



# Which kind of relationships among nested markets and small farmers. Reflections from a Sub-Saharan African Experience

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## Abstract

The main aim of this paper is to discuss how the small farmers as so as the nested markets can have an important role for stimulating a place based rural development. The paper focuses on the study of MESULA Project in Tanzania. Such project represents a process of rural development that relies traditional farming techniques. It promotes a sustainable transition of local farming systems associating with the development of nested markets. It also shows that the small farmers can play a pivotal role in stimulating place-based rural development. Albeit chiefly geared toward self-consumption, small farmers remain the principal suppliers of local and regional food markets in SSA, playing a pivotal role for the food security. In this sense, nested markets can be a relevant strategy for rural development being able to create opportunities for small farmers. In the same time small farmers could be the main actors of nested markets in SSA rural areas.

**Keywords:** nested market, small farmers, agroecology, eco-economy, Tanzania

***Quali possibili relazioni tra “nested market” e piccoli agricoltori: riflessioni a partire da un’esperienza in Africa sub-sahariana.***

## Riassunto

*Obiettivo principale di questo articolo è discutere se e come i piccoli ag-*

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*ricoltori e i 'nested' markets hanno un ruolo importante nello stimolare uno sviluppo rurale place based. L'articolo analizza il Progetto MESULA in Tanzania. Un progetto che si basa su processi di sviluppo rurale che si rifanno a tecniche agricole tradizionali e promuove una transizione sostenibile del sistema agricolo locale attraverso lo sviluppo dei "nested markets". Anche se principalmente destinata all'autoconsumo, la produzione dei piccoli agricoltori è destinata principalmente ai mercati locali e regionali, pertanto i piccoli agricoltori hanno un ruolo strategico per la sicurezza alimentare di quelle aree. In quest'ottica i "nested markets" possono avere un ruolo di primo piano nello sviluppo locale in quanto possono essere un'opportunità per i piccoli agricoltori. Contemporaneamente i piccoli agricoltori possono essere gli attori principali dei "nested markets" nelle aree rurali dell'Africa sub-sahariana.*

**Parole chiave:** *nested market, piccoli agricoltori, agroecologia, eco-economia, Tanzania.*

## ■ Introduction

The debate on food and regulation of the food system is focusing on the relations between producers and consumers. It investigates whether these relations can be a real alternative to the dominant food system (Alternative Food Network - AFN); it emphasizes that value chains need not be long, as happens in the global market or the dominated one, but short, i.e. short food chains (SFC); and it finally underlines the ability to create 'nested' markets in the sense of being embedded in the territory where they mature.

This paper briefly considers the three concepts, introduced above, and how they are positioned in the debate on place-based rural development. It then presents the case study of Mesula, located in Arumeru District - Tanzania, while the conclusions discuss why the latter can be considered a case of a short food chain and nested market that contributes to generating forms of place-based rural development.

In recent years, the debate on agriculture and food production has stressed some (numerous) problems: the social, economic and cultural distance between foodstuffs and their places of origin; loss of quality; the decline of decision-making power among consumers; the unequal distribution of profits along the agricultural chain; the use of agricultural techniques that are harmful to the land and ecosystems (Rossi, Brunori, Guidi, 2008)<sup>3</sup>. Despite an industrial conception of agricultural production, since the 1980s a new paradigm has emerged. It is based on the so-called 'quality turn' (Goodman,

<sup>3</sup> On this topic see also Morgan K., Marsden T., Murdoch J. (2008).