

An Evaluation of the Sustainability and Role of the Kadiwa Center in Enhancing Urban Food Access and Farmer Empowerment in Tagaytay City

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ABSTRACT

(Introduction) This study evaluated the sustainability and role of the *KADIWA ng Pangulo* (KNP) Center in enhancing urban food access and farmer empowerment in Tagaytay City, Philippines. Rapid urbanization has transformed food systems in developing economies, creating challenges in affordability, accessibility, and producer inclusion. Anchored on the Push–Pull–Policy (PPP) framework of the World Vegetable Center (2021), this research examined how the KADIWA model addresses gaps between food supply and consumer demand through governance and market interventions. *(Methodology)* Using a convergent mixed-methods design, data were collected from 144 participants—including consumers, vendors, smallholder farmers, and program implementers—through surveys, in-depth interviews, and focus group discussions. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, while qualitative narratives were thematically coded and triangulated to ensure analytic convergence. *(Results)* Results revealed that the KADIWA Center effectively improves food affordability and accessibility, with 73% of consumers finding the market very accessible and 90% showing strong loyalty due to freshness and price advantage. On the supply side, farmer-vendors gained steady but modest income (₱10,000–₱15,000 monthly) and increased market visibility, though constrained by high transportation costs and seasonal production losses. Policy-wise, 64.5% rated government support as excellent, yet coordination, promotion, and capacity-building gaps remain. The findings illustrate that while the program successfully operationalizes the Push (supply) and Pull (demand) dimensions, its long-term sustainability depends on stronger Policy mechanisms, including logistics support, farmer training, and institutionalized governance. *(Discussion)* Overall, the study contributes new knowledge on localized food system resilience, demonstrating that KADIWA functions as a transitional hybrid model that bridges community-based agriculture and urban consumer demand. Its implications reinforce the pursuit of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 2, 8, 11, and 17, promoting inclusive, equitable, and sustainable urban food systems.

Keywords: KADIWA ng Pangulo, food access, farmer empowerment, Push–Pull–Policy framework, urban food systems, Tagaytay City, Philippines, SDGs

INTRODUCTION

Urbanization radically changes the face of food systems, altering not only how agricultural products are produced and distributed, but also how they enter the market. As communities spread out, a growing populace puts strain on food supply chains, resulting in the provision of nutritious, affordable, and accessible food being an ongoing challenge. The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO, 2020) projections suggest that an estimated 68% of the world will be living in urban areas by 2050, hence growing concerns about food security, price volatility, as well as access to sufficient markets. Agricultural productivity has exploded globally, but in many developing countries food insecurity remains rife as a result of fragmented supply chains, inefficient distribution systems, intermediaries in the market, and lack of access to affordable food. These challenges are especially pronounced among low- and middle-income households, as income levels and market access persist in impacting food security outcomes (FAO, 2020; Global Nutrition Report, 2021; Reardon et al., 2022).

Governments across Asia have increasingly recognized that strengthening local food systems involves more than boosting crop yields. New food system reforms have focused on connecting directly with consumers in the marketplace with better oversight, logistics, and access. Community markets, farmers' markets, farmers' cooperatives, marketing mechanisms, and government-backed food hubs have become viable ways to shorten supply lines, cut marketing costs, and boost farmers' income. Yet the sustainability of these programs is still limited by logistical problems, fragmented farmer organisations, seasonal production variations, lack of cold-chain infrastructure, and weak institutional coordination, findings from the various studies in SE Asia consistently show. These repeating issues imply that successful food systems rely not only on efficient production but also on governance that fosters equitable participation among producers, consumers, and market institutions (Battersby & Watson, 2019; World Vegetable Center, 2021; Béné et al., 2022; Hoang et al., 2023; UNESCAP, 2023).

