

DYNAMICS OF CERTIFICATION OF TRADITIONAL DAIRY PRODUCTS AT EU LEVEL AND SPECIFICALLY FOR ROMANIA

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Abstract

Certified traditional products are an essential part of every country's cultural and gastronomic heritage. The quality and authenticity of these products are ensured by the authentic ingredients and artisanal methods of preparation. Consumers' growing interest in healthy eating makes the certification of traditional products a necessity. In this study, we have carried out a comprehensive statistical analysis of the current number of food products certified under quality schemes such as PDO, PGI, TSG, and also labelled as 'Traditional Product' and 'Traditional Romanian Recipe', both in Romania and in the European Union (EU). We also looked in detail at the current number of dairy products certified according to these standards. The data were obtained from the EU's eAmbrosia electronic register and the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development's CPAC electronic catalogue. The results provide a valuable and up-to-date perspective on certified and labelled food products, contributing to the development and promotion of the gastronomic heritage in Romania and the EU.

Key words: dairy products, quality scheme, registered Romanian traditional recipe, traditional product.

INTRODUCTION

In the current context, healthy eating plays a crucial role in maintaining our overall health and well-being. Moreover, consumers are increasingly opting for sustainable foods that promote sustainability and are characterized by superior quality (Chifor & Arion, 2023; Brons & Oosterveer, 2017; Bublitz et al., 2013; Smith-Spangler et al., 2012). They are interested in the origin of food products, especially for food products with certain geographical regions where culinary traditions are respected (Florek & Gazda, 2021; Vandecandelaere et al., 2018). 82% of consumers attach importance to the origin of food accordingly to the Swiss Federal Office of Public Health study that (Luykx & Van Ruth, 2008).

In order to respond to consumer demands, the EU has created the geographical indication quality systems (short, quality schemes) that aim to create added value by regulating and protecting agri-food products, ensuring that they respect and highlight their unique physical characteristics, impact on the environment and

traditions specific to the region of origin (Poetschik et al, 2021; Giovannucci et al, 2009). The first regulation was adopted by the EU in 1992, and that created the basis for the development of these quality schemes, with the aim of protecting quality and promoting products with geographical indication (Pieniak et al., 2009; Council of the European Union, 1992). In 2012, the European Parliament and the Council of the European Union adopted a new regulation that establishes the requirements for quality schemes with geographical indication, asking that most production stages take place in a well-defined geographical area, the manufacturing recipe be authentic, the raw materials must be original, the production process must be traditional and/or contain characteristics specific to the respective region, and they must pass on part of the gastronomic heritage of a community (European Commission, 2023; Glogovețan et al., 2022; Gellynck et al., 2008). According to the European Union, these quality schemes are considered an important tool in protecting and promoting high-quality agri-food products,

ensuring that farmers and producers benefit from a fair competitive environment, correctly informing consumers and promoting rural development in the respective areas (Chifor et al., 2022; Arfini et al., 2019). Various researchers have highlighted that these quality schemes make a valuable contribution to the sustainable development of rural areas, including by conserving local plant varieties, supporting diversity and social cohesion and creating employment opportunities (Crescenzi et al., 2022; Blakeney et al., 2021; Connelly et al., 2015).

In Romania, all products certified as PDO, PGI, TSG, and Mountain Product quality schemes, as well as those certified as Traditional Product and Established Romanian Recipe are included in the Certified Products and Activities Catalogue (CPAC), which is an online platform launched by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, 2023). Through this platform, all certified products are organized by product class, making it easy to navigate and search for information and allowing the consumer to quickly identify certified products. This classification is based on categories such as: milk products; meat products; fish products; bee products; vegetable-fruit products; bakery products; drinks; wineries; others (Catalogue of certified products and activities, 2023).

Romanian culinary heritage and the variety of traditional products represent a significant component of local culture and identity, influencing the socio-economic development of rural areas in a unique and valuable way (Soare et al., 2023).

