

PANDEMIC ON A PLATE: CRISIS AS AN OPPORTUNITY FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF ALTERNATIVE FOOD NETWORKS?

MID-TERM CONFERENCE

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Introduction – motivation to conduct the survey

- Spring 2020 - **European initiative** led by Danish Technological Institute and Copenhagen Business School,
- questionnaire in 16 languages, survey across the European continent to get answers from at least 500 households in each country,
- the questionnaire focused on **various aspects related to food** (obtaining, preparing...) and diet while trying to capture a possible change during the pandemic,
- the information obtained (scientific evidence base) will be used to create a **set of recommendations on how to adapt food chains** so that they are **more sustainable** and better able to **withstand** outages in times of crisis.
- More information on European research: www.food-covid-19.org
- First publication:

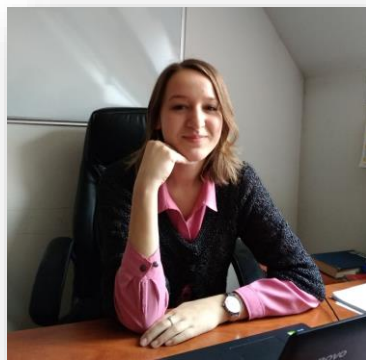
Janssen, M., Chang, B. P., Hristov, H., Pravst, I., Profeta, A., & Millard, J. (2021). Changes in Food Consumption During the COVID-19 Pandemic: Analysis of Consumer Survey Data From the First Lockdown Period in Denmark, Germany, and Slovenia. *Frontiers in nutrition*, 8, 60.

Data collection in the Czechia

- Czechia joined in June 2020, the activity is financially supported by the Food for the Future Strategy of the AV21 Strategy of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic,
- at the turn of June and July, **530 responses in the representative survey** were obtained (Median agency, a combination of the CAWI and CATI methods),
- the survey finds out: ways of obtaining food, places of purchase, frequency of purchase, eating habits ... **impact of pandemics and anti-pandemic measures** on Czech households,
- Czech questionnaire expanded with informal ways of obtaining food (self-provisioning, gardening),
- the survey will be repeated to obtain results in the longer term.

