

## TRADITIONAL PRODUCTS IN ROMANIA – STATE OF FACT

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**Abstract.** In Romania, from 2005 to 2013 were certified as traditional products at Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development more than 4300 agri-food products. The big number of certified products raised the interest of the article. The objectives of the article are to present and to understand the system of traditional products in Romania, to highlight the reasons of certification among the producers and to find the lack of the legislation. The research was conducted using the method of questionnaire addressed to producers of traditional products. The material analyzed is the current legislation at national level on traditional products. Traditional products offer various benefits: increase the revenue by adding value to the final products and offer the opportunity to sell on different markets. As social impacts are the facts that the population settles there to develop the rural economy and certain products with a history are produced again and contribute to the diversification of products. In order to encourage the small farmers to certify their products is necessary to elaborate a guide of good practices for certification of traditional products.

**Keywords:** “Romanian traditional product”, legislation, good practices guide

### INTRODUCTION

The main objective of the article is to analyze the system of traditional products in Romania with its risks and advantages. The legislation constituted by order 690/2004 is very permissive. Now, the ministry and Romanian National Federation of Traditional Products Producers (Federația Națională a Producătorilor de Produse Tradiționale din România) are collaborating so as to upgrade the current legislation concerning the certification of traditional products. Producers certified their products because they wanted to protect the recipe, to enter on the new markets, to satisfy the demand for this category and to add value for products. In general, due to the small scale production, traditional products are sold during the traditional food fairs at regional or national level.

Romania has the fifth largest agricultural surface in Europe. Therefore the foodstuff produced at national level has a huge potential. Current trends in food consumption in Romania are starting to change slowly: if in the past the main important factor in buying process was the price, nowadays the quality is starting to be a very important factor. Romanian consumers start to be aware about the importance of good quality foodstuff, including traditional products. Small farmers represent the majority of farmers in Romania and for them the only chance is small scale production. In order to become competitive and to assure high quality products on the market, certification of traditional products could be one of the solutions.

### MATERIAL AND METHOD

The methodology adopted was the survey, using the phone technic. The general objective of the survey realized using the questionnaire addressed to producers was to observe the reasons of certification and its difficulties. In order to reach the main goal, it was established some secondary objectives as: difficulty of fulfilling the legal requests, waiting period for certification, market analysis. The questionnaire was elaborated to

detect the actions made before and after the certification. It is organized from general to particular, including questions as: the year and reasons of certification, who elaborated the documentation, the market and the price of the products.

The legislation and the data from Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development were the starting points used at redaction of this article. It started with the lecture of legislation followed with discussion with experts in domain and even from ministry. Taking in consideration all the information collected is possible to make proposals for better implementation of the law.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Romanian customers prefer natural and bio products because this is the trend nowadays. But just few of them knew that Romanian traditional products were bio or healthy before this trend. The problem is heretofore the products were not enough promoted, and the several brands on the market have difficult access for the supermarkets. Therefore at national level there are measures taken to protect the small farmers and small scale production of traditional products. It started with Order 690/2004 and now is improved to answer to changes from the market. There is intention for a better legislation, but is not good implemented always.

The unique legislative document in Romania is the order number 690/2004. It was elaborated before the Romania's access to European Union, whit two years before Regulation 509/2006. Thus now we have two different terms, "traditional" and "specific character", offering the same definition for, let say a particularity which give a distinguish characteristic for similar products from the same category. Another major difference between the two laws is that the 509/2006 it refers only for agricultural products and foodstuffs, while 690/2004 says only "products". So, in Romania can be considered as traditional products a big variety of products not only foodstuffs.

**Traditional product:** the products which is obtained from raw material traditional, to present a traditional composition or a traditional mode and/or processing which reflect a traditional technological process of production and/or processing and which is clearly distinguish of other similar products of the same category (ORDER 690/2004).

This definition very permissive created a big confusion at lead to a huge number certified at national level. Because the legislative frame works was very ambiguous and easy to fulfill the requests now we have over 4300 products.

Looking to Romanian legislation it is necessary to differentiate protected denomination from traditional product. First of all is essential to say there is not any logo for "Romanian traditional product" ("produs tradițional românesc"). The first three logos from the below figure are at the European level (Traditional Specialty Guaranteed, Protected Designation of Origin and Protected Geographical Indication) and the last one is the national one. It is used after a product has national protection until its request at Brussels is solved. After receiving the answer from European commission the national logo will stop to be posted on the label; indifferent if the European protection is accepted or denied.



Source: [www.onptrebv.ro](http://www.onptrebv.ro)

Fig. 1. European and Romanian logos for protected denomination

Being no logo for traditional products collaborated with any strategy to promote this category of products, the consumers are one more time confused and do not know what to choose. Moving forward with the lack of protection, there is no prohibition for the producers without certification at Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development to use the term “traditional” or “tradition” on the label. The producer which wants to obtain the certification will prepare a file addressed to Direction Agriculture and Rural Development. In the request of certification are included: the name and address of the producer, the name of the product/-s for which claim the registration and the code of conduct.

