

# Local Food Products in Romania: Insights into Agricultural Production and Community Impact

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## **Abstract**

*This paper analyzes the availability of domestic products on the shelves of two supermarkets in order to identify the availability of these products for consumers and implicitly their contribution to the development of the economy. The research was conducted using the online identification method, focusing on supermarkets located in Bucharest Municipality, analyzed between June 19, 2024 and June 28, 2023. The analysis included a wide range of local products, such as tomatoes, cucumbers, onions, carrots, potatoes, cabbage, beets, ginger, celery, celeriac, turmeric, parsley, apples, pears, milk and eggs. Thus, in the case of eggs, in both supermarkets there are 100% Romanian products. For milk in the first supermarket there is only Romanian milk, while in the second, 94% of the products are Romanian. For vegetables the percentage of domestic products on the shelf is 50% or more.*

**Keywords:** Local products, shelf, vegetables, fruits, egg, Romania

**JEL Classification:** R10, R20, J10

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## **1. Introduction**

Consumption of local agricultural products has significant social implications, contributing to strengthening the local economy and maintaining cultural traditions. By purchasing and consuming them, local farmers are supported, rural jobs are created and maintained, rural migration is combated, providing economic and social stability to rural areas (Pinchot, 2014).

In recent years, local products have gained more and more popularity, being recognized for their superior quality and the significant role they play in supporting the local economy. These products are usually grown or manufactured close to the communities that consume them, thus helping to reduce environmental impact by shortening the supply chain and reducing carbon emissions (Dilley, 2009). In addition, they reflect the cultural identity and traditions specific to the region they come from, offering consumers an authentic experience and special flavors. By supporting local producers, not only is regional economic growth boosted, but the gastronomic diversity and traditional crafts of the area are mentioned and promoted (Blake et al., 2010).

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In addition to the economic benefits, the consumption of Romanian agricultural products plays an important role in public health, as they are often fresher and less processed compared to imported ones (Dumitru et al., 2023)

Consumption of Romanian agricultural products can have a positive impact on climate change by reducing the carbon footprint associated with transportation and storage of imported products (Iancu et al., 2022). Local food requires fewer resources to reach the market, thus reducing greenhouse gas emissions from long-distance transportation. In addition, supporting local agriculture can encourage sustainable and regenerative farming practices, which can help to sequester carbon in the soil and maintain biodiversity (Choe et al., 2018).

Consumer behavior is influenced by quality, sustainability, support for regional development and the desire for authenticity.

Moreover, cooperatives contribute to the consumption of local products by uniting farmers to be able to attract lower prices and increase sales power (Dumitru et al., 2023).

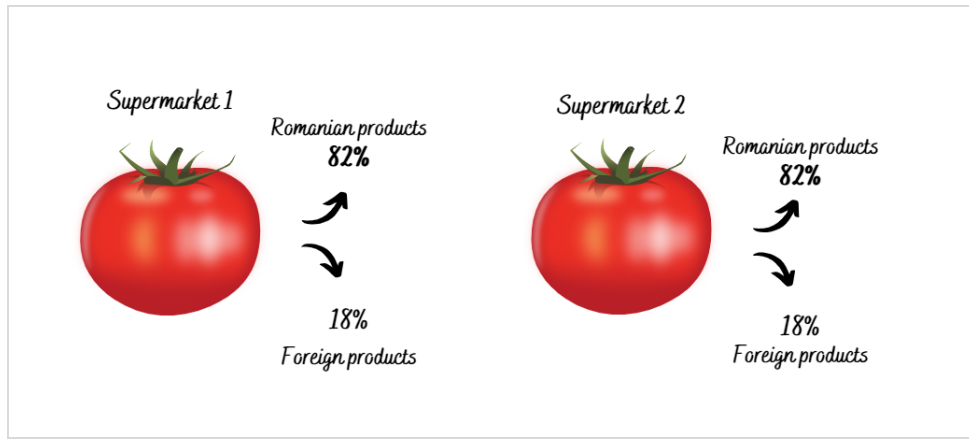
The need for authenticity and the desire to explore local traditions is also a key element in consumer behavior towards local products (Ceylan, et al., 2018). In an increasingly standardized world where mass-produced products are ubiquitous, many consumers are trying to rediscover the authentic flavours and culinary traditions specific to their region (Dangelico et al., 2024). Local products provide this link to the cultural heritage of the area, satisfying consumers' desire to feel connected to their roots and support local cultural identity (Tănase et al., 2023).

