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Position paper

Initiatives and projects to promote the Mediterranean local cheeses and their relations to the development of livestock systems and activities

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ABSTRACT

This article is a presentation of the local Mediterranean cheese sector and of the several types of projects and initiatives to promote the Mediterranean local cheeses: promotional campaigns, workshops, networks and meetings, regional events (cheeses shows, processing demonstrations, thematic routes, cheese contests, . . .). The small-scale and farm-made cheeses, mostly with sheep or goat milk, are generally considered a possible vehicle of economic and social development for the less favored rural areas; mountainous areas are seen as holders of local know-how. To support this development, several initiatives and often public supported projects have aimed to promote and improve the valorization of these local small-scale Mediterranean cheeses and their heritage value. The analysis is based mainly on a comparison of projects and initiative in which the authors were involved through several European projects of cooperation. The different situations in the northern and southern areas are considered separately. For each initiative, we particularly focus on the type of organization or institution that has led it: Regional Public Extension, National Park Administration, Universities or Research Centers, Public Organizations, Professional Associations . . . We cross them with simple indicators to characterize each regional sector. The initiatives are characterized regarding the coherence and impact of these projects. In several cases, the promotion of local cheeses is not related to a sustainable and coherent strategy of development of production. The interrelations between institutional public projects of regional rural development and the local cheese and animal production systems were studied. This article underlines that such initiatives have to integrate the components of a coherent appropriation of the Mediterranean Cheese heritage and the tensions between technical and cultural approaches.

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1. Introduction: the local cheese heritage in the Mediterranean area

Pastoralism, particularly for sheep and goat production has been a very important part of the Mediterranean agri-cultural systems for centuries. The lowlands were used for arboriculture (citrus, olive), wine yards, crops and forage. The pastoral systems and practices were developed to valorize less favored highlands and pastures. Their products were a main source of meat, milk and fiber for local pop-

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ulations. The consequence is that all the Mediterranean countries have built a long-time and diversified tradition of fermented milks and fresh or ripened cheeses. It is also the origin of a rich cooking heritage. Much of this tradition has existed until now, although the structural conditions have deeply changed since the end of the 1940s (Chassany and Flamant, 1996; Hatziminaoglu and Boyazoglu, 2004). These cheeses are often made with sheep or goat milk (a specificity of the Mediterranean area) although some traditional Mediterranean cheeses are also made with cow or buffalo milks.

The local production, marketed or not, has maintained with small-scale production and processing units. These small-scale cheese sectors coexist with strong industrial ones. Taken by the globalization of trade and economic competition, these very dynamic industrial dairy sectors are not always with a real territorial base. On the contrary, the local production could find its own comparative advantages on niche markets. Thus it became a hope of economic development for often marginal and isolated rural areas.

In spite of their structural present weakness, the hope for a renewal of pastoralism and small-scale local cheese making led often the public authorities to support very diverse projects and initiatives to promote them. The impact of these initiatives and projects on the development of these activities has not been studied much. This is why we propose here a comparative analysis of how these local activities are promoted and the impact of these initiatives and projects on development of production and processing.

After having given some updated information on the Mediterranean dairy production, we will situate the small-scale dairy sector facing the industrial Mediterranean dairy industry. Then, we will analyze how this local activity is promoted, developed and marketed by the description and comparison of several projects. We will also study the coherence between their aims and occurrence.

We will focus particularly on this side of the northern side of the Mediterranean basin where cheese making and the number of projects on small-scale cheeses have been more important. The projects on the southern side and

particularly in Morocco, Tunisia and Lebanon will be considered separately and their logics will be compared with those of the northern side.

