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THE DEVELOPMENT OF LOCAL PRODUCTS IN ROMANIA: A CASE STUDY OF HONEY

DEZVOLTAREA PRODUSELOR TRADIŢIONALE ROMÂNEŞTI – STUDIU DE CAZ PRIVIND MIEREA

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Abstract: *Romanian local product certification promotes the diversification of agricultural production, bringing major benefits for the development of disadvantaged rural area. Although the certification process of the Romanian traditional products began in 2005, Romania ranks the second place in Europe after the number of certified products. The different types of honey produced in Romania could be certified as local products because they are distinguished from other similar products, by two qualities: the naturalness and the apitherapy. The initiative to certify honey as local product can be developed using the recorded migration flows in the last period in Romania. It is about a process of acculturation.*

Key words: *local products, Romania, Europe, honey, sustainability.*

INTRODUCTION

The economic function of rural areas, with its principal pillar - agriculture - is considered a complex function whose goal is to promote an agricultural, forestry and fishing system that ensures the production of adequate amounts of products for the needs of the population, a reasonable level of income for farmers and protects the environment through the regeneration of natural resources (soil, water). In the context of sustainable development, the promotion of local products in Romania can bring considerable benefits to the rural economy, particularly in disadvantaged areas, with the following effects: increasing farmers' income and preventing migration to urban areas and to other countries.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The research about the local products is based on the systematic study of all sources of information at National and European level. In order to gather statistical data it was made an indirect observation of the phenomenon, recorded by sources such as: The Romanian Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, Eurostat, The National Office of Romanian traditional and organic products and The Centre for the Promotion of Imports from Developing Countries. The results regarding honey consumption are based on market studies, made at national level, in the period 2007-2010.

RESULTS AND DISCUTIONS

At the European Union level, there are three systems to promote and protect the names of agricultural and food products: PDO (protected designation of origin), PGI (Protected Geographical Indication) and TSG (Traditional Speciality Guaranteed). These systems are legislated by the Council Regulation (EC) No. 510/2006 on the protection of geographical indications and designations of origin for agricultural products and foodstuffs.

In Romania, the protection system allows the development of geographical indications and designation of origin for Romanian products, ensures fair competition between producers and credibility among consumers. The national legislative framework is represented by the Order no. 690/2004 of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development. The formation of the legislative framework in Romania is late (2004) compared to other European countries - Italy (2000) and Hungary (1997).

The legislation defines the local products as products obtained by traditional raw materials, which have a traditional composition, characterized by a mode of production that reflected a traditional process. The elements of traditionalism make a clear distinction from other similar products. The certification of local products means the recognition of the traditional character of products, by registration in the Certification Registry of Local Products (Fig. 1).

