INTRODUCTION

The Food Communities was chosen as a case for HealthyGrowth because they constitute a major novelty within the Danish foodscape. The Food Communities have emerged as the latest incarnation of a series of attempts to forge alternative food networks operating beyond the supermarket system. Denmark is distinguished by a large market share of organic food being sold via supermarkets, but The Food Communities are a novelty due to two factors, (1) they have experienced a rapid growth since the outset in 2010, and (2) they are organised in a decentralised manner, where they continue to split up the network in chapters, each operating within their distinct local area. This can be described as a matter of ‘upscale by multiplication’. The Food Communities are a predominantly urban phenomenon, as the farmers are not formal members of the organization.

HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT AND BACKGROUND

Denmark is distinguished by a highly modernized food and agricultural sector. The modernization of Danish agriculture was based on close collaboration between the state, agricultural and veterinary science and the farming sector. The result was a food sector distinguished by highly efficient farms, and a relatively centralized supply chain. Contrary to many other countries in Europe, organic and other ‘alternative’ foods are primarily sold via supermarkets. Still, Denmark has seen a lot of different initiatives regarding the establishment of supply chains operating outside the established retail system. Examples include box schemes, specialty shops, and various consumer supported agriculture projects.
ORGANIZATION OF THE FOOD COMMUNITIES

Organic food has a large market share on the Danish food market, with a market share of roughly 7 percent. The Danish Food Communities first emerged in the Copenhagen area in 2008. The first Danish food community was started by a group of concerned customers, who wanted to establish a direct link to regional producers of organic food. Organic vegetables were chosen as the main product (meat and other products such as dairy products are yet to emerge in the food communities). From the outset, the consumers organized the food community as a cooperative association, where the highest authority is the annual general assembly. After the initial general assembly, the food community activists started the search for producers interested in supplying the food communities on a weekly basis.

From a modest start in Copenhagen, the movement has spread to several major as well as medium-sized cities of Denmark, including the second-largest city of Aarhus where a Food Community was initiated in 2010. The food communities in Denmark now count more than 4,000 members, organized in local networks within different neighborhoods of major and medium-sized cities.

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