

Lithuanian
Centre
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Reviving regions through taste and tradition: local food and culture in community-driven sustainable development in Lithuania

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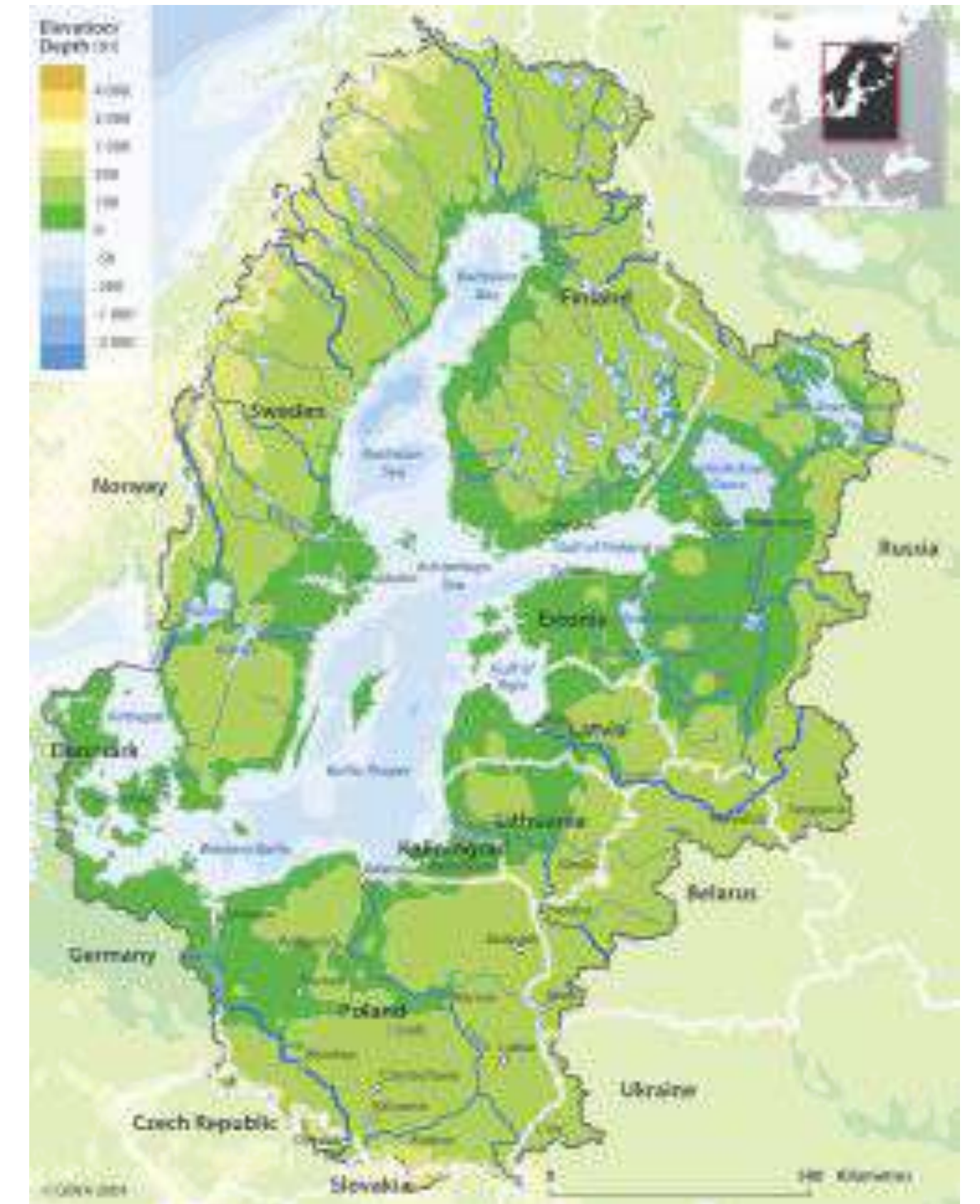
Contents

- Introduction
- Brief overview of the literature and the significance of research
- Description of methodology
- Presentation of results
- Discussion and implications
- Two key takeaways

**Reviving regions through
taste and tradition: local food
and culture in
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development in Lithuania**

Introduction

- Rural regions in the Baltic Sea Region (BSR) are facing *demographic decline*, persistent *socio-economic challenges*, and a loss of services.
- There is a need for *innovative and place-based strategies* to ensure sustainability and competitiveness.
- A *growing number of community-driven initiatives* are addressing these challenges by leveraging local food systems and cultural heritage.
- *Local food systems and cultural practices* provide a foundation for regeneration.