2. The small-scale cheese sector in the Mediterranean area and the importance of sheep and goat cheeses

2.1. Available global information and local situations

The most recent data on the dairy and cheese production (Table 1a) confirm the importance and segmentation of the dairy and cheese sectors in the Mediterranean. Most of the cow milk is used to produce liquid milk for consumption, and to a smaller extent, fresh or ripened industrial cheeses. Italy and France have a powerful dairy industry by international standards. The main characteristic of the Mediterranean area is the importance of sheep and goat milk production, mainly processed as cheeses. Once, a marginalized activity, the goat milk production changed after the 1940s first in France with the development of a specific dairy goat industry, later in Spain or to a lower extent in other European countries (Dubeuf et al., 2003). In Spain, although there have not been organized markets until the 1980s, many diverse types of small-scale cheeses were produced traditionally. Some years later, the Spanish consumers have stopped to consume these small-scale cheeses, mainly for sanitary reasons related to brucellosis (Castel et al., in press). A similar situation could be observed in the other northern Mediterranean countries. The Mediterranean basin is the only part of the world where the collection and processing of sheep milk are so developed and organized with very dynamic regional sectors such as those of Greece (Feta cheese), Sardinia, Roquefort, Castilla La Mancha (Manchego cheese), (Dubeuf, 2005) . . . Dubeuf and Le Jaouen (2005) have evaluated that 80% and 50% of the sheep and goat milks, respectively collected and processed in the world come from this zone. But, in many cases it exhibits a lot of problems of marketing (Dubeuf and Lepidi, 2004). There are also dynamic cow and buffalo

Table 1a
Volume of milk and cheese produced in the main Mediterranean countries^a.

Country	Cow milk (buffalo milk)	Goat milk	Sheep milk	Cheeses	Cheese plants (units)
Algeria	1600	230	205	1.54	NA
Cyprus	144	23	16	5.63	71
France	24373	579	264	1812.25	85
Greece	787	505	727	236.45	600
Egypt	2200 (2300)	15	93	610	NA
Israel	1185	22	19	104.25	NA
Italy	11000 (200)	105	565	1163.27	8274 ^b
Lebanon	180	39	22	18.39	NA
Morocco	1600	34	27	35.05	NA
Palestine ^c	115	34	55	6.19	NA
Portugal	1924	28	96	73.8	86
Spain	6100	488	410	117.8	477
Tunisia	982	13	18	3.85	NA
Turkey	11289	237	782	.06	NA

Source: FAO (2009); 1000 tons; Vallerand et al. (2007).

NA: Not available.

^a Including Portugal but excluding Former Yugoslavian Republics and Albania.

^b Among them 70 in Sardinia.

^c Occupied Palestinian Territories.

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Table 1b

A panorama of the small scale cheese sectors in the several Northern Mediterranean countries.

Country	Region	Main cheeses	Type of milk	Comments
France	Corsica	Brocciu (PDO), local cheeses ^a	Sheep, goat	A farm made cheese sector and a small industrial one
	Languedoc-Roussillon	Pelardon (PDO)	Goat	Many farm made cheeses. One industrial plan
	PACA ^b	Banon (PDO), local cheeses ^c	Goat, cow, sheep	A farm made cheese sector and a small industrial one
Greece	All regions	Feta and many other white cheeses	Sheep, goats	Many small scale units
Italy	All regions	A large number of cheeses ^d	Sheep, goat, buffalo, cow	A strong industrial sector in Campania, Tuscany, Sardegna, Latium and Sicily; small units every where
Spain	Andalusia	Local ripened or half ripened cheeses	Goat	95% of the goat milk processed outside. No PDO. Local cheeses made by small units
	Basque Country	Idiazabal (PDO)	Sheep	A farm made sector and an industrial one
	Canary Islands	Palmero, Majorero (PDO)	Goat	Industry and small scale
	Extremadura	Queso de la Serena(PDO) Los Ibores(PDO)	Sheep; goat; mixed	
	Murcia	Queso de Murcia (PDO)	Goat	A small industrial sector
	Navarra	Roncal (PDO)	Sheep	
Portugal	All regions	12 PDO ^e cheeses	Sheep, goats	Many made by small scale units. Cheeses made with thistle "cardo"

^aBastelicaccia, Sartinese, Venachese, Calinzanincu, Niulinu, other local cheeses. ^bProvence, Alps, French Riviera "Côte d'Azur". ^cSee Table 2. ^dMain types with local names: Caciocavallo, Fior di latte, Mozzarella, Cacioricotta, Canestrato di Moliterno, Ricotta, Pecorini. ^eAmong them, Queijo da Serra da Estrela, Q. de Castelo Branco, Q. de Nisa, Q. de Évora, Q. de Azeitão, Q. de Serpa, Rabaçal.

