

Local Food Production and Consumption in Iran

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Abstract

This study provides a comprehensive literature-review-based overview of the current understanding of local food systems, including: alternative definitions; estimates of market size and reach; descriptions of the characteristics of local food consumers and producers; and an examination of early evidence on the economic and health impacts of such systems. Iran has a long history of traditional markets in the towns and villages in the north, Some of which came from foreign tourists in the north of Iran were subject to local markets. Considering that local markets have a long history in the Middle East, especially the Iranian cities and the economic transactions of an important cultural functions are also enjoys cultural transmission of rich and tangled that alone will cause cultural richness.

Keywords

Economic and Health Impacts, Local Food

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1. Introduction

1.1. Limitations of Global Food System

Communities gained knowledge of the quality of foods through direct contact with farmers. Aside from canning, dehydrating, salting, or smoking, few foods were processed or packaged, and fruits and vegetables, fish, and dairy products typically traveled less than a day to market (Giovannucci, et al., 2010). For many foods, consumption was dictated by local seasonality. Mechanization in the early part of the 20th century has been noted as the first giant step toward agricultural industrialization (Lyson and Guptill, 2004). Over the past 50 years, technological innovation in agriculture has contributed to rapid structural change (Lobao and Meyer, 2001; Office of Technology Assessment, 1986) and has penetrated most segments of production (Lyson and Guptill, 2004).

The innocent and necessary act of making a 21st century

meal at home is often dependent on a system of food production which is intricately linked to the use of fossil fuels in the form of pesticides, packaging and distribution. Critics argue that this global production and transportation of food is an unsustainable and broken model pointing to dwindling oil reserves estimated to be 1,000 billion barrels (Worldwatch Institute, 2002).

Following World War II, the food system shifted from local to national and global food sources. Regional and global specialization spurred by lower transportation costs and improvements in refrigerated trucking reinforced transition to nonlocal food systems. With improved transportation, perishable items such as meats, eggs, fruits, and vegetables, as well as some perishable processed products like orange juice, could be shipped across the globe at affordable prices. Land and climate, coupled with technology, help determine

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the pattern of regional and global specialization.

Proponents of a globalized food system question how producers in Third World nations will feed themselves if developed nations stop purchasing items such as avocados, Argentinean beef and coffee. Although transitioning to a locally based food system doesn't imply immediate consumer spending to circulate 100% within their own locale, there could be longterm benefits for developing countries from a "local shift". The expenses of global food distribution has "forced" importers to pay very little to Third World producers in order to retain their customers whom are accustomed to paying very little for the products. Coffee growers, for example, earn 10% of what consumers pay for coffee in the supermarket whereas cocoa growers receive less than 4% the price of a chocolate bar (Bowden, 2002). Raj Patel (2007) claims that the, "...business of farming is, at the end of the day, constrained by the playing field of the market." Farmers are continually faced with foreclosure threats and fewer options while agribusinesses increase their control and power. In 2007, 40% of the world's trade in food was controlled by transnational agricultural corporations forcing farmers to comply with the wishes of big business (Patel, 2007).

Perhaps as consumers purchase more from their own locale, Third World farmers will once again produce food for their locale and start strengthening their regional economy. In addition to social costs, today's food production has environmental ramifications related to long transport miles. A ton of bottled water generates 3.8g of carbon monoxide, 5.75g of nitrogen oxide and 0.5g of hydrocarbons traveling just *one* mile by road (Bowden, 2002). Brian Halweil (2002) stresses that some of the worst "culprit" are high value items with low caloric content such as lettuce, fruit and frozen foods. For example, a head of lettuce grown in the Salinas Valley of California and shipped to Washington, DC requires 36 times more energy in fossil fuel to ship than it provides in food energy.

Typical meal prepared in Iowa using imported potatoes, cabbage, roast, tomatoes and peppers totals 2,577 miles whereas a comparable meal of Iowan ingredients reduces the miles to 74 (Halweil, 2002). A study by the Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture found that 16 fruits and vegetables consumed from a mainstream grocery store in Iowa traveled 25,000 miles whereas the same fruits grown locally traveled 716 miles (Bedford, 2006).

It is worth at least considering the role of localized food systems given its historic success at feeding small, sustainable communities (Mark, 2007; Moorhead, 2009).

In the other hand, World wide, the area of arable land is decreasing (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United

Nations 2004). Soil, water and overall environmental degradation are direct results of industrialized farming practices that form the foundation for the conventional food system (Bawden 1999; Gardener 1996; Goldsmith 1999; Kimbrell 2002; Wiese 2004).

