

## Traditional food technologies opportunity to increase the competitiveness of agriculture

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### Abstract

*The purpose was to highlight the link between Romanian traditional products- traditional food technologies - agritourism development, finding at the same time a way of regionalization of traditional food technologies and gastronomic agritourism. Therefore, capitalizing the potential of the space, mentioned above, will increase the chances in the development of certified traditional products and agritourism, reevaluating the traditional food technologies, even if Romania experience its debut phase. The study focuses on the analysis and interpretation of the legislative framework concerning the Romanian traditional products and National Register Of Traditional Products (RNPT) according to Order no. 724/2013 of 29 July, 2013; the geographic distribution of products, their mapping and matching with the identification, interpretation and comparison of certain scientific ideas about traditional occupations, aspects of history and ethnology, features of landscape, etc. In the end, we have to admit that, as far as we know, the Romanian literature does not cover studies focused on our research idea, the majority analyzing the national market of traditional products in the EU.*

**Keywords:** certified traditional products, Romanian acknowledged recipes, certified traditional food technologies, agritourism development, and regionalization of traditional food technologies

### 1. Introduction

The European Union legislation establishes strict criteria which guarantee the European product quality, and the European Union quality systems allow the identification of the food or agricultural products obtained in accordance with well-defined specifications. In Romania, traditional products have been certified since 2005, but national legislation was ambiguous and allowed the registration of a large number of traditional products until 2013, some of them being industrially obtained (Fintineru [3]). The implementation of the Order no.724/2013 of 29 July 2013, regarding the certification of traditional products and the certificate obtained by the economic operators, give more safety, protection and promotion to the traditional products. The promotion of a certain gastronomic product, by preserving skills and techniques, means readopting history, acquiring the lost things and leads, at the same time, to creation, innovation and acceptance of change (Vintila [12]). Thus, the definition in the legislative act (Order no. 724/2013 of 29 July 2013 concerning the certification of traditional products) is extremely comprehensive: "food product obtained on national territory using local ingredients, which does not have food additives in its composition, proves a

traditional recipe, a way of production and/or processing and a traditional technological procedure, which can also be distinguished from similar products of the same category”). This definition is almost similar to the one formulated by Weichselbaum, Benelam and Soares Costa in 2009. According to them traditional food is a “food with a specific feature or features, which distinguish it clearly from other similar products of the same category in terms of the use of ‘traditional ingredients’ (raw materials of primary products) or ‘traditional composition’ or ‘traditional type of production and/or processing method.” (Weichselbaum [16]). History and ethnological studies (including the ones which analyze the economic reality of the communities) have proved consistently that the two main occupations - crop production and livestock farming - provided the basics of food, being completed by the ones arising from hand picking, fishing and hunting. Quite late, during the interwar period, when Romania was internationally known, as a predominantly agricultural country, certain statistical analysis (Vitanos [13]) concerning the economic occupations (class of professions)-based on the 1930 national census-revealed that the majority of Romanians worked in agriculture (95.6% in rural settlements). At the same time the proportion of the workers in industry was increasing, the small industry recorded an important development also in rural settlements, by building workshops, factories, which were processing the agricultural products. Traditional products lead to a new rediscovery and valorisation of rural cuisine, or more appropriate-certified rural cuisine-, long after the efforts of the reputed specialist in food, wines and Romanian traditions, Radu Anton Roman who characterized it in one of his studies: “I have to admit, with great sorrow, that the vast rural cuisine of Romania is still undiscovered!” (Roman [11]; Bulletin européen [17]; Ghidul Gastronomic al României [18])

## 2. Material and methods

Furthermore, the definition of Romanian consecrated recipe-”the alimentary product obtained using the same ingredients with more than 30 years before the adoption of this order”, and all the other articles of Order 394/2014 regarding the certification of alimentary products obtained by Romanian consecrated recipes, do not use the word “tradition”, as the normative act which regulates the traditional products does. Even the names of the alimentary products, as they appear in The National Register of Consecrated Recipes (RNRC), according to Order no.394, and also in The National Register of Traditional Products (RNPT), according to Order no.724/2013 of 29 July 2013, regarding the certification of traditional products, are quite similar, recording slight differences (usually, the names end with the enterprise name, name or surname of the producer or both, or with the settlement name, etc.), causing confusion for consumers and even tourists.

