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Practices of Food Democracy: A Systematic Review

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Practices of Food Democracy: a systematic review

Food democracy (FD) has emerged as a concept and movement aiming at transforming the food system towards a more equitable, sustainable, and participatory model. The paper draws upon a systematic review of the literature on FD with the aim to analyze the implementation of the FD concept into emerging initiatives.

The systematic review examines 45 out of 51 articles published from 2008 by the end of 2021 extracted from Scopus and Web of Science. It identifies various food practice types developed worldwide, examines their goals and involved actors, and assesses their potential to foster democratic and fair transformations of the food system. The study made possible the identification of food practice types and their classification under market-related initiatives and food governance-related initiatives. The findings of this review contribute to the understanding of food democracy and provide directions for future research and practical applications in the pursuit of sustainable food systems.

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1. Introduction

The reduction of the distance between food consumers and producers is an acknowledged goal of the sustainability transition of agri-food chains all over the world. This resulted in the emergence of a variety of alternatives to the current mainstream food system (De Schutter, 2017). A broad range of localized, small-scale, food-growing and livestock-rearing initiatives with short processing and commercialization chains have emerged within civil society (Hassanein, 2003; Renting et al., 2012): some are linked to re-emerging practices, such as farmers’ markets and CSA (Michel-Villarreal et al., 2019), locally produced and distributed box schemes, and consumer-lead solidarity purchase groups (Brunori et al., 2012; De Oliveira et al., 2022); others consist in territorial structures or administrative organizations focusing on food policy (such as urban and regional food policy councils) (Rocha, 2009; Schiff, 2008), and the like

(Reckinger, 2022). These are often ad-hoc and fragmented empirical phenomena (Candel, 2022), usually with marginal power and low economic weight (Reckinger, 2022), which vary widely at the organizational level, and whose scope ranges from very small and informal food-sharing initiatives to established territorial policies, having distinct and, at the same time, partially overlapping goals, involving a plethora of different actors, and whose impact on the quality of democratic decision-making raises debates. Such initiatives aim to transform agri-food systems to make them more sustainable, inclusive, and democratic, to strive for alternative ways of organizing, producing, harvesting, foraging, processing, distributing, consuming, and, ultimately, governing food (J. K. Clark, 2021; Grauerholz & Owens, 2015; Mincyte & Dobernig, 2016), to act as experimental laboratories for new approaches and practices (Rossi, 2017), thus redesigning the value chains through which food passes, and promoting a sense of responsibility and participation within the community (Cattivelli & Rusciano, 2020). These various local food initiatives and networks are frequently referred to as alternative food networks/movements, in order to underline their alterity with respect to the mainstream food system and its features, and their potential role and contribution to transforming conventional, large-scale food systems into more sustainable ones, from a social, environmental and economic point of view (Blay-Palmer et al., 2016; Cleveland et al., 2015).

Despite such immense heterogeneity, such innovations have a structural commonality at the systematic level as they are manifold and burgeoning facets of the concept of Food Democracy (FD) (Reckinger, 2022). Although it has been expressed in various ways across the literature since the foundational research of Lang (1999), FD has dealt with how actors may regain democratic control over the food system, thereby enabling its sustainable transformation. FD evolved as an alternative food governance framework and countermovement to balance and redistribute power within the food

system, especially at the local scale (Fernandez-Wulff, 2019; Van de Griend et al., 2019). Hassanein’s (2003) definition of FD as a possibility for all citizens to actively engage in shaping the food system is largely acknowledged in examined literature, with participation, the right to food, sustainability, and reorienting control as core dimensions (Davies et al., 2019). Re-engaging citizens, communities and food system actors in general, through active participation, in the governance and the shaping of the food system are shared features (Adelle, 2019; Baldy & Kruse, 2019; Berglund et al., 2021; J. K. Clark et al., 2017; Davies et al., 2019; De Schutter et al., 2020; Dela Cruz et al., 2020; Di Masso et al., 2014; Fourat et al., 2020; Gómez-Benito & Lozano, 2014; Jhagroe, 2019; Leitheiser et al., 2021; López Cifuentes & Gugerell, 2021; Mazzocchi & Marino, 2019; McIvor & Hale, 2015; Perrett & Jackson, 2015; Prost et al., 2018; Resler & Hagolani-Albov, 2021; Thompson et al., 2020; Van de Griend et al., 2019; Zollet & Maharjan, 2021).

Despite FD’s recognition in the literature, a clear classification of the FD expression, generated processes, involved actors and impacts on agri-food chains is still missing (Dedeurwaerdere et al., 2017; Renting et al., 2012; Tregear, 2011). Hence, a systematic literature review was conducted aiming to analyze the interpretation, manifestation, and factual implementation of the FD concept into alternative initiatives in food systems. Such an understanding would facilitate a better identification, analysis, and understanding of these sustainable food innovations as well as the necessary transformation pathways within the agri-food system to address current challenges in the context of increasing environmental issues and economic and health inequalities.

The main goal of this article is to contribute to the literature on FD by focusing on both the forms and outcomes of democratic innovations. This review examines the literature on FD according to four different features, identifying food practice types developed throughout the world, their goals and involved actors as well as their

(feasible) potentials and prospects to develop a democratic, fair, socially just transformation of the mainstream food system in reviewed authors' opinion. Subsequently, the analysis of the first feature, identified food practice types, allowed us to group them into two main domains: initiatives involving forms of market exchange (market-related) and governance processes favoring the social construction of more democratic local food systems (governance-related). Goals, actor, and judgements were then analyzed under this lens. The research methodology is described in Section 2, while major findings are given in Section 3. In Section 4 findings are discussed. Some final considerations and suggestions for future research conclude the paper.

2. Methodology

The paper draws upon a systematic review of documents indexed in the Scopus and Web of Science (WoS) databases. Initial trial search queries with various keywords began on January 15th, 2021, and the final verified search was carried out in each database on January 6th, 2022, considering only records published up until the end of 2021.

2.1 Selection criteria

The analysis began at the end of 2020, starting from previous works that focused on the topic of alternative food networks (AFNs) and their increasingly relevant role in the definition of the current agri-food system, to examine their relationship with FD. Subsequently, articles cited in Martino et al. (2016) and Ascani and Martino (2017) were read to identify recurring keywords and research areas to be addressed in subsequent studies. Keywords were then grouped by theme (i.e., Food democracy, Networks-systems, Sustainability issues, Goals and Values, Governance issues), leading to the identification of the keywords to be used in the search query to be used in this

review. The mandatory term food democracy was chosen to analyze its role in reforming the food system; moreover, it was placed in quotation marks (“food democracy”), to concentrate on records strictly on this topic. The optional keywords - local food system, alternative food network, sustainable transition, fair, social justice, urban food policy- were chosen to analyze FD values and practices and challenges addressed or obstacles to be overcome. Documents were considered in any language. Finally, the search queries used in Scopus and in WOS were as reported in Table 1.

Table 1 - Representation of Food Democracy literature search and selection

Database	Search string	Number of articles
Scopus	(TITLE-ABS-KEY (“food democracy”) AND TITLE-ABS-KEY (local AND food AND system) OR TITLE-ABS-KEY (alternative AND food AND network) OR TITLE-ABS-KEY (sustainable AND transition) OR TITLE-ABS-KEY (fair) OR TITLE-ABS-KEY (social AND justice) OR TITLE-ABS-KEY (urban AND food AND policy))	41
Web of Science	TS=(("food democracy") and ((local food system) OR (alternative food network) OR (sustainable transition) OR (fair) OR (Social justice) or (urban food policy)))	40

The total number of retrieved records on 6 January 2022 was 81 (Scopus (41) and WOS (40)). 30 documents (37.0% out of the total number of retrieved documents) were retrieved by both databases (Figure 1). After dropping these overlapping 51 records remained; these were accessed and read in their entirety. Sources were screened for containing at least one FD related initiative. Doing so, six documents deemed not pertinent to the aim of the study: one was the introductory chapter of a book, not a study; the other five records reported on topics out of the review scope (large agricultural investments in Africa, nudgiting, Vandana Shiva’s books, agrosystem approach, megarethorics). Finally, 45 documents remained and included: journal articles, conference papers, books, and book chapters; all the resulted documents have been published from 2008 onwards. These then underwent document analyses.