## **2. Material and method**

In this study, the online research method was used to identify stores belonging to the largest retail chains in Romania. The analyzed supermarkets, between June 19, 2024 and June 28, 2023, were located in Bucharest Municipality and selected for detailed analysis. The products identified in the supermarkets are: tomatoes, cucumbers, onions, carrots, potatoes, cabbage, beetroot, ginger, celery, celeriac, celery, turmeric, turmeric, parsley, parsley, apples, pears, milk, eggs.

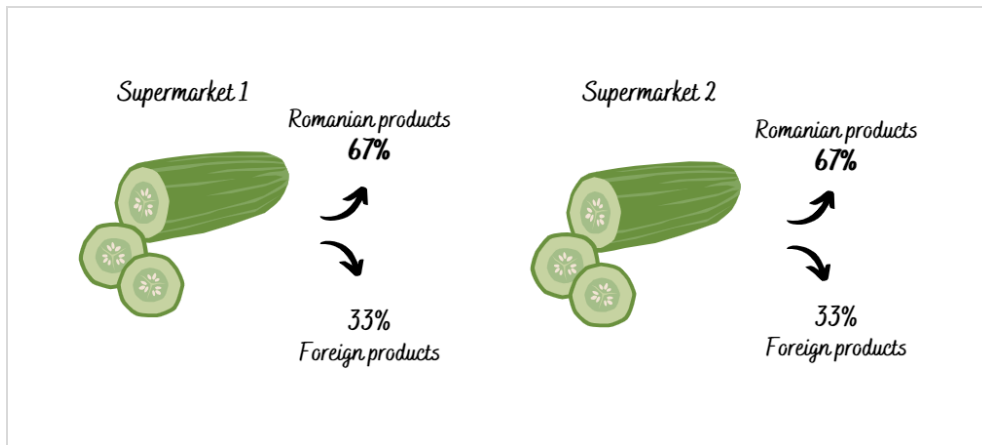
## **3. Results and discussions**

At supermarket number 1, 11 varieties of the product "tomato" were identified, of which 9 varieties of tomatoes have Romania as their country of origin, thus 82% of the products on the shelf are Romanian. In supermarket number 2, 17 tomato products were identified, of which 9 assortments have country of origin Romania. Imported products have country of origin Belgium, Turkey, Morocco, Spain (Figure 1).



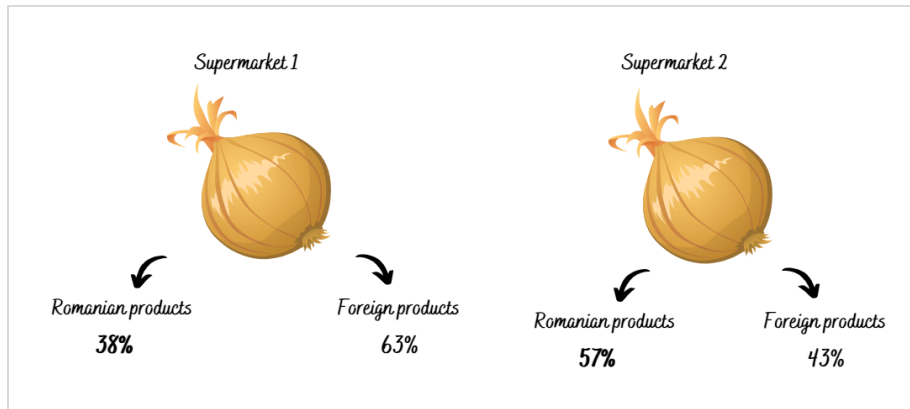
**Figure 1. Percentage of Romanian vegetables on the shelf for the tomato category (%)**  
*Source: authors interpretation.*

As far as cucumbers are concerned, in both supermarkets 3 varieties of cucumbers were identified, of which in each supermarket only 2 are of Romanian origin, thus the percentage of Romanian products on the shelf for both supermarkets is 67%. Imported products have country of origin Spain (Figure 2).



