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Review Article

Public management and short food supply chains: strategies for local economic development and territorial sustainability

Gestión pública y circuitos cortos de comercialización de alimentos: estrategias para el desarrollo económico local y la sostenibilidad territorial

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: this study explores the interaction between public management and short food supply chains (SFSCs) as fundamental strategies to promote the solidarity economy, territorial sustainability, and food security.

Methodology: through a systematic literature review using the PRISMA method and a bibliometric analysis of indexed sources, three key dimensions are identified: policy regulation and strengthening, the impact of territorial development on the solidarity economy, and the implementation of innovations for sustainability in value chains.

Results: findings indicate that the lack of flexible regulatory frameworks, limited financing, and weak institutional coordination hinder the consolidation of these circuits. However, strategies such as proximity-based public procurement, tax incentives, and specialized infrastructure development can optimize their impact. Additionally, digitalization, efficient logistics, and the integration of agroecological models emerge as crucial elements to ensure the viability of these systems.

Conclusion: the study concludes that the effective implementation of SFSCs requires a comprehensive approach that combines adaptive policies, investment in innovation, and inclusive territorial development strategies.

Keywords: public management, short food supply chains, solidarity economy, territorial sustainability, public policies.

JEL Classification: Q13, Q18, R11

RESUMEN

Introducción: este estudio explora los vínculos entre la gestión pública y los circuitos cortos de comercialización de alimentos (CCC) como estrategias fundamentales para promover la economía solidaria, la sostenibilidad territorial y la seguridad alimentaria.

Metodología: a través de una revisión sistemática de la literatura utilizando el método PRISMA y un análisis bibliométrico de fuentes indexadas, se identifican tres dimensiones clave: regulación y fortalecimiento de políticas, el impacto del desarrollo territorial en la economía solidaria y la implementación de innovaciones para la sostenibilidad en las cadenas de valor.

Resultados: los hallazgos indican que la falta de marcos regulatorios flexibles, el financiamiento limitado y la débil coordinación institucional dificultan la consolidación de estos circuitos. No obstante, estrategias como la contratación pública basada en proximidad, incentivos fiscales y el desarrollo de infraestructura especializada pueden optimizar su impacto. De igual modo, la digitalización, la logística eficiente y la integración de modelos agroecológicos emergen como elementos cruciales para garantizar la viabilidad de estos sistemas.

Conclusión: el estudio concluye que la implementación efectiva de los CCC requiere un enfoque integral que combine políticas adaptativas, inversión en innovación y estrategias de desarrollo territorial inclusivas.

Palabras clave: gestión pública, circuitos cortos de comercialización, economía solidaria, sostenibilidad territorial, políticas públicas.

Clasificación JEL: Q13, Q18, R11

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INTRODUCTION

The connection between public management and short food supply chains (SFSCs) represents a strategic field for

the development of public policies aimed at economic, social, and environmental sustainability. SFSCs, defined as marketing systems with minimal intermediation between producers and consumers, require an institutional framework that fosters their development while ensuring efficiency, equity, and resilience in local agri-food systems (Alessandrini, 2024; Barbosa Pérez et al., 2021).

Despite their potential benefits, these circuits face structural challenges. From a public management perspective, obstacles such as regulatory fragmentation, lack of institutional coordination, and limited financial resources hinder their expansion. Simultaneously, SFSCs struggle with logistical barriers, infrastructure deficiencies, and restricted access to formal markets (Bayir et al., 2022). The absence of effective governance mechanisms and incentives for strengthening local economies exacerbates these difficulties (CLAD, 2023; Garzón Olaya et al., 2022).

However, significant synergies can be leveraged through participatory governance, territorial planning, and policies that promote circular and solidarity economies (Gómez Rodríguez & Barbosa Pérez, 2024; Reina-Usuga et al., 2023). Public management plays a critical role in establishing regulatory frameworks that facilitate producer associations, fair trade practices, and innovations in proximity-based distribution models. Additionally, SFSCs can contribute to broader public policy objectives, including food security, carbon footprint reduction, and the strengthening of local economic networks, fostering more equitable and sustainable production systems (Gómez Rodríguez et al., 2023; Ma et al., 2021; Varela Barrios, 2023).

