Local Food is Growing, but is Farmer Interest Wilting? An Empirical Investigation into the Factors that Motivate Farmer Involvement in Local Selling Channels.

Camilla Tilly
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Abstract:

Local food systems (LFS) connect producers and consumers in a geographically restricted food supply chain. Local food advocates argue that limiting the spatial scope of food systems can help to address the sustainability challenges present in the global food system. LFS are argued to eliminate intermediaries, enable clear product provenance, encourage community interactions, and involve few food miles. LFS are growing in Sweden, where the government launched a National Food Strategy in 2016, which among other aims promotes the proliferation of local food.

This study aims to understand why several farmers from Uppland, central Sweden engage in local selling and whether concerns about sustainability influence the choice of selling channels among them. Using on-farm, semi-structured interviews with the farmers, this research explores three research questions concerning: (1) farmer motives for engaging in local selling channels, (2) factors constraining farmer involvement in LFS, and (3) farmer perceptions on the future of local selling channels. The overall purpose of this research is to provide a critical perspective on local selling as a sustainable food system solution.

The study reveals a wide range of motives, including economic advantages from responding to consumer demand and cutting out middlemen, price premiums, more customer interactions, job satisfaction, and proximity to markets. Various economic and personal constraints limit the farmers’ use of local selling channels. Such constraints include seasonality of produce, performing time-consuming middlemen tasks, limited access to essential infrastructure, low transport load utilisation, and individual reasons for not wanting to up-scale local production. The results indicate that better access to on-farm or nearby infrastructure, improved small-scale efficiency, increasing food prices for consumers, changing consumer preferences, more diverse farm products, and better congruency between government objectives and import policies could all help to support LFS in the future.

This research exposes a number of underlying contradictions and tensions associated with local food in the literature and among the interviewed farmers. The study finds that sustainability concerns are not a critical motive for the farmers’ involvement in local selling. Some of the farmers even question the sustainability of such channels and challenge the idea that LFS are inherently more sustainable than food systems on other scales. Furthermore, almost all the farmers are involved in both local and global food systems. The farmers do not find it conflicting to be part of both food systems, and are in fact consciously using both systems to their economic advantage. Thus the clear distinction between local and global food systems made in the LFS literature is not reflected in the practical experiences of the farmers involved in this study.

Keywords: Sustainable Development, Local Food, Local Food System, Global Food System, Farmer, Uppland

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Summary:

In the response to the various economic, environmental and social challenges present in the industrialised global food system, some sustainability advocates promote the localisation of food systems. Local food systems (LFS), which involve direct farmer-consumer contact in a geographically restricted chain of food production and distribution, are argued by some scholars to be a sustainable food system solution. It is claimed that LFS cut out middlemen, provide clear traceability of food products’ origins, encourage community interactions, and result in short transport distances from farm to fork. LFS are growing in Sweden, and the Swedish government launched a National Food Strategy in 2016, which among other aims promotes the proliferation of local food.

This study aims to understand why some farmers engage in local selling and whether concerns about sustainability influence the choice of selling channels among them. Several farmers from Uppland, central Sweden who use local selling channels were interviewed about their motives for using such channels, factors constraining their involvement in LFS, the benefits and shortcomings of local selling, and their perceptions of the future of local selling. The overall purpose of this research is to provide a critical perspective on local selling as a sustainable food system solution.

The study reveals a diverse range of social and financial motives among the interviewed farmers, including better prices, more customer interactions, the economic advantage of closing the gap between supply and demand and cutting out middlemen, greater job satisfaction, and easy access to large markets. The study highlights various factors that constrain the farmers’ use of local selling channels. They include seasonality of produce, time-consuming middlemen tasks, limited infrastructure, inefficient transport, and personal reasons for not wanting to up-scale local production. The results indicate that better access to on-farm or nearby infrastructure, improved small-scale efficiency, higher food prices, changing consumer preferences, more diverse farm products, and better congruency between government objectives and import policies could all help to facilitate the future development of LFS.

The paper exposes underlying tensions associated with local food. The study determines that sustainability concerns are not a driving motive for the farmers’ involvement in local selling. Some of the farmers even question the sustainability of such channels and challenge the idea that LFS are inherently more sustainable than food systems at other spatial scales. Furthermore, the farmers are involved in both local and global food systems. They do not desire to abandon one selling channel in favour of another, as they want to have various streams of income and better economic security. Thus the clear distinction between local and global food systems made in the LFS literature is not reflected in the practical experiences of the farmers involved in this study.

Keywords: Sustainable Development, Local Food, Local Food System, Global Food System, Farmer, Uppland
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1. Introduction
The global food system has been argued to promote “quantity over quality” and “price over provenance” (O’Neill 2014, p. 115). The energy and material efficiency of synthetic inputs, specialised industrial production and long-distance distribution networks enables output maximisation and provides a wide variety of affordable food for consumers (Duru & Theron 2015; Mount 2012; Schmitt et al. 2017; Schönhart et al. 2009; Smith 2006). The global food system’s productivist orientation, however, has significant sustainability shortcomings and the true cost on the environment and society is not reflected in its economic prices (Kahiluoto et al. 2005; Loorbach et al. 2012; Schmitt et al. 2017; Yu et al. 2013). Such practices have been criticised for long-term losses of vital ecosystem services like soil fertility, water provision and nutrient cycling, as well as the decline of rural communities (Choi & Kim 2015; Foley et al. 2005). It is argued by various scholars (Darnhofer et al. 2010; El Biali & Allahyari 2018; Markard et al. 2012), that a fundamental shift to more sustainable food systems is required to address challenges like climate change, biodiversity loss, and population growth (Foley et al. 2005; Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations [FAO] 2017; Power 2010).

1.1. Problem background
Alternative approaches to food production and consumption seek to address the sustainability issues inherent in the incumbent global food system. Such alternative approaches include diet changes, like the “planet healthy diet” (Willett et al. 2019), which recommends a mostly plant-based diet, and the organic movement, which advocates the minimal use of fertilisers and inorganic inputs (Smith 2006). Another alternative is the localisation of food. Local food systems (LFS) have been argued to reconfigure the current food system to connect actors involved in different stages of the food chain (Renting et al. 2003). LFS involve directly selling produce to the final consumer in a “local marketing channel” and thus have shorter supply chains than those in the global food system. There are various economic, social and environmental advantages associated with such re-spatialising and re-socialising of food (ibid.). Middlemen are cut out of food production and distribution processes, which can help to improve farmer income and retain money in the local economy. LFS are argued to encourage community relations and the sharing of local ecological knowledge, they can involve fewer food miles, can enhance farm biodiversity, and can improve animal welfare (Milestad et al. 2010; Mount 2012; Schmitt et al. 2017; Therond et al. 2017).

In reaction to low price margins and the dominant market share of agribusinesses and the oligopoly of food retailers, some Swedish producers have developed a parallel local food market to recapture value in the supply chain (Eriksson et al. 2016). Through channels like food cooperatives and online marketplaces, farmers are able to distribute their produce directly to the final consumer. By omitting intermediary stages of the food production supply chain, the farmers can earn a larger income than in conventional selling channels without significantly increasing the prices consumers pay.

1.2. Problem
Governments worldwide are calling for more food to be locally produced (Cohen & Ilieva 2015; Rut & Davies 2018). The Swedish government’s 2016 National Food Strategy puts forward that, “consumers should have a high degree of confidence in food and be able to make informed and sustainable choices, for example with respect to local and organic production” (Ministry of Enterprise and Innovation 2016, p. 10). The government asserts that the strategy will “lead to an increase in the share of locally produced products” and contends that, “viable domestic food production is...a strength in terms of crisis preparedness” (ibid. pp. 3,9). Local food is thus, for the first time, being discussed in an operational way in the National Food Strategy. According to the Federation of Swedish Farmers (Lantbrukarnas Riksförbund 2018a), however, in the past twenty years an increasingly large quantity of food is being imported into Sweden, while Swedish farmers receive a diminishing share of the consumption value of food. Farmers who sell locally thus face various practical challenges in scaling up local selling channels “from niche to volume markets” (Ostrom et al. 2017, p. 7; Schönhart et al. 2009).
This paper contributes with knowledge development in regards to farmer motives for using local selling channels. Grounded in farmer perspectives, from on-farm interviews with six farmers from the Uppland region of Sweden, this study will examine farmers’ motives for participation in LFS. It will also explore what the selected farmers perceive to be the benefits and shortcomings of their local, as well as national and international, selling channels.

1.3. Aim and research questions

This study aims to understand why some Uppland farmers engage in local selling and whether concerns for sustainability influence the choice of selling channels among them. To do this, the following research investigates the motives and constraints that have shaped the selected farmers’ capacity, willingness and interest to sell locally. To gain insights into potential future developments for local selling, the paper also explores the farmers’ perceptions of LFS benefits and shortcomings. The overall purpose of this research is thus to provide a critical perspective on local selling as a sustainable solution to “render the overall food system more environmentally friendly and socially just” (Milestad et al. 2017, p. 304).

To achieve this aim, the following research questions were formulated:

1. What motivates the farmers to engage in local selling channels over conventional selling channels?
2. What factors constrain the farmers’ involvement in local selling channels?
3. How do the farmers envisage the future of local selling channels?

1.4. Outline

In Chapter 2, the methodological approach and delimitations of the study are outlined. The qualitative research design, data collection, and data analysis process are presented together with the study’s ethical considerations and limitations. Chapter 3 contains a literature review and a discussion of the concepts of local food systems, local selling channels and conventional selling channels. The literature review reveals sustainability trade-offs inherent in global and local food systems. The chapter concludes with an explanation of the study’s empirical context: the Swedish food industry. The results of the empirical investigation are then presented and related to food systems literature in Chapter 4. The discussion (Chapter 5) explores and analyses answers to the research questions and underlying tensions and contradictions in food system literature brought to light in the interviews. Finally, the conclusion (Chapter 6) reconnects to the study’s aim and summarizes the central findings from the interviews.
2. Methods

This chapter involves an explanation of the qualitative research design, delimitations, data collection and analysis process, and ethical considerations and limitations.