The pollution of ground and surface water, caused by the overuse of chemical fertilizers and pesticides in agriculture adversely affects drinking water supplies (Kimbrell 1999).

Stepping away from the prevailing food system to produce foods native to our agroecosystems isn't about taking a giant leap forward. It implies taking small steps back to study the regional food supply history and looking forward by analyzing the needs of consumers and producers. Every country, region and town has different requirements and preferences with numerous solutions. Those who eat and those who grow need to work together to find the best answers for their particular locale.

1.2. Sapce for Aalternative Food System

While some may see an unassailable logic to the processes of agricultural industrialization, a number of alternatives are emerging to challenge this logic of inevitability. A productivist agricultural system is actually leading some consumers to rethink the way food is produced and their role as consumers. For instance, a growing number of consumers are interested in the production and consumption of "quality" foods as opposed to homogeneous global food (Renard, 1999; Kirwan, 2004). Quality foods are identified as being the opposite of mass-produced foods and are defined as being more specialized or having differentiating attributes. Support for alternative food systems mirrors to some extent what is now being described as a shift toward a post-productivist agriculture centered on the following transitions: a shift from quantity to quality; on-farm diversification; extensification and the promotion of sustainable farming through policy; dispersion of production patterns; and environmental regulation (Evans et al., 2002). The growing alternative food system movement includes both consumers and producers advocating for such things as organic or low-input farming, local food security, and a more equitable distribution of power within the food industry (Henderson, 2000; Kolondinsky and Pelch, 1997; Che et al., 2005). Alternative food system consumers place less emphasis on the production of commodities and more emphasis on finding local and regional market niches, rather than national and global markets (Gray, 2005). These advocates critique the global, industrial food system as leading to environmental degradation and contributing to the deterioration of rural communities (Hassanein, 1999).

They argue that returning to a more localized agricultural

system would benefit rural economic development (Padel and Foster, 2005; Lyson, 2004) and that farmers would be able to capture more of the consumer's dollar through local direct marketing (Cameron and de Vries, 2006). Alternative advocates also believe that conventional retailing distances producers and consumers (Hinrichs, 2003) and that local food production and consumption systems bridge the gap between producer and consumer, leading to increased trust and mutual understanding of the benefits of agriculture. Advocates of alternative food systems also suggest that industrialized agriculture actually increases food prices for consumers due to monopolistic control by a handful of global agribusiness firms as opposed to a more competitive market with more buyers (Welsch, 1996). Alternative food systems have been characterized as having many attributes, including: being self-reliant; being locally or regionally based; being comprised of diversified farming operations; and including many farms that minimize the application of inputs for both environmental and economic reasons (Hinrichs, 2000; Reynolds, 2004). Proponents of these systems emphasize a less industrialized, less centralized and more diverse structure of agriculture dependent upon independent household production for local and regional markets (Welsh, 1996).

Demand for locally grown food is also growing, as evidenced by substantial growth in the number of farmers' markets and community supported agricultural enterprises. The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) (2004) estimates that the number of farmers' markets in the United States grew by 111 percent between 1999 and 2004, with over 3,700 now operating in the United States alone. There were also 1,034 CSAs operating in the United States in 2004 (Tegtmeier and Duffy, 2005), up from only two in 1982. Experts estimate this pattern of growth will continue as more and more consumers seek out organic and/or locally grown foods (Organic Trade Association, n.d.).

2. Growing Interest in Local Foods in the United States is the Result of Several Movements (Guptill and Wilkins, 2002)

2.1. The Environmental Movement

Environmental movements are networks of informal interactions that may include, as well as individuals and groups who have no organizational affiliation, organizations of varying degrees of formality (including even political parties, especially Green parties) that are engaged in collective action motivated by shared identity or concern about environmental issues. Such networks are generally

loose and uninstitutionalized, but their forms of action and their degree of integration vary. However, environmental movements are not identical to organizations or episodes of protest. It is only when organizations (and other, usually less formally organized actors) are networked and engaged in collective action, whether or not it involves protest, that an environmental movement exists (Diani 1995; Rootes 2004).

2.2. The Community Food-Security Movement

Local food characteristics have commonly been associated with efforts to improve food security, particularly at the community level. Food security means that all people at all times have access "to enough food for an active healthy life," and is a necessary condition for a nourished and healthy population (Nord et al., 2009). Those who are food insecure have limited or uncertain availability of healthy and safe food or have uncertain ability to acquire food in normal ways. As of 2008, more than 6.7 million households in the United States had very low food security (i.e., multiple instances of reduced food intake and disrupted eating patterns) (Nord et al., 2009). seeks to enhance access to safe, healthy, and culturally appropriate food for all consumers and Challenges to the dominance of large corporations also have contributed to efforts to expand local food.