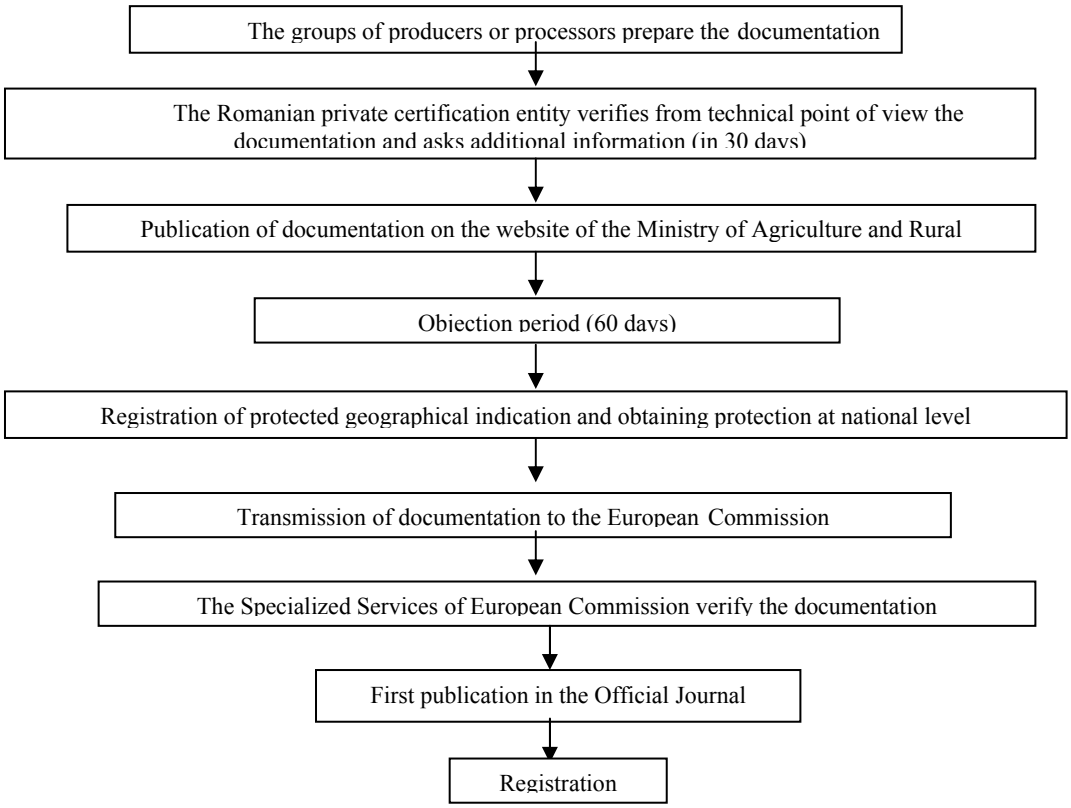


Fig. 1: Simplified diagram of the certification process based on the information provided by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development www.madr.ro and by the European Commission http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/quality/leg/index_fr. htm

The beginning of the certification process was 2005 in Romania, 2000 in Italy, 2005 in Austria and 1998 in Hungary. In this context, it is surprising that, after the number of products certified, Romania is on the second place in Europe (Fig. 2).

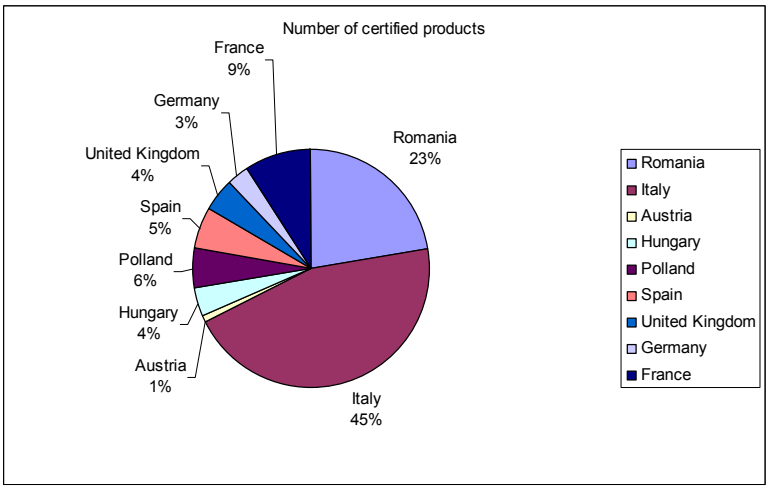


Fig. 2: A comparative analysis regarding the certified products, at European level
Source: our own calculations based on data provided by www.onpterbv.ro, Last Updated (March 9, 2010 10:29)

Analyzing the certified products by category, in the period 2005-2009, it can be observed that dairy products occupy a large weight of the total (43,16%), followed by meat products (24.75%) and bakery products (19, 26).

Table 1

The situation of certified local products, at national level, by category

Category/County	Alba	Argeş	Galaţi	Timiş	Bihor	Braşov	Iaşi	Total
Meat products	72	58	32	66	77	59	172	536
Dairy products	164	419	47	25	100	85	93	933
Bakery products	202	18	21	49	83	47	18	438
Fruits and vegetables	3	10	9	1	6	-	5	34
Honey	1	2	-	-	-	-	-	3
Fish	-	-	1	-	-	-	1	2
Oil	1	-	-	-	1	-	-	2
Non-alcoholic drinks	5	-	5	-	-	-	3	13
Alcoholic Drinks	4	49	3	3	156	9	-	224
Total no. of products	**452**	**556**	**118**	**144**	**423**	**200**	**292**	**2185**

Source: our own calculations based on data provided by www.onpterbv.ro, Last Updated (March 9, 2010 10:29)

Among the Romanian areas of excellence regarding the "local products", which are distinguished by their potential and their position on the European market, honey holds a very important place.

