



Evaluating food security policies: a study of local programmes in Italy

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1. Introduction

Historically, food-related issues were addressed mainly in rural areas because of their strong relation with agriculture, while urban communities limited their concerns to land-use planning and implementing national food policy (Doernberg et al., 2019). However, over the past 15-20 years, urban areas have begun to recognize their potential influence on the food system, including food policy into municipal agendas and developing local strategies (Doernberg et al., 2019; Pothukuchi & Kaufman, 1999). Nowadays, many cities, including heterogeneous actors (i.e., civil society, local governments and private actors) are adopting food policies to enhance food security and facilitate the transition to a more sustainable food system (Doernberg et al., 2019). More specifically, the local policy agendas aim to support and promote transversal issues such as food security, health, social inclusion, local economies, and environment management (Mendes, 2008).

Considering the importance of local food policy, an increasing number of European cities have been experiencing an urban food policy (Moragues-Faus & Morgan, 2015). For example, Italy has seen a significant number of cities formulating and implementing their own food policies, particularly since Expo 2015 and the signing of the Milan Urban Food Policy Pact (Dansero et al., 2019).

The growing number of scientific publications in this research field shows how important local food policy is for researchers to support policymakers' decision-making processes. Most current research focuses on urban areas that have already established food policies, while there is a gap in analyzing urban areas where local food policies have only recently started (Marino et al., 2024).

In addition, the evolution of food systems into multi-stakeholder governance arrangements highlights the need for a systematic examination of the development, implementation, and evaluation of local food policies.

This paper aims to fill the knowledge gap in the assessment of local food policies by providing a comprehensive view of the issue, considering both food demand (access and affordability) and food supply (provision and sufficiency). To achieve this goal, six programs in Italy were selected for detailed analysis: three focused on demand (social supermarkets, incentives for food donations, and food stamps), and three on supply (farmers' markets, urban agriculture, and optimization of the food supply chain).

The idea concerns the spread of local food policies to learn and transfer lessons across contexts. More practical, this research aims to extract and apply knowledge from one program to another, limiting the extrapolation problem. Despite various proposed methods, both quantitative and qualitative, this challenge persists. Indeed,

there is a lack of evaluation study has yet fully examined the effectiveness and transfer of programs across contexts.

To fill this gap, in this study the central core is to select an efficient case study useful to determine the start point and to start the evaluation process.

The paper was structured in different Sections: Section 2 describe the methodology used, Section 3 describe the key results while Section 4 underline the principals important discussion.

2 . Methodology

To achieve the paper’s aim of identifying ideal case studies for implementing a food policy evaluation process, a literature review was carried out in several steps (Figure 1).

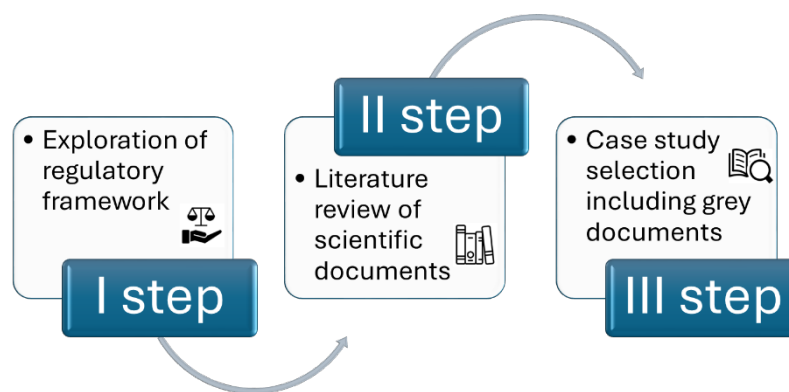


Figure 1. The flow of methodology

The first step was to examine policy documents to establish the regulatory framework. The second step involved a scientific literature review, utilizing Scopus and Google Scholar to gather relevant research. Specifically, different queries were constructed using the following keywords: i) for social supermarkets, terms such as “Social supermarket*”, “emporia of solidarity” and “Ital*” were used; ii) for food waste fees and incentives for food donations, the search included keywords like “Waste tariff* incentive*”, “Food donation*” and “Ital*”; iii) the review of literature on food stamps was performed using the keywords “Food stamp*” and “Ital*”, intentionally excluding COVID-19-related terms to maintain a broader search scope; iv) In the context of agricultural markets, the query included “farmer market*” and “Ital*”; v) for urban

agriculture, “urban agriculture” and “Ital*” were used; vi) lastly, the review of the food supply chain focused on hospital, school, and prison canteens with keywords like “food supply chain”, “school”, “hospital”, “prison” and “Ital*”. These queries enabled us to map the existing literature and identify areas where further research is needed, focusing on the case study of Italy.

3 Results

The results section will be organized by thematic areas. For each selected domain, the regulatory framework will be discussed, the relevant literature reviewed to select a case study was presented. This structure aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of each area, highlighting key regulatory aspects, summarizing existing research findings to identifying the most pertinent case studies for further evaluation.

3.1. Social Markets

3.1.1 *Regulatory framework of Social Markets*

Although the right to adequate nutrition is recognized in international bills of rights, such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights of 1966, it does not have an explicit reference in the Italian Constitution. However, it can be considered implicit in the fundamental principles of dignity and equality, and in rights related to health and work.

The right to adequate nutrition falls within the exclusive competence of the State, according to the Constitutional Court (sentence 10/2010), while the organizational and administrative aspects of nutrition and health are a concurrent competence.

In recent decades, food poverty has also grown in developed countries, with around 5.5 million people in Italy lacking access to adequate food. Strategies to address this problem include regulatory interventions on agricultural production, European assistance programs and the national welfare system, which however is in crisis. In recent years, a "second welfare" is developing, financed by local economic and social actors, which integrates public welfare.