Source: Baltic Sea – Wikipedia.

Brief overview of the literature

- Importance of *local resource mobilisation* (Marsden et al., 2000).
- Strengthening of *urban–rural linkages* and place-based identity (OECD, 2006).
- The cultivation of *place-based identity* and *trust in local food systems* fosters *social innovation* (OECD, 2006; Thorsøe & Kjeldsen, 2015).
- Grassroots *innovations in food networks* (Kneafsey et al., 2013)



Significance of Study

- There is a *rising demand for local food and immersive cultural experiences*.
- *Community-led initiatives* are increasingly recognized for their role in rural revitalization.
- *Culinary tourism* as a strategic response.
- These developments reflect *shifting consumer values* and offer *new economic pathways*.

Industrial Rural Development Paradigm-Grounded Social Movements: Redistribution of Economic Power by Collective Actions – Movement of Agricultural Cooperatives.

4. Decline of social movement „Lithuanian Association of Agricultural Cooperatives“.

Almost five hundred cooperatives have been established in Lithuania mostly in agricultural and food value chains. However, the idea of cooperation is not spreading fast enough. As the European Union's requirements in agricultural sector increase, cooperation is important in order to remain competitive.

It is also becoming increasingly important to educate the younger generation on the benefits of cooperation.

Members of association believe that good examples of cooperation, continuous education and adequate funding can encourage cooperation and, at the same time, help to solve multiple issues in the agricultural sector, and increase the competitiveness of agricultural producers and other stakeholders in the markets.



Industrial Rural Development Paradigm-Shift focused New Social Movements: New forms of Rural Lifestyle for Changing Relationships with Neighbors – Ecovillages Movements.



