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Article

LOHAS Values and Local Producer Identity: Evidence from Short Food Supply Chains in Western Hungary

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Abstract

The increasing vulnerability of global food systems – exacerbated by the pandemic, climate change, and disruptions to international supply chains – has highlighted the importance of local food production for sustainability, food security, and rural resilience. At the same time, the LOHAS (Lifestyles of Health and Sustainability) value system is gaining prominence, shaping consumer demand for locally produced, environmentally responsible, and health-oriented products. While the existing literature predominantly addresses LOHAS consumers and local food systems as separate research domains, limited empirical attention has been paid to the value-based alignment between LOHAS principles and local food producers, particularly from a territorial and place-based perspective. This study seeks to address this gap by examining how LOHAS value dimensions are reflected in the self-identification and operational practices of local food producers, and by analysing how such value alignment contributes to the sustainability and resilience of territorially embedded rural production systems. The empirical analysis draws on an online survey conducted in the second quarter of 2024 among 73 local producers operating in Zala and Vas counties in Western Hungary. Factor analysis and cluster analysis were applied to identify underlying value structures and producer typologies. The results reveal two distinct producer clusters, one of which exhibits a strong alignment with LOHAS values. Producers within this cluster place particular emphasis on sustainability, environmental responsibility, health consciousness, and authenticity, alongside a pronounced commitment to local embeddedness and community-oriented practices. Overall, the findings demonstrate that LOHAS-related values are not confined to the consumer side but are increasingly embedded in territorially grounded local production models. This value alignment may play a significant role in strengthening short food supply chains rooted in specific geographical contexts, thereby contributing to the long-term socio-economic and environmental sustainability of rural regions.

Keywords: local food systems; LOHAS values; short food supply chains; place-based sustainability; rural resilience; place-based approach; value-based clustering; territorial embeddedness

1. Introduction

The growing vulnerability of global food systems – intensified by the COVID-19 pandemic, the impacts of climate change, and disruptions to international supply chains – has once again brought the strategic role of local food production to the forefront of academic and policy debates. An expanding body of international literature emphasises that locally embedded production systems should not be understood merely as alternative arrangements, but as key components of sustainability, food security, and the socio-economic resilience of rural areas [1,2].

At the same time, the significance of local food systems extends beyond purely structural or logistical considerations. The functionality and long-term sustainability of short food supply chains

are increasingly shaped by value-based connections that emerge between producers and consumers. Direct interactions, transparent production practices, and strong attachments to local identity and the natural environment represent factors that extend beyond conventional economic rationality [3,4]

In parallel, a consumer segment committed to sustainability, health consciousness, and ethical responsibility has gained prominence. This segment is commonly described in the literature through the concept of LOHAS (Lifestyles of Health and Sustainability) (Hsu et al., 2016; Osti & Goffi, 2021; Pittner, 2014). While the vast majority of LOHAS-related research focuses on consumer attitudes and purchasing behaviour [6,9], considerably less empirical attention has been devoted to how these value dimensions are reflected on the supply side, particularly in the operational practices and self-identification of local food producers [10].

This study seeks to address this research gap by exploring whether the core dimensions of the LOHAS value system are reflected in the self-identification and everyday practices of local food producers. These dimensions include health orientation, environmental awareness, ethical commitment, authenticity, and a holistic worldview.

The empirical analysis was conducted among local food producers operating in the Western Transdanubian region of Hungary, specifically in Zala and Vas counties. Drawing on quantitative data collection, factor analysis and cluster analysis were employed to identify distinct producer attitudes and value orientations. The results reveal the emergence of a producer type that closely aligns with the LOHAS value system. Producers within this cluster not only apply sustainable production practices but also actively cultivate value-based relationships with their consumers [4,11].

By extending the application of the LOHAS framework beyond the consumer side, this study contributes to international debates on local food systems and sustainable consumption. It highlights the role of value-based producer embeddedness in fostering territorial sustainability and provides empirical insights into how LOHAS-related values can shape locally grounded production models.

2. Theoretical Background and Conceptual Framework

2.1. Local Food Systems and the Role of Territorial Embeddedness

Local food systems have become a key component of sustainable territorial development, particularly in rural areas where strong dependence on global supply chains has generated structural vulnerabilities. Short food supply chains are characterised by production and distribution methods that significantly reduce the physical, social and informational distance between producers and consumers [12].

An expanding body of literature emphasises that the viability of short food supply chains cannot be explained solely by logistical or economic factors. The concept of territorial embeddedness highlights the extent to which local producers' activities are closely connected to landscape characteristics, local knowledge systems, cultural traditions, and community-based networks [10,13]. These elements not only play an important role in shaping producer identities but also contribute to the social and economic resilience of rural areas [14,15].

From this perspective, local food production cannot be understood merely as an economic activity, but rather as a complex social practice in which producers' value choices, decision-making logics, and communication strategies directly influence consumer trust and long-term sustainability [16].