2.1. Research design

A qualitative research approach was used to explore motives for farmer involvement in local selling channels in the Upland region of Sweden. Through an empirical investigation using semi-structured interviews, this paper delves into what motivated and constrained the interviewed farmers’ participation in LFS. The study was abductive in nature, meaning that the research was a cross-fertilisation process (Dubois & Gadde 2002). The researcher went back and forth between on-farm interview data and food system literature in order to understand better both the empirical phenomena and theory.

This paper is partly a follow-up study to research on the crop and farm management practices of 24 farmers in Upland, Sweden who were interviewed in 2011 (Chongtham et al. 2016). The prior research sought to capture a wide breadth of farming practices: farm characteristics, crop choice, productivity, biodiversity, marketing channels, and perceptions of and adaption to climate change. A section of the study dealt with the potential connections between farmers’ participation in “local” and “distant” marketing channels and the characteristics of their farm (farm size, number of livestock, plant and butterfly biodiversity). Chongtham et al. (2016) concluded that farmers with small farms that cultivated a diversity of farm products were inclined to use local marketing channels. In contrast, farmers with sizeable farms that specialised in fewer products and large quantities of produce were involved in “distant” and “mixed” marketing channels. Local markets could not accommodate the significant volume of produce from these large farms, despite demand for such products. Chongtham et al. (2016) revealed that local marketing channels were more relevant and appropriate for the small-scale farms involved in the study. While an analytical focus on farmer marketing channels emerged from Chongtham et al.’s (2016) interview process in an inductive manner, the following study has a more considered focus on local selling. Using an abductive approach, the following study aims to gain a more comprehensive, in-depth understanding of the motives of farmers from the same geographical region who sold their produce locally.

2.2. Research delimitations

This paper’s scope was limited to the producer perspective. It focused on farmers who sell locally in Upland, central Sweden. The Upland region (landskap) in central-east Sweden comprises two county administrative boards units (län): Uppsala and Stockholm. Upland borders Södermanland in the south, Västmanland in the west, Gästrikland in the north and the Baltic Sea to the east (see Fig. 1).
Uppland has highly fertile arable land along Lake Mälaren and close to Uppsala. It also has a large proportion of forestland and grassland in the north. Uppland has a long agricultural tradition. It has supplied the cities of Stockholm and Uppsala with agricultural and seafood products since medieval times, facilitated by water transport along Lake Mälaren and the Baltic Sea. Agricultural production in Uppland primarily consists of livestock and cereal production, but also involves mixed farming with a high proportion of rotational grassland (Statistics Sweden 2011).

The Uppland region was selected to provide consistency with the aforementioned study (Chongtham et al. 2016), and also for logistical reasons, as the farms were easily accessible from Uppsala where the researcher resides. Such delimitations led to the selection of six farmers from five farms (Henrik, Magnus and Eva (married), Samuel, Axel, and Torbjörn). There was significant variation between the interviewed farmers, including different farming methods (organic and conventional), experience (generations old farming families and those who were new to farming), age (farmers with young families and older farmers), and land ownership (farmers who owned the land and those who rented it). The farms involved both bulk production and local selling, as well as a wide range of produce: grains, cereals, oil crops, cattle, poultry, sheep, pigs, eggs, honey, wild game and sunflower seeds (see Fig. 2 for a full description of the farmers and their farms).

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1Names have been changed.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Years in farming</th>
<th>Farm size (ha.)</th>
<th>Distance to a large city</th>
<th>Type of production</th>
<th>Past and current selling channels</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Henrik</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>50s</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>185</td>
<td>10km</td>
<td>-Crops: wheat, cereal, oats, field bean, rapeseed, clover seeds, ley -Hand-picked mushrooms -Potatoes -Poultry</td>
<td>-Bulk to agribusinesses -Road-side stall -On-farm -REKO-ring -To local slaughterhouse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Magnus &amp; Eva (married)</td>
<td>Male &amp; Female</td>
<td>60s</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>20km</td>
<td>-Cattle -Crops -Egg-laying hens -Sheep</td>
<td>-Bulk to agribusinesses, mills and dairy farms -Livestock to organic cooperative -Food boxes -On-farm -To local supermarkets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Samuel</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>40s</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>40km</td>
<td>-Cattle -Crops (as fodder for livestock) -Honey -Sheep</td>
<td>-REKO-ring -On-farm -Meat boxes -Farmers markets -To slaughteringhouses -To neighbours and friends -To a local farm shop -To local supermarkets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Axel</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>40s</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>2800</td>
<td>15km</td>
<td>-Crops: wheat, barley, peas, rapeseed -Forestry -Wild game: mouflon, wild boar, wild deer</td>
<td>-Bulk to agribusinesses -To local restaurants -On-property farm shop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Torbjörn</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>40s</td>
<td>Entire life</td>
<td>800</td>
<td>40km</td>
<td>-Cattle -Crops: wheat -Egg-laying hens -Sheep -Sunflower seeds -Wild game</td>
<td>-Bulk to agribusinesses -To Stockholm restaurants -Meat boxes -On-farm -To mobile slaughterhouse -To local supermarkets</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Fig. 2.** Characteristics of the Interviewed Farmers.

As can be seen in Fig. 2, the informants had a wide variety of characteristics but had the use of local selling channels in common.

The small number of empirical studies on local selling in Sweden that have been conducted have had a narrower focus. For example, studies have concentrated on organic production methods (Milestad
el al. 2010) and farmer-consumer interactions (Björklund et al. 2009), rather than a broader farmer perspective on selling channels that this study offers. While this study is small in scale and its findings cannot be generalised, such diversity of informants offers a more nuanced understanding of the local-global food debate.

2.3. Data collection process

In order to explore the motives, constraints, benefits and shortcomings, and the potential future for LFS, as per the aim and research questions, interviews and a literature review were conducted. The data collection methods are presented below.

2.3.1. Interviews

To gain a comprehensive understanding of farmer motives for local selling, in-person semi-structured interviews with six farmers from Uppland were conducted. An interview guide was carefully developed to enable coherent data analysis (Robson & McCartan 2016). Questions and potential follow-up questions were divided into six topics that linked to the paper’s aim and research questions regarding motives and constraints for LFS involvement, and the future of local selling (see appendix 1 for full interview guide). The interview topics comprised:

1. A background to the farmers and their farms.
2. The types of selling channels the farmers use.
3. The farmers’ perspectives on local selling channels, including their motivations for using local selling channels, and what they perceived to be the benefits and drawbacks to selling produce locally.
4. The farmers’ experiences with and perspectives on the rules, regulations, subsidies and support for their LFS involvement.
5. The farmers’ perspectives on the future development of LFS, both personally for their farm and more general trends.
6. The farmers’ views on sustainability in relation to their farm and selling practices.

The farmers in this study were selected in different ways. A number of farmers involved in previous Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences (Sveriges lantbruksuniversitet) research were contacted via telephone and mail. They were informed about ongoing research concerning local selling (i.e. within 100 kilometres of their farm) and sent a three-question survey, which asked:

1) Do you sell all or some of your products locally?
2) Are you interested in selling your products locally?
3) If yes to 1) or 2), are you willing to be contacted for an interview (mostly in English) regarding your own experiences with locally produced food?

Those who responded in the affirmative were then contacted for interviews. Other farmers who sold locally in Uppland were sourced via the Gårdsnära website, an online source for finding “local producers of food and beverages throughout Sweden” (Gårdsnära 2019). The site was filtered to show farm shops (gårdsbutik) in the region (landskap) of Uppland. Emails regarding the research topic and a request for interview involvement were then sent to these farmers. From this selection process, six informants from five farms were chosen for the study (see Fig. 2).

In total, five interviews were carried out. Four of the interviews took place in the farmers’ kitchens and one via Facetime (Torbjörn). Two farmers were interviewed together (the married couple Magnus and Eva), while the other four informants were interviewed alone. The duration of the interviews ranged from 40 minutes to two hours. Owing to the language capabilities of the researcher, interviews were conducted in English with some Swedish. Samuel responded to the interview questions entirely in Swedish and Henrik responded to questions in both English and
Swedish. Axel and Torbjörn requested to see the interview guide prior to meeting, which resulted in them giving very detailed responses during the interview. The questions were adapted in real-time by the researcher in order to follow up on unexpected and significant farmer responses (Robson & McCartan 2016). The farmers and the researcher sought clarification of certain terms and responses. All interviews were recorded and fully transcribed so as not to miss vital details. These transcripts were then sent to the farmers to confirm their responses and validate the data.

2.3.2. Literature review

Part of the data collection process involved a literature review to identify past research into LFS and sustainability perspectives on food systems. A review of multidisciplinary papers covering the global and local food system debate, sustainability transitions, system lock-ins, and the European and Swedish food sector was conducted. Academic databases were used to research the following themes:

- Global/industrial/conventional food systems and supply chains
- Local/alternative food systems
- Sustainability transformations/transitions in agriculture/food systems
- Food system lock-ins
- The Swedish food industry/sector

2.4. Data analysis

After coding and labelling the interview data, various themes relating to motives and constraints for local selling, sustainability benefits and shortcomings to LFS, and the future for local food emerged. Other themes that were relevant but not directly linked to the original purpose of the study also arose. The interview data was subsequently divided into seven themes, which were chosen based on their significance to research questions (1) and (2) (motives and constraints for local selling). The seven themes were selected in an abductive way and reflect both LFS theory and the opinions and experiences of the interviewed farmers. The interview data is analysed according to these themes in the results chapter. The results chapter concludes by presenting the farmers’ perspectives on the future of local selling channels as per research question (3).

