

## MARKETING OF TRADITIONAL PRODUCT IN TRANSYLVANIA

### MARKETINGUL PRODUSELOR TRADITIONALE IN TRANSILVANIA

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*Transylvania and the Banat are two historical regions that gave birth to several domestic animal breeds. Over the last 15 years, number have sunken dramatically, because these local breeds have been greatly replaced by imported ones. Although very many so- called agrotouristic pensions are now on the market, only about 1% of them promote real traditional food products obtained from local animal breeds. Only few people, especially old people, know traditional recipes older than two or three hundred years and the youth totally ignore them. On the one hand, a large variety of names for different products have appeared on the market, but they are manufactured by big firms and do not have the quality of the traditional products. On the other hand, small producers often have hygiene problems. The reinforcement of traditional products can only occur if people know the quality and the value of the products obtained from the local animal breeds, many of them being endangered species.*

**Keywords:** traditional products, native/ local animal breeds.

#### Introduction

Since 2005, there is also a piece of legislation that, theoretically, should support agrotourism. But what do these agrotouristic pensions have to offer? Besides the wonderful views that can be encountered almost everywhere, they also provide the tourists with horsemanship, rides with a horse-pulled sledge during the winter and with the possibility of practicing winter sports.

## **Materials and Methods**

The research has been conducted during 2006- 2008 in the Banat – Timisoara area and in Transylvania, where the following areas have been taken into account: The Apuseni Mountains, Saliste- Sibiu, Marghita- Simleul Silvaniei, Bistrita – Nasaud. Numerous field research have been conducted and on this basis, thematic questionnaires have been filled in. Afterwards, the data were submitted to a comparative and an evolutionary analysis.

All the areas in which the field researches were conducted dispose over a large number of springs, rivers, lakes, been situated in different geographical zones, from plain to mountain and having a varied vegetation. In the hilly and mountainous regions, plants have an average inclination, which encourages/promotes agrotourism. In these areas, many pensions have developed since 1994; the great majority are elegant buildings (there is not a single one under three daisies), at European standards and prices.

## **Results and Discussion**

Fifty- eight pensions were visited and from other forty- three information regarding their gastronomy was received. The research points out that only four pensions had a native cuisine based on traditional products obtained from local Transylvanian animal breeds. 30% of the other so-called agrotouristic pensions claimed the products they offered came from their own farms, but which were, surprisingly, situated far away and could not be visited. Each and every pension offered traditional products: either the raw material was imported (when referring to meat) or the animal breeds producing the raw material were imported; milk was provided by Holstein cows or Tzurcana or Walachian sheep. Pork, beef, veal, fowl and even fish is imported.

In Transylvania and in the Banat- Timisoara area there are lots of traditional products' recipes. The problem here is that these products are fabricated in well-equipped mills, technologically speaking, but however the quality of the final products is poor to bad, despite the fact the their labels display names of highly qualitative local products. The poor taste of the products is due to the fact that the quality of the used raw materials does not reach the required standards, but also to the fact that the spice quantity and even the technological preparation process shows has many flaws. The obtained products are then delivered to the agrotouristic pensions at high prices being presented as delicatessen. As a result, consumers tend to perceive the products in a negative manner, thing which lowers the consumers' interest in them. In some places, small industrial units processing zootechnical/ live- stock products were also built. They try to implement new brands for old products, as if these belonged only to that certain region.

One of the most appreciated traditional Transylvanian products, the Sibiu salami, has been produced since the beginning of the 20 Century. 1908 in Sibiu came an Italian butcher who fabricated, for the first time, a long lasting salami out

of Black Mangalitza Pork and donkey meat. Today, this recipe is no longer used, because only about fifty Mangalitza pigs still exist in Transylvania (the Banat area is an exception, because 2004, 140 Mangalitza pigs were imported from Hungary). The nowadays recipe for the Sibiu salami requires pork proceeded from imported hybrids. The result is poor quality and high selling prices.

Another traditional pork product, the so-called smoked ham, produced after the acknowledged recipe, is on the point of becoming extinct. Smoked ham (similar to the Parma or the Serrano Ham) is typical for the Banat- Timisoara area. The traditional pork products, especially the smoked ones, were introduced in Banat in the 18. Century along with the German colonization. These high qualitative products were obtained from Mangalitza and White Banatian Pig meat. The White Banatian Pig breed seems to be already extinct, and some Mangalitza pigs, the Banat type, is to be found in the Faget area (the breed is not pure). There was great demand from abroad for the Banat Ham until 1989. After 1989, when the Swabian population inhabiting the Banat was forced to leave, the new inhabitants of the region who came from other Romanian regions, preserved only partially the original recipe of the ham. However, in the Banat and in some Hungarian and Slovakian communities, the original tradition for preparing the smoked ham is still preserved.

In the Banat we can also encounter few cattle breeders who still use traditional methods for preparing smoked pork sausages or smoked pork and beef sausages. Worschkoschtprot or The Banatian Sausage Tasting Festival was, until 1989 a private manifestation held at a German newspaper's editorial office in Timisoara. The contest is now at its 36 edition. 1972 took place the festival's first edition, organized by the Banat'ian Germans and it lasted until 1985, when it suddenly stopped. 1989 was the year of its comeback. Each year, at the Adam Muller Guttenbrunn Haus in Timisoara, The Sausage Festival takes place. This year twenty private butchers and twenty- three firms from the Timis, Arad and Caras- Severin counties took part in the competition. Some of the products were bought from supermarkets. The members of the jury rewarded them with marks from 1 to 5 taking in account color, taste and smell. The quality of the firm products led to disappointment. The recipes of some traditional products are well – kept family secrets.

