Romanian Local Food Qualification for Rural Development Perspectives

Oana BRÎNZAN, Eugenia TIGAN, Claudia MURESAN, Sabin CHIS

“Aurel Vlaicu” University of Arad, Faculty of Food Engineering, Tourism and Environmental Protection, Arad, str. Elena Drăgoi, no 2, 310330, email: oana.brinzan@uav.ro

Abstract: European and Romanian legislative framework is designated to protect authentic and diverse food and foodstuff products in order to offer information about the origin of the product, to preserve local tradition of raw material utilization and local processing technologies, to protect and promote their product though a certain recognized label. Romanian rural space preserved many traditional or protected designation of origin / geographical indication foods as an expression of our culture and nowadays many of them passed through qualification schemes in order to bring economical and cultural benefit to their local rural area.

Keywords: agricultural products, foodstuffs, protected designation of origin (PDO), protected geographical indication (PGI), traditional specialities guaranteed (TSG).

INTRODUCTION

The logos for Protected Designations of Origin and Protected Geographical Indications (PDOs and PGIs) both apply to agricultural products or foodstuffs with a strong link to a specific region or place. The Traditional Speciality Guaranteed (TSG) logo is used for products with distinctive features and which either have traditional ingredients or are made using traditional methods.

DISCUSSIONS

The exceptional nature and quality of some products derives from both their place of production and the methods used to make them. Consumers and the food trade are increasingly interested in the geographical origin of food and other characteristics. The EU recognises this and has developed three ‘quality logos’.

The advantages of protecting these quality indications are that they:

• offer guarantees for consumers about origin and methods of production;
• deliver effective marketing messages about high value-added products;
• underpin rural businesses producing quality products by protecting the label against unfair imitation (European Communities, 2004).

EU consumers want safe food: they also want quality food. In addition, they want the EU to respect the diverse cultures and cuisines within its borders. The EU recognises this and has developed four ‘quality logos’: protected designations of origin and protected geographical indications (PDOs and PGIs), traditional speciality guaranteed (TSG) and organic farming.

At the same time, the EU believes food safety standards should promote, not limit, choice and quality. The aim is not to stifle innovation or homogenise the vast array of foodstuffs available on the European market, but to lay down the fundamental standards of safety to serve as a basis on which quality (European Commission, 2004).

The diversification of agricultural production should be encouraged so as to achieve a better balance between supply and demand on the markets. The promotion of products having
certain characteristics can be of considerable benefit to the rural economy, particularly in lessfavoured or remote areas, by improving the incomes of farmers and by retaining the rural population in these areas.

In view of the wide variety of products marketed and the abundance of product information provided, the consumer should, in order to be able to make the best choices, be given clear and succinct information regarding the product origin.

‘Designation of origin’ means the name of a region, a specific place or, in exceptional cases, a country, used to describe an agricultural product or a foodstuff:

- originating in that region, specific place or country,
- the quality or characteristics of which are essentially or exclusively due to a particular geographical environment with its inherent natural and human factors, and
- the production, processing and preparation of which take place in the defined geographical area (European Commission, 2004).

‘Geographical indication’ means the name of a region, a specific place or, in exceptional cases, a country, used to describe an agricultural product or a foodstuff:

- originating in that region, specific place or country, and
- which possesses a specific quality, reputation or other characteristics attributable to that geographical origin, and
- the production and/or processing and/or preparation of which take place in the defined geographical area (European Commission, 2004).

To be eligible for a protected designation of origin (PDO) or a protected geographical indication (PGI), an agricultural product or foodstuff shall comply with a product specification.

