

THE ATTITUDE AND MOTIVATION OF BUYERS OF TRADITIONAL/ LOCAL/BIO PRODUCTS IN THE CONTEXT OF AGROTOURISM, IN SIBIU COUNTY, ROMANIA

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Abstract

Based on the statistical data concerning the sheep breeding in district Sibiu and on the information obtained by making investigations markets and fairs where they sell traditional/bio products, the extent was appreciated to which this products are known and desired. The survey was conducted between May and November 2012 in four locations: “Transylvania Peasant Market (Piata Taraneasca Transilvania)”, “Traditional agro-food products Fear (Targul de Produse Agroalimentare Traditionale)” from Huet Market, “Traditional Products and Handicrafts Fear (Targul de Produse Traditionale si Mestesugaresti)” inside the Carrefour hypermarket and in “Agricultural Market” Rasinari, Sibiu county. There were also comments mentioned on the topics on the occasion of Peony Festival (Festivalul Bujorului) from Gura Raului (July 2012), “Cheese and Plum Brandy Festival (Festivalul Branzei si al Tuicii)” from Rasinari Commune (August 2012), “Countryside Fear (Targul de Tara)” from the Museum of Popular Civilization Astra Sibiu (August and September 2012). The research instrument used was the questionnaire. The items of the questionnaire aimed to identify issues such as motivation of buying traditional/local/bio products, frequency of supply with traditional/bio products, the link established with manufacturers, knowing locations where you can buy traditional/bio products. Research methods were documenting appropriate, design and develop of a questionnaire, 25 buyers of traditional/bio products were asked. The questionnaires were applied by a single interviewer.

Key words: bio, markets, mountain, recovery, sheep

INTRODUCTION

The quality food products for consumers, nice landscape for tourists, rich biodiversity for those who want to preserve nature, innovative business opportunities for farmers, all these represent high nature value farming. These agricultural systems are very important because they promote the care for natural resources, which in many countries of the European Union have been neglected and lost. Also, they help to inform about the crucial role that the farmer has in the maintenance of the natural and cultural treasury by the traditional method that he uses to work his land, by the traditional way that he has for the preparation of food and he continues to make superior quality products by multiplying and sharing with the following generations the traditions and customs related to the nature, this way of living leading to the preservation

of rural landscapes and the protection of natural resources.

There are differences between the concept of traditional product and the concept of local product.

Traditional product is the product which must be made from traditional raw material, to present a traditional composition or a mode of production and/or processing reflecting a technological process of production and/or traditional manufacturing and clearly distinguishes products of the same category.

[1] In our country there are regulations on the certification of traditional products. The certification of traditional products [2, 3] represents the recognition of tradition of a product by registration in special register, in accordance with the rules on the conditions and criteria for the certification of traditional products. All this products can be considered a source of food for tourists. [10]

The local product - the specific terminology entitles them important products for the preservation of nature, or High Nature Value Products. These are the products that help to maintain the natural landscapes in the rural areas, by the continuous agricultural practices of farmers for the growth of animals, and the works of the land. The local products also represent an important principle of the development of local economy. [5]

In an attempt of defining them we can say that they are food products, services obtained and consumed at the local area. Food products and agricultural practices by which the land pastures, orchards are dealt with, but also the way in which animals are being used and kept, play an important role in the maintenance of local culture, of the landscape, but especially for human health and that of the children. Thus the obtainment and sale of local food products represents an important factor for the maintenance and development of the community, and in the main time a source of sustainable benefits for local economy.

A local important product for the preservation of the nature is that, that helps to the preservation of biodiversity of the rural space –species of plants and animals that depend on this kind of environment- the preservation of habitats and rural landscapes, as well as the protection of natural resources- by the usage of friendly environment practices; the development of local economy, supporting farmers from semi-sustenance, by maintaining the agricultural activities in farm systems.

The local products important for the preservation of the nature must:

- support the local economy- by the proper valuation of the local products, the obtained incomes must return to the farmers and this way the help to support his future activity and the maintenance of farm systems
- preserve and maintain the local cultural treasury and help to the maintenance of the cultural identity of rural areas, by promoting local traditions and customs, local celebrations where customs, habits and way of dressing are being promoted, but also the

practice of grazing, a traditional job transmitted form generation to generation.

