

*Typical and traditional productions:
Rural effect and agro-industrial problems*
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**The evolution process towards the setting up of strategies of valorisation of
typical local products.**

The case of Garfagnana spelt.^{??}

ABSTRACT

The aim of this paper is to analyse the evolution process that has occurred in a small mountain production system, in the north of Tuscany, i. e. the Garfagnana spelt production, which has survived over time into the local cultural tradition but has recently undergone an intense revitalisation process.

The authors intend to analyse the central aspects of that evolution process, with particular attention to the role of the relations among the various actors involved, their quality and their changing over time, in view of their importance in influencing the organisation and hence the development potential of the local system.

INTRODUCTION

The production of quality products and more specifically of typical local products is clearly an important development strategy for the agro-food system. As regards this a very important role is played by the evolution trends of food consumption models. In fact, where foodstuffs are in the maturity phase of their *life cycle*, there is an increasing diversification of demand and a more and more frequent tendency to prefer quality and highly differentiated products.

Such a strategy becomes even more important in the development of rural areas, in particular of those traditionally considered to be at a disadvantage in terms of "production efficiency". In these

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contexts, the preservation of natural resources, which is sometimes indicated as the essential function of the agriculture in such areas, may be a part of a much more significant role through which agricultural production activities may contribute to a more general valorisation of the territory's resources. The manufacturing of quality products and the possibility of differentiating them by stressing the peculiar characteristics of the place of production is a great opportunity for development, more significant than the promotion of the individual production activities.

The study of issues regarding the manufacturing of quality products in specific local contexts and the role they may have in the valorisation strategies of a territory involves an analysis of the mechanisms of production, management and consumption of quality and, more generally speaking, of the perception of quality of the actors involved.

An important reference point in the whole production-promotion process is clearly the consumers' "expectations", especially the increasing attention to healthy aspects of diet and the more and more frequent search for evocative-symbolic contents of products. Consumers' behaviour, though, are only one of the factors which lead to the definition of the quality of products. In addition, there is the perception of quality and the behaviour of the other actors involved at the various stages of the production-consumption process and in the specific contexts. From this point of view concepts and content of quality and of the typical character of products assume a greater complexity, in which contexts, behaviours and interactions among actors become essential elements.

The quality of products derives from a complex and continuous "negotiation" among the various actors, more or less directly involved in its achievement and consumption. A "social construction" which is therefore variable in space and time. This process assumes a greater significance for products differentiated on the basis of their typical characters: in this case, the role played by specific characteristics of local production contexts (historical, cultural, social, economic, environmental). In this process of definition and management of the specific quality the valorisation of the link between production and the territory's characters and image is of prime importance, in a synergetic relationship which benefits both; hence, the local actors' ability to interact and to focus on joint goals becomes an essential factor for success.

The following analysis deals with the evolution process that has occurred in a small production system, which has survived over time into the local cultural tradition but has recently been forced to create its own market space and a specific identity.

The production in question, that is the production of spelt, belongs to the production and consumption tradition of a small area, called Garfagnana¹, which in the last 10 years has been involving in a widening of the production and trade area, because the product has started to be produced and sold in other areas, and has consequently been interested in a changing of the market positioning of its product. At the same time, local actors involved have gradually become aware, albeit to different degrees, of the potential of promoting the local product as a typical product and some initiatives have come from that. A fundamental step during this process is the awarding of the Protected Geographical Indication of *Garfagnana Spelt* ("*Farro della Garfagnana*").

¹ Garfagnana is an area located in the high hills and mountains in the northern province of Lucca (Tuscany); it corresponds to the highest part of the catchment-basin of the Serchio river, delimitationed from north to east by the Tosco- Emiliano Apennine Mountains and on the west and south by the Apuane Alps chain.

The case of Garfagnana spelt

The interest of the case is therefore given by the evolution path that has arisen (and still is) from the opportunity/necessity to set up valorisation strategies for spelt and, more generally speaking, for typical local products and so, potentially, for the "locality" (all the elements characterising the area: its natural environment, culture, tradition, etc.). This process involves, on the one hand, the aspects referring to the interaction between the local context and the wider external context, with particular regard to the potential opportunities for the valorisation of local resources; on the other, there are the problems connected with the creation of a specific identity and of a common representation of local resources by the local actors and, thus, with the development of a joint planning and acting capability.