cheese sectors in Northern Spain, Po Valley (Parmigiano) or Southern Italy (Mozarella di Buffalo). More specifically, one of the major strengths of the Spanish goat industry is the generalized presence of indigenous breeds that show an acceptable productivity of high-quality milk. The main actions to be considered in the Spanish goat sector are the improvement of the core structure, especially the marketing efficiency and the appraisal of goat products, as well as the organization that guarantees the stability of the goat industry. In general, the weaknesses of the small-scale cheese sector is the lack of organization in the work force, the low quality of life of farmers (Castel et al., 2009) and deficient structure of the sector especially in marketing (Dubeuf et al., 2004).

2.1.1. Small-scale and farm-made cheese sectors in the northern Mediterranean bank

In the northern Mediterranean countries, small-scale and farm-made sectors develop their activity by producing and selling local cheeses. Cheese plants are called of small scale when the milk comes from only one farm (generally farm-made cheeses) or when the number of farms and volume of milk collected is low. For this reason all the cheese processing is realized by hand by few workers. Many of them are certified locally or are Protected Designation of Origin (PDO) cheeses. Niche markets could be an alternative to develop diversified activities in less favored and mountainous areas. This development could be facilitated by the present demand of the consumers for these types of local cheeses and because these cheeses are a component of the Mediterranean diet (Padilla and Gerber, 1999).

Among the Mediterranean countries, France is the only European one where the farm-made cheese sector is clearly identified with up-dated information. A overview of the

main region with small-scale cheeses is presented in Table 1b.

In many cases, in all these regions, the situation is contrast. Industry could develop simultaneously with the presence of a small-scale sector. Small-scale experienced but rather old producers have maintained a traditional and marginalized production without real organization. And simultaneously rather more trained and new younger farmers try to boost the commercialization and promotion of farm-made cheeses (Vallerand et al., 2007).

The traditional dual purpose (meat, milk) systems of sheep and goat production systems are oriented towards specialized dairy systems by public supported projects.

In the southern Mediterranean countries, sheep and goat milk is a part of dual purpose (meat and milk) and most of the milk is home consumed or sold locally. The specialization of the shepherds in dairy production is considered by local administration, NGOs or international organizations as a solution to improve their incomes. So they have boosted initiatives and associations in this direction with the support and funding of foreign cooperation. Their objective is to produce and sell local good-quality hygienic cheeses either on local markets or high-price cheeses for urban consumers. The success of these initiatives was described as dependent on the reality of the potential markets (Dubeuf and Lepidi, 2004). In the Northern African area and particularly in Morocco or Tunisia the consumption of dairy products has always been rather low. In Middle-East, Lebanon, Syria, Palestine and Turkey the tradition of production and consumption of fermented dairy products and cheeses has been diversified and important for many centuries. In Lebanon, (and all throughout all the Middle-East), the production and consumption of local fermented dairy products (Kich, Chanklich, Gibneh, Labneh, or "Darfiyeh", a

Table 2

Some indicators on the size and situation of several examples of regional small scale cheese sectors.

(Region)	The milk sector; volume of milk produced (millions l)	Number of cheese plants	Local cheeses
(Basilicata, I)	24	128	Pecorino di Filiano PDO in progress, several small scale local cheeses ^a
(Campania, I) Parco del Cilento e Vallo di Diano	4 (sheep and goat milk)	53 (including buffalo milk)	Several local non-certified cheeses ^b
(Andalusia, E)	253 (goat milk mainly for export)	236 (mainly small scale)	Local goat cheeses of the Cádiz, Cordoba, Granada, Huelva Jaen, Sevilla and Malaga Provinces (no PDO cheeses)
(Provence, F)	12.5 (S and G + 7 cow milk)	500 (with farm cheese makers)	Banon PDO cheese, small scale goat and sheep cheeses ^c
(Corsica, F)	13	278	1 PDO Brocciu, several types of cheeses (Venachese, Calinzana, Niulinco, Sartinese, Bastelicaccia, . . .)
Algarve (P)	<2	~10	Local Algarve goat milk cheese

Source: Miredaf and Leader projects.