The Slow Food movement, which originated in Italy, is a response to homogenous, mass-produced food production, and the "fast" nature of people's lives, by encouraging traditional ways of growing, producing, and preparing food (Gaytan, 2003).

The local food movement, also reflects an increasing interest by consumers in supporting local farmers, and in better understanding the origin of their food (Ilbery and Maye, 2005; Pirog, 2009). Local food movements have been discussed within the context of post-industrial food systems, civic agriculture, sustainable food systems, community food security, food sovereignty, post-productivism, and others. A full discussion of these alternative food systems and concepts is beyond the scope of this paper; however, further information on these topics can be found in Allen (Allen et al. (2003); Blue (2009) Smithers et al.(2008).

While organic foods are among the first in the marketplace to capitalize on consumer interest in how food is raised, more and more consumers are becoming interested in foods connected to a particular place (Halweil, 2005; Ostrom, 2006). The reasons for this include widely publicized food safety incidents, growing mistrust in standardized or mass food production, and ethical and environmental concerns associated with how and where food is produced and how it is transported (Ilbery and Maye, 2006; Murdoch and Miele, 1999). Re-localizing food systems is one way to deal with

insecurities emerging from food produced in distant places and the reliance on experts, expert systems (such as standardization), and the marketplace (Dixon and Banwell, 2004). Some are even predicting local may become a more important food attribute than organic in terms of opposing the contemporary industrial food system (Ilbery and Maye, 2006). The term “beyond organic” to describe the importance of qualities beyond chemical free is emerging in the discourse associated with sustainable agriculture (or alternative food systems) describing consumer questioning of the sustainability of organic and support for locally produced foods (DeLind, 2000). Others are even touting that local production is more sustainable or civic-minded because it embodies a commitment to an economically, environmentally and socially sustainable system of agriculture and food production relying on local resources and serving local markets and consumers compared to the standardized definition of organic (Lyson, 2004; Gray, 2005; Norberg-Hodge, 2000).

How can we get from where we are now, an oil dependent economy with very little food security, to a localised, resilient and self-reliant food economy” (Rob Hopkins, 2008). The ‘transition’ response: localization.

2.3. Local Food Production Practices

Local food movements take many forms or, as Allen (2004) suggests, are comprised of many different practices. Farmers’ markets are experiencing a dramatic renaissance in the United States (Starr et al., 2003; Lyson, 2004). In fact, according to the USDA Agricultural Marketing Service, over 3,700 farmers’ markets are in operation in the United States and their numbers have grown by 111 percent since 1994. Traditionally, farmers’ markets were the usual way of buying and selling rural produce, but with the growth in supermarkets, farmer’s markets became less prominent places to purchase these foods; however, beginning in the 1970s they began to reappear in the United States (Cameron and de Vries, 2006). Their resurgence is believed to be due to a number of factors including increasing quality expectations among consumers, the unique variety of produce available at these markets and their reasonable prices (Govindasamy et al., 1998). Concern about the distance or miles food travels and the effect this has on its freshness and the environment has also contributed to growing consumer interest in farmers’ markets (Halweil, 2004).

Farmers’ markets are public facilities where farmers, growers and producers gather on a regular basis to sell fresh fruit, vegetables, and other farm products directly to consumers (Cameron and de Vries, 2006). They provide consumers with a wide variety of fresh, local and often organic produce, cheese and meats and offer an alternative or supplemental

outlet for farmers not fully integrated in the conventional food system (Lyson, 2004). Farmers’ markets are beginning to be recognized as potential engines of economic and community development. They can provide a steady source of income for farmers and serve as an outlet for goods and services not readily available through formal market channels. Farmers’ markets are also a place where consumers can interact amongst each other and with farmers (Lyson, 2004). Another popular form of local food production is Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) (Starr et al., 2003). Community Supported Agriculture originated in Japan and spread to the United States in the 1980s (Lamine, 2005). Today, over 1000 documented CSAs are in the United States alone (Starr et al., 2003). The idea of CSA is that a group of individuals or families commit resources (either labor or money or both) to a farmer at the beginning of a growing season and in return they receive a share of what the farm produces that season (Lyson, 2004). By committing resources up front, the shareholders assume some of the risks associated with farming (Lyson, 2004). During the 1970s another practice that emerged is the sourcing of local, in-season ingredients by chefs and to some extent consumers (Starr et al., 2003). More recently there is emerging interest in connecting chefs with local farmers in an effort to build reciprocal relationships where farmers, chefs and restaurant goers benefit from the purchase and use of local ingredients (Lyson, 2004). During the mid-1980s the movement for slow food emerged with the goal of celebrating and protecting traditional and small-scale producers (Starr et al., 2003). During the 1990s, Chef’s Collaborative, an organization made up of chefs and restaurateurs, formed with a focus on food quality and an expanded emphasis on the impact of food choices on our health, the environment and the preservation of cultural diversity (Starr et al., 2003).

