



Branding mountain products, a taste of Norwegian Mountains

In 2015, at the IX European Mountain Convention of Bilbao, Marit Blomlie from the Valdres Region Park presented the [example of branding of typical products from the mountainous region of Valdres](#). Valdres is the main area of summer mountain farming in Norway and food production is strongly associated with the identity of the region. The intention behind the project presented in Bilbao was to bring an added value to the regional mountain products and to use them to create a synergy between tourism and agriculture activities and, thus, to support the branding of the region. To do so, the Region Park, in collaboration with the Norwegian Transhumance and Pastoralist Association (Norsk seterkultur), focused on three of their typical products:

- The 'Rakfisk' (a fermented fish made from mountain trout), which has been protected under the 'beskyttet geografisk betegnelse'; this is the equivalent of the Protected Geographical Indication (PGI) in the European Union.
- The 'Valdreskurv' (a type of cured meat sausage made from traditional recipes), which has been awarded the 'spesialitet-merket'. Rewarding traditional products of superior quality, it is the equivalent of the French Label Rouge sign.
- The 'Støismjøl' (a typical type of milk from Valdres), which has received both labels.

Today, the Norsk seterkultur is working on trying to protect the Setersmør with the support of the Norsk Gardsost (Norwegian farm cheese organisation) and the Norwegian Institute for Agricultural and Environmental Research. As Katharina Sparstad, the secretary of Norsk seterkultur, explained to Euromontana, the Setersmør is a butter made in the alms (summer mountain farms) or in their neighbourhood. It is a product typical of mountain areas but not of one region in particular. That is the reason why the association aims to protect it under the '**beskyttet tradisjonelt særpreg**', which is the equivalent of the European Union scheme's Traditional Speciality Guaranteed. According to Matmerk, the foundation that is responsible of managing the Protected Designations, the Setersmør would be the first product to apply for this designation.

The grazing of the cows in the alm' pastures and the processing of the milk at proximity of the alm are key elements characterising the Setersmør. **So, the Norsk seterkultur decided to include it – i.e. to have the processing activities in the alm' pastures or in its neighbourhood- as an obligation in the criteria to benefit from the quality scheme 'beskyttet tradisjonelt særpreg'**. To do so, the association had to come up with a definition of alms and their neighbourhood. As Norway does not have yet a quality scheme protecting mountain areas, the association looked at the Swiss rules for mountain products to define them. If the Setersmør manages to receive the 'beskyttet tradisjonelt særpreg', it wishes to repeat the process for other mountain products.

This case from Norway illustrates well the variety of strategies that can be applied to the valorisation of mountain products: mountain products used as the brand of a region but also branded as product made from a know-how intrinsically linked to mountain areas.



Traditional processing of the Setersmør (credit: Katharina Sparstad)