1. THE CONCEPTUAL AND METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

The analytical and the methodological approach were strongly influenced by the need to consider all the aspects of a complex situation which involves other factors besides the economic factors.

1.1 The conceptual key

More and more frequently, in economic debates, the need to analyse phenomena in their environment and consequently the need for a multi-disciplinary approach for their comprehension emerge. Concepts such as "the complete production process" [1] or "the enlarged production process" [3] confirm this need, because they extend the analysis of production processes to the evaluation of the relation of mutual influence they have with the context – the natural and institutional environment, the various socio-economic elements - in which they are located. The studies on the demand highlight the role played by social and cultural factors in the evolution of consumption models as well and, thus, the ability of these to interact with the production world [12].

The importance of the interaction with the external environment raises new and relevant implications as regards the conceptual tools to be used. Both firm management and organisation studies maintain that performances and behaviours of any enterprise (organisation) are strongly affected by its network of relations which it helps to build and develop [15]. According to this approach, every organisation - individual or collective, public or private -, identified as an *actor* or a *node*, is interactive with others in exchanging material and/or immaterial resources (especially information) [4]. In particular, the actors meet within a socio-economic space defined *arena* [10; 11], where they, aware of the need to interact with the other actors, try to achieve their goals by managing relations through specific strategies (co-operation, competition, etc.). The actors follow an evolution path choosing the most convenient relationships and combining resources according to their goals. Hence, there are several evolution processes possible for every individual actor and for all the actors. The interaction among the actors gives rise to a field of forces which determines, at the same time, a continuous re-arrangement of resources, experience and power inside the

network². Such a conception also involves carrying out the analysis from a historical point of view, to observe and value phenomena underway.

The network analysis is a very effective conceptual tool in the study of local production systems with a "territorial" approach [2], aimed to obtain an interpretation as complete as possible of the characteristics and dynamics of such systems, by considering thus the role of social, historical, cultural, environmental elements characterising the contexts.

This is particularly evident in the analysis of local systems involved in the manufacturing of quality and/or typical local products, where the interaction among actors through the economic and non economic relations network have an important role in the organisation of these production systems and in their interaction with consumption. The quality and especially typical character of products may, thus, be considered the result of a social construction, of a "negotiation" process among all the involved actors [6]. Then, in the study of their definition and, thus, of their production and management (promotion, distribution, etc.), placed in specific space-time contexts, the actors' motivations and behaviours -individual and collective, private and state - and the way they interact become central to the issue. The actors' actions and interactions and the consequent results in terms of quality definition and management are influenced by actors' information and knowledge, as well as by the dominating positions among them.

Production centres thus appear as nodes of a complex relations network, with specific social, economic, cultural and environmental factors characterising local contexts [7; 8] making a decisive contribution to its formation. At the same time, the local systems are not only analysed in their internal organisation, but also in their interaction with the outside environment, as single nodes of a wider relations network, which influences their internal organisation too. The typical character of products is in fact legitimised mostly by the comparison with larger production contexts and the need to highlight and protect the specific characteristics arises from external stimuli as well.

1.2 The research method

The implementation of strategies to valorise the typical characters of products, based on the identity in a specific "locality" and, thus, the attention on joint valorisation objectives, requires the local actors to have the same representation of the environment and of its resources; their actions and the interactions among them reflect it and, at the same time, reinforce it [13]. On the methodological side, this increases the importance to evaluate not only external structural and organisational features but also the aspects having more to do with the sphere of individual behaviour and of the inter-relationships among actors. The latter are important for the evaluation of the features of the relations network in the territory and with the outside, as well as the ways in which the actors and the elements of the context in which they operate progressively contribute to its formation.

Such a complexity could not be understood and evaluated without combining the objective quantitative information provided by a general and indirect research with the qualitative

² The function of each actor inside the network is connected to the individual capability, the experience acquired and the institutional role played, while the quality of relations is influenced by the differences in information and knowledge (information asymmetry) of the actors.

The case of Garfagnana spelt

information obtainable from direct contacts with the context. The main tool of the field research was therefore *open interviews* with the various actors more or less directly involved in the production, trade and promotion, both inside and outside the territory.

Even the choice of the actors to be interviewed was made progressively, by using the existing links among actors as a guide, to outline a complete picture of relationships significant to the research.

