

Seminar 12- 13 February 2004 in Turin:

Mountain food products in Europe: What assets and what strategies

Project: Mountain Quality Products in Europe

Workshops A3 / A4 : What are the existing strategies for development of quality mountain food products?

PREPARATORY DOCUMENT FOR WORKSHOP A3 – A4

Based on Data from Case-Study reports. Common Analysis

How assessing success ?

- Volumes increasing
- Maintaining of exploitations
- Maintaining of local know-how and traditional practices
- Added value to producers and supply-chains
- Local and/or regional development
- Support of farms during transition period
- Interest and appeal of tourism
- Display of products in hotels and restaurants
- Display of products in shows and local markets

II. Different strategies to develop products

	Higher quality	Uniqueness and specificity
Logic of « production » (oscypek)		
Logic of « product » (tome des bauges)		
Logic of « process » (mustardela)		
Logic of micro local dev (gamalost)		
Logic of local development (basque bovine meat)		

Quality focus = Common product but presenting specific characteristics linked to its mountain area location (natural conditions, protected environment, production process)

Uniqueness Focus = Unique product strongly linked with a specific production area

III. Knowledge and diffusion of know-how

Key words : - scientific approach - codification - expertise		Key words : - empiricism - training
What do we want to know ?		How do we want to know ?
Why ?		Who ?

On one side: know how shared but not standardised and leading to a certain sort of diversity; on the other, a precise definition for a well controlled and defined product. Is it a paradox?

REPORT OF WORKSHOP A3 (in English/ Italian)

Moderator: Federico BIGARAN – Provincia di Trento (Italy)

Reporter: dr. Gabriella VALLER - Provincia autonoma di Trento (Italy)

Participant: almost 15 persons representing different sectors: research centres, public administration, private agency for quality certification, rural tourism association, private enterprises.

Introducing the workshop matter, the animator briefly reassumed the European contest in which the existing strategies were developed and have to take into account. The analysis made on questionnaire 2 permitted to identify some fundamental aspect of the adopted strategies.

THE FRAMEWORK

- Sustainable development (environmental, social and economical issues) as necessary background. Economic growth of the enterprises and social development of the local communities are connected.
- Long-term development strategies are required for success.
- Specificity of rural development (multifunctional, cross-sectional); we have to take into account that any strategy has to be developed in a rural environment that has its own specificity and needs; therefore a specific approach is required.
- Regarding organisation of production chain we can have different options: company logic, sectional logic, territorial logic, co-operative logic that represents different strategies.
- Local community involvement seems to be relevant for the development of market niche quality products.
- Mountain Quality Products belong to the cultural heritage of the local communities and need to be protected and supported as “cultural and social goods”.
- Increasing demand by the consumers of “safe foods”.
- Increasing need for protection against competition and “false” products

All the participant agree on the above mentioned framework.

ELEMENTS (BRICKS) TO BUILD UP A STRATEGY FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF MOUNTAIN QUALITY PRODUCTS

- Location of the chain: it can be completely or partially situated in mountain area. Almost the 25% of the analysed product are not completely produced in mountain area utilising raw

materials or other element coming from other territories. This seems not to affect quality but need a complex organisation and more control for traceability.

- Company dimension (small, medium, large, complex) and organisation of the chain. All different options were present in the products analysed with the project.
- Use of the brand (to defend the producer, the territory ...): it's a need.
- Relationship with culture and tradition: smaller the production closer the relation with the territory.
- Link with "idea of the mountain": the consumer not associates directly mountain products with the "idea of mountain".
- Role of public authorities: it is necessary to include the development of mountain quality products in the territorial development plan in order to guarantee the required support.
- The control: "not consumer trust without control".

The participants agree on the framework and the proposed elements for strategy development

COMMENTS FROM THE PARTICIPANTS

Controls

According to some participants, control seems to be a crucial point in building up a strategy to sustain the development of quality mountain food products.

The control can be:

- control on matters related to healthy products
- control on traceability
- control on specific quality elements declared by the producer

Higher, stricter controls seem to protect better both consumers and producers (consumers from "bad" products, producers from "false" products); but higher, stricter controls cost more; the costs have to be bore first by producers and afterwards, at the end of the chain, by consumers.

If we consider that at institutional level controls are already quite complicated and complex, we could wonder if it's really worthy to add new controls connected with an extra certification (for example certification of mountain origin) considering that, at European level, we already have certifications issued after strict controls (PGI, PDO ...)

According to some participants the consumers would pay extra money for buying products more secure and with a certification proving higher quality.

Also the producer would be interested in sustaining higher costs in order to have an instrument - the extra certification - that could protect his products from imitation of the concurrence.

The higher costs connected with an extra certification of mountain origin would be paid (by producers and consumers) only if the positive aspects connected with the relationship between product and territory are evident.

Location of the chain and origin of raw materials

Another crucial point seems to be the location of the production chain and the origin of raw materials.

The production chain can be totally or only partially located in a mountain area. According to some participants the definition of “mountain product” should be reserved to those products whose raw materials come only from mountain areas. According to others also the processing know how and the cultural heritage should be considered as an important characteristic for considering a product as a mountain product. In this case, even if only part of the raw materials come from mountain areas, the processing know how and the cultural heritage could characterise the product as a mountain product.

REPORT OF WORKSHOP A4 (in French/ Italian)

Moderator: Emmanuel MINGASSON – SUACI, Rural Development Institute in Savoy (France)
Reporter : Elena Di Bella (Province of Turin)

The group discussed in particular items I (“Measuring Success”) and IV (“On the Way to Success: Drivers and Obstacles”).

On Item I, the following suggestions/considerations were expressed:

- Are growing sales an indication of mountain product success?
 - Yes, but only when articulated (in a hierarchy) with other performance indicators and especially not to the detriment of the image of environmental and landscape quality that products should convey. The image of the mountain environment as a unifying factor defining European mountain products should powerfully convey the idea of a PROTECTED NATURAL ENVIRONMENT. This aspect needs further development: MOUNTAINS are not just “another” environment.
 - Growing sales volumes depend on the model selected: a sustainable, integrated local development model may lead to an expectation of increased sales volumes and turnover. But growth can also take the form of an increase in the number of farms, denoting growing total sales volumes and not just individual farm sales.
 - DRIVERS: one possibility for individual farmers consists in selecting a “cutting edge” product that will drive the market and “pull” other farm products (e.g. the “Paniere” of typical products of the Province of Turin).

On Item IV:

- Key success factors seem to prevail in Romania.
- There is one additional key success factor: the existence of a local network of public and private stakeholders who are prepared to INVEST financial, human and intellectual resources and to share a common project (i.e. not just an objective but a shared pathway). Even with money, local government alone can achieve nothing.

Resources should also be invested in meeting the preconditions of project success (including notably basic services such as road infrastructure and water supply, the organisation of controls, etc.).

- Another key success factor which is worth mentioning is the presence of a LEADER, i.e. someone passionate who can manage the concept. Leaders are not innovators, they are people who know how to motivate others and stand BEHIND the project (as opposed to ahead of it). Therefore, leaders need a group: they “analyse” the needs of the team and support them.