This second welfare includes initiatives such as food banks, social markets, urban agriculture and purchasing groups, which can contribute to realizing the right to adequate nutrition and combating food poverty.

3.1.2 *Literature review on Social Markets*

This literature review identified some relevant articles, published between 2016 and 2024. The articles were published in cross-sector and interdisciplinary journals, such

as “Appetite”, “Ecological Economics” and “International Journal of Social Economics”.

The main objective of the review was to identify optimal case studies for implementing a food policy evaluation process. Consequently, the document analysis concentrated on examining these case studies and the methodologies employed.

The following table shows the documents resulting from the review of the literature on social markets, including the title, authors, year of publication and source (Table 1).

N. Paper	Authors	Title	Years	Source
1	(Palascha & Chang, 2024)	Which messages about healthy and sustainable eating resonate best with consumers with low socio-economic status?	2024	Appetite
2	(Michelini et al., 2018)	Understanding food sharing models to tackle sustainability challenges.	2018	Ecological Economics
3	(Ranuzzini & Gallo, 2020)	Like a stone thrown into a pond—poverty contrast of an emporium of solidarity	2020	International Journal of Social Economics
4	(Arcuri et al., 2016)	LOCAL'LEVEL ANALYSIS OF FNS PATHWAYS IN ITALY THE CASE OF FOOD ASSISTANCE IN TUSCANY.	2016	TRANSMANGO: EU KBBE.2013.2.5-01 Grant agreement no: 613532
5	(Galli et al., 2016)	The food poverty challenge: comparing food assistance across EU countries. A Transformative Social Innovation perspective.	2016	Proceedings of the SIDEA Conference, San Michele, Italy

Table1. Literature review on social market

The Italian context was investigated, with specific case studies in Friuli-Venezia Giulia, Emilia Romagna and Toscana. In Toscana, the case studies included the territories of Grosseto, Prato and Pisa, while in Emilia Romagna the focus was on the social market of Portobello in Modena.

The most widely used methodologies for analysing social market included qualitative analyses based on interviews and case studies, as well as econometric methodologies that used a probit model to evaluate the effect of social market on poverty.

Considering the small number of papers that emerged from the literature review, we expanded our search by also including grey literature and documents resulting from other individual searches of the working group.

For example, the ninth chapter of the 'Second Report on the Second Welfare' also focuses on food poverty and measures to address it (Rizzini, 2015). This study reported that approximately 5.5 million people in Italy were experiencing food poverty, including 1.3 million children. Despite these issues, the country still does not have a specific national policy to address this problem. Until now, the lack of a public strategy has been compensated by general measures against poverty, such as the Social card and the New Purchasing Card, and by the role of volunteering and charity. However, these interventions have significant limitations, especially as poverty increases.

A positive aspect that has emerged from this context is the vitality of civil society, which has given rise to numerous initiatives to overcome food poverty, such as the social markets. These social markets, although still recent experiences, represent a new and interesting approach for volunteering in social policies. They offer innovative ways to respond to food poverty and other forms of destitution.

The integrated approach of the emporiums, which focuses on taking complete care of the individual, proves to be more effective in reactivating individuals and tackling the new forms of poverty in all their shades.

3.2. Waste tariff and incentives for food donation

3.2.1 Regulatory framework of Social Markets

Food access and affordability have been largely met with incentives for food donations (mainly discounts on urban waste tariffs) and the work of food banks and social supermarkets (Buseti & Pace, 2022).

Italy is a pioneer in these kinds of policies (see the 2003 Good Samaritan Law and 2016 Anti-waste Law). However, the food donation system is also the object of pointed criticism (Riches, 2018). The donation of food is currently regulated by Law No. 166 of August 19, 2016, which provides provisions for the "donation and distribution of food and pharmaceutical products for social solidarity and to limit waste." This law established a national framework for an activity that was previously governed primarily by regional regulations. Donations can include food surpluses, defined in Article 2, paragraph 1, letter c) as "food surpluses": agricultural and agri-food products that, while maintaining hygiene and safety requirements, are, for

example but not limited to: unsold or not served due to lack of demand; withdrawn from sale as they do not meet company sales requirements; leftovers from promotional activities; close to expiration dates; leftovers from new product market trials; unsold due to weather damage; unsold due to production planning errors; unsuitable for marketing due to secondary packaging alterations that do not affect the proper storage conditions. Article 17 regulates the "reduction of the waste tax rate": in Article 1, paragraph 652, of Law No. 147 of December 27, 2013, the following sentence is added at the end: "For non-domestic users related to commercial, industrial, professional, and productive activities in general, which produce or distribute food and give such food for free, either directly or indirectly, to the needy and those in greatest need or for animal feed, the municipality may apply a reduction coefficient of the tariff proportional to the duly certified quantity of the goods and products withdrawn from sale and donated. "Municipalities are responsible for assessing the extent and amount of the reduction. This provision is sometimes referenced by regional laws, which generally confirm this option (see, for example, Regional Law Puglia, May 18, 2017, No. 13). In the case of the city of Milan, the first major city to implement the aforementioned provision with a City Council Resolution on February 2, 2018, for 2023, a reduction of up to 20% of the variable part of the TARI tariff was provided for commercial, industrial, professional, and productive premises in general that produce or distribute food and give such food for free, either directly or indirectly, to the needy and those in greatest need. For the city of Rome, the deduction – established with Managerial Determination No. 1895/2021, within the municipal Food Policy framework – was set at a maximum threshold of 25%. Recently, with Municipal Council Resolution No. 207 of September 29, 2022, the city of Varese stipulated that Third Sector entities active in the recovery and redistribution of surplus goods for social solidarity purposes could request a refund of the entire fixed and variable TARI amount paid in the previous year. (Camoni, 2023). Some authors (Costantino, 2019, 12-13) have highlighted "the extremely diverse nature of the goals the law aims to achieve, ranging from solidarity purposes to others of a purely environmental nature (waste reduction)" as well as "the paradoxical dependence of social policy implementation tools on the creation of food losses in the market."

