

THE EVOLUTION OF MEAT PRODUCTS WHICH HAVE BENEFITED FROM THE OPTIONAL QUALITY MENTION “MOUNTAIN PRODUCT” IN THE MOUNTAIN AREA OF ROMANIA, DURING THE PERIOD 2017-2021

Maria Ciocan-Alupii^{1*}, V. Maciuc¹, Mariana Nistor-Anton¹

¹Iasi University of Life Sciences, Faculty of Food and Animal Sciences, Romania

Abstract

The paper aimed to present the situation of meat products that benefited from the optional quality mention "mountain product" in the mountain area of Romania, during the period 2017-2020. This paper is based on statistical data provided by the National Agency of Mountain Area, data from the National Register of Mountain Products. These were processed within the National Agency of Mountain Area in the following indicators: number of counties with mountain area, number of Administrative-Territorial Units in the mountain area, total area of the mountain area (Km²), area of pastures and hayfields in the mountain area (ha), number of meat products that benefited from the optional quality mention "mountain product". Compared to 2017, meat products that benefited from the optional quality mention "mountain product" in 2019, registered numerical increases, which leads to a better capitalization of meat and meat products obtained from animals, a diversification of meat processing activities in the mountain area and, implicitly, to the possibilities of developing farms in the mountain area.

Key words: mountain area, meat products, mountain product, indicators, Romania

INTRODUCTION

The profile of mountain areas, being a special one, involves a specific analysis from the perspective of economic activities. Both existing activities and especially the potential for their diversification, in order to develop sustainably, must be analysed in the context of constraints generated by relief, the state of existing infrastructure, the history and specificity of mountain areas and last but not least in close correlation with national and European strategies. domain [1]. Mountain areas are generally rural and are characterized by natural limitations of agricultural productivity, which lead to low agricultural production, caused by climatic and biophysical conditions unfavourable to the optimal development of agricultural activities (Law no. 197/2018). Romania's mountain area is a disadvantaged national territory, with high economic, social and

cultural potential, which needs a different approach to the policies and strategy for the development and protection of these mountain areas (Marușca T., 2018). Mountain areas are an environment with specific features. Compared to other rural areas, mountain areas face special challenges and have special needs. In the context of the current agricultural policy of the European Union (EU), they are included under the name of disadvantaged areas, as they are generally characterized either by a low growing season (due to high altitude) or by steep slopes, even if they are located at a lower height, either by a combination of these two features. These conditions pose problems for agriculture and for the rural economy of these regions (<http://www.madr.ro>). The mountain area has large areas of meadows, most of them with a high natural value, maintained in this condition due to the fact that, over time, they have been practiced a traditional, extensive agriculture, based on the use natural fertilizers (<http://www.madr.ro>).

*Corresponding author:

maria.ciocan1974@yahoo.com

The manuscript was received: 25.09.2021

Accepted for publication: 07.11.2021

MATERIAL AND METHOD

In order to characterize the situation of meat products that benefited from the optional quality mention “mountain product” from the mountain area of Romania, but also the situation of the mountain area from Romania, the following indicators were used: number of meat products that benefited from the quality mention “mountain product” (National Register of Mountain Products), number of counties with mountain area, number of Administrative-Territorial Units in the mountain area, number of inhabitants in the mountain area (National Institute of Statistics), total area of the mountain area (Km²), the area of pastures and hayfields in the mountain area (ha). The analysed period was 2017-2020, and the data were provided by the National Agency of Mountain Area,

data from the National Register of Mountain Products; these data were processed within the National Agency of Mountain Area.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

According to the delimitation mentioned in the National Rural Development Program (PNDR) 2014-2020, the mountainous area of Romania comprises 29.94% of the national territory, having a total area of 71,381.48 km², located on the territory of 27 counties. The mountainous area of Romania includes 658 localities / ATUs representing 20.68% of the 3,181 existing ATUs in Romania, with 815,000 agricultural holdings. In the mountain area live 15.04% of the country's population, according to statistical data from 2017, from the National Institute of Statistics.