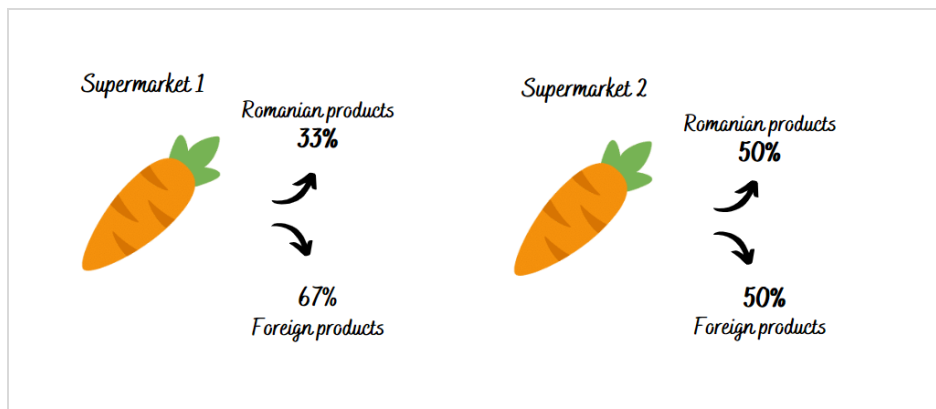
**Figure 2. Percentage of Romanian vegetables on the shelf for the cucumber category (%)**  
*Source: authors interpretation*

As far as onions are concerned, in supermarket 1, 8 varieties of this category were identified, 38% of which are Romanian products (3 products), while in supermarket 2, out of a total of 7 varieties present on the shelf, 57% of the products are of Romanian origin (4 products). Imported products show country of origin Netherlands, France and Bulgaria (Figure 3).



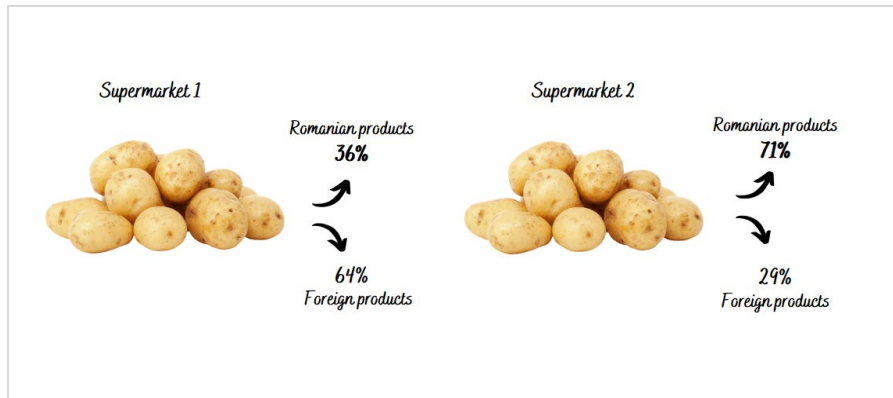
**Figure 3. Percentage of Romanian vegetables on the shelf for the onion category (%)**  
*Source: authors interpretation*

In supermarket number 1, there are 3 varieties of carrots on the shelf, 33% of which have Romanian origin (2 products), while in supermarket number 2, there are 2 varieties of products, one of which has Romanian origin. Also the countries of origin of the imported products are the Netherlands and Turkey (Figure 4).



