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Sustainable Development of a PDO or PGI
form the Voluntary Scheme “Traditional Product”

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Abstract

The European Union introduced in its regulations, for the first time in 1992, the term of traditional agri-food. In Romania, the first use of this term can be tracked back to 2003 and is particularly linked to the implementation of the European acquis, when a list of national products was sent to the EU. Nowadays Romania has a traditional voluntary quality scheme recognized at EU level and more than one product registered according to the EU quality schemes. Any Romanian or European can register a product under the voluntary scheme in the National Registry of Traditional Products and will receive from the Romanian ministry of Agriculture a certificate and the right to use the national logo. A Romanian product registered in the national voluntary quality scheme by more than one producer can easily be identified and developed in a European quality scheme. The paper's objective is to analyze the legal framework of the Romanian voluntary scheme in comparison with the European quality schemes: Protected Designation of Origin (PDO) or Protected Geographical Indication (PGI) (REGULATION (EU) No 1151, 2012), in order to identify common ground between the two documentations. Also, the advantages of registering first a product as traditional will be presented, as well as the advantages after registering a product as European quality scheme. In order to accomplish the objectives, a comparative study has been developed and certain models have been presented. International and national literature has been taken into account. The result of the research is useful for small producers as it reveals how to transform a traditional product registered in Romania into a European quality scheme, using the documentation prepared nationally as a basis. A case study for the registration of the PGI “Cașcaval de Săveni” will be used as a model to illustrate the pathway for the producers.

Keywords: European quality scheme, agri-food, traditional products, legislation, rural development.

JEL Classification: N40, N44, N50, Q01, Q18.

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1. Introduction

Following the establishment of the European Economic Community (EEC), a series of horizontal (general) and vertical (for specific products) directives have been drawn up to address the issue of the free movement of foodstuffs at European level, without prejudice to consumers' health and interests. In order to respect European diversity, the Council Regulation (EEC) No 2081/1992 on the "*protection of geographical indications and designations of origin for agricultural products and foodstuffs*" and the Council Regulation (EEC) No 2082/1992 on the "*attestation of specificity for agricultural products and foodstuffs*" were implemented.

The definition of "*traditional product*", as we know it today, has its origins in "*Council Regulation (EC) No 509/2006 of 20 March 2006*" on traditional specialties guaranteed (TSG), which replaced the definition of the certificate of specificity for agricultural products and foodstuffs in the Council Regulation (EEC) No 2082/1992. Under this Regulation, Member States have been obliged to adapt their specific national legislation so that products falling under the conditions of the Regulation are controlled by private control bodies and the labelling of marketed agricultural and food products is differentiated by a specific EU symbol. The definition in the Council Regulation No 509/2006 states that "*traditional*" is specific to the product whose use on the Community market can be demonstrated for a period of time between generations, twenty-five years regarding a TSG.

Until the closing of the negotiations on Chapter VII Agriculture, regarding Romania's accession to the European Union, the above-mentioned European regulations were transposed into Romanian legislation, which were then subsequently amended, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Synthetic presentation of the national normative acts that regulate quality schemes until the accession of Romania

Year	National normative act	State
2003	Order No 339 of May 19, 2003 on the approval of the List containing the geographical indications protected and recognized in Romania for food products	Published in the Official Gazette No 351 of 22/05/2003 Repealed by Order No 212 of 30/03/2004
2004	ORDER No 233 of April 8, 2004 for the approval of the Norms regarding the specificity certificates for agricultural products and food products	Published in the Official Gazette No 414 of 10/05/2004 Repealed by Order No 160 of 14/03/2008
2004	Order No 212 of March 30, 2004 on the approval of the List containing geographical indications and protected and recognized designations of origin in Romania for food products	Published in the Official Gazette No 313 of 8/04/2004
2004	Order No 715 of October 6, 2004 for the completion of the Order of the Minister of Agriculture, Forests and Rural Development No 212/2004, regarding the approval of the List	Complete the Order No 212 of 30/03/2004 Annex Published in the Official

Year	National normative act	State
	containing the geographical indications and the protected and recognized designations of origin in Romania for food products	Gazette No 921 of 11/10/2004
2004	Order No 690 of September 28, 2004 for the approval of the Norm regarding the conditions and criteria for the attestation of traditional products	Published in the Official Gazette No 938 of 14/10/2004 Repealed by Order No 724 / 1082 / 360/2013 regarding the attestation of traditional products, published in Official Gazette No 688 of 11/11/2013
2004	Order No 214 of March 31, 2004 on the approval of the List of Protected and Recognized Geographical Names in Romania for Spirits	Published in the Official Gazette No 352 din 22/04/2004 Repealed by Order No 147 din 08/03/2005

Source: Documents issued by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development www.madr.ro.