2. THE LOCAL CONTEXT AND THE EVOLUTION OF ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURES: THE REDISCOVERY OF TRADITION BETWEEN INTEREST AND IDENTITY

"(...) In Garfagnana, in the post-war period there were 62.000 inhabitants when Italy numbered 43 millions of inhabitants. Today we are 57 millions; how much was this increase in percentage? It was 30%, was not it?(...) And even more. If this population was increased of 30% we should be at least 80.000 inhabitants, that is that instead of three inhabitants as we should have been, we are only one. How does this only one live? Here they live on sheep farming, on things that now are no more: the agriculture has been abandoned because they say "it does not pay very well" (...). We should have done something more to make it yield more; obviously here it is not possible to sow what is sown, for example, in Maremma or in Val Padana, but here the cattle, for instance, could be bred in large amounts, because it lives well here, here there is healthy air and good food (...). Here, instead, all of that has been destroyed rather than being created (...). Then, what happens, these few people remained are good workers, but they go to work outside, to La Spezia, Lucca, Livorno, Firenze (...)".

(from an interview with a local farmer)

2.1 Garfagnana: environmental features and socio-economic development

Garfagnana, high hills and mountainous land belonging to the province of Lucca, tends over an area of 53.377 hectares and is divided into 16 municipalities. As has occurred in many Italian mountain areas from the beginning of the century Garfagnana has experienced a progressive intense marginalization in comparison with the neighbouring areas.

Despite signs of change over the last decades, resulting either from the progressive urbanisation and the development of industrial and service activities in the valley or the improvement in infrastructures, in particular in the communication ways, its development still appears to be slow and very much dependent³.

Only in the last few years the development pattern due prevalently to outside forces appears strongly interested in the valorisation of the local resources, such as the naturalistic and landscape elements, the historical-cultural elements and the traditional production activities which currently represent an important development opportunity.

³ At this regard, the high percentage of commuters among the residents is significant.

This evolution course has been supported by initiatives aimed at the promotion of the rural development in the “5b objective areas” - to which Garfagnana belongs -, in particular the Leader Programmes (I and II). They have contributed to promote an integrated approach to development based on the valorisation of all the local resources.

In this context, the position of agriculture has changed as well. Still today agriculture has a very important economic and social role⁴ but it has been at a distinct disadvantage due to the development pattern followed until now. In the past, production was in fact scarcely differentiated and prevalently local market oriented. At this regard, agriculture has been damaged not only by natural features of the territory but also by characteristics of the local rural entrepreneurs, who are not very responsive to innovation (especially in terms of organisation) and have a certain leaning for the welfare state. It should be noted that, in comparison with other Tuscan areas, Garfagnana did not benefit very much from the «dragging» effects deriving from the settlement of entrepreneurs from other areas and/or with different social backgrounds [9].

From a structural point of view, Garfagnana’s agriculture has the typical features of mountain agriculture, with little farms (in 1990 the average cultivable land was 3 hectares and more than 83% of the 3,377 farms had less than 5 hectares) which are diversified as regards production although with a prevalence of zootechnics (60% of the farms), in particular bovine, also characterised by small average sizes (the average per farm is about 6 head of cattle). In the allocation of total cultivable land (10,250.3 hectares) the percentage used for pasture is remarkable (59%); second in order of importance are permanent crops (23%) followed by annual crops (18%). The latter have increased sharply over the last ten years (+24%) because of the widening of cereals, characterised by a gradual substitution of wheat for other cereals, presumably spelt.

There are high expectations for the re-launching of agriculture in the application of rural development policies; in their integrated approach agriculture again plays a prominent role in the valorisation of the specific local resources.

2.2 Features and evolution of the cultivation and marketing of Garfagnana spelt

Spelt, commonly defined as a “hulled wheat”, is an ancient cereal whose cultivation area has gradually shrunk due to the increasing importance of other wheats such as soft and hard wheat. Only in the recent years it has been “re-discovered” because of the growing demand from specific consumption segments more and more interested in natural/dietetic aspects and in typical characters of foods.

Spelt has survived in Garfagnana, as in a few other mountain and hill areas (at altitudes between 500 and 1500 m.s.l.) until today thanks to its belonging to the local traditions⁵ and, thus, to the

⁴ Agriculture has a higher number of assets (in some municipalities the number of employed reaches 20%) in comparison with the provincial average and a lower ageing rate of the rural population.

