

THE DEVELOPMENT OF TRADITIONAL ROMANIAN FOOD PRODUCTS

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Abstract

Traditional products preserve and promote local identity, culture and tradition. They also contribute to the local economy, environmental protection and public health. This paper studied the development of the traditional products sector in Romania in the period 2013-2022. The main objective was to show the distribution among product types and landforms. The information was gathered from two main sources, the "National Register of Traditional Products" and the "Catalogue of Certified Products and Activities" of the Romanian Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Development. The research showed that almost 41.6% of traditional products are found in the meat and meat products category, followed by milk and dairy products with 18.2%. They are mainly produced in mountain and lowland areas. In the period 2013-2022, an increase in product structure can be observed in beverages and bakery products in lowland areas, vegetable and fruit products in mountain areas, and fish products in mountain areas.

Key words: traditional products, lowland, hill, and mountain areas

INTRODUCTION

The promotion of European products began in 1992 with the introduction of the Quality Scheme for Geographical Indications (PGI) [3]. The protected designation of origin (PDO) was also established in 1992 and aimed to preserve products that "have been produced, processed and developed in a specific geographical area, using the recognized know-how of local producers and ingredients from the region concerned [4]. The European quality scheme for agricultural and food products also protects products based on their method of production or composition by means of the TSG (traditional specialty guaranteed) label. The basic idea is to promote and valorize products that are produced by traditional methods and preserve local identity [12]. Because the certified producers (PDO/PGI/TSG) can promote them self better on the market, there is an increase in registrations. However, that do not mean implicit a success on the market because the prices of such products are higher and can involve additional costs [5].

In addition, producers from member states can apply to national authorities for approval as a traditional national/regional food product, a process similar to the European Union's Protected Geographical Status [2].

Traditional products were first defined in 2004 [6] and several amendments were added in 2013 [7] and 2020 [8]. Due to the 2013 legislation, the number of traditional products certified at the national level increased steadily. However, although we have a specific national and European legal framework that encourages food producers to take advantage of quality schemes, there are few products that are recognized at the European or global level [9].

In 2022, in Romania, we have 26 products certified with GI, 1 product with PDO and 2 with TSG [1]. With 735 traditional certified products and 2853 mountain certified products, RMARD (Romanian Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development) certification for agricultural and food products remains the most important source of certification, along with regional certifications (like "Bun de Maramureş").

The purpose of this paper is to examine the development in 2013-2022 period of traditional products in Romania with an emphasis on their distribution on product categories and landforms.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

In this paper we performed a quantitative analysis of the traditionally certified products in Romania. The source of information was the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (“National Register of Traditional Products” [11] and “Catalogue of Certified Products and Activities” [1]). The analysis was performed by product categories and landforms (lowland, hill, and mountain). The distribution among landforms was made considering the classification of villages and towns made by the National Research and Development Institute of Pedology, Agrochemistry and Environmental Protection.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

According to Regulation No. 724/2013 [7], traditional products are "foods that use local

raw materials, do not contain food additives, have a traditional recipe and a traditional production and/or processing method, and are different from other similar products in the same category." In 2013, 171 traditional products were registered, of which 43.9% were meat and meat products, 17.5% were milk and milk products, and 17.5% were vegetable and fruit products. The structure has not changed significantly in the period 2013-2022. We observe a slight increase in beverages and bakery and pastry products. The number of products has increased by 330% and currently there are 4-5 times more certified products (Table 1). Around 385 of the products certified in 2022 are located in three counties, respectively Brasov, Maramures and Alba (Transilvania historic region).

However, we would like to point out that many of the products registered in 2013 are no longer on the market and have been replaced by new brands. Thus, in 2022, only 24 traditional products from 2013 are still certified. So basically, we cannot analyse the actual development in this sector, only the structure.

Table 1. The evolution of traditional products in 2013-2022 period by types of products

	2013		2022		2022/2013	
	Number	%	Number	%	+/-	pp
Beverages	5	2.9	29	3.9	24.0	1.0
Meat and meat products	75	43.9	306	41.6	231.0	-2.2
Milk and milk products	30	17.5	134	18.2	104.0	0.7
Vegetables-fruits	30	17.5	118	16.1	88.0	-1.5
Bread, bakery, and pastry products	23	13.5	114	15.5	91.0	2.1
Fish	7	4.1	28	3.8	21.0	-0.3
Other	1	0.6	6	0.8	5.0	0.2
Total	171	100.0	735	100.0	564.0	-

Source: Own determinations based on National Register of Traditional Products 2013 [10] and 2022 [11].