^a Caciocavallo Silano, podolico lucano, Fior di latte apennino meridionale, Cacioricotta, Padaccio, Casieddu, Casiello, Manteca, Formaggio di Zaccuni, Scamorza, Canestrato di Moliterno.^b Several local “ricotta”, “canestrato”, Cacioricotta caprino del Cilento, Mozzarella nella Mortedda, Manteca, Caciocavallo Podolico, local small scale Buffalo Mozzarella.^c Père d’Aï, Tome d’Arles et Gardian, Brousse du Rove, Cabricime, Cabrichon Cabriclette, Cabrigan, Cachaille, Tome de la Brigue.

Lebanese goat raw milk cheese ripened in a goat skin, etc.) or white cheeses (Halloum) has always been an important element of the local cooking specialties. But these products, which were once, very local and made with sheep and goat milk are being increasingly replaced by industrial products made with cow milk. In Israel, both small-scale and industrial cheese sectors co-exist mainly for local market and export in the USA. This sector is based on the Western European and Northern American model.

2.1.2. Identification and comparison of the initiatives to promote the small-scale cheeses in several Mediterranean regions

There is no specialized information system or data base to identify the information on small-scale cheeses and how they are promoted and developed. Documentation and publications on small-scale cheese sectors are very scarce. Therefore, we used information picked in several projects, actions and organizations in which the authors were involved at several levels.³ The several cases covering a large range of situations and localizations and the personal observations of the authors gave a complete overview of the several types of actions engaged with an identification of the stakeholders governing them.

For the northern area, the Interreg European Miredaf project gave comparative information on initiatives led for promoting small -scale cheeses in France,⁴ Italy⁵ and Spain⁶ (Miredaf Group, 2006a,b; Dubeuf, 2006). We completed the samples with initiatives and projects led in

Portugal and discussed during the Leader project. The methodology of the project involving Algarve with Corsica and Basilicata was developed by Ruault and Dubeuf (2001). This information provided elements to characterize and evaluate how the stakeholders have acted and impacted on the sector.

For instance in Tunisia and Morocco, the priority was to develop a specialized production and trade new dairy products on narrow markets. Requested often by the local actors themselves, these integrated projects are based on the Western European intensive model and do not consider always the local practices, systems and breeds. They include generally genetic improvement, nutrition, herd management, sanitary control and improvement of technological processing. In Lebanon, the urban demand for local products is high and many projects aim to develop them thanks to several NGO’s. For instance the “Women’s Association of Deir Al Ahmar” has organized sessions of training and packaging to improve the local involvement of the population particularly the shepherds. In Northern Lebanon, The Northern Agricultural Centre (René Moawad Foundation) developed a project to valorize goat milk and process it in “Darfiye”, a traditional cheese (Hosri et al., 2004). Although tourism is very important, in the southern Mediterranean, rural tourism is probably less developed and organized and will probably more concern sales of other products (jam, olive oil, almonds, spices, perfumes, . . .) than that of cheeses and dairy products.

3. Classification of the main actions and their relation to the local small-scale cheese sector

The range of initiatives is presented in three different tables. Each milk cheese sector was characterized using simple indicators listed in Table 2. The types of organizations involved are listed in Tables 3a and 3b (Table 3a for the North and Table 3b for the South). Each activity and project are presented and classified in Tables 4a and 4b

³ Leader project “Training in Project Engineering on small scale cheese”, 1999–2001. Corsica, Algarve, Basilicata ; Interreg European Project MIREDAF, 2004–2007 ; French Tunisian PICO Medenine Project, 1997; Moroccan Chefchaouen Project supported by France, Belgium and FAO, 1995. . . ; Women’s Association of Deir Al Ahmar (Lebanon); CIRVAL, 1994–2005.

⁴ PACA (Provence, Alps, French Riviera “Côte d’Azur”) and Corsica.

⁵ Basilicata, Campania (Cilento National Park).

⁶ Andalusia.

Table 3a
Activities and positions in the Northern Mediterranean area—Organizations involved.