2.5. Ethical considerations and limitations

Various ethical considerations were taken into account when designing and conducting this research. They included: ensuring that the informants understood the aim of the study and the nature of their involvement in the research, voluntary participation with the right to withdraw or to refuse to answer questions, fully informed consent, confidentiality and anonymity (Robson & McCartan 2016, p. 210). The farmers were free to clarify questions and ask about their involvement in the project. They gave written consent to being interviewed and taped, and their names have been changed to ensure anonymity. Furthermore, to ensure full comprehension, the farmers were provided with the opportunity to read their interview transcripts and alter their responses before the study was published.

The researcher’s nationality and language abilities - not Swedish nor fluent in Swedish - may have influenced how the farmers answered questions and biased how the results were analysed. Clear communication in the interviews, which were conducted mostly in English, proved to be problematic. While the interviewed farmers could speak English to some degree, their responses were likely to have been quite different in their native language. The farmers may not have felt as relaxed speaking a second language and may have avoided certain topics where they felt their abilities in English might constrain them. Furthermore, culturally derived nuances of language and subtleties of expression and non-verbal communication may have been lost in the interview process. The limited Swedish capacity of the researcher meant that certain responses were not grasped in real-time and followed up on during the interviews. This was particularly evident in the interviews with Henrik and Samuel, who responded mostly in Swedish. In order to overcome some of these language drawbacks, additional questions were sent via email after the interviews to clarify certain answers.
The research supervisor also advised on the interpretation of some parts of the interview recordings that were in Swedish.

The interview process was also limited by the use of technology. For logistical reasons, the interview with Torbjörn was conducted over Facetime, rather than in-person. Poor Internet connection and image quality hampered the flow of the conversation. The ability of both the researcher and Torbjörn to discern one another’s reactions was thus limited. Body language and facial expressions, which help to guide the interview (Bryman 2012), were hard to gauge via Facetime. For example, it was difficult to know whether silence was a natural pause in the discussion or was due to poor Internet connection.
3. Literature review and guiding concepts

This chapter introduces key concepts relevant to the study and then examines literature on sustainable food systems.

3.1. Definitions of local food and selling channels

While a food system involves “the complex interactions among processes and actors in the provision and consumption of food in human society” (Kahiluoto et. al 2005, p. 14), there is no such precise definition of local food. The concept can be divided into two ideas: food within a particular geographical area\(^2\) or food defined by producer-consumer relationships (Choi & Kim 2015). In the literature, local food is referred to in various ways: “food from somewhere” (Campbell 2009), “short food supply chains” (Renting et al. 2003), and “alternative agro-food networks” (Goodman 2003), and can comprise, but is not limited to, farmers markets, community-supported agriculture, food box schemes and community gardens (Feagan 2007). “Local food” is argued to be linked with quality, holistic farming methods, and sustainability (O’Neill 2014; Ostrom et al. 2017). In this paper, the term is left purposefully vague to reflect such ambiguities in the literature and enable a range of interpretations by the involved farmers. “Selling locally” was thus defined by the informants themselves, who, when asked to be involved in research on “local food”, responded in the affirmative that they, in their opinion, “sell locally”.

This paper discusses “local” and “conventional” selling channels. By “local” selling channel, the researcher means a spatially proximate supply chain and/or direct contact between the farmer and the consumer (Milestad et al. 2017; O’Neill 2014). When the term “conventional” selling channel is used, it denotes selling channels within the global food system. Such channels often involve intermediaries, longer transport distances than those in local selling channels, and products that are cultivated and sold in bulk.

LFS are frequently defined in opposition to the global food system (Campbell 2009; Ostrom et al. 2017; Renting et al. 2003; Schönhart et al. 2009). The global food system is often depicted in the literature as an anonymous and invisible supply chain, whereas LFS involve transparency and clear product provenance (Renting et al. 2003). It can be common to describe the global food system as being reliant on monocultures, fertilisers and pesticides (Therond et al. 2017), while LFS are characterised by some as involving “relatively small farm size and organic or low external input production methods” (Milestad et al. 2010, p. 29). It is, however, contested whether local or global food systems are more “sustainable” as both involve trade-offs, which are explored in the following section (Leventon & Laudan 2017; Mount 2012; Schmitt et al. 2017; Schönhart et al. 2009).

3.2. The global food system’s benefits and shortcomings

The global food system involves a highly organised flow of goods. It maximises outputs through concentrated industrial production processes. The system generates a significant volume of food to feed the growing global population, which is expected to increase to almost 10 billion by 2050 (FAO 2017). For consumers, the system provides convenience. Through conventional selling channels, customers can purchase all their food at a single supermarket and buy produce at a low price that is not limited by season (Smith 2006). Each link in the global food system’s supply chain seeks to optimise its profitability and production per unit of labour and input (Struik et al. 2014). The use of large production units, as well as efficiencies in energy usage and distribution and loading capacity can all help to lower environmental impacts and offset negative climate effects of the global food system (Schmitt et al. 2017; Schönhart et al. 2009). These benefits can, however, also cause rebound effects. The aforementioned efficiencies lower prices, which can lead to an increase in rather than a reduction of total consumption, and in turn result in further environmental repercussions (Alcott 2005). Thus, the pursuit of energy and material efficiency within the global food system has sizable shortcomings.

\(^2\)For example, *The 100-Mile Diet* (Smith & MacKinnon 2007).
The environmental toll of the global food system is argued by some to be considerable. The global food system involves large quantities of water and agrochemical inputs which can lead to eutrophication, pesticide residues, nitrates in ground water, the degradation of soil, and long-term losses of soil fertility (Therond et al. 2017, p. 20; Sundkvist et al. 2001). The manufacture and use of pesticides, the operating of food processing facilities, and extensive food transport distances generate high levels of greenhouse gas emissions. In the global food system, sizable areas of forestland are cleared to make way for crop and grazing land, to the detriment of wildlife habitats and life-supporting carbon sinks. Moreover, the global food system gives little regard to animal welfare, landscape diversity, and biodiversity (DeWeerdt 2016; Schmitt et al. 2017; Therond et al. 2017).

The global food system rewards economies of scale and accordingly the most dominant actors are large corporations working with capital-intensive operations (Mount 2012; Ostrom et al. 2017). With power concentrated in the hands of a few, the livelihoods of small-scale producers are eroded and rural communities lose viability (Choi & Kim 2015; FAO 2017). Farmers receive an “ever-decreasing share of total added value” and diminished “decision autonomy about what and how to produce” (Therond et al. 2017, p. 21).

3.3. Local food systems’ benefits and shortcomings

At the core of LFS are interactions between farmers and customers. Some scholars maintain that such exchanges are imbued with intangible values such as connection to nature, sense of community, and social learnings (Milestad et al. 2010; Schönhart et al. 2009). These interactions can enable the sharing of local ecological knowledge, which in turn can encourage more sustainable consumption behaviour (Milestad et al. 2010). LFS can aid in the revitalisation of local communities by reinforcing social identity and cohesion (Feagan 2007, p. 27). LFS can “keep decision-making power within the community rather than losing it through dependence on external sources of food” (Anderson & Cook 2000, p. 237).

By working with direct sales, farmers are able to bypass middlemen, which helps to cut costs and increase their income (Schmitt et al. 2017; Schönhart et al. 2009). Offering products that differ from the generic, standardised commodities of the global food system allows farmers to demand a price premium and thus earn more for their produce (Farmer & Betz 2016). LFS involve a short supply chain within a particular geographical boundary, which helps to retain money in the local economy (Mount 2012). Farmers are thus able to contribute more directly to their local community, help to foster economic development and also propagate employment opportunities in rural areas (Milestad et al. 2010; Schönhart et al. 2009).

LFS can be argued to be more environmentally sustainable. Animal welfare and on-farm biodiversity derived from more diverse production can be enhanced in local food production (Darnhofer et al. 2010; Schmitt et al. 2017; Therond et al. 2017). Few “food miles” (food transport distances) in LFS can lead to fewer transport-related emissions than in the global food system (Mount 2012; Schmitt et al. 2017; Wilson 2008). Food transport is, however, only a small proportion of total agricultural emissions, as farming practices can be much more emission-intensive (Schmitt et al. 2017). Moreover, the concept of “food miles” is much contested within the local-global food debate (Kahiluoto et al. 2005; Schönhart et al. 2009), as later discussed in Chapters 4 and 5.

“Local food” does not necessarily denote superior environmental practices, a higher quality of social relations or social equity (Hinrichs 2014; O’Neill 2014; Penker 2006). As Born and Purcell (2006) assert, many authors fall into the “local trap” wherein they assume that a local food system is fundamentally superior, both socially and ecologically, due to its small scale. LFS can be logistically weak as they involve low transport load capacities and energy inefficiencies (Kahiluoto et al. 2005). LFS can also have a class bias in the sense that access may be limited to customers with expendable income who can afford price premiums, thereby excluding less well-off consumers (Milestad et al. 2010; Ostrom et al. 2017). Such trade-offs accordingly make it interesting to explore in more detail why some farmers choose to pursue local selling.
3.4. The Swedish farming context

According to Eriksson et al. (2016), in Sweden, high production costs for inputs and labour, in part linked to large geographical distances, as well as to high quality standards regarding pest and disease control, have made the Swedish food production industry globally uncompetitive. The food sector in Sweden is the fourth largest industry in terms of production value and number of employees (Livsmedelsföretagen 2016). The country’s self-sufficiency is 50%, which has decreased from 75% in the 1990s. According to the Federation of Swedish Farmers, Swedish self-sufficiency has the potential to increase to 80% (Lantbrukarnas Riksförbund 2018b). The productivity and capacity of Sweden’s food distribution networks have in recent years increased without a corresponding increase in industry size or competitiveness (Eriksson et al. 2016). In response, the Swedish Ministry of Enterprise and Innovation devised the National Food Strategy in 2016 to direct policies up to 2030. The strategy aims to strengthen the competitiveness of the Swedish food sector, create jobs, support “sustainable growth”, enable open landscapes, and promote lively rural communities (Regeringskansliet 2017). Part of the strategy seeks to expand the share of locally produced products and increase overall food production so as to improve Sweden’s self-sufficiency and reduce food supply chain vulnerability (Ministry of Enterprise and Innovation 2016).