Within the Philippines, they manifest in the form of ongoing food affordability, farmer profitability, and market access issues. Although many attempts have been made by the government, farmers in the Philippines are still paid very low prices for their crops at the time they receive them, and consumers face uneven prices in retail due to intermediaries or transportation, as well as supply disruptions. Based on the findings of the Philippine Statistics Authority (2023) and the Philippine Institute for Development Studies (2022), urban food security and high food prices still affect Filipino households despite the widespread support of food assistance and agricultural programs. The Department of Agriculture (2023) responded by revitalizing the KADIWA ng Pangulo (KNP) Program to link farmers, fisherfolk, micro-enterprises, and consumers by making agricultural commodities affordable and creating market possibilities for producers. More than being a price stabilization mechanism, KADIWA attempts to boost economies in local regions, enhance food security, raise farmers' livelihoods, and contribute to the expansion of inclusive farming development by partnerships among national agencies, local government units, and community groups (Philippine Statistics Authority, 2023; Philippine Institute for Development Studies, 2022; Department of Agriculture, 2023).

The literature review has addressed the question of urban food systems from different points of view. International studies also show that local food markets enhance food availability, stimulate economies, and decrease dependence on long supply chains, especially during times of economic uncertainties and public health crises. And Asian studies underscore linking agricultural production to urban demand through localized market systems, which feed both producers and consumers. Yet, most existing studies have focused on efficiency in food production processes, price stability, or supply chain performance to the exclusion of governance mechanisms, stakeholder representation, and the long-term sustainability of the development process. In addition, we also know that research has predominantly investigated the independent determinants of consumer well-being or farmer livelihood on the one hand, as opposed to those on the other side, the interaction between them to be studied in locally based government-supported food systems (Battersby & Watson, 2019; Briones et al., 2021; Béné et al., 2022; Teng et al., 2022; Hoang et al., 2023).

The evidence base of empirical investigations on the KADIWA ng Pangulo Program in the Philippines is limited. Existing literature focuses mainly on the contribution it makes in terms of food price reduction and market utilization but doesn't provide strong support for the sustainability, governance systems, and local-level contribution to farmer empowerment. Further, there is minimal research simultaneously on consumer, sellers, farmer, and program implementer experiences within an integrated analytical framework. Thus, there is little knowledge on how supply-side conditions, consumer behaviour and institutional governance interact to influence the sustainability of the KADIWA, especially in the fast urbanizing cities characterized by a mix of the tourism, agriculture and local development sectors (Balleta et al., 2022; Philippine Institute for Development Studies, 2022; Department of Agriculture, 2023). Initial findings of the current study confirm these research gaps. Although a majority of the farmer-vendors were very keen to stay involved in KADIWA given the opportunity to directly connect to the market, they also mentioned that transportation costs, seasonal production losses, limited logistical assistance, and unstable demand, are still relevant operational challenges. Similarly, respondents indicated increased satisfaction that products and services are relatively low in price and fresh, but also mentioned product non-diversity, limited operating hours, and seasonal shortages as being causes of consumer loyalty among consumers. These findings indicate that the sustainability of localized food markets is not only about affordability but also about additional institutional encouragement, logistical backing, market

organization, and stakeholder cooperation (De Ocampo et al., 2025).

As the theoretical basis, the current study takes the Push–Pull–Policy (PPP) Framework by the World Vegetable Center (2021) as its basis to fill in these gaps. Sustainable food systems develop out of three interwoven dimensions of interactions underpinning the framework. The Push element of this approach focuses on enhancing the production, availability, and affordability of nutritious food through improved agricultural supply systems. The Pull component focuses on consumer demand, accessibility, buying behaviour and dietary preferences that drive sustainable markets. Lastly, the Policy aspect focuses on governance structures, institutional coordination, public investment, and enabling policies that facilitate long-term food system sustainability. Unlike other frameworks that look at these dimensions in isolation, the PPP framework acknowledges that resilient food systems call for supply, demand, and governance improvements to occur simultaneously (World Vegetable Center, 2021). Continuing the existing framework, this study pushes the application of Push–Pull–Policy to the local implementation of the KADIWA ng Pangulo Program in Tagaytay City through the integration of these three dimensions. In particular, it examines whether institutional support will enhance farmer participation, whether consumer purchasing drives market sustainability, and whether governance mechanisms support equitable participation from all involved. By embedding the Push–Pull–Policy framework within a community-driven food system, the study adds empirical evidence and practical application to the Push–Pull–Policy framework, making policy-relevant proposals related to enhancing government-backed food market interventions.