⁵ Traces about the historical link of Garfagnana population with spelt are in different historical documents. A work of 1883, “La Garfagnana 1883-1993. Aspetti economici, agricoli, urbanistici e socioculturali”, reports: “(...) It was cultivated by many people, although only in few municipalities, in some mountain areas. After having harvested it, in August, they polish it; they use it for soups and cakes. The farmers of S. Romano and Vagli sell it to inhabitants of neighbouring areas and to the market. It costs 36-46 hundredths per kilogram (...)”.

The case of Garfagnana spelt

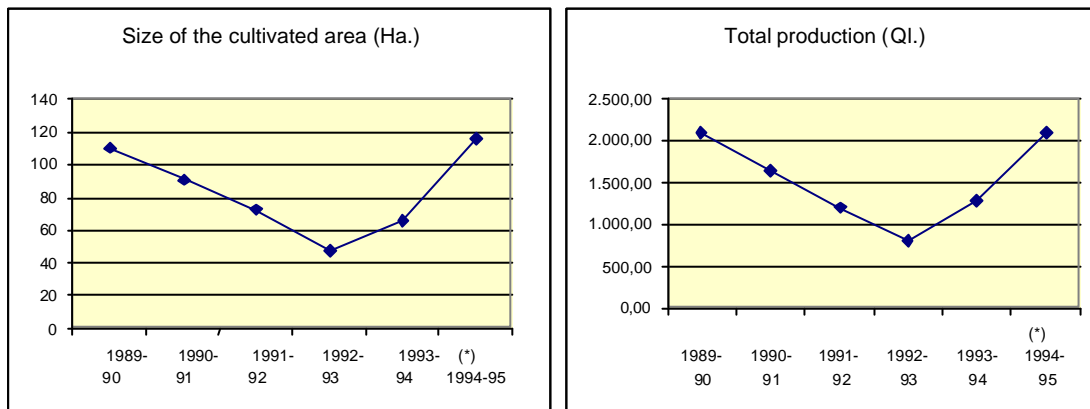
presence and maintaining of particular market “niches” (local consumption, typical cousine).

According to data provided by the Agriculture and Mountain Community Office (figure n.1) referring to the Nineties, after reaching the minimum area in 1992-93, the cultivated area is now increasing, having reached about 120 hectares in 1995-96 for a total production of about 2,600 quintals. It can be observed that, even if the average yield of spelt (18-22 quintals per hectare) is not very different from that of the other cereals grown in the area (soft wheat and barley), it is extremely profitable for the area thanks to its higher price.

There are currently around 80 farms growing spelt, characterised by a very small average size (little more than one hectare) and the prevalence of zootechnic productions (about 80%). Moreover, they are often run on a part-time basis. There is also a certain number of entrepreneurs of non-agricultural origin, who, attracted by the potential of profits offered by the cultivation and also by socio-cultural motivations, have turned out to be the most industrious promoters of the product and, thus, an important stimulus for the more traditional farms.

The cultivation technique is quite simple; no chemical inputs are used and for this reason spelt naturally assumes the characters of an “organic product” [15]. To be edible, the spelt caryopsis must be released from its covering by a peeling; afterwards a polishing operation may follow which, besides giving spelt the typical spotted look, also makes its cooking easier.

Figure n. 1 – Size of cultivation and production in the period 1989-95



There are two polishing techniques: a «traditional» technique, using a stone millstone covered with cork sheets, characterised by a very low yield (1-2 quintals per day), and a «modern» technique, using electric mills obtained by a suitable adaptation of the rice polishing technology and so much more efficient (1-1,5 quintals per hour). The product value after the polishing increases by about 3 times.

Garfagnana spelt is sold mostly through some big local wholesalers and two co-operative societies; in view of their turnover, it is reasonable to suppose that they also sell spelt coming from other production areas, exploiting the image of the local product.

In the last few years, however, the number of individual producers who succeed in placing their own spelt directly *c/o* final retailers or final consumers is growing. As already mentioned, this tendency to reduce the trade circuits is linked to the possibility of internalising the polishing phase into the farm activities. Another even more significant advantage (significant also as regards the entrepreneurship required) is the ability to supply a completely finished product, not only polished but also prepared in small and properly labelled packets, which maximises the added value for producers.

The product is distributed most of all to specialised retail outlets and to restaurants of the typical cuisine circuit, mostly in the region (although not evenly distributed depending on whether spelt is part of the local cuisine), but sometimes also further afield, generally on the markets of typical local products in Northern Italy.