**Table 1. Example of Certified Alimentary Product Included In National Register of Consecrated Recipes (RNRC), According To Order No.394/2014, Accessed In 2015**

RNRC Number Of Certification	Category	Operator identification number	Name of the Certified Alimentary product	Enterprise Name	Contact
22/28.01.2015	Meat products	04-01-02	Smoked fillet	S.C.AGROSU INDCOM S.R.L	Zărnești Commune, Traian Village, Neamț County

Source: [http://www.madr.ro/docs/ind-alimentara/retete\\_consacrate/RNRC-update-30.04.2015.pdf](http://www.madr.ro/docs/ind-alimentara/retete_consacrate/RNRC-update-30.04.2015.pdf)

For this reason, the analysis does not include the alimentary products obtained by Romanian consecrated recipes, even if, many specialists believe that they would be successful both at national and international level, because foreign consumers always search the authenticity of the regions they visit. They also could contribute to the completeness of Romanian traditional food technologies and its regionalization, developing agritourism activities along with traditional products. According to the amount of the traditional products for each settlement, county and the seven categories of products included in National Register of Traditional Products (RNPT), complying with Order no. 724/2013 regarding the certification of traditional products for years 2014 and 2015, we can deduct a number of issues related to the geographical distribution combined with scientific papers (historical, ethnological, geographical, economic) and documents on sustainable economic development and agritourism.

**Table2. Example of Alimentary Product Included In National Register of Traditional Products (RNPT), According To Order No.724/2013 Regarding the Certification of Traditional Products, Accessed In 2015**

Year	County	Categories	Name of the Certified Product	Contact	Producer	Certificate Number
2015	Brasov	Meat and meat products	Dumbrava smokedfillet	Rupea , 213Republicii street, BrasovCounty	S.C COMINTER DUMBRAVĂ IMPEX S.R.L	335

Source: <http://www.madr.ro/industrie-alimentara/produce-traditionale-romanesti/implementarea-ordinului-nr-724-2013-privind-atestarea-produselor-traditionale.html>

Various country distribution (amount and categories) of Romanian traditional products, a localization which appears not to be random on the map of Romania, but based on a sumum of connections established between man and nature, within competition of socio-economic and political factors, setting up certain areas, distinct centers by content and interest: in 2014, RNPT indicated 362 traditional products in 25 counties (...of all, most from mountain areas, hills, plateaus or in proximal vicinity) and 85 settlements, including 23 towns (27.05% of all) and 62 villages belonging to communes or cities (72.95% of all); in 2015 (27<sup>th</sup> of May, 2015, the date we accessed the website), RNPT indicated 421 Romanian traditional products in 27 counties (Bistrita and Dambovita County were added to the list) and 105 settlements, including 28 towns (26.66% of all) and 77 villages belonging to communes and cities (73.34%). Therefore, during 2014-2015, the amount increased by 62 traditional products added to the 26 settlements: 6 settlements indicated by RNPT since 2014, having together 14 products (CătălinasiGhelinta- Covasna County; Sălasu de Jos – Hunedoara County; Preluca Nouă, Seini - Maramures County); the other 48 products were certified in 20 settlements (14 villages: Loman and Ponor - Alba County; Gliganu de Jos - Arges County; Vlăsinesti and Rădeni – Botosani County; Prejmer and Vlădeni-Brasov County; Zilisteanca – Buzău County; Lunga and Sântionluca – Covasna County; Botiza and Chechis – Maramures County; Delus – Suceava County; Stroesti – Vâlcea County) and 6 urban settlements (Bistrita, Brăila, Făgăras, Tăusii Magherus, OcnaMures, Pucioasa).

The certification of traditional products in urban settlements (27.05% in 2014 and 26.66% in 2015) can be explained by “bringing tradition to the cities”, as follows: 1) due to active persons available in rural areas, with their final setting up in urban areas between 1950 and the 70's, caught up in definitive internal migration, wide spread in Romania, generated by the increase of manpower in agriculture and an excess of jobs in industry and services, which represented the main “consequences” of industrialization and mechanization of agriculture and the main “causes” of migration from rural to urban regions.