Under the Push–Pull–Policy (PPP) Framework, this study aimed to determine the sustainability and extent to which the KADIWA Center is contributing to urban food access and farmer empowerment in Tagaytay City. Thus, this study explored demographic and socioeconomic characteristics of the KADIWA stakeholders as well as the role of the KADIWA Center in urban food accessibility, affordability, and consumer purchasing behavior. It further evaluated the degree to which participation in the program could enhance farmer empowerment, market participation, and livelihood opportunities; and the governance, logistical, and operational factors that may potentially affect program sustainability. This study sought to answer, in the final analysis, how each of the Push, Pull, and Policy dimensions interacts to determine sustainable outcomes of the KADIWA Center, in the specific context of inclusive food systems development and farmer empowerment. Thus, in connection with the abovementioned research questions, this study aims to (1) describe the demographic and socioeconomic profile of KADIWA stakeholders; (2) analyze the supply-side conditions associated with the degree of farmer participation and market performance; (3) evaluate consumer accessibility, affordability, and purchasing behavior; (4) investigate the governance and institutional mechanisms supporting KADIWA implementation; and (5) propose empirically valid steps towards the sustainability, inclusiveness and resilience improvements across localized food systems.

This research, in the broader field of current food ecosystem and agricultural marketing policy support from government, has important results. It is also one of the few and small-scale localized mixed-method evaluations implemented on the KADIWA ng Pangulo Program—encompassing consumers, farmer-vendors, producers, and program implementers in the same theoretical frame of reference. This model is a comprehensive way of evaluating the implementation and sustainability of the program. Moreover, using empirical data analysis, this study contributes to the Push–Pull–Policy Framework as it highlights the impact of agricultural supply (Push), consumer preferences and buying behavior (Pull), and institutional and governance structure (Policy) on local food system sustainability. The findings of this study provide a basis for further refinement of this framework specific to community-based food market interventions in low-income countries. The findings provide recommendations grounded in existing research in efforts to support local government units, the Department of Agriculture, policymakers, and community stakeholders in strengthening the implementation of KADIWA with improved logistics, market access, institutional coordination, and support to farmers. This study contributes to advances towards both achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) 2 (Zero Hunger), SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities) and SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals) by promoting strategies and policies aimed at promoting food security, equipping the farmer and enhancing the impact of urban food systems toward a sustainable and inclusive lifestyle. To this end, it contributes to debates about sustainable governance of urban food systems at the local level (United Nations, 2015; World Vegetable Center, 2021).

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a convergent mixed-methods design, integrating both quantitative and qualitative data to generate a comprehensive understanding of the sustainability and role of the *KADIWA ng Pangulo* (KNP) Center in enhancing urban food access and farmer empowerment in Tagaytay City. According to Creswell and Plano Clark (2018), a convergent mixed-methods approach allows the simultaneous collection and analysis of numeric and narrative data, facilitating triangulation and complementarity. This design was deemed appropriate to capture both measurable indicators—such as affordability, accessibility, and sales performance—and lived experiences of consumers, vendors, farmers, and local implementers within the KADIWA ecosystem.