In 2003, Romania presented to the European Union a list containing the geographical indications protected and recognized in Romania for food products, whose protection is recognized by the agreement between Romania and the European Union, included in the annex to Order No 339/2003, respectively a list containing the geographical names protected and recognized in Romania for spirits, by Order No 214/2004. These lists contained PGI, PDO notified to be officially recognized and protected as European Union names such as: “pălincă”, “horincă”, “țuică”, Sibiu salami, Pleșcoi sausages, Topoloveni plum magiun and about 50 other names in the category of dairy products, products of meat or bakery.

It was only in 2018 that the necessary steps were taken to create a national voluntary quality scheme. The Order No 724/2013 was issued to repeal the Order No 690/2004 regarding the Norms that stated the conditions and criteria for the attestation of traditional products. The European Union approved the changes in February 2020. Since then, Romania has had its first voluntary agricultural product certification scheme, which is registered in the Technical Regulation Information System, also known as the TRIS database. A quality scheme aims to certify the quality and characteristics of products or of the production process, thus reassuring consumers. Also, registering a quality scheme contributes to the sustainable development of the rural environment. The Common agricultural policy (CAP) has as objective the promotion of agri-food products registered on quality schemes through different measures. These direction is revealed in the Commission staff working document called the Evaluation of the impact of the CAP on generational renewal, local development and jobs in rural areas din 8.04.2021 (in Annex 4).

At the same time, the Agency for the Financing of Rural Investments (AFRI) provides financial instruments, investments through PNDR Sub-measure 3.1 - Support for the participation for the first time in quality schemes.

The purpose of the sub-measure is to support farmers and farmer groups applying for quality schemes for the first time, in order to increase the number of applicants producing and marketing agricultural and food products on the basis of quality schemes (AFIR, 2021).

2. Problem Statement

At present, Romania has a small number of product names registered on PDO or PGI quality schemes. Shortly the registration of the name of “*Cașcaval de Săveni*” - Protected Geographical Indication will be published. This is the eighth Romanian quality scheme recognized by the EU, in addition to the protected designation of origin – “*Telemea de Ibănești*” and the 6 protected geographical indications: “*Magiun de prune Topoloveni*”(Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) No 338, 2011), “*Salam de Sibiu*” (Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) No 234, 2016), “*Novac afumat din Țara Bârsei*” (Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) No 640, 2017), “*Scrumbie de Dunăre afumată*” (Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) 1878, 2018), “*Telemea de Sibiu*”(Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) 1725, 2019) and “*Cârnați de Pleșcoi*”(Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) 1667, 2019).

For this reason, the Romanian legislator came to meet the interests of producers, by connecting the national legislation to the criteria of PDO and PGI quality schemes. With the recognition of the voluntary scheme “*traditional product*” by the EU, Romanian products are closer to gaining protection as PDO or PGI, as well as the recognition of their quality, as we will show in this study.

Till now, the only relevant paper in this domain in Romania has been written by Simoni et al. (2017), but in 2018, the legislation for traditional product registration changed, when a new one was registered with the European Union as voluntary quality scheme. However, the authors did not focus on the similarities between the Romanian legislation and the EU regulations back then.

The present study aims to help producers understand the huge potential of registering first their product as voluntary quality scheme “*traditional product*”, as the documentation for the Romanian scheme has a lot in common with the one requested for a PGI or PDO, as it will result from this paper.

3. Research Questions/Aims of the Research

The study will demonstrate the benefits of manufacturers accessing the voluntary quality scheme “*traditional product*”, as a step forward in growing the awareness of the need for association to facilitate the recognition of products as PDO or PGI.

This paper aims to show in practice how several producers from a geographical area, who have completed the registration procedure in the Register of Traditional Romanian Products (RTRP), can start specific and related steps to obtain European recognition of product names, PDO or PGI.

4. Research Methods

The study aims to demonstrate the similarities between the documentation related to the certification of agri-food products on the voluntary quality scheme “*traditional product*” with those required for registration as a PDO or PGI. The research has undertaken a conceptual and methodological dimension. The information was processed by analysing, evaluating and comparing the data that come from the legislation and that can lead to the identification of the common points of the two types of records. Thus, both the evolution of European legislation regarding European quality systems and that of Romania in the field of traditional agri-food products were analysed.

