

CASE STUDY ON THE CERTIFICATION OF TRADITIONAL FOOD PRODUCTS IN ROMANIA

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to analyze the current situation regarding the registration of traditional products in Romania. The information collected from the "National Register of Traditional Products" was methodologically analyzed, processed, synthesized, and ranked in correlation with national legislation. Currently, according to updated data from the National Register of Traditional Products (October 31, 2025), Romania has a total of 806 registered products. The largest share belongs to meat products, with a percentage of 38%, followed by dairy products with a percentage of 18%. Following the centralization of the situation of registered products by county, it was found that the counties with the highest number of registered products are: Braşov (19.73%), Maramureş (8.06%), Alba (6.33%), Argeş (5.83%), and Suceava (4.22%). In conclusion, the paper proposes a series of recommendations for intensifying the certification of traditional products at the national level.

Key words: traditional products, quality schemes, certified products

INTRODUCTION

The traditional products sector enjoys particular attention from consumers and is constantly developing, as this designation brings benefits to small and large producers in the food industry [1]. Traditional foods have played a major role in the traditions of different cultures and regions for thousands of years, being naturally associated with the rural environment, the village being the basis of tradition, of an archaic way of production with local, natural ingredients and according to a traditional recipe, passed down from generation to generation, thus preserving a regional specificity imbued with popular values [2].

The legislation underlying the certification of traditional products in Romania is drafted by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, in accordance with the provisions of Order No. 724/2013 [3] on the certification of traditional products.

According to Order 724/2014, traditionality represents the element or set of elements that clearly differentiate a product from other similar products belonging to the same category; this cannot be limited to a qualitative or quantitative composition or to a production method established by Community or national regulations or by voluntary standards; However, this rule does not apply if the regulation or standard in question was established with a view to defining the traditional character of a product.

Culinary traditions have constantly evolved over the centuries, with Romanian cuisine being influenced by the numerous dishes of its neighbors and other countries, but these culinary imports have not undergone profound changes and adjustments. As a result, Romanian creativity, talent, and love for traditions have contributed to the continuous improvement of transmission from

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generation to generation and have permanently shaped the eating habits of this people [1].

The most spectacular and distinctive dishes found in Romanian cuisine today were created centuries ago by isolated fishermen in the Danube Delta and solitary shepherds in the Carpathian Mountains. Many culinary dishes evolved during times of exile, when people were forced to leave their villages and homes and take refuge in the mountains, forests, or marshes when invaders attacked them [4].

The descriptions currently available regarding the traditional eating habits of our ancestors are modest. However, given the diverse geographical conditions, the resources available, sometimes abundant, sometimes modest, and the turbulent history of the Romanian people, it is easy to understand how their lifestyle and culinary habits have been shaped throughout history [5].

According to Order 724/2013, the term "traditional product" is defined as a food product obtained on national territory, for which local raw materials are used; which does not contain food additives; is based on a traditional recipe with a traditional production method and technological process passed down from generation to generation; and is clearly different from other similar products in the same category.

This study aims to analyze the certification of traditional food products in Romania between 2013 and 2025. It will examine the types and classes of products, the counties they come from, and will assess the interest of both producers and authorities in this approach.

MATERIAL AND METHOD

The information was obtained, analyzed, processed, and synthesized through a study of the "RNPT" database. The National Register of Traditional Products (RNPT) is a register established and administered by the

General Directorate for Food Industry, through the specialized department responsible for traditional products within the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development; it provides direct access to information on all traditional products certified in Romania.

The data entered and processed in this study covers the entire period for which records exist (2013-2025). The county of origin and product class were established as criteria for analysis, with the following research objectives: to identify the frequency of certification of traditional products; to compare the number of certified products according to the county of origin; comparing certifications according to product classes; the analysis also addresses the stage of implementation of this quality system at national level according to specific legislation. The data was organised, combined, compared and classified, then presented in various tables and graphs. Results were expressed in both absolute and relative values to facilitate easier comparison, analysis, and interpretation.

The interpretation of the data included an analysis of the factors contributing to the certification of traditional products, together with an overview of the various actions included in the EU's integrated food safety policy. These led to conclusions and recommendations for both entrepreneurs and the relevant institutions and authorities.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

As of October 31, 2025, research results indicate that 806 certified traditional products are registered in the National Register of Traditional Products; Table 1 details the products registered for each county in Romania.

The study shows that in Romania, 38 counties have at least one traditional product registered; three counties has no registered product.

Table 1 Number of traditional products certified in Romania by county

County	Number of products	Percentage of total (%)
1. Alba	51	6.33
2. Arad	9	1.12
3. Argeş	47	5.83
4. Bacău	10	1.24
5. Bihor	9	1.12
6. Bistriţa-Năsăud	32	3.97
7. Botoşani	27	3.35
8. Braşov	159	19.73
9. Bucureşti*	19	2.36
10. Buzău	33	4.09
11. Caraş Severin	12	1.49
12. Cluj	15	1.86
13. Constanţa	1	0.12
14. Covasna	26	3.23
15. Dâmboviţa	6	0.74
16. Dolj	3	0.37
17. Galaţi	14	1.74
18. Giurgiu	2	0.25
19. Gorj	9	1.12
20. Harghita	3	0.37
21. Hunedoara	11	1.36
22. Iaşi	23	2.85
23. Ilfov	5	0.62
24. Maramureş	65	8.06
25. Mehedinţi	3	0.37
26. Mureş	6	0.74
27. Neamţ	29	3.60
28. Olt	6	0.74
29. Prahova	14	1.74
30. Sălaj	15	1.86
31. Satu Mare	34	4.22
32. Sibiu	18	2.23
33. Suceava	34	4.22
34. Timiş	4	0.50
35. Tucea	21	2.61
36. Vâlcea	24	2.98
37. Vaslui	5	0.62
38. Vrancea	2	0.25
Total	806	100.00