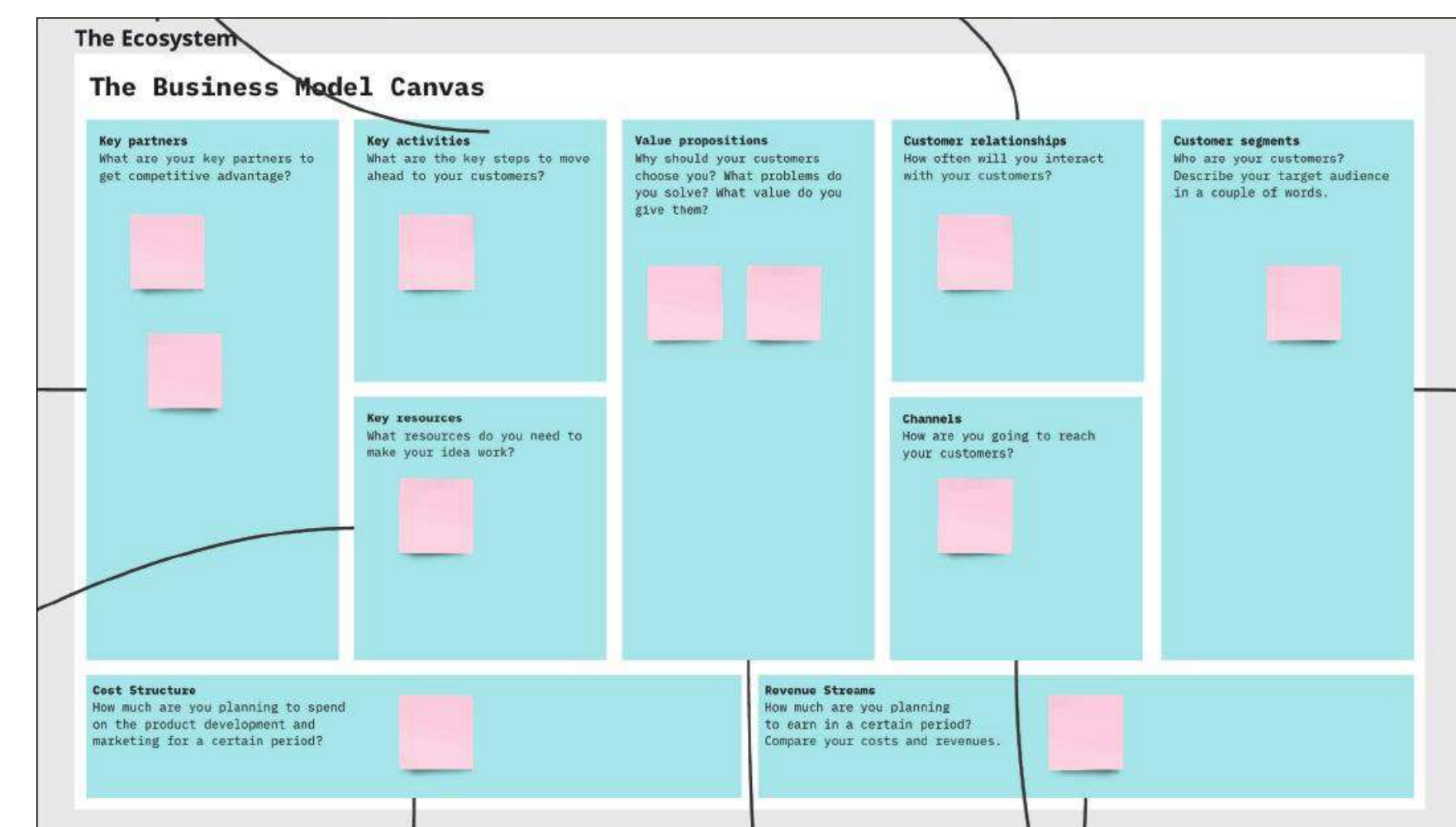
Research gap

- Despite growing grassroots innovations, many local producers lack:
 - *institutional support,*
 - *market access, and*
 - *tools for diversification.*
- *Understanding the socio-economic and institutional dynamics* of these innovations remains a critical *research need.*
- Need for *scalable, replicable solutions* for rural diversification.



Methodology of the research

- Qualitative case study approach.
- Interviews, observations, project documentation.
- Use of Business Model Canvas, participatory methods (workshops, hackathons) to gather structured insights and co-develop solutions.
- Duration for the research:
 - Case study „Village to your home“ since 2012.
 - Case study „Culinary tourism in BSR“: 2023-2025.



