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|----|---------------------------|------|---------------------------------------|-------------------|----------------------|---|---|---|
| 38 | Milestad,R., et al.       | 2017 | J. Rural Stud.                        | Box scheme        | Austria              | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 39 | Wills,B., Arundel,A.      | 2017 | Agric. Hum. Values                    | AFNs              | Canada;<br>Australia | ✓ |   | ✓ |
| 40 | Elghannam,A., et al.      | 2017 | New Medit                             | SFSCs             | Spain                | ✓ | ✓ |   |
| 41 | Leiper, C., Sather, A. C. | 2017 | Int. J. Justice and<br>Sustainability | Farmer market     | US                   | ✓ | ✓ |   |
| 42 | Deller, S. C., et al.     | 2017 | Community Dev.                        | Local food system | NS                   | ✓ | ✓ |   |
| 43 | Demartini, E., et al.     | 2017 | Agric. Econ.                          | SFSCs             | Italy                | ✓ | ✓ |   |
| 44 | Sellitto, A., et al.      | 2018 | J. Cleaner Prod.                      | SFSCs             | Italy;<br>Brazil     | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |

### ***Social pillar of sustainability***

It can be noted from Table 1 that only eight papers from the sample solely focused on the linkages between SFSCs and social dimension of sustainability.

The earliest research investigating the social sustainability of SFSCs was implemented by Sage in 2003. Through 12 semi-structured interviews and 20 informal discussions with relevant stakeholders, Sage (2003) explored the benefits of direct interactions in these food systems. The study noted that additional moral values, such as ethics of animal welfare, consideration for sustainability and belief in local community, can be obtained in face-to-face transactions.

Alongside with Sage (2003), the close linkage between social sustainability and direct interactions in SFSCs was also confirmed in some other studies. For example, Giampietri et al. (2016, 2018) conducted two continuous studies to investigate the motivations of consumers' purchasing behavior in SFSCs. They found that the direct interactions in SFSCs can reinforce consumers' trust on food security and quality, and increase consumers' involvement in local development. A similar finding was also obtained by O'Kane and Wijaya (2015). Moreover, O'Kane and Wijaya (2015) also found that farmers could feel more empowered and equitable in Farmers Markets (FMs), a typical face-to-face category of SFSCs.

Apart from the social benefits introduced by direct interactions, the gender equality was also investigated in SFSCs. Two continuous studies by Zirham and Palomba (2015, 2016) explored the females' role in SFSCs. Through open and semi-structured interviews, they found that female features, such as high responsibility and good social manners, can improve food security and provide a more pleasant shopping atmosphere. Thus, SFSCs tends to have a better gender equality.

Moreover, as a form of local food system, SFSCs can also provide food with improved security to more low-income people (Nonini, 2013). Meanwhile, a positive correlation was also found between the density of FMs and Italian adults' Body Mass Index (BMI), indicating that FMs can provide higher quality food products (Bimbo et al., 2015).

Based on the identified 8 studies, it can be noted that the most widely acknowledged social benefits of SFSCs is the improved food quality and security. This fact is consistent with the consumers' expectation on SFSCs, as their growing preference of SFSCs is because the increasing occurrences of safety crises in conventional food systems (Llazo, 2014). Thus, SFSCs can be an effective solution to regain consumers' trust and improve social sustainability through the improved food products and gender equality.

### ***Economic pillar of sustainability***

Unlike the widely acknowledged improvements in social sustainability, research on the linkage between SFSCs and economic sustainability is rather limited. As shown in Table 1, only four articles were found to be focusing solely on economic sustainability of SFSCs.

Studies focusing on farmer markets (FMs) found that the direct interactions can help to regain the profit shared by intermediates in conventional food supply systems, and also facilitate economic development of local areas (Watts et al., 2011; Benedek et al., 2017). Moreover, Benedek et al. (2017) also found that farmers within FMs are more open to cooperation and tend to be higher educated. Thus, they can benefit more through the direct interactions with customers, and the pleasant social atmosphere can be retained as added values to the food products.

While the economic sustainability of FMs is obvious, there is some controversy over Community Supported Agriculture (CSA). While Balázs et al. (2016) confirmed that CSA can improve farmers' financial situation and

facilitate local economic development, both them and Janssen (2010) found the scaling up of CSA can be a major challenge. This is because the investment of CSA is much greater for hiring external labours. Thus, it can be a tough decision for growers to adapt to this form of SFSCs. Moreover, the empirical evidences of the return on investment for CSA are quite limited.