2.2. The LOHAS Value System as an Analytical Framework

The LOHAS (Lifestyles of Health and Sustainability) model was originally developed to describe consumer lifestyles that prioritise sustainability, health consciousness, and ethical considerations. The decision-making processes of LOHAS consumers are shaped by a set of interrelated value dimensions, including health orientation, environmental awareness, ethical commitment, authenticity, individual responsibility, and a holistic worldview [4,9,17,18].

The LOHAS academic literature has predominantly focused on analysing consumer attitudes and purchasing preferences. However, a growing body of research suggests that these value dimensions influence not only demand, but also supply, particularly in sectors where there is direct interaction between producers and consumers [19].

In this sense, the LOHAS model can be understood as both a framework for describing a specific consumer segment and an analytical lens through which to study producer attitudes, value orientations and operational practices. This perspective is especially relevant in the context of local food production, where sustainability, transparency, and authenticity function not as marketing tools, but as core principles of everyday operation.

The analytical application of the LOHAS value system is well illustrated by Paul Ray’s lifestyle model, which conceptualises the interrelationships between individual values, worldview, and everyday practices (Figure 1) [20]. This model enables LOHAS to be interpreted not merely as a set of consumer attitudes, but as a complex, value-based framework guiding action.



Figure 1. Paul Ray’s model of values, worldview, and lifestyle. Source: based on [20].

The application of the model makes it possible to interpret the LOHAS value system at the level of producer self-identification and operational practices, thereby directly linking it to the issue of value-based alignment discussed in the following subsection.

2.3. Value-Based Alignment Between Producers and Consumers

One of the key determinants of the success of local food systems lies in the extent to which producers are able to align with consumer expectations on a value-based basis. The LOHAS value system and the specific characteristics of local food production overlap at several points: short transportation distances, environmentally responsible production practices, the strengthening of local economies, and the cultivation of community relationships all represent elements situated at the intersection of sustainable consumption and production [21].

While the literature extensively examines the preferences of LOHAS consumers and the advantages of short food supply chains, considerably less empirical research has focused on how these value dimensions are manifested among producers themselves, and how they shape producer self-identification and everyday operational practices [22,23]. In particular, there is a notable lack of studies that analyse producer value orientations within a territorial and place-based context.

The present study seeks to address this gap by examining the LOHAS value system from the perspective of local food producers and by identifying value-based patterns that may strengthen the sustainability and resilience of short food supply chains [24].

Figure 2 summarises the connections between the LOHAS value dimensions identified in the literature and the characteristics of local food production. The figure illustrates how producer-level advantages interpreted along LOHAS value dimensions may contribute to the functioning of short food supply chains and to territorial sustainability.

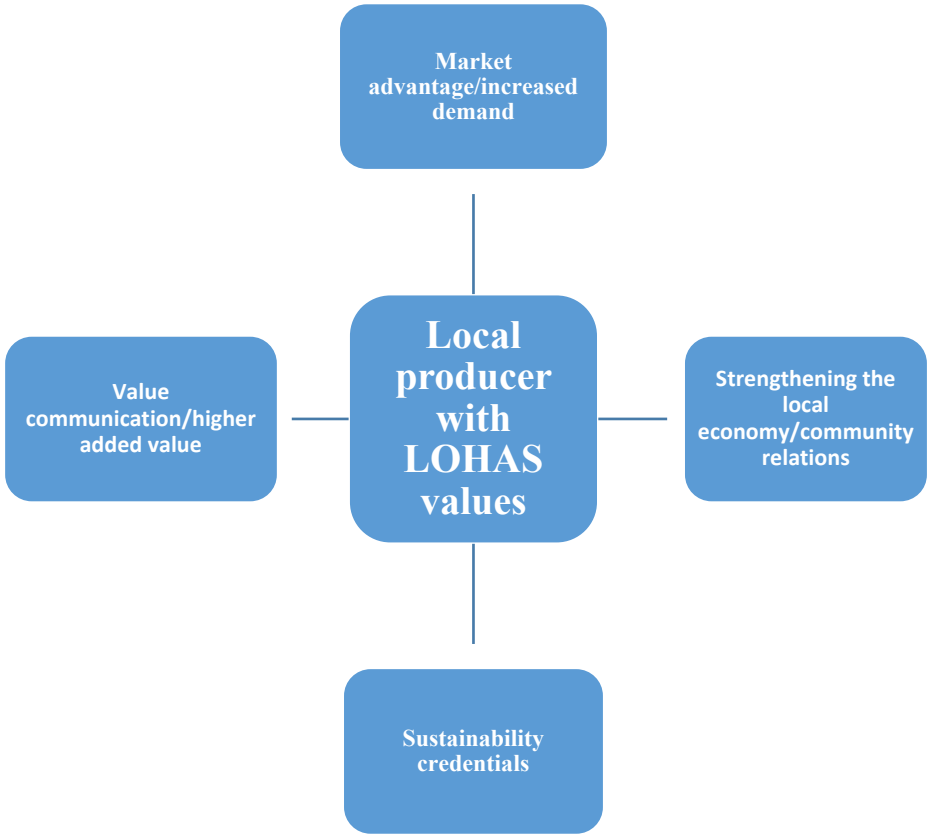


Figure 2. Conceptual framework linking LOHAS value dimensions with local producer advantages. Source: own compilation.