The aim of this paper is to present the dynamics and evolution of PDO, PGI, TSG, Traditional Product and Established Romanian Recipe certified agri-food products in Romania, with special emphasis on certified dairy products. To achieve this goal, the following objectives were formulated:

- analysis of the distribution of these products by region;
- highlighting the close links between the areas that have preserved local traditions and practices and the distribution of the agri-food products studied.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Materials

For the research we have used some specific Romanian and EU databases like:

- Legislation regulating the licensing conditions of agri-food products certified according to PDO, PGI, TSG quality schemes at the European Union level and Traditional Product, Established Romanian Recipe at a national level.
- eAmbrosia online platform: for monitoring the current status of products certified under the PDO, PGI and TSG quality schemes;
- The online platform Catalogue of certified products and activities (CPAC): access information about the status of PDO, PGI, TSG, traditional products and Established Romanian Recipe certified products in Romania;
- The National Registry of Traditional Products (RNPT) and the National Registry of Certified Traditional Recipes (RNRC): relevant information on food products certified as traditional products in Romania, as well as on producers who have certified and registered products according to an Established Romanian Recipe.

The monitoring of the data from the accessed materials led to results showing accuracy and precision in terms of the certification/licensing of traditional Romanian food products, contributing to the development of knowledge in this important field of Romania's cultural and gastronomic heritage.






Methods

1. Identification of the certification methods of Romanian traditional products

Products certified under the quality schemes benefit from specific logos, which confirm their quality and authenticity (Figure 1). These distinctive logos help consumers easily identify them on the shelf, differentiating them from other products in the same category (Somicu & Vladu, 2023).

At the level of the European Union there are several protected, recognized and officially regulated quality schemes (Table 1).

Table 1. Protected quality schemes and allotted logos



Description	Specific logo*
<p>Protected Designation of Origin (PDO)</p> <p>This certification applies to agri-food products and wines, provided that all stages of production, processing and packaging take place in the respective region.</p>	
<p>Protected Geographical Indication (PGI)</p> <p>This certification applies to agri-food products and wines, provided that at least one of the stages of production, processing and packaging takes place in the respective region.</p>	
<p>Geographical Indication of Spirit Drinks (GI)</p> <p>This certification applies to spirits and aromatized wines, provided that one of the distillation or processing steps takes place in the respective region.</p>	
<p>Traditional Speciality Guaranteed (TSG)</p> <p>This certification applies to agri-food products, provided that the product is made according to a traditional recipe, which highlights traditional aspects and is not less than 30 years old</p>	
<p>Mountain product</p> <p>This certification applies to agri-food products, provided that the animal feed and raw material come from mountain areas. For processed products, it is necessary that the processing process takes place exclusively in the mountain area (European Commission, 2023).</p>	

*Extracted from: European Commission, https://agriculture.ec.europa.eu/farming/geographical-indications-and-quality-schemes/geographical-indications-and-quality-schemes-explained_ro (accessed on 14 November 2023).

In Romania, in addition to the PDO, PGI, GI, TSG and Mountain Product quality schemes, there are two main ways by which agri-food

products are protected and valued, which preserve their authenticity and respect traditional recipes and methods (Table 2).

Table 2. Official logo for Traditional product and the established Romanian recipes

Description	Specific logos*
<p>Traditional product</p> <p>This certification applies to food products, provided that the raw material is local, does not contain food additives, is based on a traditional recipe, and the production and/or processing process is traditional, products that will be registered in the National Registry of Traditional Products (Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, Food Industry, 2023).</p>	
<p>Established Romanian recipes</p> <p>This certification applies to food products, provided that the recipe according to which the product is manufactured is more than 30 years old from the date of entry into force of "Decree no. 394/2014", recipes that will be registered in the National Registry of established recipes (Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, 2023).</p>	

*Extracted from: Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, <https://www.madr.ro/industrie-alimentara.html> (accessed on 14 November 2023).

