

Towards a Policy to Support the Local Food Systems: The Case of Latvia

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Introduction

The local food system (LFS) is a set of interconnected processes and social agents involved in food production, distribution, consumption and disposal. In recent years and particularly within a context of pandemic, the role of local food has been emphasized by international organizations such as Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, European Food Safety Authority, and Council of Europe. Local food and its production technologies are part of national bioeconomy, country's unique cultural heritage and identity. Based on system approach, **the aim of the paper** is to analyse current policies and measures supporting LFS in Latvia, particularly focusing on aspects relevant to rural communities and local businesses.

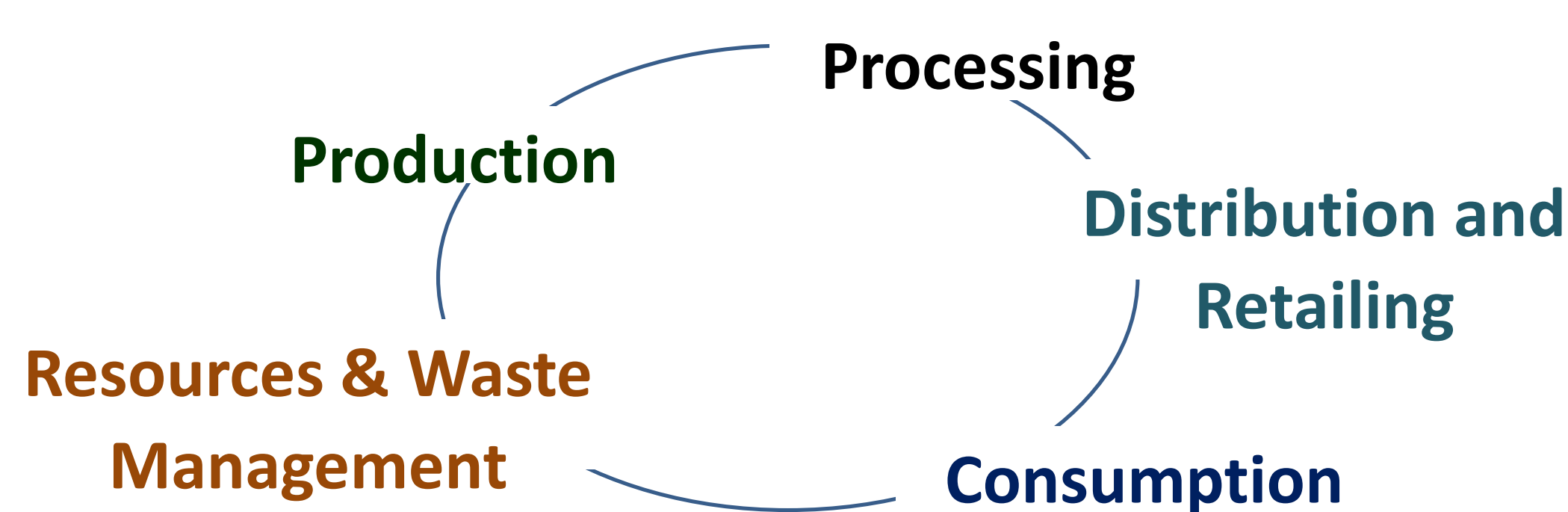


Figure 1. Phases of LFS

Examples of support measures at national level

Producers can participate in the national food quality scheme or in any other EU food quality schemes:

- (1) Organic Agriculture scheme,
- (2) Protected Geographical Indication scheme,
- (3) Protected Denomination of Origin scheme,
- (4) Guaranteed Traditional Specialties scheme,
- (5) National Quality scheme:



- **green label "Qualitative product" ("Green Spoon")** – higher quality products in which the general standard of commercial products has been exceeded and at least 75% of raw materials have been obtained in one country (135 processing plants involved, 579 products are labelled)
- **dark red label "Qualitative product", "Produced in Latvia"** – higher quality products in which the general standard of commercial goods is exceeded and the whole processing cycle is conducted in Latvia (53 processing plants involved, 274 products are labelled)

Products that have been awarded the label "Qualitative product" have advantages in state and municipal procurement.