Figure 2 summarises the key theoretical points of connection through which the LOHAS value system can be operationalised within local producer practices. This conceptual framework provided the foundation for the formulation of the research questions, measurement dimensions, and analytical logic of the empirical investigation.

The proposed framework highlights that the relationship between the LOHAS value system and local food production cannot be understood merely in terms of thematic overlaps. Rather, it constitutes a value-based alignment mechanism that simultaneously structures producer self-identification, operational practices, and relationships with consumers. Accordingly, producer-level advantages interpreted along LOHAS value dimensions emerge not as isolated attributes, but as interrelated patterns within the context of short food supply chains.

This theoretical approach establishes the basis for empirically examining the extent to which, and the ways in which, LOHAS-related values are present among local food producers, as well as how individual value dimensions are configured into distinct producer types. The following section therefore outlines the empirical framework of the study, the methodological approach applied, and the analytical steps through which value-based producer patterns were identified.

3. Research Design and Methodology

3.1. Research Objectives and Analytical Approach

The objective of this study is to explore how the core dimensions of the LOHAS value system are manifested in the attitudes and operational practices of local food producers, and to identify distinct producer types based on these value orientations within the context of short food supply chains.

The study employs an exploratory research approach, which is particularly appropriate in areas of research where existing empirical evidence is limited, particularly with regard to value-based analyses of the supply side. Rather than testing predefined hypotheses, the analysis focuses on identifying and categorising attitude patterns relating to the LOHAS value system among local food producers.

The analytical framework is based on the collection of quantitative data and is complemented by multivariate statistical techniques, namely factor and cluster analyses. These methods allow us to identify underlying value structures and delineate producer groups that emerge along these dimensions.

3.2. Study Area and Data Collection

The empirical investigation focused on local food producers operating in the Western Transdanubian region of Hungary, specifically in Zala and Vas counties. The selection of the study area was justified by several considerations. First, the region is characterised by highly fragmented, predominantly rural landscapes, where small-scale, diversified production and short food supply chains have traditionally played a significant role [4]. Second, the presence of active local producer networks and cooperation initiatives provides a suitable empirical context for examining value-based producer attitudes [3,16].

Data collection was carried out in the second quarter of 2024 through an online questionnaire survey. The final sample comprised 73 local food producers. Respondents were reached with the support of professional and local development organisations, and publicly available producer databases were also utilised, including the Zala Thermal Valley Association (<https://nyitottportak.hu/>) and the Gőcsej Knowledge Centre (<https://gocsejitudaskozpont.hu/>), as well as Local Action Groups operating within the LEADER programme.

Prior to finalising the questionnaire, a pilot test was conducted incorporating feedback from experts and producers. The purpose of the pilot phase was to ensure the clarity and relevance of the questions and to maintain an appropriate level of respondent burden.

3.3. Measurement Instruments and Variables

The development of the questionnaire was informed by the main dimensions of the LOHAS value system identified in the literature. The measurement scales covered elements related to health orientation, environmental awareness, authenticity, philanthropic attitudes, and a holistic worldview.

Producer attitudes were measured using a six-point Likert scale (1 = not at all characteristic, 6 = highly characteristic), which allowed for a nuanced assessment of respondents' value orientations. The scale items were developed through a combination of adapting indicators used in previous empirical studies and formulating statements tailored to the specific context of local food production.

In addition, the questionnaire included demographic and business-related background variables (gender, age, level of education, duration of production activity, and regional location). These variables enabled the identified value patterns to be interpreted within their broader social and territorial context.

3.4. Data Processing and Analytical Methods

Data analysis was conducted in several stages. First, descriptive statistical methods were used to present the basic characteristics of the sample. This was followed by factor analysis to identify the underlying dimensions of the scale items related to the LOHAS value system. The suitability of the data for factor analysis was assessed using the Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy and Bartlett's test of sphericity.

Building on the results of the factor analysis, K-means cluster analysis was applied in order to identify producer groups differentiated along LOHAS value orientations. The interpretation of the

resulting clusters was supported by mean values associated with the extracted factors and background variables, as well as by significance tests.

All statistical analyses were carried out using SPSS version 25.0. The objective of the analytical procedure was not to construct predictive models, but to identify interpretable and theoretically grounded producer types that are suitable for illustrating the manifestation of LOHAS-related values on the supply side.

Following factor extraction, the internal consistency of the factors was assessed using Cronbach’s alpha. In most cases, alpha values exceeded the commonly accepted threshold of 0.7, indicating satisfactory reliability. Within the “Authenticity” factor, one item (“I received environmentally conscious upbringing within my family”) was removed, as its inclusion reduced the Cronbach’s alpha value to 0.671.