The information presented is taken from the public database of MADR, www.madr.ro and from the EU official sites.

5. National Voluntary Quality Scheme, a First Step towards Sustainable Development of National Products in European Quality Schemes

The paper will present general information on the sector of traditionally certified products and will show to what extent this preliminary step helps or has already helped manufacturers to access European quality schemes.

5.1. The Situation of the Registrations on the Voluntary National Quality Scheme “Traditional Product”

As consumers today are much more focused on the quality and origin of products, the registration of European quality schemes is a strategic advantage for producers. Nowadays, consumers are more focused on the quality and origin of food products (Albuquerque et al., 2018; Becker & Staus, 2009; Grunert & Aachmann, 2016, Pieniak et al., 2009). On the other hand, the consumption of local products offers benefits from the development of the internal market, by creating short chains that make the capitalization of local resources efficient and that ensure to the consumers the need of fresh and quality local products.

At present, the urban population interested in a healthier lifestyle is returning to traditional products that respect as much as possible the authentic characteristics. As many producers have noticed the increase in demand for such products, on 31.12.2020, the number of certificates of traditional products, registered in the National Register of Traditional Products (NRTP) reached 685. It should be mentioned that, Order No 724/2013 on the certification of traditional products - based on which the certificates of traditional products for the years 2014-22 June 2020 were granted, was amended by Order No 112/2020, according to which the exchange of traditional product certificates was required until 31.12.2020 (amendment published in the Official Gazette No 538 of June 23, 2020). Consequently, the data presented below reflects the situation for 2020 and represents the total number of certificates issued in 2020, as well as the certificates for the years 2014 - 22 June 2020 exchanged until 31 December 2020.

Of these, over 50% of the total number of certified products is in the counties of Braşov (169), Maramureş (56), Alba (46), Argeş (37), Neamţ (33) and Buzău (33).

The analysis of the territorial distribution of registered traditional products shows that there is a high interest of producers in all areas of the country to access this quality scheme and implicitly in the logo which, printed on products, increases their visibility and adds value. The temperate continental climate and the geographical conditions specific to our country are a determining factor in increasing the potential for registering products on this quality scheme, and create the premise for a wide range of products, given that we find all forms of relief in Romania. These environmental conditions also affect the specificity of the products, as the organoleptic characteristics of the products are, in most cases, related to animal feed, which differs from one geographical area to another.

Also, the identification in a county / area / geographical area of a large number of products with the same name reveals a high potential for the registration of a PDO or PGI quality scheme. Creating such a national legal framework for the registration of traditional products in Romania has provided major benefits for the small producers, because it has been an important first step towards recognizing the national products at European level. Through the registration of products in the National Register of Traditional Products, it has become possible to identify the products that are suitable to become a PGI or DOP. These European schemes include the particularities / specificities related to a certain geographical area. In the cases of the products “Caşcaval de Săveni” and “Cârnaţi de Pleşcoi”, the producers gathered in an association with the purpose of preparing the documentation for the recognition as PGI has had as starting point the particular registration of each unique producer of their product as a voluntary quality scheme that met the conditions of a “traditional product”.

Certainly, there will be other famous products in our country, given that, for example, for the name “Caşcaval de Brădet” 7 producers in the geographical area are registered in NRTP -, whereas for the name “Virşli” there are 3 manufacturers registered.

5.2. “Caşcavalul de Săveni”, from the Traditional Product to the PDO Quality Scheme

The Association of Producers “Caşcavalul de Săveni” (APCS) includes 5 members, i.e., the economic operators - SC CICOS SRL, SC GERARD SRL, SC VIOFANNY SRL, SC LACT PRODCOM SRL, SC GENYS COMPANY SRL, SC FAVIS SRL, and later the economic operator SC VLĂSIE COMPANY SRL joined. All these operators had obtained during 2014 and 2015 certificates for their own traditional product, a type of cheese obtained in the Săveni area, giving it various names according to the producers’ preference. In 2016, they set up the Association and send forward the documentation to MADR in order to obtain the PGI recognition for the product.

