

Literature review WP 1

Italy

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Review report

1. TYPICAL PRODUCTS AND "TRADITIONAL PRODUCTS" IN ITALY

1.1. Introduction

Since last year, alongside the typical products assigned to recognized categories and classification by the EU (Dop, Igp, Stg as well as Doc and Docg) in Italy a number of so-called "traditional food and agricultural products" have also achieved recognition.

According to Italian law, specifically law D. Legs. no. 173/98, "traditional food and agricultural products are products with methods of processing, conservation and aging that have been established in time". The identification of such products is one of the tasks of the Regions and Autonomous Provinces, which "must ascertain that the above methods of processing are practiced on its territory in a uniform manner and according to traditional rules protracted in time, for no less than 25 years". The products thus identified are entered in special regional lists that must be sent to the Ministry for Agrarian and Forestry Policies to make up a national list of "traditional food and agricultural products", to be updated and published annually. The products protected by the Community labeling are excluded.

Suggestions for inclusion in the list can be submitted by the Regions themselves, other public organizations (municipal governments, mountain community observatories, etc.) and by private groups (association, consortiums, etc.). For each product the proposal must be submitted with a detailed identification sheet containing a series of elements (Tab. 1):

Table 1: Contents of the identification sheet for "traditional food and agricultural products"

1.	Category
2.	Name of product including synonyms and dialect terms
3	Zone involved in production
4.	Brief description of product
5.	Description of methods of processing, conservation and aging
6	Material, special equipment used in the preparation and conditioning
7.	Description of sites of processing, conservation and aging
8.	Elements that prove that the methods have been uniformly practiced according to traditional rules for not less than 25 years

In November 2000, the "traditional" food products appearing on the list published by the Ministry amounted to a total of 2,188, distributed as follows by category and region (Tab. 2):

Table 2 : The " traditional food and agricultural" products by category and by region

Region	Natural and processed vegetable products	Fresh pasta and baked goods	Meats and organ meats and their preparation	Cheese	Soft drinks, distilled beverages and liquor	Products of animal origin	Fish and shellfish	Oil and fats	Condi-ments	Total	Italy %
Tuscany	142	60	50	25	2	13	6	4		302	13,
Veneto	65	35	51	30	1	11	12			205	9,4
Lombardy	22	60	53	57		4	4	1		201	9,2
Piemonte	42	32	36	44	8					162	7,4
Prov. Bolzano	16	57	24	17	11	1				126	5,8
Campania	28	23	16	16	11	9	5	3		111	5,1
Calabria	34	25	11	18	6		10			104	4,8
Lazio	25	48	15	7	4	3		1	1	104	4,8
Liguria	25	30	11	17	2	3	4	1	8	101	4,6
Marche	24	33	22	10	3				1	93	4,3
Molise	4	43	28	10			1			86	3,9
Puglia	37	13	4	16	11		2		1	84	3,8
Friuli V.G.	12	6	36	12	6		1	2	1	76	3,5
Emilia R.	19	29	12	6	1	4		1	1	73	3,3
Abruzzo	23	14	16	17	1	1	1			73	3,3
Sicily	34			24		4	1		1	64	2,9
Umbria	11	31	13	5					2	62	2,8
Prov. Trento	6	7	28	16		1	2			60	2,7
Sardinia	3	16	4	6	1	9	2	1	1	43	2,0
Basilicata	5	11	9	16						41	1,9
Valle d'Aosta			5	8				4		17	0,8
Total Italy	577	573	444	377	68	63	51	18	17	2188	100,0
% basket	26,4	26,2	20,3	17,2	3,1	2,9	2,3	0,8	0,8	100	

Source: Mipaf data processed by Nomisma

Clearly, the Regions with the largest number of traditional products are Tuscany (302), Veneto (205) and Lombardy (201), which proves once again that entrepreneurial initiative and efficient administration are a plus also when it comes to the richness of food traditions, because it is not realistic to think that many Regions of southern Italy are less endowed with "enogastronomical treasures" than the Regions of the north. As regards the categories, it will be seen that the vegetable products, fresh pasta, meats and cheese account by themselves for over 90% of the products listed. There is a substantial difference in the basket of traditional products with respect to those with the Dop and Igp labels, related primarily to the element of craftsmanship that characterizes the "traditional" products (as in the case, for example, of baked goods and processed fruits like jam) and that therefore have a more distant connection with the agricultural raw materials than that which connotes Dop and Igp products.

1.2. Objectives

The objectives for which the Italian legislators found it necessary to create this new type of product characterized by "methods of processing, conservation and aging consolidated in time", where the zone of origin is an element related to the typical essence of the product but is not a factor that guarantees its exclusiveness, can be summarized as follows:

- ??to define a series of exceptions to the regulations regarding the hygiene of the products involved;
- ??to promote and spread the production of typical agricultural and food products of high quality in order to increase the competitiveness of the Italian agricultural and food production system.