The “Individualist values” factor, which did not meet the minimum acceptable reliability level ($\alpha = 0.565$), was excluded from subsequent analyses, particularly from the cluster analysis.

4. Results

4.1. Sample Characteristics

The empirical analysis included a total of 73 local food producers operating in Zala and Vas counties. The gender distribution of respondents was relatively balanced, with a slight predominance of female producers. In terms of age, the sample primarily represents middle-aged and older cohorts, which is consistent with typical entrepreneurial life courses observed in local food production.

With regard to educational attainment, more than half of the respondents reported holding a tertiary-level qualification, while the remainder indicated secondary or vocational education. The vast majority of producers are active in rural areas and have strong ties to their local environment. They are primarily located in the Göcsej, Órség and Zala Valley regions.

Table 1. Sample characteristics of local producers.

Characteristics of local producers		Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	30	41.1%
	Female	43	58.9%
Age group	1943 - 1965	22	30.1%
	1966 - 1979	27	37.0%
	1980 – 1995	23	31.5%
	1996 - 2010	1	1.4%
Educational attainment	Secondary school leaving certificate	17	23.3%
	College/university	38	52.1%
	Advanced vocational qualification	11	15.1%
	Intermediate vocational qualification	2	2.7%
	Technical qualification	5	6.8%
Region	Göcsej region	24	32.9%
	Hetés region	2	2.7%
	Keszthely basin	5	6.8%
	Órség (Vendvidék region)	18	24.7%
	Zala Valley region	24	32.9%

Source: Authors’ own survey, 2024.

4.2. Underlying Dimensions of LOHAS Values

In order to explore the underlying structure of attitude items related to the LOHAS value system, factor analysis was conducted. The adequacy of the data for factor analysis was confirmed by the

Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin measure (KMO = 0.786) and a significant result of Bartlett’s test of sphericity ($p < 0.001$).

The analysis resulted in the extraction of five well-interpretable factors, which together accounted for 64% of the total variance. Based on their content, the factors were labelled as follows: knowledge and awareness, authentic values, philanthropic values, spiritual-holistic values, and individualist values.

Table 2. Factor structure and scale items of LOHAS-related value dimensions.

Scale items	Knowledge and awareness	Authentic values	Philanthropic values	Spiritual-holistic values	Individualistic values
I prefer high-quality products (I favour them).	0.687				
I always thoroughly gather information before making purchases or concluding business deals.	0.703				
I favour domestic products when making purchases.	0.735				
I am happy to share my knowledge of sustainability and health with my customers and clients.	0.657				
I am happy to participate in programs where we can offer our customers experiences and other values in addition to our products (e.g., tastings, lectures, product introductions, etc.).	0.692				
Health consciousness is also a priority in my local farming activities.	0.576				
The principle of naturalness is extremely important to me and influences all my activities.		0.841			
I strive to display information about the origin and quality of my products.		0.563			
I was raised to be environmentally conscious in my family.		0.424			
I am incorporating more and more environmentally friendly solutions into my work.		0.465			
Physical and mental fitness are also important to me.		0.650			
I use environmentally friendly packaging solutions.			0.637		
As an entrepreneur, I believe it is important to support charity and fundraising programs.			0.783		
I am happy to get involved in volunteer programs.			0.668		
Traditions are important to me.				0.683	
I am delighted when I manage to make products that are as sustainable and/or healthy as possible.				0.682	
I strive to make products that are as sustainable as possible.				0.618	
I strive to provide transparent information about my products.				0.559	
Self-improvement is important to me, and I regularly train myself.					0.573
I am open to the latest technologies and novel/innovative solutions.					0.849

Principal component, Promax with Kaiser normalisation. KMO 0,786; (Bartlett test $p= 0,000$; total variance explained 64%); Source: Authors’ own calculations, 2024. N = 73.

4.3. Descriptive Patterns of LOHAS Value Dimensions

The descriptive statistical results showed that several LOHAS value dimensions had high mean scores among the local food producers surveyed. In particular, the spiritual–holistic values and

authentic values dimensions proved to be dominant, with most associated items located in the upper range of the scale.

The knowledge and awareness dimension also showed relatively high mean values, indicating that a substantial proportion of producers consciously reflect on their sustainability-oriented and health-related practices. In contrast, items related to philanthropic values displayed more moderate scores across the sample.

Table 3. Descriptive statistics of LOHAS-related value dimensions among local producers based on factor analysis.