It seems that European consumers are not very familiar with the legislation regarding quality schemes. Still, in Romania the term “traditional” is well known

and used for describing something that comes from our ancestors. Romanian respondents to Eurobarometer 389 (2012) recognized only in a proportion of 25% any of the European quality logos. Because the traditional term is so well known in Romania, changing it to PDO or PGI quality scheme will facilitate, probably, the integration of European specific names in the consumers' perception. This might have a positive impact on the other European products that are registered as quality schemes, which are marketed in Romania.

5.3. "Cașcavalul de Brădet", one Step Closer to the European Union

"Cașcaval de Săveni", which is in the final stage of the procedure for gaining recognition as a PGI, can serve as a model for the 7 producers of cașcaval de Brădet, because the term "cașcaval" designates in the Romanian area a specific type of cheese, the product being differentiated by name depending on the area in which it is produced and by the production method used. As a result of the registration of the Brădet cheese product, 7 different producers created the premises for a collaboration among the producers to recognize the uniqueness of the product at European level.

The registration of the PGI Cașcaval de Săveni took more than four years, as there were two oppositions from Greece and Bulgaria for the name "cașcaval". Since they were resolved and there is a precedent for registering a new cheese name, the procedure will be much easier.

The registration of "Cașcaval de Brădet" as a traditional product within the voluntary quality scheme recognized at the level of the European Union implies the elaboration of a specific documentation, which can be easily adapted and used in the process of registering the product as PGI.

According to the National Institute of Statistics (INS, 2021), data regarding the herds of animals (cows) Argeș County is the 3rd most populated county, linking this to the old traditions of producing Cașcaval de Brădet, with a notoriety of over 100 years, there is an obvious potential to register a geographical indication protected in Brădet geographical area.

Today we are talking about the commune of Brăduleț consisting of nine villages and hamlets: Piatra, Ungureni, Slămnești, Uleni, Galeș, Aluniș, Cosaci, Brăduleț and Brădet. The first toponym on the territory of the current commune of Brăduleț is Brădet, which was documented in 1506 by the chancellery of Radu cel Mare, which certifies an exchange of land between these families and the monks of the Brădet monastery.

5.4. From Traditional Product to PGI Quality Scheme

Currently, in European legislation, the term "traditional" appears defined in the context of the registration of a TSG quality scheme according to art. 3 of Regulation 1151/2012 and implies "proven use on the national market for a period of at least 30 years". The phrase "specific character" is assigned to a product whose properties are clearly distinguishable from another product in the same category and which is used to register a quality scheme such as PGI or PDO.

In the national legislation, respectively in the “*Joint Order No 724 / 1082 / 360/2013 of the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, of the Minister of Health and of the President of the National Authority for Consumer Protection regarding the attestation of traditional products*”, with subsequent amendments and completions, “traditional product” is considered to be a food product that is made with locally produced raw materials, for which no food additives are being used and that has a traditional recipe, a traditional production and / or processing mode, and which has some particularities that can be found in similar products that belong to the same category (Chebeleu, 2020). Comparing the two definitions, it can be observed that both at national and European level the term traditional is related to the use of the name for marketing, proven by the connection of the product with the geographical area, and the difference is given by the name, which in the case of the traditional product is a personalization that is not covered by European regulations. The difference between the 2 definitions also emerges from the different production quantities.

Table 2. Comparative situation of registration documents at national and European level

Requirements for certification documentation at national level (Task book)	Requirements for European PDO and PGI certification documentation (Task book and single document)
Copy of the proof of registration in the Register of associations and foundations (Equivalent registration documents for MS or EEA producers)	Documents certifying the establishment of the applicant group (“group” means any association, whatever its legal form, consisting mainly of producers or processors of the same product)
for traditional product (acc to art. 6, Order No 724/2013, with subsequent amendments and completions)	for PDO / PGI (acc to art. 7, Reg. No 1151/2012):
Product name - personalized, unique name that has not been previously registered	product name as used in the commercial language or in the common language (name of the product already existing in the agri-food chain circuit)
Short description of some characteristics required for a traditional product:	
A product that does not contain additives obtained through chemical synthesis and by other means, such as: food additives, vitamins, minerals, aroma; the product has at origin raw materials;	in the case of PGI - description and justification of all restrictions on the supply of raw materials; specific stages of production to be carried out in the defined geographical area;
Regarding the characteristics of the ingredients that should be used in the manufacturing process:	
- they do not contain food additives, except for natural ones, respectively dyes, aromas, vitamins, minerals, natural sugar; indication of the ingredients used and of the main organoleptic, physico-chemical and microbiological properties, are applicable.	