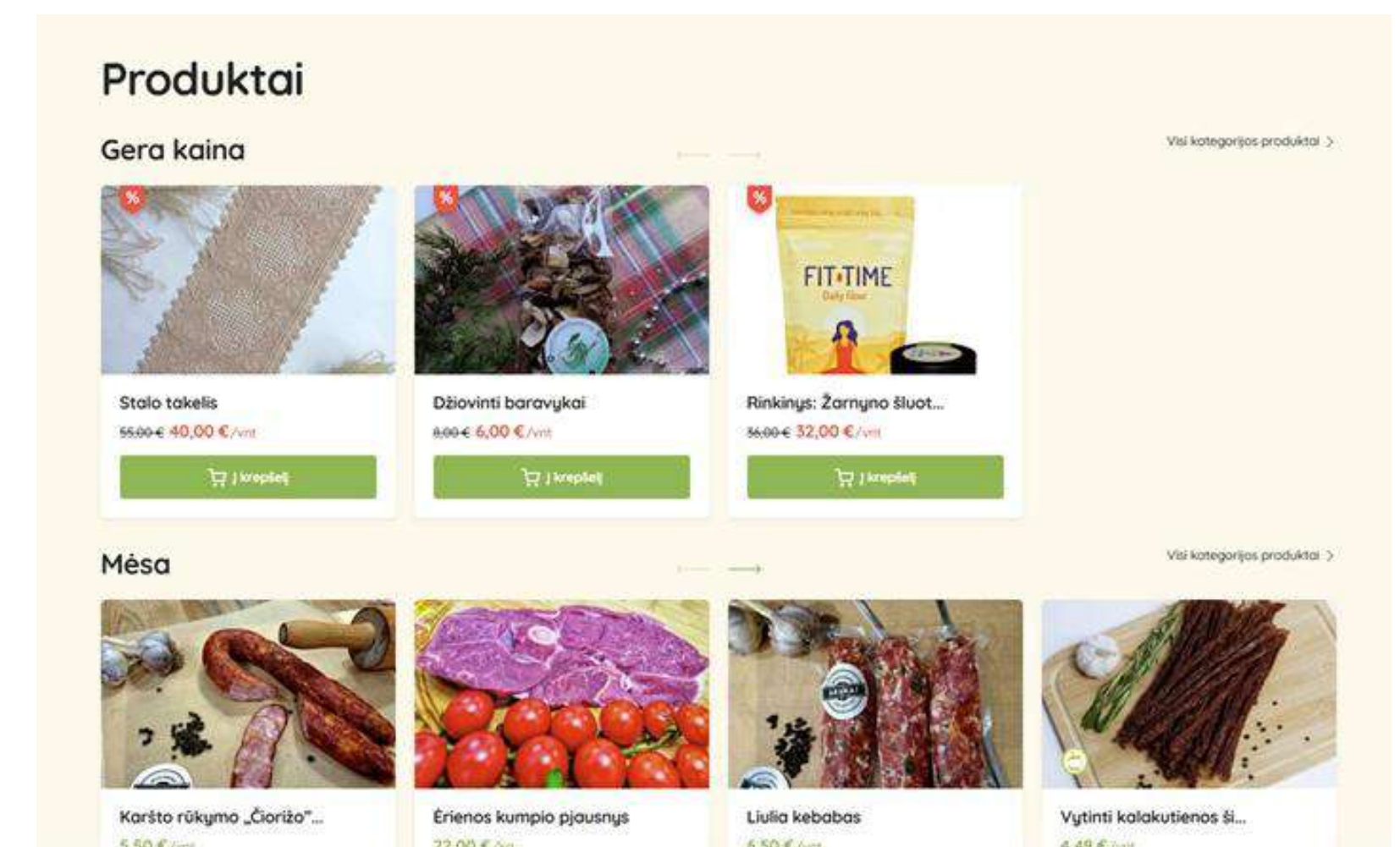
Case study

“Village to your home”