Czech team

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- PhDr. Jan Vávra, Ph.D., University of South Bohemia, Department of Regional Management and Law
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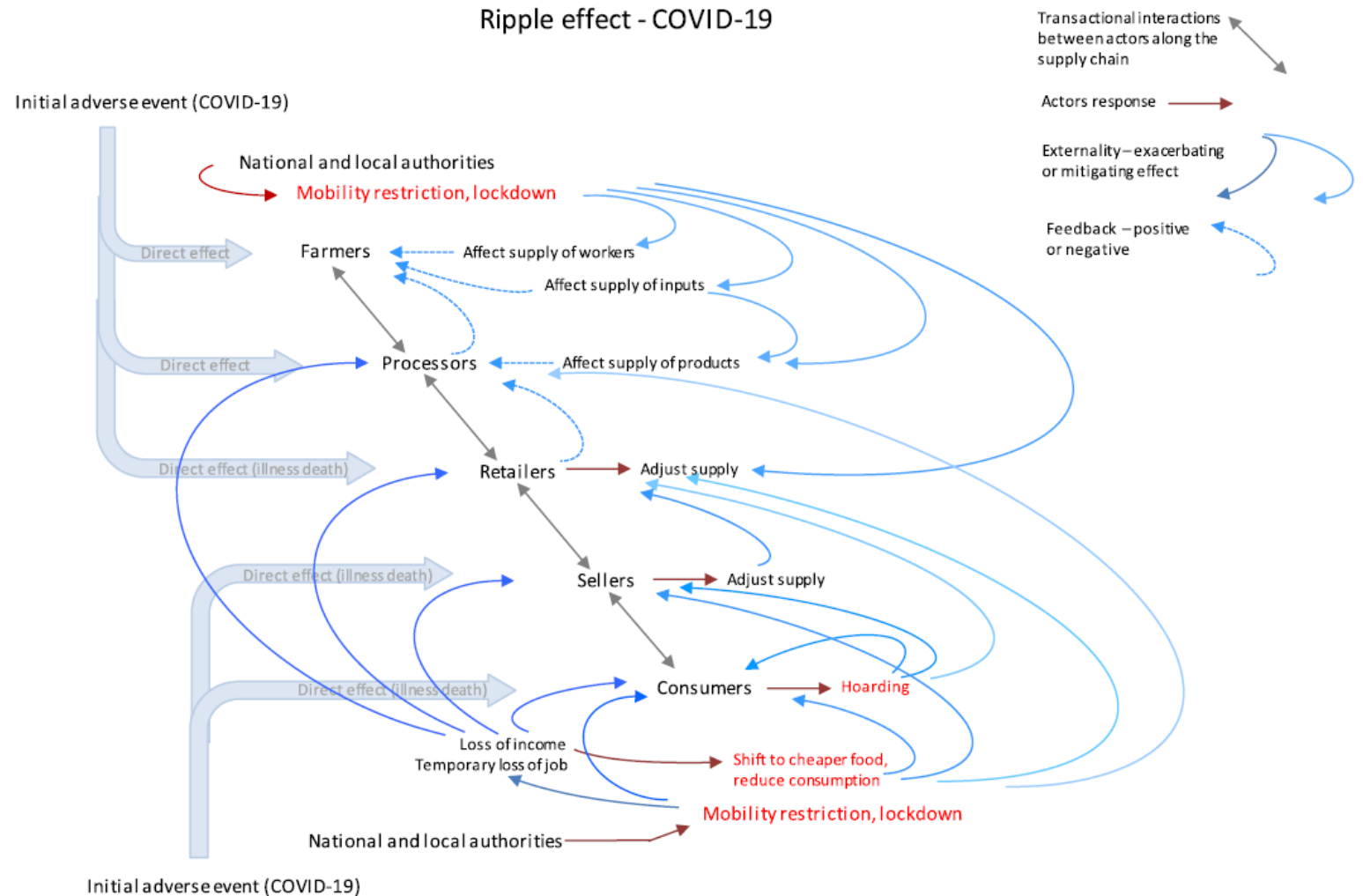


Assumptions of our further (partial) research

- The data will be used for more detailed international research, but we are interested in the following issues **in the Czechia**:
 - no significant changes were found in the first survey (linked to the first pandemic wave) -> *does this mean a certain resilience of Czech households or is it too early to draw conclusions?*
 - from some of the statements of the respondents we can assume that there is a growing interest in food self-provisioning, local resources and a healthy diet,
 - deterioration of the economic situation increases the appeal to address the resilience of households (and thus the entire agri-food sector),
 - is the crisis an opportunity to strengthen the position of Alternative Food Networks?

Conceptualization

- Situation associated with government measures has completely affected the entire agri-food system,
- at the local level - producers dependent on regional sales (restaurants, canteens, farmers markets ...) do not have sales,
- many households are facing a reduction in income.



Conceptualization

- Alternative food networks (AFNs) concept **explaining and analysing the growing popularity of local food** (e.g. Renting et al., 2003, Maye et al., 2007) is focused on increasing the sustainability of agro-food systems,
- aimed to (re)connect producers and consumers, (re)spatialize food provenance and quality, and (re)scale food governance processes in ways committed to social justice, ecological sustainability, and economic viability (Kneafsey, 2010; cit in Santo, 2019, p. 76),
- AFNs: - **formal** (Community supported agriculture, boxes schemes, farmers markets..) - **informal/non-market** (food self-provisioning – **FSP**, in allotments, gardens, etc... e.g. Vávra et al., 2018; Vávra et al., 2021),
- crisis as **opportunity spaces** (see Grillitsch and Sotarauta, 2020),
- **window of opportunity** in relation to agri-food sector (see Dannenberg et al., 2020; Hobbs, 2020).

Results

Figure 1 What were the main ways of procuring food in your household before/during COVID-19?

