

Case: LL Azienda Usi Toscana Nord Ovest

How to assess social and economic impacts of interventions addressing health and awareness of food and nutrition at middle and high schools



24 January 2024

Case description

- The **Azienda Usi Toscana Nord Ovest Living Lab** has two sites in both an urban and rural area of the Northwest Tuscany region aiming at *health promotion* among adolescents.
- **Research among adolescents** points at high consumption of snacks (41,9%) and sugary drinks (22,6%) and no breakfast (22,6%). Only 3% between 12-16 eat the daily recommended 5 portions of fruit and vegetables.
- Focus is on **118 students** from the second year of middle school (12-13y) and of high school (15-16y).
- **Planned intervention** in support of enabling factors and of the adoption of healthy diets include co-design exercises with students, a set of initiatives such as cooking classes, and promoting local *Slow Food* actions.
- **Assessment** via survey, based on *Theory of Planned Behaviour* (Ajzen, 1991) as input for the setup of Focus Groups – what is missing is the social and economic impact assessment.

Take-home lessons

- **Disruptive delays in research due to** (I) ethical rules in EU projects: important to communicate these rules at the very beginning – this can save time and misunderstandings, and (II) preparing the questionnaire: balancing academic standards/literature against length and concept requires an early and sound division of tasks between different actors, and (III) dropout of school causing more delays > negative feedback mechanism.
- **Social Assessments:** The LL applied the Theory of Planned Behaviour (Ajzen, 1991) for the online survey on the ‘adherence to a Mediterranean Diet by addressing attitude, subjective norms, perceived behavioural control against intention and actual behaviour. Key for launching a successful intervention (‘perceived behavioural control’) is to better understand the target groups mindset and preferences. Translating the ‘[Milkshake Marketing](#)’ approach by C. Christensen to the LL situation, means to possibly first examine the mechanism behind food consumption, e.g. at the school’s vending machines (VM): what are the key drivers – price, taste, brand, size, food environment? This also means to understand the social norms behind customer choices.
- **Economic Assessments:** While the framework provides only some insights on economic aspects, change of behavior as well as perceived behavioral control can be measured through concepts such as [Social Return Values](#) offering a monetarization of social and governance parameters. This means to possibly consider an intervention around the VM’s *business model*. By doing so, the LL might need to contact the operator, potential producers of healthy food alternatives and other players. Ideally, the intervention proposes a win-win solution for all stakeholders.
- **Sustainability Impact Assessment (SIA):** the above means that the LL could identify different ambition levels in the context of a SIA – a broader approach going beyond an EIA which includes next to the environment also the social and economic domain. In the light of the LL’s action space it could be considered to embed the existing survey into a SIA-stile assessment that draws upon targeted stakeholder contacts and a desktop study.
- **Establish a working group:** the above involve experts from different fields and expertise. In the LL’s working group, these include already health promotion, a school and the university of gastronomic science, and this allows us to put together different fields and different experiences.
- **Involvement of stakeholders:** Make sure that relevant stakeholders and local entities are involved from the very beginning of the project.

Discussion

- Chiara presents the case of the Tuscany LL and shows the 4 mandatory FEAST intervention impact dimensions: Health, Environmental, Social and Economic. Her question to the group: **How can we analyze the economic and social impact within the focus group?**
- Anant mentions the **social return of investment framework, theory of change through social & economic impact, cost effectiveness analysis**. He questions whether you need to look at all of those outcomes. Not all interventions will deliver all of those outcomes, it depends what you're looking at.
- Pointing on recent work undertaken in the FoodSHIFT 2030 project Dirk sees **parallels between an intervention and an innovation**. The **innovation cases** are in principle long-term business and policy driven interventions in support of changing our food system. Here, the FoodSHIFT2030 operates with so-called Innovation Readiness Levels that allow measuring the advancement of an innovation along different parameters, such as social cohesion and jobs.
- Anant: There is a **different social dynamic** when working with kids/younger persons, because the incentive to look 'cool' cannot be leveled by older people (like us researchers). Consider that they may not want to interact with other kids, because it is not the 'cool' thing to do, or that there are trends about certain type of candy bars or drinks that we are not aware of – referring here to the role of vending machines.
- Andreas: You could also use these focus groups to put another perspective on social practices. The theory of planned behaviour is a very individualistic approach, but do not always deliver the expected outcomes, because there is **habit** that is not taken into account, family routines/dynamics and power relations. Would be interesting to also investigate those. You could see it as a follow-up of a quantitative approach.
- Johanna: Could be interesting to look at the Ghent case and take a step back from schools/youngsters and look at the social impact on **different levels** and reflect how healthy food habits and behavior in school can reflect back into **society as a whole** in the social dimension.
- Geoffrey: Make a take home survey asking **what kids would like to learn** from the intervention. Could be good reference point to see what is taken home outside of school life. Interventions could follow the rational of **'high fidelity' vs 'low fidelity'**: some core assessments embedded in a wider package of socio-economic data on the local food system..

Attendees

Chiara Ferravante,	Tuscany LL
Federica Manca,	Tuscany LL
Fabio Consalez,	Tuscany LL
Anthony Fardet,	PLAN'EAT kids
Nathalie Ross,	University of North Texas
Caroline Welch LL,	Good Food Oxfordshire
Andreas Exner,	RCE Graz-Styria
Anant Jani,	Heidelberg University
Geoffrey Kwala,	Uganda Permaculture Consortium
Johanna Vordemfelde,	ICLEI
Iris Blasquez,	Universitat Oberta de Catalunya
Kathy Belpaeme,	City of Oostende, LL
Edmund Roch,	
Merel Dubbeldam,	SusMetro
Dirk Wascher,	SusMetro

Further reading/Annex

- Theory of Change linking with Environmental Impact Assessment: [Link](#)
- Doernberg et al 2022. Sustainability Assessment of short food supply chains: [Link](#)
- Exner & Strüver 2020 Addressing the Sustainability Paradox: The Analysis of "Good Food": [Link](#)
- FoodSHIFT2030 Innovation Reports & Food Ecosystem Roadmaps: [Link](#)

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