The study was anchored on the Push–Pull–Policy Model developed by the World Vegetable Center (WorldVeg, 2021), which conceptualizes food system transformation through three interlinked domains: (1) Push, which expands the supply and affordability of healthy foods; (2) Pull, which stimulates demand for nutritious diets; and (3) Policy, which strengthens enabling environments for sustainable and equitable food systems. This framework was contextualized to the Tagaytay urban food landscape to analyze how KADIWA’s operations influence both the supply-side (farmers, vendors) and demand-side (consumers) dimensions, while assessing the policy layer in terms of governance, inclusivity, and logistical support. The model guided both the construction of data-collection tools and the coding of emergent qualitative themes.

The research was conducted in Tagaytay City, Cavite, Philippines, a rapidly urbanizing tourism hub characterized by peri-urban agricultural pockets. The focal site was the KADIWA ng Pangulo Center, strategically located near major barangays—Mag-asawang Ilat, Maitim 2nd Central, Maitim 2nd West, San Jose, Silang Crossing East, Silang Crossing West, and Tolentino West—all within a 2 km radius. The area was selected for its dynamic interaction between smallholder farmers, vendors, and urban consumers, reflecting a typical peri-urban food system setting in developing Asian cities (FAO, 2020; Briones et al., 2021). The study involved 144 participants, purposively selected to represent diverse stakeholder groups in the local food system. Participants included: KNP Consumers (n = 50); KNP Vendors (n = 30); Non-KNP Consumers (n = 24); Non-KNP Vendors (n = 15); Smallholder Farmers (n = 15); KADIWA Program Implementers and Local Government Representatives (n = 10). Purposive and criterion sampling were utilized to ensure that participants had direct and active involvement in KADIWA’s operations, either as suppliers, sellers, buyers, or implementers (Etikan & Bala, 2017). The heterogeneity of participants enabled the study to explore multi-level interactions and cross-validate findings between supply and demand actors.

Data were collected between July and August 2025 using multiple instruments to enhance validity through methodological triangulation: (1) Structured Survey Questionnaires were administered onsite to consumers and vendors to gather quantitative data on income levels, sales volume, transportation cost, food budget, accessibility, and satisfaction. (2) In-Depth Interviews (IDIs) were conducted with farmers, non-KNP vendors, and key program implementers to elicit rich qualitative narratives regarding market participation, logistical challenges, and perceptions of KADIWA’s inclusivity. (3) Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with KNP Implementers and selected LGU representatives were held to validate emerging themes and co-develop recommendations for policy improvement.

All instruments were pre-tested for clarity and reliability. Digital forms (via Google Forms) were used for data encoding and storage, ensuring secure and efficient data management. Quantitative tools were designed to complement thematic domains identified in the Push–Pull–Policy framework, while qualitative guides encouraged reflection on empowerment, accessibility, and sustainability issues.

Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics—including frequency counts, percentages, and mean scores—to describe patterns of affordability, accessibility, and participation. Analyses were conducted using SPSS v.28, following established food-system metrics (PIDS, 2022).

Qualitative data from interviews and FGDs were transcribed verbatim and analyzed thematically following the six-phase approach of Braun and Clarke (2019): familiarization, coding, theme generation, review, definition, and interpretation. NVivo v.12 software was employed to organize codes aligned with the Push–Pull–Policy

dimensions. Triangulation between quantitative and qualitative results ensured convergence and corroboration, strengthening the validity of the conclusions.

The study adhered to the ethical principles of autonomy, beneficence, non-maleficence, and justice as outlined by the Philippine National Ethics Guidelines for Health and Social Research (DOST–PCHRD, 2017). All participants were informed of the study’s purpose, procedures, and voluntary nature. Informed consent was obtained before data collection. Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained by assigning numeric codes and storing digital data in password-protected devices. Participants had the right to withdraw at any point without penalty, and findings were reported transparently and objectively to uphold research integrity.

To ensure methodological rigor, the study applied multiple validation strategies: Credibility was strengthened through data triangulation and member checking during FGDs. Transferability was achieved by providing a rich contextual description of the research site and population. Dependability and Confirmability were addressed through an audit trail documenting analytic decisions and code revisions (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). For the quantitative component, instrument reliability was verified using Cronbach’s $\alpha = 0.87$, indicating high internal consistency.