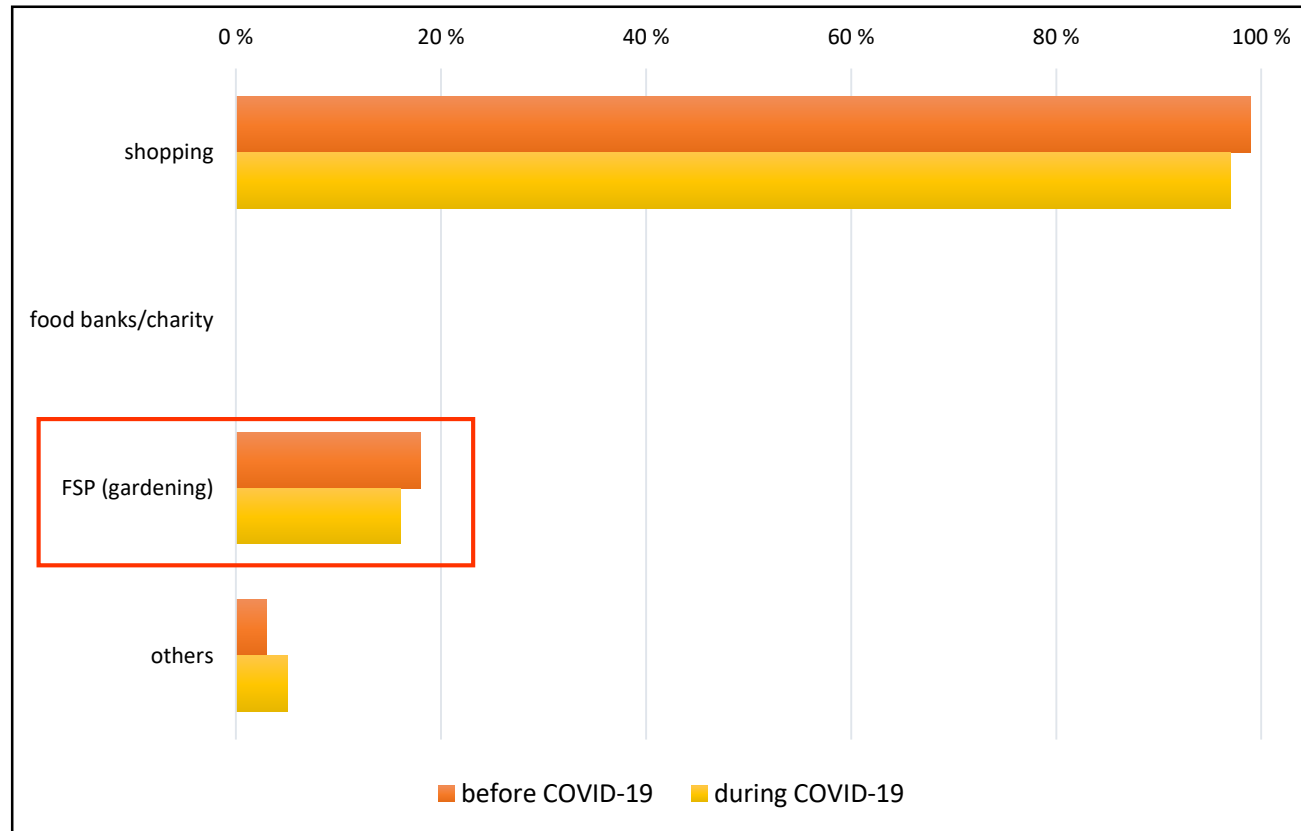
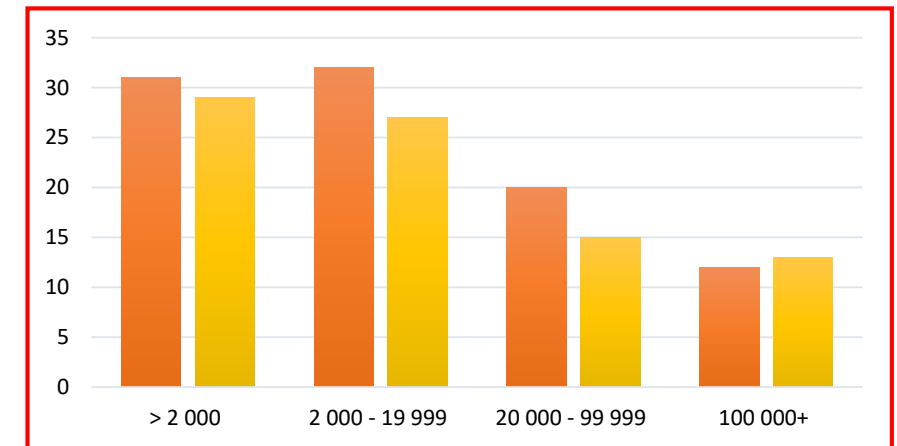