The slaughter of the animal must respect the old method, not take place according to the latest requirements, that is either by shutting or by electrocuting the animal, methods that the peasant cannot accept. In the past, meat was minced not with the help of machines, but with the chopper.

In almost all the Transylvanian regions smoked pork sausages are produced, but not smoked ham. Instead, smoked lard/ bacon is prepared considering several recipes. The same happens with blood pudding, mosaic salami and frankfurters. In the Apuseni Mountains, the Vata region, there is a traditional product made up of goat meat- the so- called "Vata virsli" a type of thin sausage. In other regions, along the Strei river, the traditional products have almost disappeared, because of

the depopulation of the villages that brought along the lack of domestic animals. The Black Strei pig breed is almost extinct.

The buffalo breeding is typical for Transylvania. The drastic diminution of the number of these animals - from about eighty thousands animals in 1996 to circa twenty thousands in 2007- 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 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.

Cow milk represents the raw material for a series of traditional products, the most well known being cottage cheese, yogurt and Romanian pressed cheese. Quality cheese is obtained from the milk of the following cow breeds: Transylvanian Pinzgau, Brown of Maramures and Transylvanian Simmental. In the last fifteen years the number of animals belonging to these breeds has decreased with 70% and the breed which tends to prevail is Holstein- Frisian. Milk is processed in industrial factories and so, the quality of the obtained products is poor; they preserve only the labels of traditional products.

The same happens also with the sheep milk. The prevailing sheep breed in Transylvania is Tzurcana or the Walachian Sheep, a local breed that has to face one major problem: they cannot be milked mechanically. The great majority of the sheep and goat milk is taken over for processing by industrial units. Shepherds who use traditional technology for preparing various kinds of cheese still exist, however very few. This profession- shepherd- becomes less and less practiced and the people who watch over the sheep have no skills at all. In the mountainous region of the Banat, there are about 2000 Ratzka Sheep and 13000 Curly Banatian Sheep. It is almost certain that these sheep will become extinct over the next ten years. From their milk, a high-quality cottage cheese is obtained. Only a few shepherds still know the preparation secret of this cheese. As an answer to the question what would happen to those recipes after they died, the answer was similar to that of the shepherds from another region, also famous for its sheep cheese (Salistea Sibiului):”After we are gone, the secrets of these recipes will vanish because our successors have chosen other professions”. The hygiene of the technological process of preparing the cheese, when referring to a sheepfold, consists of filtering the milk, blanching and rubbing the cauldron and the barrel with a brush, barrel that is sealed immediately after introducing the cheese and stored up in a cool place, using the 13% brine for three weeks and then changing it. At the sheepfold they prepare cottage cheese, green ewe cheese, soft cottage cheese, “jintita”- whey mixed up with soft cottage cheese, sour cream, yogurt, barrel sour milk/ (lapte batut= curd), cheese preserved in fir tree bark, bladder cheese. Every sort of cheese

requires a specific recipe and a technological process and so the shepherds prove their advanced knowledge in this domain. Actually, we have an old saying “ The cheese quality is strictly connected to the quality of the meadow and the skill of the head shepherd.” Tradition says that the milk obtained after the 15<sup>th</sup> of August should be used only for preparing sour milk and not cheese.

The sheep wool is now worthless. Only handicraft capitalizes it and the cowhide. The keen demand for handicraft products led to the need of mass production and to trivializing these products. There is not a big demand for sheeps, however we preserve the easter lamb tradition.

What the fowl and the hen eggs are concerned, the Transylvanian Naked Neck breed can seldom be found in the peasants’ yards. Only the Banat’ian White Goose is still widely spread in the Banat Plain. Only very seldom do people overfeed geese to obtain fat goose liver and other traditional goose products like smoked goose- flash or goose- lard are almost forgotten by consumers.

Occasionally, people organize small fairs for presenting some traditional products, but the prices are discouraging.

### **Conclusions**

The majority of the agrotouristic pensions’ owners are people who do not have the necessary qualified training and have no idea about the products obtained from the above mentioned breeds and, last, they do not care. The products they use must have the cheapest price possible, but then the quality is also poor and many pensions choose to sell imported products: pizza, hamburgers, sea fruits and imported cheese.

The only way to make real agrotourism is by knowing and acknowledging the importance of the local animal breeds from Transylvania and appreciating their qualities.

In the last years, advertisings constantly promote traditional products, but unfortunately, the consumers hardly recognize the real ones, the raw materials needed and the breeds used for preparing them.

People think that it has no importance where the pork or the cow or sheep milk proceeds from.

The young generations show a very weak interest for the existence of traditional products.

Without acknowledging the true value of the local animal breeds from Transylvania the market will not thrive.

Projects aimed at encouraging the local management to promote and apply some original and economical instruments for preserving the zoogenetical biodiversity are necessary. The local management should also elaborate some guides for presenting the local food products as an efficient instrument for promoting traditional food products, organize exhibitions of the local animal breeds in order to give the youth the chance to familiarize themselves with these animal, as the great majority does not know and even despises them

Traditional food products' guides should be spread and used as a tool for preserving nature and developing a rural economy.

People hardly know the latest regulations concerning traditional products. There is a lack of information and communication between the population and the authorities, who are responsible for the matter. Often, we also have to face the idea that promoting a traditional product takes a lot of time and costs too much.

There is a major dispute going on between the important producers that prevail on the market and the traditional producers who tend to disappear from the market. As a consequence, a great deal of economical opportunities are lost and along with them a part of our cultural legacy. The rural areas become poorer and poorer and the youth lose interest in them.

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