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LOFT

Local Food Trace

WP4 - LOFT Roadmap for the digitalisation of farm management activities

Draft 3.0



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Introduction

LOFT - Local Food Trace is a European Union project supported under the Erasmus+ Programme, aiming to contribute to the EU's policy of leveraging digital technologies for teaching and learning while developing the digital skills of small-scale local food producers (LFPs) by actively involving them in the digital transformation process. LOFT also aims to develop innovative vocational training tools to reduce the negative impact of the pandemic on food consumers and enable local food producers to capitalize on growth opportunities. The project involves five complementary partners and runs from December 2022 to May 2025.

The project consists of six work packages with different scopes, and this document has been prepared as part of the Work Package 4. The digitalization of farms has become a crucial issue for the agricultural sector worldwide, and particularly in Europe, bringing significant economic and environmental benefits.

In addition to this work package, the partners developed training content on various topics, ranging from digital security to social platforms, in the Work Package 3 to enhance the digital literacy of local food producers. These modules, which provide users with access to more detailed information through links at the end of each section, will support the document in achieving its purpose.

You can also take a look [HERE](#) at the introductory module on the challenges of digitisation in agriculture offered on the LOFT training platform.

The aim of this document is to promote the main benefits of digitisation applied to management, communication and customer relations for farmers. By embracing digital tools and technologies, farmers can streamline their operations, improve efficiency in managing resources and data, enhance communication with suppliers, customers, and stakeholders, and build stronger, more responsive relationships with consumers. The document aims to showcase how these advancements can lead to improved decision-making, increased profitability, and greater sustainability in the agricultural sector.

Additionally, at the end of each section, a **roadmap** is presented to help individuals identify the most suitable ways to apply the content of this document to their own businesses.

1. Optimising financial management :

Process automation: Digitisation enables administrative tasks such as sending invoices, processing payments and managing expense claims to be automated, reducing the time spent on these activities and minimising errors.

Real-time monitoring: Digital tools make it possible to monitor a farm's financial performance in real time, enabling farmers to make informed decisions based on up-to-date data.

Document dematerialisation: Electronic management of documents, such as contracts and financial statements, facilitates access to necessary information and improves data security.

Cost analysis: Financial management software enables you to analyse production costs and identify areas where savings can be made, thereby contributing to greater profitability.

Preparing for grants and subsidies: Digitisation also helps in the preparation of applications for financial aid, by facilitating the collection and presentation of the data required by funding bodies.

Visibility and Transparency: Digital tools improve the transparency of financial operations, which can boost the confidence of business partners and customers.

User's Roadmap

- Define the financial situation of your business—such as whether it is small-scale or large-scale, a long-term or seasonal business.
- List the difficulties you encountered while preparing the accounting records.
- In comparison with similar businesses, please specify the digital tools that are utilized by others but not currently adopted in your operations.
- Please identify any applications you are not currently utilizing that you believe could be beneficial to your business in the short or long term.

There are many management and accounting software packages available, but they are often expensive. But there are also free solutions such as spreadsheets and word processors available online (the Microsoft 365 online suite or Google's Workspace), with free tutorials on how to use them. Tools such as a printer or scanner will be useful for digitising your documents.

For a better understanding of the issues involved, you can consult the LOFT project introductory module [HERE](#)

To identify practical solutions, consult the LOFT module [HERE](#)

2. Optimising the management of quality labels :

Standards compliance: Digital tools help farmers comply with label requirements by automating certain administrative tasks and making it easier to manage the documents needed for quality audits.

Simplified controls: Management software makes it easier to collect the data needed for audits and compliance controls. This reduces the administrative burden and helps farmers to comply with certification specifications. The development of QR codes facilitates traceability (and associated checks) by digitising the description of production stages, certificates of origin, etc.

Access to relevant information: Digital platforms provide access to knowledge and best practices, enabling farmers to better understand certification requirements and improve their practices.

Adding value to products: Digitalisation enables labels and certifications to be communicated more effectively to consumers, increasing the visibility and value of labelled products on the market.