Over the past two decades, inexpensive international food imports have created a price squeeze for Swedish farmers. In the twentieth century, Sweden’s heavily regulated and subsidized agricultural policy maintained agricultural commodity prices. When Sweden joined the European Union in 1995, the agricultural sector was deregulated to encourage cheaper imports. This led to high competition among Swedish farmers, resulting in a decline in the number of Swedish farms and an increase in the size of remaining farms (Lantbrukarnas Riksförbund 2014a; Lantbrukarnas Riksförbund 2014b; European Commission 2019). According to Eriksson et al. (2018), Swedish farmers now struggle to compete with powerful agribusinesses and food retailers and have weak negotiating power. This cost-price squeeze is evident in Fig. 3, which shows that Swedish farmers received a 9% share of the consumption value for food products in 2017.

![2017 Swedish Food Bag Diagram](translated from Lantbrukarnas Riksförbund 2018a, p. 1)

In 2017, there was 11% VAT on food purchases, Swedish farmers received a 9% share of the consumption value of food products, the Swedish food industry received 11%, 37% derived from imports (overseas industry and agriculture), while merchants and wholesalers obtained a sizable share of 32%. This gap between the consumption value share received by Swedish farmers and food imports has widened over the last few years. In 2012, farmers received a 13% share of the consumer

Fig. 3. 2017 Swedish Food Bag Showing the Consumption Value for VAT, Swedish Farmers, the Swedish Food Industry, Imports and the Merchant/Wholesaler (translated from Lantbrukarnas Riksförbund 2018a, p. 1).
price for food, while imports received just over a third (35%) of the total Swedish food bag (Lantbrukarnas Riksförbund 2014b). According to the Federation of Swedish Farmers (Lantbrukarnas Riksförbund), the share of consumption value for imported food has doubled over the last twenty years, while Swedish farmers receive half of what they did in 1995. Swedish consumers are increasingly choosing to purchase imported foods. This may be due to foreign alternatives being cheaper and the limited ability to respond to increasing demands for tropical produce by cultivation in Sweden (Lantbrukarnas Riksförbund 2018a).

The diet preferences of Swedish consumers are shifting towards healthier lifestyles and a high quality diet (Engström 2011; Eriksson et al. 2016). This “quality turn” has led consumers to demand food associated with “quality, embeddedness and the local” (Goodman 2003, p. 2). According to the Swedish government, an “interest in healthy and safe food as well as food produced in a sustainable way constitute an important and growing part of the market” (Ministry of Enterprise and Innovation 2016, p. 9). Swedish consumers are concerned about food safety and are sceptical of industrialised agricultural practices. There is thus a rising demand for food provenance transparency and alternative food systems. Local selling channels are one such way to meet these changing consumer preferences and concerns.

3.5. Local selling channels in Sweden

There are various local selling initiatives in Uppland and throughout Sweden. Farmers’ Own Market (Bondens egen Marknad), established in 2000, is an association of producers and farmers based on the concepts of “freshness, quality, locally produced and no middlemen” (Bondens egen Marknad 2018). The organisation stipulates that produce must come from within 250 kilometres of the market and the producer must be the one selling his or her produce. In the geographical scope of this study, such markets exist in Stockholm (Östermalm/Tessinparken and Katarina bangata) and Uppsala (Uppsala Resecentrum).

In Uppsala, Fyristorg hosts a farmers market on Saturdays, where 25 vendors can sell farm products cultivated or picked by the seller, including mushrooms, berries, vegetables and flowers (Uppsala Kommun 2018).

There is increasing digitalisation of local selling channels in Sweden. Various websites direct Swedish consumers to local food options. Gårdsnära (which roughly translates to nearby farms) is one such online source where consumers can search for local produce, restaurants, farm shops, markets and home delivery options (Gårdsnära 2019).

REKO-ringar (henceforth referred to as REKO) is a free Facebook platform for locally produced food without intermediaries that launched in Sweden in 2016 (Hushållningssällskapet 2019; REKO Uppsala 2019). REKO is divided by geographical location and exists in many cities throughout Sweden. It is a decentralised system, and each Facebook group designs its own rules so that the concept can be adapted to fit local conditions. Farmers post descriptions and images of their produce on their local REKO Facebook page, and are encouraged to include information about their farm and production methods. Consumers comment on the post to order their desired quantity of the product. Both parties confirm the exchange and payment is made online (often using Swish, a Swedish mobile payment system). Food delivery and pick-up occur at a predetermined time and location once a week. REKO involves advance orders, meaning that the farmers will only transport what has been ordered by the consumers, and the consumers cannot buy extra produce on the day when they collect their food order.

There are various local selling initiatives in Sweden that are not within the geographical scope of this study. They include the food ordering application Local Food Nodes which connects producers and consumers in the southwest of Sweden (Local Food Nodes 2018), The Food Cooperative (Matkooperativet), a member-owned food association (Matkooperativet Helsingborg 2019), and Community-supported agriculture (Andelsjordbruk), in which consumers share the risk of farming by paying in advance and committing to purchasing produce for a whole season (Andelsjordbruk Sverige 2019).
4. Results
The following chapter introduces the farmers involved in the study. The interview data is then presented and divided into seven themes derived from the data coding process. The themes relate to research questions (1) and (2): farmer motives for local selling and factors that constrain farmer involvement in LFS. The themes are:

1. Job satisfaction as a motive
2. Cutting out middlemen as a motive and a constraint
3. Economic motives and constraints
4. Responding to and envisioning new ways to meet consumer demand as a motive
5. Farm location, size and infrastructure as a motive and constraint
6. Customer interactions as a motive and a constraint
7. Environmental and sustainability concerns as a motive and a constraint

The chapter concludes by presenting the results for research question (3), which concerns the farmers’ perspectives on the future for local selling channels.

4.1. Introduction to the interviewed farmers
The six interviewed Uppland farmers differed significantly in terms of age, years in farming, farm size, type of farm ownership, approaches to agricultural production, product types, and experience of selling channels. Each farmer is introduced below (see Fig. 2. for a description of the interviewed farmers in a table format).

Henrik, who is in his 50s, became interested in farming as teenager when his father bought a hobby farm. He does not own his 185 hectares of land, but rents it from Uppsala University. He works mostly in bulk organic crop production which he sells to major Swedish agribusinesses. Living ten kilometres from Uppsala, Henrik has also tried his hand in various local food pursuits including roadside potato and mushroom selling, raising organic chickens to sell at the Uppsala REKO, and selling produce to friends and acquaintances. He enjoys the variety that comes with trying different farming ventures and wants to continue experimenting with new farming activities.

Magnus and Eva have been farmers for over thirty years. They have a holistic environmental vision for their 160 hectares of land and wish to be “repairers of life-supporting systems”. They use different ecological agricultural methods, including organic production, machine-free cultivation and have been involved in agroforestry projects for perennial crops. They sell their cattle, sheep and crops in bulk to agribusinesses, mills, dairy farms, and to an organic meat cooperative. They have had decades-long experience with local selling. They have sold eggs to local supermarkets and processed their grain to sell on-farm and to food boxes schemes.

Samuel began farming in late 1990s. He runs a small farm of 40 hectares, where he has bees and grows crops to feed his cattle and sheep. His farm is situated along a main road 40 kilometres from Uppsala, which enables him to easily access the Uppsala REKO, where he sells his produce every fortnight. He also sells on-farm, to local farm shops, via meat box schemes, at farmers markets, and to a local slaughterhouse. He works mostly independently, but his teenage children also assist with the harvest.

Axel’s 2800-hectare estate has been in the family for over 370 years. He, however, moved away to Stockholm and only returned to take on full-time responsibility for the property in 2006. He and his wife are accordingly relatively new to farming. The property’s main sources of income are forestry and real estate. The family and farm employees also cultivate crops, which are sold in bulk to Swedish agribusinesses like Lantmännen. A small part of their income derives from selling wild game. The wild game meat is sold in their on-property farm shop and to local restaurants.
4.2.2. Cutting out middlemen as a motive and a constraint

While the literature argues that farmer involvement in LFS can be driven by a desire to cut out middlemen, thereby helping farmers to earn more and have greater autonomy (Björklund et al. 2009; Milestad et al. 2010; Mount 2012), the reality for interviewed farmers was not so simple. In order to transform their farm produce into food products, the interviewed farmers still worked with intermediaries in different forms. The farmers used the services of those working in slaughtering, milling, manufacturing, packing, ordering, and selling. Thus, although involved in LFS, these farmers continued to be one of several stages in the food supply chain. They did not personally take on all intermediary functions and they were still reliant on others.

When the interviewed farmers did manage to cut out intermediary stages of the supply chain, new challenges arose. Samuel had become the salesman to market his honey:

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Torbjörn has been farming his whole life. His 800-hectare property, 40 kilometres outside of Stockholm, has been in the family for 13 generations. He grows crops in bulk to sell to agribusinesses, and hunts and sells wild game. Recently he started rearing organic cattle, sheep and egg-laying hens for local selling activities. This year he started growing sunflower seeds, which he sells to nearby supermarkets. He is new to local selling but is highly enthusiastic about its prospects. He approached several top-end Stockholm restaurants and now sells meat to them. He also sells on-farm and via meat box schemes to private customers.

4.2. Interview results
4.2.1. Job satisfaction as a motive

In keeping with local food literature (Milestad et al. 2010; Mount 2012), job satisfaction was an important motivating factor for the farmers’ involvement in local selling channels. The farmers in this study found personal fulfilment in selling locally. Samuel emphasised how he enjoyed packing his produce for farmers markets by hand and seeing the value of everything he had cultivated. Eva, Henrik, Torbjörn and Axel expressed joy in being able to provide customers an alternative to conventional selling channels and the global food system. They were proud to offer unique products, like organic chicken and wild game, and found it rewarding working with customers who were on the whole very grateful for their produce.

