

ANALYSIS OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF QUALITY SCHEMES OF FOOD PRODUCTS IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

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Abstract

The work aims to achieve an analysis of the status of implementation of food products quality schemes in the countries of the EU. The information gathered from the "DOOR" database were methodologically analysed, processed, summarized and prioritized in correlation with the European legislation in force. The data entered and processed within this study cover the 1996-2016 period and refer to: the determination of the number of products registered under the PDO, PGI and TSG quality schemes by each EU country; the highlight of the total number of registered products in each class; the highlight of the countries with the most registered products, namely those with the fewest registered products. The results obtained show that the EU countries have recorded a number of 1257 PDO and PGI products; in the TSG scheme 57 products have been registered so far. The first place in the top of the classes of products is held by "Fruits and Vegetables" with 27% of the total, followed by the "Cheeses" class with 18%. Regarding the interest of the EU countries to implement the PDO, PGI and TSG quality schemes, we note that the first place is held by Italy (282 registered products), followed by France (228 products) and Spain (190 products); Romania ranks last (along with Cyprus) with only three entries. In conclusion, the work proposes a set of recommendations (both for entrepreneurs and for institutions and authorities involved in the field) to intensify the implementation of these quality schemes at European level and especially in our country.

Key words: quality schemes, food products, geographical indication, guaranteed traditional specialty

INTRODUCTION

One of the most important advantages of European agriculture is its reputation for quality food products. The quality of these products comes from the natural environment of Europe and from the specific production methods developed over centuries. In this context, the European Union adopts measures that ensure that producers and food processors get the most from the added value of their products by taking advantage of certain natural conditions or specific cultures and culinary traditions.

The EU also ensures the quality of food products through various measures such as: demanding legislation on food safety, clear

labelling rules, regulations on animal and plant health, animal welfare, control of pesticide residues and additives in food products etc [5]. EU policy on quality goes far beyond these measures providing assistance to the European producers to maximize the benefits deriving from the quality of the products they made [1].

EU Commission Communication entitled "Europe 2020: A European strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth" promotes the concept according to which Agricultural product quality policy should provide producers with the appropriate tools to identify and promote products with specific traits, also protecting them against unfair practices [2]. In this context, for the protection of products whose reputation extends beyond their geographical area of production have been created specific quality

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The manuscript was received: 04.07.2016

Accepted for publication: 22.02.2017

schemes commonly known as PDO (Protected Designation of Origin), PGI (Protected Geographical Indication) and TSG (Traditional Speciality Guaranteed). Thus, purchasing a product labelled with the symbols of the European quality (PDO, PGI, TSG), in addition to the guarantee of quality, the buyers are also guaranteed the authenticity of the products.

The protection granted to the geographical indications at international level is considerably improved by the TRIPS Agreement (The Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights) managed by the OMC, but the system requires further support and strengthen by all those involved [9].

The work aims to execute an analysis of the implementation status of food quality schemes under European law, of classes of products included in these schemes, as well as the interest in this approach by the producers and the authorities of the European Union countries.

MATERIAL AND METHOD

The information obtained from the study of "DOOR" database ("Database of Origin & Registration") were processed, analysed and synthesized, database that is administered by the European Commission, Directorate for Quality Policies. "DOOR" database includes product names for the PDO, PGI and TSG registered food products as well as the product names required for registration. For each product can be identified the file number, country of origin, type of request (PDO, PGI, TSG), the status (stage) of application (filed, published or recorded) and the specific calendar dates of each phase [3].

The data entered and processed in this study aimed the entire period for which records exist (1996-2016) and refers to: the determination of the number of products registered under the PDO, PGI and TSG quality schemes; the highlight the total number of registered products in each class; the rank of the top five countries with the most registered products or for the last five countries with the fewest registered products; the analysis addresses also the status of implementation of these schemes at

European and national level according to specific legislation. These data were sorted, merged, compared, ranked and presented in various tables and graphs; the expression of results was done in absolute and relative values to be compared, analysed and interpreted more easily.