In 2013, 57 traditional products were obtained in lowland areas (33.3%), 15 in hill areas (8.8%) and 99 in mountain areas (57.9%). Beverages and other products were certified in mountain villages and fish products in lowland areas (Figure 1). Most beverages (spirits, cider) are usually obtained from fruit trees growing in mountain areas. The first certified fish species were carp (usually found in lowland rivers) and catfish (usually found in the Danube and Danube Delta).

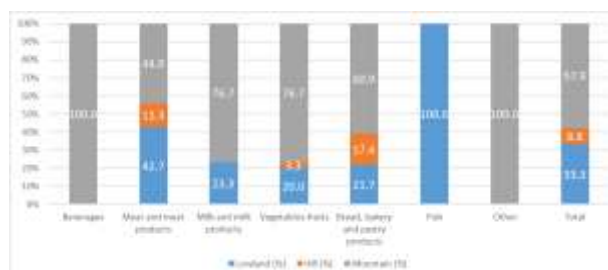


Fig. 1. The share of traditional products from lowlands, hill and mountain areas in total (2013)

Source: Own determinations based on National Register of Traditional Products 2013 [10].

Most traditional products from 2013 were found in mountain areas, except for meat products, where the distribution between mountain and lowland villages is almost equal. The vegetable and fruit certified in mountain areas are primarily sweetness and jam from fruits found in mountain areas (blueberries, cherries, etc.). In 2022, 302 traditional products were obtained in lowland areas (41.1%), 85 in hill areas (11.6%) and 348 in mountain areas (47.3%). Lowland villages recorded the most traditional products in all categories except milk, vegetables, and fruits. 67.2% of milk and traditional dairy products were obtained in mountain villages (cheese, salty cheese, sweet cheese) (Figure 2).

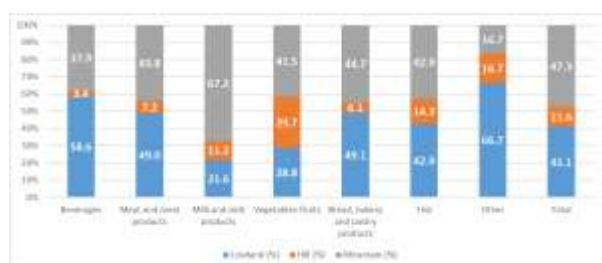


Fig. 2. The share of traditional products from lowlands, hill and mountain areas in total (2022)

Source: Own determinations based on National Register of Traditional Products 2022 [11].

In the vegetables and fruits category, the certified products from the hill areas represent

almost 30% and consist mainly of juices and compotes.

The development of traditional products in lowland areas

In the lowland areas, development is far advanced in traditional products. Only 12 products from 2013 were certified in 2022 (5 products from the meat category, 1 from the vegetables and fruits category, 2 from the bread and pastries category, and 4 from the fish category). They come from the villages of Maramureș, Tulcea, Buzău, Botoșani and Olt counties. So, in 2022, 302 products were certified, of which only 12 have been approved since 2013. In 2022, most traditional products from lowland villages come from the meat and meat products category (49.7%) and the bread and bakery products category (18.5%) (Table 2). The situation is different from 2013, when meat, dairy and fish products were in the first place. The importance of bread, bakery and patisserie products, meat and meat products from lowland villages has increased, reaching almost half of the products in this category in the whole country. The situation is more positive in the category of beverages, where the products from the lowlands account for 58.6% of the total.