(Region) Organization	Type	Main activity	Strategic stakes and associate objectives
(Basilicata, I) ALSIA	Regional Public Extension Agency	Local events and administration	Political/financial
(Campania, I) Parco del Cilento e Vallo di Diano	National Park Administration	Local events and administration	Political/financial
(Andalusia, E) University of Sevilla ^a with small scale cheese associations(GDRVG IFAPA)	University/professional association	Research extension/professional assistance/promotion/training	Institutional/individual/economic
(Provence, F) FRECAP	Regional professional organization	Extension/professional assistance/promotion/training	Economic/political/individual
(Corsica, F) Cirval Association and Casgiu Casanu	Public organization in collaboration with professional organization	Extension/professional assistance/promotion/training	Economic/political/social
(Algarve, P) "In loco" Association	Association for local development/University	Extension/professional assistance/promotion/training	Economic/political/social

Source: Data from the Miredaf project—Leader project.

^a With the University of Cordoba.

Table 3b
Projects and activities in the Southern Mediterranean area (Lebanon, Morocco, Tunisia); organizations involved.

(Region) Organization	Type	Activities
(Medenine, T) Regional Direction of Agriculture + UCARDEC ^a	Regional administration + French NGO	Integrated project: selection and animal nutrition; investment on milk collection, procession and packaging
(Chefchaouenne, Ma) National Direction of Animal Production (DNE) + FAO + French and Belgium Cooperation	Regional Administration/International Organization	Integrated project: selection and animal nutrition; investment on milk collection, procession and packaging
(Bekaa, L) Dar El Ahma Association	Local Non-Governmental Association	Extension (animal nutrition), sanitary and veterinary support, and teaching (on precessing and trading)

Source: Pico Project (1997), Cirval (Dubeuf et al., 2004).

^a Unité de Coopération des Actions de Recherche et de Développement en Elevage Caprin.

(Table 4a for the North and Table 4b for the South) by crossing them with the type of supporting organizations involved.

3.1. A typology of initiatives to promote local cheeses in northern Mediterranean countries and their institutional basis

Although dairy-oriented sheep or goat production is currently threatened economically and structurally by the small size of the farms or cheese plants and the natural or social conditions, these traditional production systems generally have an historical base. Traditional products are still the most frequently promoted products in the regions concerned by our study although some new products and packaging have also been developed in some cases.⁷ In many regions the Slow Food Movement has become a reference to promote local products.

In Algarve, Cilento, Andalusia and some parts of the other regions, production is presently endangered in the short term by the small number and advanced age of

the breeders. Four main types of actions to promote local cheeses were identified:

One-off or annual events: Shows and fairs, cultural events (associated with music and/or cinema), gastronomic festival and degustation, promotion for youngsters, thematic week.⁸

Permanent initiatives linked to tourism: Thematic routes, "Praesidia Slow Food products⁹" projects, Open caves, farm and cheese making units.

Publication of promotional documents: Brochures, books, informative booklets, DVD's, Web sites, all connected or not with signs of qualification (regional signs, official denominations, Slow food, etc. . . .)

Target initiatives: Training (for restaurants, for consumers, for cheese makers), meetings, cheese tasting, cheese competitions.

⁸ Small events in several places.

⁹ The Slow Food Organization has now created permanent activities all over the world.

⁷ Like "queso al vino", cheese in wine, in Southern Spain.

Table 4a

Some initiatives and events to promote the local cheeses in the Northern Mediterranean area.