2.4. The Case for Local Food Systems

Many reasons for supporting local food systems have been articulated. According to Wilkins (2005), “local food systems make a necessary economic exchange something more than the biological need for nutrients and energy and the pleasure of taste into something that reflects a broader set of considerations beyond the health of the individual.” Advocates claim that local food systems enhance health, food-security and well-being for persons, communities, and ecological systems (Guptill and Wilkins, 2002). An especially prominent argument for local food systems is that the dollars spent for locally produced foods circulates more through the local community than dollars spent for foods produced elsewhere by multinational food corporations (Lyson, 2004; Ostrom, 2006). One of the promises of local food systems is that through closer connections between producers and consumers, a shared perspective of respect and

a long-term commitment to farming emerges among all food system stakeholders (DeLind, 2002; Lyson, 2004). In fact, local food systems are believed to shorten the distance between producers and consumers both spatially and psychologically, allowing a greater trust to develop between the central food system stakeholders via face-to-face relations (Raynolds, 2002). From a public policy perspective, food system advocates believe local food systems should be given more attention. They believe local food systems benefit consumers and are easily relatable because they are developed around the lived experience of food – shopping, cooking and eating and rely on a positive perspective of food that is familiar, safe and healthy (Aubrun *et al.*, 2005). A more recent development associated with the case for local food is the emerging critique of organic food production (discussed in some depth earlier). With the conventionalization of organic, local food production is increasingly viewed as a potentially more sustainable system than organic. This critique is sometimes referred to as “beyond organic.” It is argued that local food systems’ dependence on direct producer and consumer networks makes them less vulnerable to being incorporated into the industrialized food system (Guthman, 1998). While a number of benefits are associated with local food systems, a number of scholars are cautioning against romanticizing them as the magic bullet solving food system and societal ills.

3. Local Food

Unlike organic food, there is no legal or universally accepted definition of local food. In part, it is a geographical concept related to the distance between food producers and consumers. In addition to geographic proximity of producer and consumer, however, local food can also be defined in terms of social and supply chain characteristics. In this section, we first describe local foods as a geographic concept. Then, we examine other features that have been used to define “local” foods. Finally, we briefly describe a typology of local food markets, which adds a more tangible perspective to the local foods concept.

3.1. There is no Generally Accepted Definition of “Local” Food

Though “local” has a geographic connotation, there is no consensus on a definition in terms of the distance between production and consumption. Definitions related to geographic distance between production and sales vary by regions, companies, consumers, and local food markets. According to the definition adopted by the U.S. Congress in the 2008 Food, Conservation, and Energy Act (2008 Farm Act), the total distance that a product can be transported and still be considered a “locally or regionally produced

agricultural food product” is less than 400 miles from its origin, or within the State in which it is produced. Definitions based on market arrangements, including direct-to-consumer arrangements such as regional farmers’ markets, or direct-to-retail/foodservice arrangements such as farm sales to schools, are well-recognized categories and are used in this report to provide statistics on the market development of local foods.

“Locavore”, the 2007 New Oxford American Dictionary Word of the Year, refers to a person whose diet focuses on foods grown and produced nearby, typically 100 miles. The term reflects a growing trend of using locally grown ingredients, taking advantage of seasonally available foodstuffs that can be bought and prepared without the need for extra preservatives. The “locavore” movement encourages consumers to buy from farmers’ markets or even to grow or pick their own food, arguing that fresh, local products, environmental responsibility, and support of local farmers. (Halweil, 2007).

3.2. Production of Locally Marketed Food is more Likely to Occur on Small Farms Located in or Near Metropolitan Counties

Local food markets typically involve small farmers, heterogeneous products, and short supply chains in which farmers also perform marketing functions, including storage, packaging, transportation, distribution, and advertising. According to the 2007 U.S. Census of Agriculture, most farms that sell directly to consumers are small farms with less than \$50,000 in total farm sales, located in urban corridors of the Northeast and the West Coast.

