prices, and access to credit has proved difficult after the crisis has come out. EU subsidies for young farmers help eliminate the problems caused by lack of resources and encourage the young generation to carry out agricultural activity.
- Small farmers are also faced with the additional administrative costs associated with direct sales and the costs related to food hygiene legislation. The EU recognizes this by trying to provide small farmers with simplified legislation without compromising food safety.
- We can consider seasonality as a barrier, because small scale farmers cannot compete against conventional producers who can provide a wide range of foods throughout the year. Small farmers may be forced out of public catering because they are not able to do the processing, conservation and long-term storage of their agricultural products.
- Local food systems are not well known among consumers, partly because of inefficient communication and marketing, and partly because of the human and material resources that can be devoted to this purpose.

Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) type movements began to emerge in the USA, Japan and Europe from the second half of the 20th century, independently of each other. The first of these types of communities appeared in Germany in the 1950s. The idea of community-supported agriculture in Japan began in the 1970s, as a response to the adverse consequences of the agro-industrial development. The movement was named “Teikei”, which means “Food labelled with the farmer's face”. Nowadays, Community Supported Agriculture is present in the countries of four continents of the Earth. Today, around 6,000 in the United States, and in the western part of Europe, there are thousands of similarly organized economies and related communities. These communities are differentiated in space, and differ greatly in their size and

organizational form. Considering their local features and needs, they have many forms of manifestation. After the turn of the millennium, communities producing high-value-added food and a growing number of conscious consumer groups also appeared in Central and Eastern European countries. Since these communities were formed far from each other both in terms of space and time, there is no unified definition for Community Supported Agriculture, only common guidelines that are based on local national definitions. These principles, according to the European CSA Research Group (2016), provide an alternative approach to agriculture for solidarity, direct human relations, mutual respect, respect for small-scale food production and consumption and respect for the environment. In the wording of the 2014 Statute of the Hungarian National CSA Network (KöKiSz - Community Smallholders' Association), "the CSA is a system based on trust, solidarity, mutual commitment and personal contact between a group of consumers and one or more producers. It is a local food system based on the principles of organic farming (whether proven ecologically or not). At the initiative of individual farmers or NGOs, consumer members are committed to agricultural production for a given period. According to the terms of such an agreement, consumer members may share the produced food without the attached price tag, but they pay a flat fee to finance the operation of the farm with regular contributions."

In the Hungarian context, only a few literature deals with the topic of community supported agriculture and, therefore, the unified conceptual definition has not yet emerged in Hungary. In the 90s, the direct translation of "Community Supported Agriculture" was first used by the academics. However, later the terms "Community agriculture", "community farming", "producer-consumer communities", "vegetable community" and the French "AMAP economy" were used, as well. Nowadays, in our country, consumer communities operate in the northern axis of the country and in urban areas, agglomeration areas. Of course, their number may be different, but in our research, we were focusing only on those that are competent enough to consciously organize their activities and reach a wider audience, for example, by appearing online (e.g. their own website, web shop, Facebook). Regarding to consumer communities, consumers have the most freedom, because they do not have to pay in advance and have no obligation to buy the portion of their food products produced in cooperating economies, such as in the system of permanent buyers (Community farms) or proportional farming (box system). As a matter of fact, we can also regard consumer communities as a mixture of these two types, since members informally commit themselves to food products from local farmers, accepting the seasonal selection, but the consumer decides on the quantity and nature of the products.

Several local producers, non-governmental organizations or small consumer communities arrange a delivery and distribution system (door to door or a permanent reception point), typically for small farmers, locally or regionally produced goods. Customer communities offer high quality, value-added, reliable and traceable resources to local consumers and their customers. These communities distribute foodstuffs from farms with a maximum of 80 kms, at a producer price. In consumer community systems, many products of a variety of producers are usually displayed, depending on the size of the community. Customer communities in Hungary are typically non-profit organizations operating on a civil basis. Community members can make their orders by phone, fax, online on a regular basis for delivery and receipt for a specific day. These systems are flexible enough and can vary depending on their operation and product range (Lőrincz, 2017):

*A. Personal system:*

- The organisers co-ordinate the orders
- The producer is present when the consumer receives the product
- The consumer pays to the producer directly
- The transaction is finished in about two hours
- The producers may sell more goods than ordered (to other consumers)

**Advantage:** direct contact between the producer and the consumer

**Disadvantage:** It requires more space and infrastructure. Transactions are not as traceable as other possibilities; buying communities may become more market-like.