Vladimir Trebici (1971), analyzing the 1966 Romanian census results, concluded that 59% of the Romanian urban population was formed, at that time, by people born in other settlements than in those where they were residing; some of these people, were emigrants between cities, but the majority represented a substantial shift from rural to urban areas.

Analyzing, the 1977 Romanian census results, some geographers (Allen [1]; Cucu [2]) concluded that urban settlements (towns and cities) recorded the largest population growth, therefore 55.7% of Romanian population was born, at that time, in other settlement than the one of residence or 2) due to a part of population, available once in rural areas who returned, mostly from urban areas (some having qualifications in agriculture and agro-food) at their origin places since 1989, included in the main direction of urban-rural migration (Institutul de Geografie București [19]) started in Romania since 1994, as a result of the social consequences generated by economic restructuring, the determinants led to the staff redundancies in industry and regaining land ownership. Processing agrifood products, certified as traditional products in urban settlements, is made based on private farms set up in rural areas to ensure a wider market outlets. In either of the two situations, these economic units are profitable, and represent the proof of tradition breath, the affirmation of their identity in urban mass by the certified traditional products they produce, a way of putting into practice the knowledge acquired in the places of origin (Table 3).

**Table 3. The Dynamics of Certified Traditional Products (2005-2015)**

Year	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Number of Certified Products	280	695	774	325	450	279	1050	438	111	362	421

Source: <http://www.madr.ro/industrie-alimentara/produse-traditionale-romanesti.html>

### 3. Results and Discussions

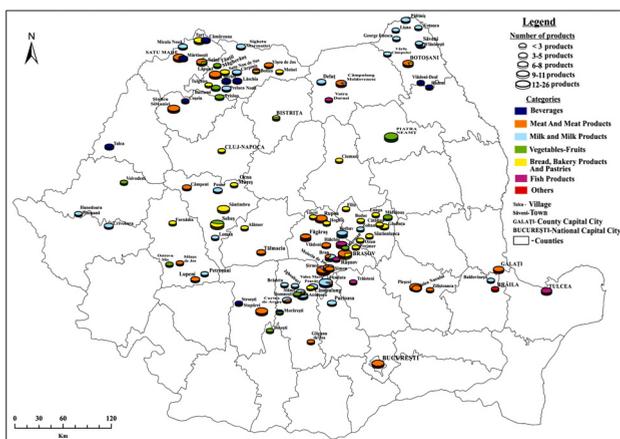
The first area of settlements, and also the largest, consists of 40 settlements (38% of the total of 105 in 2014) and 173 traditional products, including all the categories (41.09% of 421 in 2015) in Covasna County (9 settlements and 18 traditional products), Brasov County (16 settlements and 108 traditional products, 25.65% of all Romanian products, the county with the highest amount), the North-West of Prahova County (one settlement and one traditional product), the extreme North of Dâmbovița County (one settlement and three traditional products), the North of Arges County (10 settlements and 31 traditional products), Olt County (one settlement and one traditional product) and Vâlcea County (2 settlements and 11 traditional products), covering mostly, the Carpathian Mountains, Brasov Depression, and the Sub-Carpathians. It is part of the vast area of the ancient Romanian sheep farming, in various types – local-agriculture and migratory – and is also part of the transhumance origin area, located in southern Transylvania and initiated during thirteenth-fifteenth centuries, for various economic, social and political reasons, with free settlements as “a necessary condition for transhumance was its freedom”. Thus, we can explain why two of the six categories of traditional products - meat and meat products, milk and dairy products - are located mainly in Brasov, Dâmbovița, Arges and Vâlcea Counties, many of actual settlements being mentioned as Romanian shepherding centers in the historical documents. For example, they show, during the peak of transhumance, reduced flocks belonging to Transylvanian households in Bran Territory (Vlădeni, Bran, Șirnea, Fundata, Simon, Bran), Brașov District (Brașov, Râșnov, Prejmer) indicates villages as Bran, Moieciu, Fundata, etc who practiced wide transhumance (in summer-on Southern and Eastern slopes of the Carpathians, in Wallachia and Moldova), villages situated on the transhumance road of Wallachia, some of them made by Romanians 11962