RESULTS

The results are organized and interpreted according to the Push–Pull–Policy (World Vegetable Center, 2021) framework, integrating both quantitative patterns and qualitative themes derived from surveys, interviews, and focus group discussions. The findings reflect how supply, demand, and governance interact in the *KADIWA ng Pangulo* (KNP) Center in Tagaytay City, highlighting the multi-dimensional nature of food access and farmer empowerment within an urban–peripheral context.

Profile of Respondents

The study involved 144 participants representing diverse stakeholders across the KADIWA ecosystem: KNP consumers ($n=50$), vendors ($n=30$), non-KNP consumers ($n=24$), non-KNP vendors ($n=15$), urban smallholder farmers ($n=15$), and KADIWA implementers ($n=10$). The demographic and socioeconomic profiles reveal key insights into the structure of participation and potential inequalities in market engagement.

Demographic Characteristics

Most respondents were middle-aged (36–50 years old) and late adults (51–60 years old), aligning with national statistics showing that the median age of Filipino farmers is 57 (PSA, 2023). Female participation was notable, particularly among vendors and consumers, reflecting women’s dominant role in local food retail and household provisioning in the Philippines (FAO, 2020; Cabaraban et al., 2022).

Educational attainment was relatively high: 40.4% held postgraduate degrees, followed by 13.5% with a college education, suggesting a more educated urban-peripheral population compared to the national farmer average, where only 11% attain tertiary education (PSA, 2022). This indicates that KADIWA participants—especially vendors and implementers—represent an emergent group of educated micro-entrepreneurs operating in community-based markets.

Socioeconomic Status

A majority of respondents reported monthly incomes between ₱10,000 and ₱19,999, consistent with the urban lower-middle-income bracket (PIDS, 2022). Household sizes were predominantly small, with 2–3 members per household, suggesting nuclear family structures typical of semi-urban environments.

Nearly half of respondents (48.4%) were farmers/producers, followed by city market retailers (32.3%) and barangay garden growers (12.9%), showing that KADIWA functions as a hybrid intersection between formal and informal livelihood sectors.

These patterns parallel findings from Briones et al. (2021), who observed that hybrid markets in peri-urban Philippines often attract both smallholder farmers and semi-formal retailers, promoting social inclusivity and bridging economic classes.

PUSH Layer: Supply-Side Dynamics and Farmer Empowerment

Market Participation and Economic Outcomes

Quantitative findings show that 53% of farmer-vendors sell less than 25% of their total harvest through KADIWA, while 27% sell about half. Average gross daily sales ranged from ₱3,000 to ₱4,999, and monthly sales from ₱10,000 to ₱15,000, indicating modest but stable income contributions. These earnings fall below the national monthly poverty threshold of ₱13,800 for a family of five (PSA, 2023), suggesting that KADIWA participation provides partial livelihood support rather than full income replacement.

Qualitative narratives reinforce this dual role. Farmers viewed KADIWA as an *“additional market channel”* complementing sales to hotels, restaurants, and wet markets: “We bring our excess to Kadiwa—it’s nearby and helps us sell when hotels buy less.” (Farmer 6)

However, logistical constraints persist. Most vendors relied on private or rented tricycles, with transport costs exceeding ₱200 per trip, emphasizing transport inefficiency and limited post-harvest infrastructure—a recurrent issue in the Philippine food distribution chain (PIDS, 2022; DA, 2023). Despite these constraints, 90.3% of farmer-vendors were very likely to continue participating, underscoring satisfaction with direct market access and fairer pricing mechanisms.

Production Diversity and Seasonality

Product variety was relatively wide, dominated by eggplant (69%), chayote (69%), and Malabar spinach (46%), while major fruits included banana (80%), papaya (73%), and avocado (60%).