Scale items	Average	Standard deviation	Median
Knowledge and awareness ($\alpha=0.836$)			
I prefer high-quality products (I favour them).	4.64	0.653	5.00
I always thoroughly gather information before making purchases or concluding business deals.	4.19	0.793	4.00
I favour domestic products when making purchases.	4.59	0.620	5.00
I am happy to share my knowledge of sustainability and health with my customers and clients.	4.40	0.759	5.00
Health consciousness is also a priority in my local farming activities.	4.62	0.592	5.00
I am happy to participate in programs where we can offer our customers experiences and other values in addition to our products (e.g., tastings, lectures, product introductions, etc.).	4.30	0.996	5.00
Authentic values ($\alpha=0.751$)			
The principle of naturalness is extremely important to me and influences all my activities.	4.63	0.514	5.00
I strive to display information about the origin and quality of my products.	4.58	0.622	5.00
I am incorporating more and more environmentally friendly solutions into my work.	4.30	0.701	4.00
Physical and mental fitness are also important to me.	4.44	0.687	5.00
Philanthropic values ($\alpha=0.716$)			
I use environmentally friendly packaging solutions.	4.14	0.732	4.00
As an entrepreneur, I believe it is important to support charity and fundraising programs.	3.74	0.913	4.00
I am happy to get involved in volunteer programs.	3.56	1.258	3.00
Spiritual-holistic values ($\alpha=0.760$)			
Traditions are important to me.	4.41	0.779	5.00
I am delighted when I manage to make products that are as sustainable and/or healthy as possible.	4.81	0.430	5.00
I strive to make products that are as sustainable as possible.	4.56	0.552	5.00
I strive to provide transparent information about my products.	4.78	0.479	5.00
Individualistic values ($\alpha=0.565$)			
Self-improvement is important to me, and I regularly train myself.	4.40	0.740	5.00
I am open to the latest technologies and novel/innovative solutions.	4.16	1.041	4.00

Note: Likert scale ranging from 1 = not at all characteristic to 6 = highly characteristic.

Source: Authors’ own calculations (2024). N = 73.

Based on Cronbach’s alpha, the internal consistency of the factors proved acceptable. Items with low reliability and factors that failed to meet the minimum reliability threshold were excluded from subsequent stages of the analysis.

4.4. Producer Clusters Along LOHAS Value Dimensions

Based on the results of the factor analysis, a cluster analysis was conducted to identify producer groups that exhibited different levels of alignment with the LOHAS value system. This analysis revealed two distinct clusters.

The first cluster comprises producers for whom most LOHAS value dimensions play a more moderate role. By contrast, the second cluster displays significantly higher scores across dimensions related to sustainability, health consciousness, authenticity and a holistic worldview.

In most cases, differences between the two clusters across the LOHAS value dimensions are statistically significant, supporting the empirical validity of the proposed value-based producer typology.

Table 4. Results of the cluster analysis.

Factors	Clusters	Cluster 1.			Cluster 2.			ANOVA p-value
	Responses	Average	Standard deviation	Median	Average	Standard deviation	Median	
Knowledge and awareness	I prefer high-quality products (I favour them).	4.10	0.852	4.00	4.85	0.411	5.00	0.000
	I always thoroughly gather information before making purchases or concluding business deals.	3.60	0.883	3.00	4.42	0.633	4.00	0.000
	I favour domestic products when making purchases.	4.05	0.686	4.00	4.79	0.454	5.00	0.000
	I am happy to share my knowledge of sustainability and health with my customers and clients.	3.60	0.681	4.00	4.70	0.540	5.00	0.000
	Health consciousness is also a priority in my local farming activities.	3.95	0.605	4.00	4.87	0.342	5.00	0.000
	I am happy to participate in programs where we can offer our customers experiences and other values in addition to our products (e.g., tastings, lectures, product introductions, etc.).	3.15	1.137	3.00	4.74	0.445	5.00	0.000
Authentic values	The principle of naturalness is extremely important to me and influences all my activities.	4.25	0.550	4.00	4.77	0.423	5.00	0.000
	I strive to display information about the origin and quality of my products.	4.05	0.605	4.00	4.77	0.505	5.00	0.000

	I am incorporating more and more environmentally friendly solutions into my work.	3.75	0.550	4.00	4.51	0.639	5.00	0.000
	Physical and mental fitness are also important to me.	3.80	0.616	4.00	4.68	0.547	5.00	0.000
Philanthropic values	I use environmentally friendly packaging solutions.	3.75	0.550	4.00	4.28	0.744	4.00	0.005
	As an entrepreneur, I believe it is important to support charity and fundraising programs.	3.10	0.852	3.00	3.98	0.820	4.00	0.000
	I am happy to get involved in volunteer programs.	3.25	1.020	3.00	3.68	1.327	4.00	0.196
Spiritual-holistic values	Traditions are important to me.	3.80	0.894	4.00	4.64	0.591	5.00	0.000
	I am delighted when I manage to make products that are as sustainable and/or healthy as possible.	4.40	0.598	4.00	4.96	0.192	5.00	0.000
	I strive to make products that are as sustainable as possible.	4.20	0.410	4.00	4.70	0.540	5.00	0.000
	I strive to provide transparent information about my products.	4.45	0.510	4.00	4.91	0.405	5.00	0.000
Other LOHAS motives	Environmental awareness	4.20	0.616	4.00	4.58	0.570	5.00	0.014
	Health consciousness	3.95	0.686	4.00	4.66	0.649	5.00	0.000
	Concern about environmental problems and sustainability challenges	3.65	0.587	4.00	4.28	0.744	4.00	0.001
	Connection to the natural environment	4.35	0.489	4.00	4.83	0.379	5.00	0.000
	How important environmental protection and sustainability are in your work and decision-making	3.75	1.164	4.00	4.36	0.736	4.00	0.010