User's Roadmap:

- Identify the certification standards or labels relevant to your products (e.g., organic, local).
- Evaluate how you currently manage documentation and audit preparation – is it manual or supported by digital tools?
- List the administrative tasks related to certification that could be simplified or automated with digital solutions.
- Explore digital platforms or tools that provide access to best practices and certification guidelines relevant to your sector.
- Assess how you currently communicate your product certifications to consumers – could digital tools improve visibility and add value?
- Identify any gaps in your current digital setup that could hinder effective compliance or communication of certifications.
- Make a plan to adopt or improve the use of digital tools for managing audits, tracking compliance, and showcasing certifications.

It's very important for farmers to keep abreast of changes in legislation and new labels. You can do this by visiting specialised websites or dedicated social networks. All you need to know is how to surf the internet.

You can access the LOFT introductory web navigation module [HERE](#)

*To learn how to identify the reliability and relevance of information on the web, you can access all the contents of **module 5** of the LOFT project.*

3. Optimising traceability :

Tracking the supply chain: Digitalisation makes it possible to track every stage of production, from seed to plate, and to communicate this traceability, for example through QR Codes associated with the packaging or labels of the products you sell. This responds to growing consumer demand for transparency about the origin of their food.

Use of advanced technologies: Barcode and blockchain systems make it easier to track products, guaranteeing their quality and food safety.

Boosting consumer confidence: By offering clear traceability, farmers can reassure consumers about the quality of their products, which can improve their image and increase sales.

User's Roadmap:

- Map out your current supply chain – from production to distribution – and identify which stages are tracked and documented.
- Assess whether you use digital tools (e.g., barcodes, QR codes, or blockchain systems) to track and share product information.
- Determine how traceability information is currently communicated to consumers – is it accessible, clear, and credible?
- Identify areas in your supply chain where digital tracking could improve efficiency, quality assurance, or food safety.
- Develop a strategy to implement or upgrade traceability tools that can help build consumer trust and increase the market appeal of your products.

Specialised software, but also simple software such as spreadsheets, can be used to keep track of processes, sources and so on. Find out more [HERE](#)

*QR codes or barcodes can be used to make the link with essential information such as origin, allergens, etc. You can learn how to create them [HERE](#) (**Module 2 – content 7**).*



4. Optimising communication :

Improving online visibility: Creating websites and having a presence on social networks enables farmers to promote their work and their products, increasing their visibility and their ability to reach new customers.

Connectivity between farmers: Digital tools such as social networks and forums enable farmers to connect, exchange information and share best practice, reducing the isolation often felt in this profession.

Access to information: Farmers can easily access digital resources on a wide range of issues (cropping techniques, livestock management, etc.), improving their decision-making and operational efficiency.

Knowledge sharing: Digital tools encourage the sharing of knowledge and experience between farmers, which can lead to innovations and improvements in farming practices.

User's Roadmap:

- Evaluate your current online presence – do you have a website, social media profiles, or an online marketplace listing?
- Identify which digital platforms your customers and peers are using and consider establishing or improving your presence there (e.g., Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, local food platforms).
- Assess how digital tools could help reduce professional isolation by connecting you with other producers, experts, or communities.
- Develop a plan to boost your digital engagement – whether through content creation, joining farmer networks, or attending virtual training sessions.

Communication is vital to a company's development, so it's important to know how to create digital content such as videos, slideshows or even just text using specialist software. Learn how to create digital communication media and content on the LOFT/Module 2 platform [HERE](#).

Once this content has been created, you need to be able to share it with your future customers by publishing it on social networks or simply on your own self-created website. You can learn how to master your digital communication with Module 3 of the LOFT training course [HERE](#).



5. Optimising the sales process:

Optimising marketing: Digital platforms make it easier to sell directly to consumers, enabling farmers to increase their profits while reducing their dependence on intermediaries.

Optimised sales management: Digital tools make it easier to manage orders, stocks and financial transactions, enabling farmers to concentrate on their production while effectively monitoring their sales.

Reducing costs: By optimising the sales process and cutting out intermediaries, digitisation can help to reduce the costs involved in marketing agricultural products.

Adapting to new consumer trends: Digitalisation enables farmers to respond quickly to changes in consumer preferences, particularly when it comes to sustainability and local produce.