An analysis of agro-food chain in Romania reveals that beekeeping is characterized by favorable natural conditions that contributed to the continuous development of this activity, by obtaining significant productions. On the other hand, studies carried out until present on consumption demonstrate that Romanian people consume reduced quantities of honey compared to other European countries (see tab. 2).

Table 2

Honey consumption (total and per capita) at European Union level, 2003-2007

Specification	2003		2005		2007		Average annual % change in total consumption
	Total (tones)	Per capita (kg)	Total (tones)	Per capita (kg)	Total (tones)	Per capita (kg)	
EU average	312071	0.64	324923	0.66	309933	0.63	-0.2
Germany	96050	1.16	90741	1.10	95506	1.16	-0.1
United Kingdom	27914	0.47	32383	0.54	36069	0.59	6.6
France	28457	0.46	31462	0.50	34869	0.55	5.2
Spain	34028	0.82	31867	0.74	28927	0.65	-4.0
Italy	18879	0.33	23210	0.40	18803	0.32	-0.1
Greece	16643	1.51	18318	1.65	18151	1.62	2.2
Polland	15725	0.41	14847	0.39	16192	0.42	0.7
Austria	10739	1.33	9825	1.20	9876	1.19	-2.1
Romania	8007	0.37	12589	0.58	9061	0.42	3.1

Source: Eurostat, 2009, CBI Market Information Database, 2010

A market study made at national level (Pocol Cristina Bianca, 2008) demonstrates that honey consumption in Romania is reduced. It can be observed that a significant percent of questioned people (30.8%) appreciates at honey the quality of being a natural product and another significant percent (25.1%) its curative effect (see tab. 3). In this context, the future of the beekeeping industry is possible by promoting exports of local products

and by changing the consumer attitude regarding the honey consumption. The study identified several reasons that determine the consumption of honey.

Table 3

Reasons for which honey is appreciated

Specification	Frequencies	Percent
It has a sweet taste	203	10,0
It is a natural food	624	30,8
It can be used in association with other foods or drinks	72	3,6
It can be used in different culinary recipes	76	3,8
It has a high nutritional value	161	8,0
It can be used as medicine	507	25,1
It can be used by replacing sugar	180	8,9
It is cheap	12	0,6
Other things	15	0,7
Nothing	99	4,9
I don't know/I don't respond	74	3,7
Total	2 023	100,0

Source: Pocol C, 2008, The management and the marketing of bee products in Romania and European Union

The different types of honey produced in Romania could be certified as local products because they are distinguished from other similar products of the same category, just by two qualities: the naturalness and the apitherapy. The initiative to certify honey as local product can be developed using the recorded migration flows in the last period in Romania. It is about a process of acculturation. Romanians who have immigrated to Europe have the tendency to adapt their cultural norms to the communities in which they live and work. This thing is perceived as a higher stage of social development. On the other hand, the acculturation process faces with different patterns specific to the Romanian culture, by creating a mix between what is kept from the culture of origin and what is adopted from the host culture. This phenomenon can be named "the commuters syndrome". The human being is culturally suspended between two points.

The Romanians could consume a greater quantity of honey, due to the tendency, very fashionable in Europe and worldwide, to eat healthy foods. Romanian immigrants will try to consume local products similar to Romanian traditional products the Romanians, or even local products imported from Romania. They are related to the local products in a dual manner: for example, on one hand, honey is included in a list of products that respond to different needs (food-drug) and secondly they refuse the honey consumption, in a formal way. The phenomenon of migration changes the motivation of consumption (fig. 3).

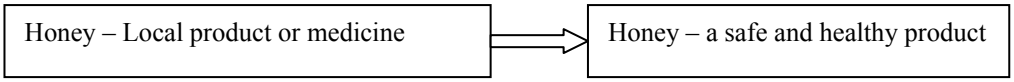


Fig. 3: Simplified diagram of the motivation of consumption

This change is made in a period of several years and with a period of rebound in consumption. In the first stage, the consumption of honey drops and the product is rejected due to his specificity of "traditional" or "original". In the second stage the consumption increases by the valorization of the concept "healthy".

CONCLUSIONS

The promotion of honey as a local product will have benefits for both consumers and producers: the increase of honey consumption will improve the health of the population and the certification of honey as local product will certainly have benefits for producers and processors through exports.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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