



ULST Timisoara  
**Multidisciplinary Conference on Sustainable Development**  
 21-22 May 2026



# INTEGRATION OF SHORT FOOD SUPPLY CHAINS IN THE AGRO-FOOD ECONOMY: EVIDENCE FROM BIHOR COUNTY, ROMANIA

Ramona Vasilica BACTER<sup>1</sup>, Alina Emilia Maria GHERDAN<sup>1</sup>, Monica Angelica DODU<sup>1</sup>, Denis Paul BACTER<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>University of Oradea Faculty Environmental Protection, Oradea Romania

**Abstract:** Short food supply chains (SFSCs) are increasingly recognized as an effective mechanism for improving the economic sustainability and resilience of agricultural systems, particularly in regions characterized by fragmented farm structures. By reducing the distance between producers and consumers, SFSCs enable higher value retention at farm level and strengthen local economic linkages. In Bihor County, proximity to urban consumption centers, particularly the peri-urban area of Oradea, creates favorable conditions for the expansion of SFSCs and direct marketing strategies. This spatial advantage strengthens producer–consumer relationships and supports the development of local agro-food systems.

## • Introduction

The agro-food sector has undergone significant transformations in recent decades, driven by globalization, technological progress, and changing consumer preferences. Within this context, small and medium-sized farms face increasing pressure to remain competitive while ensuring economic sustainability and market integration. One of the most relevant responses to these challenges has been the development of short food supply chains (SFSCs), which reduce the number of intermediaries and strengthen the direct connection between producers and consumers.

The objective of this study is to evaluate the integration of farms in Bihor County into short food supply chains and to assess the impact of this integration on economic performance. The research combines a case study approach with a comparative analysis based on a scoring model, aiming to provide both empirical evidence and practical insights for the development of local agro-food systems

## • Material and method

The research was conducted in Bihor County, Romania, a representative agricultural region located in the north-western part of the country. This area is characterized by a diversified agro-food structure that includes crop production, livestock farming, and mixed agricultural systems. The coexistence of rural and peri-urban zones, particularly in the vicinity of the city of Oradea, creates favorable conditions for the development of short food supply chains (SFSCs), facilitating direct interaction between producers and consumers.

## • Results and discussions

The results indicate that farms engaged in SFSCs achieve better economic outcomes than those relying on conventional distribution systems. Direct sales and reduced dependence on intermediaries contribute to improved profit margins, greater price stability, and increased control over market activities. In addition, integration into local markets enhances farm adaptability to price fluctuations and external shocks, supporting overall economic resilience.

The study concludes that SFSCs represent a viable pathway for improving farm sustainability and competitiveness. However, their effectiveness depends on enabling factors such as infrastructure, digital capabilities, cooperative structures, and supportive policies. The findings provide empirical evidence and practical insights for stakeholders involved in rural development and agro-food system optimization.

## • Conclusions

The study demonstrates that short food supply chains represent an effective strategy for improving farm profitability, economic sustainability, and regional agro-food resilience in Bihor County, particularly for farms integrated into local and peri-urban markets.

The results demonstrate that farms with a higher degree of integration into SFSCs, particularly those located in peri-urban areas, achieve superior economic outcomes. Direct sales and reduced reliance on intermediaries contribute to improved profitability, greater price stability, and enhanced control over the marketing process. In this regard,