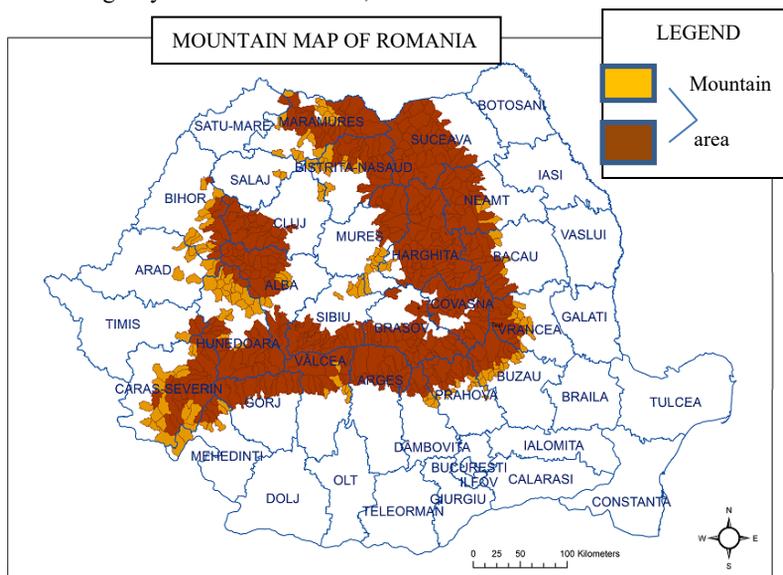


Fig. 1 Mountain map of Romania; Source: National Agency of the Mountain Area

The mountainous area in Romania, respectively about 35% of the territory is the least anthropically modified area, with a low density of stable population and small localities, many of them unfortunately, being depopulated due to various causes such as aging population, decrease birth rate, lack of well-paid jobs, poor infrastructure, migration, etc. This state of affairs of a weak anthropization favoured the appearance in the mountainous regions of the most important

protected areas in our country, respectively 12 of the 13 national parks and 9 of the 15 national parks. The size, complexity and especially the accentuated specificity of the agro-zootechnical economy - “engine” of the mountain rural economy, the specificity of the mountain environment, the great geoclimatic and traditional differences in the intramontane, do not make possible a good governance without a logical identification. from plain and hilly areas - based on high

soil fertility, crops, chemical fertilizers and pesticides, mechanization, industrial systems of animal husbandry and exploitation, longer periods of vegetation, flat or sloping land, etc. (Rey R.). In mountainous areas the layer of fertile soil is extremely low (5-15 cm), the animal production base is represented by grass and organic fertilizers, mechanization is restricted by steep slopes, average feed production, per hectare (grass and hay), are at level 1 / 3-1 / 4 compared to the plain / hilly areas, the vegetation periods are shorter by approx. 1.5-2.5 months, etc. (Rey R.). The mountain agricultural economy, largely ecological, focused on the pastoral economy, can be intertwined, through pluriactivity, with the harvesting and processing of berries and medicinal plants from the spontaneous mountain flora, and both can be connected with agro-tourism activities or related to pastoral habits. , ethno-folkloric, religious and spiritual or with sports and hiking activities, all being ways to significantly increase the added value in the mountain rural economy and to capitalize on the natural capital of the mountain area (<http://www.madr.ro>). The quality of mountain products is influenced by animal nutrition, respectively feeding animals with good quality, ecological fodder, produced in the mountain area. This area is an unpolluted area, the flora is diversified, rich in medicinal plants that give a special taste to animal meat. Land in the mountain area is fertilized only with manure, farmers with commitments to agri-environment and climate and organic farming, which involves maintaining the biodiversity of mountain land. The attestation of the mountain product in Romania is regulated by Order no. 585 of December 20, 2019 for the amendment of the annex to the Order of the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development no. 52/2017 on the approval of the Procedure for verifying the conformity of the data contained in the specifications in order to grant the right to use the optional quality mention "mountain product" and to verify compliance with European and national legislation by economic operators who have obtained the right to use of the respective mention, which

regulates the competent authority that verifies the specifications, the national register of mountain products will be updated and completed by the National Agency of Mountain Areas, the following terms are defined: mountain area, mountain product, applicant, specifications. Also, the Government Decision no. 506 of 20 July 2016 on establishing the institutional framework and measures for the implementation of Delegated Regulation (EU) no. 665/2014 of the Commission of 11 March 2014 supplementing Regulation (EU) no. 1,151 / 2012 of the European Parliament and of the Council regarding the conditions of use of the optional quality term "mountain product" designating the National Mountain Area Agency as the competent authority responsible for developing the procedure for verifying the conformity of the data contained in the tasks in order to grant the right to use the optional quality label "mountain product" and to verify compliance with European and national legislation by economic operators who have obtained the right to use that label. Delegated Regulation (EU) no. 665/2014 of the European Commission of 11 March 2014 supplementing Regulation (EU) no. Regulation (EC) No 1151/2012 of the European Parliament and of the Council as regards the conditions for the use of the optional term "mountain product" governs the types of products which may benefit from that quality and the conditions for granting each product. According to the above-mentioned Regulation, the following product categories can benefit from the quality of mountain product: animal products, feed, bee products, plant products, processed products. In the case of products of animal origin, the maintenance of mountain product quality may be attributed to products obtained from animals in mountain areas and which are processed in these areas, also for animals raised for at least the last two thirds of life in the mountain area and for transhumant animals, at least a quarter of their lives were transhumant and grazed on mountain pastures. In Romania, the logo is used for the mountain product presented in figure 2.