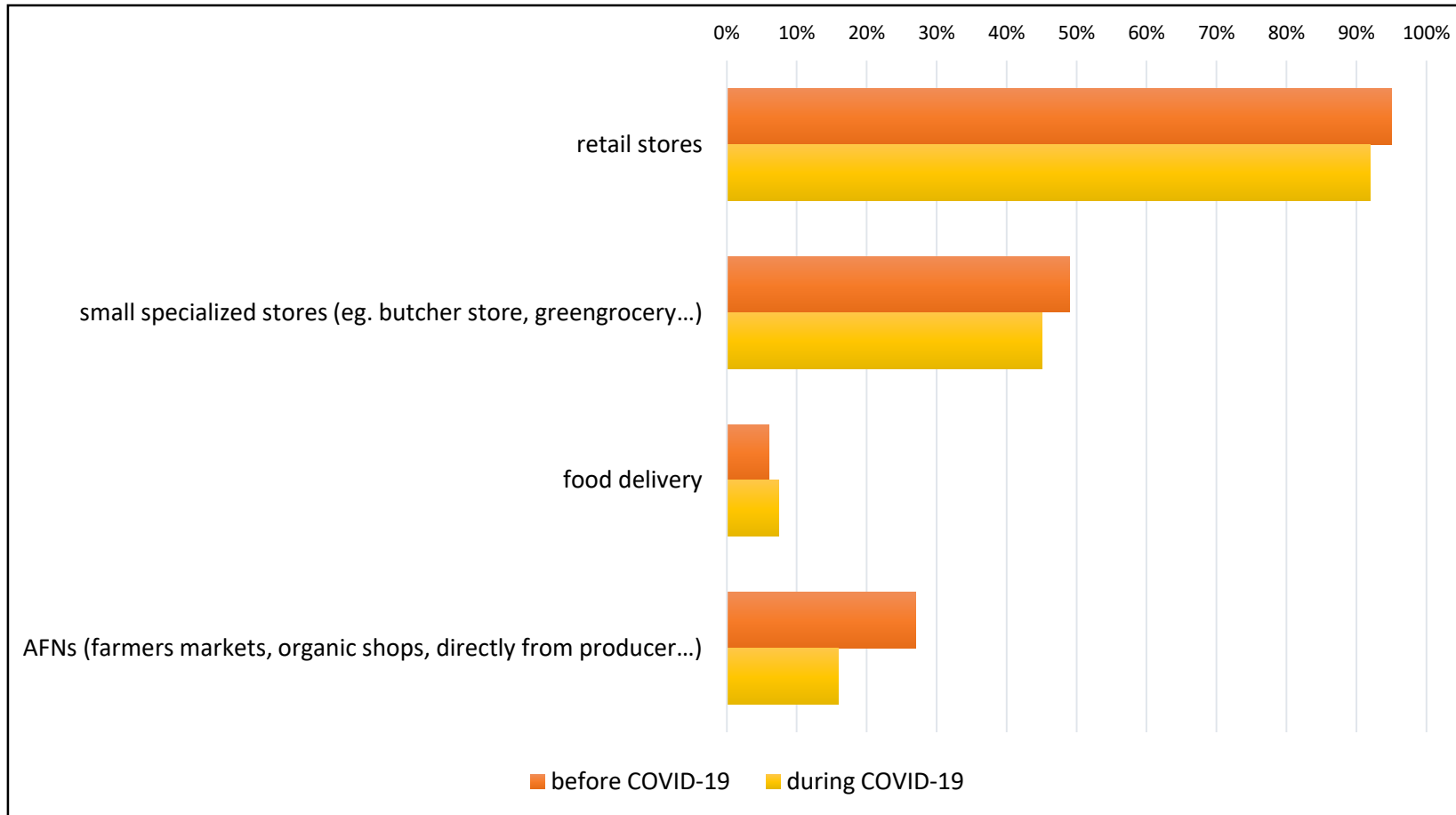
Figure 2 FSP as one of the main sources according to the size of the respondents' municipality (total numbers)