Customer experience elements	Do customers expect experiences, programs, and services related to local products?	3.30	0.979	3.00	3.70	1.049	3.00	0.145
	The appearance of experience programs, other experience motifs, and services offered to customers in local producer businesses.	2.70	1.218	3.00	3.85	0.949	4.00	0.000
	To what extent do customers expect sustainable/green solutions in relation to local products?	3.35	1.089	3.00	3.57	0.888	3.00	0.387

For certain variables, primarily related to community participation, differences between the clusters were not statistically significant, further reinforcing the interpretation of internal differentiation within the LOHAS value system.

4.5. LOHAS-Oriented Local Producer Profile

To synthesise the results of the cluster analysis, a profile of a LOHAS-oriented local producer was developed. This can be interpreted as an adaptation of Paul Ray’s value–worldview–lifestyle model from the study’s theoretical framework. This profile does not constitute an independent empirical unit, but rather represents an analytical synthesis of the characteristics associated with the identified LOHAS-oriented cluster.

The application of this model enables the integration of core LOHAS-related values, the reference points shaping producer worldviews, and everyday operational practices within a single analytical framework. Accordingly, the LOHAS-oriented local producer profile functions as an analytical tool that links the empirical findings with the theoretical approach and provides a transparent representation of the key features of a value-based producer identity aligned with LOHAS principles.

Producers belonging to the LOHAS-oriented cluster are characterised by a strong value orientation centred on environmental responsibility, health consciousness, and an emphasis on naturalness. These values are closely embedded in a broader worldview framework in which attachment to the local environment, respect for traditions, and a preference for domestically produced goods function as key reference points.

At the level of producer practices, this value orientation is reflected in strong intrinsic motivation to produce sustainable and healthy products, transparent communication with consumers, and the consistent application of environmentally friendly solutions. The integration of knowledge sharing and experiential elements further strengthens producer–consumer relationships and contributes to the social embeddedness of short food supply chains.

Table 5 provides a structured overview of the main empirical characteristics of the LOHAS-oriented local producer profile, organised along the dimensions of Paul Ray’s value–worldview–practice model. The table translates abstract value dimensions into observable producer-level practices, thereby operationalising the LOHAS framework on the supply side.

Table 5. LOHAS-oriented local producer profile based on the value–worldview–practice framework (Analytical synthesis based on cluster-level mean values).

Analytical dimension	Empirical indicator (mean value)	Interpretation
Core values (LOHAS priorities)	Strong attachment to the natural environment (4.83)	Environmental responsibility constitutes a central reference point in the producer’s value system.
	Importance of physical and mental well-being (4.68)	Health consciousness extends beyond products to personal lifestyle and work practices.
	Environmental awareness (4.58)	Sustainability considerations are consistently integrated into production-related decisions.
	Health consciousness (4.66)	Health-oriented thinking plays a significant role in shaping production philosophy.
	Emphasis on naturalness (4.77)	Naturalness functions as a guiding principle in product development.
	Willingness to engage in voluntary activities (3.68)	Community engagement is present but less dominant within the overall value structure.
Worldview and reference points	Respect for traditions (4.64)	Tradition is perceived as a stabilising reference rather than a restrictive framework.
	Concern about environmental and sustainability challenges (4.28)	Awareness of global sustainability issues informs local production practices.
	Preference for domestic products in procurement (4.79)	Local economic embeddedness is a key element of the producer’s worldview.
Practices and producer identity (LOHAS-oriented style)	Satisfaction derived from producing sustainable and/or healthy products (4.96)	Sustainability-oriented production generates intrinsic motivation and professional fulfilment.
	Increasing integration of environmentally friendly solutions (4.51)	Continuous improvement towards environmentally responsible practices is evident.
	Provision of transparent product information (4.91)	Transparency functions as a core trust-building mechanism.
	Importance of sustainability in decision-making (4.36)	Sustainability considerations influence strategic and operational decisions.
	Careful information gathering prior to procurement and business decisions (4.42)	Decision-making is characterised by deliberation and responsibility.
	Use of environmentally friendly packaging solutions (4.28)	Environmental considerations extend to packaging and logistics.
	Display of origin and quality-related information on products (4.77)	Traceability and quality signalling are integral to producer identity.
	Willingness to share sustainability- and health-related knowledge with consumers (4.70)	Knowledge transfer strengthens producer–consumer relationships within short food supply chains.

