



COMMISSION OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES

Directorate General for Agriculture

(DG 6)

**LOCAL AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS AND FOODSTUFFS
IN SOUTHERN EUROPE.
ANTHROPOLOGICAL, SENSORIAL AND SOCIO-ECONOMICAL
CHARACTERIZATION OF THEIR TYPICALITY. VALUE-ADDING STRATEGIES.**

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SUMMARY

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The purpose of this research program was twofold. Its first aim was to get a better understanding of the elements which impart to traditional local agricultural products and foodstuffs their specificity. Its second purpose was to analyse how such uniqueness fits into a framework of product valorisation and regulated protection. In addition to the importance placed on human and social sciences, the originality of this work rested on a multi-disciplinary approach involving three main streams of research : Ethnology and History, Socio-economy and Sensory Sciences. Care was taken to integrate these together in order to propose new analytical methods, suggest different methodological approaches and formulate concrete proposals.

A number of phases were planned to meet stated objectives. A survey was carried out to locate, identify and describe local products in the selected regions of Emilia Romagna, Piemonte and Liguria in Italy, Catalonia in Spain, Tras-os-Montes in Portugal and Rhône-Alpes in France. At the same time, suitable investigation methods were formulated. At the end of this phase, 10 products were selected for in-depth work; five were later targeted for additional historical and anthropological investigations.

Relying on survey results and on the monographs of these "core products", a number of common attributes were isolated to evaluate and study the distinguishing features of agricultural and food products considered to be "local and "traditional". These features cover knowledge and know-how, organoleptic properties, variability, environmental factors, the players involved, the immaterial dimension of tradition and heritage, the notion of time and the name of products. A socio-economic model demonstrates how the local context, business activities and product evolution influence each other.

The same attributes were then examined in the perspective of questions raised by the implementation of geographic protection and/or tradition regulations such as EC regulations 2081/92 and 2082/92. These questions include reputation and history, the status of local knowledge and practical know-how, local animal breeds and varieties and the demarcation of geographic zones. They also include the important role played by taste, the limits of protection implementation and the problems associated with the compliance of standards.

Valorisation by socio-economic means and valorisation through heritage and environment were identified and described as two ways of achieving additional value. Protection itself, notably PDO (Protected Denomination of Origin), is also examined for its economic effects and the effects it has on the interpretation of what constitutes heritage. A number of proposals are put forward to understand and facilitate value-adding at the producer and consumer levels and through the relationship existing between production and the economic environment. Suggestions are offered to promote the perennialisation of know-how, practical techniques and cultural bio-diversity. These suggestions rely strongly on two fundamental principles: information and extension of professional education.

Finally, the contribution of political decisions to the on-going existence and further valorisation of local products was also considered.

At another level, standards - specifically hygiene standards - proved to be a major stumbling block which calls for a review. Unless such standards are accommodated to include specifically unusual products, these are at great risk of disappearing in the short term.