(Region) Initiative/events	Type	Support
Basilicate		
“Caseifici Aperti	Thematic route: cheese plants and caves	Institution
Fiera del Pecorino di Filiano	Shows and fairs	Institutions
Sagra del Canestrato di Moliterno	Shows and fairs	Institutions
Sagra del Casieddu	Shows and fairs	Local councils + Association
Sagra del Pecorino di Filiano	Shows and fairs	Institutions + Local Councils
“Settimana Bianca”	Regional thematic and cultural event (demonstrations, fairs, concerts, markets, . . .)	Institutions + Local Councils
Project of valorization of the typical products of the Alto Agri Mountain community	Creation of an umbrella regional label	Institutions + Local Councils
Pollino Park Project	Coordination and marketing of local projects (pork butchery, fruits, cheese, breads)	Institutions
Campania—Parco del Cilento e Vallo di Diano		
Sentinel Slow Food project	Promotion of local products through Slow food networking	Institution + Slow food
Atlas of typical products (and other brochures)	Brochures and publications	Institution + Slow food + Environmental Associations
Le vie del latte	Regional thematic routes in Campania	Institution + Slow food
Regional Goat cheese Contest “Il Rucolo d’Oro”	Cheese competition	Institution + local Association
Andalusia		
Cheese market and cheese contest	Cheese competition and market	Local organizations and councils
Training on cheese tasting and making	Training	Administration + Culinary schools + Associations
The Baena small scale cheese fair	Cheese fair gastronomic competition	European project + local councils + Associations
Goat and Cheese fair	Fair	Association of goat breeds + Administration
Guide book of small scale Andalusia cheeses	Book, brochures	Association + Administration
Provence		
Semaine des goûts et senteurs	Cultural events	Professional + Local Associations
Banon cheese fair	Cultural and commercial events	Banon local tourist office + Professional organization
Publication of “fromages fermiers en Provence et dans les Alpes du Sud”	Book	Professional Association
Biannual farm-made cheese meetings	Seminar	Professional organization + Regional administration
Corsica		
“A Fiera di U Casgiu”	Cheese fair	Local village Association
Regional farm made cheese contest	Cheese competition	Local village Association
Route des sens authentiques	Thematic route	Regional Administration + Tourism office + Regional Park + Professional Associations
The Shepherds Day	Film festival	Regional Association + Interprofessional Association
Algarve		
“In loco” goat projects	Several technical and promotion actions	University of Algarve/In loco Association

Source: Miredaf project, LeaderI Project.

Table 4b

Southern Mediterranean projects to promote local dairy products.

Region (Country) Initiative/events	Type	Support
Medenine (Tunisia)		
PICO project-regional livestock project	Organizing production and milk collection	Regional administration/NGO
Rif (Morocco)		
Chefchaouen cheese making—local fairs	Organizing milk production collection and processing	Administration/International Organisation (FAO)
Bekaa (Lebanon)		
Courses to promote local foods	Training and side activities	Local Association

Sources: Pico Project (1997), Cirval (Dubeuf et al., 2004), Thomas and Dubeuf (1996).

The impact of each social or cultural event was evaluated by direct observations of the number of participants or the distribution of publications, brochures or guides. The number of participants is very varied from several hundred to ten thousand depending on awareness of the event and its historical precedence. One realization of the MIREDAF interregional project of exchanges was the publication of a guide for the evaluation of the initiatives to promote local cheeses. This guide proposed quantitative (number and types of participants) and qualitative (impact estimation on public, media, prescribers, institutions) indicators (Miredaf, 2006).

The distribution of the documents published by each local project was appraised. The documents are useful to promote a region and its activities. But most are distributed or sold during other events either by the institutions that publish them or by tourist offices. Few are sold in the usual way (book sellers). The Web sites are built within the framework of the project and may be of a good editorial quality. The main indicators to assess their quality are long-term up dating and relations with the professionals themselves.

The main institutional behaviors and motivation of each participant in the projects were also identified. We observed that the economic objective of developing the cheese sector was not always the most frequently encountered objective except when the action was supported by a professional organization. The most frequent objectives were political (to enhance the legitimacy of the organization), financial and institutional (to obtain financial subsidies), or economically oriented towards rural tourism. Concerning European projects of exchanges (like the MIREDAF project), we also observed individual personal objectives as such a project can be a way to promote the personal position and legitimacy of the leading group of an organization. The lack of professional organization and economical strategy of the sectors are probably the main reasons for these possible deviant appropriations that are observed also in other projects for development of rural marginal lands.