Figure 1 - Representation of the literature search and selection process

INSERT HERE FIGURE 1

2.2 Document analysis

To build a distinct understanding of the practical implementation of the FD, after an in-depth reading of all documents, four features were considered for analyzing the food-related democratic initiatives addressed in the reviewed literature. Specifically, the first refers to the type of initiative, the second captures its main goals, the third concerns the involved actors, and the fourth regards the author's judgement on the capability and efficacy of the examined initiatives in democratizing and transforming the food system.

Studying the types of initiatives emerged from the analysis, all were attributable to two domains, alternative markets putting producers and consumers in direct contact (market-related initiatives) and governance processes that favor the emergence and development of such initiatives (governance-related initiatives).

Subsequently, for each other feature (goals, actors, judgement), the 45 analyzed documents were listed under one of the two above-mentioned categories according to the nature of the studied initiative.

It goes without saying that since a single document can deal with more than one initiative at once, some being market-related and others governance-related, it can be listed in both categories (this is the case of Bornemann & Weiland, 2019; De Schutter, 2017; Fernandez-Wulff, 2019; Kimura & Suryanata, 2016; Prost, 2019; Prost et al., 2018, 2019). Consequently, except for the sub-category 'type', a mixed 'market and governance' class was created for the other three analyzed features.

3. Analysis of Food Democracy initiatives

Findings are delineated in the following sub-sections related to types, goals, involved actors and authors' judgement on alternative food-related initiatives.

3.1 Types

Market-related initiatives

Market-related initiatives found in the reviewed literature include: Community Supported Agriculture (CSA), AFNs, Short Food Supply Chains (SFSCs), sustainable/local/alternative food systems, local food hubs, urban food sharing initiatives, agri-food movements (alternative, transformative) and local food initiatives, civic agriculture, Solidarity Purchasing Groups (SPGs)/consumer-producer relationships. They are various forms of consumer-producer relationships and cooperation, food provision strategies connecting production and consumption, creation of networks, and supply chain management strategies, often fostering rural-urban interaction. Common features involve shared ethical principles such as trust and redistribution of value in the food chain and common social, economic, and environmental values.

Table 2 – Food initiatives mentioned in revised literature

INSERT HERE TABLE 2

In detail, CSA is explicated among food practices in 3 cases and is described as a specific form of alternative food organization featured by consumer-producer cooperation with mutual benefits and sharing of ethical principles as well as production risks.

AFNs are mentioned in 5 cases and defined as new relationships between producers and consumers based on trust, redistribution of value in the food chain and establishment of new forms of political associations, innovative initiatives around food, forms of resistance to the corporate agri-food system seeking for a space of autonomy where to build alternatives, alternative innovative processes that develop local alternatives to the dominant corporate food system, newly emerging networks of

1
2
3 producers, consumers and other actors that embody alternatives to the standardized
4
5 industrial mode of food supply.
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8 SFSCs are mentioned in 3 cases and are defined as chains in which actors share
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10 a commitment to social, environmental, economic values, grassroots initiatives around
11
12 food, forms of production-consumption reconnection, alternative food movements
13
14 fostering interaction between rural-urban food agents.
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16
17 Sustainable/local/alternative food systems are mentioned in 4 cases and defined
18
19 as food provision strategies involving the use of a household's physical, social, and
20
21 economic resources to produce food (home gardening), alternative food movements
22
23 fostering rural-urban interaction, transformative economies, socially innovative local
24
25 initiatives proposing an alternative to the conventional food system, and forms of
26
27 agriculture occurring at the local level.
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29

30
31 Local food hubs are mentioned in 5 cases and are described as: local food
32
33 systems using a supply chain management strategy focusing on the logistics and
34
35 distribution of local food; social businesses fostering aggregation; distribution and
36
37 marketing services combined with product differentiation strategies to preserve
38
39 provenance and return greater value to producers; food supply chain management
40
41 strategies aggregating small local food producers and consumers.
42
43

44
45 Urban food-sharing initiatives are mentioned in two records and are described as
46
47 ICT-mediated initiatives focused on shared growing, cooking, eating and food
48
49 redistribution.
50

51
52 Agrifood movements (alternative, transformative) and local food initiatives are
53
54 mentioned in 6 documents and described as: alternative and transformative food
55
56 movements adopting food sovereignty as a political framework; sustainable agricultural
57
58 development models; forms of food-related empowerment; practices of shaping and
59
60

changing the way food is produced, distributed, and consumed; social movements pursuing the objective of re-spatializing food production.

Civic agriculture is mentioned in 1 case and defined as a form of agriculture occurring at the local level, from production to consumption.

SPGs/consumer-producer relationships are mentioned in 2 cases and are defined as alternative producer-consumer relationships.

Governance-related initiatives

Among food governance-related initiatives (not involving the market), different types were detected: food policy councils (FPCs), Urban food systems/urban agriculture (UA), Urban food strategy/urban food policy, State-driven food related participation processes/government food education programs, Smart food cities, Civic Food Networks (CFNs), Food citizenship, Citizens-led local initiatives/practices/innovations, Agroecology, Food public procurement. They are described as governance tools and mechanisms connecting stakeholders involved in local food systems, as civic networks, means of empowering communities and promoting social capital and democratic decision making, place-based food policies, participatory approaches, civic society movements, political groups, and socially innovative and political initiatives. They explicitly challenge the conventional food system trying to build alternatives to it.

In detail, FPCs are mentioned in 8 documents and described as grass-roots projects conducted by civic-oriented groups to develop community food systems, forums for civic participation in the food system, governance mechanisms for urban food policy, forms of food-related empowerment, practices of shaping and changing the way food is produced, distributed and consumed, structures bringing together stakeholders from different food-related areas, civic networks bringing together actors involved in local food systems, practical initiatives in cities.

Urban food systems/UA are mentioned in 5 records and are described as means of empowering communities, strengthening social capital, and promoting democratic habits and norms, right-based food systems characterized by democratic decision making on food system choices, just food systems helping to address food system challenges at urban scale, in particular distributive inequalities in disadvantaged urban communities.

Urban food strategies/urban food policy are mentioned in 5 records and described as governance tools connecting civil society, private actors and local governments, place-based food policies promoting SFSCs, healthy and sustainable diets and food waste solutions, participatory approaches bringing together stakeholders from different food related areas, civic networks bringing together actors involved in local/regional food systems.

State-driven food related participation processes/gov. food education programs are mentioned in 2 cases, which describe them as top-down processes of FD and as forms of food related empowerment.

Smart food cities are mentioned in one case defining them as cities valuing public good formation through a digitally democratized agri-food system.

The CFNs are mentioned in 3 cases and are described as civic society movements attempting to influence market and state governance mechanisms of the corporate food regime and constitute exemplars of doing FD, forms of alternative food initiatives that engage in processes of FD, political groups challenging the current food system, democratic and political initiatives to realize alternatives to the global and corporate food system.

Food citizenship is mentioned in 3 articles and defined as a socio-political praxis trying to make food systems more democratic and sustainable by making individuals

having access to sustainable food and mobilizing themselves to achieve it, going beyond alternative purchasing systems as short supply chains.