3.2.2 Literature review on waste tariff and incentives for food donation

The literature review on waste tariffs and incentives for food donations was conducted by constructing a search query implemented on Scopus and Google Scholar. The keywords used were: "Waste tariff*" "incentive*", "Food donation*" and "Ital". The resulting articles from this research were published between 2014 and 2021.

Specifically, the articles were published in journals from various fields and interdisciplinary sources, such as the “British Food Journal” and “Waste Management”.

The primary objective of this research was to identify the most suitable case studies for implementing a food policy evaluation process. Thus, as done previously for social markets, the document analysis emphasized the case studies and methodologies used in the papers. The Italian context was central, with specific case studies in Lombardia and Emilia-Romagna. In line with the Regional Waste Management Plan, on May 26, 2014, the Emilia-Romagna Region adopted an agreement with ATERSIR and Legacoop Emilia-Romagna to prevent waste production and promote its recovery in large-scale distribution. This agreement includes an environmental certification scheme for retail outlets and an agreement for the donation of food surpluses to charity organizations. Meanwhile, on July 24, 2015, the Lombardy Region approved the Memorandum of Understanding for the project "Virtuous Territorial Networks Against Food Waste," aimed at distribution chains, non-profit organizations, and municipalities, to reduce food waste and evaluate tax incentives for the donation of food surpluses.

The most commonly used methodologies in the selected papers were both qualitative, involving the use of interviews, and quantitative, based on the use of economic models.

The following table lists the documents resulting from the literature review on food waste and incentives for food donations, including the title, authors, year of publication, and source (Table 2).

N. Paper	Authors	Title	Years	Source
1	(Azzurro, & Gaiani, 2016)	Italy-Country report on national food waste policy	2016	Food Policy
2	(Garrone et al., 2014)	Surplus food recovery and donation in Italy: the upstream process..	2014	British Food Journal,
3	(Franco & Cicatiello, 2021)	Levering waste taxes to increase surplus food redistribution at supermarkets:	2021	Waste Management

		Gains and scenarios in Italian municipalities.		
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Table2. Literature review on food waste and incentives for food donations

The reviewed literature highlights strategies and initiatives in Italy aimed at addressing food waste and promoting food donations. Azzurro and Gaiani (2016) present a comprehensive overview of national food waste prevention strategies, detailing high-level plans and programs targeting food waste prevention across key sectors, such as local authorities, households, the hospitality industry, the retail supply chain, businesses, and institutions like schools and hospitals. These strategies align with EU Guidelines on food waste prevention.

Garrone, Melacini, and Perego (2014) provide quantitative evidence on the generation and recovery of surplus food within Italian manufacturing and retail firms. Their study involves 12 exploratory case studies to assess the recoverability of surplus food, investigating 83 firms in total. They identify that surplus food primarily results from products reaching internal sell-by dates.

Azzurro (2015) examines the regulatory framework governing the donation of unsold food in Italy. This study, conducted in preparation for the "Stop food waste - feed the planet: la carta di Bologna contro gli sprechi alimentari" initiative, involved consulting stakeholders from the Italian National Plan for Food Waste Prevention (PINPAS) to produce a position paper for the Minister of the Environment. The document consolidates stakeholder views, highlighting key issues and proposing potential solutions to improve the regulatory framework for food donations.

Franco and Cicatiello (2021) analyze the impact of leveraging waste taxes to increase surplus food redistribution at supermarkets. They examine the "Gadda law," which allows municipalities to reduce waste taxes for retail stores in proportion to the amount of surplus food donated. Using an economic model, the study assesses the gains and losses for municipalities and retailers under various scenarios. Findings suggest that, under appropriate conditions, reducing waste taxes for stores engaging in food redistribution can create a win-win economic situation for all involved parties. These studies collectively provide valuable insights into effective mechanisms and policies for reducing food waste and promoting food donations in Italy, emphasizing the importance of regulatory frameworks, stakeholder engagement, and economic incentives.

3.3. COVID-19 FOOD STAMPS

3.3.1 *Regulatory framework of Food stamps*

Following the COVID-19 pandemic, Italian private and public actors have experimented with new governance arrangements and tools; for instance, by implementing food stamps in 2020 (Busetti & Righettini, 2022). The Italian government allocated about €800million to municipalities based on population sizes and increased by indicators of social deprivation. Municipalities were completely free to design the programmes (Busetti & Righettini, 2022). The first €400 million were allocated by the Government in March 2020. The Civil Protection issued an ordinance (Ordinanza di Protezione Civile n. 658 del 29 marzo 2020). The additional 400 million euros were allocated with the decreto-legge 23 novembre 2020, n.154.

The Department of Social Policies of Bergamo has set up two special telephone numbers to contact for requesting the distribution of "food stamps". The distribution will occur following a brief assessment by the social services office (conducted via a phone interview to verify the citizen's actual vulnerability due to temporary lack or limitation of income to meet primary needs).

Some municipalities, on the other hand, have chosen not to distribute shopping vouchers but instead to directly purchase food and necessary goods for distribution to eligible individuals (Brugherio in the province of Monza and Brianza, Fiumicino). This choice was motivated by the need for speed and cost-efficiency, with direct sourcing from local producers in the case of the Lazio region.