While the linkage between SFSCs and economic sustainability is less evident, it can be noted that the direct interactions in FMs can be retained as added values and hence help farmers to solve the price squeeze issues. Moreover, the short-circuit feature of SFSCs can help farmers to regain the profits shared by intermediates. However, it should be noted that the potential increased costs for small scale production is not fully evaluated. Although the economic performance of SFSCs can be difficult to assess, a thorough evaluation and more empirical evidences are recommended for further justification.

### ***Environmental pillar of sustainability***

Similar to linkage with economic sustainability, only 3 articles from the sample were identified to associate with solely environmental sustainability, as illustrated in Table 1.

Hara et al. (2013) conducted a multi-scale and a scenario analysis to examine the energy consumption of vegetables in Osaka city region, where they found that the local food movement can effectively reduce the energy consumption. Meanwhile, McClenachan et al. (2014) compared the environmental impacts of Community Supported Fisheries (CSFs) and industrial fisheries. CSFs were confirmed to be a more environmental sustainable alternative with much smaller carbon footprint. Moreover, Tasca et al. (2017) found that the abandon of disposable packing and industrial processing in direct distribution can effectively reduce environmental impacts by 20% to 48%. Nevertheless, they also indicated that additional improvements, such as better fertilization practices, are still needed to further improve environmental sustainability of SFSCs.

Therefore, it can be noted that SFSCs can improve environmental sustainability through direct distribution. Meanwhile, a better performance can be achieved through the adoption of environmental-friendly practices, such as improved fertilizations.

### ***Combined pillars of sustainability***

While articles focusing on one specific pillar of sustainability are rather limited, many studies in the sample document two or three combined sustainability pillars. A total of 29 papers were identified as illustrated in Table 1. The identified earliest research of this type was conducted by Renting et al. (2003). They explored the development of AFNs within Europe. A major contribution of their work was classifying AFNs into three categories based on proximity. They found that AFNs can satisfy all three pillars of sustainability through improving food quality, mitigating price squeeze, and protecting environment with more eco-friendly production methods.

Another research prior to 2011 was implemented by Smith (2008). He focused on the sustainable features of local food system. More complete benefits were found as improving food quality and security, supporting local economy development, improving livelihoods of farmers, reducing energy consumption, and improving biodiversity of local areas. This research can be regarded as a general summary as it almost covers all the identified sustainable benefits of SFSCs.

The remaining 27 articles were all published after 2011, which corresponds to the increasing research interest in this area. These studies can be classified into four groups based on their linkage to different sets of sustainability pillars, e.g. social and economic, social and environmental, economic and environment, and all three pillars.

A total of 7 articles were found to document the social and economic benefits of SFSCs. Elghannam et al. (2017) and Demartini et al. (2017) focused on the general form of SFSCs, and investigated the contribution of social network and farmers' motivation respectively. According to Elghannam et al. (2017), SFSCs can improve rural development and increase community sense and social awareness. Meanwhile, Demartini et al. (2017) found that farmers within SFSCs can obtain higher profits and closer relations with consumers. Meanwhile, Leiper and Sather (2017) investigated the motivations of both farmers and consumers in participating FMs. Alongside with the increased profits and community sense, they also found that FMs can supply food with improved quality, and provide an enjoyable vending atmosphere to both parties. According to Engelseth (2016), an increased profit and improved food quality can also be obtained through local food hub. In two continuous studies conducted by Sgroi et

al. (2014) and Tudisca et al. (2015) they found direct sales can increase farmers' profits and create new job opportunities. Meanwhile, Deller et al. (2017) found local food systems can improve public health and create sustainable economic growth.

5 articles were identified to mention the social and environmental benefits of SFSCs. While Wills and Arundel (2017) haven't declared the exact sustainable improvements, they confirmed that both social and environmental benefits can be obtained through AFNs. Meanwhile, Farmer et al. (2014) found that the positive influence on environment and food nutrition were the top two factors affecting participations in FMs and CSA. The remaining 3 articles all found SFSCs can create more job opportunities. Moreover, Falguieres et al. (2015) also confirmed that SFSCs can reduce environmental damage and help to mitigate the emigration wave in Spain. The improvement of biodiversity was declared by Rover et al. (2017), while Mundler and Laughrea (2016) found farmers within SFSCs tend to adopt environmental production practices and implement educational activities.