2. Data processing methods

Descriptive statistics was used for data processing through techniques of organization and summative presentation of data (representation in the form of graphs and tables).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The distinctive feature of these products is their superior quality. The products stand out for their strict adherence to traditional manufacturing methods, the recipes being inspired by

traditional culinary practices (Soare, 2023; Sprosser, 2022).

Based on the synthesis and statistical processing of the data taken from the official platforms, it was concluded that at the end of December 2023 there were 1527 certified products, of which 57 TSG, 659 PDO and 810 PGI (Figure 3). In the case of PGI products, the certification procedure does not involve carrying out all the stages of obtaining the respective product in the geographical region characteristic of the product.

In contrast, PDO certification restricts the production, processing and packaging stages to take place in the geographical area to which the product is assigned.

This restriction is what makes PDO-certified products so valuable, as they guarantee authenticity and a close connection with the

specific traditions and resources of the respective geographical region.

For the certification of TSG products, the requirements refer to strict adherence to tradition and authentic production methods. This aspect led to a smaller range of products, but highly appreciated by consumers (Figure 1).

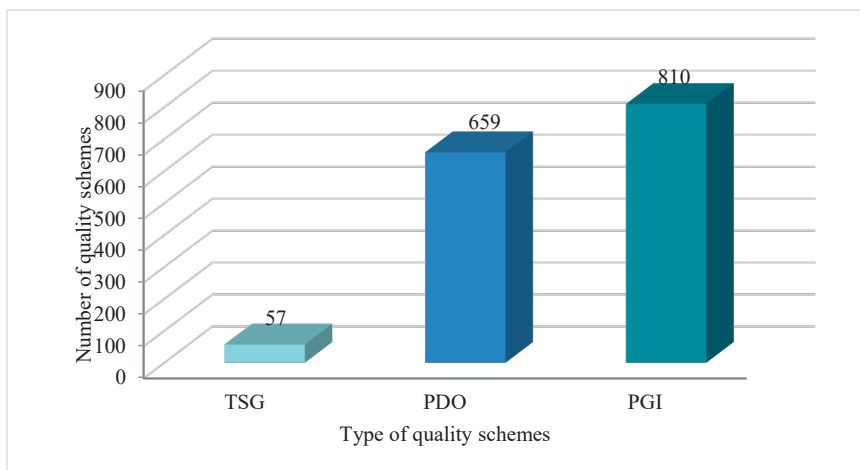


Figure 1. Number of food products certified through PDO, PGI and TSG quality schemes within the EU (December 2023)

The countries for which gastronomy is valued as an art, respectively the countries where tradition is a cult, stand out for the majority of products that are part of the PDO, PGI, TSG quality schemes. The feeling of belonging and attachment to the territory, respect for traditions and culinary recipes contributed to obtaining certification for many local products. For example, Italy is known for its respect for traditions and its culture rich in gastronomy, strongly anchored in tradition and with a strong sense of territorial identity. Each region of Italy has its own traditional specialties and specific production methods, which has led to a

remarkable diversity of certified food products. Italian locals and producers are proud of their products and traditions and are dedicated to protecting and promoting them. Italy also has a long history of protecting and promoting local products through the Italian Association of Geographical Indications Consortia (AICIG), which works constantly and rigorously to ensure product quality and authenticity. France (famous for its cheeses and pastries) and Spain (known for its olive oils and traditional hams) have a rich history of culinary traditions and are considered leaders in high-quality gastronomy (Figure 2).