The product specification shall include at least:
(a) the name of the agricultural product or foodstuff comprising the designation of origin or the geographical indication;
(b) a description of the agricultural product or foodstuff, including the raw materials, if appropriate, and principal physical, chemical, microbiological or organoleptic characteristics of the product or the foodstuff;
(c) the definition of the geographical area
(d) evidence that the agricultural product or the foodstuff originates in the defined geographical area;
(e) a description of the method of obtaining the agricultural product or foodstuff and, if appropriate, the authentic and unvarying local methods as well as information concerning packaging and gives reasons why the packaging must take place in the defined geographical area to safeguard quality or ensure the origin or ensure control;

Romanian Government Decision 828/2007 establishes that:

- authorities responsible for checking documents for obtaining protection for a name (PGI or PDO) - Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development
- market authorities responsible for checking the labelling and use of the logo - National Authority for Consumer Protection
- control and inspection documentation for obtaining protection for a name (PGI or PDO) - private inspection and certification bodies (accredited according to European Standard EN 45011)

Romanian Government Decision no. 828 of 25 July 2007 on establishment of the protection of geographical indications and designations of origin for agricultural products and foodstuffs or foodstuffs product certification is the procedure whereby a state inspection and certification body agree that the product is genuine and in accordance with specifications or a
technical specification or regulation on the production, processing, definition, description, presentation, labelling and marketing.

The meaning of specification is the document that contains data on the product name and description, geographic area and evidence that the product originates from this method of obtaining the product and its link between the quality or characteristics of the geographical environment or geographical origin, the authorities or bodies verifying. Additional labelling elements and develops in accordance with Council Regulation (EC) no. 510/2006.

In Romania through Agriculture and Rural Development Ministry Order 906/2007 it is set:

- the procedure for registration and documentation for obtaining protection for a name (PGI or PDO)
- the procedure for declaring opposition nationwide
- the procedures for transmitting documents to the European Commission rules
- the specific model and use national logo

The procedure for registration and documentation to acquire the protection of geographical indications or designations of origin of a food or agricultural product is approved by Agriculture and Rural Development Ministry Order no. 906 of 30 October 2007, the procedure for declaration of opposition at national and procedure for submission to the European Commission request registration of geographical indications and designations of origin for agricultural products or food, to obtain protection at EU level.

Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, Directorate for Food, check the documentation for the registration and protection acquisition of geographical indications or designations of origin of an agricultural product or foodstuff. Documentation is accompanied by:

a) the act of association, regardless of legal form or composition of the group of producers or processors, and status; the association can be included and organizations to promote the product, which is an economic interest of producers or processors to which they belong;
b) affidavit that the group represents producers and processors in the geographical area defined in the specification

c) the specification must contain the elements set out in Regulation (EC) no. 510/2006;
d) data, documents, etc., highlighting the link with the geographical area, the link between geographic and product quality or characteristics or a specific quality, reputation or other characteristics of the product, showing that the product for which protection is sought have other quality characteristics that distinguishes it from products in the same category obtained outside the production area;
e) data, documents, references, etc., showing the historical connection of product development,
f) socio-economic data containing the following information: - current production - estimated amount for 5 years - the number of customers (actual and potential) on each segment of the product chain (production, distribution, marketing, etc.). - geographical destination of the product current and forecast for 5 years;
g) the current economic situation and forecast for 5 years

h) colour map of adequate size to allow precise delineation of the production area or boundaries set
i) affidavit attesting to the authenticity of the information provided;
j) copy of the contract with a private inspection and certification of agricultural products or foodstuffs for verifying and certifying reliability of the data contained in the specifications;
k) other data and information showing the necessity of acquiring protection.
The situation by numbers of protected designation of origin (PDO), protected geographical indication (PGI) food and foodstuff al national level by categories in Romania

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.crt.</th>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Subcategory</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Dairy products</td>
<td>Milk</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Yogurt</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Buttermilk</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Yellow cheese</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Fresh cheese</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Cheese</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Matured cheese</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Meat products</td>
<td>Salami</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Sausage</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Bakery products</td>
<td>Bread</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Pretzels</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Pie</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Fruits</td>
<td>Processed fruit</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>78</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Regulation no. 212/2004 of Romanian Agriculture and Rural Development Ministry

Looking at these numbers it is seen that many food and foodstuff products were qualified and promoted as rural developments assets. Here local or national promotes took in consideration the interaction between physical environment like local plant varieties of animal breeds, cultural values like traditional techniques, myths and stories, economic heritage like skilled human resources. The qualification procedure was a local or a national initiative as a result of a well conceptualised strategy or just an expression of local will for promoting their products.