For Axel and Torbjörn, who both had a centuries-old connection with their farmland, being involved in LFS was a way to uphold their family legacy and preserve traditions. Selling game meat locally was a small but important piece of Axel’s farm that provided income and enabled his ancestors’ estate to be kept together. To maintain the family property as one piece of undivided land gave Axel a sense of pride. Up until recent decades, Torbjörn’s family’s farm and the surrounding region had for centuries supplied Stockholm with a variety of food. Local selling had enabled Torbjörn to re-establish this connection with the community and revive these long-established practices:

*We have a tradition of being Stockholm’s garden ... If you talk to older people, they remember this ... it is still alive, but the later generations they don’t have a clue, you have to tell them.*

Local selling had given Torbjörn great joy as it had enabled him to have conversations about this tradition with consumers and share the story of the land’s history with this local community just outside of Stockholm.

Some of the interviewed farmers also found job satisfaction from selling locally as it enabled them to have variety within day-to-day farm activities. When discussing his various farming activities, including his newest pursuit (pressing rapeseed oil), Samuel noted, “*that's what I like - doing different things*”. Henrik similarly expressed how he enjoyed the diversity of his work. He did not want to increase the amount of produce he cultivated or reared for local selling channels, for instance by having a larger flock of poultry, as he was eager to have flexibility and the option to go on holidays from time to time.

4.2.2. Cutting out middlemen as a motive and a constraint

While the literature argues that farmer involvement in LFS can be driven by a desire to cut out middlemen, thereby helping farmers to earn more and have greater autonomy (Björklund et al. 2009; Milestad et al. 2010; Mount 2012), the reality for interviewed farmers was not so simple. In order to transform their farm produce into food products, the interviewed farmers still worked with intermediaries in different forms. The farmers used the services of those working in slaughtering, milling, manufacturing, packing, ordering, and selling. Thus, although involved in LFS, these farmers continued to be one of several stages in the food supply chain. They did not personally take on all intermediary functions and they were still reliant on others.

When the interviewed farmers did manage to cut out intermediary stages of the supply chain, new challenges arose. Samuel had become the salesman to market his honey:

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There are some [local selling farmers] who are investing heavily in it [advertising] ... they have long ads with a lot of text and blah blah ... I can't do that. I know that it [the honey] is good and people who buy it say "wow that was great", but I am no salesperson.

For Samuel, who was passionate about trying a variety of on-farm activities, assuming the role of product marketer was not something in which he was excited to invest his time and energy.

Some of the farmers found cutting out stages of the supply chain to be tedious and expensive in terms of time and finances. Magnus and Eva even argued that assuming middlemen rolls limited their willingness to participate in LFS. In circumventing higher levels of the supply chain, Magnus and Eva incurred physical and administrative costs from sorting, packing, transporting, delivering and maintaining market supplies (Hardesty 2007). Magnus was irritated by having to take on time-consuming, irksome middlemen tasks and found it inefficient to pack everything by hand:

It’s so tiring to do these jobs and so on, all these middleman jobs without having an industrial process ... we are wearing out our bodies as we are doing hand packing of stuff which they don’t do in the industrial part [of the global food system].

The couple argued that the advantages of centralised logistics and economies of scale within the global food system have been obfuscated by current local food euphoria. Unlike the LFS literature, the interview revealed how intermediaries do indeed have an important role. Thus farmer independence from middlemen was in actual fact not always desired as it led to inefficient work.

Other farmers in the study, however, did not hold the same opinion as Magnus and Eva. Samuel enjoyed packing his products by hand, and did not find it frustrating to do everything manually, stating, “It’s pretty fun actually. It is nice as you ... see how much it is ... you see the value a little better”. Thus, some farmers were motivated by a sense of personal satisfaction to cut out the middleman and use LFS.

4.2.3. Economic motives and constraints

Economic motivations for local selling were raised by many of the interviewed farmers, which is in line with the literature on LFS (Milestad et al. 2010; Mount 2012; Schmitt et al. 2017). Several of the farmers were compelled to sell locally as it provided more income. Henrik could earn 20 crowns more per kilo from his organic chickens when selling with the Uppsala REKO than via conventional selling channels, stating, “you can have a bigger piece of the cake if you sell yourself”.

Similarly, Axel could earn double or triple the number of crowns per kilo when he sold game meat in his on-farm shop or to restaurants than via conventional selling channels. He expressed that, “I don’t want to look more idealistic than I am, we are doing it because we need to, we need the money”. When discussing the price difference between selling channels for his wild game, Axel noted that local selling gave him the ability to set his own prices and to “own your customers”. This stands in stark contrast to his experiences with bulk production, where Axel perceived he was at the mercy of large agribusinesses:

We are so much in the hands of these very big companies and they set the rules and the prices and there is very little you can do about that.

In Sweden, the food retail sector is highly concentrated and dominated by three food retailers, which hold 85.8% of the market share (DLF 2018). With economies of scale and efficient industrial processes, the food retailer oligopoly and large Swedish agribusinesses, like Lantmännen and Svenska Foder, have significant leverage over the market and weaken producer power (Eriksen et al. 2016). According to Eriksson et al. (2016), these powerful businesses squeeze profit margins for farmers who must accept lower prices to compete. This was evident in the experiences of Samuel. When he sold his honey to a major supermarket, Samuel was frustrated that the retailer increased the consumer price twofold and earned much more than he did from the business transaction. However, as can be seen from the above-mentioned experiences of Axel and Henrik, some of the farmers were able to circumvent such power hierarchies and gain greater financial influence over their farming output through the use of local selling channels.
While the literature emphasises how LFS enable farmers to gain a greater share of income by cutting out stages of the supply chain (Björklund et al. 2009; Choi & Kim 2015; Schmitt et al. 2017), it has failed to raise concerns regarding the financial burden of such. Samuel and Torbjörn noted that farmers markets were not an ideal way for them to sell as they took an entire day away from farm work and the level of customer demand was hard to anticipate. Magnus and Axel commented on the significant time it took to sell to private customers on-farm. Lengthy conversations with customers, while engaging, were not economically efficient and reduced the time the farmers could spend on agricultural production activities. Furthermore, Magnus pointed out that sorting and packing farm produce by hand for local distribution was not financially comparable to the large flows of goods enabled by mechanical processes in the global food system.

While independence from large agribusinesses was attractive to some of the interviewed farmers, various factors motivated them to continue with their bulk production activities. They identified investments in machinery, agricultural skills acquired over a long time and the steady income derived from volume production as compelling motives to continue using conventional selling channels. Henrik noted that the grain he sold in bulk was too cheap per kilo to sell in smaller quantities, so he would continue to sell it in large volumes to large agribusiness. Bulk production thus provided the farmers with a secure income stream, which was a persuasive motive to remain using conventional selling channels.

The financial security of their selling channels was a top priority for the farmers. Axel and Torbjörn stated that economic stability was a critical motive for their local selling approach. Torbjörn was eager to pursue restaurants as his principal customers “because they know what they need and they know what the price should be for it ... it’s pre-sold more or less”. He felt more economically secure working with larger batches of produce and having the stability of repeat customers. Axel, on the other hand, sought to spread financial risk by having many different kinds of customers:

*If we lose a big restaurant as a customer, that’s a big hole in the sales. And then if we have more private customers, then we are more protected against that kind of thing.*

Some of the literature argues that it is beneficial for farmers who sell locally to cultivate a diverse range of farm products as a way to spread economic risks (Björklund et al. 2009; Chongtham et al. 2016). These two farmers, however, handled financial risks differently and instead focused on the potential challenges associated with their consumer target markets.

### 4.2.4. Responding to and envisioning new ways to meet consumer demand as a motive

A “quality turn” among consumers (Goodman 2003; Hinrichs 2014) has led to a growing concern for climate issues and increasing demand for “food produced in a sustainable way” (Ministry of Enterprise and Innovation 2016, p. 9). Such customer demand motivated some of the interviewed farmers to be involved with LFS. By offering products that were aligned with present trends, i.e. food that is “local” and (debatably) imbued with a story of authenticity and quality, the farmers were able to demand a price premium (Farmer & Betz 2016; Milestad et al. 2017). Axel perceived that he had been fortunate in the timing of his local selling endeavours: “*Many people are looking for healthier food, sustainable food and things like that. We are just lucky to be doing this now*”. Torbjörn had similarly seen demand for Swedish food growing among Swedish consumers and taken advantage of the current excitement for local food:

*There is real need, a real market for things. Which is good because we are starting at that end rather than having something to sell. It’s easier for us then.*

Customer demand was thus seen as a driving motive for Torbjörn’s local selling activities. He had tailored his production accordingly and was looking to expand the number of livestock he reared for his various local selling endeavours.

Some of the farmers had developed strategies to respond to consumer demand and fill gaps in the market. Currently, Uppland customers wishing to support LFS must shop at multiple farms or markets, as it is difficult to source all local food items at one location at a time of the customers’
choosing. In response to these limitations of LFS in Uppland, Axel and Torbjörn had envisioned a holistic local selling strategy to provide consumers eventually with all their staple products from their farms. Axel wished to cultivate a wide range of produce in order to become an Uppland food hub:

The vision is to have animals here again ... livestock and have the slaughterhouse open again ... and be able to run that over the year ... and growing vegetables and everything. So if you live in Uppsala and you need food, you come to us. We have everything, not everything, but most things you need.

Torbjörn wanted to take advantage of his proximity to Stockholm, where top-end restaurants “on paper at least ... are screaming for local [food]”. For him, selling locally was an innovative way to work with a currently untapped market: high-end restaurants. Torbjörn planned to expand on the exclusive restaurant niche:

The idea is to niche on restaurants to get them interested in the meat and then we follow up with fresh produce like lettuce, potatoes...so one thing should build onto the next.

Torbjörn saw local selling as a profitable way forward: “if it [demand for local food] keeps going with interest as of now, there is no debate that it is much, much better [than bulk production for conventional selling channels]”. He had already begun to consider ways to expand, for instance by selling both fresh and frozen meat. In this way, potential profit from high demand for local food had motivated Axel and Torbjörn’s LFS involvement.