**Examples:** Kiskosár Buying Group, Szatyor Debrecen, Tatai Fészek Buying Group, Gördülő Kosár Buying Group

*B. Community system:*

- The producer is not present at the transaction
- Contribution of volunteers, compilation of unit boxes
- The buyer pays to the organizer who transfers the money to the producers

**Advantage:** it can be handled in a smaller place, more traceable product traffic and administration.

**Disadvantage:** there is no direct customer-to-customer relationship; it also requires a large volunteer portfolio and much effort.

**Examples:** Miskolc Green Basket Community, Nyíregyháza Community, Kecskemét Szatyor

*C. Institutional system:*

- Similar to the community system, the producer and the buyer do not meet personally

- The circle of buyers is represented by an institution, a work group, and the transfer takes place in the given institution
- Payment is made with a one-week slip drawn by a volunteer appointed by the institutional / workplace customer group and handed over to basket organizers who forward it to the producers

**Advantage:** buyers are concentrated in one place, the transaction is quick

**Disadvantage:** there is no direct producer-consumer contact and it requires plenty of volunteer work

**Examples:** Pannon Helyi Termék

We identified two more categories based on our empirical research:

*D. Community system + shop + providing related services*

- It combines the community system with a permanent point of sale / shop where not only those can receive their food packages who pre-ordered it, but also occasional buyers can buy from a basic product range
- They are intensifying approaches, community building activities and complementary services such as home delivery, cookery courses, community-building, food and venue insurance etc.

**Advantage:** reaching a broader consumer segment, fix transaction point

**Disadvantage:** the organisers must form an official organisation, which might be costly and takes a permanent staff.

**Examples:** Budapesti Szatyor Közösség

*E. Buying group organised on a social media website:*

- The community does not have the basic infrastructure that is needed to organize and operate a permanent producer-consumer community, so an enthusiastic volunteer creates a community site / forum where local producers and customers can meet.
- The volunteer takes care of site maintenance, content filtering, but handover and acceptance processes are co-ordinated between producers and buyers.

**Advantage:** it does not require much organisation effort and infrastructure capacities,

**Disadvantage:** it is more difficult to ensure- and control quality and the community-building function is lower than in other forms

**Examples:** Közös Batyu Vásárlói Közösség, E-Kofa

## **OBJECTIVES AND METHODS**

Questionnaires and interviews were conducted by the framework of the doctoral research of the main author, who is investigating the alternative local food systems since 2016. The results of the research showcased in this paper are based on her primary research study conducted in the spring of 2017. Sampling of the questionnaires was representative and the number of relevant respondents (after filtering out the failed questionnaires) was 297.

A questionnaire study was conducted among the general population with the help of second year students of the Szent István University in 2016 (Esztergom, Kecskemét, Érd, Csömör) and 2017 (Miskolc, Eger). Sampling was arbitrary and not representative, but as far as possible, we tried to approach as many types of people as possible (gender, age, income position, education). The number of relevant respondents (after filtering out the failed questionnaires) is 817. In this paper regarding this research the evaluation of open questions is given.