Fig. 2 Mountain product logo used in Romania; Source: taking over the National Agency of the Mountain Area

The meat products that benefited from the optional quality mention “mountain product” in the period 2017-2020 are presented in tables 1 and 2.

Table 1 Certification of meat products in “mountain product” in 2017 in Romania

Current number	County	Mountain meat products (number)	Mountain product name
1.	Argeş	2	Smoked sheep pastrami “Coşco-Vele”
			Smoked homemade sausages “Coşco-Vele”
Total		2	

Source: taking over the National Agency of the Mountain Area

Table 2 Certification of meat products in “mountain product” in 2019 in Romania

Current number	County	Mountain meat products (number)	Mountain product name
1.	Gorj	7	Angus grill sausages
			Angus spicy sausages
			Angus pastrami
			Angus mountain sausages
			Angus parizer
			Angus burger
			Angus meat paste
Total		7	

Source: taking over the National Agency of the Mountain Area

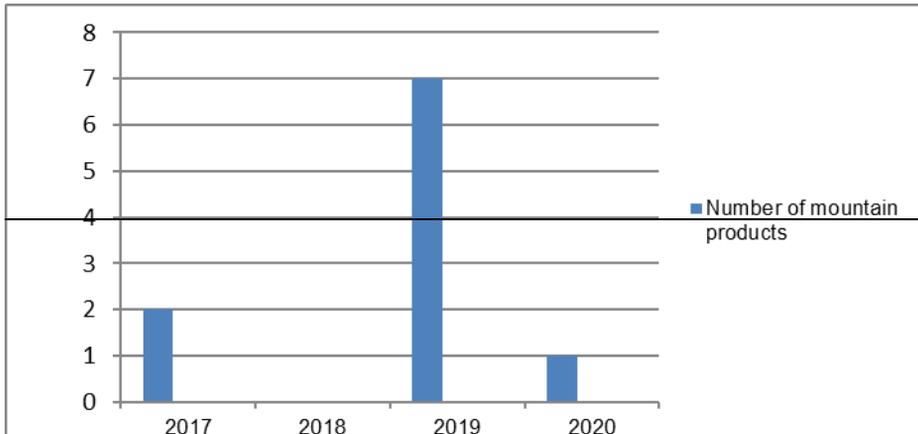


Fig. 3 Certification of mountain products in the period 2017-2020

The meat products that benefited from the optional quality mention “mountain product” in the period 2017-2020 were obtained from beef and mutton, as can be seen in the graphic representation (figure 3 and figure 4). In 2017, the National Agency of the Mountain Area authorized 2 sheep meat products, from Argeș County, which benefit from the optional quality mention “mountain product” under the following names: Smoked sheep pastrami “Coșco-Vele”, Cârnași “Coșco-Vele” smoked house products. In 2018, no product was authorized under the

name of “mountain product”. In 2019, 7 beef products were authorized, from Gorj County, which benefit from the optional quality “mountain product” under the following names: Angus grill sausages, Angus spicy sausages, Angus pastrami, Angus mountain salami, Angus parizer, Angus burger, Angus meat pasta. In 2020, until July 15, only one sheep meat product, from Alba County, benefited from the optional mention “mountain product” (figure 3 and figure 4).

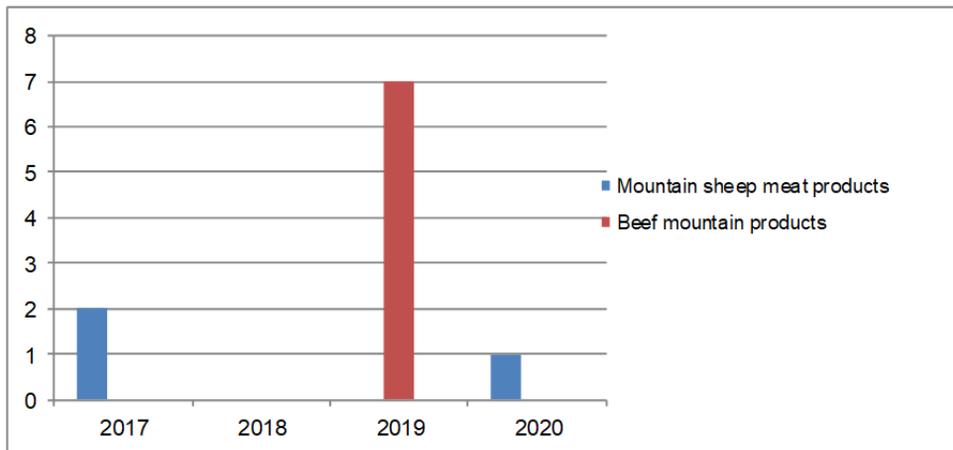


Fig. 4 Certification of mountain products by species, in the period 2017-2020

The main resource for the economic and social development of the mountain area is the product obtained “from the mountains”.