The rapid growth of online marketing channels for local food had opened up new ways for the farmers to engage in local selling. Four of the interviewed farmers used online marketing channels and social media advertising. They had taken advantage of these free platforms (particularly Facebook and REKO Facebook pages) to expand their selling network and gain access to new customers eager to purchase local produce. Henrik was stunned by how quickly these platforms have grown. In half a year he witnessed the Uppsala REKO grow from 1000 members to its current 6500 members. Axel was a fervent advocate of online marketing, and went so far as to say that social media marketing was more important to the future of local selling than governmental support. Online marketing enabled straightforward transactions, through for example, pre-purchasing food via REKO. As Samuel commented:

You do all the business online and then you just go there [to the REKO customer meet up] and leave the stuff ... it only takes half an hour if you know what to bring.

The interviewed farmers who used REKO to sell their produce locally were able to respond to rapidly growing consumer demand for local food via online marketing. They were highly motivated to use such channels due to the ease of pre-selling and delivering to several consumers at a single location.

4.2.5. Farm location, size and infrastructure as a motive and a constraint

The interviewed farmers had advantageous geographical locations which facilitated easy access to large markets and motivated their involvement in LFS. The farmers lived close to major cities (all of the farms were situated within 40 kilometres of Uppsala or Stockholm) and some were located along major roads. Samuel and Henrik lived close enough to Uppsala to sell in the city’s weekly REKO. Both farmers also lived very close to bus stops, and accordingly were able to sell produce on the side of the road to passers-by and also on-farm. Samuel pointed out that other farmers he knew did not have such an advantage of access as they lived in more remote areas. Torbjörn lived in close proximity to local supermarkets, making it easy to sell his sunflower birdseed there. He was also considering selling produce from his local ferry wharf kiosk. Being only 40 kilometres from Sweden’s capital city, he had tapped into a significant market of high-end restaurants. As can be seen, convenient access to markets was a compelling motive for these farmers to work with LFS.

A small farm size restricted Samuel’s selling channel options. His involvement in local selling was not so much a proactive choice but a necessity. Samuel’s farm was too small to cultivate in bulk for
large agribusinesses: “I do not see that I have any other option”. Thus farm size limited his choice of selling channels and restricted him to selling locally. A similar result associating local selling strategies with farms of a small size was found in Chongtham et al.’s (2016) study.

An absence of necessary infrastructure constrained the interviewed farmers’ involvement in local selling channels. A lack of on-site or nearby slaughterhouse facilities was raised again and again by the farmers in the interviews. Henrik, Axel, Torbjörn, Magnus and Eva had to travel long distances to reach slaughterhouses. The farmers were eager to address this infrastructure issue in the future, as they felt frustrated by their current dependence on middlemen. Factors like difficult personalities (Henrik), inconsistent quality of cuts of meat (Samuel and Axel), abattoirs located far away meaning that the farmers must drive long distances (Magnus and Eva, Axel, Henrik), and inconvenient slaughterhouse conditions, like having to provide a certain number of livestock (Torbjörn), all constrained the farmers’ ability to expand their involvement in LFS. Such experiences and inconveniences inspired some of the farmers to seek greater independence from middlemen and develop private processing facilities. Henrik considered establishing his own slaughterhouse and Axel wanted to revive his on-site slaughterhouse with a highly competent employee, so as not to lose time in transport and to have better control over quality.

The number of livestock and quantity of produce inhibited the level to which the farmers could sell locally. As mentioned in the literature, consumer choice in LFS is restricted to that which can be grown in season or stored locally, and there can be poor supply reliability in terms of type and quantity (Kahiluoto et al. 2005; Nost 2014). The farmers could not match continuous customer demand with their seasonal farm products. Livestock and game meat were limited to hunting seasons and times of slaughter. To have better supply and demand congruency, the farmers argued that other on-farm facilities would be required, like on-site mills, slaughterhouses, freezers and refrigerated vehicles to transport fresh and frozen farm products. Axel and Torbjörn were aware that their wild game needed to be kept at a level that could be replenished. As Torbjörn commented, this constrained how much he could sell:

> We supply meat once, or maybe twice a year and obviously they [restaurants] would like it every other week or every month. We can’t market ourselves too heavily, because then we don’t have any meat.

Thus supply reliability was a constraint that limited the level to which the farmers could sell locally.

### 4.2.6. Customer interactions as a motive and constraint

Various scholars argue that the desire for more farmer-consumer interactions have led both producers and private customers to be involved in LFS, as such systems enable these relationships to flourish (Milestone et al. 2010; Mount 2012; Ostrom et al. 2017; Renting et al. 2003; Schönhart et al. 2009; Sutherland & Darnhofer 2012). Interacting with customers was indeed a motive for many, but not all, of the interviewed farmers. Torbjörn enjoyed how selling locally enabled him to have more frequent social exchanges compared to his earlier experiences with bulk production:

> Having been pure bulk, my customers were two or three telephone calls a year... so it’s a different story now with ... people ringing and stores ringing and delivering and all that. It’s quite nice.

Axel appreciated how selling locally enabled him and his family to connect with his local community:

> That’s [the on-farm shop] our face, our channel to meet our neighbours ... and otherwise I am not sure where we ... if we would have met them at all.

Axel’s on-farm shop had helped him to establish meaningful relationships with his consumers, and simultaneously had given outsiders a positive impression of the farm. Such a favourable farm image had helped Axel to get regulating government officials onsite. Axel described how his on-farm shop had been advantageous in terms of his relationship with the local government:
We spend a lot of time talking to state agencies, different people at Uppsala Kommun (municipality), so if they have a favourable picture of what we’re doing, that will make life easier for us, and vice versa. So I think that the game thing [on-farm local selling]…I hope at least it has a positive effect on people, the sort of general picture of what we are doing.

Thus the ability to create a positive brand image of the farm as a whole was a compelling motive for Axel to sell locally.

In the interviews contradictions appeared between the positive connotations of “knowing your farmer” (United States Department of Agriculture 2012) and the reality of dealing with customers, which at times discouraged farmer involvement in LFS. One informant, despite thoroughly enjoying social exchanges with private customers, was aware of the poor business-case for such dealings: They [private customers] think they are supporting us by taking 20 minutes for a job that should take 20 seconds”. Another interviewed farmer at times felt a drained by his customer conversations: “It’s a little fun. Though it’s both. Some [customers] are tough - “When was it slaughtered? What is the [best before] date on it?” - a thousand questions. A third farmer perceived that Swedish consumers were becoming more interested in how food is grown. When discussing current trends in farming, the farmer expressed apprehensions about private customers wishing to become more involved in the production side of food, stating, “You don’t necessarily want anybody involved in how we grow … why we grow is different, but not the day to day”. As can be seen, these farmers perceived various constraints to having direct relationships with their customers.

4.2.7. Environmental and sustainability concerns as a motive and constraint

While some local food advocates have emphasised how LFS reduce food miles (Choi & Kim 2015; Mount 2012), many of the farmers were worried about the large amount of fuel they and their customers used to be involved in local selling activities. This empirical research emphasises how there is too much theory focused on the environmental benefit of short distances from farm to fork, and too little on the weak transport logistics of LFS. All the farmers were concerned about the inefficiency of transport in their local selling channels. Axel was sceptical about the professed environmental benefits of fewer food miles:

You can’t assume that it is more sustainable to be small scale. Our customers come by car, most of them, to buy just a little of something … that’s not necessarily more sustainable in a total or global perspective … it depends on how are customers are acting. How are they getting here? Biking here from the village? Great. If they are driving 200 kilometres to buy something here? I am not quite so sure [that it is sustainable].

Magnus similarly felt that LFS involved too many individual car trips to and from markets and farms to deliver and sell only a small quantity of produce:

We drive … a few hundred kilometres and consume as much fossil fuel as almost a big truck is consuming, when they have big pallets of maybe one tonne of wheat flour.

In terms of transport emissions, Magnus felt that the global food system had a much more efficient transport load capacity. Thus, reducing food miles did not motivate Magnus and Eva to sell locally and even was a factor that constrained their willingness to continue selling locally.

The interview with Magnus and Eva underscored inconsistencies within food system literatures regarding a food system’s vulnerability to shocks. Magnus and Eva emphasised how local food can enable greater self-sufficiency and provide a buffer in a time of crisis. In spite of this, they recognized that it could be dangerous to depend on a single geographical location for food. Magnus highlighted how contaminated grain silos or toxic substances in the soil could put a local population at risk if it relied on one confined geographical area for its food.

Some of the farmers had doubts regarding the sustainability advantages of local food, and as a result, some were even questioning their involvement in local selling channels. Axel was unconvinced that local selling was the ultimate sustainable food system:
People, especially at Länsstyrelsen (the county administrative board), they think that local initiatives and small-scale farm shops are the miracle solution to all problems in the countryside but maybe it’s not.

Magnus and Eva believed that first and foremost farmers must have sustainable agricultural practices before pursuing local selling. Eva, when discussing her interactions with consumers, expressed that:

*It’s not honest to have contact with consumers to sell and so before you think the production is sustainable ... Because when people buy local they think it is sustainable ... it’s not ... it’s good and nice, and they have contact with the producer and so on. But in wider meaning it’s not sustainable.*

The couple argued that others in society should assume middleman tasks, and farmers should exclusively concentrate on agricultural production, as only they have the necessary skills and knowledge required for such. The couple had even downsized their local selling pursuits so as to focus on agricultural production methods. For example, they had reduced their local egg selling activities from 1000 to 100 egg-laying hens. Magnus and Eva had prioritised ecological-focused agricultural methods, as they felt they could make the most meaningful sustainability impact in that way. The couple were considering turning away from manufacturing food products for local selling to instead focus on cultivating bulk farm produce for conventional selling channels.