Only 1 article was found to focus on the economic and environmental sustainability features of SFSCs. Through a questionnaire survey with 270 consumers, Migliore et al. (2015) assessed the food quality in FMs, and confirmed the positive effects of FMs on both environment and local economy.

Alongside with the two studies published prior to 2011, another 14 articles were also identified to document all three pillars of sustainability. 5 of them focused on the general form of SFSCs. According to Aubert and Enjolras (2015), SFSCs can promote rural development, increase producers' profits and benefit consumers with lower prices and higher quality food products. Moreover, farmers that favor SFSCs were also more likely to adopt environmental-friendly practices. While similar benefits were confirmed by Giampietri et al. (2015), they also addressed the benefits of direct interactions in SFSCs. Meanwhile, Mastronardi et al. (2015) identified the benefits of SFSCs as improvement of biodiversity, creation of more employments, a larger profit and control over farming products. Moreover, Canfora (2016) and Sellitto et al. (2018) both found that SFSCs can reduce transportation costs, and hence improve the environmental sustainability. Meanwhile, there are 4 articles that explored AFNs. Similar to the above literatures, Forssell and Lankoski (2015) found AFNs can increase farmers' profits, improve food quality and security, and adopt eco-friendly production methods, and reduce transportation distance. Meanwhile, Si et al. (2015), Dixon and Richards (2016), and Darolt et al. (2016) reached same findings, that AFNs can facilitate local economic development, create a closer social relationship between producers and consumers, and improve environmental conditions. The remaining 5 articles focused on more specific forms of SFSCs. For example, Connelly et al. (2011) examined the potentials of box scheme and food hub in community transformation. While the exact benefits were not mentioned, they confirmed that both initiatives can create more sustainable food systems, with reduced environmental impacts, improved social just and economic viability. Meanwhile, Milestad et al. (2017) investigated a box scheme in Austria, and reached same findings. Moreover, Berti and Mulligan (2016) examined the sustainable feature of food hub, and found that food hub can improve health, create more job opportunities, increase profits and improve biodiversity. Both Beckie et al. (2012) and Marino et al. (2013) focused on FMs. In addition to the mentioned sustainable benefits, it was also found that producers, especially retired seniors, can gain supplemental income and enjoy the social connections at FMs (Beckie et al., 2012), and consumers shopping there are mainly motivated by the fresh and high quality food products (Marino et al., 2013).

#### **4. Conclusions, Limitations and Future Research Agenda**

This study provides a systematic review of literature on SFSCs. Using Triple Bottom Line as a theoretical lens, this study also improves our theoretical understanding of the SFSCs and sustainability linkage. In addition, the study clarifies the differences between the various AFN concepts and attempts to define new sustainability values in food supply chains. In addition to the theoretical contributions, this study has strong practical implications. The findings of the study will benefit policy makers and local/regional governments seeking to improve the sustainable livelihood of farmers by having a better understanding of the potential of SFSCs. As a result more supportive policies could be developed to promote SFSC activities to address major issues such as food safety, food transparency and rural employment opportunities.

From the 44 articles, it can be noted that the social benefits of SFSCs are the most widely acknowledged, as only 1 paper hasn't addressed the improvements in social sustainability. Growing consumer preference towards SFSCs due to the improved food quality, trust and security, is hence not surprising. Other commonly identified social benefits of SFSCs include creation of more job opportunities and increasing community sense. While the economic and

environmental benefits are relatively limited, it was still found that SFSCs can mitigate the price squeeze and increase farmers' incomes by regaining the profits shared by intermediates in conventional food supply systems. Moreover, SFSCs can also improve biodiversity, adopt more eco-friendly production methods, and reduce environmental pollutions. From the country's perspective, it is found that despite the 4 articles that did not specify any countries, only 3 articles focused on SFSCs in developing countries. This indicates a lack of empirical evidences from developing countries.

As SFSCs can improve food security and increase farmers' profits, it would hence be beneficial to encourage more studies in the developing countries context. As indicated by Balázs et al. (2016) and Janssen (2010), the scaling up of CSA can be a major challenge as it requires more investments than other forms of SFSCs. Thus, it might be worthy to release some relevant governmental policies to overcome this issue, and facilitate the developments of CSA. Future studies can also focus on understanding and transferring the best SFSCs practices from the EU region to developing nations and improve the livelihood of their rural regions. Understanding the role of government regulations in promoting SFSCs in rural areas can also be part of the future research agenda.

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