User's Roadmap:

- Evaluate your current sales channels – are you selling directly to consumers, or relying on intermediaries (e.g., wholesalers, retailers)?
- Analyze the effectiveness of digital platforms, including e-commerce websites, local food delivery applications, and social media, in boosting direct sales and lessening the reliance on middlemen.
- Determine the digital tools you are presently utilizing for sales management, including order processing, inventory control, and financial transactions, and assess their effectiveness.
- Examine digital tools that have the potential to optimize your sales management through the automation of order tracking, inventory oversight, and payment handling.
- Keep an eye on consumer trends linked to sustainable practices, local food options, and direct purchasing strategies.
- Create a plan to refine your digital marketing approach by concentrating on improved consumer targeting, enhancing the overall customer experience, or implementing promotional offers and discounts.

Many solutions, such as accounting software or online marketing platforms, make the sales process easier and provide you with statistics that are very useful in your marketing strategy. Find out more [HERE](#)

Creating your own online shop will enable you to sell your products directly to consumers at the prices you decide. You can learn how to set up an online store [HERE](#) and how to make secure payments

6. Optimising stock management :

Real-time monitoring: Digitisation enables stock levels to be monitored in real time, helping to anticipate replenishment requirements and avoid stock-outs.

Order optimisation: Digital systems enable farmers to automate their orders in line with fluctuations in demand, reducing overcapacity and financial losses.

Data centralisation: Digital tools centralise all stock information, facilitating analysis and decision-making. This means that resources can be managed more efficiently.

Reduced errors: The use of management software reduces the human errors associated with manual data entry, improving the accuracy of stock information.

Improved profitability: By optimising stock management, operations can reduce inventory-related costs and improve overall profitability.

User's Roadmap:

- Evaluate your existing stock management system: is it operated manually or enhanced by digital tools? How do you monitor inventory levels and handle order management at present?
- Examine how digital systems can facilitate the automation of orders in relation to demand shifts, helping to decrease overcapacity and mitigate the financial losses that arise from unsold products.
- Recognize the specific areas in manual data entry that are susceptible to human mistakes and could see improvements in accuracy through the implementation of stock management software.
- Investigate the effects of proficient stock management on your profitability. Is it possible that optimizing your inventory can lower costs, enhance cash flow, and boost operational efficiency?
- Create a strategy for the implementation or enhancement of digital inventory management systems to optimize your stock processes and boost profitability.

Just like accounting or communications, there are many software packages specializing in stock management. However, advanced use of a spreadsheet (often free of charge) with the help of online tutorials (also often free of charge) will give you an overall view of your stock and enable you to automate certain tasks.



7. Optimising information searches :

Knowing how to use a browser and a search engine: To get the most out of your online experience, you need to understand how to use both a web browser and a search engine effectively.

Surfing in complete security: It's essential to adopt certain good practices that protect you against digital threats and know how to identify them.

Mastering search techniques: To find information quickly, you need to follow a number of steps and use specific tools to optimise your searches.

Knowing how to assess the credibility of content: Assessing the reliability of internet sources is crucial to avoid falling into the trap of misinformation and even to protect your personal information and guarantee data security, as an unreliable site can lead to data theft and fraud.

User's Roadmap:

- Become familiar with the basic principles of safe internet browsing, such as using strong passwords, being wary of dubious links, and recognizing online scams or phishing attempts.
- Assess the authenticity of online sites and their content: Check the source, investigate the author's credentials, and verify the date and origin of the information.
- Use your skills in everyday activities, such as researching agricultural resources, government programs, or online market trends, while staying safe from digital threats.
- Regularly update your understanding of online security practices to stay ahead of evolving cyber threats and continue browsing safely.

It is essential to know how to find information on the internet using browsers associated with search engines ([LOFT Module 1 - content 2](#)). Knowing how to identify quality content is also crucial, as is knowing how to protect your identity. Learn more with LOFT [Module 5](#).



8. Optimising connection methods :

Internet connection problems in rural areas can be solved using a number of technical solutions tailored to the specific characteristics of these regions. These technical solutions and optimisation strategies can considerably improve Internet connectivity in rural areas, enabling faster, more reliable access.

These include solutions such as satellite connections and fixed wireless access, which offer high speeds at relatively low cost. Find out more [HERE](#)

In conclusion, **raising awareness of digitisation** is essential to support farmers in this transition. This requires a collective effort to overcome the barriers associated with access to technology and training, to ensure that all players in the sector can benefit from the advantages offered by digitisation.

The LOFT platform enables you to be identified as a producer by means of a description of your activity and your position on a map, as well as finding training content on the use of digital tools.

For more information: <https://www.localfoodtrace.eu>