Given this context, it is essential to design policy instruments that incorporate a comprehensive vision of territorial development, creating enabling conditions for SFSCs to become viable strategies for transitioning to more just and resilient economic models. Therefore, this study aims to analyze the challenges and synergies between public management and short food supply chains to identify governance strategies and public policies that enhance their development while reinforcing the solidarity economy, territorial sustainability, and food security.

METHODOLOGY

To investigate the relationship between public management and short food supply chains (SFSCs), a methodological approach based on a systematic literature review using the PRISMA method (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) and bibliometric analysis was employed (Aguilera-Prado et al., 2020; Mukherjee et al., 2022; Page et al., 2021).

Definition of analytical categories

The theoretical and methodological framework of this study is structured around two primary analytical categories:

Public Management: the role of public policies, regulatory frameworks, and governance mechanisms in supporting SFSCs.

Short Food Supply Chains (SFSCs): strategies for enhancing food security, territorial sustainability, and local economic development.

Identification of emerging themes

Based on the literature analysis, three emerging categories were identified at the intersection of public management and SFSCs:

Public policy and regulatory strengthening: examining regulatory frameworks, incentives, and public procurement strategies.

Territorial development and solidarity economy: addressing strategic planning, infrastructure, and associative networks.

Innovation and sustainability in value chains: exploring digitalization, logistics, and agroecological certifications.

PRISMA method for literature review

To ensure methodological rigor in the selection of sources, the PRISMA method was employed, facilitating a

transparent and replicable systematic review (Barbosa Pérez et al., 2020; Pliscoff-Varas, 2017). The review process consisted of four phases:

Identification: searching for articles in indexed databases such as Scopus, Web of Science, and Google Scholar.

Screening: applying inclusion and exclusion criteria to determine relevant studies.

Eligibility: evaluating methodological quality using bibliometric indicators such as citations, impact factor, and quartile classification (Q1, Q2, Q3, Q4).

Inclusion: synthesizing selected studies to construct the theoretical framework and develop qualitative analyses (Camacho-Bercherlt et al., 2023; Devi Prasad, 2019).

Search equations for bibliometric analysis

For the bibliometric analysis, search equations were designed using Boolean operators (AND, OR, NOT) and wildcards to ensure precision in retrieving relevant scientific literature (Bensman & Leydesdorff, 2009; Romanelli et al., 2021). Examples of search equations include:

Table 1.
Example of a Search Equation for the Category Gestión Pública OR Public management

Database	Search Equations
WoS	Tema: ((“Gestión Pública OR Public management “)) Índices=SCI-EXPANDED, SSCI, A&HCI, ESCI Período de tiempo=Todos los años
	Tema: ((“Gestión Pública OR Public management “)) Refinado por: Años de publicación: (2016 OR 2017 OR 2010 OR 2013 OR 2015 OR 2012 OR 2009 OR 2011 OR 2014 OR 2008 OR 2020 OR 2021 OR 2022 OR 2019 OR 2018 OR 2006 OR 2005 OR 2004 0R 2003 OR 2002 02 2001 0R 2000) Índices=SCI-EXPANDED, SSCI, A&HCI, ESCI Período de tiempo=Todos los años
	Tema: (“Gestión Pública OR Public management) “ Índices=SCI-EXPANDED, ESCI, A&HCI, SSCI Período de tiempo=Todos los años
Scopus	TITLE-ABS-KEY (“Gestión Pública OR Public management “)
	TITLE-ABS-KEY ((“Gestión Pública OR Public management “))
	TITLE-ABS-KEY ((“Gestión Pública OR Public management”)) AND (LIMIT-TO (PUBYEAR, 2018) OR LIMIT-TO (PUBYEAR, 2017) OR LIMIT-TO (PUBYEAR, 2019) OR LIMIT- TO (PUBYEAR, 2020) OR LIMIT-TO (PUBYEAR, 2016) OR LIMIT-TO (PUBYEAR, 2015) OR LIMIT-TO (PUBYEAR, 2014) OR LIMIT- TO (PUBYEAR, 2022) OR LIMIT-TO (PUBYEAR, 2023) OR LIMIT-TO (PUBYEAR, 2013) OR LIMIT-TO (PUBYEAR, 2012) OR LIMIT-TO (PUBYEAR, 2011) OR LIMIT-TO (PUBYEAR, 2010) OR LIMIT-TO (PUBYEAR, 2009) OR LIMIT-TO (PUBYEAR, 2008) OR LIMIT-TO (PUBYEAR, 2000) OR LIMIT-