Actually, the first of these objectives was the real reason for the identification of a category of "traditional food and agricultural products", because as the time neared for application under Italian law (D.Legs. no. 155/98) of the Haccp system, as established by Directive 43/93/CEE, many food processing plants, especially small and medium enterprises, and many producers, with the support of their professional organizations, as well as numerous consumer organizations, protested vehemently that the rigid application of hygienic and sanitary regulations would have caused many "traditional" products to disappear. These regulations did not take into account and, indeed, forbade certain practices of production and conservation as not in conformity with the terms of the law, in spite of the fact that their "traditional" aspect was the confirmation of their healthfulness. Emblematic in this country, and taken up with great gusto by the press, was the case of Colonnata Lard that is produced in a few villages in the Apuan Alps by aging the lard for six months in marble vats in brine and aromatic herbs. The experts feared that it would never be possible to achieve the same results in vats of stainless steel, as the new hygienic and sanitary regulations stipulated.

This was the reason for the law that introduced the concept of "traditional food and agricultural" products (D.Legs. no. 173/98) and, in particular, the decree of application (DM no. 350/99). They required that each Region, with its identification of the traditional product, could request exemptions from the hygiene and sanitation rules in effect, indicating the reasons for the request, with the reservation by the Health Ministry to give its approval while complying, in any case, with the Community regulations.

The pressure in this direction was so insistent that, within the sphere of a later law (Law no. 526/99, Provisions for compliance with the obligations deriving from Italy's membership in the European Community) it was established (art. 10, clause 7) that: "those food products that require special and traditional methods of processing and storage, or processing recipients and techniques of conservation essential for the organoleptic characteristics of the product which do not comply with the prescriptions of the law enacting Directive 93/43/CEE of the European Council of June 14, 1993 and 96/3/CE of the Council dated January 26, 1996, may not be exported or placed on the market". The subsequent clause specifies that: "under the terms of the prohibition in clause 7 above, direct sale by the producer and consortium of producers or organizations and associations for the promotion of typical food products to the end consumer does not constitute a violation thereof. Within the area of the province and zone of production".

Clause 7 also establishes that these limits on marketing do not include "traditional food and agricultural products" as identified according to the terms and by effect of art. 8 of law D. Legs. no. 173/98, the subject of this note.

Following these exceptions, it appears that Italian law has, in effect, identified two classes of food products: the first, including food products in general, is subject to the obligations deriving from law D. Legs. no.155/97, that applies Directive no. 93/43, and the second, represented by typical products, for which possible exceptions to these rules are accepted, with a distinction, however, between those products that must obey the above rules in order to be marketable and those, listed as "traditional food and agricultural products" according to law D. Legs. No. 173/98, which are exempt from these restrictions.

It is also true that, despite these concessions, the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry¹ has issued a note with which they require that Regional Councils present, together with the Product identification sheet, a Derogation sheet² which will include, inter alia, an evaluation report by Regional Health Services regarding the request for hygienic-sanitary derogation, to be based on criteria which will have to be defined by the Ministry of Health. To this end the Ministry of Health has recently issued a note containing the operational guidelines to be followed by Regional Health Councils in charge of evaluating the derogation requests, which should finally allow the system to become fully operational.

¹ Note by MIPA no.62737 dated July 26th, 2000.

² The derogation sheet (see MIPAF circular no.10 dated 21.12.99) contains:

??subject-matter and reasons for requesting derogation;

??notes on food safety of the product made with traditional methods;

??guarantee of compliance of end product with the health and safety requirements provided by current regulations;

??references to regulations;

??possible notes by Regional Health Services.

1.3. "Traditional food and agricultural products" and exceptions to the hygiene and sanitation rules

The entire matter prompts a series of observations: in the first place, it is undeniable that the disappointment of the operators was initially justified by legislation that lacked the necessary clarity in terms of application but, at the same time, it does not appear that the exceptions and delays granted for certain products and types of manufacturing companies have adequately resolved the problems.

It is important to point out that this position was not upheld by the typical products safeguarded by laws Reg.(CEE)2081/92 and Reg.(CEE) 2082/92 relative to Dop, Igp or Stg status as much as by the many producers of "traditional" specialties, available in very limited quantities and often known only in the zone of origin, that do not have the advantage of Community classification.

