Eco-Physiological Aspects of the Traditional Milk (Slow) Food in Banat and its Eco-Bioeconomic Impact

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Abstract. In Banat are 80 officially registered traditional products. The milk and derived products is the traditional food. Drink milk products from all major species: cow, buffalo, sheep, goat. There are a large number of traditional recipes, some 150 years old. Mostly these recipes were lost, including the food that uses milk as ingredient. In supermarkets there are products, which are labeled as being “traditional food” but their taste and quality are still different from the true traditional recipes, because those old recipes are almost completely lost or “disobeyed”. A well-known example of losing traditional recipes is the “Vinga” chocolate. Vinga is a small multiethnictic community situated in Banat, in the plain area, and this is the place where back in 19th century a chocolate factory was built, the taste of that chocolate being similar to the Swiss or Belgian one. After 1947, when factories in Romania were nationalized, the owner of this particular factory, Mr. Drascovici, the only person who knew the entire recipe, didn’t want to disclose it to anyone. Thus, the “Vinga chocolate” is nowadays only a memory of Vinga’s elders, whereas the youth is not really interested in traditional food. Dairy products are traditionally eaten in Banat and their consumption has increased with 48-51 % from 1990 to 2010. The raw product is milk, which comes from cows and sheep, but also goats and buffalo females. Butter is used daily but also for certain cakes, such as the famous cakes made after German recipes. Lard is also used in the making of pastry.

Keywords: milk, sustainable development, animal production, farm animal biodiversity, bioeconomics, eco-bioeconomics, agrifood green power

INTRODUCTION

Advanced research in Genetics has come up with the concept of genome nourishment, which means that one does not feed the human body, but their own genetic baggage. There are studies on protein analysis and their identification and role in the metabolism with the help of biomarkers. This is how it has been proved that the genome is responsible for two diabetes types and that a number of 250 genes are responsible for fat storage (5, 6).

There are a number of studies on if and how the climate changes have an impact on the genotype. It is believed that in the future each of us will have an individual genetic ID, which, according to our genetic profile, will select the type of food we should eat. (8).

The human body needs approx. 2800 kcal/day. By 2050 the necessary amount will have decreased to 2200. Specialists predict that in the future there will be a severe lack of food. What’s more, by 2050 only 5,7% of the population will be working. Much agitation is being made for cultivating plants, which will produce a bio-fuel. But not everybody is aware of the fact that a Jeep’s tank full of bio-fuel costs as much as a man’s necessary of food for a whole year (17).

Global warming is certain. The population is growing steadily and the land fit to be cultivated is decreasing in surface. In 1960 there were 0,45 ha of arable land per person, but by 2021 there will only be 0,21 ha/person left. The cereals production decreases as well, as we tend to eat
more cereals than meat. Today’s genetic science studies genomes such as the ones of cows, poultry, pigs, horses, sheep, camel, etc as the researchers work on the genetic map of animals (7, 9).

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Materials for this research come from the Transylvanian Rare Breeds database, which is a non-profit organization and whose goal is to identify and monitorize the keeping of traditional breeds in Banat and Transylvania and also the traditional cuisine in this region.

The research has been conducted in several communities in Banat, with a clear delimitation between the plain area and the mountainous one and with a highlight on the similarities and differences between them.

The method used was observation, together with filling questionnaires related to people’s lifestyles. There were also meetings with the members of those communities, on different occasions, when modern equipment for animal breeding was presented and the situation of the traditional breeds in Banat was analyzed in order to maintain their superiority over the economic competition that comes from the big companies.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Dairy products are traditionally eaten in Banat and their consumption has increased with 48-51 % from 1990 to 2010. The raw product is milk, which comes from cows and sheep, but also goats and buffalo females.

Milk is either consumed in the owner’s household or sold in markets as milk proper, cream or cheese. Those products do not have any label that may certify them being traditional or of a certain breed. Supermarkets don’t sell them while the traditional recipes for such qualitative products are known only by a few.

In supermarkets there are products, which are labeled as being “traditional food” but their taste and quality are still different from the true traditional recipes, because those old recipes are almost completely lost or “disobeyed”. A well-known example of losing traditional recipes is the “Vinga” chocolate. Vinga is a small multiethnic community situated in Banat, in the plain area, and this is the place where back in 19th century a chocolate factory was built, the taste of that chocolate being similar to the Swiss or Belgian one. After 1947, when factories in Romania were nationalized, the owner of this particular factory, Mr. Drascovici, the only person who knew the entire recipe, didn’t want to disclose it to anyone. Thus, the “Vinga chocolate” is nowadays only a memory of Vinga’s elders, whereas the youth is not really interested in traditional food.