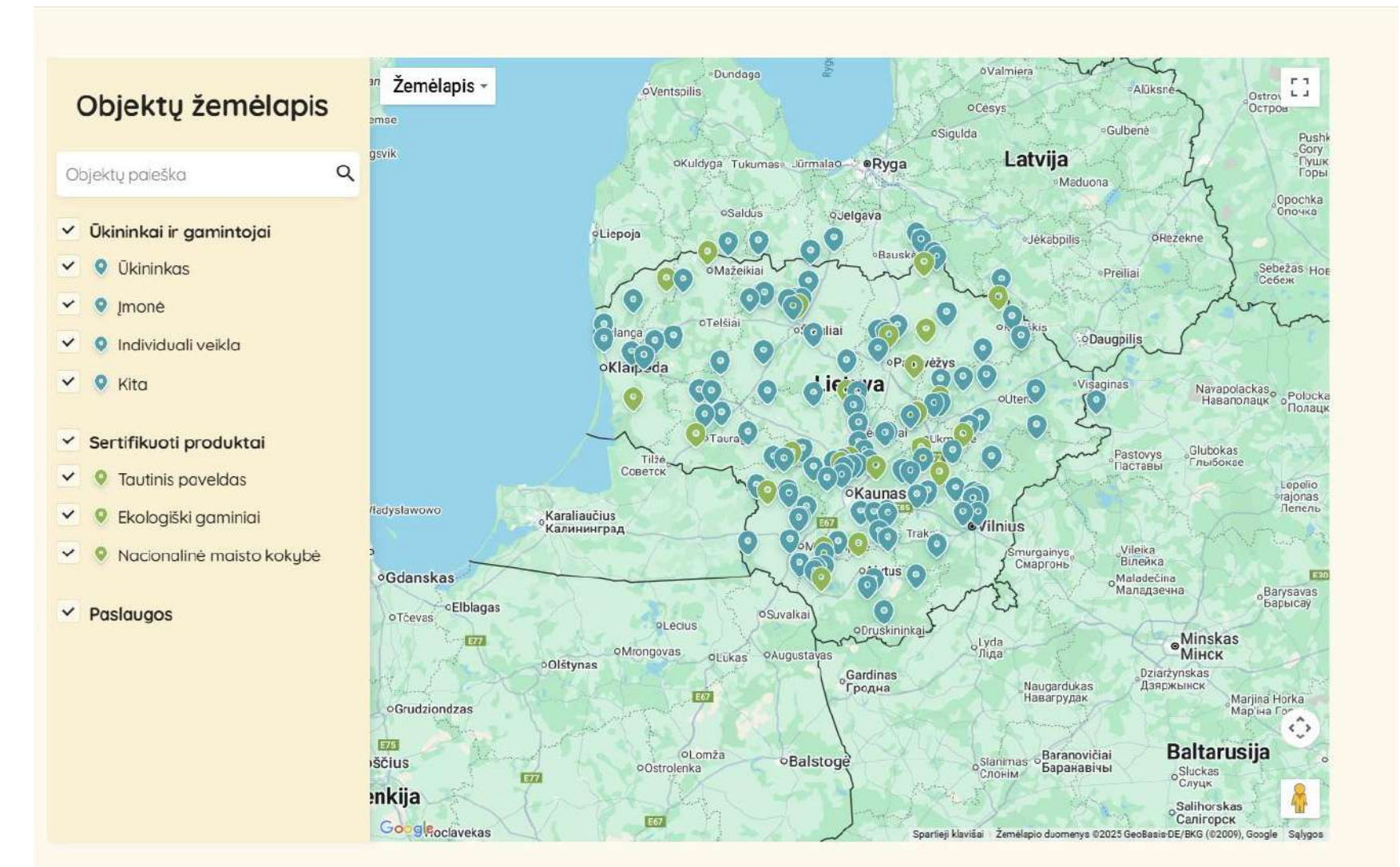
Case Study 1: Platform „Village to Your Home“