3.2. *The southern Mediterranean projects*

In the southern part of the Mediterranean (Morocco, Tunisia), the situation is quite different. The public services support the sheep and goat sector in cooperation with European governments or non-governmental organizations. Their aim is to obtain added value by promoting fresh local cheeses, although local consumption is currently low and the market is not stabilized. Priority is given in equipment and professional training to improve the technical skills of the breeders. In Lebanon the initiative of a local village association financed by NGOs as several other associations is original. Their aim is to train the local villagers and shepherds to promote their know-how and help them to sell their products to urban consumers who have always appreciated them. Actions and projects in Morocco and Tunisia were initially more oriented to the organization of the sector than promotion of the products and very often they were based on the technical Western model with the introduction of European breeds for crossing with local

breeds, intensification and specialization of the production and few references with the local practices.

4. Analysis of the implementation of the projects and initiatives

4.1. *Original initiatives linked to the local cultural heritage in the northern Mediterranean area*

We observed that many identified initiatives have been started by public institutions (regional public extension agencies, universities, national park administration) or boosted by them as shown in Table 3a. Often located in marginal rural areas, cheese making and pastoralism are generally one of the few economic activities with handicrafts and to some extent agro-tourism. They are an important element of the cultural collective consciousness and the pastoral heritage is often the image of idealized old times for urban citizens. The small-scale cheese sectors have strong territorial roots. But for this reason, it is not seen as a modern activity. Isolated and poorly trained, the breeders often have many difficulties to organize and to associate themselves. The institutions are often aware of the interest in this activity for supporting rural tourism, preventing fires and protecting environment. Consequently, although the professional associations are supported by administration through project funding, the awareness of the breeders is often low (and their membership) as well as their financial autonomy.

When an action is decided, its implementation has to face a lack of human resources and the ignorance of the reality of the whole cheese sector and livestock activities. Besides, several initiatives were often started by the institutions themselves that have few regular relations with the actors and possibly without a previous analysis of their needs. Thus, the breeders and cheese makers were involved neither in the origin nor in the implementation and governance of the action. In these cases, the real objective is firstly to promote rural tourism in one region, not a specific economic activity. We observe that in this case, administrative organizations, local associations, NGO's or individual initiatives replace cheese makers and breeders. The involvement of each organization is oriented mainly by individual motivation and logic not by a real evaluation of the strategic potentialities or by the needs of the livestock sector and the valorization of cheeses. Three examples can illustrate this comment: In Algarve, the "In Loco" project on development of goat production was impulsed by the Association of Local Development and the University of Algarve by a participative research funding. This project was stopped by the end of the financed period owing to lack of appropriation by the farmers themselves. On the contrary, in Provence, where a professional association has been organized for more than 20 years, each project is not dependent on only one financial source and the board of the association has several different sources of funding to decide their own priorities. In Andalusia, a small part of the goat milk produced is processed (nearly 95%, being marketed as raw milk outside the region) and the cheese sector is not organized. To achieve this structuring the "Património Quesero Andaluz" Project has recently associated

breeders associations, public administration and research centres (GDRVG, 2009).

When the level of organization and the productive potentialities are too low, the local organizations (local associations, public administration) replace breeders or cheese makers to a certain extent. So, the sustainability of the financial support is an important indicator of potential success. The participation or the creation of a professional association was considered as useful only if they were involved right from the beginning of the initiative and if their technical and economic situation was stabilized. Cooperation and interregional exchanges are often promoted as a way to stimulate isolated and small-scale sectors in less favored areas. The main advantage of these exchanges (such as those during the Miredaf projects) is to debate common problems to see if they can be solved together or if a solution that is successful in one situation can be applied in another.

4.2. *The conditions of success of the southern projects*

The references are less important in these cases. When the dynamics was linked only to the financial opportunities of some punctual institutional supports the danger of a low sustainability is often very high and the activity (selection, processing, marketing) could stop soon after the end of the funding (some cases in Tunisia or Morocco). If this financial support sticks with the inner project of a rural group or association, there are logically more chances of success (as in Lebanon). In all cases a previous evaluation of the strategy to apply could give more chances of success and sustainability.

5. The impacts of such actions to develop local production systems

This information covers the range of existing actions to promote local cheeses. Many examples of such actions and their dynamics could have been found in other regions (Frost et al., 2007; Mountain Food Quality group, 2004; Lacroix and Jénot, 2010).