The IBM SPSS Statistics 20 statistical programme package was used for processing the questionnaire database. In processing the results, besides descriptive analysis, we tried to reveal dependency relationships between the different criteria by using the cross-table analysis. Through the cross-table analysis we sought to explore the deeper relationships. With the help of the principle component and cluster analyses, we identified consumer types based on their food purchasing behaviour. The respondents rated on a Likert scale ranging from 1 to 6 that how important the eleven criteria we gave were to them when purchasing their food. The criteria: the shop's reputation, all available at one place, food of Hungarian origin, food produced locally, organic farming, chemical-free, natural, etc., the knowledge of food, price, quality, packaging, health consciousness, and finally, the recommendation of family and friends. During the survey we tested our hypotheses, our preliminary assumptions based on secondary results that the Hungarian Alternative Food Buying Communities indicate different consumer characteristics and their consumer behaviour is the closest to the so-called LOHAS's (Lifestyle Of Health and Sustainability) behavioural pattern.

## **RESULTS**

### **The results of the survey among 'Basket members'**

Surveying among the consumer community has brought the expected results, as by purchasing in a buying community, they are committed to high added value local foods. It is not surprising, therefore, that for 62.6% of respondents it is very important and for 34.0% it is partly important to buy locally produced food. Our hypothesis that purchasing communities,

primarily those with a higher education qualification and households with higher than average income, have been certified since 70.7% of respondents have a higher education degree and have higher income than 250,000 Hungarian Forints. The basket members could be labelled on Likert scale ranges from one to six (1-none at all ... 6-fully-characterized) that the motivations listed by us are characteristic of them when purchasing them in consumer communities (Tab. 2). Based on the averages of responses, the main motivations of their community purchases reflect modern conscious consumer behaviours, as it is important for them to get their basics from trusted sources (5.60), fresh (5.60) and healthy (5.47). At the same time, in addition to the individual interests, there is a strong emphasis on social responsibility in their purchasing decisions, as the motivation of the local economy (5.22) and local producers (5.20) is strongly emphasized by their purchases. This consumer segment also has an environmentally friendly attitude (4.97). In spite of the fact that this is a purchasing segment with a higher disposable income, it can be stated that they are somewhat price sensitive.

**Table 2** Motivations behind buying in buying groups

Criteria	Mean value	Deviation
To get safe and reliable food	5.60	0.830
To get fresh food	5.60	0.822
To get healthy food	5.47	0.914
To support the local economy	5.22	1.107
To support local producers	5.20	1.120
To protect the environment	4.97	1.248
Affordable prices	4.40	1.123
To strengthen my local identity	4.02	1.601
To belong to a community	3.68	1.642
Due to the possibility to take part in community programmes	3.17	1.608
Other	2.23	1.800

Source: The authors' own editing based on own research (2017, n=297)

Contrary to our preliminary assumption, consumer communities do not yet fully fulfil the role of community development and identity in Hungary. Based on our empirical experience, currently few communities have the capacity to accommodate the food procurement and distribution system on this front and the consumer segment is not open enough for it either. Of course, there are one or two smoother and more organized and functioning communities such as the Budapest Szatyor Buying Community, the Esztergom Kiskosár Buying Community or the Miskolc Green Shopping Community. It is very difficult to “slow down” and “engage” the accelerated consumers of our time and give them a community experience. It was clear from the research that this form of purchasing was chosen because of health and environmentally

conscious functional food procurement, rather than membership in the community or participation in community programs. However, it is clear that their consumer behaviour is the closest to the so-called LOHAS's (Lifestyle of Health and Sustainability) behavioural pattern. The special character of the group is given by the environmentally and health-conscious consumer attitudes (Kotler-Keller, 2006) and the buzzwords of consumers in the consumer community are reliability, traceability, health, freshness, environmentally friendly and local / neighbourly farmers. The main purpose of the survey among basket members was to find out what kind of lifestyle characteristics were to be written along with these customer groups. Based on the averages of responses, the examined consumer segment has the lifestyle characteristics shown in Tab. 3 according to their responds. Personal demographic characteristics go beyond the lifestyle, as it generally shows the way people want to “lead” their lives and thus reveal a lot about their individual goals (Töröcsik, 2007) and thus reveal the basic consumer habit. In the life of the respondents, on the Likert scale which ranges from one to six (1-not at all ... 6-fully-featured), the main priorities are health (5.68), family (5.64) and a calm, balanced life (5.48). They try to be autonomous (5.14) and live a secure life (5.31), they are eco-conscious (5.28), they are supporters of meaningful life (5.26), friendships are important to them (5.19), as well as learning (5.18) and leisure time (5.02).