In Pescara, however, it has been decided to provide both forms of assistance, including food packages and shopping vouchers ranging from 150 euros to 500 euros, plus an extra bonus for each minor child.

Lastly, in Rome and Milan, recipients of the vouchers can choose between using a smartphone application or a prepaid Mastercard usable within the Mastercard network (Milan), or the traditional paper format (Rome).

3.3.2 *Literature review on food stamps*

As described in the previous paragraphs, for the analysis of the scientific and grey literature on food stamps, a query was created with keywords such as "Food stamp*" and "Ital*". No keywords related to Covid-19 were included to maintain a broader scientific search and have a general framework.

N. Paper	Authors	Title	Years	Source
1	(Anconelli et al., 2015)	La Carta Acquisti Sperimentale per la lotta alla povertà. Il caso di Bologna. Autonomie locali e servizi sociali	2015	Autonomie locali e servizi sociali
2	(Buseti & Righettini, 2023)	Policy learning from crises: lessons learned from the Italian food stamp programme	2023	<i>Policy & Politics</i>

Table 3. Literature review on food stamps

The results of the literature review were very limited, reinforcing the idea of focusing on this issue. Notably, only two reference documents were found, one published in 2015 and one in 2023. The latter is contextualized during the pandemic period, confirming the importance of Covid-19 on shopping vouchers.

The main objective of the research was to identify the most suitable case studies, therefore the analysis of the documents highlighted the case studies and the methodologies used in the papers. The contexts analyzed were Bologna, Bari, Catania, Milan, Rome, Turin and Padua. The methodologies used did not focus on the evaluation of food policies, leaving ample margin for choice of the case study on which to focus.

3.4. FARMER MARKET

3.4.1 Regulatory framework of farmer market

Direct sales agricultural markets or farmers' markets were introduced in Italy in 2006, with the financial law of 27 December n. 296 and the subsequent MiPAAF ministerial decree of 20 November 2007.

According to the aforementioned Ministerial Decree, the Regions have a marginal role, i.e. promoting, together with the Municipalities and the MiPAAF, information actions for consumers on the products offered for sale. Some Regions have, however, issued specific regulations to economically support the development of farmer's markets or have in turn produced regional guidelines (e.g. Veneto Region L. reg. 22 January 2010, n. 3).

The Municipalities, in addition to the promotional tasks indicated above, must ensure that the farmer's market respects the municipal regulations on the matter and the specifications dictated by the aforementioned Ministerial Decree

An interesting analysis document is the Analysis of municipal regulations regarding farmers' markets, VeDi direct sales, developed by ISMEA and published in November 2011.

Law no. 61 of 2022 provides in art. 4 that the Municipalities reserve «for agricultural entrepreneurs and entrepreneurs in fishing and maritime and inland waters aquaculture, single or associated in cooperatives, carrying out the direct sale of agricultural and food products referred to in article 2, paragraph 1, letters a) and b), at least 30 percent of the total area intended for the market and, for fishing, of the areas facing the landing points. The municipalities, in the case of opening agricultural markets referred to in article 22 of law 28 July 2016, n. 154, may reserve special spaces within the area intended for the market for agricultural entrepreneurs, whether single or associated in various forms of aggregation, selling zero kilometer agricultural and food products and those coming from a short supply chain. In any case, the possibility for agricultural entrepreneurs to create types of markets reserved for direct sales pursuant to article 4 of the legislative decree of 18 May 2001, n. 228, not attributable to those referred to in the aforementioned article 22 of law no. 154 of 2016, without prejudice to compliance with current hygiene and health regulations.

3. The regions and local bodies, in agreement with the associations representing trade and large-scale retail trade, may encourage, within the premises of large-scale retail trade establishments, the use of particular areas for the sale of products zero kilometer agricultural and food products and those coming from a short supply chain".

The oldest experience in Italy is that of the FIERUCOLA in Florence (<https://www.lafierucola.org/>), historic medieval farmers' market, interrupted in the 19th century and reactivated in 1984.

The “Fierucola del pane” was born in Florence in the early 1980s. It is the first Italian fair dedicated to natural family-scale agriculture and non-entrepreneurial craftsmanship. The association of the same name promotes meetings and conferences dedicated to ecology themes: biodiversity; biological agriculture; hygiene of local productions; ancient crafts and new tools; farmhouse; local seeds and grains; specific legislation and taxation for natural farmers and workshop artisans. As part of Fierucola's cultural activity, documents have been developed, including the Charter for the reconstruction of the city and the countryside (1980) and the Charter for the renaissance of the countryside (2008).

3.4.2 Literature review of farmer market

For the literature review on agricultural markets, we used a search query on Scopus and Google Scholar with the keywords “farmer market” and “Ital*” (Table 4).

N. Paper	Authors	Title	Years	Source
1	(Black, 2005)	The Porta Palazzo farmers' market: local food, regulations and changing traditions.	2005	<i>Anthropology of food</i>
2	(Foti & Timpanaro, 2021)	Relationships, sustainability and agri-food purchasing behavior in farmer markets in Italy.	2021	<i>British Food Journal</i>
3	(Lanfranchi & Giannetto, 2014)	ANALYSIS OF PRODUCERS' KNOWLEDGE ABOUT FARMERS' MARKETS	2014	<i>Italian Journal of Food Science</i>
4	(Pascucci et al. 2011)	Back to the future? Understanding change in food habits of farmers' market customers	2011	<i>International Food and Agribusiness Management Review</i> ,
5	(Orlando, 2011)	Sustainable Food vs. Unsustainable Politics in the City of Palermo: The Case of an Organic Farmers' Market	2011	<i>City & Society</i>
6	(Vecchio, 2010)	Local food at Italian farmers' markets: three case studies.	2010	<i>The International Journal of Sociology of Agriculture and Food</i>
7	(Golisano & Liberati, 2010)	Farmers' markets in Lazio. Notes on farmers markets	2010	<i>Economia E Diritto Agroalimentare</i>
8	(Monticone et al., 2024)	Harvesting connections: the role of stakeholders' network structure, dynamics and actors' influence in shaping farmers' markets	2024	<i>Agric Hum Values</i>
9	(Filippini et al., 2023)	Economic Impact of Short Food Supply Chains: A Case Study in Parma (Italy).	2023	<i>Sustainability</i>
10	(Bonomi & Ricciardi, 2017)	Trasformare lo spreco alimentare in risorsa sociale: Una soluzione organizzativa	2017	<i>Impresa Progetto</i>