Citizens-led local initiatives/practices/innovations are mentioned in 5 cases and described as niche innovations for sustainable development, socially innovative initiatives building alternatives to the conventional food system, flexible networks seeking to develop self-reliant communities that produce socio-environmental goods (e.g., healthy and sustainable food, renewable energy) and connect food initiatives.

Food public procurement is present in one case and is defined as tool capable of orienting economic relations, producers' choices, organization of the supply chains, consumers health.

Summarising, market related initiatives are various forms of consumer-producer relationships and cooperation, food provision strategies connecting production and consumption, creation of networks, and supply chain management strategies, often fostering rural-urban interaction. Common features involve shared ethical principles such as trust and redistribution of value in the food chain and common social, economic, and environmental values.

Food governance-related initiatives are described as governance tools and mechanisms connecting stakeholders involved in local food systems, as civic networks, means of empowering communities and promoting social capital and democratic decision making, place-based food policies, participatory approaches, civic society movements, political groups, and socially innovative and political initiatives. They explicitly challenge the conventional food system trying to build alternatives to it.

3.2 Goals

The analysis of the literature addressing the goals of the various initiatives expressing the FD revealed the following main goals: deliberative democratization, sustainability,

reform and transformation, health, and nutrition, and local and/or regional economic development (Table 3).

Table 3 - Goals of the various initiatives

INSERT HERE TABLE 3

Deliberative democratization

The most acknowledged goals detectable among the different types of initiatives are related to the improvement of the deliberative democratization of the food system through broader stakeholders' participation. Such goals are acknowledged in 29 documents. According to several authors, the deliberative democratization of FD is a process where people and communities regain control, actively participate in the design and implementation of the food system policy, and collectively respond by offering solutions to current ecological, social and economic problems (Adelle, 2019; Anderson, 2008; De Schutter et al., 2020; Dela Cruz et al., 2020; Gómez-Benito & Lozano, 2014; Johnson, 2020; Kaika & Racelis, 2021; Moragues-Faus, 2017; Perrett & Jackson, 2015; Prost, 2019; Reina-Usuga et al., 2020; Resler & Hagolani-Albov, 2021; Van de Griend et al., 2019).

More in detail, market-related initiatives (11 documents) emphasize the importance of local community active participation in the democratization of the food system, call for more participatory and democratic processes in food policy and agri-food economic development for SFSCs to be inclusive and accessible, empower both participants by developing skills and understandings around food, and communities by building greater community cohesion, and boost not only ordinary actors' participation but also their 'personal transformation' (self-confidence).

Initiatives related to governance (12 records) aim at building an enabling environment to grow and support processes of food system democratization. In this

perspective, governmental actors charged with developing a food policy play a leading role in enabling the participation of non-governmental actors (NGAs) in traditional governmental activities by designing food-related participatory processes in order to facilitate interactions between all groups of relevant local food-related actors.

Deliberative democratization is the main goal also detected among all documents falling into the mixed class (6 records).

Sustainability

Other important goals of the different forms of food-related initiatives are referred to as sustainability and its three dimensions, environmental, economic, and social, which are mentioned in 22 documents.

More in detail, such goal is explicitly recognized in the following market-related initiatives (10 records): home gardening, considered a powerful way to achieve greater social and environmental sustainability in the agro-food system; Buying Groups (BGs), which enable communities to leverage their capability in sourcing more sustainable food and promoting environmental integrity, economic sustainability, and social justice; Alternative Food Movements, where collective action has objectives related to sustainability values; civic agriculture (i.e., networks of producers who are bound together by place), which embodies a commitment to developing and strengthening a sustainable system of agriculture and food production.

Sustainability is also an acknowledged goal among governance-related initiatives (9 documents), such as in: Local Food Councils, in which ecological sustainability is among the highest priorities regarding the local food system; FPCs, generating policies with the aim to transform local and regional food systems toward sustainability and justice.

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3 Lastly, small-scale initiatives in Hawai'i as examples of organic agriculture
4 practiced by women farmers, farmer's markets, and food localization projects, as well
5 as broader citizen movements and policy initiatives as social activism against GMOs
6 and legislative efforts to protect agricultural lands, play a significant role in
7 commitment to the community, through cultural rejuvenation and educational
8 opportunities, and sustainability.
9

10
11 Food-related initiatives analyzed by some documents falling under both domains
12 also advocate for sustainability goals (3 records).
13
14

15 16 17 *Reform and transformation*

18
19 As seen, the above-mentioned goals of sustainability -in food production, distribution,
20 and consumption- are intertwined with goals related to the food system reform and
21 transformation. The latter, also meant as social and political change, are explicitly
22 mentioned in 21 articles.
23

24
25 More in detail, among documents reporting on market-related initiatives (10
26 documents), attempts to reform or transform the food system are recognized in
27 grassroots innovations (such as CSA), which are defined as agents of pro-democratic
28 change and source of innovation and transformation of agri-food systems, able to
29 provide a model for a deeper self-regulated and social transformation of the entire food
30 economy as well as of spaces through a "re-spatialization" of food production and
31 related supply chains.
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35 Among governance-related initiatives (7 documents), the important role of
36 supportive state actors as initiators, shapers, and implementers of food system
37 transformation processes is documented. Indeed, government actors have the potential
38 to support food system reform, as strong top-down leadership can stimulate consumers
39 to take on roles as citizens and become active in transforming the food system.
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The reform and transformation of the food system are goals recognized to some extent also among those initiatives analyzed by some documents falling under both domains (4 records).

Health and nutrition

Health and nutrition goals, described as healthy food systems/communities and concerning production and consumption, are mentioned in 14 documents.

The capacity to strengthen local and sustainable food procurement to improve food security, ameliorate food poverty, improve diets, nutrition, and food access, promote healthier eating and play a role in promoting food justice has been observed in market-related initiatives place-based community food initiatives (3 records), such as food hubs. Other health and well-being goals reported by studies of urban food-sharing initiatives include: reducing food waste by redistributing edible surplus, providing accessibility of healthy, local food to all people, facilitating peer-to-peer exchanges of surplus food, empowering participants to develop skills and understandings around food, empowering communities to build greater community cohesion.

Health and nutrition goals are mainly recognized by governance-related initiatives (9 documents). Indeed, the FD is seen as a contemporary food system and policy approach with the potential for public health benefits, reducing nutrition-related health disparities. The UA has the potential to improve the civic health of a community, as urban food systems can localize the production and distribution networks of fresh and healthy food beyond a wide range of social and ecological benefits, addressing socioeconomic and health challenges at an urban scale, dealing with how food is produced, purchased, consumed, and disposed of by people living in urban areas. The ability to provide nutritious and healthy meals to end users, i.e., increased meal quality, is also among the expected direct impacts of FPP experiences.

Few references dealing with initiatives related to both categories report of health and nutrition goals (2 documents).

Local/regional economic development

The last and least recurring goal, mentioned in 6 documents, is related to local and/or regional economic development.

More in detail, among initiatives related to the market (2 documents), the emerging food hub in Australia represents a promising approach to strengthening local agri-food communities' economic development, as well as civic agriculture linked to a community and its social and economic development, which through locally grown and consumed food is crucial in building just and equitable economies.

Among initiatives related to governance processes (4 documents), it is documented that the FPP has the ability to, and contribute to the development local economy by activating numerous social networks, and strengthening the relationship between producers, institutions and consumers), as well as the governmental and nongovernmental actors involved in Local Food Council which collectively set a policy agenda to address local needs among which the agriculture economic development and the strengthening of the regional food economy. Indeed, in the opinion of individuals in municipal or county food policy staff positions across the United States, local economic development is a food policy priority.