The product is also placed more and more in mass distribution channels (Coop, Superal, Esselunga supermarket chains), both in the province of Lucca and in the neighbouring areas, not through wholesalers, but rather through processing firms⁶, located near the production areas, which have direct and stable contacts with supermarket chains.

Another important factor contributes to widen the market: over the last few years production has spread to other areas outside the territory, generally flat areas, where the crop is not grown according to tradition. Such an extension of the production and trade area has had important implications on the market positioning of the product: on the one hand a process of “un-differentiation” of the product has begun, on the other it has become necessary to differentiate Garfagnana’s production and, thus, to look for specific strategies.

2.3 The evolution of organisational structures

In the case of the production of Garfagnana spelt, the recent evolution of the local production system appears strongly influenced by the interaction with a wider external production and consumption context. In this situation the presence of useful elements in the local context to actively and consciously manage this evolution process assumes a great importance.

In the study of this system, the evolution process has been analysed focusing on the actors involved and the dynamics started by the network of relations existing and growing in the area and between this and the external context. To describe the sequence of events occurred in this about 10 years period and their implications a succession of phases has been identified:

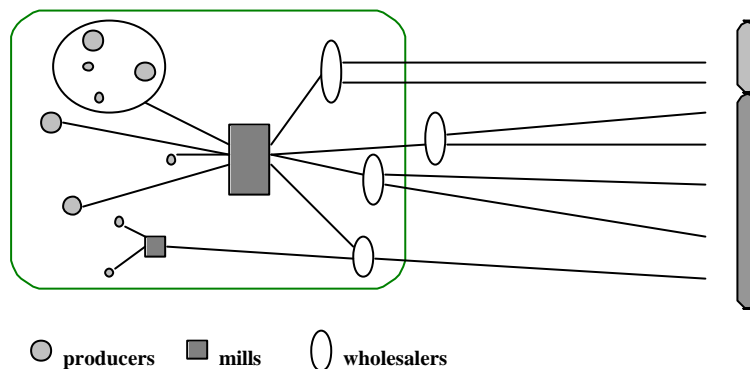
⁶ Rather than processing firms they are mixing firms that make dry pulses and cereals mixtures for the preparation of vegetable soups in which spelt is one of the main ingredients.

The case of Garfagnana spelt

2.3.1 The production tradition and the local market

At the end of the eighties the market context is stable and very small: the product belongs to the local cookery and is therefore known and appreciated especially by consumers of local or neighbouring areas (in the province of Lucca and La Spezia).

Production and trade are carried out by few producers (around 20), partly associated in two co-operative societies, and by some wholesalers (both local and from other areas of the province) who sell the product to retail outlets, partly specialised, and to restaurants on the circuit of the typical cuisine.



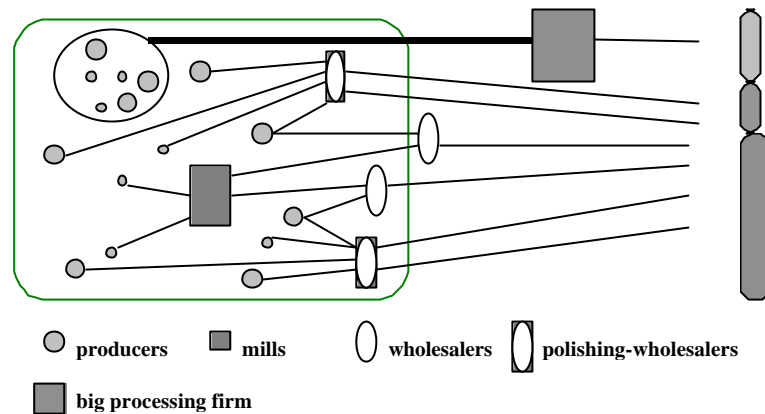
A central element of this system is a mill which carries out the polishing phase. By concentrating a high percentage of the production it becomes a «power node» and «almost a monopoly» both in relation to the producers and the wholesalers. So an increasing conflict arises together with the need for the search for new solutions, both technological and organisational.

2.3.2 The market growth and the internal reorganisation

Successively the market becomes more and more dynamic thanks to the increasing demand from specific consumption segments for foods containing intrinsic natural/healthy elements and/or symbolic-evocative features.