Table 2. The evolution of traditional products in 2013-2022 period by types of products in lowlands

	2013		Share in total (%)	2022		Share in total (%)	2022/2013 (pp)
	Number	%		Number	%		
Beverages	0	0.0	0	17	5.6	58.6	58.6
Meat and meat products	32	56.1	42.7	150	49.7	49.0	6.4
Milk and milk products	7	12.3	23.3	29	9.6	21.6	-1.7
Vegetables-fruits	6	10.5	20.0	34	11.3	28.8	8.8
Bread, bakery, and pastry products	5	8.8	21.7	56	18.5	49.1	27.4
Fish	7	12.3	100.0	12	4.0	42.9	-57.1
Other	0	0.0	0.	4	1.3	66.7	66.7
Total	57	100.0	33.3	302	100.0	41.1	7.8

Source: Own determinations based on National Register of Traditional Products 2013 [10] and 2022 [11].

The development of traditional products in hill areas

In mountain areas, only 1 product from 2013 was certified in 2022 (from Bistrita-Nășăud County). We encounter in 2022 the Thus, in 2022, 84 new traditional products were registered, of which 41.2% are vegetable and fruit products, 25% meat products and 18%

dairy products (Table 3). This is a different situation from 2013, when meat and bakery products were in first place. The share of hill areas in the total country was below 18% in all categories of traditional products. However, the importance of bakery products from hill areas has increased, reaching almost

30% of products in this category in the whole country.

Table 3. The evolution of traditional products in 2013-2022 period by types of products in the hill areas

	2013		Share in total (%)	2022		Share in total (%)	2022/2013 (pp)
	Number	%		Number	%		
Beverages	0	0.0	0.0	1	1.2	3.4	3.4
Meat and meat products	10	66.7	13.3	22	25.9	7.2	-6.1
Milk and milk products	0	0.0	0.0	15	17.6	11.2	11.2
Vegetables-fruits	1	6.7	3.3	35	41.2	29.7	26.3
Bread, bakery, and pastry products	4	26.7	17.4	7	8.2	6.1	-11.3
Fish	0	0.0	0.0	4	4.7	14.3	14.3
Other	0	0.0	0.0	1	1.2	16.7	16.7
Total	15	100.0	8.8	85	100.0	11.6	2.8

Source: Own determinations based on National Register of Traditional Products 2013 [10] and 2022 [11].

The development of traditional products in mountain areas

In mountain areas, only 11 products were certified in 2022 from 2013 (7 products from the vegetables and fruits category; they are from Maramureş, Braşov and Neamţ counties) and 337 new traditional products were registered. The traditional mountain products are generally derived from meat and milk (almost 65%) and about 28% are vegetable

and fruit products and bakery products (Table 4). In 2013, the structure was almost the same, but we had only 99 certified products. In 2022, traditional mountain products account for more than 40% of national products in almost all categories, and as much as 67% in the dairy products category. However, if we compare the share of mountain products in the two years studied, we notice a sharp increase in the category of fish products

Table 4. The evolution of traditional products in 2013-2022 period by types of products in mountain areas

	2013		Share in total (%)	2022		Share in total (%)	2022/2013 (pp)
	Number	%		Number	%		
Beverages	5	5.1	100.0	11	3.2	37.9	-62.1
Meat and meat products	33	33.3	44.0	134	38.5	43.8	-0.2
Milk and milk products	23	23.2	76.7	90	25.9	67.2	-9.5
Vegetables-fruits	23	23.2	76.7	49	14.1	41.5	-35.1
Bread, bakery, and pastry products	14	14.1	60.9	51	14.7	44.7	-16.1
Fish	0	0.0	0.0	12	3.4	42.9	42.9
Other	1	1.0	100.0	1	0.3	16.7	-83.3
Total	99	100.0	57.9	348	100.0	47.3	-10.5

Source: Own determinations based on National Register of Traditional Products 2013 [10] and 2022 [11].

CONCLUSIONS

The list of traditional products certified by national authorities changes every year. Due to the high selling prices, it is very difficult to comply with the production conditions and stay on the market. Thus, in 2022, only 24 products were approved that were registered in 2013. However, in 2022 we have over 700 traditional products, of which 302 are in the lowlands, 85 in the hills and 348 in the mountains. These are meat products (over 40%), usually from pigs and sheep, dairy

products (about 18%) (usually cheese) and vegetable and fruit products (about 16%) (juices, jams, etc.). We have also noticed an increase in bakery products (such as bread and cakes) in the lowlands and fish products in the mountain areas (especially trout).

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