- In FSP participate most respondents in rural areas and small towns,
- middle-aged people (35-54 years) pay the least attention to FSP.

"We also consumed compotes and canned food with gusto. We've had them at home for a long time and we didn't need to eat them at home before."

Figure 3 What were the main ways to buy food for your household before/during Covid-19?



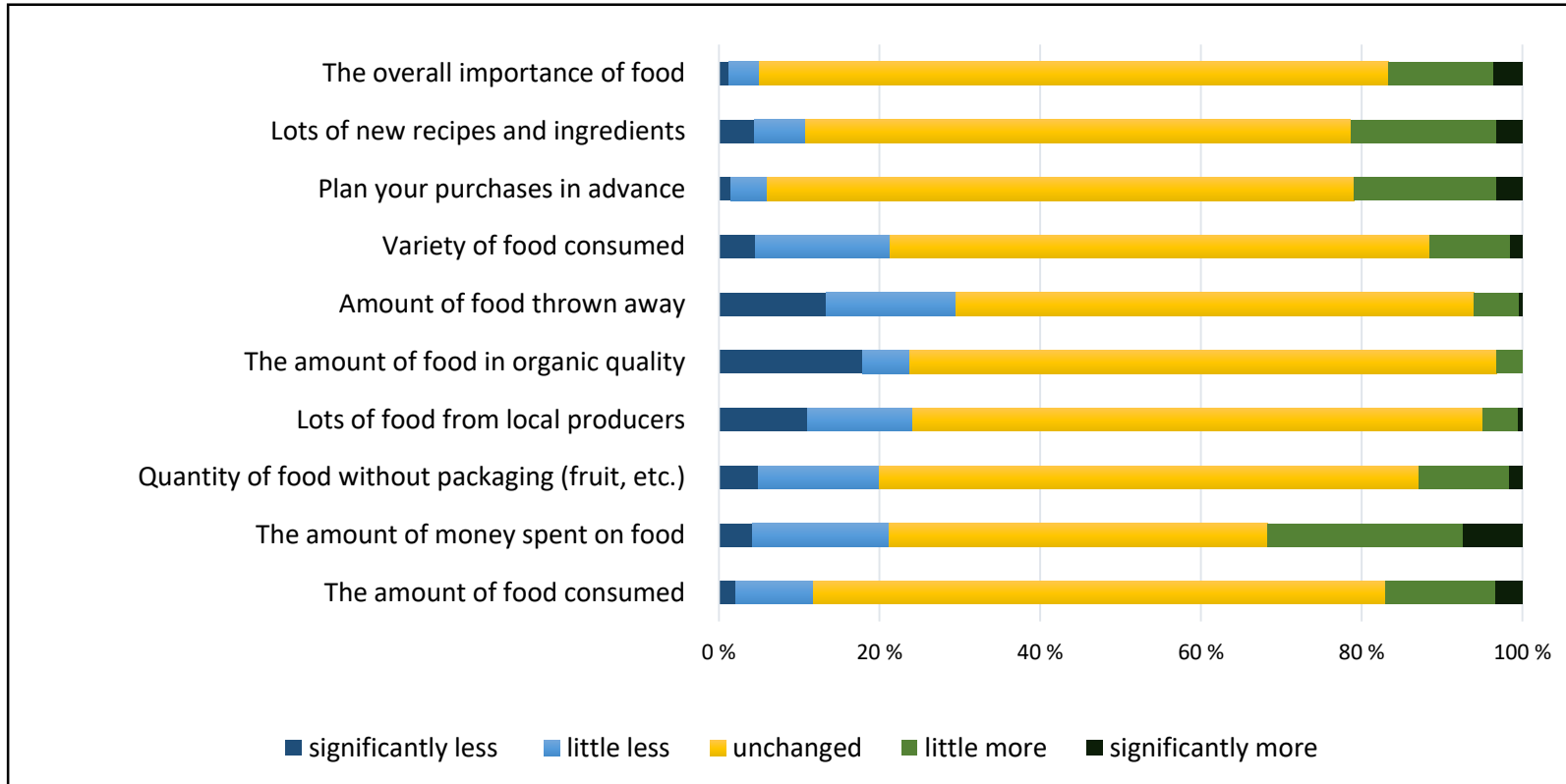
*„I will buy more local things on the market ...“
„I started buying food from farmers.“*