A strong effect on the local system, in 1991-92, comes from the interest in the spelt production of a big national firm working in the sector of health-dietetic products which, seeing the possibility of high profits from the launching of a line of spelt-based products, establishes a relation of vertical integration (supply contracts) with one of the local co-operative societies, based on much higher prices in comparison with the local market. Hence, the number of local producers sharply increases.

At the same time, the increasing conflicts deriving from the monopoly of the mill has led some wholesalers and the co-operative societies to by-pass this power position through the internalisation of the polishing phase. This determines a new spatial organisation of trade relations, allowing direct contacts between both local and nearby producers and wholesalers.



2.3.3 Strategies of product differentiation: the search of a market space

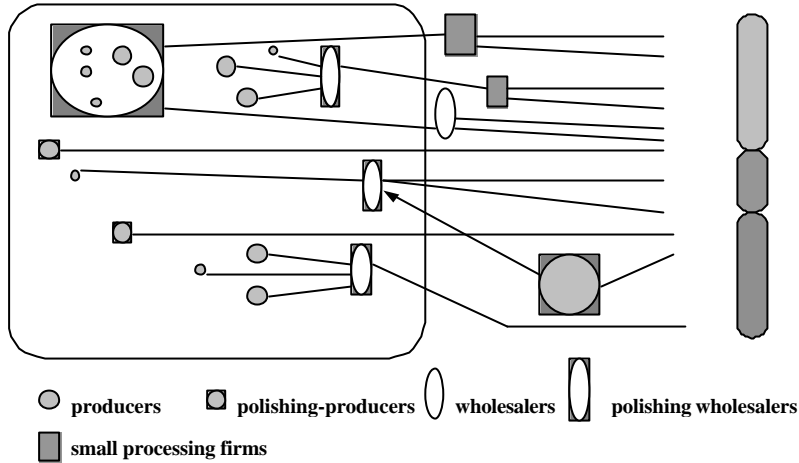
In this phase there is a further expansion and diversification in the demand and the development, outside Garfagnana, of new much more competitive production systems. At the same time, the integration relationship between the co-operative and the national firm has broken down because the line of products has not met with much success. As a consequence, there is a fall in the product price.

All this determines a growing conflict between local producers and wholesalers, the latter taking advantage of the asymmetries of information: they purchase spelt outside and then resell it as *Garfagnana Spelt*, exploiting the greater appreciation of the local product.

In this situation many producers prefer to abandon production, causing a strong decrease in the local supply. Other instead show a stronger will to defend and valorise their product: they reduce their dependence on wholesalers by including the polishing phase into the farm activities and by implementing marketing strategies (supply of a completely finished product, search for own trade channels, especially in the segment of specialised retail) in order to better or directly manage the commercialisation.

Local public institutions (especially the Mountain Community) begin to support the producers' entrepreneurship, as regards both the production level (subsidies for purchasing machinery) and the valorisation initiatives (application for the Protected Geographic Indication certificate).

The case of Garfagnana spelt



2.3.4 Strategies of product differentiation: the attention on the image of the territory

The demand for the product, which is still increasing, is by this time divided into various and different segments. These, in turn, are connected to different distribution channels: specialised and traditional retail, mass distribution, regional cuisine restaurants, the food industry (dry and frozen soups, biscuits) and the various channels for organic products.

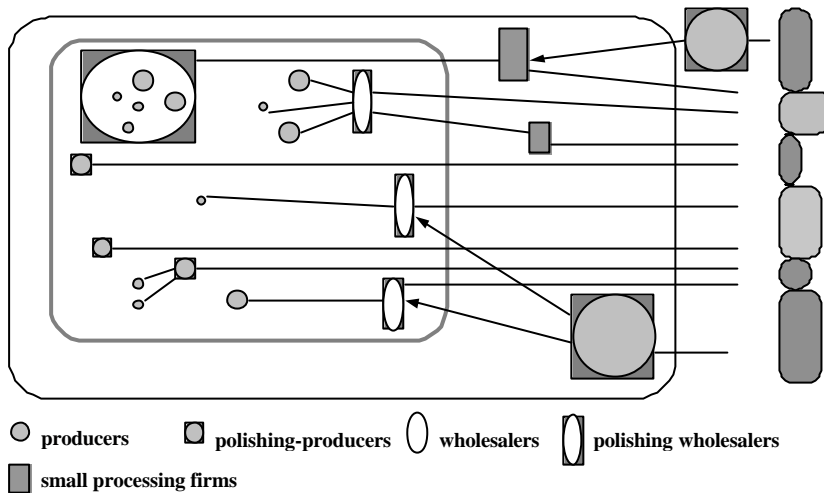
The market positioning of the product is changing. The product not only embodies the attribute of the typical local production but also the image of an innovative and, in one way, undifferentiated product placed on a wider market.