In 2007, direct-to-consumer sales accounted for a larger share of sales for small farms, as defined above, than for medium-sized farms (total farm sales of \$50,000 to \$499,999) and large farms (total farm sales of \$500,000 or more). Produce farms engaged in local marketing made 56 percent of total agricultural direct sales to consumers, while accounting for 26 percent of all farms engaged in direct-to-consumer marketing. Direct-to-consumer sales are higher for the farms engaged in other entrepreneurial activities, such as organic production, tourism, and custom work (planting, plowing, harvesting, etc. for others), than for other farms. In 2007, direct sales by all U.S. farms surpassed custom work to become the leading on-farm entrepreneurial activity in terms of farm household participation. Barriers to local food-market entry and expansion include: capacity constraints for small farms and lack of distribution systems for moving local food into mainstream markets; limited research, education, and training for marketing local food; and uncertainties related to regulations that may affect local food production, such as food safety requirements.

3.3. Local Food Market Typology

Because there is no universal definition of local food, defining types of local food markets facilitates our ability to evaluate these markets. Two basic types of local food markets include those where transactions are conducted directly between farmers and consumers (direct-to-consumer), and direct sales by farmers to restaurants, retail stores, and institutions such as government entities, hospitals, and schools (direct-to-retail/foodservice). 4 Venues for direct to-consumer marketing of local foods include farmers' markets, community supported agriculture (CSAs), farm stands/on farm sales, and "pick your own" operations. Other less formal sources of local foods that are typically difficult to measure or are unmeasured include home gardening and sharing among neighbors, foraging and hunting, and gleaning programs.

3.4. Direct-to-Consumer Marketing

The Census of Agriculture, conducted by USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service every 5 years, currently provides the only measurable indicator of the direct-to-consumer local food marketing channel. However, "direct-to-consumer marketing" and "direct sales to consumers" as defined by the most recent agricultural census (2007) are not equivalent concepts.⁵ For example, catalog or Internet sales are included in the agricultural census's direct sales to consumers, but customers are typically not local (Hughes et al., 2007).

3.5. Farmers' Markets

A farmers' market is a common area where several farmers gather on a recurring basis to sell a variety of fresh fruits, vegetables, and other farm products directly to consumers. They were once the core focal point for selling fresh products in urban centers, but their significance gradually declined as cities grew larger and more mobile (Futamura, 2007). Most established farmers' markets have hired individuals to oversee the organization, rules and regulations, and promotions for all growers. The number of farmers' markets grew to 5,274 markets in 2009, a 92-percent increase from 1998 (USDA, AMS, 2009). They are concentrated in densely populated areas of the Northeast, Midwest, and West Coast. According to the USDA Agricultural Marketing Service's 2006 National Farmers' Market Survey, the most popular product category sold at farmers' markets was fresh fruits and vegetables, which was sold by nearly 92 percent of farmers' market managers in 2005, followed by herbs and flowers, and honey, nuts, and preserves (Ragland and Tropp, 2009). However, not all products sold at farmers' markets are part of the local food system (Hughes et al., 2007). For example, some vendors may come from outside the local region, and

some local vendors may not sell products that are produced within the region.

3.6. Community Supported Agriculture (CSA)

During the 1960s, the concept of community supported agriculture originated in Switzerland and Japan (Farnsworth et al., 1996). A group of people buy shares for a portion of the expected harvest of a farm. CSAs traditionally required a one-time payment at the beginning of the season, but have since become more flexible, offering two- to four-installment payment plans or payments on a monthly basis (Woods et al., 2009). Consumers often take on added risk because they pay a fixed amount in advance, regardless of the realized quantity and quality of the harvest. Some CSAs offer members a price discount in exchange for providing farm labor. Members may be required to pick up their food at the farm, or it may be delivered to a centralized location, farmers' market, or directly to the home or office (Woods et al., 2009). In 1986, there were 2 CSA operations in the United States (Adam, 2006). By 2005, there were 1,144 CSAs compared to 761 in 2001, an increase of 50 percent (Adam, 2006). In 2010, the Robyn Van En Center, provider of a national resource center about CSAs based at Wilson College in Chambersburg, PA, estimates that there are over 1,400 CSAs in operation, but a 2009 survey found 700 CSAs in 9 States, which suggests the number could be much greater. An online registry estimates that the number of CSAs exceed 2,500 (Local Harvest, 2010) and are concentrated in the Northeast.

