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Summary

The research team of the Turkey hub consists of Aylin Topal, Işıl Servetoğlu and Çiğdem Adem from Middle East Technical University (METU) in Ankara and Fikret Adaman, Zühre Aksoy and F. Hazal İnce from Boğaziçi University in Istanbul. The project is based in Turkey and focuses primarily on the largest city of Turkey, Istanbul, where the main practice partner, Temiz Hasat, is located. Yet, the geographical scope extends beyond Istanbul to include Izmir, Ankara, Antalya, and Samsun, reflecting the cooperative's supply chain network and the broader territorial dynamics of Turkey's urban food system. Our main practice partner is a community-supported agriculture model consumer cooperative based in İstanbul. The cooperative connects urban consumers with small-scale producers through direct procurement and solidarity-based distribution mechanisms. Additional practice partners include two producer cooperatives, one consumer cooperative, one community garden, two environmental cooperatives, two municipalities, and one citizens' assembly.

The study examines this consumer cooperative operating within İstanbul's urban food system and its wider network of producer cooperatives, municipalities, and civic organizations. The main intervention of the research team was to facilitate dialogue and collaboration among these actors in order to strengthen more sustainable and

solidarity-based food supply networks. As part of this process, the team engaged directly with a women-led producer cooperative as part of the supply chain of the consumer cooperative, sharing knowledge on cooperative practices and traditional ecological and agricultural knowledge. Additional side interventions included enabling and monitoring dialogue between a producer cooperative and municipal representatives as a supporting ecosystem regarding the potential use of a publicly owned cold storage facility, and organizing a meeting in İzmir to support new collaboration between producer cooperatives and international partners. The preliminary findings of the study indicate that CSA-based cooperative models in urban food systems remain unsustainable without long-term institutional support mechanisms. The absence of a stable, permanent supporting ecosystem, transparent food system data, and participatory governance mechanisms increases their vulnerability to market volatility and external shocks.

Policy Recommendations

Establish Dedicated Municipal Support Programs for Cooperatives

Scale: Municipal

Municipalities should establish formal support programs for consumer and producer cooperatives, including market space allocation, access to storage facilities, logistics infrastructure, and digital tools. Financial and technical support mechanisms should be institutionalized and made sustainable, rather than being random, short-term, or temporary.

Reform National Agricultural and Land Policies to Support Small-Scale and Solidarity-Based Models

Scale: National

National agricultural and land-use policies should be revised to explicitly support small-scale producers and solidarity-based food networks. Legal and regulatory frameworks must consider community-supported agriculture (CSA) and cooperative models as strategic components of the food system. A comprehensive and coordinated national food strategy should integrate these actors.

Scale: Local, National

Izmir municipality supports cooperatives by purchasing their products and selling them at the municipality run markets (Izmar). By doing so, they provide support to products which do not save water and which pollute the soil and the environment. Instead, the municipality needs to buy products from cooperatives that produce organically, that have low carbon foot prints, that save water in a city that is water deficient and improve the soil quality. Hence, by supporting organic production and inserting a set of principles for their purchases, the municipalities need to support food production that saves water, that improves the soil quality

and that have low carbon footprints and protects the environment. (Recommended by: Uygun Aksoy)

Scale: National
The difference in food prices from the farm to the market is tremendous in Turkey due to intermediaries and middlemen and the taxes imposed at each stage. For instance, in February 2026, the price difference from farm to fork for cauliflower was 230%. In addition, each time the registered food is transmitted among various middlemen different taxes are imposed. In addition, the taxes on energy, diesel amount for two thirds of the product.

Recommendation: Food should be tax exempt and the taxes imposed at every stage when the product is handed down from one middlemen to the other should be removed by the Turkish government. In addition, the taxes on oil and diesel should be removed as well by the government. This policy change should be supported by legal arrangements.

Further, the food prices are determined in an almost oligopolistic way by the substantial actors such as the market chains and massive food companies. Legal arrangements should be carried out to ensure that food prices are determined according to the free market not only by the largest actors. Monitoring and control is essential as well. (Recommended by: Erdem Ak)

Create Public, Open-Access Food System Data Platforms

Scale: National / Municipal
Public institutions should develop open-access platforms providing transparent food system data, including price monitoring and supply chain information. Regular and reliable data production and publication should be established as an institutional responsibility. The participation of civil society actors in data monitoring and dissemination processes should be facilitated.