Nevertheless, 74% of vendors identified seasonality as a major production challenge, with significant drops in output during the June–August rainy season. One farmer explained: “When typhoons come, we lose our crops and income for weeks. It’s hard to recover.” (Farmer 10)

These results confirm the high climate sensitivity of local supply chains, consistent with Béné et al. (2022), who found that Southeast Asian smallholders remain vulnerable to rainfall variability and lack adaptive post-harvest systems. While the Push component of KADIWA succeeds in creating supply channels for small-scale producers, it remains fragile against environmental shocks and logistical barriers.

PULL Layer: Consumer Access, Affordability, and Behavior

Accessibility and Consumption Patterns

Among the 50 consumer respondents, 73.1% rated KADIWA as “very easy to access,” with most traveling by jeepney (38.5%) or on foot (26.9%), and spending ₱30–₱60 on transport. Consumers predominantly allocated a ₱4,000–₱5,999 monthly food budget, matching the Philippine urban median (PSA, 2023). Weekly patronage (78%) indicates high dependency and satisfaction with KADIWA as a routine food source.

Quantitative findings align with qualitative sentiments, emphasizing affordability and freshness: “It’s cheaper and fresher—why go to the supermarket?” (Consumer 11) This perception aligns with Reardon et al. (2022), who emphasized that price sensitivity and freshness are defining factors of consumer loyalty in hybrid Asian markets. KADIWA’s ability to provide affordable produce directly from farmers addresses one of the core urban food access barriers identified by FAO (2020)—price volatility and middlemen markups.

Consumer Trust, Loyalty, and Market Coexistence

A strong sense of trust and loyalty emerged: 90% of consumers said they were “very likely” to continue buying, and 96% recommended KADIWA to others. However, this success has competitive spillovers. Vendors reported that some consumers now bypass traditional markets: “Many people buy there [Kadiwa] once a week, so they don’t go to the city market anymore.” (Vendor 6)

While this enhances consumer welfare, it may threaten the survival of informal vendors, as seen in Vietnam and Indonesia, where government-supported food markets can unintentionally displace informal traders (Teng et al., 2022; Hoang et al., 2023). Hence, the Pull layer reveals both empowerment and exclusionary dynamics, reflecting the need for a balanced hybrid food governance model.

POLICY Layer: Governance, Coordination, and Sustainability

Inclusivity and Farmer Participation

Survey results show that 58% of respondents strongly agreed that KADIWA is inclusive and accessible to smallholder farmers, and 87% reported improved confidence and capacity as a result of participation. These findings affirm the program’s empowerment intent, but qualitative data highlight areas for enhancement: “Include marginalized farmers from each barangay so everyone benefits.” (Implementer 4).

This underscores the need for systematic inclusion mechanisms, particularly for remote or small-scale producers who struggle to meet KADIWA’s logistical requirements. The finding resonates with Battersby and Watson (2019), who argue that inclusivity in urban food systems must be deliberately designed rather than assumed.

Program Management, Training, and Coordination

A majority (64.5%) rated LGU and program support as “excellent,” but 33% identified gaps in communication and coordination. Respondents emphasized the need for training in modern farming, marketing, and entrepreneurship to strengthen productivity and sustainability: “Teach us modern farming so we can sell fresher and cheaper products.” (Farmer 1)

These findings confirm that while the Policy layer is robust in design, its implementation remains fragmented and personality-dependent, echoing national critiques that local market programs often lack consistent monitoring and capacity-building systems (DA, 2023; Ballesta et al., 2022).