Most of the goals of the various initiatives expressing FD aim to democratize the food system by involving various stakeholders in decision-making processes, by emphasizing participatory approaches, civic engagement, and the empowerment of local communities. They seek to empower communities and individuals to participate in decision-making processes and shape the food system according to their values and needs. There is a shared focus on promoting sustainable and resilient food systems that

consider social, economic, and environmental values. Indeed, FD expressions prioritize practices such as regenerative agriculture, local sourcing, and reducing food waste, and prioritize sustainability, social equity, and the redistribution of value in the food chain. Moreover, FD initiatives seek to challenge and transform the dominant corporate food system by promoting alternative models and local food policies based on trust, redistribution of value, and the establishment of new political associations. They aim to foster innovative processes and develop local alternatives to the industrial mode of food supply. Also, there is some emphasis on improving health outcomes and promoting nutrition through sustainable food systems. Initiatives aim to increase access to healthy and nutritious food, address food poverty, and promote healthier eating habits. Finally, some initiatives aim to promote local and regional economic development, strengthen communities, and enhance food security, prioritizing the support for small-scale producers, and the creation of networks and connections between rural and urban food agents.

3.3 Actors

Analyzed practices and initiatives involve a wide range of food system stakeholders, often representing alliances within niches at a regional scale. Federating actors which support AFNs and similar initiatives often share an alternative vision of the economy based on autonomy from industrial food production, processing and/or marketing. They function through practices of consultation and direct negotiations (Darrot et al., 2015) and their balance and framework within each initiative generate different outcomes in terms of potential change (Poças Ribeiro et al., 2021). Collaboration and networking of food practices may enhance each other's strengths. In this process, local actors (primarily the institutional ones and consumers) can play a strategic role by fostering new food policies as they are the real agents of change (Barbera & Dagnes, 2016).

The types of actors were grouped in 5 sub-categories derived from the analysis of actors involved in food-related initiatives: food chain actors; public sector (State) actors; civil society actors; private/public researchers; private sector actors (Table 3). The analysis highlighted 20 different types of actors involved in food practices: producers, consumers, processors, retailers, distributors; various levels of government; other public institutions, as schools; FPCs; public food strategies; citizens/food citizens/civil society; communities/community organizations/interest groups (e.g. parents); activists/volunteers/consumers-health advocates; NGOs; transformative initiatives; SPGs; future generation; researchers and Universities; technical advisors/experts; private sector for profit, private sector non-profit.

An examination of Table 4 reveals that Food chain actors and researchers are represented in a balanced way in market and governance domains; public sector actors are mostly related to governance, as well as civic society actors and private sector actors.

Table 4 – Actors participating in food initiatives

INSERT HERE TABLE 4

As the food chain is concerned, food producers, consumers, processors, retailers, distributors are represented in the selected articles as follows: food producers are mentioned among stakeholders in 35 cases. They are described as food producers without further specifications in 22 documents, as local (often small) farmers in 6 cases, and as urban farmers in 8 records. The latter include gardeners among market-related initiatives, and CSA, community gardens, sustainable urban farmers, and farmers groups among governance related initiatives. Producers are central actors in alternative food movements, particularly in initiatives such as CSA and SFSCs. They collaborate with consumers and participate in direct producer-consumer cooperation to foster more sustainable and locally focused food systems. Consumers are present in 11 documents;

among market-related initiatives, political and local consumers are mentioned.

Consumers play a crucial role in FD by participating in alternative food movements, making informed food choices, and advocating for change in the food system. Food processors (agri-food businesses) are mentioned among actors in 10 records. Retailers are mentioned in 6 articles. Distributors are mentioned in 3 cases; among initiatives related to market, short distribution channels are recognized.

The second category is represented by public/State actors, representing different levels of government institutions and policymakers having a significant role in shaping food policies and promoting FD. They are increasingly recognizing the importance of participatory processes and incorporating the interests of various stakeholders in decision-making. Local and regional governments, in particular, are increasingly involved in food governance and policy development. They collaborate with civil society actors, support community food initiatives, and implement strategies for sustainable and equitable local food systems. Their engagement in FD contributes to transformative changes in the food system. Such category is mentioned in 22 documents; among market-related initiatives, EU, national governments and WHO are cited. 2 records name other public institutions such as schools. FPCs and Public food strategies are less mentioned.

The category of Civil society is instrumental in driving FD. It mobilizes citizens, advocates for policy changes, and works towards transforming the food system. It promotes collective action and challenges dominant food systems. In its variety of individuals and groups it is largely represented in analyzed documents: citizens/food citizens/civil society is mentioned in 18 records. Food citizens have the potential to impact food-related policymaking and promote sustainable and equitable food practices. Communities/community organizations/interest groups (e.g. parents) serve as intermediaries between producers and consumers, fostering connections, and promoting

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3 local food systems. They create spaces for collaboration, knowledge exchange, and
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5 democratic decision-making, empowering local communities to participate in food-
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7 related activities; they are recognized in 19 documents. Other specific civil society's
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9 actors are mentioned, as activists/volunteers/consumers-health advocates in 11
10
11 documents, NGOs in 4 cases. NGOs and activists play a vital role in advocating for
12
13 food justice, sustainability, and equity. They engage in grassroots activism, raise
14
15 awareness about the impacts of the industrial food system, and work towards systemic
16
17 change through campaigns, lobbying, and community organizing. SPGs, connecting
18
19 producers and consumers, are mentioned in 2 cases. Finally, transformative initiatives
20
21 as well as future generations are mentioned as actors in one document, respectively.
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25 Private/public researchers include scientists and Universities, mentioned in 9
26
27 documents and technical advisors/experts in 5 records; in particular, skilled staff is
28
29 mentioned as actor among initiatives related to market. Researchers and academics
30
31 contribute to the understanding and advancement of FD through their studies, analyses,
32
33 and critical perspectives. They provide insights into the challenges and opportunities
34
35 related to alternative food movements and propose policy recommendations for
36
37 achieving more democratic and sustainable food systems. Actors representing the
38
39 private sector are acknowledged as for profit in 6 documents, and as non-profit in 3
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41 records.
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47 Actors, with their diverse roles and perspectives, collectively contribute to the
48
49 development and advancement of FD, shaping alternative food practices, policies, and
50
51 governance arrangements. The categorizations of the various actors involved in food-
52
53 related initiatives reflect the diversity and complexity of the food system and the
54
55 collaborative efforts required to drive change. Most actors are food chain actors
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57 including stakeholders directly involved in the food chain, such as producers,
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59 consumers, processors, retailers, and distributors; Public sector actors consist of actors
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from various levels of government, including EU and national governments, as well as other public institutions like schools; Civil society actors encompass a wide range of actors representing civil society. It includes citizens, food citizens, and civil society organizations, as well as communities, community organizations, and interest groups. Activists, volunteers, consumers-health advocates, NGOs, and specific groups like food charities are also mentioned as part of this cluster. Private/public researchers involved in food-related initiatives are from universities and other institutions, as well as technical advisors and experts. Private sector actors include actors from both for-profit and non-profit.

3.4 Authors’ assessment of efficacy of examined initiatives

Judgement expressed by authors on the FD practices analysed and their objectives is mostly positive (34 documents, more than 70% of analysed records). In 18 out of 34 documents, food initiatives are related to governance processes (Table 5).