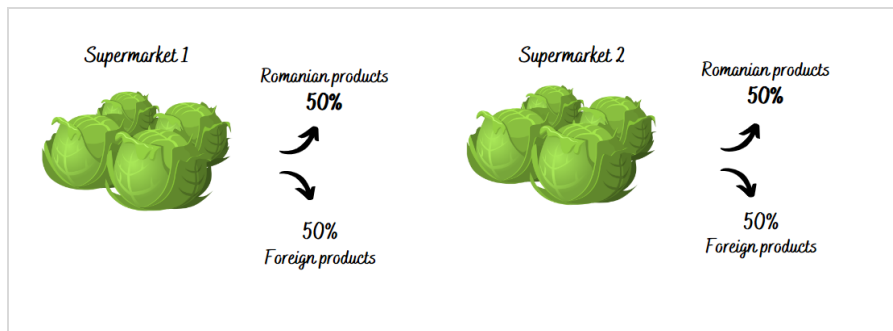
**Figure 4. Percentage of Romanian vegetables on the shelf for the carrot category (%)**  
*Source: authors interpretation*

As far as potatoes are concerned, 11 varieties were identified in supermarket number 1, 36% of them are produced in Romania (4 products), and in supermarket 2, the percentage of Romanian products is 71% (5 Romanian products) out of the total of 7 products on the shelf. In the case of foreign products, these were imported from countries such as Egypt, Spain, France and Greece (Figure 5).



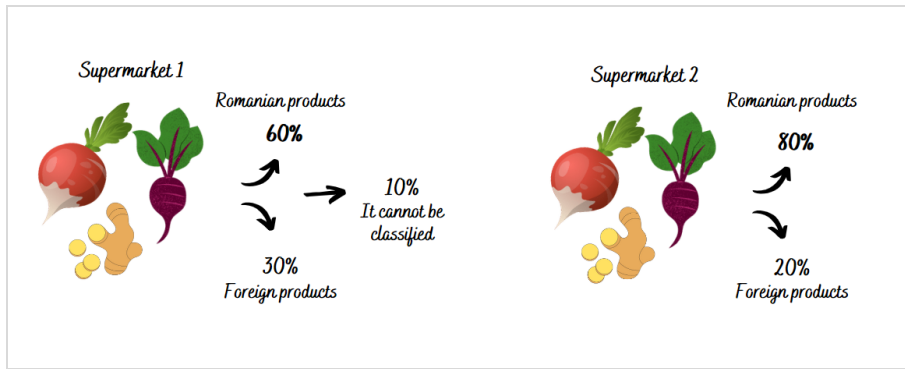
**Figure 5. Percentage of Romanian vegetables on the shelf for the potato category (%)**  
*Source: authors interpretation*

For the cabbage category, 2 varieties were identified both at supermarket number 1, one of Romanian origin and one of foreign origin, and at supermarket 2, 4 products were identified, of which only 2 are of Romanian origin. Foreign products were imported from China and the Netherlands (Figure 6).



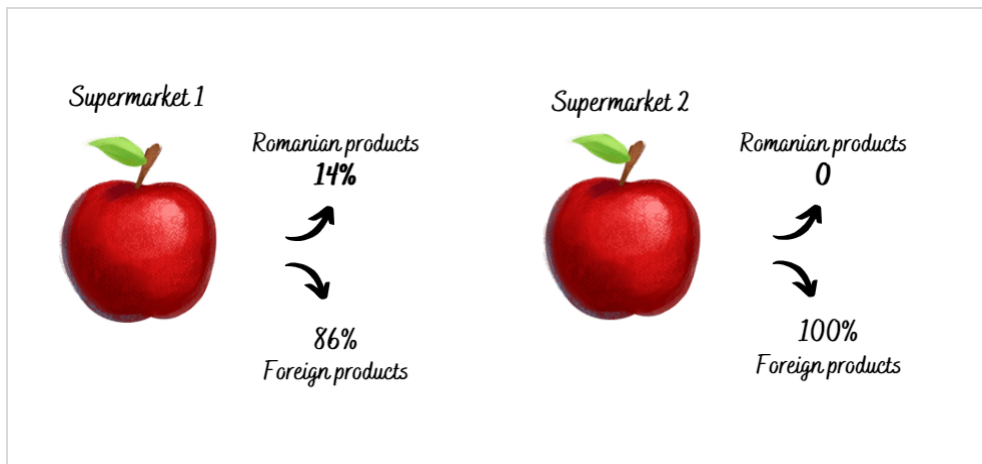
**Figure 6. Percentage of Romanian vegetables on the shelf for the cabbage category (%)**  
*Source: authors interpretation*

In supermarket number 1, for the category of root vegetables (celery, red beetroot, parsley, gully, ginger, parsnip, turmeric), 10 types of products were identified, of which 60% are from Romania. In supermarket number 2, the root vegetables category (beetroot, ginger, celery, radishes, red beetroot, parsnips), 10 types of products were also identified, of which 80% were from Romania. Products with foreign origin were imported from countries such as China, the Netherlands and Thailand (Figure 7).