Main conclusions

- ❖ By referring to the internationally adopted sustainable development priorities, strategic policy documents in Latvia (e.g. NDP) emphasize the issues of local food support in general, but specific competencies, responsibilities and tasks in the food sector are determined by regulatory enactments.
- ❖ Some policy measures of supporting LFS in Latvia is at place; support structure includes activities of the public sector (the state institutions, local municipalities, research and education institutions) and the non-governmental sector both supporting and supervising the food industry and other elements of the LFS.
- ❖ The implementation of local food support policy is more clearly identifiable at the local level, where emphasis is placed on both specific businesses (e.g. home production, production of organic products) and areas for their potential development.

Methodology

Literature review and qualitative document analysis were used in the research. Strategic documents and legislation at national, regional and local levels were analysed, with the key words "food production" and "local food".

Results

Public policies and programmes are needed to develop and support LFS infrastructure through a combination of activities, investment, research, and training. The focus on LFS is greatly in line with the environmental measures of the EU Green Deal. Institutions in the structure of local food support policy represent public sector (e.g. line ministries, local municipalities (business support departments), scientific and research institutions, etc.), non-governmental sector (e.g. food producers' association, etc.).

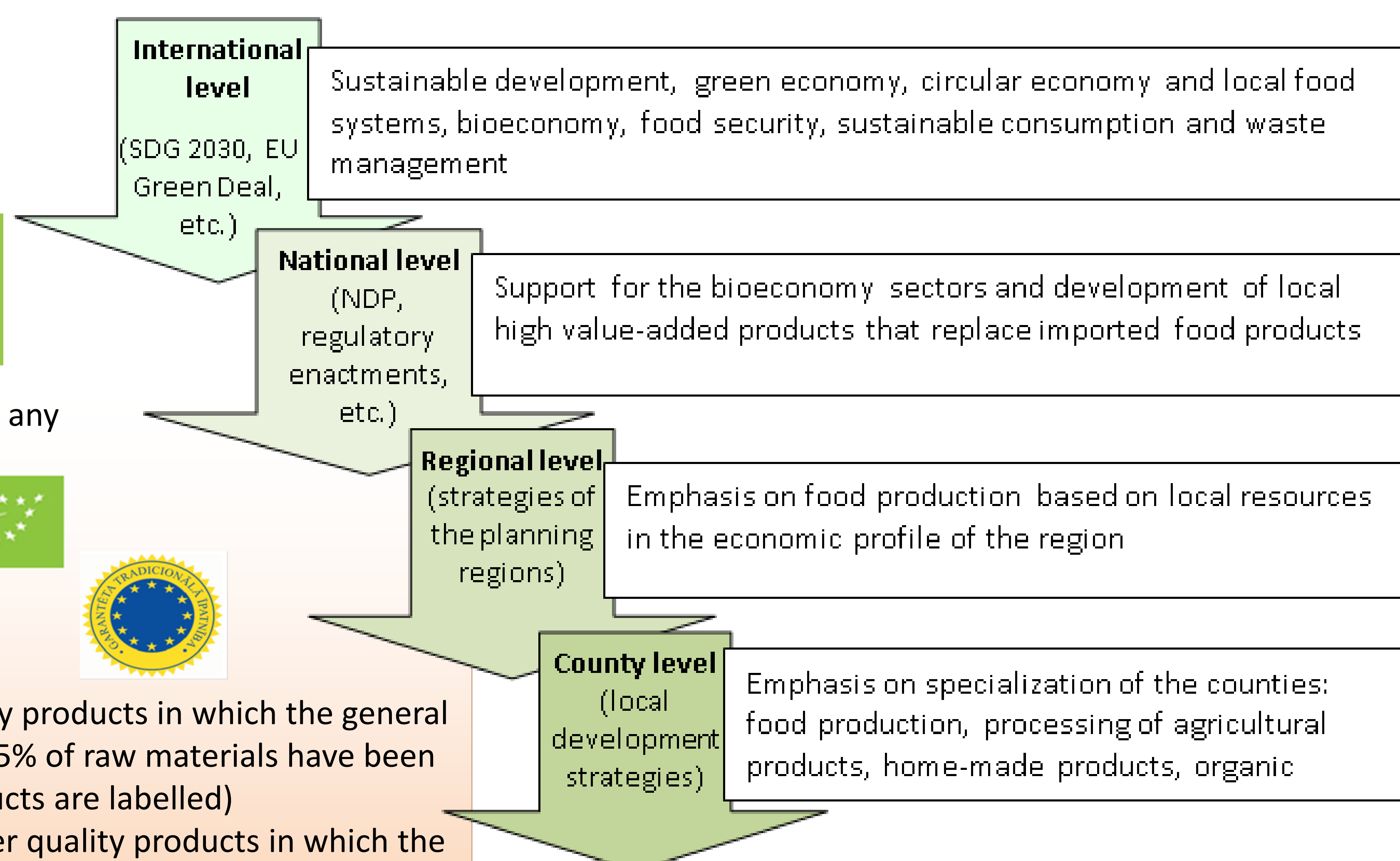


Figure 2. Policy levels related to LFS

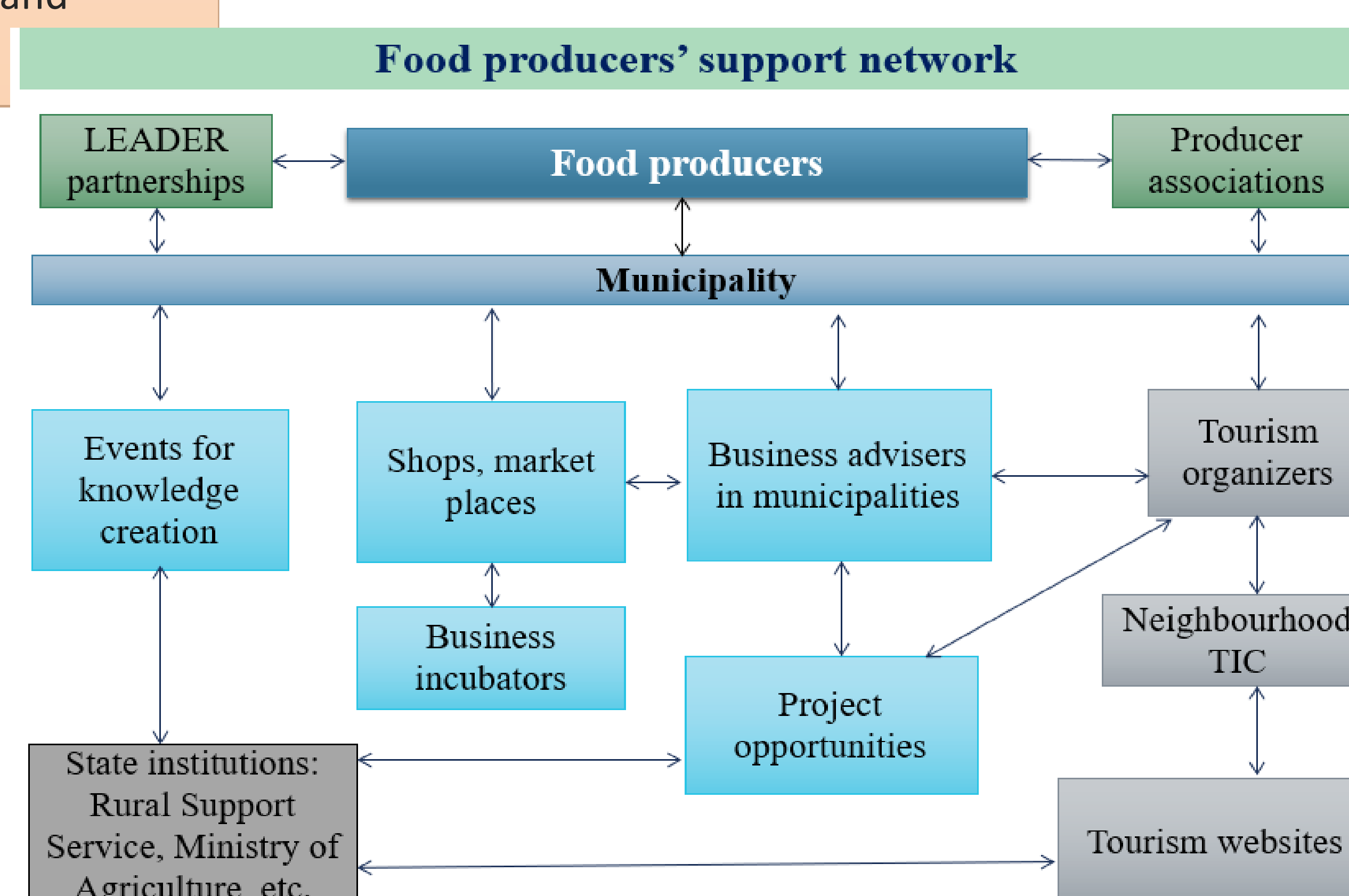


Figure 3. Food producers' support network at municipal level

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