Source: localwiki.org, 2021

- Overall, people tried to shop less. Alternative (regional) market significantly affected by government measures - **ban on farmers' markets.**
- The amount of organic food and food from local growers or producers **fell in 23%** of respondents. The role is probably played by the time of year (respondents considered March 2020) and government measures.

Figure 4 How much eating habits have changed in your household DURING a pandemic Covid-19 compared to the time before it started?



More details....

- 87% of respondents use fresh unprocessed food when preparing meals,
- semi-finished products are used by about 40% of respondents (similar before/during COVID-19),
- **decrease** in the consumption of fruit and vegetables during the first wave of the pandemic - again, it is likely that the season and the ban on farmers' markets play a role.

- 21% of respondents reported an **increase in the use of new recipes, ingredients** and purchasing and cooking **planning**.
- 17% of respondents confirmed the greater importance of food than in the pre-pandemic period.
- 29% of respondents reported a decrease in the amount of food thrown away.

"More is planned, less is thrown away."

"I've learned to cook more sparingly, to plan more."

"I value quality food more."

Figure 5 Community garden



Source: Authors

Figure 7 FSP according to the age (%)

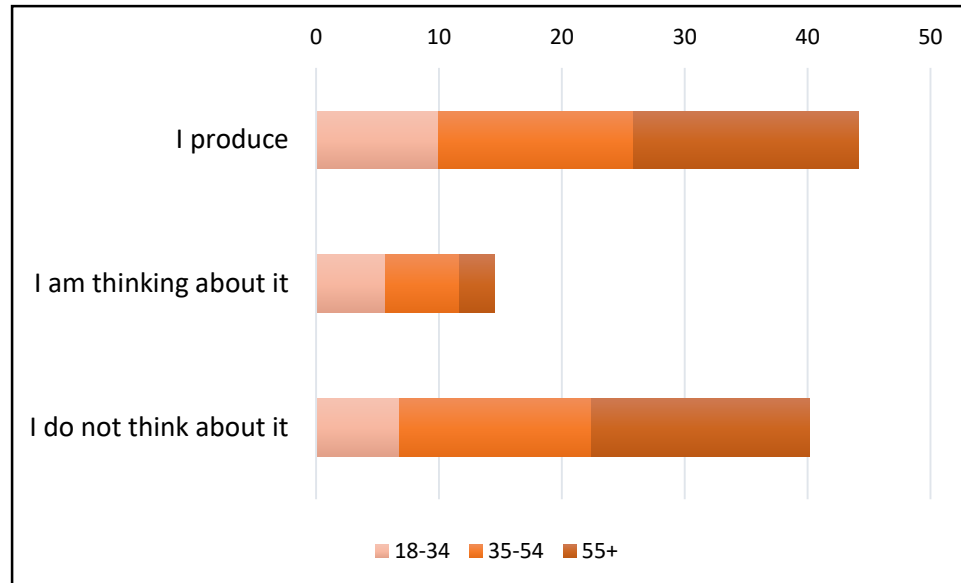


Figure 6 With regard to own production (growing in the garden, breeding animals), choose which answer best suits your household.