Mountain, traditional, ecological and quality products have a great capacity to contribute to the development of local communities,

from an economic and social point of view, and the awareness of farmers and the general public about their economic potential and the importance of maintaining biodiversity and practices. traditional agricultural areas, is the starting point for the sustainable development of mountain areas. The introduction of the optional quality mention “mountain product” can stimulate: the development of mountains, thanks to agricultural and guaranteed products will bring added value in mountain areas, due to the clearly superior quality of quality mountain agri-food products; in order to avoid any deception against the consumer, by the misuse of the term “mountain” and to remedy the market distortion caused by the sale of so-called “mountain” products which are not actually mountain products; to increase the competitiveness of traditional mountain farming systems; to protect the cultural heritage of mountain areas. The mountainous area in Romania faces great challenges in the field of agriculture, the labour market and education. Lack of processing of products at farms, capitalization of production at very low prices; lack of collection centres, for: milk, wool, animal skins, etc. but also a small number of economic operators using in production and services, materials and local resources. The ideal solution for overcoming the impasse of mountain agricultural producers is to organize in various forms of association as well as registration and promotion of traditional products in the mountain area to identify as a local brand as the potential of mountain areas is undeniable. Thus, the mountain producer will gain the right to obtain competitive prices for agricultural products. This will work given the growing number of “pretentious” consumers and tourists who prefer “health” to mount (air, water, healthy agri-food products). Tourists are looking for new destinations. Natural attractions, ecological products, traditional gastronomy, cultural heritage, specific leisure, make this kind of tourism gain more and more ground. The prices of these products will be higher; this is justified by the special conditions under which the producing animals are raised and the quality of their food. The ideal solution

for overcoming the impasse of mountain agricultural producers is to organize in various forms of association as well as registration and promotion of traditional products in the mountain area to identify as a local brand as the potential of mountain areas is undeniable. Thus, the mountain producer will gain the right to obtain competitive prices for agricultural products. This will work given the growing number of “pretentious” consumers and tourists who prefer “health” to mount (air, water, healthy agri-food products). Tourists are looking for new destinations. Natural attractions, ecological products, traditional gastronomy, cultural heritage, specific leisure, make this kind of tourism gain more and more ground. The prices of these products will be higher; this is justified by the special conditions under which the producing animals are raised and the quality of their food.

CONCLUSIONS

Mountain products can be easily recognized by consumers of valuable, high-quality food, who also want to be sure that they meet the standards. The prices of these products may be higher; this is justified by the special conditions in which the producing animals are reared, as well as by the quality of their food. Authorization of meat products, which has the optional status “mountain product”, is more difficult compared to the authorization of dairy products because the slaughter of animals, cutting and boning of carcasses can take place outside mountain areas, provided that the distance from the mountain area in cause not to exceed 30 km. The mountainous area of Romania must benefit from specific policies that have the role of preserving the housing attributes of the mountains threatened by migration, climate change, ecological imbalances, due to the improper exploitation of resources and poor urban planning; to take into account demographic disparities and the diversity of territories and to encourage the economic development of the mountain area by supporting agricultural and non-agricultural activities; to support the compensation of additional costs and income losses that mountain farmers suffer as a result of the

application of extensive management measures, biodiversity conservation, water and soil protection, or due to natural and specific constraints manifests in areas with an influence on agricultural production, in order to continuously use the land in areas with limited agricultural potential due to some unfavourable conditions induced by natural factors.

REFERENCES

- [1]. Gâf-Deac I, Rachieru O.T. - Analysis of the diversification of economic activities in mountain areas, in correlation with the existing infrastructure and national/European trends. Case study: The mountainous area from Suceava county
- [2]. Government Decision no. 506 of 20 July 2016 on establishing the institutional framework and measures for the implementation of Delegated Regulation (EU) no. 665/2014 of the Commission of 11 March 2014 supplementing Regulation (EU) no. Regulation (EC) No 1.151 / 2012 of the European Parliament and of the Council as regards the conditions for the use of the optional quality term “mountain product”
- [3]. Order no. 585 of December 20, 2019 for the amendment of the annex to the Order of the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development no. 52/2017 on the approval of the Procedure for verifying the conformity of the data contained in the specifications in order to grant the right to use the optional quality mention “mountain product” and to verify compliance with European and national legislation by economic operators who have obtained the right to use of that statement
- [4]. Rey Radu, 2013 - Multiannual strategy for the Romanian Carpathians-Horizon 2040
- [5]. www.anzm.gov.ro
- [6]. www.insse.ro
- [7]. www.madr.ro