from Transylvania, like Jgheaburi in Arges County.(Iordache, 1986, p.18, 29). Also, the whole area is included into the system of ancient roads – some common, big roads of the country settled in time, some of them less known, away from domination security and despotism of the enemies, less regular, traditional (Vulcănescu [14]; [15]) – and rest stops. From all the big commercial routes of Medieval Romanian space – “that preceded the very foundation of Medieval Romanian states, like viae or rather magnaeviae, descending always along the rivers, linking, quite often, through their network, shoals and valleys, uniting at the same time the most important economic centers of our lives” (Vulcănescu, 1974, p.17) – here is the one that linked Brasov (large commercial center in Medieval Transylvania) to Targoviste (former royal residence of Wallachia), Bucharest and Giurgiu (Danube harbor). Well known in all documents and historical works, as a great trade route, today only in its area, between Brasov and Valea Mare Pravat, there are seven settlements with 62 traditional products (35% of the area covered). Starting from Valea Mare Pravat, the route was heading to Târgoviste, which was the new Wallachia capital residence, when Bran Route became more important than Olt Route, or Sibiu Route. When the Danube Route prevailed, the capital residence was established in Bucharest.(Panaitescu, 1969, p. 293-294).The whole area is also a touristic one, well known by the Romanian and foreign tourists, being centered on Brasov and its surroundings, Bran-Rucar-Dragoslavele Depression, urban and rural agritourism being practiced for decades, due to the exceptional natural and cultural heritage. Fundata and Șirnea villages have been on the list of the 13 settlements (out of the 118, identified and selected at national level) experimentally declared as touristic villages, when, for the first time in Romania, by Order no. 744/16 in July 1973, the Minister of Agritourism approved the framework of the organization, operation and guidance of agritourism activity and agritourism promotion in these settlements (Glăvan [6]). We consider that it is not a coincidence, for the two villages of the same commune, Fundata, to be recorded in 2015, a large number of traditional products, Șirnea-26 traditional products, the highest amount in Romania- and Fundata with 12 products. The second area, is smaller than the first one, having only 22 settlements (20.95% of 105, in 2014) and 91 traditional products (21.61% of 421 in 2015) from almost all the categories, except fish category, covering Maramures County (14 settlements and 46 traditional products, the second county by number of products after Brasov), Satu Mare County (6 settlements and 33 traditional products) and Sălaj County (2 settlements and 12 traditional products), including the North Side of the Eastern Carpathians, Western Hills and Plain. This area is characterized by a strong conservation of Romanian population traditions, in the struggle for defending the Orthodox Christianity, as in Transylvania it was a religion "tolerated" for centuries by the authorities. There were restrictions against schismatics and heretics, especially in the years 1352, 1356 and 1366. Such restrictions will require and will remain valid in the following centuries, but in certain circumstances they will be violated, sometimes with the consent of royalty, either because specific local situation turned out to be stronger, or because political reasons of a particular moment required the compliance of Orthodox worship, especially when princes of Wallachia and Moldova, as founders, interfered."(Istoria românilor [20]).The area also includes a traditional touristic region-Maramures and Oas- with exceptional natural attractions and a rich cultural heritage (historical monuments, wooden churches belonging to the Orthodox Christian worship - 8 registered in UNESCO, museums and public collections, art and popular tradition etc) and is part of the ancient Romanian shepherding region.The third area, and the smallest one, having only 11 settlements and 27 traditional products (milk and dairy products in 7 localities, beverages, meat and meat products, bread, bakery and pastries) covers only Botosani County and the extreme North-West of Moldavian Plateau. This space is evaluated and described in history documents as the final destination on the transhumance route where “shepherds or glade people” in Rodnei Mountains crossed Moldova River,

