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Editorial

# Special Issue: Sustainable Food Supply Chain Research

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The persistent advocacy for a sustainable food supply chain is to enable stakeholders to configure, promote, and maintain food supply systems that deliver value in terms of profit and the well-being of people [1] and the planet [2,3]. Despite efforts to ensure more efficient food production and distribution globally, achieving sustainable food supply chains remains a critical global challenge [4]. The extant scholarship on sustainable food supply chains has evolved in different directions as a response to different food industry dynamics, environmental variability, and incidences that manifest as extreme climatic changes and natural hazards in various geographical areas. The multidimensional nature of the field has proven to be a complex terrain for research. Therefore, research in sustainable food supply chains has received attention from a multidimensional scholarship [5]. In the sustainable supply chain literature, studies provided indicators, drivers, and barriers based on the stakeholder theory towards the attainment of a sustainable food supply chain [6], whereas others highlighted the persistent social and environmental challenges and the essence of stakeholder collaboration to develop a sustainable food supply chain [7]. Other strands of sustainable food supply chain research employed the resource-based view [3], systems theory for modelling sustainable food systems [2], actor-network theory, co-creation and collaboration on platforms for collaboration and co-creation [8], justice and fairness theory for food retailer–supplier relationships [9], and attitude–behaviour gap on sustainable food consumption [10].

This Special Issue “Sustainable Food Supply Chain Research” in *Sustainability*, therefore, received interesting articles with multidimensional theoretical perspectives such as logistics services quality, governance and power relationships, food quality, production and environmental challenges of the food supply chain, actor-network theory, co-creation, and collaboration on platforms for collaboration and co-creation, digitisation of sustainable food supply chains, and systems theory for modelling sustainable food systems.

In this Editorial for the Special Issue, we summarize the contents. The Johnson-Hall et al. (Contribution 1) paper developed and tested a novel product quality framework for food supply chains that addressed sustainability by including climate change, population growth, and resources required by industrialised agriculture, as well as changing consumer preferences using a natural resource-based view and convention theory. Mattsson et al.’s (Contribution 2) study identified causes of food waste at the grocery retail level to develop effective measures to reduce waste. They revealed different causes for different fruit and vegetable categories of waste and posited that generic descriptions of causes are not enough to use as bases for planning reduction measures, whereas the Yamoah et al. (Contribution 3) study examined the rationale behind consumers’ vote for or against choice editing (reducing food choice) in favour of sustainable consumption to inform marketing communication strategies and sustainability policies in the UK. They reported that the majority of consumers disagreed with governments being allocated the right to minimize the food choice options available to consumers by requesting that food industry players supply only sustainable food products.



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From the governance and power relationships perspective, Schuster and Mossig's (Contribution 4) paper interrogated multi-stakeholder initiatives as formalised networks with member organisations from the private, public, and not-for-profit sectors. They reported that even though members interact to achieve sustainability goals, they cannot reach these alone; they are heterogeneous actors with their own and sometimes conflicting goals. Keller et al. (Contribution 5), examining sustainability in governance in a cocoa supply chain in a developing country, reported differentiation in terms of sustainability governance according to the different supply chain stages; they reported that sustainability is mainly improved using contracts, extensive and frequent knowledge sharing, and audits.

The Zoric et al. (Contribution 6) paper examined the importance of digitalisation for a sustainable food supply chain, with the aim of identifying the negative impact of indicators in the traditional supply chain impacting negatively on sustainability functions in the wholesale and retail segments. This proffers digitalisation to improve sustainability in business processes. Dovbischuk (Contribution 7) explored the attributes of logistics service quality in rural territories of the developing economy of Ukraine. The paper provides evidence that the perceived and expected quality of the social sustainability-related aspects of the logistics service quality is substantially different. Obour et al. (Contribution 8) interrogated crop failure in a developing African country, Ghana, of smallholder farmers of maize and reported a decline in maize yield due to the failure of the minor season rains and fall armyworms.

The Yawson and Yamoah (Contribution 9) paper reviewed strategic agility in the fresh produce supply chain to improve strategic agility and resilience to ensure sustainability. They posit the application of strategic agility to a developing country's fresh produce supply chain in the context of a rapidly changing business environment due to disruptions such as COVID-19 and in stable conditions by conceptualizing a supply chain agility framework. The Csordás et al. (Contribution 10) paper provided a systematic review of who prefers regional products by focusing on the characteristics and attitudes of short food supply chain (SFSC) consumers.

The multidimensional nature of the field of study provides more room for the interrogation of sustainable supply chain research in various themes and provides opportunities for the application of diverse theoretical lenses to improve its development. The articles in this Special Issue contribute to the development of research in the sustainable food supply chain from different perspectives. However, some of the perspectives require further interrogation as Csordás et al. (Contribution 10) reported that though the number of short food supply chain (SFSC)-related empirical studies has risen in recent years, there is a lack of related data, even in developed countries (European Union) where a sustainable agriculture and food system must play a crucial role in the implementation of the Green Deal. This, we believe, will improve the sustainability field and agenda.

**Conflicts of Interest:** Both authors declare no conflicts of interest.

#### **List of Contributions:**

1. Johnson-Hall, T.D.; Hall, D.C. Redefining Quality in Food Supply Chains via the Natural Resource Based View and Convention Theory.
2. Mattsson, L.; Williams, H. Avoidance of Supermarket Food Waste—Employees' Perspective on Causes and Measures to Reduce Fruit and Vegetables Waste.
3. Yamoah, F.A.; Haque, A.u.; Yawson, D.E. Consumer Psychology on Food Choice Editing in Favor of Sustainability.
4. Schuster, D.; Mossig, I. Power Relations in Multistakeholder Initiatives—A Case Study of the German Initiative on Sustainable Cocoa (GISCO).
5. Keller, J.; Jung, M.; Lasch, R. Sustainability Governance: Insights from a Cocoa Supply Chain.
6. Zorić, N.; Marić, R.; Đurković-Marić, T.; Vukmirović, G. The Importance of Digitalization for the Sustainability of the Food Supply Chain.
7. Dovbischuk, I. Sustainability in Logistics Service Quality: Evidence from Agri-Food Supply Chain in Ukraine.

8. Obour, P.B.; Arthur, I.K.; Owusu, K. The 2020 Maize Production Failure in Ghana: A Case Study of Ejura-Sekyedumase Municipality.
9. Yawson, D.E.; Yamoah, F.A. Review of Strategic Agility: A Holistic Framework for Fresh Produce Supply Chain Disruptions.
10. Csordás, A.; Lengyel, P.; Füzési, I. Who Prefers Regional Products? A Systematic Literature Review of Consumer Characteristics and Attitudes in Short Food Supply Chains.

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8. Scandellius, C.; Cohen, G. Sustainability program brands: Platforms for collaboration and co-creation. *Ind. Mark. Manag.* **2016**, *57*, 166–176. [[CrossRef](#)]
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10. Yamoah, F.A.; Acquaye, A. Unravelling the attitude-behaviour gap paradox for sustainable food consumption: Insight from the UK apple market. *J. Clean. Prod.* **2019**, *217*, 172–184. [[CrossRef](#)]

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