11	(Bazzani et al., 2016)	Consumer perceptions and attitudes towards Farmers' Markets: the case of a Slow Food" Earth Market"	2016	<i>Economia Agro-Alimentare</i>
12	(Migliore et al., 2014)	Farmers' participation in civic agriculture: the effect of social embeddedness.	2014	<i>Culture, Agriculture, Food and Environment</i>
13	(Vecchio, 2011)	Italian and Un.ited States farmers' markets: Similarities, differences and potential developments	2011	<i>Journal of Food Products Marketing</i>

Table 4. Papers resulting from the literature review

The search identified 13 articles published in international journals and one book, published between 2005 and 2024.

The literature review explored various food markets in different Italian regions. In Turin, the Porta Palazzo market has been studied for its crucial role in the distribution and access to food in the local community. In Sicily, the farmers' markets of Catania, Palermo and Messina were analysed, fundamental for the regional economy and for satisfying the food demand of millions of consumers. In Naples, the study focused on the impact of local food policies and the management of urban markets. In Emilia-Romagna, particular attention was paid to the "Earth Market" of Bologna and the "MercaTiAmo" project of Parma, both focused on food sustainability and the short supply chain. Veronamercato SpA in Verona was analyzed to understand the dynamics of food distribution and initiatives to reduce waste. Finally, the regions of Friuli-Venezia Giulia, Tuscany, Lazio, Puglia and Basilicata were explored through several agricultural markets, providing insight into local food practices and policies.

Among the methodologies used to explore agricultural markets we find qualitative approaches, which are based on the analysis of interviews, but we still find quantitative approaches that have used methodologies such as Social Network Analysis, discrete choice model, Theory of Planned Behavior. Little has been investigated in the literature regarding the evaluation of food policies.

3.5. URBAN AGRICULTURE

3.5.1 Regulatory framework of urban agriculture

The first Italian study on the phenomenon of urban gardens was started in Turin in 1980.

In 1980, out of a resident population of 1,143,263 inhabitants there was a horticultural area of 146.4 hectares. The analysis revealed that southern immigrants were key to the horticultural boom in Turin. Former farmers, laborers, and shepherds, forced to work in large factories, maintained a connection to their cultural roots by cultivating small plots of land along the city's rivers, railways, roads, and any available space. This activity served as both a supplementary income and a way to preserve traditional values. The first Italian regulation of municipal social gardens was established in Modena in 1980, allowing six gardens to be allocated to retirees over 55 on non-buildable suburban land.

With a note dated 12.16.06 Italia Nostra requested the Association of Italian Municipalities (ANCI) to disseminate a proposal regarding "Urban Gardens" among all associated Municipalities, highlighting the need for the "art of cultivating vegetable gardens" and promote "urban agriculture", safeguarding products from pollution and obtaining natural seasonal products even forgotten or at risk of extinction because it is outside the logic of large-scale globalized consumption; the same note also highlighted the importance of the Garden "as a place of multi-ethnic aggregation, a place of discussion and exchange of knowledge especially among young people, of environmental education with schools and universities, as well as acquisition of agri-food and gastronomic information". To guarantee the quality and ethical nature of the products in all the municipalities involved, regulations for use and guidelines for organic cultivation were drawn up.

In the session of 22 June 2007 held in Bari, the ANCI Environment Commission expressed a positive opinion on the proposed initiative, noting the need to define the framework of the activities to be launched for the purposes of a Memorandum of Understanding and related regulations. ANCI and Italia Nostra signed for the first time on 30 September 2008 a Memorandum of Understanding for the promotion of the national "Urban Gardens" project, renewed over the following years.

Many Italian Municipalities have gradually joined this Memorandum of Understanding, sharing its aims and objectives.

3.5.2 Literature review on urban agriculture

As part of the literature review on urban agriculture, we conducted a search using Scopus and Google Scholar with the keywords "urban agriculture" and "Ital*", identifying 16 articles published in international journals, such as Journal of Food Products Marketing, Land use Policy, Agroecology and Sustainable Food Systems (Table 5).