descending then on Bistrita River down to GuraBistricioarei. There they met with shepherds from Călimani. They all arrived to TgNeamt “and here some advanced to Iasi, others went on Hârlăului route and stopped around Botosani.” (Hall [7]; Iordache [8]). The area was on the great trade route of Moldova, after the capital - Suceava - which supported, first of all, the economic relations with Poland, had been moved to Iași, due to the relocation of the most important economy activities towards Danube River(Panaitescu [10]). Also, the area included the old Botosani town, a great fair, known for its intensive trade. Even if they are part of ZDS areas, some settlements are located inside and also outside the Carpathian Mountains. Among the settlements registered in RNPT, we can find on the list of PNDR administrative-territorial units, Annex 4A – Disadvantaged Areas (ZMD-Mountainous Disadvantaged Areas; ZDS-Areas with specific natural conditions, ZSD-Areas Significantly Disadvantaged) 42 settlements with traditional products of 105 (40%; 30 villages a in 2015 and 12 towns) and 35 settlements of 85 in 2014 (41.17%; 24 villages and 11 towns), most of all (rural settlements) being part of Mountainous Disadvantaged Areas. Why do we affirm this? Disadvantaged Areas are usually associated with a high biodiversity (animals and plants species or habitats), a beautiful landscape favorable to agritourism (rugged topography, longer duration of the snow season, etc) and a rich cultural heritage which, by exploiting its potential, ensure the future transformation of some areas becoming successful touristic regions by developing cultural agritourism and ecoagritourism. These disadvantaged areas, seen as traditional areas, are privileged from other areas with settlements registered in RNPT in 2014 and 2015, by the policy pursued in the country, as in many places in the EU, of conservation and transmission of traditions, including those related to culinary practice. Analyzing the National Spatial Plan – Section Vi<sup>th</sup>-Touristic Regions. Argumentative Studies, Assessment Of Touristic Potential In The Administrative-Territorial Units Of The Counties”, only for counties (Alba, Arges, Brăila, Brasov, Covasna, Harghita, Hunedoara, Maramures, Neamt, Prahova, Sibiu, Suceava, Tulcea,Vâlcea) with traditional products located in disadvantaged areas, we can mention our conclusions, regarding the scores awarded to the touristic resources (natural and anthropic) and infrastructure (general and touristic), complying the “Methodology For Evaluating Agritourism Potential In Basic Administrative-Territorial Units”.

Traditional products based on livestock farming - meat and meat products, milk and dairy products - are found, usually, in the Carpathians and the surrounding hills regions, as follows: in southern Transylvania, in the area of transhumance origin practiced by people who live in Romanian settlements, extended in Wallachia through Rucar-Bran-Dragoslavele depressions; in the marginal regions, less accessible, over mountains, such as Maramures, Hateg, Hunedoara, where Hungarian domination was not claimed because of natives resistance and other local circumstances (Matlovičová [9]; Giurescu [4]); in depressions called “countries” - Maramures, Oas, Hațeg, Brașov - due to their antecedence and permanent population reflected by ancient archaeological evidences, distinguished by a wide economic profile generated by a capitalized natural and socio-economic potential, considered to be true Romanian ethno-cultural hearths; in the settlements of areas economically vulnerable, on the impact of restructuring, due to the concentration of activity on mining and associated activities - Baia Mare, Petrosani Depression, returning to farming and processing the agricultural products complying new standards condition the regional development; in the landforms with proper altitudes which ensured space population. Knowing the landforms altitude, we tried to frame the settlements with traditional products, based on Claudiu Giurcăneanu research, on hypsometric scales (Giurcăneanu [5]). The lower scale, with altitudes below 1000 m, met the most favourable conditions for the humanization process, grouping almost all depressions, large valleys and peak plains where are located most of the settlements. They spread out across the entire Apuseni Mountains, surrounding the high

