

Evaluation REKO-ring Pilot in Groningen

May 27 2021

The REKO-ring had already been postponed due to the Covid-19 pandemic, but at the end of May 2021 REFRAME was still able to execute the pilot in Groningen. The aim of the pilot was to investigate whether this concept works in Groningen (the Netherlands) in addition to [Sweden](#). In Sweden, the REKO-ring concept has in a short time become a popular way for the producer and consumer to meet and at the same, REKO-rings create a network and logistical system for locally produced food. The initiative [Lokaal Kilo's Schuiven](#), which actually means 'shift pounds locally', conducted the pilot on behalf of REFRAME in Groningen.

In Groningen the REKO-ring concept was adapted to our city and region, slightly different from the concept executed in Sweden. Whereas in Sweden consumers order directly from producers through closed Facebook groups after which they meet; in Groningen consumers ordered from the community managers of the organizations where they work. We expected that consumers would be easily approachable through the organizations they work for: organizations that already have sustainable intentions and/or social goals. And if this works, of course many (new) consumers of local food can be reached with the REKO-rings. Consequently, consumers who participated were approached via the community managers of their workplaces at multi-company buildings, such as start-ups and freelance workplaces, and even a student association joined the pilot. All consumers received the order lists from their community manager. In the morning of the REKO-ring, the producers brought the orders to several drop-off points in the city of Groningen and consumers also came here to pick up their order. The producer's payment was made through the community managers.



Communication

To reach consumers posters were distributed, a Facebook and website banner were made and an Instagram message was posted. The community managers of the multi-company buildings and student association helped to enthuse employees and students to participate.

What were the results?

Products were ordered from **eight farmers and suppliers** in the city and region of Groningen and Assen (province of Drenthe) and orders have been picked up by consumers from **three locations** in the city of Groningen: [De Pijp](#) (freelance workplace), [Aegir](#) (student rowing association) and from one of the organizers' home. Products has been ordered for an amount of **910 euros**.

Of the 8 farmers and suppliers, 7 want to participate in the REKO-ring again. 1 company, a biodynamic farm, indicated that they did not want to participate again, because they could not meet the demand. However, they may want to participate again in collaboration with other farmers. The 3 drop off locations mentioned above would all like to participate again.

What have we learned?

1. Products must be sold below market price in order to compete with organic products or regular products in the supermarket;
2. Consumers participate in REKO-ring based on the idea that here they can get their basic ingredients and products. A list with a maximum of 10 products, 5 types of vegetables and potatoes, cheese, meat and bread meet their needs;
3. A recipe must accompany the order list;
4. REKO-ring should be organized every two weeks;
5. REKO-ring shouldn't be about becoming a farmer's supermarket ('one-stop shop' principle);
6. A lot of voluntary work is required from the drop-off locations;
7. Someone needs to be trained for a few months in organizing REKO-rings, but in the end the project can run almost self-sufficiently;
8. Someone has to spend fifteen minutes / half an hour a week on maintaining the order list and bundle orders and send them to farmers and suppliers;
9. The role and responsibility of farmers must be increased;
10. Payment by consumers to farmers and suppliers should be made easier.

What's next?

The REKO-ring pilot was a success and has added value for consumers, farmers and suppliers in Groningen. Both the REKO-ring team and participants desire to continue with organizing (two-weekly) REKO-rings, even after REFRAME has ended. If this wish can be realized, the team wants to test:

- If an integration with other challenges could be made, such as (sustainable) logistics and reducing poverty.
- If a collaboration with restaurants can be realised.
- If more student associations want to participate.
- Whether the REKO-ring project could become 'self-sufficient' in three months.
- What role 'local food hubs' could play (such as multi-company buildings and student associations);
- Whether local cooking workshops for student associations can be of added value.

If the REKO-rings will be organized more often, a number of risks must be taken into account. For example:

1. not all products will be available throughout the season. How can the REKO-rings be adapted to this?
2. The REKO-rings may only seem to revolve around economic value, but value must also be added in another way. Volunteering is and remains necessary.