3.7. Other Types of Direct-to-Consumer Marketing

Other types of direct-to-consumer marketing include pick-your own, farm stands, community gardening, and on-farm stores (Lawless et al., 1999).

Pick-your-own (PYO), or U-pick, operations became popular in the 1930s and 1940s, during the Depression and after World War II, when produce prices were low and producers could not cover labor and material costs (Lloyd et al., 1995). Crops that are well-suited for PYO operations include those with high labor requirements per acre, yet require little expertise to harvest. Examples include berries, tomatoes, pumpkins and Christmas trees. Roadside farm stands and on-farm stores operate year round from a permanent structure, or only during harvest periods from a truck, trailer, or tent (Lloyd et al., 1995).

4. The Role of Local Markets in Iran

Market is the heart of every city and that is why as human

started to reside in cities, residential places established around the business centers. In the first place, further to being an economic place for selling and buying of every product, market could be an exhibition center of cultural products. If you visit the local and indigenous markets of each city in Iran, you will be mesmerized by colour, taste and the miracle of Iranian artists' hands, who not only sustain through dependence on Iranian spiritual resources, but also exhibit a part of their ancestor's identity and legacy. In the other hand, these kinds of markets make a good opportunity for job-making. women are the main administrators of the most local markets whole over the country. in the specific day of week, this persevere group, come together to both exhibit a part of their art and to make money as the breadwinner.

The local markets are the place for selling the products which are produced by the sellers themselves and in the regions except big cities, we can see the local markets in suburbs or in villages which have been formed by the farmers and the animal breeders and the producers of handicrafts. in these markets, the products are being sold which are mostly supplied and produced manually and traditionally by the producers themselves (figure, 1).



Figure 1. local market in north of Iran (Fruit, Vegetables and Crafts)

In the north of Iran, local markets are the most thriving ones in the Iran. female breadwinners produce stuffs with the

minimum capital and bring them to market for selling. these kinds of markets have a good security for the working of women.

The local markets had been prevailed since a long time ago in different regions of Iran (Rezvani, 2003) and the existence of them had been a cause for transformations in the social and economic life of different inhabitants, especially rural areas.

The local markets as an economical phenomenon, have different functions. further to meet the needs of the inhabitants of rural regions, with dependence on local and indigenous productions and direct supply of them in the market which cause the appropriate price of products, motivate the rural people to produce more and more. Increase in economical productivity for rural and urban people will ensue from more production. The weekly markets is one of the properties of rural societies of developing countries. weekly markets can be seen in populous rural regains of iran, such as south coast of caspian sea and parts of azarbajejan. While dry plateau of center of iran and in the far-fetched oases, which are underpopulated, these kinds of markets are whether rare or not exist at all.(Afsar keshmiri, 1993). Traditional markets have a long history in the cities and villages of the north of Iran. Some of the tourists who had visited the Iran, mentioned the issue of local markets of the north of Iran. "shefiled" in the book "occasional markets and central place system in the region of gilan" writes: the existence of these markets in Iran could be traced back to the gradual influence of Islam and Arabs in Iran.

"Macensy" in his itinerary of north mentions multiple markets in gilan and mazandaran such as fereydunkenar, babol, mir bazar and amir kala (Khosravi, 2002).

The weekly rural markets, initially, have been the place for bartering the agricultural, bestial and garden productions and handicrafts, which the transferring of urban products, also, used to be done beside of them (figure,2). after the land reform and land division and more freedom of farmers in the production of different kinds of agricultural products, weekly markets started to prosper. The improvement of routes and the construction of new roads also caused that more urban people enter the villages and sell from the local markets and as a result weekly markets exited from exclusive place for the bartering of rural people, and urban people started to interfere in them and the role of wholesale buyers is really important. weekly markets in the north villages of Iran are usually held in the one of the days of week. for example in table.1 spatial distribution of local (weekly) markets in the villages of mazandaran state has been shown. Further to these markets, annual rural markets also get held in the villages (Khosravi, 2002).

Table 1. local distribution of local(weekly) markets in the villages of mazandaran state, mazandaran agricultural crusade organization, 2005.