N. Paper	Authors	Title	Years	Source
1	(Baldi et al., 2024)	Productive function of urban gardening: estimate of the yield and nutritional value of social gardens in Prato (Italy).	2024	<i>Renewable Agriculture and Food Systems</i>
2	(Codato et al., 2024)	Community gardens for inclusive urban planning in Padua (Italy): implementing a participatory spatial multicriteria decision-making analysis to explore the social meanings of urban agriculture.	2024	<i>Front. Sustain. Food Syst.</i>
3	(Marino et al., 2024)	Toward evidence-based Local Food Policy: an agroecological assessment of urban agriculture in Rome.	2023	<i>Land</i>
4	(Marini et al., 2023)	Investigating local policy instruments for different types of urban agriculture in European cities: A case study analysis on the use and effectiveness of the applied policy instruments	2023	<i>Land Use Policy</i>
5	(Amitrano et al., 2021)	AGRiS: agriculture, growth and regeneration inspired by sustainability.	2021	<i>International Society for Horticultural Science</i>
6	(Fanfani et al., 2022)	Multiple evaluation of urban and peri-urban agriculture and its relation to spatial planning: The case of Prato territory (Italy)	2022	<i>Sustainable Cities and Society</i>

7	(Lucertini & Di Giustino, 2021)	Urban and peri-urban agriculture as a tool for food security and climate change mitigation and adaptation: The case of Mestre.	2021	<i>Sustainability</i>
8	(Zanzi et al., 2021)	Assessing agri-food start-ups sustainability in peri-urban agriculture context	2021	<i>Land</i>
9	(Sturiale et al., 202)	Social and inclusive “value” generation in metropolitan area with the “urban gardens” planning.	2020	Values and Functions for Future Cities. Green Energy and Technology. Springer, Cham
10	(Dalla Marta et al., 2018)	A methodological approach for assessing the impact of urban agriculture on water resources: a case study for community gardens in Rome (Italy)	2018	Agroecology and Sustainable Food Systems
11	(Timpanaro et al., 2018)	Urban agriculture as a tool for sustainable social recovery of metropolitan slum area in Italy: case Catania.	2018	Acta Hortic
12	(Casadei & Bazzocchi, 2017)	Urban agriculture and city development in Bologna (Italy): Notes in historical perspective	2017	<i>ACTA HORTICULTURAE,</i>
13	(Paltrinieri et al., 2017)	Innovation system in the metropolitan agriculture of Bologna: Some evidences from the MADRE project	2017	<i>Acta Hortic. 1215, 415-420</i>

14	(Sanyé-Mengual et al., 2018)	Social acceptance and perceived ecosystem services of urban agriculture in Southern Europe: The case of Bologna, Italy.	2018	PLoS ONE
15	(Sanyé-Mengual et al., 2018)	Revisiting the sustainable concept of Urban Food Production from a stakeholders' perspective	2018	<i>Sustainability</i>
16	(Sanyé-Mengual et al., 2018)	Eco-efficiency assessment and food security potential of home gardening: A case study in Padua, Italy	2018	<i>Sustainability</i>

Table 5: Papers resulting from the literature review

In the context of urban sustainability and food policies, several Italian regions have developed significant projects. In Tuscany, social gardens in Prato have promoted community cultivation and environmental awareness. In Padua, in the Veneto region, targeted initiatives have promoted sustainability through urban agriculture projects. Rome, in Lazio, has implemented active policies to improve access to fresh food products. Trieste and Udine, in Friuli Venezia Giulia, have focused attention on sustainable agricultural practices. In Naples, Troisi Park represented an example of integrated management of green spaces and food safety. Catania, Sicily, has developed projects that combine horticulture and art to promote local food culture. Bologna, in Emilia Romagna, saw the creation of the "MADRE" project together with other initiatives that strengthened the short supply chain and food sustainability. Milan, in Lombardy, has supported initiatives to reduce food waste and improve the fair distribution of food products. Venice, in the Veneto region, has promoted policies for the valorisation of local markets and the reduction of environmental impact through urban agriculture.

3.6. Enhancing food supply chains

3.6.1 Regulatory framework of enhancing food supply chains

The art. 6 of Ln 61 of 2022 provided that the quality of the products should be taken into account in contracts for collective catering.

Currently the regulation is contained in the art. 130 of Legislative Decree no. 36 of 2023 (so-called procurement code):

Article 130

Catering services

1. Without prejudice to the provisions of Article 127, the catering services indicated in Annex XIV to Directive 2014/24/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26 February 2014 are awarded exclusively on the basis of the economically most economically advantageous, identified on the basis of the best quality/price ratio. The evaluation of the technical offer takes into account, in particular, through the attribution of a reward score:

- a) the quality of foodstuffs, with particular reference to organic, typical and traditional products, protected designation products, as well as products coming from short supply chain systems and from social agriculture operators;
- b) compliance with the environmental provisions regarding the sustainable economy (green economy), as well as the relevant minimum environmental criteria referred to in Article 57;
- c) the quality of operator training.

2. For the assignment and management of school lunch services and the supply of food and agri-food products to nurseries, nursery schools, primary schools, lower and lower secondary schools and other public structures whose users are children and young people up to eighteen years of age, the obligation referred to in article 4, paragraph 5-quater of the legislative decree of 12 September 2013, n. 104 ¹, converted, with amendments, by law 8 November 2013, n. 128.

¹ Art. 4, paragraph 5-quater.

For the same purposes referred to in paragraph 5, in the tender notices for the awarding and management of school lunch services and the supply of food and agri-food products to nursery schools, nursery schools and primary schools, to first and second level secondary schools and other public structures that have children and young people up to eighteen years of age as users, the relevant contracting entities must ensure that ((an adequate share of agricultural, fisheries and agri-food products coming from short and organic supply chain systems and in any case with reduced environmental and quality impact)) , as well as the attribution of a score for the offers of services and supplies that comply with the nutritional model called "Mediterranean diet", consisting of a diet in which fiber-rich products prevail, in particular whole and semi-whole grains, fresh and dried fruit, raw and cooked vegetables and legumes, as well as fish, extra virgin olive oil, eggs,



3. Public institutions that manage school and hospital canteens may provide, in the tenders concerning the related supply services, in compliance with article 6, paragraph 1, of law 18 August 2015, n. 141, priority criteria for the inclusion of agri-food products coming from social agriculture operators.