The Mountain Breed used to be one of the main taurine breeds kept in traditional Jewish shelters in Transylvania and Maramures up until the beginning of World War II. This particular breed was highly appreciated for its qualitative milk, which had a great amount of protein and fat. Specimens of this breed were encountered in the so-called “Schweizers” which consisted of 30-60 cows and 100-300 sheep. The Mocanitza milk can be transformed into Schweiz cheese and a low-fat type of cheese which is not very expensive either, but the recipe of the latter seems to be lost (13).

The fatty milk of the Mountain Taurines used to be appreciated by the Macedonians who had come from the “Quadrangular” (a region in the NE of Bulgaria, on the Black Sea shore). They used it in order to prepare fine cheese. Today exist various sortiments to Cashcaval: Penteleu, Dobrogea, Dalia, Rarau, Liebling.

In Arad there used to be a type of cheese called Liptauer but nowadays it can’t be found in markets or shops anymore (12).
Butter is used daily but also for certain cakes, such as the famous cakes made after German recipes. Lard is also used in the making of pastry. Butter used to be exported in Germany, Great Britain and Austria from Banat since the beginning of the 20th century (15).

The buffalo breeding is typical for Transylvania and Banat. The drastic diminution of the number of these animals - from about eighty thousands animals in 1996 to circa twenty thousands in 2010- led inevitably to less buffalo based products. With time, the buffalo breeding area has become more and more reduced, limiting itself to a small area in the Apuseni Mountains, the Salaj region, Bistrita- Nasaud, Hatzeg County and the Fagaras area. Small dairies that process buffalo milk still exist, for example Dezna (in the Arad area) - opened in 2006, having a capacity of 4000 liters/ day, which produces yogurt, sour cream, sweet cream cheese, cottage cheese and Romanian pressed cheese/ cacciocavallo. Very many private breeders give up their activities and the products they manufacture –cheese, meat, eggs- because they do not have the necessary means to pack and to label the products, thing which leads to their being banished from the market by big companies (14).

Old traditional products obtained from sheep milk

“Bellows cheese”. The milk is filtered and rennet is added to it so that it would curdle. It is poured into a cauldron where the churn milk is left after removing the cheese. The so-called green cheese is obtained from boiling the churn milk. The remaining cheese is mixed with 1 kg of salt per 20 kg of cheese and it is battered then put away into a tall vat or into special bellows or pine bark.

Smoked cheese is made out of the so-called green cheese which is cut into thin pieces, put into salty water and then smoked.

The “flying cheese” is a strip of sweet cheese kept in boiled water for about 2-3 minutes, salted and dried.

Winter milk is prepared in September, with cream and it is put away for two weeks to ferment.

The green cheese "urda” kept for winter is fresh green cheese, fermented and salted.

Buttermilk is obtained after the 40 days in the vat had passed. Here it had turned sour but then it has to be boiled together with some cream and butter mouse. The resulting butter is washed in fresh cold water, salted and boiled again.

Traditional products from Banat are presented for sale in numerous fairs, festivals and markets.

Agrifood Green Power

Starting from our results regarding the More Animal Production in Romanian Agriculture, linked with the basic paradigms on Bioeconomy and Eco-Economy scientifically applied to the rural economy, in the context of a sustainable rural development, the possibility exists to issue the following tentative terms for consideration in the future: a. Bioeconomic sustainable development of the rural areas; b. Eco-Economic sustainable development of the agrifood production; c. Eco-Bioeconomic sustainable development of the agrifood green power (2,3).
The More Animal Production must be a component of the Agrifood Green Power concept based on Green Economy, Green Business, (new) Green Revolution and Green Energy –aspects underlying Lester Brown’s more recent Eco-Economy–Building an Economy for the Earth concept, which we consider to be inspired after Nicholas Georgescu-Roegen’s initial Bioeconomics concept. More about these issues can be found in the paper About Eco-Economy and the Green Economy in
Romania by Bogdan A.T. and his team, recently printed by the Academy Publishing House. We consider the aspects related to the link between More Animal Production in Agriculture and the Agrifood Green Power to spell the need for Romania to work out urgently a medium- and long-term strategy of rural sustainable development (4,16).

CONCLUSIONS

Starting from the title of the 1970 bestseller The Greening of America, and establishing a bridge in time, under the new circumstances of simultaneous and non(264,320),(746,339)

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