Table 5 – Authors judgement

INSERT HERE TABLE 5

More in detail, although the positive authors’ judgement, 7 documents identified some critical issues and risks that might threaten the effectiveness of the analyzed initiatives, such as the potential exclusion from AFNs of a large part of society (Moragues-Faus, 2017); limitations in capacity and resources of FPCs (Berglund et al., 2021); eventual lack of support offered by policies to FD goals (Davies et al., 2019); need for cooperation between the urban food system and general food system (López Cifuentes & Gugerell, 2021); risk of “local trap” and influence of demographics as race, income, gender, education on the success of civic agriculture (Kaika & Racelis, 2020); contradictions arising from the increasing profit potentials for local farmers and food-related industries linked to tourists' food provision and the difficulty in accessing the

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3 same products for low-income local residents (Kimura & Suryanata, 2016); the focusing
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5 on short-term projects of recent experiences of UA to increase local involvement and
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7 attract funding, but for that hardly succeeding in moving toward meaningful forms of
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9 popular participation and deliberation (McIvor & Hale, 2015).

10
11
12 Critical judgment occurs in 9 documents and deals with operational divergences
13
14 and weight of consumers choices, softening the emancipatory agenda in alternative food
15
16 movements (Di Masso et al., 2014), inability of local food hubs alone to challenge
17
18 industry and movement deprivation of its capacity to activate broad participation in the
19
20 food system (Perrett & Jackson, 2015), need to connect government action, business
21
22 initiatives and grassroots innovations for food system reform (De Shutter, 2017),
23
24 enhancing UA transformative potential (Kesselman, 2015), existence of barriers to local
25
26 food system participation, e.g. socio-economic status (Schupp et al., 2016),
27
28 inaccessibility of locally produced food for deprived communities (Prost et al., 2018),
29
30 social inequalities and their role in access to food products (Fourat et al., 2020), need
31
32 for plans and rules for the success of local food production in smart cities (Dela Cruz. et
33
34 al., 2020), fragmentary adoption of social justice in European urban food strategies
35
36 (UFSs) (Smaal et al., 2021).

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38
39 In the remaining 2 documents a clear authors' judgement is not expressed.

40
41
42 The authors of the reviewed documents identify several limitations and
43
44 challenges of the studied initiatives, such as the potential exclusion of certain groups
45
46 from AFNs, resource constraints, lack of policy support, and barriers to participation.
47
48 They also highlight the need for cooperation between different actors and the potential
49
50 contradictions and inequalities within the food system. Despite such critical issues, the
51
52 FD initiatives offer opportunities for collaboration, networking, innovation, and
53
54 knowledge sharing. Indeed they provide spaces for collective action, empowerment of
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56 communities, and the potential to influence policies and practices. The initiatives can
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also contribute to consumer awareness and behavior change, as well as generate valuable knowledge and insights through research and monitoring activities.

4. Discussion

The developed review shows how the various FD expressions embodied by alternative food-related initiatives differ from one another, and what kind of similarities and differences exist.

Overall, both market-related and governance-related practices play important roles in fostering alternative and sustainable food systems. Indeed, all the analyzed initiatives serve as alternatives to the mainstream market and aim to transform the industrial food system into a more sustainable and democratic one. They involve different actors, mechanisms, and scales but share common values and principles.

More in detail, key differences arise among the two categories of food-related initiatives. Those related to the market primarily focus on consumer-producer relationships, supply chain management, and cooperation between actors (Fladvad, 2018). In contrast, governance-related practices focus on governance tools, civic participation, policy development, and democratic decision-making (Berglund et al., 2021; Thompson et al., 2020). Moreover, market-related practices often involve direct cooperation and negotiation between consumers and producers (Balazs, 2013; De Schutter, 2017), while governance-related practices utilize governance tools, participatory approaches, and policy development processes (Baldy & Kruse, 2019; Clark, 2018). Another difference that emerged is in terms of scale: market-related practices can occur at both local and urban scales (De Schutter et al., 2017), while governance-related practices often focus on urban or regional scales and involve multiple stakeholders (Baldy & Kruse, 2019; Thompson et al., 2020). Finally, as regards involved actors, market-related practices involve a wide range of actors, including food

chain actors (producers, consumers, processors, retailers, distributors), public sector actors, civil society actors, private/public researchers, and private sector actors (Chiffoleau et al., 2016; Zollet & Maharjan, 2021). Governance-related practices involve actors such as Food Policy Councils, urban food systems, civic networks, citizens, communities, activists, NGOs, researchers, and technical advisors/experts (Clark et al., 2017; Van de Griend et al., 2019).

About similarities, both market-related and governance-related initiatives emphasize shared ethical principles such as trust, redistribution of value in the food chain, and social, economic, and environmental values (Adelle, 2019; Andretta & Guidi, 2017; Bornemann & Weiland, 2019). Moreover, as seen above, initiatives in both domains often represent alliances within niches and challenge the conventional food system, seeking autonomy from industrial food production and marketing (Balazs, 2013; Prost et al., 2018). Finally, collaboration and networking among food initiatives in both domains can enhance each other's strengths and contribute to potential change (De Schutter et al., 2020; Leitheiser et al., 2021).

Most articles highlight the importance of democratizing the food system by promoting active participation of diverse stakeholders. This involves engaging producers, consumers, communities, civil society organizations, and government actors in decision-making processes (Adelle, 2019; Anderson, 2008; Baldy & Kruse, 2019; Bornemann & Weiland, 2019; Chiffoleau et al., 2016; Fernandez-Wulff, 2019). Participatory democracy processes provide spaces for deliberation among actors from various levels of governance and backgrounds, promoting democratic innovations and citizens' participation in agri-food governance (Reina-Usuga et al., 2020; Zollet & Maharjan, 2021). In this regard, citizen-led local initiatives challenge dominant food systems and promote collective and political engagement in markets, going beyond consumer sovereignty toward collective agency (Fernandez-Wulff, 2019; Jhagroe,

2019). Producers and consumers are considered food citizens who actively participate in food governance and impact politics and the food economy (Gómez-Benito & Lozano, 2014; Prost et al., 2018). Thus, democratic participation leads to the definition of the new concept of "rights-based food systems", which aims to fulfill economic, social, and cultural rights for farmers and food system workers thus emphasizing that basic human rights can be achieved through the food system (Anderson, 2008). Non-governmental actors, including NGOs, play an increasing role in urban food policy development and governance (Baldy & Kruse, 2019; Van de Griend et al., 2019). Food Public Procurement (FPP) situations (Mazzocchi & Marino, 2019) and smart agri-food cities (Dela Cruz et al., 2020) are examples of strengthened access and participation in urban agri-food governance. Alternative food-related initiatives can contribute to emancipatory political processes. Indeed, citizens and consumers play a crucial role in these initiatives, participating in alternative food movements, making informed food choices, and advocating for change in the food system (Moragues-Faus, 2017). Achieving a more democratic and sustainable food system requires a deliberative democratic model that incorporates the interests of all relevant stakeholders at different levels (Thompson et al., 2020). It is worth noting that different food-related initiatives empower individuals and communities in different ways, indicating varying levels of democratic potential (Bornemann & Weiland, 2019).

Sustainability is a recurring theme, encompassing environmental, economic, and social dimensions. The articles emphasize the need for sustainable practices in the food system, including ecological farming, local food networks, and alternative food production and distribution models (Balazs, 2013; Bedore, 2010; Fladvad, 2018; Lohest et al., 2019; Zollet & Maharjan, 2021). The reviewed documents often refer to initiatives around food as vectors of transition to sustainability (De Shutter, 2017; Lohest et al., 2019). Different market-related initiatives, such as civic agriculture, food

hubs, home gardening, urban food-sharing initiatives, and participatory UA, contribute to social sustainability, community cohesion, and knowledge exchange among food actors (Davies et al., 2019; Fourat et al., 2020; Kaika & Racelis, 2021; McIvor & Hale, 2015; Rose, 2017; Schupp et al., 2016). Short supply chains and regional food hubs strengthen communication, relationships, and local community bonds, promoting more sustainable and socially just food systems (Balazs, 2013; Chiffoleau et al., 2016; Kimura & Suryanata, 2016), boosting not only the participation of food systems' ordinary actors, but also their 'personal transformation' (self-confidence) (Chiffoleau et al., 2016). Achieving sustainable and equitable food systems requires the active participation of individuals as food citizens, who are informed about food production and distribution processes (Gómez-Benito & Lozano, 2014). However, to promote the transition to sustainable food systems, a governance shift towards integrated food policies is needed (De Shutter et al., 2020). In this perspective, governance actors contribute to sustainable development (Zerbian & de Luis Romero, 2021) as having an important role in starting initiatives aimed at sustainable local food system transformation (Baldy & Kruse, 2019).