4. With decrees of the Minister of Health, in agreement with the Minister of the Environment and Energy Security and with the Minister of Agriculture, Food Sovereignty and Forestry, the national guidelines for hospital catering are defined and updated, welfare and education. Until the adoption of these guidelines, the contracting authorities identify in the tender documents the technical specifications aimed at guaranteeing the quality of the requested service.

3.6.2 Literature review on enhancing food supply chains

When reviewing the literature on the food supply chain, we focused our attention on hospital, school and prison canteen contexts, we performed a search using Scopus and Google Scholar with the keywords “food supply chain”, “school”, “hospital”, “prison” and “Ital*”, identifying 5 articles published in international journals such as Food Policy and Italian Journal of Food Safety (Table 6).

N. Paper	Authors	Title	Years	Source
1	(Milicevic et al., 2019)	Introduction of the nudging method in penitentiary facilities in Italy in view of food waste reduction: Preliminary data	2019	Ital J Food Safety
2	(Galli et al., 2014)	Co-Producing Sustainability: Involving Parents and Civil Society in the Governance of School Meal Services. A Case Study from Pisa, Italy.	2014	<i>Sustainability</i>
3	(Mistretta et al., 2019)	Energy and environmental life cycle assessment of an	2019	Science of The Total Environment

milk and yogurt, with a limitation in the consumption of red meat and simple sugars. The aforementioned tenders also provide for an adequate quota of products to satisfy the food requests for those suffering from celiac disease.

		institutional catering service: An Italian case study		
4	(Cerutti et al., 2016)	Carbon footprint in green public procurement: Policy evaluation from a case study in the food sector	2016	Food Policy
5	(Caputo et al., 2014)	Strategies and Tools for Eco- Efficient Local Food Supply Scenarios	2014	Sustainability

Table 6: Papers resulting from the literature review

The main objective was to identify ideal case studies to evaluate the implementation of food policies. The analysis of the documents focused on various case studies located in different Italian regions. In addition to the projects already mentioned above, we have identified further significant examples. In Molise, the District House and the Larino Prison have implemented integrated agricultural practices that favour the rehabilitation of prisoners and local food production. The same was analysed in Pisa, Tuscany, in Abbiategrasso and Milan, in Lombardy, and in Turin, in Piedmont.

4. Discussion and concluding remarks

The methods and results used in this paper allow us to select different case study to fill the gap of evaluation of local food policies.

1. For the social market case study selection, it is advisable to reconsider the approach based on substantive and opportunistic reasons. Although the food policy in Rome is well-documented, it remains largely formal with limited substantive implementation, as indicated by interviews with those involved in the Atlas and Food Council. This diminishes the relevance of Rome as a case study. Instead, a multi-case analysis across diverse institutional contexts is recommended. This approach is justified for several reasons: A) Social markets exhibit considerable variability. For instance, some cases are purely local, such as the volunteer market in Giulianova, which receives minimal financial support from the municipality. In contrast, Milan's market is integrated into a comprehensive municipal food policy, with sustained commitment beyond one-time financial support. Additionally, regions like Veneto and Emilia

Romagna have developed regional food policies specifically targeting food emporiums. Analyzing these different models allows for a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon's diversity. B) The primary objective of the project is extrapolation and policy transfer. Investigating various contexts will provide a broader base of information to evaluate the feasibility of transferring interventions across different settings, thereby enhancing the insights available for policy adaptation and implementation.

2. Focusing on food donations, in Italy, several innovative initiatives have been introduced to address waste management and promote recycling through strategic incentives and collaborations. In Campania, the initiative titled "Campania has a big heart" encourages donations of various goods such as non-perishable foods, furniture, and medical supplies from companies and individuals. These donations, which are exempt from VAT and simplify disposal processes, are cataloged and distributed to non-profit entities, thereby transforming disposal costs into meaningful social benefits. In Emilia Romagna, a voluntary agreement with retailers has been established to tackle surplus food waste. Under this collaboration, large retailers are encouraged to donate unsold food and non-food items to charitable organizations. The initiative, guided by the Regional Waste Management/Prevention Plan, aims to create uniform criteria for waste management tax discounts in exchange for donations, promoting both environmental and social benefits. Additionally, Emilia Romagna runs the "Remida Food" project, which has been active since 2007. This project, managed by the Reggio Emilia Municipality and Province, focuses on recovering and redistributing surplus food to those in need. The initiative partners with local health authorities to ensure food safety and hygiene, and offers waste tax discounts to supermarkets that participate in the program. These efforts collectively demonstrate a commitment to reducing waste and supporting community welfare through innovative, collaborative approaches.
3. Milan could serve as a model for effective food stamps programs due to its comprehensive approach and established infrastructure. The city's new Food Assistance Program, approved in November 2022, demonstrates a robust system for allocating resources to address food insecurity among vulnerable populations. By leveraging a public tender to distribute approximately one million euros in grants to Third Sector organizations, Milan ensures that aid is targeted and effective. The evaluation criteria for proposals emphasize operational capacity, collaboration, and quality of food, which promotes

efficiency and impact. Furthermore, Milan's program complements the efforts of 193 organizations accredited under the European Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived (FEAD), enhancing its reach and effectiveness. The initiative's structure—selecting up to nine projects, requiring co-financing, and focusing a significant portion of funding on food purchases—reflects a well-coordinated strategy to maximize the distribution of aid, with a goal of delivering 45,000 food parcels. This approach not only addresses immediate needs but also fosters collaboration among local entities, setting a precedent for how urban centers can successfully implement and manage large-scale food assistance programs.