Local(weekly) rural markets	place	number	percentage
Saturday	Juybar-babol-babolsar-sari	4	13.3
Sunday	Juybar-babol2-ramsar-behshahr	5	16.7
Monday	Juybar-babol-ramsar-sari-behshahr	5	16.7
Tuesday	Juybar-babol2-ramsar-sari-behshahr	6	16.7
Wednesday	Babol3-juybar	4	20
Thursday	Juybar-babol2-babolsar-sari-behshahr	5	13.3
Triday	Babol	1	16.7
Total		30	3.3

**Figure 2.** weekly markets in the north of Iran (Mazandaran)

Weekly rural markets have two kinds: markets which are being held in cities and those which are situated in villages. most of the north of Iran weekly markets are of the second type. These markets are formed weekly or two times a week in the margins of villages at the intersections of main roads. most of their products are agricultural, industrial products can be seen in these markets though. These types of markets are not well-disciplined and the working hours of them is short and is from 7 am till 4 pm (Tavajjoh and Nurizade, 2001 and Khushfar, 1999).

The type of available goods by the urban and rural sellers changes constantly with the seasons of the year. In each season, specific kinds of goods are being sold, except for the bestial products which only change in their quantity. urban salesmen bring the kinds of goods to rural areas, which are in the first place parts of basic and fundamental consumption of the households such as clothes, shoe, sock, different kinds of containers and dishes, kitchen lamps and illuminating lamps. In the other side rural vendors, in the different seasons of

year, sell goods such as different kinds of vegetables, fruits, summer crops and various types of birds and fished. In some of the markets, rural handicrafts such as wooden spoon, sock, glove, sweeper and wicker works are also being sold (Pur Musa Arabani, 1973).

Weekly markets vendors are divided to farmers and non-farmers:

A. farmers: who the main job of them is the agriculture and sell their produced goods in different season of the year in the rural markets of their place of residence. Another group of these vendors, retail their produced goods in the farms.

Some of the farmers are seasonal vendors who offer their products, such as bestial and agricultural products , birds and handicrafts which are produced in different season, to the market .many of these vendors are urban women who mostly sell dairy products, all kinds of vegetables, chicken, rooster, fruits and.

Non-farmers: are the vendors who bring the non-agricultural goods such as textile, bag, shoe, kitchen containers and dishes, weekly throughout the year from nearby cities (figure, 3&4) (Barabadi, 1995).

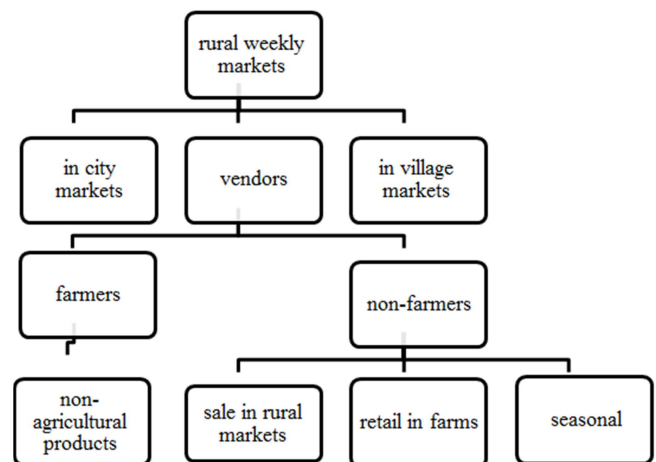
**Figure 3.** Markets and types of local vendors in Iran



Figure 4. Markets and local Sellers in Iran a) cereals b) vegetables

The role of rural women in agricultural economy the state of women employment in the agriculture division has been shown in table 2. As you can see, with the increase of population of agriculture division in the world, the share of women work-force with respect to the total agricultural work-force has been increased. The numbers show the

positive trend of rural women economical contribution in society, this trend is really slow though. Rural Women, Food Security And Agricultural Cooperatives (2003). With regard to the level of economic development, women play a central role in the agriculture and rural development in the most Asian-oceanic countries.

Table 2. Women's employment in the agricultural sector

Indicators of population/year	1950	1970	1990	2000	2010(Estimated)
Agricultural population in the world(1000)	1621927	2001885	2465015	2601722	2667219
The share of developing countries in world agricultural population (%)	81.39	90.28	94.5	96.09	97.12
Women ensabor participation of developing countries in the world (%)	68.4	69.09	73.53	75.83	78.29
Women share in the labor total agriculture world	39.01	41.13	42.69	43.55	44.16
Women share in the agriculture from agriculture labor total Developed countries	41.07	43.77	38.38	36.13	33.73
Women share in the agriculture from agriculture labor total Developing countries	38.59	40.85	42.93	43.83	44.44
Proportion of the female labor from agriculture labor total(%)	44.7	45.87	47.34	48.1	48.74

One of the indices of national economical rehabilitation and the social progress of women contributions is the quality of their contribution in economic structures. Women, especially in rural area, have a major role in production of different kind of agricultural and bestial goods; it is in such an extent that without their aid and contribution as the work-force in farms, reaching the agricultural progress is impossible.