- Founded in 2012 by the Lithuanian Centre for Social Sciences (previously the Institute of Agrarian Economics)
- Facilitates *direct food supply* from farmers to consumers through *pre-ordered food baskets*.
- The objective is to ensure *minimal processing of natural products* and to *reduce the distance between producers and consumers*, thereby promoting both *product authenticity and the efficiency of local supply chains*.



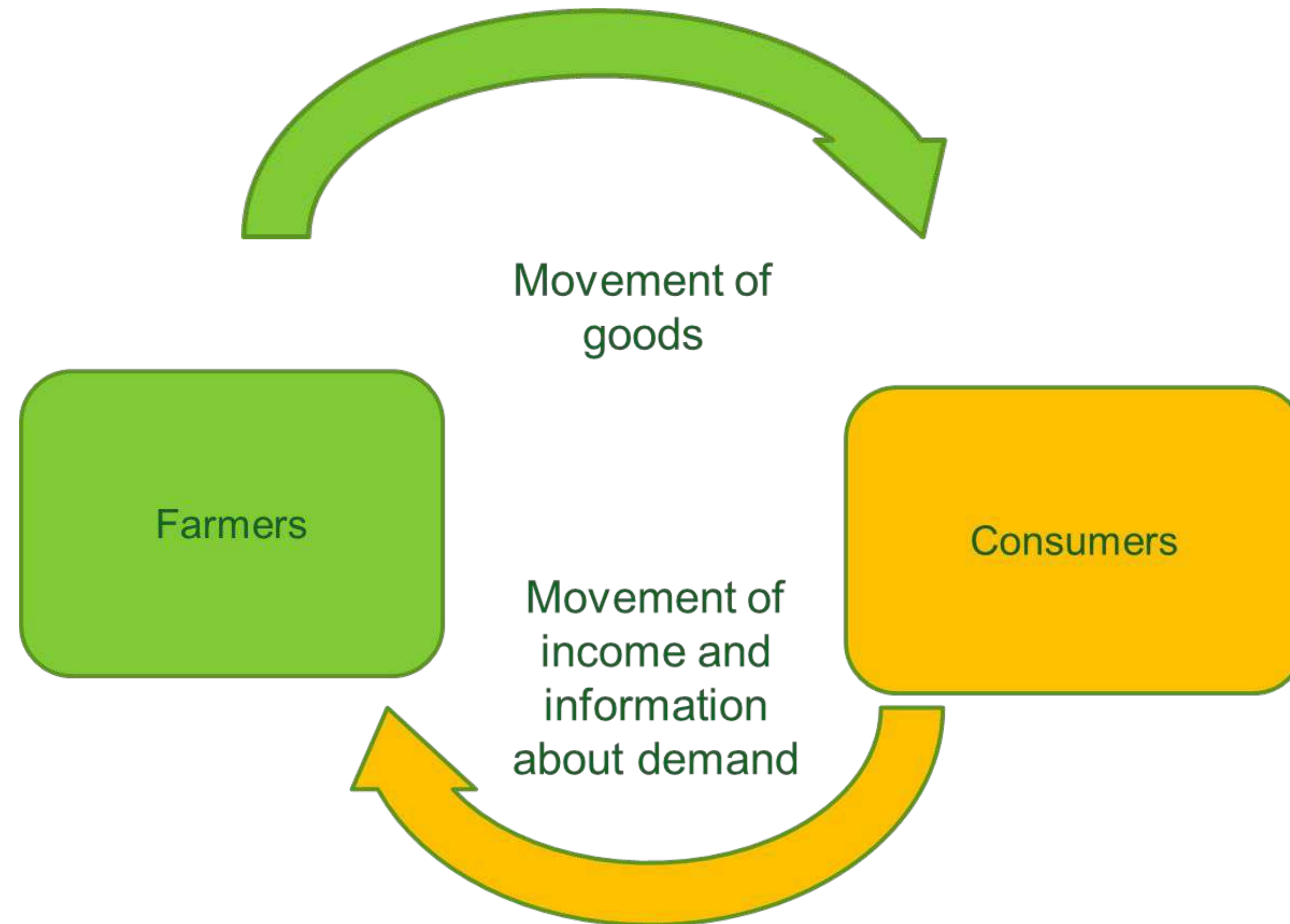
Case Study 1: Platform „Village to Your Home“