**4.3. Summary of motives and constraints for farmer involvement in local selling channels**

From the above results it can be seen that there are various motives and constraints for farmer involvement in local selling (research question (1) and (2)). Below common motives and constraints for using local selling channels are summarized in Box 1, while unique views held by individual farmers in the study are presented in Box 2.

**Box 1. Shared farmer perspectives on motives and constraints for using local selling channels**

**Motives**

- Job satisfaction from selling locally, for example, through seeing products’ value, by providing consumers with an alternative to the global food system, being able to uphold the family’s farming traditions, and having variety in daily farm activities.
- Economic incentives to take advantage of current consumer interest in local and sustainable food, and earn more by demanding a price premium.
- To make the most of advantageous farm locations close to large markets.
- More interaction with customers and neighbours.

**Constraints**

- Limited access to important infrastructure like slaughterhouses and processing facilities.
- Seasonality of produce and limited livestock slaughter times.
- At times direct relations with customers were too demanding. Customers could take up too much time, ask too many questions, and wanted to be overly involved in food production.
- Economic losses from high fuel usage, and time spent selling to customers on-farm and traveling to markets and slaughterhouses.
- Using a variety of selling channels to spread economic risks meant that overall involvement in LFS was limited. The farmers wished to continue producing in bulk for conventional selling channels owing to the financial stability of such.

**Box 2. Unique farmer perspectives on motives and constraints for using local selling channels**
Motives
- To develop a favourable image with local authorities.
- Due to the ease of transactions enabled by online marketing platforms. One farmer enjoyed being able to quickly deliver pre-sold produce at a pre-determined time and location to many customers at once.

Constraints
- Significant time requirements, and physical and financial costs from assuming intermediary tasks without having efficient food processing methods in place.
- Perception that it is more environmentally beneficial to prioritise ecologically focused agricultural production, like organic farming.

4.4. Farmer views on the future of local selling channels

The following section will discuss results for research question (3) regarding the future of local selling.

The interviews revealed that, from a producer perspective, the future demand for local food is unclear. The farmers had different ideas as to whether LFS would be a short-lived trend, and interest would peak and then wane, or whether LFS would be a long-lasting phenomenon and current public interest would continue to grow. Torbjörn, who started selling locally last year, had experienced very enthusiastic clientele. He maintained that his supermarket and restaurants customers were clamouring for local food and were eager to buy as much produce as he could sell. On the other hand, Magnus and Eva, who had been selling locally for several decades, saw a disheartening pattern in consumer interest. Over the years they saw that new customers were initially very eager to support local farmers, but their enthusiasm then plateaued and died, and the customers finally sought more convenient options. This finding raises questions regarding future implications for Sweden’s National Food Strategy, which appears to align itself with current public interest in local food.

Based on the farmers’ perspectives and experiences, certain supports could help to encourage farmer involvement in LFS in Uppland in the future. The farmers felt constrained by their ongoing dependence on intermediaries and were eager to reduce the time and fuel required to transport their produce to middlemen. The farmers articulated a need for some middlemen, but at a scale that would support LFS. According to the informants, better access to infrastructure like grain processing facilities and freezers could lead to economic gains, and would enable the farmers to have more time for on-farm work. Access to on-farm or mobile slaughterhouses would enable livestock to be slaughtered in smaller batches and at more frequent intervals. This would help the farmers to have more consistent meat supply and accordingly better congruency with consumer demand, as well as better quality control over the cuts of meat.

Some of the farmers proposed ways to promote a greater uptake of local food, which would increase their potential to generate profit. Both Magnus and Henrik were eager to increase local-scale efficiency through, for example, local-scale manufacturing facilities. Henrik suggested “a common selling station where you can sell your products in the city”, while Magnus wanted to build up “small-scale efficiency”, stating,

*We once again need people who are skilful in constructing and building up small-scale systems that are cheap, so cheap so that you don’t need to add a lot of money on the food price.*

Thus improved small-scale efficiency through shared logistics and infrastructure was suggested in the interviews as a way to potentially promote greater farmer participation in LFS in the future.

As in the literature (Kahiluoto et al. 2005), some of the farmers argued that the low cost of food for Swedish consumers was undermining their livelihood. As Henrik stated, “*I think the food is too cheap in Sweden. I think it should be more expensive... you [the consumer] maybe lose the respect*
“for the food you are eating”. According to Magnus, raising food prices to reflect food production processes and also a corresponding increase in consumer willingness to pay would mean that farmers using local selling channels would not have to compete with the global food system: “if consumers would like to pay more, then we don’t need to be as efficient as they are [in the global food system]”. Moreover, changes in consumer habits and preferences could help to support LFS. One farmer suggested that consumers could adjust their food preferences to include both fresh and frozen products, which would lead to better congruency between farmer supply and customer demand. Henrik and Axel maintained that consumers have an important role to play in creating sustainable food systems by reducing food waste. While striving for a holistic and sustainable approach to farming, these two farmers were frustrated by their inability to influence the development of sustainable food systems due to consumer food waste. They contended that all actors in the food chain needed to work towards sustainability by avoiding superfluous waste. They thus saw local selling as only one part of a sustainable food system, and not the ultimate sustainability solution in and of itself.

Finally, some of the farmers argued that consistency between government aims and current import policies could encourage the continuation and growth of LFS. One farmer argued that while the government is promoting locally grown food, Sweden is still importing far too much meat, limiting the extent to which he and other farmers could sell locally. Another informant argued that government regulations were overly complex. He wanted them to be made more simple and adaptable to each farm. Thus, according to some of the farmers, improved on-the-ground government support for local food could help its proliferation.
5. Discussion

The following chapter discusses sustainability challenges associated with local food. It discusses the future for local food in terms of the implications of scaling up LFS, and finally links the research with an earlier study on farmer marketing channels in Uppland.

The multiplicity of experiences, perspectives and ambitions among the informants problematizes some of the generalisations in LFS literature. This study initially sought to link sustainability transitions theory with the way transitions are produced in reality, only to find that those expected to be at the transition vanguard (farmers selling locally) were in fact not actively working towards such a shift. Theoretical discussions regarding food systems often consider LFS in terms of sustainability transformations (Darnhofer et al. 2010; Hinrichs 2014). Global and local food systems are analysed in terms of transitions from weak to strong multifunctionality (Wilson 2008) and from being socially disembedded to becoming highly socially embedded (Therond et al. 2017). The experiences of the interviewed farmers, however, were quite different. The farmers did not think of their local selling channels in terms of instigating a regime change away from the incumbent global food system. The farmers were instead motivated by practical factors like earning an income, job satisfaction, day-to-day variety, and more social interactions. This finding provides an important lesson for those working with sustainability transitions from a theoretical standpoint. It highlights how reality does not always conform to theory - the farmers did not find it conflicting to be part of global and local food systems, and were in fact consciously using both systems to their advantage.

While the informants did not intentionally endorse the sustainability discourse, they nonetheless experienced various economic, social and environmental benefits from selling locally. The farmers set their own prices and received more crowns per kilo of product, thereby improving their personal economy, and they had more social interactions with their community. From an environmental perspective, the farmers’ local selling channels had the potential to facilitate greater self-sufficiency in Uppland and provide a buffer to external shocks.

Food self-sufficiency is purported to create resilient food systems (Choi & Kim 2015). As some of the farmers pointed out, however, LFS can be highly susceptible to shocks. Factors like toxic substances in the soil, contaminated silos, natural disasters, unfavourable growing conditions, such as drought and flooding, heighten a local food system’s vulnerability (Schönhart et al. 2009). The global food system may well be susceptible to market fluctuations and price volatility, which has significant impacts on commodity prices for consumers as well as for individual farmers who do not have the capital to buffer such shocks (Bureau & Swinnen 2018; Sundkvist et al. 2001). However, the global food system’s wide geographical network of food producers provides a buffer in times of crisis for consumers and producers, who rely on a global system of energy and other agricultural inputs.

The local selling experiences of the interviewed farmers demonstrated flaws found in “the local trap” (Born & Purcell 2006), in which local food advocates assume that LFS are fundamentally more environmentally and socially sustainable due to their small scale. Despite being pivotal players in their LFS, the farmers themselves were questioning the sustainability of LFS. Throughout the interviews, the farmers were critical of the high transport emissions related to their local selling channels. Food miles, a key argument of local food advocates, was in reality a concern for the farmers. They perceived that their and their customers’ food transport capacities were inefficient and involved too much fuel per kilo of produce.

Social biases inherent to LFS were manifest in the local selling channels in which the farmers engaged. As proposed in the literature, well-off consumers have greater capacity to engage in local food movements (Milestad et al. 2010; Ostrom et al. 2017). The interviewed farmers sold a significant quantity of their local produce to city customers, for example through food box schemes, at REKO, at farmers markets, and to restaurants. One farmer suggested that consumers living in more remote areas were both less interested and less able to access this local produce. Moreover, as mentioned in the interviews, the farmers took advantage of their “local food” brand to demand a price premium. Selling local food as a niche product to top-end restaurants, for example, had a
limited, wealthy consumer base. Thus as a whole, well-off customers living close to markets had the
greatest capacity to purchase local food.

5.1. The future for local food
The following will discuss research question (3) regarding the future of local selling channels in
relation to scaling up LFS.

5.1.1. Implications of scaling up local food
Contradictions regarding the scaling up of LFS arise in the literature. Some scholars (Mount 2012;
Nost 2014) argue that the spirit of LFS, i.e. direct farmer-consumer relationships and small
geographical boundaries, would be lost if LFS are expanded. Conversely, others (Beckie et al. 2012;
Campbell 2009; Kahiluoto et al. 2005) maintain that LFS must be up-scaled in order to create
collective competitive advantage and ultimately “transform the overall food system into a more
environmentally friendly and socially just direction” (Milestad et al. 2017, p. 312). Quite different
tensions relating to the scaling up of local food came to light in the interviews. Some farmers were
eager to increase their local selling activities for economic motives, so as to capture a new market
(for example, high-end restaurants). Other farmers had strong objections concerning the time and
effort required to expand their local selling pursuits. They would rather have personal autonomy and
time away from the farm, or concentrate their efforts on organic farming methods. For these farmers,
it was not so much a concern for diluting the notion of “local food” than a personal disinclination to
expand their local selling pursuits. The farmers also had concerns for how sustainable selling locally
could be in the long-term. For instance, they had misgivings about a food system being too local, as
complete dependence on one location in a time of crisis would be disastrous. For most of these
farmers, being part of both local and global food systems, rather than scaling up and having complete
dependence on one selling channel, was regarded as the optimal path forward.