The expansion of the production and trade area is also having an increasing effect on the local organisational structure:

- ?? local wholesalers tend to adopt speculative sales strategies (also because they can take advantage of the situation as described above) and weaken the relations with local producers; a similar effect stems from the presence of processing and trading firms in the neighbouring areas, which have trade relations with distant production areas;
- ?? the producers and the local institutions begin to react to this tendency of “market globalisation” by looking for a differentiation on more select market segments based on a stronger defence and the promotion of the typical characters of the product⁷. In such a context, important joint experiences occur as: “*Garfagnana Produces*” Association, which for a long time was unable to carry out an effective valorisation strategy as regards the local products, has been revitalised; the *Producers of Garfagnana Spelt Association* has been created and this is the first initiative specifically aimed at the organisation of the local production system, with

⁷ The initiative includes the participation in national and international fairs, with the promotion of Garfagnana through its local products.

particular reference to the technical aspects; Garfagnana spelt has awarded a Protected Geographic Indication, with its control and promotion instruments.



In this phase, the implementation of rural development policies in the territory (especially the Leader Programmes) is particularly significant. The effects of such policies are various and are becoming increasingly important: the creation of concrete conditions for development plans (possibility of obtaining essential funds); the action to stimulate local Institutions to draw up specific projects; the progressive action to “educate” institutional operators to an integrated approach to the development, as regards both sectorial and intersectorial objectives of projects and methods, with the growth of a greater ability and awareness of the importance to interact and follow a joint plan of action.

3. THE DEVELOPMENT PROCESS TOWARDS THE SETTING UP OF VALORISATION STRATEGIES ON A TERRITORIAL BASIS

As regards the sequence of phases described above, here below is an analysis of some key aspects in the process of the local production system for working out and implementing valorisation strategies on a territorial basis. Attention is still focused on the behaviour and role of the various actors involved and on the quality and changing in time of the relations among them, in view of their importance in influencing the organisation and hence the development potential of the local system.

The case of Garfagnana spelt

Even if the evolution process has been gradual, by making a further schematisation it is possible to identify two main phases, corresponding to different configurations of the network of relations in the territory as well as of the reaction of the local context to external stimuli.

3.1 The growth phase: creation and consolidation of the market space

The first phase is that of growth which brings the creation (almost from scratch) and the consolidation of the market space of this production area. In this phase the action of exogenous elements is crucial: they affect the local system and help to start a development process.

In this context a key role is played by the evolution of the cultural models characterising the external environment, in particular of the consumption patterns, which introduces elements of revitalisation into local culture and production tradition.

Initially the relations with external economic agents (the large processing/trading firm) bring these stimuli to the local system. They are the first to realise the potential of the product and subsequently help to spread the product outside the local area, but stimulate its rediscovery within the area at the same time. Another important factor is the prompt reaction of the local economic agents working inside and outside the territory, that is, the wholesalers. They have been favoured because of their ability (thanks to available information) to perceive the current phenomena and market opportunities. Despite their opportunistic behaviour, wholesalers help to further consolidate both a wider demand and the local supply, thereby contributing to stimulate the local system.

In this phase, the producers are at a disadvantage because of the information asymmetries in their relations with wholesalers and are mostly unable to understand the situation and react. These limits show the role of the context and its history in influencing the actors' present ability and ways of action. In the past the characteristics and the socio-economic development of the territory had not encouraged the youngest and more enterprising people to stay in the area or the creation of an active exchange with the neighbouring areas. Now they make it difficult to promote innovation and to valorise production on market. Nevertheless in the specific case of spelt production and its market potential, these limits have not discouraged more enterprising people (not by chance those with closer relations with institutions), who have begun to act as a stimulus for the other producers. This has helped the start of new relationships inside the local production system characterised by a greater awareness of the local resources and potentially aimed at their valorisation.

Compared to the growth of individual entrepreneurship, there is still a general lack of collective planning skill and entrepreneurship; the local actors behave in an opportunistic, individualistic and, sometimes, conflicting way.