The interpretation of the data was completed with an analysis of the causes that slow down the implementation process of the European systems of quality. The hereby analysis led to some conclusions and recommendations for both entrepreneurs and institutions and authorities involved in the field.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The protection of some of the representative products from a particular country or region, emerged as a necessity given that the globalization tends to diminish the regional or national identity. The European Quality System currently protects over 1300 names used to designate traditional agricultural and food products. The product registered at position number 1000 (on 15th February 2011) is called "Piacentinu Ennese" and refers to a variety of sheep's cheese flavoured with saffron, produced by Italy. From the moment the business name of the food product is registered under one of the three systems of quality, the EU will pursue and ensure that the same protected name shall not be used by other manufacturers. [4] Managing these quality schemes at European level is ensured by specific regulations whose implementation is monitored by the designated authorities [6,7,8].

The study shows that in the European Union, 26 states have at least one product registered under one of the quality schemes, the total registrations up to date (on April 2016) being of 1314 products.

The first place, with the most products registered under the European quality schemes is Italy's (282 products, of which, 164 PDO, 116 IGP and two TSG), followed by France (with 228 products, of which 97 DOP, 128 PGI and one TSG registered product) and Spain (with 190 items, of which 100 PDO, 86 PGI, and 4 TSG); the fourth

and fifth places are Portugal's (with 134 registered products, of which 64 PDO, 69 PGI and one TSG) and Greece's (with 103 registered products, of which 75 PDO and 28 PGI).

The countries with the fewest registered products (located in the last five places in the ranking) are Latvia, Ireland, Luxembourg, Cyprus and Romania, that ranks last in the ranking with just three products registered under EU quality systems; of these, two are

registered PGI („Magiunul de prune Topoloveni" / "Topoloveni plum jam" and „Salamul de Sibiu"/"Sibiu Salami") and one PDO („Telemea de Ibănești"/ "Brine feta cheese from Ibănești") (Table 1).

It is also important that Romania has submitted on 20th November 2013 the PGI application for „Novac afumat din Țara Bârsei"/"Smoked Bighead carp from Bârsa region".

Table 1 The products registered by EU countries according to the European quality schemes

No.	Country	PDO ¹⁾	PGI ²⁾	TSG ³⁾	Total
1	Austria	9	6	-	15
2	Belgium	3	10	5	18
3	Bulgaria	-	2	4	6
4	Cyprus	-	3	-	3
5	Czech Republic	6	23	4	33
6	Germany	11	74	-	85
7	Denmark	-	6	-	6
8	Greece	75	28	-	103
9	Spain	100	86	4	190
10	Finland	5	2	3	10
11	France	98	129	1	228
12	Croatia	4	4	-	8
13	Hungary	6	7	1	14
14	Ireland	1	4	-	5
15	Italy	164	116	2	282
16	Lithuania	1	4	2	7
17	Luxembourg	2	2	-	4
18	Latvia	1	1	3	5
19	Netherlands	6	5	3	14
20	Poland	8	19	9	36
21	Portugal	64	69	1	134
22	Romania	1	2	-	3
23	Sweden	2	3	2	7
24	Slovenia	8	11	3	22
25	Slovakia	1	9	7	17
26	United Kingdom	23	33	3	59
Total		599	658	57	1314

¹⁾PDO-Protected Designation of Origin, ²⁾PGI-Protected Geographical Indication; ³⁾TSG -Traditional Speciality Guaranteed

Regarding the number of products registered under each quality scheme, of the analysis conducted shows that most products are PGI registered (658 entries representing

50.1% of the total of registrations), followed by products with PDO (599 or 45.6% of total records) and TSG registered products at a very large distance (57 or 4.3% of total).