- contribute to the preservation of rural landscapes, by the preservation of biodiversity –species of plants and animals, habitats and natural resources, due to a reduced involvement of human interventions;

- help to maintain the agricultural traditional practices

- extensive agriculture, the main type of using the lands and fields

- the use of organic raw, according to the fertilization requests

- the reduced density of animals, having in consideration the natural capacity of production of the pastures; (grazing can be made with max 1 UVM /hectare);

- reduced human intervention

- reduced existence of technology, the use of manual practices

The type of products that can be considered local and of having high local value are: milk, diary, cheese, meat products; stock, sheep, sausages, smoke dried salt meat, marmalade, jam and tinned fruits, honey and products of honey; products from forest fruits and medicinal herbs, wine and natural juices, plum brandy

The agrotourism is compatible with green economy. That compatibility is sustained by the idea of green tourism, i.e. of tourism practiced in relation with Nature. Green tourism represents one of the three branches of tourism industry [7], together with travel industry and hospitality industry. The green colour has been chosen especially because it is in synchrony with the rural zone and with the Nature. The green tourism is defined as a touristic activity practiced in the agro-rural space from the province zones, but also in low populated zones, as well as in certain mountain zones which do not have a special destination. [8]

Regarding the attitude and behavior of buyers, there are studies showing that standard food offered at affordable prices, usually satisfy psychological needs and find a large number of consumers. High quality food play in addition to these the role of representing the social class and groups with high income, and

even projecting an image of them. Thus, according to these studies, in the opinion of consumers, on the first place are food products to use – 40%, hygienic food products – 30%, organoleptic food products – 20%, and nutritional and dietary products have a share of 10%. [9]

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Data concerning the sheep breeding in district Sibiu

Sheep breeding in district Sibiu is a many centuries, traditional activity. It is the main activity in area Marginimea Sibiului where farming is practiced alongside with traditional activity on the processing of specific products with a strong local character. Sibiu, with approx. 459,000 sheep and 1,732 farms takes the second place in the country in terms of growth of this species. The average dimension of a sheep farm in Sibiu is 265 heads. In the district there are 181 farms (10,5%) holding more than 500 individuals, four farms holding more than 2000 sheep/farm, breeding together 2,51% (11,548 individuals) and a farm that breeds more than 4000 sheep. [5]

Analysis of data from the questionnaire concerning the capitalization of traditional products

The 25 asked buyers were part of the following age categories: 20-30 years – 52%, 31-50 years – 24% and over 50 years – 24%.

Following this study revealed that the most popular categories of traditional/bio products are dairy, meats and bakery products. Other categories of products known by the buyers as traditional/bio are bee products, fruit, apples and underbrush. At the same time buyers are well aware of sweets, jams, fruit juices, herbal teas, vegetables, vegetable stew, cold pressed oils, syrups, pickles, eggs, wine and brandy.

The most wanted products are dairy products both from sheep and cows, meats, followed by bee products and bakery products. They are also willing to buy fruits, vegetables herbal teas and fruit juices. The less wanted products are jams, sweets, pickles, eggs, vegetable stews, syrups, wine and brandy.

Concerning the site where supply these products, 26% buy only from local markets, 20% buy from markets and special stores, 20% buy direct from producers. Another category of buyers (18%) make their supply from the market and from the producers at home and 16% have three sources of supply: from markets, special stores and direct from the producers (Fig.1).

When asked why they buy this traditional products, 20% answered they consider them healthy, 12% for their quality, 3% for they are fresh, 3% trust the producer, 5% buy the products for they are fresh and have a good quality, 8% for they are healthy and have a good quality. However 9% chose them because they are healthy, they have a good quality and trust the producers, 12% buy traditional and bio products because they are fresh, healthy, they have a good quality and they trust the producers, 3% because they are tasty and another 3% buy this products because they are something new for them.

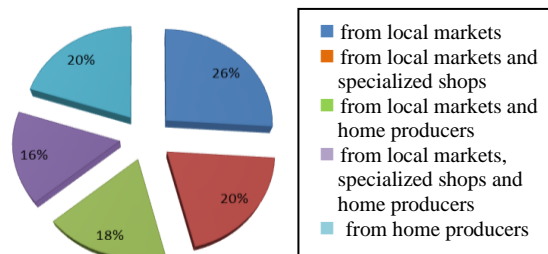


Fig. 1. The place from where traditional products are bought

Regarding the choice to buy from the same producer, 35% always buy from the same producer, 30% said they most often prefer to buy from the same producer and 35% said they do not buy exclusively from the same producer.

To see the extent of establish a link between producer and buyer, we wanted to know if the buyers ask questions about how to make this products. From this point of view, it was observed that 35% of the asked traditional/bio product buyers use to always ask questions about how to make the products they buy, 27% of the asked buyers use to ask the producer questions regarding the products but

not every time they buy and 38% of the responders do not usually inquire this (Fig. 2).

