

Good Practice Example No. 1 - Hungary

Kislépték Association: Cross-Border Short Food Supply Chain & Small-Scale Producer Network

Industry:	Small-scale food producers
Location:	Bács-Kiskun County, Hungary
Established in:	2014
Legal form:	Association of small-scale farmers and producers
Business model:	B2C (Business to Consumer)
Core activity:	Cross-border support model for small-scale producers

The Kislépték National Association for the Representation of Small-Scale Producers and Service Providers' general objective is to promote environmentally friendly forms of farming that are adapted to the characteristics of local landscapes, as well as the development and wider adoption of local processing and marketing systems, short supply chains, and related services. They seek to achieve this through the rationalization of the regulatory framework and by facilitating market access for local producers and service providers. The roots of the association and its strongest activities are connected to rural areas and short food supply chains across Hungary, including the Southern Great Plain region (Bács-Kiskun, Csongrád-Csanád and Békés counties).

The environmentally sustainable development of production and services provided by small and medium-sized enterprises, family farms, and artisans using natural materials, together with improved market access, can contribute to reducing intensive crop production and livestock farming practices.

It can also support the expansion of new livelihood opportunities that are economically, environmentally, and socially sustainable. This may have positive impacts on biodiversity, soils, and water resources in Hungary by reducing the harmful environmental effects of production. Strengthening local economies can provide local communities with important opportunities for development and resilience.

The Association's key activities include advocating for the simplification of the regulatory conditions governing the production and sale of small-scale food products and handmade craft goods, as well as promoting the establishment and dissemination of flexible regulatory frameworks for food production in private households. It supports the development of Short Supply Chains (SSC) through strategic planning and advocacy,

while also encouraging the tradition-based, environmentally conscious, and high-quality development of rural agritourism services. Furthermore, the Association promotes self-employment opportunities, conducts surveys of producers and local markets, provides support to local stakeholders, and contributes to the enhancement of their knowledge and skills. It operates and strengthens networks for advocacy and cooperation among producers and service providers and actively works to build international partnerships, contributing to joint representation and advocacy efforts at both national and international levels.

Programme context and challenges

This initiative was implemented within the framework of cross-border cooperation between Hungary and Serbia, with a particular focus on strengthening SME competitiveness, sustainable agriculture, and short food supply chains. It addresses the challenges faced by small-scale agricultural producers in the Hungary–Serbia border region, where limited market access, weak bargaining power, and insufficient visibility often hinder economic development.

Many rural producers struggle to comply with regulatory requirements while lacking the resources and expertise needed for effective branding, direct sales, and digital marketing. In addition, fragmented supply chains reduce income stability for producers and weaken the resilience of local economies and communities. These factors collectively limit the growth potential of small-scale farms and rural enterprises, despite their important role in maintaining sustainable agricultural practices and supporting local livelihoods.

Solution, results and good practice value

To address these challenges, Kislépték developed a cross-border support model designed specifically for small-scale producers. The initiative focuses on strengthening short food supply chains, providing legal and regulatory guidance, supporting direct sales models such as farmers' markets and community-supported agriculture schemes, organising professional workshops and study visits, and building cross-border networks among producers.

The model creates connections between producers, consumers, municipalities, and other local stakeholders, thereby promoting local products and encouraging the development of sustainable food systems.

As a result, producer networks have been strengthened, regulatory knowledge and compliance have improved, and new opportunities for direct sales have emerged. The project has also enhanced cooperation among rural actors on both sides of the border and increased consumer awareness of locally produced goods.

This approach represents a strong example of good practice because it strengthens local economies, promotes sustainable and short supply chains, supports rural resilience and food sovereignty, and offers a scalable and adaptable model that can be transferred to other rural regions facing similar challenges.

Source: <https://kisleptek.hu/>