Cross-Layer Integration: Interdependencies and Emerging Patterns. Synthesizing the results across layers reveals a **dynamic but uneven system**:

Framework Layer	Quantitative Evidence	Qualitative Insight	Interpretation
PUSH (Supply)	53% sell <25% of produce via KADIWA; ₱10–₱15k monthly sales; high transport costs	Farmers appreciate market access but face logistical, seasonal, and Climatic challenges	Supply stability depends on infrastructure and adaptive logistics
PULL (Demand)	78% weekly purchases; 90% loyalty; 96% recommend KADIWA	Consumers value affordability and freshness; trust vendors	Price and freshness drive repeat buying, but may pressure informal markets
POLICY	64.5% rate support “excellent”; 87% report empowerment	Requests for better coordination and capacity building	The program succeeds in its intent, but needs institutional continuity

Collectively, these results depict KADIWA as a socially inclusive yet structurally constrained model—effective in democratizing market access but vulnerable to environmental shocks and governance fragmentation.

Comparative and Contextual Implications

Compared to similar urban food system initiatives in Vietnam (Hoang et al., 2023) and Indonesia (Teng et al., 2022), the KADIWA program demonstrates a stronger emphasis on social equity and affordability. However, it shares regional weaknesses in logistics, seasonal production, and governance continuity.

Thus, Tagaytay’s KADIWA Center exemplifies a transitional hybrid model—bridging traditional informal markets and modern policy-driven food hubs. Its experience contributes to the broader Asian discourse on localized food system resilience, emphasizing that urban food access and farmer empowerment must be co-developed through participatory governance.

DISCUSSION

The findings reaffirm the usefulness of the **Push–Pull–Policy (PPP)** framework in understanding the dynamics of urban–peripheral food systems within the Philippine context. Consistent with WorldVeg (2021), the study revealed that the three layers—supply, demand, and policy—are interdependent and must function synergistically to sustain localized food markets.

The Push layer demonstrated that while *KADIWA ng Pangulo* effectively creates direct market access for smallholder farmers, the system remains fragile due to high logistics costs, climatic risks, and dependence on seasonal production. Similar structural vulnerabilities have been observed in peri-urban markets across Southeast Asia, where the absence of cold storage, aggregation centers, and value-chain financing inhibits scaling (Béné et al., 2022; Hoang et al., 2023).

The Pull layer underscores that consumer behavior in Tagaytay mirrors broader urban patterns identified in Asian cities (Reardon et al., 2022; Teng et al., 2022)—price sensitivity, product freshness, and trust-based relationships drive purchasing preferences. The KADIWA Center’s ability to deliver affordable and fresh produce strengthens food access and aligns with SDG 2 (Zero Hunger) by reducing dependence on intermediaries and mitigating urban food insecurity. However, this shift also introduces market displacement risks for informal vendors, necessitating more inclusive vendor integration models to prevent marginalization.

The Policy layer validates the enabling role of local governance and cross-sectoral coordination. Tagaytay City’s approach—anchoring KADIWA operations on municipal ordinances and multi-stakeholder partnerships—reflects SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals). Yet, the study also identified gaps in program institutionalization, coordination, and continuous training. These governance challenges echo national policy assessments showing that Philippine agri-marketing interventions often succeed in design but fall short in long-term operational sustainability (Ballea et al., 2022; DA, 2023).

The participant profile revealed an educated, middle-aged, and lower-middle-income demographic, distinct from the national farming average, where literacy and digital skills remain low (PSA, 2023). This divergence signals an emerging class of “agro-entrepreneurial” participants—individuals capable of engaging with both traditional and technology-assisted market systems. The inclusion of women as the majority consumers and vendors reflects gendered labor patterns noted in other Philippine agricultural systems (Cabaraban et al., 2022), suggesting that women’s agency is central to sustaining community-based market programs. Hence, strengthening women’s leadership in vendor associations and farmer cooperatives can amplify KADIWA’s inclusivity goals. Moreover, the presence of educated micro-entrepreneurs and LGU staff as program implementers implies that capacity-building investments yield high returns in market efficiency and stakeholder trust. By contrast, smallholder farmers with lower formal education expressed difficulty in navigating digital information and transport coordination. This knowledge gap underscores the need for differentiated support systems—technical for producers, managerial for vendors, and policy training for local implementers.