Source: own elaboration

Table 2.
Example of a Search Equation for the Category Circuitos cortos de comercialización or Short food supply chains (SFSCs)

Database	Search Equations
WoS	Tema: ((“Circuitos cortos de comercialización or Short food supply chains (SFSCs))”)) Índices=SCI-EXPANDED, SSCI, A&HCI, ESCI Período de tiempo=Todos los años
	Tema: ((“Circuitos cortos de comercialización or Short food supply chains (SFSCs)”)) Refinadopor:Añosdepublicación:(2016OR2017OR2010OR2013OR2015OR2012OR2009OR2011OR2014OR2008OR2020OR2021022022OR2019OR2018OR2006OR2005OR20040R2003OR20020220010R2000) Índices=SCI-EXPANDED, SSCI, A&HCI, ESCI Período de tiempo=Todos los años
	Tema: (“Circuitos cortos de comercialización or Short food supply chains (SFSCs)”) Índices=SCI-EXPANDED, ESCI, A&HCI, SSCI Período de tiempo=Todos los años
Scopus	TITLE-ABS-KEY (“Circuitos cortos de comercialización or Short food supply chains (SFSCs))“)
	TITLE-ABS-KEY ((“Circuitos cortos de comercialización or Short food supply chains (SFSCs)) “))
	TITLE-ABS-KEY ((“Circuitos cortos de comercialización or Short food supply chains (SFSCs)”)) AND (LIMIT-TO (PUBYEAR, 2018) OR LIMIT-TO (PUBYEAR, 2017) OR LIMIT-TO (PUBYEAR, 2016) OR LIMIT-TO (PUBYEAR, 2015) OR LIMIT-TO (PUBYEAR, 2014) OR LIMIT-TO (PUBYEAR, 2013) OR LIMIT-TO (PUBYEAR, 2012) OR LIMIT-TO (PUBYEAR, 2011) OR LIMIT-TO (PUBYEAR, 2010) OR LIMIT-TO (PUBYEAR, 2009) OR LIMIT-TO (PUBYEAR, 2008) OR LIMIT-TO (PUBYEAR, 2000) OR LIMIT-

Source: own elaboration

Application of the analysis

The use of the PRISMA method and bibliometric analysis facilitated a rigorous systematization of existing knowledge on the relationship between public management and SFSCs. The identification of emerging categories enabled the development of a robust theoretical framework and the formulation of evidence-based intervention strategies, contributing to the design of public policies aimed at territorial sustainability and the strengthening of local marketing systems (Rincón & Gómez, 2023; Castro Jiménez et al., 2017).

RESULTS

Optimization of public policies and regulatory frameworks

The formulation of public policies aimed at strengthening short-food supply chains (SFSCs) is a key component in sustainable territorial management. The absence of specific regulations or overly rigid frameworks can hinder the inclusion of small producers in formal markets (Bhatt et al., 2022; Živković et al., 2022).

To address these challenges, the adoption of strategic measures is recommended by the literature, including:

Financial and fiscal incentives, such as tax exemptions, access to low-interest credit, and subsidies to promote agroecological production.

Flexible and differentiated regulations that adjust phytosanitary requirements without compromising quality and food safety, thus facilitating SFSCs' access to institutional and private markets (Blas Ghiggo et al., 2022; Garzón Olaya et al., 2023).

Integration of sustainability criteria in public procurement, prioritizing local products in government programs such as school feeding, hospitals, and social assistance.

Decentralization and multi-level governance ensure the participation of local governments in planning and implementing strategies tailored to territorial needs (Bianchi & Richiedei, 2023; Gómez Rodríguez, Nieto Aguirre, et al., 2024).

Territorial development and solidarity economy

SFSCs play a crucial role in driving local economic growth by fostering proximity-based production and marketing systems (Doernberg et al., 2022). Public management can enhance these processes through territorial planning strategies that integrate different segments of the production chain within an endogenous development approach (González-Azcárate et al., 2023).

Priority actions include:

Consolidation of producer networks and solidarity cooperatives, promoting associativity and access to technical assistance in marketing and logistics (González Meyer, 2020).

Development of appropriate infrastructure, such as farmers' markets, collection centers, and distribution platforms that optimize direct commercialization.

Integration of SFSCs into urban and rural planning, ensuring their alignment with local economic and social development strategies (Gómez Rodríguez, Barbosa Pérez, et al., 2024; Martens et al., 2022).