After all documents are on file, it is submitted at to Direction Agriculture and Rural Development for the examination. The responsible with the certification check the file and if is not conform with the legal norms inform the applicant, and this will submit with the documents were missing. If the file is completed the responsible will come to verify the information presented in the code of conduct. In case that are discrepancy between the document and reality the product/-s will not be certified. Assuming that everything is fine the file will be sent to Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development to receive the registration as “Romanian traditional product”.

Traditional products are registered from small farmers to small and medium enterprises. For some of them this certificate is only way to survive on the market meanwhile others use it to conquer new markets despite the fact that they do not deserve it. From here is easy to conclude that the law is not made to protect the small farmer or nowadays the law is outdated and need to be updated and improved.

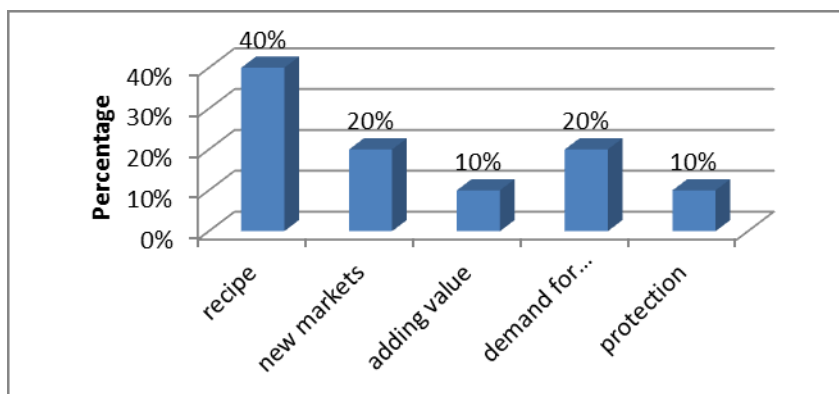


Fig. 2. Which were the reasons of certification?

Depending on size of each producer and his goal, after the certification they have access to new markets as supermarkets or even to export. But most of them are loyal to fairs because the customer are going special for good quality products and is establish a direct contact producer-client. The results presented below are normal due to the fact the majority have small scale of production. The quantity of production gives the direction for different markets.

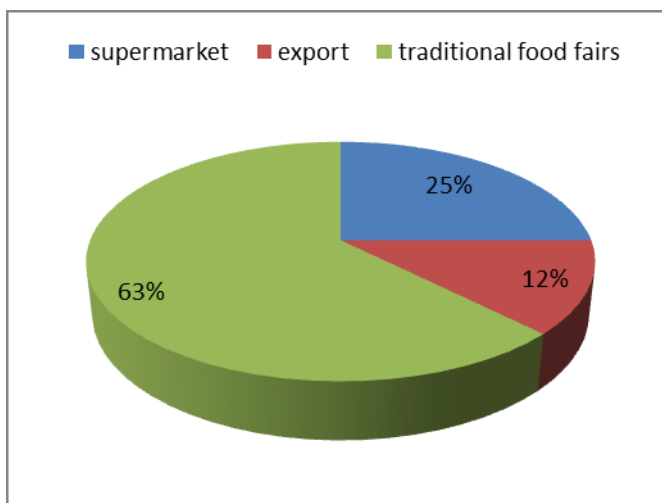


Fig. 3. Where is the market for traditional products?

Observing the trend of consumption of foodstuff in Romania more and more consumers prefer certified traditional products. For them is a protection of traditional character and authenticity of the product.

Also it started negotiation between the Romanian National Federation of Traditional Products Producers and the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development to change the norms of application for order 690/2004. Even if seems to be quickly solved the discussion is taking much time because are many aspects to be changed. Since the beginning were elaborated three drafts, but none of them had the approval of both parts. By the end of 2013 is expected to be published the new framework. According to new legislation, all the traditional products certified already, have one year to fulfill the request imposed in the new law. The documents are deposited at Direction Agriculture and Rural Development.

## CONCLUSIONS

To conclude, the producers are encouraged by the authorities to certify the products and to develop the activity in order to be more competitive on the national market in the first phase. But in the same time there are few adjustments to do on the legislation to offer more protection for the producers and to not allow to “fake” products to be accepted in the national register. In order to help the small farmers to apply with their produces to the system of the certification is necessary to elaborate a guide of good practices for certification of “Romanian traditional product”. Taking in consideration the education of the farmers and the legislation I consider the guide will be a useful tool to understand and fulfill the requests imposed by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development in

Romania. This market niche should be occupied in general by the small producers. In actual condition of the market, it is almost impossible for a big company to produce an old family recipe in a traditional way because the technological process is long and pretty much manual. However, due to the very permissive law, big industries were able to certify a lot of so called ‘traditional’ products even though they were not even close to the authentic methods of production and to the product itself. In this way, they succeeded to gain customers confidence and benefit from the new markets accessed.

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