When compared to urban food system models in Vietnam, Thailand, and Indonesia, the Tagaytay KADIWA Center represents a unique public–community hybrid model, characterized by state facilitation and civic participation. In Vietnam, for instance, urban–rural food integration has largely relied on cooperative-led aggregation and state-subsidized logistics hubs (Hoang et al., 2023), while Indonesia’s *Pasar Rakyat* focuses on infrastructure modernization but lacks direct farmer–consumer linkage (Teng et al., 2022).

The Philippine model, in contrast, emphasizes price fairness and inclusivity rather than volume-based efficiency. This focus aligns with the WorldVeg (2021) emphasis on social equity as a necessary pillar for sustainable food systems. However, the comparative evidence also reveals that institutional continuity is critical. In other Asian contexts, food system reforms achieved success through sustained policy commitment, private-sector engagement, and adaptive financing mechanisms (Béné et al., 2022). For KADIWA to remain viable, it must move beyond short-term market facilitation toward institutionalized food governance—integrating agricultural extension, community logistics, and digital monitoring systems.

This study contributes new knowledge in three domains: (1) Empirical Expansion of the Push–Pull–Policy Model. By applying the PPP framework at a city-level micro-market, the study demonstrates how structural (Push), behavioral (Pull), and institutional (Policy) layers intersect in a localized food system. This contextual adaptation enriches the global discourse on food system localization and resilience. (2) Evidence-Based Insights for Local Food Governance. The results highlight the coexistence of empowerment and exclusion, where affordability and farmer visibility improve, but logistical and inclusivity gaps persist. These findings advocate for integrated municipal food planning that coordinates agriculture, transportation, and social welfare policies. (3) Policy-Oriented Knowledge for SDG Implementation. By linking findings to SDGs 2, 8, 11, and 17, the study operationalizes the global goals within a city-level governance model. The KADIWA framework can thus serve as a replicable local innovation for other Southeast Asian municipalities pursuing inclusive and sustainable food systems.

The study was limited by its geographical scope (Tagaytay City) and seasonal timing (March–June 2024), coinciding with the rainy season that influenced production and sales data. Future studies may apply longitudinal and comparative designs across multiple Philippine cities to evaluate KADIWA’s long-term sustainability and adaptability. Further, digital and spatial analyses (e.g., GIS-based mapping of food access and NVivo-assisted thematic coding) can enhance understanding of how market reach, pricing, and urban design shape consumer accessibility. This research evaluated the sustainability and role of the KADIWA Pangulo Center in enhancing urban food access and farmer empowerment in Tagaytay City, Philippines. Using a convergent mixed-methods approach grounded in the Push–Pull Policy framework, the study found that KADIWA has succeeded in bridging producers and consumers, promoting affordability, accessibility, and inclusion in the local food system. However, persistent challenges in transportation logistics, seasonal production, and program coordination constrain its scalability. These findings underscore that the food system transformation requires not only economic and infrastructural interventions but also participatory governance and continuous capacity building.

At the global level, the study contributes to the understanding of localized food governance as a pathway toward urban food security and climate resilience, echoing calls for multi-level integration between state policy, community action, and market participation (Béné et al., 2022; UNESCAP, 2023). At the Asian level, it situates the Philippines within emerging regional discourses on equitable food systems, offering a replicable model for mid-sized cities navigating rapid urbanization. At the national level, it reinforces the importance of institutionalizing KADIWA and similar programs within Philippine food governance frameworks, ensuring that smallholder empowerment and consumer affordability remain central to policy implementation.

Ultimately, the KADIWA experience demonstrates that resilient food systems are both social and structural—requiring sustained policy support, community engagement, and equitable partnerships to achieve long-term sustainability and align with the vision of a food secure, inclusive, and self-reliant Philippines.

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