Innovation and sustainability in value chains

The success of SFSCs in the current context depends on incorporating technological innovations and organizational strategies that improve efficiency and sustainability (Baptista et al., 2022). In this regard, public management can play a key role in promoting digitalization, improving logistics, and fostering environmentally responsible practices (Marksel et al., 2025; Martínez Ramírez et al., 2024).

Recommended actions include

Digital tools for product traceability and efficient commercialization management, facilitating direct sales and

optimizing logistics routes.

Training in sustainable production models, encouraging certifications in fair trade, organic agriculture, and regenerative production (Gómez Rodríguez, 2024; Laverde Guzmán et al., 2020).

Investments in ecological infrastructure, including sustainable transportation and storage systems with energy efficiency criteria, aligned with circular economy principles and ecological transition (Rojas Rojas & Carranza Cambronero, 2024; Medina Carranco & García Serrano, 2021).

DISCUSSION

Short food supply chains (SFSCs) are a key tool for strengthening local productive systems and promoting more equitable economic models (Gómez Rodríguez et al., 2021; Petruzzelli et al., 2023). However, their consolidation depends on active public management intervention, which must design appropriate regulatory frameworks, provide economic incentives, and foster territorial governance to optimize their functioning (López-Rodríguez et al., 2025; Saravia Ramos, 2020).

From an institutional perspective, challenges such as regulatory fragmentation and lack of coordination between government levels persist, limiting small producers' ability to access formal markets (Renkema & Hilletofth, 2022). Additionally, insufficient integration of SFSCs into territorial development strategies hampers their expansion and long-term sustainability (Gómez Rodríguez & Aguirre Nieto, 2023; Sobczak-Malitka & Drejerska, 2024).

Despite these barriers, strengthening public procurement mechanisms, promoting associative networks, and investing in infrastructure can enhance the viability of these systems (Gjokaj et al., 2025). Furthermore, from an environmental perspective, incorporating agroecological practices, optimizing logistics, and fostering sustainable certifications are essential to ensure SFSCs' resilience and scalability within local markets (Jia et al., 2024; Sreenivasan & Suresh, 2024).

The articulation between public management and SFSCs is a key element for economic and social development in territories (Petropoulou & Paschou, 2022). The formulation of comprehensive policies, including adaptive regulation, innovation incentives, and sustainable territorial development strategies, will enable the consolidation of these circuits as viable alternatives to conventional marketing models.

CONCLUSIONS

The study confirmed that the effective consolidation of SFSCs depends less on isolated efforts and more on an orchestrated, systemic alignment of public policies, territorial governance, and innovative practices. It became clear that rigid regulatory frameworks, fragmented institutional responsibilities, and limited financial resources persist as major bottlenecks. These constraints not only hinder operational efficiency but also perpetuate inequalities by limiting smallholder access to formal markets.

Nonetheless, the research also identified concrete pathways to address these constraints. Strategies such as adaptive regulatory adjustments, territorialized public procurement policies, and the promotion of agroecological models demonstrated potential for transforming local economies and fostering resilience. The integration of digital tools and decentralized infrastructure emerged not merely as optional improvements but as core components to ensure logistical efficiency and traceability, two critical pillars for scaling these models.

Moreover, the study highlighted that public management must transition from being a reactive administrator to becoming a proactive facilitator. This shift involves promoting associative models, fostering co-responsibility with civil society, and stimulating the solidarity economy through cooperative networks and inclusive value chains.

Several research avenues appear both promising and necessary. Firstly, future studies should delve into the evaluation of SFSCs through indicators that go beyond economic performance, incorporating metrics related to food sovereignty, social capital, and ecosystem services. This broader perspective can better capture the systemic impact of SFSCs on territorial well-being.

Secondly, research should explore how digital transformation, particularly in rural areas, can be ethically and sustainably implemented. Understanding the barriers and accelerators of technological adoption among small producers could guide more equitable innovation policies.

Another promising line of inquiry involves the governance of multi-actor platforms. Future work could analyze how collaborative models involving local governments, producer associations, academic institutions, and community organizations can co-create adaptive public policies and sustain them over time.

Finally, there is a need for longitudinal and comparative studies that examine the impact of different regulatory and institutional designs across regions and countries. These analyses could help distinguish contextual variables from universal success factors, offering more nuanced policy recommendations for decision-makers.

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