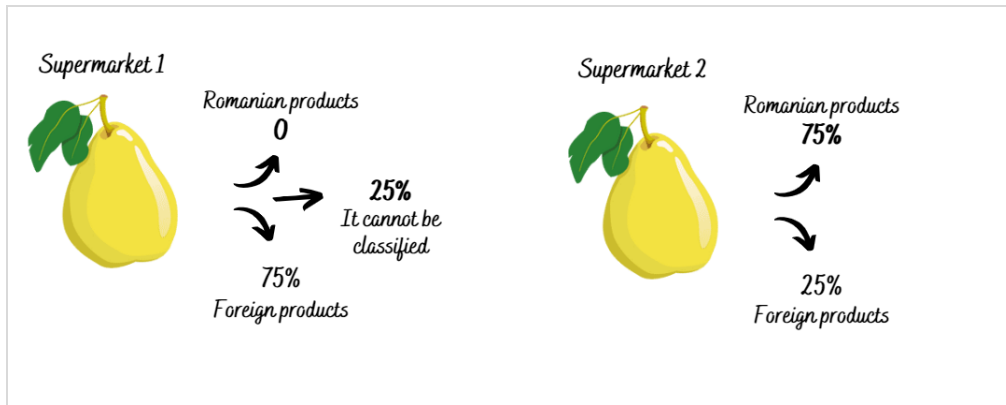
**Figure 7. Percentage of Romanian vegetables on the shelf for the roots category (%)**  
*Source: authors interpretation*

For the category of apples, in supermarket number 1, 7 assortments were identified of which 14% have Romania as country of origin (one product), and supermarket number 2 has 10 assortments on the shelf of which all have foreign origin. Products of foreign origin were imported from Poland, Argentina, Italy, Turkey and South Africa (Figure 8).



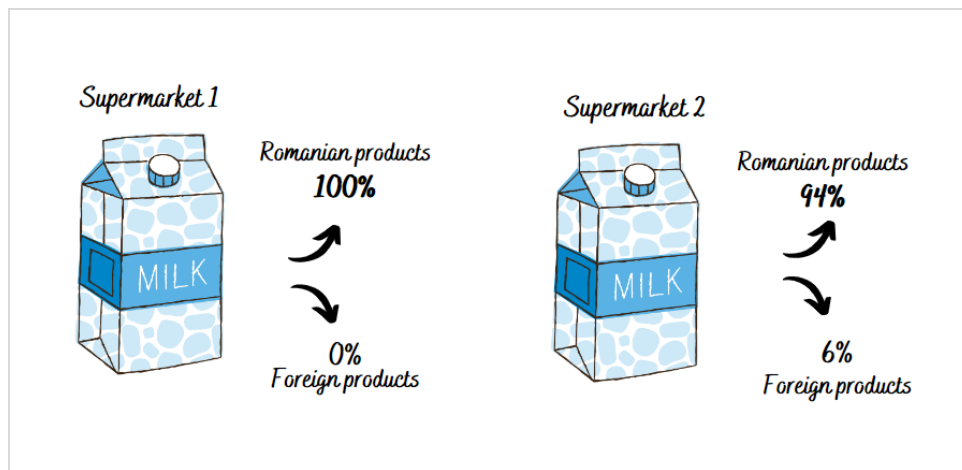
**Figure 8. Percentage of Romanian vegetables on the shelf for the apple category (%)**  
*Source: authors interpretation*

In the case of pears, in supermarket number 1, 4 products were identified on the shelf, 3 of which were of foreign origin and one of which did not specify the country of origin. In supermarket number 2, there are 2 products of foreign origin on the shelf that have been imported from the Netherlands and Italy (Figure 9).