The FD initiatives analyzed in reviewed documents aim to challenge and transform the dominant food system. Authors discuss grassroots innovations, alternative food movements, and the potential for political and social change in the food system (Andretta & Guidi, 2017; Di Masso et al., 2014; Kesselman, 2015; Zerbian & de Luis Romero, 2021). Grassroots initiatives foster social and political change in the agri-food system, transforming food culture, production-consumption practices, and governance structures (Lohest et al., 2019; Rossi, 2017). Alternative food movements strive to build new food practices and build egalitarian spaces where food actors can meet, and also generate political will for food system change (Moragues-Faus, 2017; Van de Griend et al., 2019). Actors at the niche and, to some extent, at the regime level build coalitions to

drive a process of ongoing changes that fosters a transformation of established structures within the food system (López Cifuentes & Gugerell, 2021). These initiatives vary in their strategies and approaches across territories (Di Masso et al., 2014).

Furthermore, several articles highlight the importance of promoting health and nutrition within FD initiatives. They emphasize improving access to healthy food, addressing food poverty, and promoting sustainable diets (Bedore, 2010; Davies et al., 2019; Johnson, 2020; Mazzocchi & Marino, 2019). Health-consciousness, nutritional considerations, and awareness of food origins empower consumers and have democratic potential (Bornemann & Weiland, 2019).

Promoting the concept of food citizenship involves an active interest in defining and exercising food preferences and understanding the political implications of food practices (Gómez-Benito & Lozano, 2014). An example can be members of SPGs: these are initially interested only in obtaining good quality food, safe and healthy products at sustainable prices, and later understand that obtaining good food implies a political redefinition of practices and a struggle to build concrete alternative ways of consuming and producing, empowering people to feel "less" powerless and to try to affect, if not the "capitalist system," at least their local economy (Andretta & Guidi, 2017). Government policies also prioritize access to healthy food, particularly for low-income residents (Berglund et al., 2021; Clark et al., 2017; Clark, 2018).

Finally, the retrieved literature emphasizes the role of FD in supporting local and regional economic development. This includes strengthening local food systems, empowering communities, and creating economic opportunities for small-scale food producers (Baldy & Kruse, 2019; Clark et al., 2017; Jhagroe, 2019; Prost, 2019).

Overall, the authors across the analyzed documents mainly express optimism about the potential of FD initiatives to contribute to a more democratic, fair, and socially just transformation of the mainstream food system. Emphasizing the

transformative potential (Andretta & Guidi, 2017; Clark et al., 2017; Clark, 2018; Fladvad; 2018), they highlight the importance of participatory processes (Leitheiser et al., 2021), policy reforms (Berglund et al., 2021; Clark, 2018; De Schutter et al., 2020; Jhagroe, 2019; Leitheiser et al., 2021), collective agency (Fernandez-Wulff, 2019), and inclusive governance structures to achieve these goals. Other authors adopt a critical perspective, highlighting limitations, challenges, and the need for further improvements.

In summary, alternative food-related initiatives strive for transformative change, promoting sustainability and democracy in the food system. They involve citizens, consumers, producers, civil society organizations, government actors, researchers, and community organizations. Through participatory processes, these actors challenge dominant food systems, shape alternative practices, and advocate for policy changes, aiming to create a more democratic, sustainable, and equitable food system.

5. Conclusions

By comprehensively analyzing the selected literature, this systematic review consolidates and synthesizes the literature on FD, providing a comprehensive understanding of its various forms and outcomes. The findings shed light on the potential of FD expressions to foster democratic, fair, and socially just transformations in the mainstream food system. By identifying key features and examining diverse initiatives, their goals, and actors, as well as the authors' judgement, this review contributes to the existing knowledge and offers insights for future research, policymaking, and grassroots actions in the pursuit of more democratic and sustainable food systems.

Different forms of organization in the agri-food system, despite their differences, have in common the fact that they represent an alternative to the mainstream market. Nevertheless, to overcome the niche position that they currently occupy, they need to

find a way of dialogue and coexistence with the conventional system by exploiting the opportunities it can provide to them (Barbera & Dagnes, 2016).

Agenda 2030, which includes the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), provides a crucial framework for addressing global challenges, including those related to food systems (Borsellino, Schimmenti, et al., 2020; El Bilali et al., 2019). The integration of FD principles and practices within the SDGs could contribute to achieving sustainable, equitable, and resilient food systems. FD, as explored in the reviewed literature, emphasizes the importance of participatory decision-making processes, inclusive governance, and social justice in shaping food systems. Aligning FD principles with Agenda 2030 could enhance the effectiveness of initiatives aimed at eradicating hunger, promoting sustainable agriculture, and ensuring access to nutritious food for all.

Moreover, the COVID-19 has highlighted the vulnerabilities and inequities in the current food systems (Borsellino, Kaliji, et al., 2020), emphasizing the need for a rights-based approach that ensures everyone's access to safe, nutritious, and culturally appropriate food. The COVID-19 has exposed the disparities in access to healthy food in urban areas, underscoring the importance of just and equitable urban food systems that prioritize food security, affordability, and social justice (López Cifuentes & Fiala, 2022). In the meanwhile, it has spurred social movements and consumer actions aimed at supporting local producers, promoting sustainable practices, and advocating for fair and just food systems. The COVID-19 crisis has thus created opportunities for governments to engage in participatory processes and collaborate with local actors to build more resilient and sustainable food systems (Petetin, 2020).

During times of crisis, such as the ongoing Ukraine War, social movements advocating for FD and consumer-producer alliances may play a significant role in shaping alternative food systems and fostering resilience. The recent conflict has

heightened the need for food systems reform to address the underlying causes of food insecurity and promote social justice (Neik et al., 2023).

This review highlights the importance of empowering people and democratizing the food system. Future research could explore the mechanisms and outcomes of empowerment processes within FD initiatives. This could involve studying the impacts of participatory decision-making, capacity building, and community engagement on individuals and communities, as well as their contributions to broader social and political transformations.

State-driven participation processes for local food system transformations have been discussed in the literature. However, there is a need for systematic evaluations of these processes to assess their effectiveness, inclusivity, and impact on decision-making. Future research could focus on evaluating the outcomes of participatory processes, identifying best practices, and developing guidelines for implementing inclusive and democratic governance structures.

Urban food systems are increasingly recognized as important sites for FD. However, there is a need for further research to understand the challenges and opportunities associated with integrating urban food systems into broader FD efforts. Future studies could also explore the dynamics of UA, the role of local governments in supporting FD initiatives, and the impacts of smart city policies on food system governance.

The literature emphasizes the link between FD and sustainability. Future research could explore the interconnectedness of FD and sustainability by investigating how democratic practices and values can contribute to more sustainable food systems. This could involve examining the social, economic, and environmental dimensions of FD and identifying strategies for promoting sustainability within democratic food systems.

These research gaps and future directions provide opportunities for further investigation and advancement in the field of FD, ultimately contributing to the development of more democratic, fair, and socially just food systems.