4. To study farmer market, Rome presents an intriguing case in the realm of food policy due to its structured and comprehensive approach to urban food governance. The city has actively engaged with several food policy frameworks, such as being a signatory of the Milan Urban Food Policy Pact (MUFPP) and participating in European projects focused on urban food policies. Notably, Rome has adopted the Food Atlas, a key component in its strategic planning, and has been extensively analyzed in academic literature, including the case study by Marino and Mazzocchi in **ReCibo Journal of the Italian Network of Local Food Policies**. The Food Policy in Rome is characterized by its bottom-up approach, initiated by a Promoting Committee formed in 2019. This committee, which includes research experts, journalists, and representatives from local and national associations, has facilitated a participatory process involving numerous stakeholders. This collaborative effort led to the formulation of ten policy proposals, which were officially adopted by the municipal administration through Resolution No. 38 in April 2021. Rome's Food Policy framework comprises three main instruments: the Food Council, the Food Plan, and the Planning Office. The unique aspect of Rome's approach is the development of this political act through the advocacy of a broad movement organized by the Promoting Committee. The Food Council's regulations were further approved with Resolution No. 68 in April 2023, underscoring the city's commitment to advancing its food policies. Additionally, the Food Atlas, developed as part of the "Construction of the Food Plan of the Metropolitan City of Rome" project, serves as an open, updatable tool crucial for formulating agricultural and food strategies. It acts as a bridge between knowledge producers and decision-makers, enhancing the strategic planning process for Rome's food system. Overall, Rome's structured and participatory approach to food policy, supported by a network of diverse

stakeholders and innovative tools like the Food Atlas, makes it a compelling example of effective urban food governance.

5. Turin is a compelling case study in urban agriculture, thanks to its comprehensive and innovative approach to integrating food systems into urban planning. The city is actively involved in various food policy frameworks and projects, making it a prime example of effective urban food governance. Turin's commitment to food policies is evident in its adherence to the Milan Urban Food Policy Pact (MUFPP) and participation in European food policy projects. The city has also adopted the Food Atlas and is featured in academic analyses, including studies published in the *ReCibo Journal of the Italian Local Food Policy Network*. Notably, the Piedmont Region, where Turin is located, is unique in Italy for its pioneering efforts in food policy development. One of Turin's standout initiatives is its extensive urban agriculture program. The city boasts over 2,000,000 square meters of urban gardens and agricultural areas. The municipal administration has established a structured regulation for the allocation and management of these urban gardens. Plots, ranging from 50 to 100 square meters, are assigned through district tenders with an annual fee of 50 to 200 euros. These gardens, available for a renewable five-year term, are accessible to adults, promoting widespread community engagement in urban agriculture. The Turin Metropolitan Food Atlas, a key tool in the city's food policy, is a product of extensive research and contributions from various stakeholders. The fourth report of the Atlas, published in 2023, synthesizes knowledge on the city's food system, addressing issues from production to waste and exploring themes related to sustainability and social equity. Turin is also involved in two major European food projects: Horizon 2020 ProGInreg and Horizon 2020 Fusilli. ProGInreg focuses on using nature-based solutions for urban regeneration, with Turin leading initiatives in the Mirafiori Sud district. The project aims to enhance health and quality of life, reduce climate change vulnerability, and provide economic benefits through nature-based solutions, including community-based urban farms and gardens. The Fusilli project is another significant effort, concentrating on food innovation and policy development. It aims to strengthen Turin's "City of Food" policy by integrating sustainability, economic development, nutrition, and citizen participation. The creation of a "Food Innovation Living Lab" is a central component, promoting coherent and integrated policies and fostering local partnerships. Overall, Turin's robust urban agriculture initiatives, active participation in European projects, and comprehensive approach to food policy make it a noteworthy

example of how cities can integrate food systems into urban planning and community development.

6. Lucca presents a noteworthy case study in urban food policy for enhancing food supply chains due to its innovative approach to integrating local food systems with community well-being and sustainable development. The city of Lucca has made significant strides in urban food policy through a variety of initiatives and projects. One of its key achievements is the development of a comprehensive Food Policy that emphasizes local food production, community engagement, and environmental sustainability. Lucca's commitment to these principles is reflected in its participation in broader food policy networks and its implementation of local food programs. A central feature of Lucca's food policy is its support for urban agriculture. The city has established urban gardens and community farms that serve not only to provide fresh, locally grown produce but also to foster community interaction and environmental education. These urban gardens are managed through regulations that ensure equitable access and sustainable practices. The city's involvement in European projects highlights its proactive stance on food policy. Lucca has engaged in initiatives such as the Horizon 2020 project, which focuses on sustainable urban development and food systems. These projects aim to improve local food security, enhance environmental sustainability, and support economic growth through innovative food practices. Lucca's Food Policy is also guided by principles of social inclusion and community empowerment. The city has implemented programs that involve local residents in decision-making processes related to food policies and urban agriculture. This participatory approach ensures that the needs and preferences of the community are reflected in the city's food strategies. Additionally, Lucca has adopted tools such as the Food Atlas, which provides valuable insights into the local food system and supports strategic planning for future food policy developments. The Atlas helps to map out food production, distribution, and consumption patterns, enabling more informed and effective policy decisions. In summary, Lucca's approach to urban food policy is characterized by its focus on local food production, community involvement, and sustainability. Through its urban agriculture programs, participation in European projects, and use of strategic tools like the Food Atlas, Lucca demonstrates a robust and forward-thinking model for integrating food systems into urban planning and development.

Although the paper has some limitations, such as using only a limited set of keywords that may have affected the results, the multi-step methodology developed, along with

the inclusion of regulatory frameworks, scientific literature, and grey literature, provides a solid starting point. This foundation can be used to identify case studies that could become the focus of future research papers aimed at evaluating local food policies.

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