*Capital of Romania

The first place, with the most products registered is Braşov county (159 products), followed by Maramureş county (65 products) and Alba county (51 items); the

fourth and fifth places are Argeş county (with 47 registered products) and Satu Mare and Suceava county (both with 34 registered products). The counties on the

last positions are Dolj, Harghita and Mehedinți (all with 3 registered products), Giurgiu and Vrancea (both with 2 products registered), and Constanța which occupies the last position with only one traditional product certificated.

The largest share belongs to the meat products category, with a percentage of

38% and a total number of registrations of 308, followed by dairy products with a percentage of 18% and a number of 143 registered products. In the beverages category, 35 products are registered, and fish products are 35 (Fig. 1).

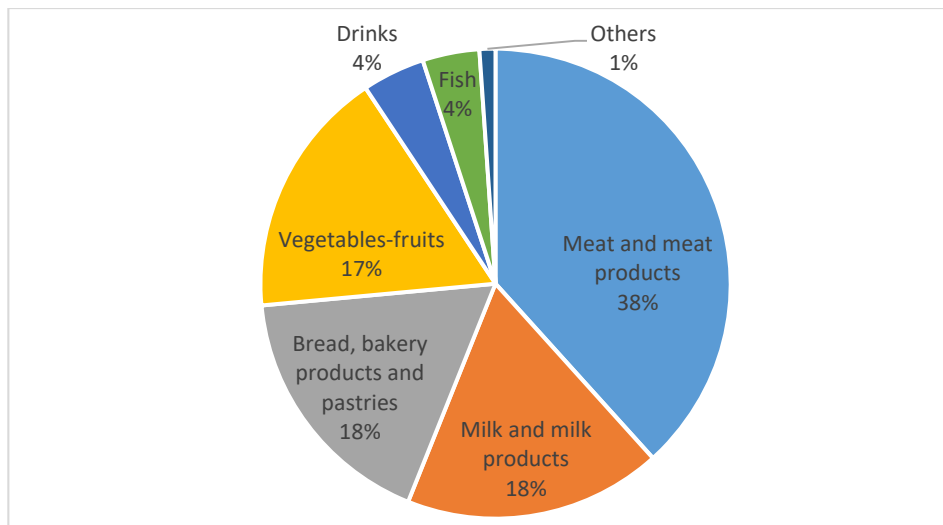


Fig. 1 Certified product categories (%)

Compared to food products registered with national quality schemes (traditional product), Romania also has products registered with European quality schemes (PDO-Protected Designation of Origin, PGI-Protected Geographical Indication and TSG-Traditional Speciality Guaranteed). Of the 14 products registered by Romania, 11 designations are registered PGI ("Magiun de Prune Topoloveni"; "Salam de Sibiu"; "Novac afumat din Țara Bârsei"; "Scrumbie de Dunăre afumată"; "Cârnați de Pleșcoi"; "Telemea de Sibiu"; "Cașcaval de Săveni"; "Salată cu icre de știucă de Tulcea"; "Plăcintă dobrogeană"; "Pită de Pecica"; "Salinate de Turda"), one designation PDO ("Telemea de Ibănești") and two products TSG ("Salată tradițională cu icre de crap"; "Sardeluță marinată")

[6,7,8]. It can be seen that Romania has significantly more food products registered with the "traditional product" quality scheme, compared to product registrations with European quality schemes.

Regarding the products registered by Romania, Lapusneanu et al. (2020) [7] conducted a study on analyzing the guarantee of quality and safety of food products, which showed that Romania was among the countries with the fewest registered products, ranking penultimate with only 5 products. However, in 2024 there was an increase in the number of certified products, indicating that producers have begun to understand the benefits of certification.

CONCLUSIONS

Romanian institutions, like all national institutions of the European Union, are required to comply with and adapt existing legislation to regulations on the recognition and registration of food products as traditional products [9] (Teodora Tarcza et al., 2015). One of the important aspects of food quality, in a broad and modern sense, are the attributes related to agricultural policy, which in turn is linked to certain aspects of production methods, often resulting from local expertise and traditions [10] (Agnieszka H. et al., 2014).

In conclusion, we can list a series of benefits of certifying traditional products, both for consumers and for producers.

The benefits of certified products for consumers can be represented by: ensuring compliance with authentic recipes and the use of natural ingredients, the certification process ensures that the product does not contain additives or unauthorized industrial processes, certified producers are subject to periodic controls, guarantee traceability, traditional recipes preserve the flavors specific to a region, and supporting the local economy by supporting small farmers and local producers.

The benefits for producers can relate to legal protection and official recognition (certification protecting the product against imitations), selling at a higher price due to recognized quality and prestige, access to new markets and promotion, increasing consumer confidence, developing local communities and capitalizing on local resources.

Certified traditional products bring important benefits to both consumers and producers; they guarantee quality, authenticity and safety, contribute to the preservation of Romanian gastronomic traditions and stimulate the sustainable development of rural communities.

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