After having analyzed more than twenty actions in nine regions, we can confirm that local cheeses are believed to promote a positive image of the rural areas as they reflect the local pastoral activities in the Mediterranean. These actions help to build a patrimonial appropriation of the cheese and pastoral culture. Nevertheless, small-scale cheeses are still promoted more for their sensory qualities than the production system of the milk used to make them. In Andalusia, the use of pasture and range-land grazing is an important part of the strategies of research, development and training to promote the added value of small-scale goat cheeses (Jiménez and Hevilla, 2007; Navarro et al., 2007; Ruiz et al., 2009). But the comparative analysis of the games of stake-holders (Collier, 1993) also reveal possibly opportunistic and non-transparent strategies as already quoted by Bouche and Casabianca (2001).

“Promotion” is generally used and associated with “development” without any previous definition of their meaning neither link nor objective of such a promotion. This means that the cheeses may in fact be used to promote

a region, its tourism potentialities or even the institutional legitimacy of local administrations or organizations independently of the reality of the cheese sector itself also reflected in other studies (Tyran, 2007; Tregear et al., 2006). A project to promote cheese could be also used as a means of obtaining financial support without concrete feed-back on the dynamics of the livestock sector, as public stake-holders themselves are not necessarily aware of their position. In other words, when the local situation of the livestock pastoral cheese making sector is too weak (as observed in Algarve, Tunisia, Cilento, for instance), there is a high risk that these actions might promote a virtual product with no links to the real conditions. But these actions of promotion and valorization can be also an ambiguous but significant way to build the patrimonialization of the cheese culture by developing the awareness and training of citizens on sensory characteristics of products, local breeds, traditional know-how and equipment, territorial pastoral practices, all being seen as collective territorial goods (Casabianca et al., in press). The positive valuation of the specific characteristics of the small-scale cheeses by the consumers themselves is a large part of their differentiation from the industrial ones (Dubeuf et al., 2004; Castel et al., in press).

We could draw a parallel between initiatives to promote local cheeses and to certify them (Protected Designations of Origin or Geographical Indications). Both could help building the reputation of “heritage” product without a real relation with the development of the related production system. The danger is the appropriation of this heritage by other stakeholders (big companies, for examples) with no link to the local system (Linck et al., 2009). Consequently, it is necessary to find differentiated ways of marketing for small-scale cheeses (Dubeuf et al., 2004; Castel et al., in press).

These elements can provide useful information for decision makers involved in extension on pastoralism or rural livestock activities in the Mediterranean region: what type of activities to choose, how to organize actions and with whom? Other studies could be useful to improve project engineering in rural development. However, we recommend a prior evaluation of the strategic orientation of each local regional sector including – if necessary – genuine collaboration between breeders and cheese makers and an action plan including technical training and technical references.

6. Conclusion

A wide range of actions realized to promote local small-scale cheeses around the Mediterranean has been characterized in this paper. This survey has showed that such actions have a very varied impact depending on the conditions in which they were decided and organized. Many public local, regional, national administrations or local associations are interested in the image and position of the cheese heritage and these actions could provide useful back up for livestock activities and product qualification both on the northern and southern banks of the Mediterranean although the conditions and objectives are different.

Small-scale cheese making is now considered as an activity to promote and stimulate the development of rural areas. But in many cases, there was little involvement of the breeders or cheese makers themselves. Thus, the impact of these actions may be greater on activities supported by stakeholders who implement each action, for example tourism, local animation, cultural heritage, than on the dynamics of livestock production systems themselves. These initiatives can also be a justification to finance local administrations. Although the sheep and goat dairy and cheese sector is being considered more and more, in many rural areas it is becoming marginalized, principally for structural reasons. A militant or activist attitude would not be enough to reverse the trend but could help to arouse public awareness on their realities. We suggest more generally, that prior to promotion, it is necessary to get good technical and economic structural conditions. Thus before any new action, we recommend that all extension agents involved should conduct a prior diagnosis of the situation of the sector, the human resources available, what are the objectives of the several actors and finally to define what priority to favor. Because of these failures and lack of impact, public funding could be reluctant to keep supporting this type of projects and ask for a better project engineering and management. But we can also suppose that due to the environmental and sustainable development challenges, in the near future, local cheeses, like other products will have more and more opportunities to develop.

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