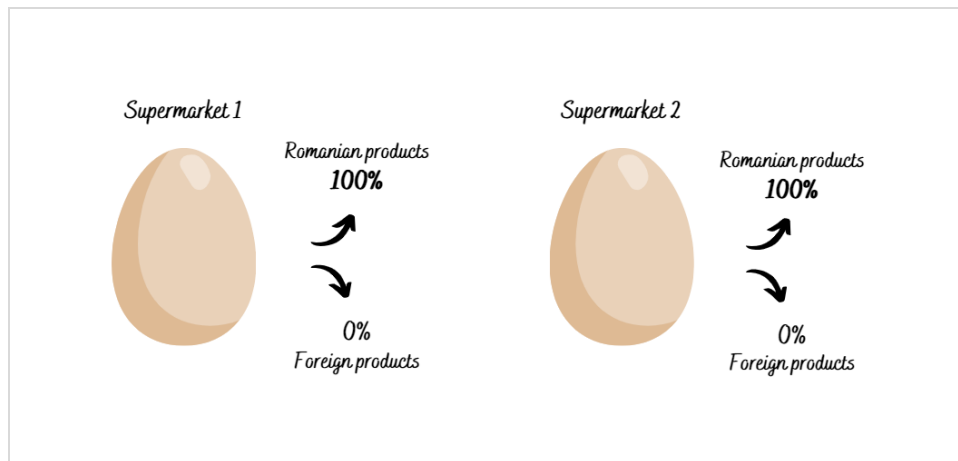
**Figure 9. Percentage of Romanian vegetables on the shelf for the pear category (%)**  
*Source: authors interpretation*

For the milk product, in supermarket number 1, 100% of the milk produced in Romania is present on the shelf out of a total of 24 products identified on the shelf, while in supermarket 2, only 94% of the milk present on the shelf is of Romanian origin out of a total of 85 products identified. The 6% of milk that comes from abroad is from Germany and Austria (Figure 10).



**Figure 10. Percentage of Romanian vegetables on the shelf for the milk category (%)**  
*Source: authors interpretation*

The eggs category, presents a percentage of 100% eggs of Romanian origin in both supermarkets, the total of products in supermarket number 1 is 16 products present on the shelf, while in supermarket number 2, the total is 32 products (Figure 11).



**Figure 11. Percentage of Romanian vegetables on the shelf for the egg category (%)**

*Source:* authors interpretation

#### 4. Conclusions

For vegetables such as tomatoes, cucumbers, cabbage and root vegetables, the percentage of domestic products on the shelf is 50% or more, while for onions, carrots and potatoes the percentage is lower. Vegetables also come from countries such as Belgium, Turkey, Morocco, Spain, the Netherlands, France, Egypt, China, Thailand and Bulgaria.

In the case of fruit, in the first supermarket, apples have 14% Romanian products on the shelf, while in the second supermarket, all products are of foreign origin. In the case of pears, where in the first supermarket 25% of the products do not specify the country of origin, and in the second supermarket 75% are of Romanian origin. The fruit comes from various countries such as Poland, Argentina, Italy, Turkey, the Netherlands and South Africa.

In the milk category, Romanian products predominate on the shelf in both supermarkets, while in supermarket 2 there are also products imported from Germany and Austria.

Eggs are the only product category with exclusively Romanian products on the shelf in both supermarkets.

The study shows a significant presence of local products on the shelves in Romania, but also a dependence on imports. Thus, in the case of vegetables, imports are realized from countries such as Spain, Turkey, Netherlands, Greece, France. In the case of vegetables, imports come from countries such as Argentina, Turkey, Italy and the Netherlands, while milk comes from Germany and Austria.

An important aspect is the treatment of hazardous waste, which should be a priority both for the member states of the European Union and beyond, due to the potential to cause significant damage. There are European directives, which impose rules for collection, transport, treatment and disposal, and their monitoring remains crucial, as well as transparency to ensure safety.



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