Women peripheral activities in handicrafts and productions of some of the good always have been set forth. in the north regions of Iran 70% of the cultivation of rice is done by women, and their activities usually boil down in disinfection of seed, sowing the seed in reservoir, transplantation, maintenance of reservoir, irrigation of reservoir, manuring,

weeding, corp-spraying, harvest and transferring of crop to store. women also have contributions of 60% in tea-planting and 80% in the harvest of cotton in these regions (Merhabi Basharabadi,1997).

Table 3, evaluate the share of employment of rural women according to different kinds of economic activities. women employment share in agriculture division had been 55.6% in the year 1986 between the other economic divisions which have decreased to 36.1% in the year 1996 furthermore with calculation of workers' growth rate in different districts, it gets obvious that the growth rate of the workers of industry district has been greater than the growth rate of the workers of the other districts.

Table 3. Women employment in different districts of agriculture, industry and services, public census of 1986-96.

Economic Section	Number(1986)	Share	Number(1996)	Share	Growth rate
Agriculture	246573	55.6	268274	36.1	0.85
Industry	156720	35.3	396066	53.2	9.7
Services	40207	9.1	79454	10.7	7.0
All economic	443500	100	73794	100	5.3

Ahmadi et al., (2005), in examination of local markets of mazandaran province from the eyes of vendors and buyers have stated: these kinds of markets have a considerable role on the economy of rural households, in a way that average monthly income of vendors from selling goods in local market has been about 230 thousands toman. Also roughly 70% of customers believed that the goods and products which have been supplied in these kinds of markets are cheaper than the other places, especially rural shops. So it is recommended that these kinds of markets receive overarching support for their influential economic role. they also asserted that with respect to local markets properties such as vocational diversity, complementary role for the activities of rural people, peripheral income for rural people, decrease of dependence on cities, formation of economic and sociological bonds between rural people and..., it seems that these markets are one of the factors of economic and sociological prosperity and rural development in Iran.

5. Conclusion

Although much effort has been undertaken by local food advocates to engage individual consumers with social, economic, and environmental concerns through locality, the ability of consumers to engage in individually-based localism will be limited as long as the broader context in which food provisioning activities are undertaken is ignored. Interest in local food has grown steadily in recent years, with people seeing not just its nutritional and taste benefits, but also its political role, alongside its ability to strengthen local economies.

In the light of climate change and resource depletion, that the role of local food is no longer an optional extra, but a key necessity in a resource-constrained future. In the wider context of economic localisation, economist David Fleming writes, "...localisation stands, at best, at the limits of practical possibility, but it has the decisive argument in its favour that there will be no alternative" (Fleming 2006).

Local food is looked as an alternative approach to the current paradigm, arguing that interests of sustainability, resilience, health and nutrition and long-term economic stability are best served by a move, through a well-designed and integrated approach, towards the area meeting its food needs as close to home as is practicably possible and Resulting in a sustained social movement can be realized.

With consideration that local markets have a deep background in middle east cities such as iran and further to economic barter, have important cultural functions, they facilitate the transference of rich and intertwined culture

which alone can cause cultural enrichment and further to mixing of different cultures, they sell their special cultural products (Handicrafts) and that is why nowadays they need more attention. The main and initial objective and philosophy of formation of the local rural markets had been the direct selling of rural productions by the producers themselves which gradually by elapsing time and diversity of industrial and urban products, percentage of supplying of rural products has decreased by far. In some markets, only hardly you can find the people who want to sell their or their village's products in these places. Thus attention to necessity of reviving of initial culture and philosophy of establishment of these bazaars could be a influential actions toward making job for people, especially young rural people and even some rural people who could not make ends meet by farming. The promotions of the role of rural women in this markets through the supply of their agricultural products, could to some extent improve the economy of rural household. Thus if we blossom the local markets, the production costs will decrease, with omission of mediators the capital will be absorbed in production, workshops start to thrive and capital and work-force productivity in country economy will increase. the collection of these actions would pave the way for justice and economic growth. The increase of healthy competition, omission of mediators, employment, just distribution of wealth, decrease of inflation rate, making the indigenous culture known by the selling of handicrafts, increase of product quality through the increase of product competition and help to economic growth and development are some of the boons of prosperity of local markets whole over the country.

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