Note: The profile represents a synthetic analytical construct based on cluster-level empirical results and does not describe an individual producer.

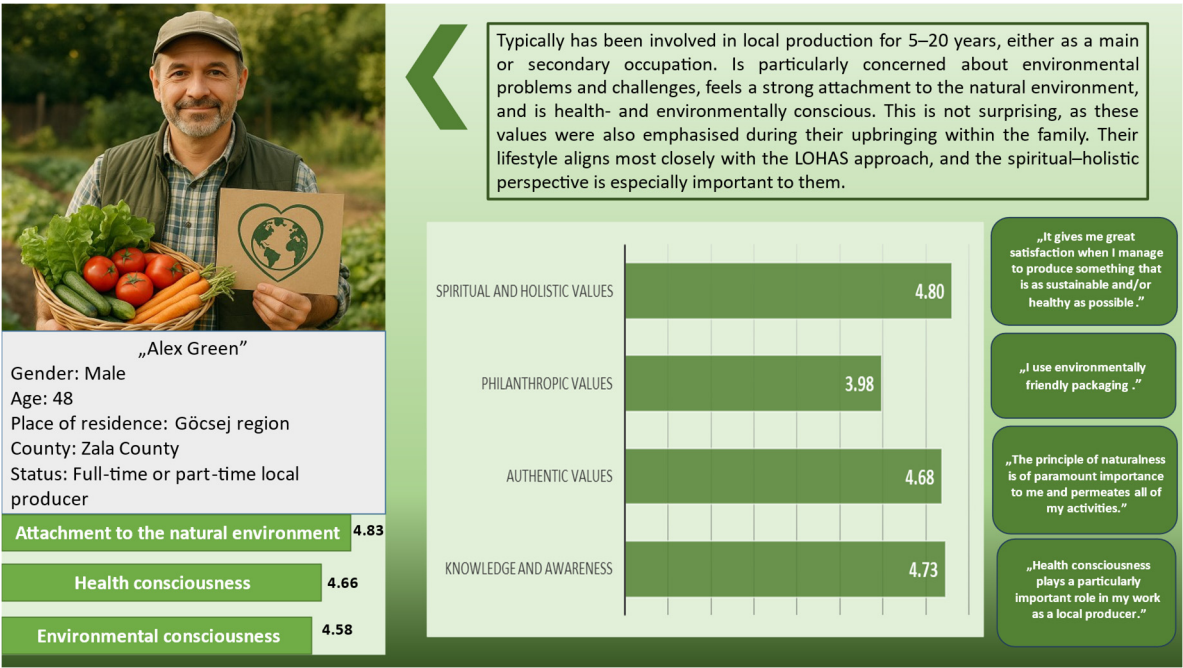


Figure 3. An abstract LOHAS-oriented local producer persona profile (“Alex Green”). Source: Authors’ own compilation based on the results of cluster analysis, 2025. AI-generated illustration by the authors. Note: The profile represents a synthetic analytical construct based on cluster-level empirical results and does not describe an individual producer.

5. Discussion

5.1. LOHAS Values as a Structuring Force on the Producer Side

The study's findings confirm the hypothesis that the LOHAS value system not only influences consumer decision-making, but also shapes the attitudes and operational practices of local food producers. Among the LOHAS-oriented producers identified through factor and cluster analysis, health consciousness, environmental responsibility, authenticity and a holistic worldview do not exist in isolation, but form an interconnected value system.

This result nuances the predominantly consumer-centred focus of the LOHAS literature, lending support to the idea that value-based consumption and production operate within mutually reinforcing systems, as suggested by more recent research. In the case of local producers, LOHAS-related dimensions cannot be reduced to market adaptation; rather, they shape the identity and influence long-term decision-making.

5.2. Territorial Embeddedness and Value-Based Producer Identities

The results reveal an important relationship between the LOHAS value system and territorial embeddedness. Among LOHAS-oriented producers, attachment to the natural environment, respect for local traditions, and transparent production practices do not primarily function as marketing tools, but rather as organic expressions of their connection to place.

This relationship supports key arguments within place-based approaches, which emphasise that the success of short food supply chains cannot be explained solely in terms of economic rationality, but is closely linked to the value-based embeddedness of producers. In this sense, the LOHAS-oriented producer profile represents a territorially embedded identity that enhances consumer trust and contributes to the resilience of local food systems.

5.3. Value Alignment and the Functioning of Short Food Supply Chains

The findings indicate that value-based alignment between the LOHAS value system and local food production plays a key role in the functioning of short food supply chains. In the case of LOHAS-oriented producers, practices such as knowledge sharing, the integration of experiential elements, and transparent communication strengthen producer–consumer relationships and extend beyond mere product transactions.

This form of value-based connection contributes to the stability of short food supply chains, as consumer loyalty is not grounded solely in price or quality considerations, but is instead built on shared values and trust. The results thus provide empirical support for theoretical perspectives that emphasise the long-term viability of sustainable food systems as being rooted in relationships organised around shared values.