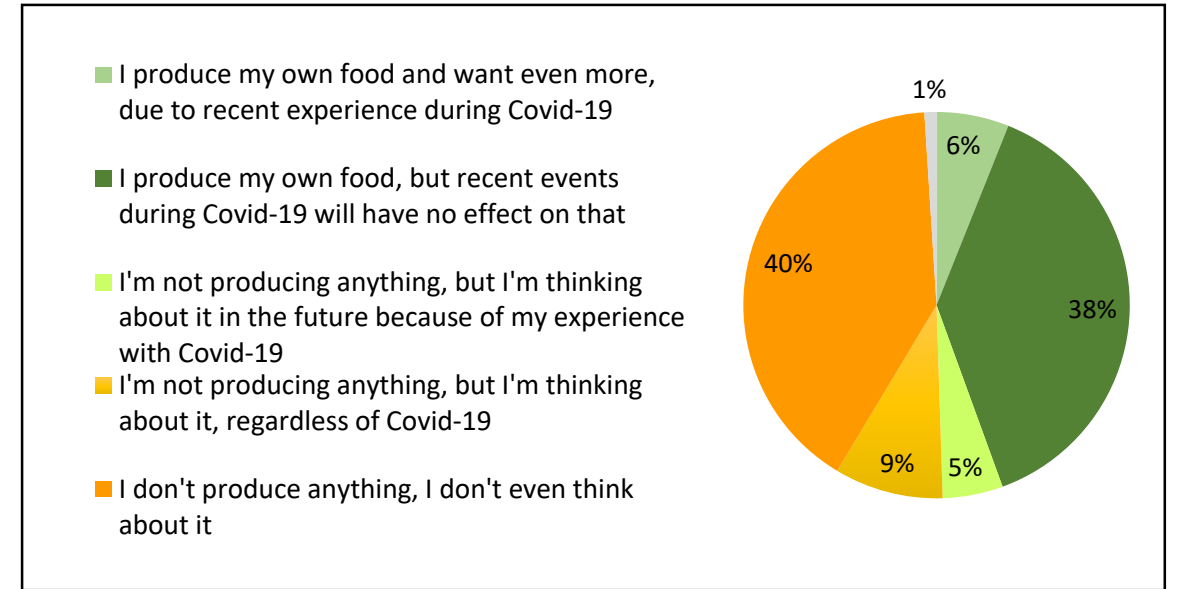


Figure 8 FSP according to the size of the respondents' municipality (%)