In the general context of the relations among local actors, the position of the local public institutions is inevitably the most difficult, considering that their institutional duties are to coordinate and organise the local social and production structure. Despite the advantage in the availability of information and, in the specific case, the awareness of the importance of valorisation strategies, they appear unable to communicate with the other actors and, most of all, to promote their involvement and the interaction among them, both in terms of methods and content.

The institutions are unable to involve the interested actors in the implementation of projects or, even before, in their planning phase; this is particularly important because it can influence the

effectiveness of any valorisation project⁸. There is also the lack of a policy for re-balancing the powers of the actors; in particular there are no efforts to help to establish co-operative relations among the actors potentially interested in the valorisation of the local production system, also in order to control the conflict with those who have other interests, such as wholesalers who behave in an opportunistic way. Another important limit to the action of public and private institutions is the poor interaction among the same in the management of the various projects regarding the territory, with the consequent lack of coherency and, even more, of synergy.

The inability to work in joint, coherent way is also demonstrated by the content of the carried out actions, which is largely concentrated on the promotion of individual products, besides without considering the other simultaneous initiatives in the management of the territory's resources. This undoubtedly represents a limit as regards opportunities linked to a wider-reaching promotion strategy, referring to a whole selection of products and services of which to spotlight and valorise the link with the territory; this strategy being part of a more general integrated approach in the management of local resources.

In the last analysis, the local actors' reaction to the external signs appears individual and un-coordinated. The process of organisation of the relationship aimed at the valorisation of local resources is at the beginning.

3.2 The planning phase: building of identity and active management of the development

In the more recent years, the particular commitment of public institutions in the valorisation of spelt typical characteristics led to the awarding of the Protected Geographic Indication certificate. This is a very significant experience. If it initially appeared a partial view rather than an integrated approach to the valorisation of territory's resources, its management has successively become a wider development opportunity for the involved actors.

This experience, in fact, highlights important aspects of the organisational evolution of the local system: the gradual growth of a common identity in the specific area and in its culture (the "locality") and the actors' progressive ability to interact to identify common development objectives and to achieve them. In this context better conditions seems to be developing to allow the involved actors to come to a common definition of the specific quality of the local products and, thus, to set up differentiation strategies. At this regard, the importance of close relations among the actors with the same interests is clear as is the importance of the role they may have in a conscious management of the conflicting relations.

This is what emerges in particular among actors with a greater perception capability, as institutions, both state and private. As regards the previous phase, they show more converging interests, in a relationship which is beginning to lay the foundation for a common planning and activity.

⁸ The initiatives set up for the promotion of spelt, personally co-ordinated by public bodies, end up by pushing the fundamental aspect of the consolidation and the expansion of the production system into the background, which is in the hands of the farmers who do not seem to be numerous in this phase or firm in their production choice yet.

The case of Garfagnana spelt

An important factor in this evolution process seems to be the effects of setting up rural development policies in the territory. Over time, these have favoured a process of accumulation of new values, knowledge and skills, thereby contributing to modify the context and then the attitude and the behaviour of the local actors. This is evident, as far as the institutions are concerned, in the progressive, greater awareness of the importance of an integrated approach to development and, therefore, of a synergetic interaction among the various actors operating in the territory, as well as in the use of common “language” and tools on an operational point of view.

4. CONCLUSIONS

Considering that interaction with the external environment is necessary in order to identify development opportunities, this case study is an example of the complexity of the process leading to the implementation of differentiation strategies on a territorial basis.

The main factor seems to be the setting up of a negotiation process among the various local actors involved, through which to create or reinforce the common identity in the “locality”, to assume an integrated approach to development and, thus, to define common goals and strategies. This is even more important in the specific case of the production and promotion of typical local products where, as already mentioned at the beginning of the report, the definition and management of the specific quality, based on the synergetic link between production and the territory, makes the local actors’ ability to interact and to work for common objectives a very important factor for success.

Such a process seems to represent the most advanced phase of a necessary evolution path through which the whole local environment gets a kind of “maturity” as regards the potentialities of the territory and the ways of their valorisation (in other words, the development, from inside, of an awareness but also of a method to operate). The significant role played by the considerable experience of rural development initiatives in the territory, with the consequent process of knowledge and skills accumulation (in particular the development of the local actors’ ability to interact) confirms that.

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