

THE AGRO-INDUSTRIAL DISTRICT OF THE “CASTELMAGNO” CHEESE: SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC IMPLICATIONS FOR THE RURAL ENVIRONMENT OF A SMALL PIEDMONTESE VALLEY

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ABSTRACT.

The “Castelmagno” cheese is a traditional type of cheese with some distinctive characteristics; although the value of its production is relatively small, the economic implications for the rural environment in the area of origin are not marginal. This product has a long tradition, that goes back to the thirteenth century, it is produced only in a small area, in a limited quantity, and therefore can be hardly found at the retail level. The area of origin is a small alpine valley, where there are only three small villages; despite the relatively small production, this area is strongly dependent on cattle-breeding and production of “Castelmagno”. Besides local consumption, the product is distributed in some great cities in northern Italy, Europe and United States, where it is mainly consumed in restaurants or sold in “cheese boutiques”.

The objective of this paper is to study the origin and the evolution of the “Castelmagno” district, focusing on social and economic aspects and implications on the rural environment. In particular, we want to evaluate the impact of possible strategies and projects undertaken by the Consortium which manages this PDO product within the area of production, emphasizing that the concept of ‘typical product’ is the result of several different aspects and their unique combination.