Requirements for certification documentation at national level (Task book)	Requirements for European PDO and PGI certification documentation (Task book and single document)
Short description of the method of production	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the method should be specific, well known locally, authentic and invariable - the producer will describe the traditional technological process, which will include all production phases, specifying the operations performed manually 	There are no required criteria
Some specific elements regarding the packaging	
<p>Photograph and description of the product by section, as the case may be, illustrating the specific characteristics of the product, shape; production and / or processing mode, which reflects a traditional technological process of production and / or processing for the product can be found different from other products that belong to the same category</p>	<p>Description of the elements that define the specificity of the product</p> <p>Colour map of appropriate size to allow precise delimitation of the production area or geographical area</p>
Some minimum requirements and procedures that must be followed for the verification and control of the traditional character of the product	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Minutes of finding the conformity of the conditions declared in the documentation with those in the field; - Sanitary-veterinary authorization / registration and for food safety; - Copy of the analysis bulletins of the product made at an accredited laboratory; 	<p>Copy of the contract concluded with a private body for inspection and certification of agricultural and food products for the verification and certification of the accuracy of the data contained in the SC.</p> <p>Certificate of conformity of the product issued by the ICO in accordance with the requirements of no. 1151/2012 European Regulation and of the CS edition x, version x, revision x, as the case may be</p>
Requirements and limitations regarding the production capacity	
<p>The production of a year, i.e., 365 days, may not exceed the average quantity of 150 kg / liter per day total certified traditional product and not more than 400 kg / liter per day total of the product that is certified as traditional. There is an accepted exception for the bread and dairy production. Traditional bakery has still to keep its production in a certain range: the average quantity of the productions cannot exceed 300 kg per day in total for a certified traditional product and can never exceed 800 kg per day total per certified traditional product;</p>	<p>Socio-economic information on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - current production; - the estimated quantity that it is provisioned to be made in the next 5 years; - customer related information (current and potential), applied to every element of the product chain (production, distribution, marketing); - the geographical destination of the product, current and estimated for 5 years; - the current economic situation and estimated for 5 years.

Requirements for certification documentation at national level (Task book)	Requirements for European PDO and PGI certification documentation (Task book and single document)
Other data, paperwork or bibliographic references requirements	
Regarding the history references of the product, there will be mentioned the traditional character and any historical connection of the future registered traditional product with the place where it is produced or there will be given a notoriety statement on behalf of the local association of producers of the traditional product that will be signed by its representatives.	Regarding the age of the product or the result of the historical connection of the product with the geographical area Evidence that highlights the link between the geographical area and the quality or characteristics of the product, or some link to a specific quality that comes from the geographical criteria, or the product's reputation or other characteristics that result from specificity and uniqueness.
Evidence regarding:	
Local raw material - produced locally, on the state of manufacturing territory;	concise delimitation of the geographical area; connection with the geographical area;
Other documents (if applicable)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - List of production equipment - Proof of ownership for the production space; - A location map of the space with the location of the equipment used 	Other data and information showing the need to obtain protection.

Source: Adapted from Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, www.madr.ro and from the EU official sites.

6. Conclusions

The registration of a traditional product as a voluntary national scheme recognized by the EU means that a product can be obtained only in a certain quantity, meeting the provisions of the Order No 724/2013. Small producers must register and/or must be authorized in the sanitary-veterinary field, in order to ensure / respect the traceability of the product that goes directly to the consumer. The registration of traditional products contributes to the consolidation and promotion of short supply chains, which are characterized mainly by direct sales in fairs, own stores, markets.

Regarding the registration of a product name on a PDO or PGI quality scheme, it is worth mentioning that it stimulates the association of producers, individual farmers, animal breeders from a geographical area, who use identical methods of obtaining a certain product and the same recipe with notoriety in the area. Also, with the registration of a product name, specifically at national level, it represents a model for other producers, from another area, as they will benefit from the effects of the locally developed model. In Romania, there are many products of the same category, but with specific properties determined by the place of manufacture and the quality and specificity of the raw material

In conclusion, the national voluntary scheme is a real help for identifying Romanian products and producers who can associate in order to register products in the European Union as PDO or PGI quality schemes. By default, the documentation prepared for the individual registration of the traditional product is a support / a model in the preparation of the specifications and the single document, which are necessary to register and obtain protection on a PDO or PGI quality scheme. Following the comparative analysis presented, it turned out that most of the requirements for the registration of PDO or PGI are also found in the specifications to be drawn up for the traditional product.

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