5.4. Differentiation Within the Producer Community

The results of the cluster analysis also indicate that the community of local food producers is not homogeneous in terms of its relationship to the LOHAS value system. Within the producer group that is less closely aligned with LOHAS-related dimensions, elements associated with sustainability and a holistic worldview are present, yet they are less coherently integrated into a conscious value system.

This finding has important implications for the development of local food systems, as it suggests that LOHAS-related values are not automatically embedded in producer practices, but are shaped by learning processes, experiential factors, and generational influences. At the same time, differentiation within the producer community creates opportunities for knowledge transfer and cooperation between actors with different value orientations.

5.5. Contribution to Theory and Implications for Future Research

One of the key contributions of this study lies in extending the application of the LOHAS model beyond the consumer perspective to the producer side, and in providing empirical evidence that LOHAS-related value dimensions are both interpretable and measurable among local food producers. By adopting this perspective, the study contributes to value-based analyses of sustainable food systems and advances the theoretical framework of place-based sustainability.

The findings further suggest that LOHAS-oriented producer identities may play an important role in the future development of short food supply chains. At the same time, the exploratory nature of the research and its regional focus point to the need for further investigation. Promising avenues for future research include examining temporal changes in LOHAS-related values, exploring the dynamic relationships between consumer and producer value orientations, and conducting comparative analyses across different territorial contexts.

6. Conclusions and Policy Relevance

6.1. Main Conclusions

This study explored how LOHAS-related value dimensions are reflected on the producer side of local food systems, paying particular attention to their role in shaping territorially embedded production models and short supply chains. By applying the LOHAS framework to producers as well as consumers, the analysis provides empirical evidence that LOHAS values also influence local producers' identities and practices.

The results demonstrate that a substantial share of local producers exhibits a coherent value orientation characterised by environmental awareness, health consciousness, authenticity, and a holistic understanding of sustainability, underpinned by transparency. These values do not appear as isolated attitudes but form an interconnected value system that influences everyday production decisions, communication practices, and producer–consumer relationships. The identification of a

LOHAS-oriented producer cluster confirms that value-based alignment is not merely a market response but an integral component of territorially embedded local production.

By linking LOHAS values to territorial embeddedness, the study contributes to the literature on place-based sustainability and short food supply chains. It highlights that the resilience and long-term viability of local food systems depend not only on spatial proximity or logistical arrangements, but also on the shared value frameworks that underpin trust, transparency, and cooperation between producers and consumers.

6.2. Policy and Practical Implications

From a policy perspective, the findings suggest that value-oriented local producers represent an important yet often underutilised resource in the development of sustainable food systems. Policies aimed at strengthening short food supply chains and rural resilience could benefit from explicitly recognising and supporting value-based producer identities, rather than focusing exclusively on infrastructural or economic incentives.

In this respect, the findings are particularly relevant in the context of Hungary's Common Agricultural Policy Strategic Plan (2023–2027), which increasingly emphasises sustainability, short food supply chains, and value-based producer practices in line with broader European policy priorities [25].

In practical terms, support schemes, advisory services, and rural development programmes may be more effective if they incorporate elements that foster knowledge sharing, transparency, and community engagement among producers. Encouraging learning processes, peer-to-peer exchange, and value-oriented cooperation can help bridge differences within the producer community and support the diffusion of sustainability-oriented practices.

Moreover, the results indicate that LOHAS-oriented producers are well positioned to act as intermediaries between sustainability-driven consumers and local food systems. By articulating and communicating shared values, these producers can enhance consumer trust and contribute to the social embeddedness of short food supply chains. This has particular relevance for place-based development strategies that seek to integrate economic viability with social cohesion and environmental responsibility.

6.3. Limitations and Directions for Future Research

The study is subject to several limitations that should be acknowledged. The empirical analysis is based on a regionally focused sample, which limits the generalisability of the findings. While this place-based approach provides valuable insights into territorially embedded dynamics, future research could extend the analysis to other regions and national contexts to explore similarities and differences in producer value orientations.

Furthermore, the cross-sectional design captures value orientations at a single point in time. Longitudinal studies could provide deeper insight into how LOHAS-related values evolve among producers and how they respond to changing environmental, economic, and social conditions. Future research may also benefit from integrating producer and consumer perspectives within a single analytical framework, allowing for a more dynamic examination of value alignment along short food supply chains.

6.4. Final Remarks

Overall, this study demonstrates that the LOHAS framework offers a valuable analytical lens for understanding not only sustainable consumption but also sustainable production in territorially embedded food systems. By shifting attention to the producer side, the paper contributes to a more integrated understanding of value-based sustainability transitions and underscores the importance of shared values in shaping resilient local food systems.

From a policy perspective, LOHAS-oriented local producers contribute to broader sustainability objectives by reinforcing responsible production patterns and strengthening local food systems, in line with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals [26].

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