**Table 3** The lifestyle characteristics of basket members

Lifestyle characteristic	Mean value	Deviance	Lifestyle characteristic	Mean value	Deviance
Health	5.68	0.675	Trying new things	4.71	1.028
Family	5.64	0.782	Saving money	4.68	1.084
Relaxed, balanced life	5.48	0.864	Travelling	4.56	1.227
Autonomy	5.34	0.914	Respecting traditions	4.52	1.317
Living a secure life	5.31	0.916	To belong to a community	4.35	1.366
Eco-consciousness	5.28	0.921	Success/career	4.04	1.257
Joyful/meaningful life	5.26	0.967	Religious beliefs	3.31	1.819
Friends	5.19	0.912	Busy lifestyle	3.23	1.488
Learning/knowledge	5.18	0.961	Economy	3.11	1.287
Free time	5.02	1.071	The opinion of others	2.78	1.257
			Party-personality	2.67	1.414
			Following trends	2.65	1.290
			Seeking power	2.07	1.268

Source: The authors' own editing based on own research (2017, n=297)

Based on dominant lifestyle characteristics, they could be described best with the functional consumer behaviour (Töröcsik, 2007). They show a pure consumer type, which consumes goods not due to symbolic motivation, but by internal motivations, their own “well-being”.

### Consumer types based on food buying behaviour

Three consumer types were also identified among the respondent basket members based on factors affecting their food buyer behaviour. Factors based on criteria influencing food purchasing are shown on Tab. 4.

**Table 4** Principle component analysis with Varimax rotation (Basket member survey)

Factors influencing food purchase	Basket member survey		
	1. Factor	2. Factor	3. Factor
Health consciousness	.733	-.029	.092
Environmentally friendly packaging	.732	-.039	.007
Bio-origin (without added chemicals, etc.)	.723	.046	.298
The recommendation of friends and family	.690	.038	-.190
Quality	.595	.264	.195
Everything should be available at one place	.187	.802	-.095
Price	.095	.794	.145
The fame of the food brand	-.135	.667	-.036
Hungarian origin	.182	.128	.712
Locally produced food	.167	.371	-.660
The fame of the shop	.526	.180	.532
KMO=0.637; the explanatory variance is 56.7%			

Source: The authors' own editing based on own research (2017, n=297)

Based on the food buyer behaviour of surveyed basket members, the three clusters in Fig. 2 were identified. Contrary to our assumption, we cannot only talk about a homogenous consumer type in their case. Obviously, buying food in a buying community does not mean they are fully committed to domestic food and reject retail brands from abroad. It should be noted that among the basket members, the issue was related to their general grocery behaviour and not just to the consumer community. There are 33 respondents in the first cluster (**Conscious-locational patriotic cluster**), and they are looking for purchases of foodstuffs of Hungarian origin, and food which is healthy and good quality. The 32 respondents in the second cluster, which is named "**Convenient and Price Sensitive Brand Loyal cluster**", have many similarities with the type of consumer cluster identified in the other sample, with the difference that for them the important thing is the fame of the shop and not that all the products should be available in one place. They stick to the usual brands, products and they are price sensitive. They are mostly adventurous or newcomers who are just getting familiar with local food and in their general consumer behaviour preferring local and Hungarian products is not as dominant. Also, price is more important for them than quality and health preference. The largest cluster (with 81 people) was named the "**Hybrid Cluster**", because for them it is important to be able to buy all the

products in one place, that the products are of Hungarian origin, and health awareness and environmental protection are also important for them. They consider the price/value ratio and they are loyal to brands and products. Essentially, this cluster is the combination of the first two clusters.