peaks, along the valleys in Eastern and Southern Carpathians. The higher scale, with altitudes above 1000 m, was also favorable for the humanization process, due to extended flat areas, so called "altitude platforms", covered by meadows and pastures, where altitude sheepfolds and settlements lie. Here are some examples of depressions and settlements with traditional products, classified by altitude: low altitude depressions and valleys (200-500 m) –Orăstie (Sebes in the Eastern Part), Făgăras Depression (with Tâlmăciu, Făgăras, etc.); middle altitude depressions (400-800 m), Braşov and Haţeg Depression (Sălasu de Jos), Maramures Depression (Sighetu-Marmatiei, Vişeu de Jos, Botiza etc.), Petroşani Depression (Lupeni and Petrosani), Arieşului Depression (Câmpeni, Ponor). These settlements have developed along valleys often spread out on slopes and upon hills; passes and pass depressions, with the main function of passage areas, crossed by major Transcarpathian roads - Giuvala-Bran (Bran, Moieciu). Traditional products on vegetables-fruits and beverages category, are recorded in settlements situated in the two major areas, and exceptionally beyond them. A higher concentration appears in the second area, Baia Mare and its surroundings, with 9 settlements (40.9% of total settlements with traditional products) due to the famous plantations of fruit trees (apple, pear, plum) and the ethnic specific found in drinks name (Apple Palinca, Pear Palinca, Plum Palinca). The products from bread, bakery and pastry category are located in depression areas in southern Transylvania, including the first major area (as it was called and described), and the second one. They occur where the climatic conditions and the relief are favorable for wheat and/or potato crops, along with affirmation opportunities for ethnic groups (Hungarians, Germans), although the Romanian peasant honored his best, serving them with bread, this one being the "house treat." We can easily notice the higher number and density of settlements with such products in Brasov Depression (8 products, 7 in Covasna County, recognized for its Hungarian-population), better agricultural cultivated, considered among all the Carpathians depressions "the interposed plain of Brasov" by its smoothness due to several floodplains that cross it. Therefore we find in RNPT names like "Fulop homemade bread with potatoes" (Certificate no. 355 in RNPT 2015), KurtosKalacs etc. This may explain why the largest bakery, confectionery and catering fair in Romania - GastroPan - and one of the most important in Eastern Europe has been organized for several years (tenth edition) in Brasov. "Fish" traditional products are registered (Figure no. 1) in the fewest settlements (2 in Brasov area - Tulcea,



**Figure 1.** The Geographical Distribution of Romanian Traditional Products - Number and Categories  
Source: achieved using 2014 and 2015 RNPT Data<sup>1</sup>

1. <http://www.madr.ro/industrie-alimentara/produce-traditionale-romanesti/implementarea-ordinului-nr-724-2013-privind-atestarea-producelor-traditionale.html>

Vatra Dornei, and Trăisteni in Prahova County), although fishing was an ancient occupation, the larger and varied fish fauna ensuring food for the entire population throughout the country.

The presence of fish traditional products in Tulcea (near Danube and Danube Delta) can be explained by the presence of Russian-Lippovan ethnic group recognized for the preparation of fish products which are the main component in their daily diet, by specific lifestyle and housing imposed by natural factors.

#### 4. Conclusions

First of all, we have to admit, that this geographical distribution of the certified traditional products is a typical one, as the Carpathians and the adjacent space wealth, have provided the basis of the activities that gave the specific of old housing. For the time being, the offer of the certified traditional products represents very little of the full potential of Romania. This growth is possible if the entrepreneurs (developers of these values whose business is supported by various types of financing, promotion, etc) proof a profound degree of professionalism which will provide the framework for: the enhancement of food products specific to each region, also mixed with the ethnic element, registered, this time, into a genuine and legitime cultural heritage, contributing to the certified traditional food technologies completion and its regionalization; in promoting certified traditional products as a agritourism brand, as an identity mark, a distinctive feature of a social group that provides historical depth and a permanent model in a constantly changing, of recognition and protection of the cultural heritage of the inhabitants of the Carpathian-Danubian –Pontic space; in agritourism; the challenges of the certificate traditional food technologies will no longer be limited to a few dishes, the offer will be wider, especially in the traditional touristical regions (Brasov and its surroundings, Maramureș-Oas, Bucovina) or other regions, less known (some settlements being located in disadvantaged areas in an exceptional landscape); the number of tourists will increase throughout the year with peaks during important religious holidays - Easter and Christmas -, raising sales in hospitality and entrepreneurship industries; in revitalization the villages by exploiting the traditions and reducing poverty, the residents migration to other areas searching for socio-economic opportunities, absorbing excess labor from agriculture, increasing the income of the elderly population involved in agritourism development, increasing women's social importance role, who hold the regional "food models" being "the head" in rural agritourism (many rural houses/agrotouristic guesthouses are headed by women).

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