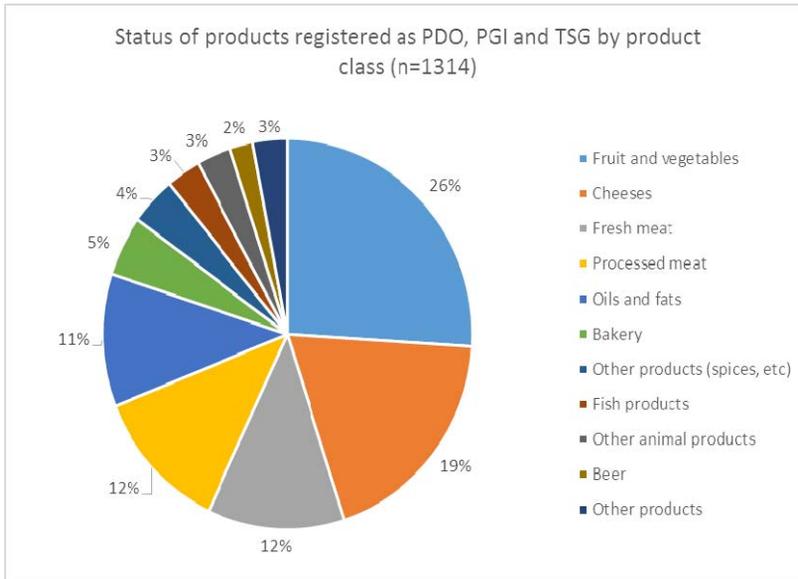


Fig. 1 Status of products registered as PDO, PGI and TSG by product class (n=1314)

The food products for which registration is requested are included in certain "classes of products" set by the European Commission for each of the three systems of quality [8]. In the top classes of food products with the most entries, the first three places are occupied by "the Fruit and Vegetables" class with 27% of the total, followed by "Cheeses" 18%, "Fresh meat" 12% and "Processed meat", with 12%. The ranking continues with "Oils and Fats" class 11% of the total, "Bakery" 5% "Other products (spices, etc.)" 4%; The classes of "Fish", "Other Animal Products" and "Other Products", each have 3% of the total registered products. The "Beer" class recorded the fewest products, occupying 2% of the total registered products according to the three quality schemes (Fig. 1).

CONCLUSIONS

By the specific legislation of the quality schemes, the EU protects the product names linked to a particular territory and certain production methods. Since 1992 when these schemes were created (updated and improved in 2006) until now, the producers' interest for them continuously increased; this interest focused particularly on geographical

indications, which, as shown in the study currently sums 95.7% of the total registrations. However, we believe that the current procedures for PDO and PGI registration are complex and prolonged. For example, the Romanian products registration procedure took about 2 years: 4th March 2009-8th April 2011 for "Magiunul de prune Topoloveni"/"Topoloveni plum jam "; 21st November 2014-19th February 2016 for „Salamul de Sibiu”/"Sibiu Salami"; 20th November 2013-15th March 2016 for "Telemeaua de Ibănești"/"Brine feta cheese from Ibănești". Romania has a pending registration (filed on 20th November 2013) for "Novac afumat din Tara Bârsei"/"Smoked Bighead carp from Bârșa region" (PGI). As such, it would be particularly useful for the authorities involved in the registration activities to identify ways to accelerate the process. We also appreciate that, especially for consumers, there should be a clearer distinction between PDO and PGI. This can be achieved through a global effort (national and EU) of training, information and promotion of these schemes.

The traditional specialties guaranteed scheme covers only 4.3% of all registered products according to all three quality

schemes. Based on these results we can say that the TSG instrument created and made available to farmers is not sufficiently attractive for them, which is why more efforts should be made to strengthen this system. In this regard there should be acted to simplify the procedures and shorten the registration period and other means to stimulate the interest of the producers.

Regarding the ranking of countries according to the number of products registered under the EU quality schemes, the last position occupied by Romania should generate a stronger mobilization of the authorities and groups of producers to increase the number of registered products. Our country has no product registered under the TSG scheme although our traditional cultural “heritage” is well known when it comes to food products. The development, support and promotion of this system could represent for our country the guarantee of protection, preservation and promotion of the traditional production methods that add value to the products.

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