By European Council Regulation (EC) No 509/2006 of 20 March 2006 on agricultural products and foodstuffs as traditional specialities guaranteed, ‘traditional’ means proven usage on the Community market for a time period showing transmission between generations; this time period should be the one generally ascribed to one human generation, at least 25 years.

‘Traditional speciality guaranteed’ means a traditional agricultural product or foodstuff recognised by the Community for its specific character through its registration. The characteristic or set of characteristics referred to specific character may relate to the product's intrinsic features such as its physical, chemical, microbiological or organoleptic features, or to the product's production method or to specific conditions that pertain during its production (European Commission, 2006).

In order to qualify as a traditional speciality guaranteed (TSG), an agricultural product or foodstuff shall comply with a product specification. The product specification shall include:

a) the specific name, in one or more languages, indicating whether the group applies for registration with or without reservation of the name;
b) a description of the agricultural product or foodstuff including its main physical, chemical, microbiological or organoleptic characteristics;
c) a description of the production method that the producers must follow, including where appropriate the nature and characteristics of the raw materials or ingredients used and the method of preparation of the agricultural product or foodstuff;
d) the key elements that define the product's specific character and, where appropriate, the reference basis used;

e) the key elements that prove the product's traditional character. An agricultural product or foodstuff shall either be produced using traditional raw materials or be characterised by a traditional composition or a mode of production and/or processing reflecting a traditional type of production and/or processing.

f) the minimum requirements and procedures to check the specific character.

The procedure for registration and documentation to acquire a traditional specialty guaranteed protection, the procedure for declaring opposition nationally and procedure for submission to the Commission an application for a traditional specialty guaranteed, to obtain protection at EU level, and specific rules about design and use of national logo is set by Romanian Agriculture and Rural Development Ministry Order Nr.160 from 14.03.2008.

To appear in the register of certification of traditional products, the product must be made from traditional materials to produce a traditional composition or a mode of production and/or processing reflecting a traditional type of production and/or processing.

Registration is not allowed for a product whose traditionalism is due to:

a) provenance or geographical origin,
b) the application of technological innovations;

To be registered, traditional product must:

a) to be traditional in itself, or
b) express traditionalism.

The situation by numbers of traditional food and foodstuff al national level by categories in Romania

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Meat products</th>
<th>Dairy products</th>
<th>Bakeries</th>
<th>Vegetables and fruits</th>
<th>Honey</th>
<th>Fish</th>
<th>Oil</th>
<th>Non alcoholic Beverages</th>
<th>Alcoholic Beverages</th>
<th>Total products</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ALBA</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>164</td>
<td>202</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>452</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARGES</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>419</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GALATI</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>556</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TIMIS</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIOR</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>144</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BRASOV</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IASI</td>
<td>172</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>292</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>536</td>
<td>933</td>
<td>438</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>224</td>
<td>2185</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: National Office of Romanian traditional and organic products

As is easily seen the number of a traditional speciality guaranteed (TSG) products are impressively bigger comparative with protected designation of origin (PDO), protected geographical indication (PGI) products because Romanian rural space has a large tradition and well preserved in consuming traditional food for an extensive period of time. Preparation
methods were passed through generation to generation and now is an important part of local
tradition and a very important instrument of rural development.

CONCLUSIONS

All agricultural products and foodstuffs, even if there are protected designations of
origin (PDO), or protected geographical indication (PGI), or traditional specialities
guaranteed (TSG), are passing through a long ways and sometime difficult for their
qualification. Romanian legislation is fully compatible with the European one and is giving
full recognition to specific label. It is important that this recognition to become an active
instrument of rural development and not just to became a local activity for occasional fairs
and exhibitions. It is important that our customers to recognise the specific label, to value and
appreciate the results of this work and understand the importance of their consume in
generating added value for economic and social – cultural rural space, especially for ones who
became marginalised during time.

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