Promotion of Participatory Food Governance Mechanisms

Scale: Municipal / Local
Neighborhood councils, food councils, and other citizen-based mechanisms should be promoted and actively participate in policy processes as key actors. Participation of universities, chambers of agriculture, local representatives, and civil society organizations should be structurally ensured. Participatory governance must move beyond informal consultation and become embedded in decision-making structures.

Creation of Spaces for Knowledge Exchange between Farmers, Cooperatives, and Scientists

Scale: National / Municipal / Local

> Traditional ecological and agricultural knowledge of the farmers, which is crucial for adaptation to climate change and protecting biological diversity, should be recognized and weaved with scientific knowledge in a way that fosters innovative and sustainable production processes. Public institutions and municipalities, along with universities should facilitate platforms in which farmers, cooperatives, scientists can engage in knowledge exchange within a horizontal and complementary framework.

To international policy-makers

Traditional ecological and agricultural knowledge and practices needs to be recognized, revitalized, respected, reinforced and documented by practice partners and researchers and access has to be based on the free, prior and informed consent of knowledge-holders.

The need for democratic, transparent, participatory and inclusive food supply chains should be emphasised and incentives need to be provided for increasing the transparency, inclusivity and participatory food supply chains.

<u>Policy recommendations from project experience</u>

To national policy-makers (including local governments)
We found out that in Turkey there are no incentives provided to agricultural development cooperatives to export their products and send their sample products whereas for companies there is plenty of support (such as exemption from taxes) and training. Hence, the central or the local governments need to provide support and capacity building for cooperatives in Turkey on how to export their products.

Different actors of food supply chains do not interact with each other and there is no such platform for this as well. At our project and practice partners meeting in İzmir, Turkey (2025), we witnessed that food communities do not prefer to interact with cooperatives and the same is true for some members of cooperatives. Although the food cooperatives were invited to the first day of the meeting which comprised of presentations on cooperatives and visits to cooperatives they did not attend to both.

Consequently, the formation of Urban Food Policy Councils in Turkey is necessary for a more democratic, transparent, inclusive and collaborative management of food supply chains. In Istanbul, Karşıyaka - İzmir and Nilüfer - Bursa municipalities food policy strategies are already developed via the participation of diverse stakeholders. Thus, these locations would be good starting points to form a food policy council.

We found out through our practice partners (Gödence Cooperative, Çıralı Ulupınar Cooperative, Union of Village Cooperatives in İzmir, Hatay Defne Women's Cooperative) that the national regional development agencies (RDAs) and the Agriculture and Rural Development Support Institution are significant supporting ecosystems based on project proposals in addition to municipalities in Turkey.

National RDAs and the Agriculture and Rural Development Support Institution as supporting ecosystems in Turkey have to continue to provide funding for the project proposals of cooperatives to receive organic certification. These certificates are unaffordable and rather expensive for cooperatives and such support is essential.

To project funding agencies

The CO-SFSC project is empowering for both consumer and producer cooperatives. During the project, we kept on passing the information about our practice partners to other practice partners of our project partners especially during project partner meetings. We had planned to organize an online meeting with the aim of introducing all practice partners for peer to peer exchange and for inspiration but it did not happen. A meeting or a series of meetings need to be funded by the national funding agencies for the practice partners to meet face to face, share experiences and learn and get inspired from each other. It would be good to reinforce the value of peer-to-peer learning and learn from good practices and to showcase that there are similar cases across the world.

Policy Recommendations of Practice Partner Asaf Özalp

Regulatory framework and national policy-makers

Target group: The Turkish Parliament, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry and Ministry of Trade

Formation of Food Waste and Donation Legislation

Recommendation: Introducing "zero waste" based on waste hierarchy principles as legally obligatory for market chains and food businesses. Incentives should be provided to halt throwing of food into waste that can be consumed. The donation of such food to food banks should be supported via decreasing from 100% tax assessment.