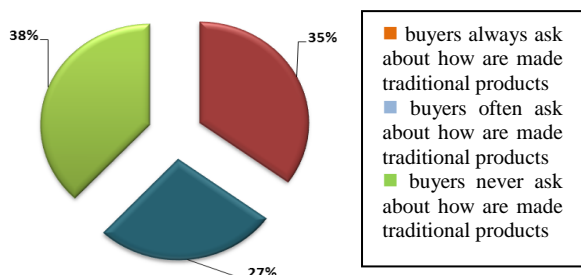


Fig. 2. The extent in which buyers are interested in the way in which traditional products are made

Regarding the price of the products 35% said that they are willing to pay more for a traditional/bio product, 47% would be willing to pay more for most of this products and 18% said they are not willing to pay a bigger price for this products.

The frequency with which this products are bought is different: 44% of the responders buy the products once a week, 20% buy twice month, 11% once a month, 220% buy occasionally and 5% more than once a week (Fig. 3).

Most buyers interested in this products (56%) know the special stores in city Sibiu, most popular are: Eco-Prod Traditional, The Traditional and Ecological Producers Association "Marginimea Sibiului" and the stores which sell natural products in Sibiu.

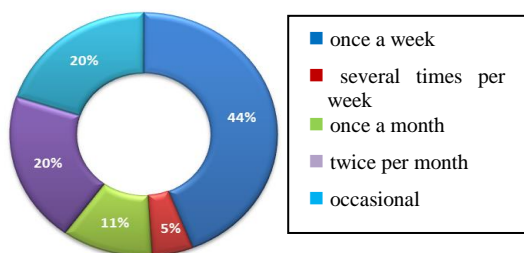


Fig. 3. The frequency of buying the traditional/bio products

CONCLUSIONS

The asked know well the products of the local producers but the bio products are less popular, as, moreover, the number of organic producers who sell the products in the four markets is very small, only 12%.

The most popular and the most purchased products are dairy products from both sheep and cattle, followed by meats and bakery products, and in the biological area honey, sea buckthorn and herbal teas.

Many buy from markets but most buyers visit the special stores and even buy from the producer at home. This encourages the producers on the one hand and on the other hand in this way may arise direct the relationship based on trust between producer and buyer, while preventing the emergence of intermediaries.

Most buyers want healthy, clean, traditional/bio products with a high quality because this products represent for them a guarantee of quality food.

A large proportion 65% buy from the same producer, which again helps strengthen producer-buyer relationship, bringing a number of benefits to both parties.

While 35% are interested in the way in which the products they are going to buy are made, shows that a large proportion of buyers appreciate the authenticity of the product, the traditional recipes but also food safety, a rate approximately equal buyers 38% are not interested in how to make the products, which shows that this buyers are still not aware of the benefits off this products, relying more on the fact that the products are very tasty. There are also few who do not ask because they trust the producer.

A positive thing is that people are open to such products and they are willing to pay more and 80% of the buyers are regularly supplying with traditional/bio products. More than half of the asked people know the special stores in the city and nearly half of them had the opportunity to taste traditional/bio products in a hostel in the country.

The multitude of individual attitudes the buyers to claim the increase of the products quality. To remove the uncertainty ooh the buyers, intense communication is required, this after the high quality of the raw material.

Consumer motivation is a universe that cannot be observed directly. In the Register of traditional producers from Sibiu county are registered 191 products. On the list of

traditional producers of sheep meat products are registered 21 people and on the register for people who sell products obtained from sheep milk 35 people. Traditional agricultural practices do not endanger the species of plants and animal living in the rural area and do not affect their living environment.

Moreover, traditional products support the local economy: by selling the products the capital returns to the farmers and this supports the future of their business. For many farmers, this activities are the main source of income, without which they could not continue the work, however much they would like to keep traditions and stay close to the nature.

A traditional product maintain the cultural heritage of the rural area and helps preserve cultural identity by preserving local traditions and customs: local holidays and festivals in which the local costumes, customs and products are promoted.

Products obtained by traditional practices have a higher quality and are much healthier, especially for children. Milk, for example is better because during the summer sheep and cows graze freely on mountain pastures and during winter they are fed with natural fodder, hay and herbal concentrates.

For small producers who sell their products direct from their household must know the rules of Order 209/2007. Thus all small producers who sell small quantities of primary products of non-animal origin, cheese or prepared meat must register for direct sell to Veterinary County Department on the area the household is. [6]

All manufacturers and producers have the legal obligation to produce clean and safe food. For this producers should be made informative material on veterinary rules you need to follow, they should be registered as traditional producers and grant opportunities with which farmers and small producers can buy equipment and improve production standards, to meet the new conditions.

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