Food system research often stresses a dichotomy between local and global food systems (Campbell
2009; Holloway et al. 2007; Milestad et al. 2010; Therond et al. 2017; Wilson 2008). The
experiences of the interviewed farmers calls into question this simplified division. The study
revealed how, in reality, local and global food systems interact and coexist (O’Neill 2014, p. 121).
In different ways, the selected farmers were navigating their position within both systems. They were
kept financially afloat through their involvement in different types of selling channels. They engaged
in small-scale, local selling pursuits, but were simultaneously entrenched in the global food system
and enjoyed the financial stability that came from producing in bulk. To buffer potential economic
risks, they kept various selling channels open and did not want to abandon one in favour for another.
Such findings expand understandings of “local food” and may have implications for the future
development of sustainable food systems and policymaking. The results highlight the complexity of
the local-global food system dichotomy. The findings suggest how devising policies for more local
food is not straightforward for various reasons. Firstly, the concept of “local food” can mean many
things and it is therefore not simple to make operational in policies. Moreover, farmers’ selling
channels are not exclusively locally-oriented, suggesting that LFS are not an “island” unto
themselves but exist alongside food systems at other scales (Feagan 2007, p. 34). Additionally,
several of the interviewed farmers made it clear that they were not requesting such policies.

5.2. Links with Chongtham et al.’s 2016 study on farm
management and marketing channels
Some findings from this study have clear similarities with the above-mentioned Chongtham et al.
study from 2016 on Uppland farmers involved in “local, distant and a combination of marketing
channels” (Chongtham et al. 2016, p. 3). In this current study and the 2016 study, the farmers
worked in both local and global food systems and produced a broad portfolio of farm products for
sale in diverse selling channels.

Financial stability was a significant motivating factor for the farmers in the 2016 study and for
informants in the current study. Economic security, however, was just one of many motives. As
Chongtham et al. (2016, p. 39) put forward, “profit maximisation was clearly not the only motivation
for farmers’ management practices, as personal goals, environmental values, traditions…often outweighed the economic considerations.” In the earlier study, the farmers asserted how it was important for them to develop meaningful relationships with customers and neighbours. Similarly, Henrik, Axel and Torbjörn thoroughly enjoyed how local selling enabled them to interact with neighbours and buyers.

The limited scope of local production was a common theme in both the 2016 study and the current study. As in this study, the farmers in Chongtham et al.’s (2016) research expressed that inadequate volume and availability of produce restricted their ability to participate in local selling channels. These farmers were also hindered by limited infrastructure. They had similar aspirations to develop private slaughterhouse facilities so as to slaughter fewer animals at a time to enable more consistent supply to customers. Some farmers in the earlier study produced diverse products in small quantities to sell year round. This strategy, which was used to better match farm supply with consumer demand and thus ensure year-round income from local selling, was not evident in the current study, which may have been due to the small number of informants.
6. Conclusion

This paper responds to calls for on-farm research on farmer perspectives to complement theoretical food system research (Born & Purcell 2006; Eriksson et al. 2016; Darnhofer et al. 2010). The diverse characteristics and experiences of the informants defy some of the generalities in the LFS literature and demonstrate that there are many underlying contradictions associated with local food.

The study contributes a practical understanding of local selling and brings to light various motives of the selected farmers to sell produce locally. These include gaining a price premium, more community interactions, personal job satisfaction, and proximity to markets. The study also exposes theoretical and tangible obstacles that constrain the farmers’ motivation and practical ability to be involved in local selling, which are summarised in Box 3.

**Box 3. Summary of factors that have limited the uptake of LFS in Uppland**

- Cutting out intermediaries meant that the farmers had to take on tedious additional tasks and involved significant time commitments, for example through lengthy on-farm conversations with customers, transporting produce, and entire days at farmers’ markets.
- The farmers had inadequate access to vital infrastructure, including slaughterhouses, freezers, and grain processing facilities, which limited their supply of produce. This hampered their ability to sell year-round and meet consumer demand.
- The farmers perceived that the environmental benefit of fewer food miles in LFS was counteracted by inefficient transport load capacity utilisation.
- While the Swedish National Food Strategy calls for an increase in local food, some of the farmers found it difficult to sell enough produce. Contradictions between the government’s strategy and food import policy, they argued, hindered local selling.
- Some of the farmers were reluctant to expand the scope of their local selling activities. They desired to maintain a work-life balance, to instead focus on organic production, or were sceptical as to whether local self-sufficiency enhances food system resilience.
- Despite participating in LFS, most of these farmers seemed unlikely to break away from the global food system. Economies of scale, agricultural skills and past farming decisions had locked the farmers in to their conventional selling channels. The steady income they derived from bulk production was an enticing motive to continue selling to agribusinesses.

Some of the interviewed farmers challenge the idea that LFS are inherently more sustainable than food systems on other scales, as some authors claim (Choi & Kim 2015; Ostrom et al. 2017; Renting et al. 2003). Rather than seeing LFS as a crucial sustainable food system solution (Milestad et al. 2010; Mount 2012; Renting et al. 2003), the farmers question some sustainability aspects of selling through local channels. Some of the informants even have doubts about their future engagement in LFS due to their limited environmental benefits.

In spite of the various shortcomings to local selling, LFS do have an important place in the sustainability discourse. LFS may not supplant the global food system as the world’s primary source of food, but they can instead complement larger-scale food systems in “urgently needed ways” (Anderson & Cook 2000, p. 244). LFS can facilitate better farmer wellbeing and income, help to foster local community interactions and consumer-producer relationships, and increase local self-sufficiency. The results reveals various strategies that could help support LFS, including better access to infrastructure, improved small-scale efficiency, higher food prices, changing consumer preferences, and better congruency between government objectives and import policies.

From this study of Uppland farmers, it is apparent that the distinct divide between local and global food systems, as presented in the literature, is not reflected in the practical experiences of these farmers working with LFS. Further studies need to take a more nuanced view of this theoretical distinction, and focus on how farmers navigate between these two systems. While Swedish consumers are calling for local food and the government is trying to respond to such demands, the
interviewed farmers are finding their way in a middle ground. They are involved in both global and local food systems and are motivated to use various selling channels to have more meaningful social interactions and financially viable livelihoods.
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Appendix 1. Interview guide

1. Background to farmer and farm: tell me about your farm
   - Farm history, do you own the land? Who owned/cultivated land in the past and what was cultivated? Have you thought about who will take over the farm in the future? Your children, relatives, someone else?
   - Brought up on a farm? This one?
   - Do you have responsibility for maintaining the farm? Do you have family?
   - Farm size, Forest, pasture? Farm products - why are you growing these? Animals?
   - Part or full time farmer
   - Organic or conventional, are you certified in a different way?
   - Other work? Other forms of income other than farming - e.g. forestry? How do you divide your time?
   - Are you planning on expanding the farm or maintain the same size?
   - What do you like about living here? Can you tell me about the local community (schools, churches, shops, population)

2. Could you please describe your selling channels?
   - E.g. local, bulk, direct/indirect, through friends, cooperatives, social networks, local grocery shops?
   - Your relationship with your buyers? Any networks?
     - Has your relation to your customers changed since selling to them?
     - Have you developed new contacts and acquaintances through direct selling channels?
   - Do you have contact with the customers who buy your products?
     (If yes) How would you describe your interactions?

3. Why do you sell directly/locally?
   - What do you like about it? Are you happy with the prices you get? Are you satisfied with your choice? Is it a viable strategy for you?
   - Would you like to have more direct contact with your customers?
   - Has selling locally changed your approach to farming? Try to adapt your production to customer demands?
   - Have you always sold locally? (If no) Why didn’t you sell locally in the past? What motivated you to change and begin to do so?
   - What are the drawbacks to selling locally/directly? Is there anything that stops you from selling locally? (How) have you overcome these?

4. Are there any rules and regulations, subsidies, support etc. helping you to sell locally?
   - Is there sufficient governmental support?
   - What do you think makes it hard for you and others to sell locally?
   - What would help/assist you to sell locally?
   - Do you need more support from the state or municipality? From local shops, farming organisations (like LRF, organic farmers), consultancy or from other parts of the food industry?

5. How do you think local and direct selling will develop in the future?
   - Will you continue selling locally/directly?
     - Are you satisfied with how you are selling or would you like to make changes? (If yes) What would such changes/improvements look like?
     - Would you be interested in another form of local selling - e.g. an on-farm shop, joining a cooperative, REKO-ringar, using local butchers etc.?
   - How do you imagine local demand for your products will develop in the future?
   - Do you see any general trends in local or conventional (global) selling channels? (E.g. with neighbouring farms?)
- What do you think about the future of local selling channels (In general, but also Uppland & Sweden)?
  - Is there sufficient consumer demand
  - Do you think there is something that would increase demand in the future?

6. Thoughts on sustainability (Social, economic ecological) I am interested to know more about how you see sustainability in relation to your selling channels?
- Did environmental, community or economic reasons motivate you to sell locally?
  - Do you think selling locally makes farming and food more environmentally friendly, is it good for the rural community, is it beneficial to future generations?
  - Does local production make it easier to live in the countryside?
  - Is there something else you think is more important/effective for the environment, community etc. in your farming practices?
- Social/environmental/economic à direct marketing channels?
  - Have you experienced any of these yourself?

Anything you feel you would like to add? Are there any questions you want to answer but I have not asked?