Revision of Public Procurement Law based on green and local purchases:

Recommendation: "Sustainability Criteria" should be included in the Public Procurement Law no. 4734. For food purchases of public institutions (schools, hospitals, dormitories) the carbon footprint of the product and being a product of a cooperative should determine the procurement points.

Regenerative Agriculture Law:

Recommendation: Ecosystem services-based model should be secured legally instead of the traditional input-based support model. Farmers who increase the organic matter of the soil, who save water and who avoid monoculture should receive "direct green payment".

Local government and regional development
Target group: Municipalities, national regional development agencies (RDAs), governorships

"Food Cluster" Support for National Regional Development Agencies

Recommendation: RDAs should establish "Common Processing and Cold Chain Facilities". Grants up to 80% need to be funded for fully integrated, from production to consumption, short food supply chain (SFSC) projects instead of providing funding for discrete projects.

The topic of food security in municipal strategic plans

Recommendation: Urban Food Strategy should be an obligatory topic in municipal 5-year strategic plans. Peri-urban areas need to be protected and the access of disadvantaged groups to fresh food should be assured via urban municipal community gardens.

International and Sectoral Alignment
Target Group: Ministries of Foreign Affairs, International Institutions (FAO, UNDP), Exporters Unions

Digital food passport and traceability

Recommendation: A "food passport" system based on blockchain should be formed to align with international trade standards. This system would increase the added value of agricultural products by submitting transparent information on the source of the seed, the amount of the water used and the labour standards to international purchasers.

Incentives to Align with Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism

Recommendation: The "Low Carbon Agricultural Certificate" processes of exporting food producers should be funded by the governments so that they are not faced with the carbon tax within the scope of the European Green Deal.

Producers and Cooperatives

The Modernization of Cooperative Law

Cooperatives should be classified as a social enterprise rather than a commercial company. Their tax liabilities should be decreased and professional administrative support within the scope of consultancy should be provided free by the governments.

Regenerative agricultural supports

Direct payments should be provided by the central or local governments for regenerative agricultural practices" that improve the soil, capture carbon and increase biodiversity instead of providing diesel oil and fertilizer support to farmers.

<u>Research Findings</u>

Research questions

This study examines how CSA model consumer cooperatives can be strengthened to create a sustainable food supply chain in Turkey. Specifically, it asks what

consumer cooperatives need to strengthen their governance structures and to support sustainable food systems, and how participatory governance mechanisms like food policy councils can support these cooperatives through democratic decision-making processes.

Research significance

The research is socially significant because cooperative food networks have the potential to connect farmers, consumers, municipalities, and civil society actors in more sustainable and transparent food systems. Strengthening such cooperative supply chains can contribute to fairer market conditions for small-scale producers, increased access to healthy food for consumers, and more environmentally sustainable production and distribution practices.

Research findings

The research shows that CSA consumer cooperatives operating in urban food systems are highly vulnerable to market fluctuations and external shocks when long-term institutional support mechanisms are absent. The case study demonstrates that cooperative initiatives relying primarily on volunteer labor and limited financial resources struggle to maintain operational stability under changing market conditions. These findings suggest that stronger and more stable public support mechanisms are necessary to enhance the long-term sustainability and resilience of such initiatives.

The study also highlights important institutional gaps in the policy environment surrounding alternative food networks. Municipal support mechanisms, access to reliable food system data, and participatory governance structures remain limited or largely ad hoc, constraining the capacity of cooperatives and similar initiatives to anticipate market risks, plan, and operate sustainably. Addressing these institutional gaps through more structured policy frameworks and inclusive governance mechanisms could significantly strengthen the resilience of alternative food system initiatives.

Conclusion

The research shows that CSA-based consumer cooperatives operating in urban food systems face structural vulnerabilities when long-term institutional support is absent. Market volatility, limited access to transparent food system data, and weakly institutionalized participatory governance mechanisms further constrain their sustainability. These findings highlight the need for targeted policy action, including institutionalized municipal support programs for cooperatives, improved public food system data, stronger participatory food governance mechanisms, national policy

frameworks that recognize and support solidarity-based food networks, and the creation of platforms for knowledge exchange between farmers, cooperatives, and scientists.

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