- The platform works as a free support tool for Lithuanian rural producers and suppliers.
- The network represents the public interest and aims to promote advanced nutrition, based on the short food supply chain model.
- Promotes *bilateral cooperation and digital tools*.
- It started as a *consumer-oriented delivery scheme* and evolved into a *formalized digital platform* enhancing local food accessibility.
- Number of rural producers and suppliers: 147 (2025).
Number of registered consumers: 3577 (2025)

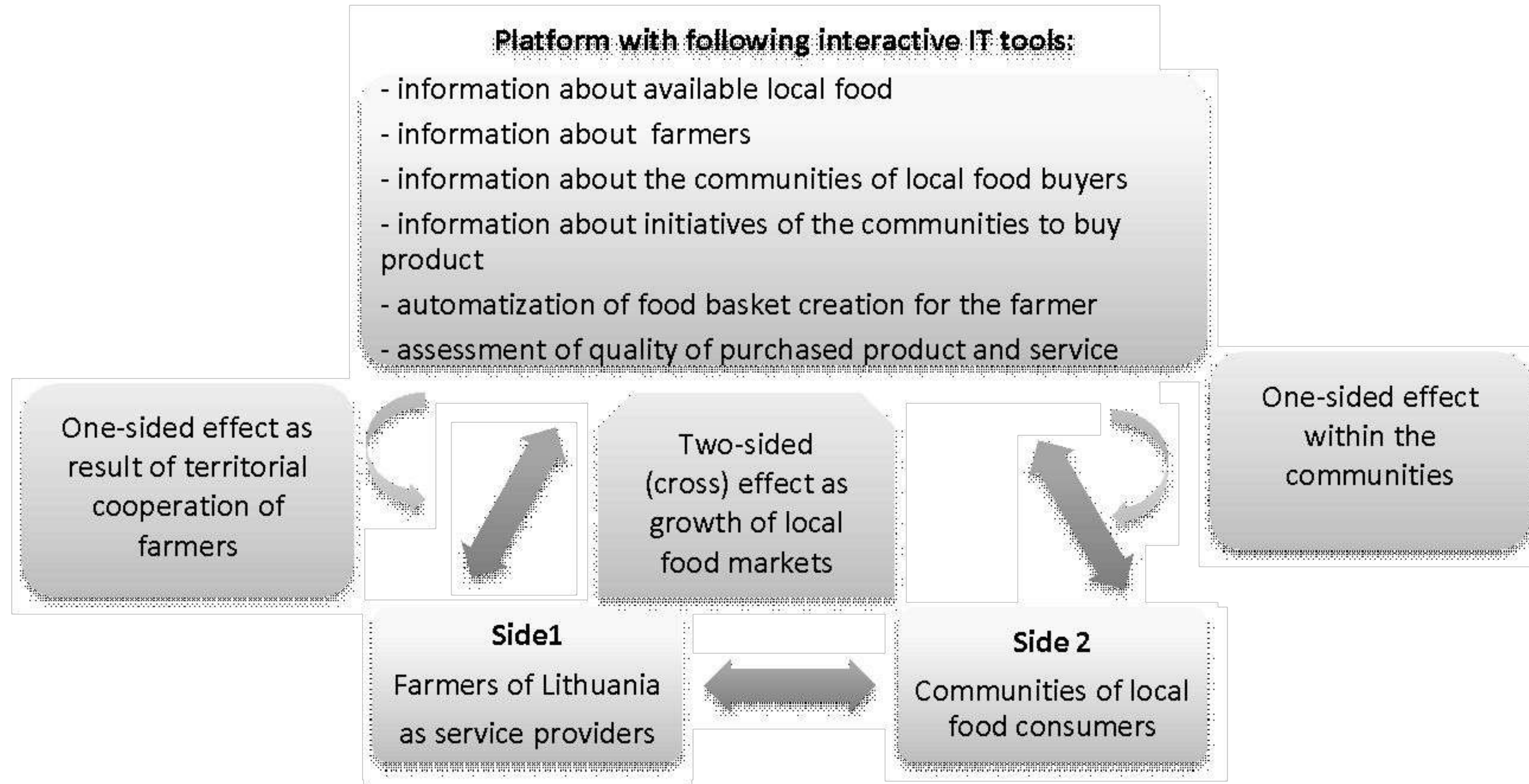


Case Study 1: Platform „Village to Your Home“

Organization process of network ‘Village to your home’



Case Study 1: Platform „Village to Your Home“



Structure of the two-sided network 'Village to your home'

Results from Case Study 1: Platform „Village to Your Home“

- Elimination of intermediaries
- Better income, more efficient labor use
- Optimized use of time through planning in advance
- Reduced marketing costs for farmers
- Consumer access to fresh food and healthy food
- Social value from knowing their food sources.

Implications from Case Study 1: Platform „Village to Your Home“

- A case study provides a non-technological innovation framework that strengthens local economies:
 - Servitisation and short supply chains;
 - Supports high-quality and tasty food;
 - Supports farmers and SMEs;
 - Scalable rural innovation model.
- A similar two-sided network of farmers and consumers can be easily created and used in other countries. The important thing is to have initiators of the idea, to *attract like-minded people*, i.e., potential suppliers, producers, and/or farmers and consumers. It is important to determine the *availability or acquisition of resources*.

Case study “Innovating Rural Food Through Culinary Tourism in BSR region”



Case Study 2: Innovating Rural Food Through Culinary Tourism in BSR region

Challenges facing rural food producers in the Baltic Sea region:

- Local food producers in rural areas face increasing economic pressure
- COVID-19 pandemic disrupted production, distribution, and tourism
- Rising energy prices and inflation have escalated production costs
- Many producers report declining sales and reduced market demand
- Urgent need to diversify economic activities and income streams

Case Study 2: Innovating Rural Food Through Culinary Tourism in BSR region

- The Interreg BSR project BASCIL (2023-2025) – *Innovative Solutions for the Rural Food Production Sector to Diversify into Sustainable Culinary Tourism Services* provides a solution.
- The project aimed to integrate *small-scale rural food producers* into *culinary tourism ecosystems*, enabling producers to retain *higher value through direct-to-consumer models* and *short value chains*.
- A case study offers a framework for non-technological innovation that strengthens local economies.



Co-funded by
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RESILIENT ECONOMIES AND COMMUNITIES

BASCIL

Case Study 2: Innovating Rural Food Through Culinary Tourism in BSR region

A case study was implemented between 2023 and 2025 across twelve BSR regions, aiming:

- Focus on value retention and sustainability
- Empower food producers via culinary tourism services;
- By providing tools, training, and joint marketing strategies;
- Creation of regional food producer networks.



Case Study 2: methodology

- The selection of SMEs (88 in 12 BSR regions) in 2023;
- Stakeholder interviews, and use of Business Model Canvas enabled co-creation of service models in 2023;
- Hackathons and workshops for selection new services in 2024;
- Testing new services (2024-2025);
- Regional analysis (2025);
- The development of regional networks (2025).