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Table 2 – Food initiatives mentioned in revised literature

Market		Governance	
Initiative	Documents	Initiative	Documents
CSA	Balazs, 2013 De Shutter, 2017 Rossi, 2017 (no. = 3)	Food Policy Councils (FPCs)	Adelle, 2019 Berglund et al., 2021 Bonermann & Weiland, 2019 Clark et al., 2017 Clark, 2018 Leitheiser et al., 2021 Thompson et al., 2020 Van de Griend et al., 2019 (no. = 8)
AFNs	Fourat et al., 2020 Lohest et al., 2019 Moragues-Faus, 2017 Prost et al., 2019 Rossi, 2017 (no. = 5)	Urban food systems/urban agriculture (UA)	Anderson, 2008 Bedore, 2010 López Cifuentes & Gugerell, 2021 McIvor & Hale, 2015 Resler & Hagolani-Albov, 2020 (no. = 5)
SFSCs	Chiffoleau et al., 2016 Reina-Usuga et al., 2020 Rossi, 2017 (no. = 3)	Urban food strategy/urban food policy	Adelle, 2019 Johnson, 2020 Leitheiser et al., 2021 Smaal et al., 2020 Zerbian & Romero, 2021 (no. = 5)
Sustainable/local/alternative food systems	Fernandez Wulff, 2019 Kaika & Racelis, 2020 Reina Usuga et al., 2020 Shupp et al., 2015 (no. = 4)	State-driven food-related participation processes/government food education programmes	Baldy & Kruse, 2019 Bonermann & Weiland, 2019 (no. = 2)
Local food hubs	Perret and Jackson, 2015 Prost et al., 2018 Prost et al., 2019 Prost, 2019 Rose 2017 (no. = 5)	Smart food cities	Dela Cruz et al., 2020 (no. = 1)
Urban food-sharing initiatives	Davies et al., 2019 Kesselman, 2015 (no. = 2)	Civic Food Networks (CFNs)	Prost et al., 2018 Prost et al., 2019 Prost, 2019 (no. = 3)
Agri-food movements (alternative, transformative)/local food initiatives	Bonermann & Weiland, 2019 Clark et al., 2017 De Schutter et al., 2020 Di Masso et al., 2014 Fladvad, 2017 Kimura & Suryanata, 2016 (no. = 6)	Food citizenship	Jhagroe, 2019 Gomez-Benito & Lozano, 2014 Prost et al., 2018 (no. = 3)
Civic agriculture	Kaika & Racelis, 2020 (no. = 1)	Citizens-led local initiatives/practices/innovations,	De Shutter, 2017 Fernandez-Wulff, 2019 Jhagroe, 2019 Kimura & Suryanata, 2016 Zollet and Maharjan, 2021 (no. = 5)
SPGs/ consumer-producer relationships	Andretta & Guidi, 2017 Kimura & Suryanata, 2016 (no. = 2)	Food public procurement	Mazzocchi & Marino, 2019 (no. = 1)

Table 3 - Goals of the various initiatives

Goals	Market	Governance	Market & Governance
Deliberative democratization	Balazs, 2013 Chiffolleau et al., 2016 Davies et al., 2019 De Schutter et al., 2020 Fourat et al., 2020 Kaika & Racelis, 2021 Moragues-Faus, 2017 Perret & Jackson, 2015 Reina-Usuga et al., 2020 Rose, 2017 Shupp et al., 2015 (no. = 11)	Adelle, 2019 Anderson, 2008 Dela Cruz et al., 2020 Gómez-Benito & Lozano, 2014 Jhagroe, 2019 Johnson, 2020 Mazzocchi & Marino, 2019 McIvor & Hale, 2015 Resler & Hagolani-Albov, 2021 Thompson et al., 2020 Van de Griend et al., 2019 Zollet & Maharjan, 2021 (no. = 12)	Bornemann & Weiland 2019 Fernandez-Wulff, 2019 Kimura & Suryanata, 2016 Prost et al., 2018 Prost et al., 2019 Prost, 2019 (no. = 6)
Sustainability	Andretta & Guidi, 2017 Balazs, 2013 Chiffolleau et al., 2016 De Shutter et al., 2020 Kaika & Racelis, 2021 Lohest et al., 2019 Moragues-Faus, 2017 Reina-Usuga et al., 2020 Rossi, 2017 Shupp et al., 2015 (no. = 10)	Adelle, 2019 Anderson, 2008 Baldy & Kruse, 2019 Clark et al., 2017 Gómez-Benito & Lozano, 2014 Jhagroe, 2019 Leitheiser et al., 2021 Zerbian & de Luis Romero, 2021 Zollet & Maharjan, 2021 (no. = 9)	De Shutter, 2017 Fernandez-Wulff, 2019 Kimura & Suryanata, 2016 (no. = 3)
Reform and transformation	Balazs, 2013 Davies et al., 2019 Di Masso et al., 2014 Fladvad, 2018 Fourat, 2020 Kesselman, 2015 Lohest et al., 2019 Moragues-Faus, 2017 Reina-Usuga et al., 2020 Rossi, 2017 (no. = 10)	Baldy & Kruse, 2019 Berglund et al., 2021 López Cifuentes & Gugerell, 2021 Leitheiser et al., 2021 Resler & Hagolani-Albov, 2021 van de Griend et al., 2019 Zollet & Maharjan, 2021 (no. = 7)	De Shutter, 2017 Kimura & Suryanata, 2016 Prost et al., 2018 Prost, 2019 (no. = 4)
Health and nutrition	Andretta & Guidi, 2017 Davies et al., 2019 Rose, 2017 (no. = 3)	Berglund et al., 2021 Clark, 2018 Clark et al., 2017 Dela Cruz et al., 2020 Gomez-Benito & Lozano, 2014 Johnson, 2020 Mazzocchi & Marino, 2019 McIvor & Hale, 2015 Smaal et al., 2020 (no. = 9)	Bornemann & Weiland, 2019 Prost et al., 2019 (no. = 2)
Local and/or regional economic development	Kaika & Racelis, 2021 Rose, 2017 (no. = 2)	Berglund et al., 2021 Clark, 2018 Clark et al., 2017 Mazzocchi & Marino, 2019 (no. = 4)	

