

Abstract

Supporting the Development of Rural Areas with Experiential Learning about Embedded Food Systems—GOODFOOD Project [†]

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Abstract: The GOODFOOD project, as an educational and research project supporting the sustainable development of food systems, is aimed at establishing cooperation between EU universities and rural territories and their communities related to food production through a number of educational activities. This work resulted in the development, exploration and implementation of experiential learning activities and outcomes enabling the academic community to develop and exchange knowledge about territorially embedded food systems (EFS) and gain insight into possible pathways of their implementation. Through these multidisciplinary activities, the academic community, with the involvement of the explored EFS actors, developed teaching materials to contribute to supporting the sustainable development of rural food systems and their communities, based on experience and peer-to-peer learning. Local knowledge, built on the traditions and experiences of the local territory, supported by the input of qualified university graduates, has the potential to contribute to building sustainable, territorially embedded food systems, addressing challenges related to, i.e., resource constraints, diverse food quality and safety aspects, the environmental impacts of food production, biodiversity, food sovereignty, adapting to climate change, etc. To achieve the project's goals, educational content and activities tailored to students' preferences and major educational gaps were created in the form of e-learning courses and intensive study programs (summer schools). Students from six countries (PL, IT, FR, DE, BG, and RO) participated in two experiential-learning-focused summer schools in the Münsterland and Piedmont regions (2022, 2023). The project research team analyzed the students' understanding of the concept of EFS and identified their preferred methods of learning about EFS. Educational materials for students, descriptions of selected EFS case studies and a guide on innovative teaching about territorially embedded food systems addressed to academics working in this subject area were developed. The created, publicly available educational materials and approaches may be used in the future to support the restoration and development of socially, economically and environmentally sustainable EFS in the rural areas of Europe.

Keywords: Embedded food system; EFS; sustainability; innovative education; experiential learning; e-learning; intensive study programme; Europe; GOODFOOD



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