In effect, although it is right and important to safeguard national gastronomic traditions also in consideration of the fact that these "traditional" products are an part of the wealth of a culture, however limited in area, it is also true that art. 8 of the Community Law of 1999 arouses a great deal of perplexity. In fact, it is dangerous to accept exceptions on the subject of the safety of food products even in the presence of minimum quantities, considering that hygiene and sanitation do not depend either on the type or on the volume of production. At best, it would be more reasonable to accept an exception for all typical products, ensuring equal treatment to the totality of them on the basis of the observation that the methods of production and conservation used have proved over a sufficiently long period of time to guarantee the safety of the consumer, while it appears difficult to justify the exemption from restrictions on the sale of the products entered on the list of "traditional" products since any typical product, as such, is presumably the result of traditional methods that have passed the test of time to the point of ensuring hygienic and sanitary safety.

To this we have to add that the logic underlying the imposition as regards marketing the products only within the area of product remains obscure, in view of the fact that no difference can be determined, in terms of hygiene and sanitation, between a typical product sold within or outside the province of its typical zone of production.

The perplexities surrounding the situation that has arisen as a result of the national health legislation lead to other observations: law D. Legs. no. 155/97 has been accused of being both too generic, in that it does not permit a practical evaluation of the impact in manufacturing terms, but also, in other ways, too rigid to the point of jeopardizing national production of typical products. The substantial contrast between the two types of criticism lead us to think that the law has been often the subject of discussion without real knowledge of its content. Before condemning the decree definitively, therefore, it would be advisable to analyze the main contents of these documents in greater detail.

As effectively claimed by the operators, law D.Lgs. 155/97 defines prescriptions whose formulation is expressed in such general terms as to make it difficult even to recognize the legality or lack thereof as regards specific methods of processing or materials use. One example will suffice for all: "...the material, equipment and instruments that come into contact with the food products must be clean and made of materials such as to render minimum, if maintained in good condition and subjected to regular maintenance, the risks of contamination of the food products ...". The rule is generic, without a doubt, but it is presumable that the legislator purposely chose a formulation of that kind considering that art.1 of the decree specifies that the field of its application is the definition of general standards of hygiene for food products and the manner of verifying compliance with such standards "...save other provisions contained in specific regulations ...", to which the legislator directs us for definition of the detailed regulations. Therefore, the effective intention of the legislator is to convert the European directive into Italian law and to insure an organic structure to the legislation on the subject of food safety by approving a decree to be applied to all sectors of the food processing industry, maintaining in effect, however, the previous national legislation on the subject of contact with food products, official inspection of food products and the specific regulations for certain sectors that continue to be the real reference point for ascertaining compliance with the rules by the operators. Having determined this, the only aspect that is really new in law D.Lgs. 155/97 seems to be the extension of the obligation of self-control previously defined by the regulations for certain sectors, to all the food chains except the primary sector.

Similar reasoning applies also to the system of risk analysis and control of the critical points that does not intend to impose regulations to respect but rather to illustrate a method of study for the definition of adequate controls of the productions processes. Thus the criticism of excessive severity regarding this method does not appear to be justified. The problem, if any, consists of the need to adapt this system, developed for medium and large industries, to activities at a much smaller level that need a simple structure, easy to apply; for this purpose it may be helpful to refer directly to Directive 43/93/CEE that contains provisions for drawing up voluntary sectorial guidelines by the representatives of the interested parties, authorities and consumer groups. These guidelines –so-called manuals of correct hygiene practice – enable the producers to identify the critical points in their company's processes for the specific products involved and to correctly quantify the engagement necessary to comply with the standards.

Effectively speaking, the medium and large food processing companies, in addition to being facilitated in respect of the decree both in view of the greater resources available and for the controls to which they have already been subject for some time, have been able to successfully manage the instruments provided by the legislation on the subject of hygiene and sanitation, also taking advantage of the experience provided by the ISO 9000 standards, widely applied in those plants whose management has more industrial characteristics, but much less widespread among operators of small businesses.

On the whole, it is possible to foresee that application of these standards will pervade the entire agricultural and food sector, though it is reasonable to expect that certain areas will need more time.

1.4. "Traditional food and agricultural products" and market prospects

As we have mentioned above the second aim in identifying "traditional food products" is "to promote and spread the production of traditional Italian typical foods"

It is certain that although "traditional food products" in order to be included in the lists made available by Regional authorities and published by the Ministry (tab. 1) must also be classed as "typical", so far the term "traditional" has not received official recognition, nor does it fall into a disciplined category, nor does it require a guaranteed origin. Therefore the term "traditional food" derived from inclusion in a ministry list confers no exclusive right on its producer nor does it protect the producer from unfair trading.

This may not represent a real problem as in most cases these products are produced on a small scale and in closed production systems – in other words are consumed nearly entirely within the area they are produced in. Some cases are extremely exclusive and produced and consumed by a small "elite" of national and international connoisseurs. However for other products supply is far smaller than demand and therefore there is no reason why the producers should not enjoy the protection of the European Union, offered by Regulations 2081/92 and 2082/92. Lardo di Colonnata is just one case, the producers of which have started the procedure to obtain Igt recognition.

