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*Food fight! The urban food supply through the lens of civil court cases in eighteenth-century Brussels*

The food supply of eighteenth-century Brussels was responsible for feeding thousands of mouths with decreasing options for self-supplied subsistence in an urbanizing environment. At the same time, it provided the financial livelihood of socio-economic actors such as the food guilds, merchants, hawkers, and (in part) the local government. In the eighteenth century this challenge was met by the government with extensive regulation outlining not only who could sell food, but also where, when and what could be sold. The purported aim of such regulation was to make the food supply of the city as secure as possible, while ensuring the food was affordable and not harmful to consumer health. This paper goes beyond what this normative top-down view on the urban food supply can provide. Instead, it questions how various stakeholders shaped and subverted this regulation. To this end, it looks at arguments and strategies used by actors involved in civil court cases in eighteenth-century Brussels and attempts to ascertain to which degree they were (un)successful in their legal endeavours.

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