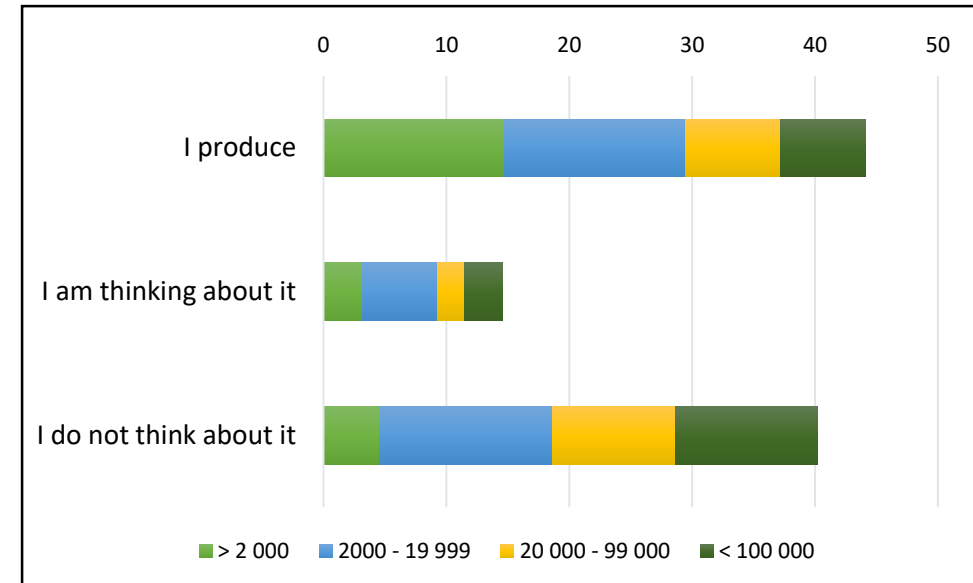
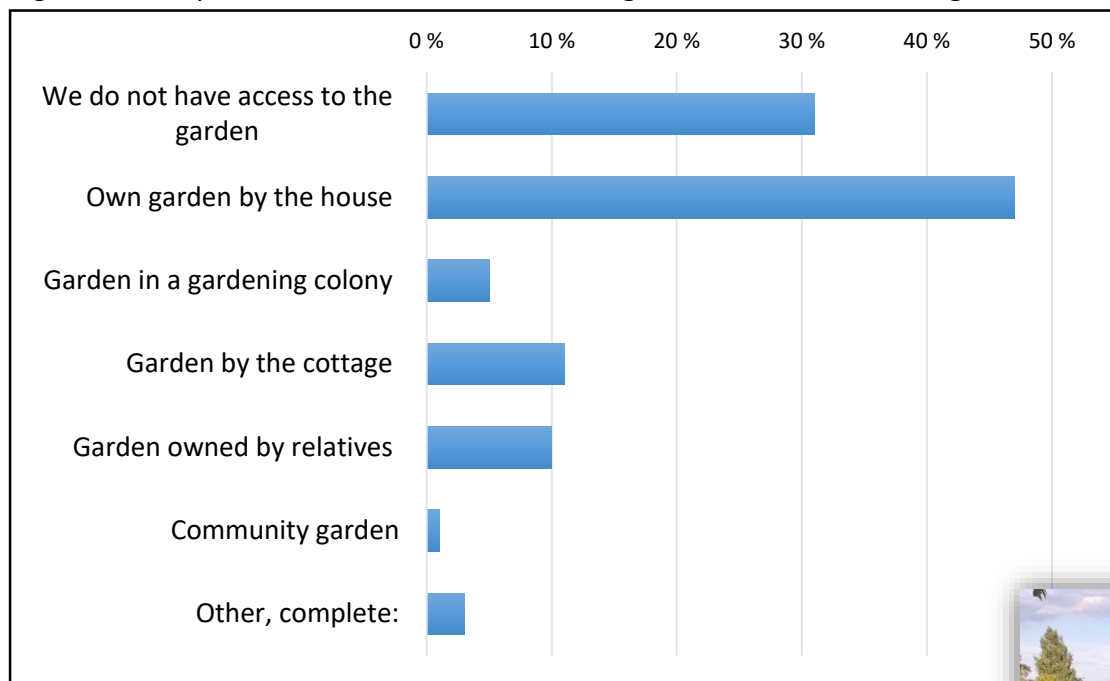


Figure 8 Does your household have access to a garden where fruits or vegetables can be grown?



- In addition to their own garden, respondents also mentioned other non-market food sources such as beekeeping, hunting, small livestock breeding, fishing and gifts from relatives and acquaintances.

"I live in a village and have my own fruit and vegetable production. Personally, I was not bothered by government measures in the area of food. I don't visit restaurants or other fast food, so it didn't affect me in any way.,,"

„Since I keep hens, ducks, geese, rabbits and catch fish with my son, so more time and energy is put into expanding breeding and greater self-sufficiency.“



Source: Authors

Discussion

- What will be the economic impacts on consumer behavior:
 - will consumers be even more dependent on cheaper food in the conventional market, or will they seek to find other - local sources?
 - Can we expect a real increase in interest in food self-provisioning?
 - Will consumers be sufficiently engaged and active to find local producers or - possibly be active in food production themselves?
- Can the crisis be a window of opportunity or will consumers return to "normal" after it subsides?
- Who should be competent to coordinate supply and demand in regional food networks so that local products are affordable and trade is profitable?

Sources

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Thank you for your attention

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🌐 <https://tichaudrzitelnost.geogr.muni.cz/cs/nas-vztah-k-jidlu-behem-pandemie-covid-19/>

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