The goal of "promoting and spreading the typical Italian food products" through the identification of "traditional food products" may seem therefore difficult to pursue through the creation of a list to be published by the Ministry for Agricultural and Forestry Policies alone. Regions too need to be involved, first of all in identifying the products while the Ministry and above all the category associations need to promote events that increase the perceived value of the products which often represent a significant economic resource in limited areas which are often also economically marginalised.

These products are generally distributed in areas that have the following characteristics:

- ??high level of production fragmentation and lack of organisation
- ??high level of variability between production processes and final results, such that in many cases production is far from homogeneous and in some cases even product recognition is difficult;
- ??the product is easily identified with a single producer be it a farm or artisan;
- ??distribution organised essentially in three groups:
 - ??direct sale by producer
 - ??local shops, local restaurants, farmhouse accommodation
 - ??specialised shops (outside the production area)
- ??high level of interactivity with local economic activity (tourism, artisan production etc)
- ??high level of interaction with cultural values of the local area (history, tradition etc)
- ??interesting quality and nutritional content.

These products in many cases emulate, albeit in a different process, the so-called "Produits Fermiers" of France which the APCA (Assemblée Permanente des Chambres d'Agriculture) has shown are particularly appreciated by the consumer on the look out for healthy and genuine products (Sylvander 1998). The differences between "traditional" products as recently defined by the Italian legislation and the "Fermiers" products mentioned above is based on the fact that the former have been identified and included in a public list while the "Fermiers" are defined as nothing more than independent farmers.

It is worth bearing these two experiences in mind for, as Sylvander writes à propos the "Fermiers", their produce represents a whole market segment with an increasingly high perceived value and therefore with good prospects for expansion.

2. SELECTION OF SCIENTIFIC AND RECENT (SINCE 1980) PAPERS, PUBLICATIONS, MEMORIES AND STUDIES IN THE COUNTRY

Giacomini, C. (1998)

Governing protected designations: EEC Regulations 2081/92 and 2082/92 as an integral part of quality.

Trade Marketing 22/98

The first part of the paper analyses the contents and identifies the objectives of EEC Regulation 2081/92 and EEC Regulation 2082/92. The paper continues then with the analysis of the implementation of these regulations in Italy, with reference to the new role undertaken by Consortia vs. the activities of supervision and control in conformity with Community provisions.

After describing the difficulties dealt with by Italian legislators in implementing the regulations, the paper ends by identifying the main obstacles found to promote typical products at a national level.

Capelli, F. (1996)

Quality in the agro-food system: juridical aspects.

Proceedings of the XXXII SIDEA Seminar, Quaderni della Rivista di Economia Agraria, n.21

This paper contains a critical summary of the Community Law on the agro-food sector, starting from the Treaty of Rome, to the "Cassis de Dijon" case and EEC Regulation 2081/92 and EEC Regulation 2082/92.

The paper analyses the meaning of the expressions "specificity" and "typicality", by highlighting possible consequences that an excessively enlarged adherence may originate and it contains some considerations on the geographical and juridical limits of the protection given to typical products by the mentioned regulations.

Boccaletti, S. (1994).

The role of typical products and designations of origin in safeguarding the competitiveness of Italian agro-food products.

Rivista di Economia Agraria, supplement n.3

This paper starts from the analysis of the problem found in communicating information on the quality of agro-food products. This framework represents a necessary basis to assess the areas open to institutional interventions to safeguard quality, with special attention to Community regulations (EEC Regulation 2081/92 and EEC Regulation 2082/92).

The last part of the paper considers the role that the two forms of quality certification can play to safeguard Italian agro-food products.

Boccaletti, S.; Moro, D. (1993).

Defence of traditional agro-food products in the EEC.

Rivista di Politica agraria, vol. XI

The purpose of this paper consists in assessing the main effects of Community legislation on typical products (EEC Reg. 2081/92 and EEC Reg. 2082/92) in the light of the reasons imposing an institutional intervention on the matter.

This paper includes a discussion on the distinctive features of these norms and on their repercussions on the market of agro-food products, in particular with reference to Italian cheeses already governed by similar national regulations.

Discussion report

NEED FOR NEW RESEARCH

The main needs for new research can be focussed on:

- ??a further analysis on the requirements defined by Italian law for the "traditional products",
- ??the concept of "traditional products" as a possible preliminary step of Reg.(EEC) 2081/92 and Reg.(EEC) 2082/92,
- ??the needs of new institutional support to make traditional products as a tool for the development of rural areas (including a comparison with "produits fermiers").