**Figure 2** Consumer groups based on the survey among basket members



Source: The authors' own editing based on own research (2017, n=297)

Nezdei-Alpek (2018) has made a similar survey in 2016 focusing on consumers' and operators' approaches in seven traditional markets on seven different settlements as measure points representing the possible social and economic regional differences. The author identified four clusters generated by cluster analysis. "The adventure seekers valued the market atmosphere and the uniqueness of products as the most important factors to visit the marketplaces. The price optimizers thought only about monetary value. The supply-addicts considered product quality, selection and exclusiveness. Finally, classic market visitors represented the more common market-visiting reasons (e.g. quality and price of products or supporting local producers)." (p. 146.)

### ***Analysing open questions***

The next section is about the opinion of respondents regarding to buying communities. During the research we created analytic categories reflecting to the hypotheses, which categories are the criteria of our investigation.

### ***Supporting local producers***

In our analysis, the most dominant motivation was the support of local producers. It is quite clear that it is very important for the interviewees to support a narrower place of residence, to strengthen local economic development and thus to strengthen local strengths, values, and characterize the place. At the same time, the experience of personality is also a great attractive force, a sense of “homeliness”, and buying from acquaintances is extremely important for the interviewees.

### ***Community development***

Successful local economic development is unimaginable without an active, strong and conscious local population. We could see in the answers of 65% of the respondents, that these types of initiatives are not only important because of their economic benefits, but also because of the fact that they are closely related to recreational free-time activities. These motivations occur in a complementary way, and they clearly show that programmes organised by the community friendships and common thinking are highly needed “commodities”.

### ***Health consciousness***

Health conscious behaviour was most important for the basket members. This conscious behaviour was an expected attitude among this group and by examining their answers we can see that the health of their family and reliability are very important for them. The results of the questionnaire survey carried out among the general population also show that healthy and quality food is becoming increasingly important for ordinary people as well.

### ***The value set behind health consciousness***

In many cases, respondents emphasize the value sets behind a healthy lifestyle approach. The open questions reveal that the respondents consider culture and tradition of eating and producing as the pillars of not only the individual, but the community thinking and socialization processes. Approximately one third of the sample emphasized that it is very important for them to buy Hungarian raw materials, Hungarian products and goods.

### ***Environment consciousness***

The aspect of protecting the environment is clearly reflected in the respondents' responses. There were many critical responses as well. The relatively homogeneous responses also reveal an aspect that is based on an unusual, but in any case, realistic view. In our analysis, the issue of transport is mentioned in environmental terms. It is not only about how shortening the vertical chain is good economically, but a very large percentage of respondents state that the short product chain is environmentally friendly and less costly:

### ***Reliability, control***

By approaching open issues with quantitative indicators, we can conclude that for three quarters of the respondents, the criterion of verifiability, control and reliability is best associated with locally produced food ingredients. Respondents repeatedly mention that personal presence and visiting nearby food production areas are important factors. Of the respondents, only one person had a realistic critique, according to which inappropriate “production” conditions, controversial techniques and simple homemade preparations are also encountered among local producers.

## **CONCLUSION**

A survey among basket members highlighted that households with higher than average earnings and higher education typically use this alternative food supply option. Contrary to our preliminary assumption, consumer communities do not yet fully fulfil the role of community development and identity in Hungary. Based on our empirical experience, currently few communities have the capacity to accommodate the food buying and distribution system on this front and the consumer circle is not open enough for it either. However, it is clear that their consumer behaviour is the closest to the so-called LOHAS's (Lifestyle Of Health and Sustainability) behavioural pattern. Their support for local producers, their health and environmental awareness are serious for them. Their dominant lifestyles are based on their mature, clear, consumer-type image, which is not motivated by symbolic food consumption and the appearance of the outside world, but motivated by internal motivations and their own “well-being”.

The alternative Short Food Supply Chains like Hungarian Alternative Food Buying Communities can play an important role in revitalizing the countryside, in local economic and community development, in supporting the livelihoods of small farmers and in promoting a healthy lifestyle. Judging by the current state of development of these communities, it is necessary to receive a strong local and governmental support and promotion and to clarify their legal background.

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