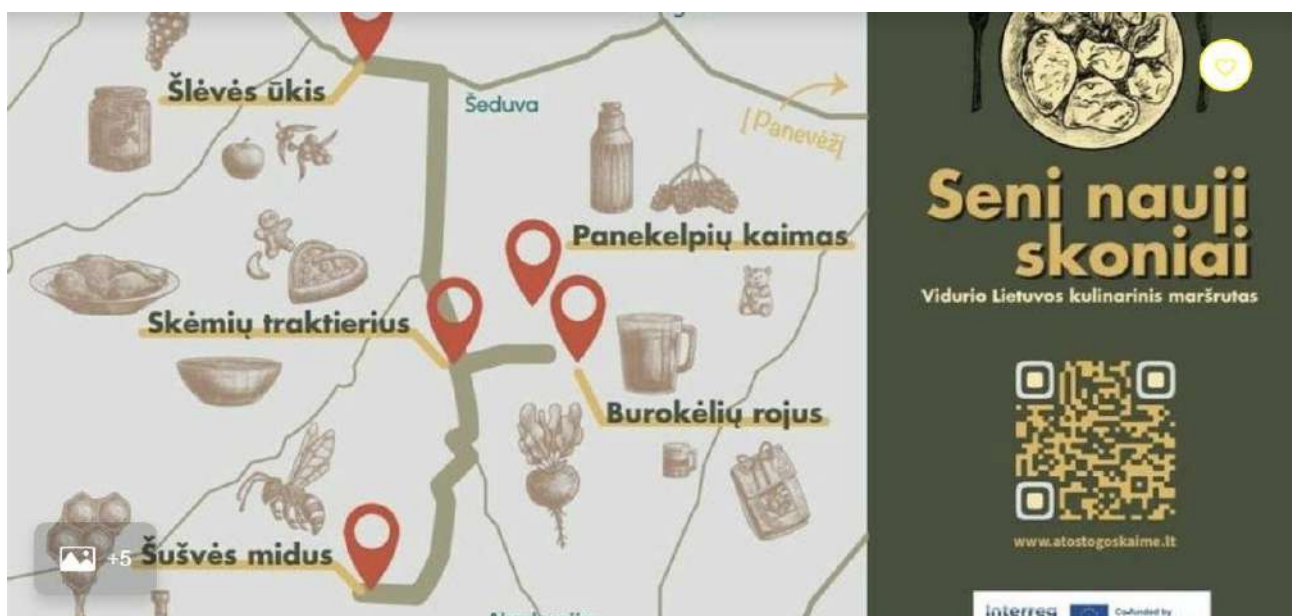


Case Study 2: results from one pilot region in Lithuania



New gastronomic journey in Lithuania “Old New Flavours: A Culinary Journey through Tradition and Innovation”

- Discover the authentic culinary heritage of the region
- Taste traditional local dishes reimaged with a modern twist
- Explore the stories and origins behind each flavor
- A unique experience for travellers seeking culture through cuisine
- Unexpected combinations, unforgettable tastes!
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-r7ptodmxXF&t=142s>



„SENI NAUJI SKONIAI“



Case Study 2: results and implications

- *Knowledge and capacity building* are essential for small-scale rural food producers.
- Producers need more *support to offer experiential services*, such as tastings and farm tours.
- *Digital tools and collaborative marketing* were demonstrated to be essential for reaching consumers and tourists.
- *Customized solutions* must be designed at both the *enterprise and network levels*.
- *Partnerships with tourism bodies and digital platforms* are key to ensuring *scalability and sustainability*.
- Need for *integration with national tourism strategies*.
- *Model for EU-wide rural diversification*.



Discussion

Discussion

- Culinary tourism fosters sustainable development
- Enhances cultural heritage, economic resilience
- Community engagement is key
- Culinary tourism blends economic goals with cultural preservation.
- Community participation and market innovation can help rural areas remain competitive while preserving their heritage.

Conclusion

Conclusion

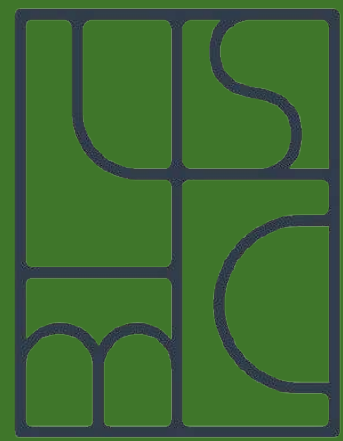
- Both Lithuanian case studies show that culinary tourism can be a strategic tool for sustainable regional development.
- They demonstrate how local knowledge, cooperation, and innovation can drive transformation.

Key Takeaway 1

Integrating food heritage with tourism can revitalize rural areas and preserve local identity.

Key Takeaway 2

Capacity-building and networking among producers are critical to scaling innovations and achieving resilience in rural settings.



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Thank You !