Table 4 – Actors participating in food initiatives

Actors	Types	Market	Governance	Market & governance
Food chain actors	Producers	<i>Food producers without specifications:</i> Andretta & Guidi, 2017 Balazs, 2013 De Shutter et al., 2020 Di Masso et al., 2014 Fladvad, 2017 Kaika & Racelis, 2020 Kesselman, 2015 Lohest et al., 2019 Moragues-Faus, 2017 Rossi, 2017 (no. = 10) <i>Local (often small) farmers:</i> Chiffolleau et al., 2016 Perrett & Jackson, 2015 Reina-Usuga et al., 2020 Rose, 2017 (no. = 4) <i>Urban farmers:</i> Schupp et al., 2015 (gardeners) (no. = 1) (no. = 15)	<i>Food producers without specifications:</i> Adelle, 2019 López Cifuentes & Gugerell, 2021 Clark, 2018 Jhagroe, 2019 Leitheiser et al., 2021 Mazzocchi & Marino, 2019 Smaal et al., 2020 Zollet & Maharjan, 2021 (no. = 8) <i>Urban farmers:</i> López Cifuentes & Gugerell, 2021 (CSA) Dela Cruz et al., 2020 Davies et al., 2019 (community gardens) Jhagroe, 2019 (sustainable urban farmers) McIvor & Hale, 2015 Resler & Hagolani-Albov, 2020 Zollet & Maharjan, 2021 (farmers groups) (no. = 7) (no. = 15)	<i>Food producers without specifications:</i> Bonermann & Weiland, 2019 Fernandez-Wulff, 2019 Prost et al., 2019 Prost, 2019 (no. = 4) <i>Local (often small) farmers:</i> Kimura & Suryanata, 2016 Prost et al., 2018 (no. = 2) (no. = 6)
	Consumers	Andretta & Guidi, 2017 (political consumers) Balazs, 2013 Chiffolleau et al., 2016 Fladvad, 2017 Kaika & Racelis, 2020 (local consumers) (no. = 5)	Adelle, 2019 Gómez-Benito & Lozano, 2014 Johnson, 2020 (no. = 3)	Bonermann & Weiland, 2019 Fernandez-Wulff, 2019 Kimura & Suryanata, 2016 (no. = 3)
	Processors	Balazs, 2013 Chiffolleau et al., 2016 De Shutter et al., 2020 Lohest et al., 2019 (no. = 4)	Baldy & Kruse, 2019 Clark, 2018 Jhagroe, 2019 Johnson, 2020 Van de Griend et al., 2019 (no. = 5)	Fernandez-Wulff, 2019 (no. = 1)
	Retailers	Chiffolleau et al., 2016 Lohest et al., 2019 Reina-Usuga et al., 2020 (no. = 3)	López Cifuentes & Gugerell, 2021 Clark, 2018 Leitheiser et al., 2021 (no. = 3)	
	Distributors		Clark, 2018 Gómez-Benito and Lozano, 2014 Prost et al., 2018 (no. = 3)	
Public sector / State actors	Various levels of government	Chiffolleau et al., 2016 Davies et al., 2019 De Shutter et al., 2020 (EU, national governments, WHO) Kaika & Racelis, 2020 Kesselman, 2015 (no. = 5)	Adelle, 2019 Baldy & Kruse, 2019 Berglund et al., 2021 López Cifuentes & Gugerell, 2021 Clark, 2018 Dela Cruz et al., 2020 Jhagroe, 2019 Johnson, 2020 Leitheiser et al., 2021 Mazzocchi & Marino, 2019 McIvor & Hale, 2015	Bonermann & Weiland, 2019 (no. = 1)

			Resler & Hagolani-Albov, 2020 Smaal et al., 2020 van de Griend et al., 2019 Zerbian & Romero, 2021 Zollet & Maharjan, 2021 (no. = 16)	
	Other public institutions, as schools		Mazzocchi & Marino, 2019 McIvor & Hale, 2015 (no. = 2)	
	FPCs	De Shutter et al., 2020 (no. = 1)	Clark et al., 2017 McIvor & Hale, 2015 (no. = 2)	
	Public food strategies	Reina-Usuga et al., 2020 (no. = 1)		
Civil society actors	Citizens/food citizens/civil society	De Shutter et al., 2020 Fourat et al., 2020 Schupp et al., 2015 (no. = 3)	Baldy & Kruse, 2019 López Cifuentes and Gugerell, 2021 Gómez-Benito & Lozano, 2014 Jhagroe, 2019 Johnson, 2020 Leitheiser et al., 2021 Smaal et al., 2020 van de Griend et al., 2019 Zerbian & Romero., 2021 Zollet & Maharjan, 2021 (no. = 10)	Bonerman & Weiland, 2019 Fernandez-Wulff, 2019 Kimura & Suryanata, 2016 Prost et al., 2018 Prost, 2019 (no. = 5)
	Communities/community organizations/interest groups (e.g. parents)	Davies et al., 2019 Fourat et al., 2020 Kaika & Racelis, 2020 Rose, 2017 (no. = 4)	Berglund et al., 2021 López Cifuentes & Gugerell, 2021 Clark, 2018 Dela Cruz et al., 2020 Jhagroe, 2019 Mazzocchi & Marino, 2019 McIvor & Hale, 2015 Resler & Hagolani-Albov, 2020 Zollet & Maharjan, 2021 (no. = 9)	Bonermann & Weiland, 2019 Fernandez-Wulff, 2019 Kimura & Suryanata, 2016 Prost et al., 2018 Prost et al., 2019 Prost, 2019 (no. = 6)
	Activists/volunteers/consumer health advocates	Kaika & Racelis, 2020 (no. = 1)	Baldy & Kruse, 2019 Bedore, 2010 Jhagroe, 2019 Johnson, 2020 Leitheiser et al., 2021 Kaika & Racelis, 2020 Zollet & Maharjan, 2021 (no. = 7)	Prost et al., 2018 (food charities) Prost et al., 2019 Prost, 2019 (no. = 3)
	NGOs	Di Masso et al., 2014 Reina-Usuga et al., 2020 (no. = 2)	Leitheiser et al., 2021 van de Griend et al., 2019 (no. = 2)	
	Transformative initiatives	Di Masso et al., 2014 (no. = 1)		
	SPGs	Lohest et al., 2019 Zollet & Maharjan, 2021 (no. = 2)		
	Future generations	Gomez-Benito & Lozano, 2014 (no. = 1)		
Private/public researchers	Researchers and Universities	Chiffolleau et al., 2016 De Shutter et al., 2020 Di Masso et al., 2014 Lohest et al., 2019 (no. = 4)	Adelle, 2019 Johnson, 2020 Leitheiser et al., 2019 Van de Griend et al., 2019 (no. = 4)	Prost et al., 2019 (no. = 1)
	Technical advisors/experts	Di Masso et al., 2014 Rose, 2017 (skilled staff) (no. = 2)	McIvor and Hale., 2015 Zollet and Maharjan, 2021 (no. = 2)	Bonermann & Weiland, 2019 (no. = 1)

Private sector	For profit	De Shutter et al., 2020 (no. = 1)	Baldy & Kruse, 2019 Clark, 2018 Jhagroe, 2019 van de Griend et al., 2019 Zerbian & Romero, 2021 (no. = 5)	
	Non-profit	Balazs, 2013 (no. = 1)	Clark, 2018 (no. = 1)	Kimura & Suryanata, 2016 (no. = 1)

Table 5 – Authors judgement

Judgment	Market	Governance	Market & Governance
Positive	Andretta & Guidi, 2017 Balazs, 2013 Chiffolleau et al., 2016 De Schutter et al., 2020 Lohest et al., 2019 Reina-Usuga et al., 2020 Rose, 2017 Rossi, 2017 (no. = 8)	Adelle, 2019 Anderson, 2008 Baldy & Kruse, 2019 Bedore, 2010 Clark et al., 2017 Clark, 2018 Gómez-Benito & Lozano, 2014 Jhagroe, 2019 Johnson, 2020 Leitheiser et al., 2021 Mazzocchi & Marino, 2019 Resler & Hagolani-Albov, 2021 van de Griend et al., 2019 Zerbian & Romero, 2021 Zollet & Maharjan, 2021 (no. = 15)	Bornemann & Weiland 2019 Fernandez-Wulff, 2019 Prost et al., 2019 Prost, 2019 (no. = 4)
Positive with critical issues	Davies et al., 2019 Kaika & Racelis, 2021 Moragues-Faus, 2017 (no. = 3)	Berglund et al., 2021 López Cifuentes & Gugerell, 2021 McIvor & Hale, 2015 (no. = 3)	Kimura & Suryanata, 2016 (no. = 1)
Critical	Di Masso et al., 2014 Fourat et al., 2020 Kesselman, 2015 Perrett & Jackson, 2015 Schupp et al., 2015 (no. = 5)	De Shutter, 2017 Dela Cruz et al., 2020 Smaal et al., 2020 (no. = 3)	Prost et al., 2018 (no. = 1)
No authors' judgement	Fladvad, 2017 (no = 1)	Thompson et al., 2020 (no = 1)	

Figure 1 - Representation of the literature search and selection process