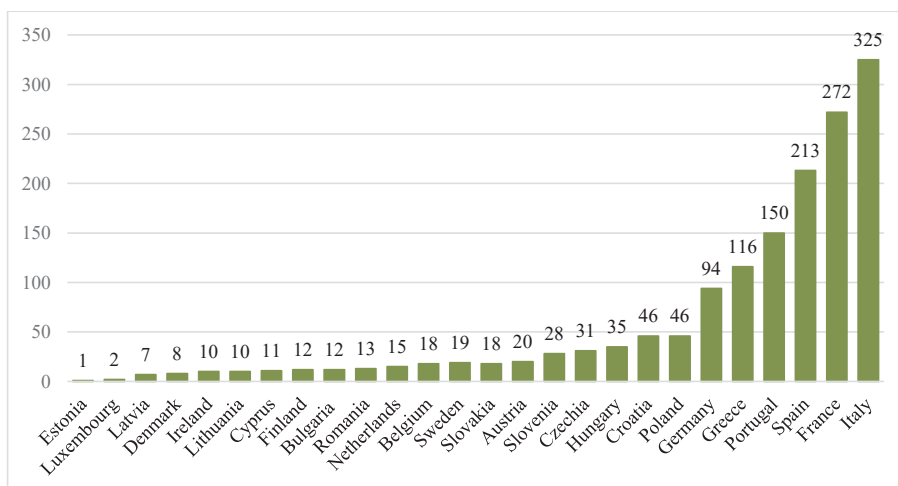


Figure 2. Number of food products certified through PDO, PGI and TSG quality schemes in EU member states (December 2023)

In Romania, there are 13 products certified at the European level through the corresponding quality schemes, among which PDO, PGI and TSG. In addition, at the national level, there are

its own certification and recognition mechanisms for traditional agri-food products: Established Romanian Recipe (25 products) and Traditional Product (765 products), Figure 3.

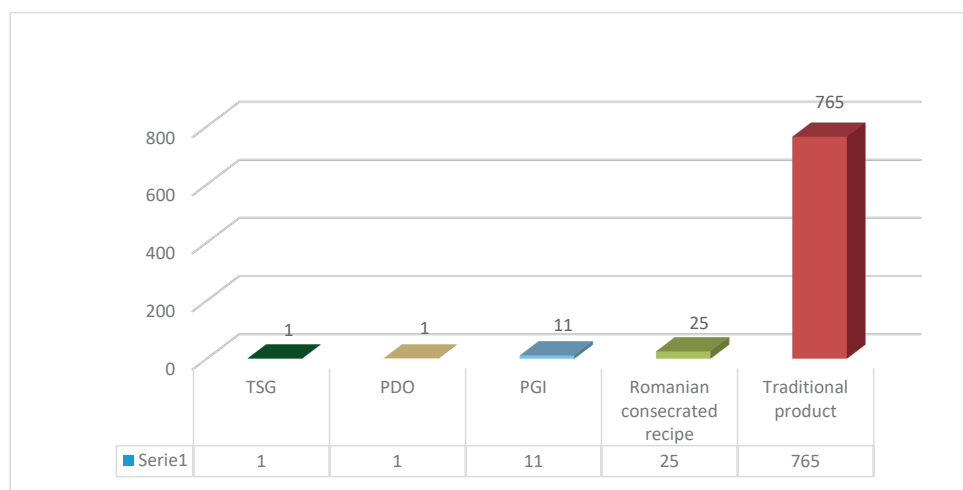


Figure 3. Number of food products certified in Romania as Traditional Product and Established Romanian Recipe (December 2023)

Regarding the PDO, PGI and TSG certified dairy products, the same countries stand out at the European level, whose products are in accordance with the strict standards of quality, provenance and tradition, respectively (Figure 4):

- France (62 products) - French cheeses are famous for their traditional recipes and refined taste (Roquefort, Camembert and Brie);

- Italy (58 products) - known for its experience in the production of fine cheeses (Parmigiano Reggiano, Gorgonzola and Mozzarella di Bufala)

- Spain (33 products) - offers a diverse range of authentic and delicious cheeses, recognized for their superior quality and their specific origin (Manchego, Queso de Tetilla or Queso de Cabra Majorera).

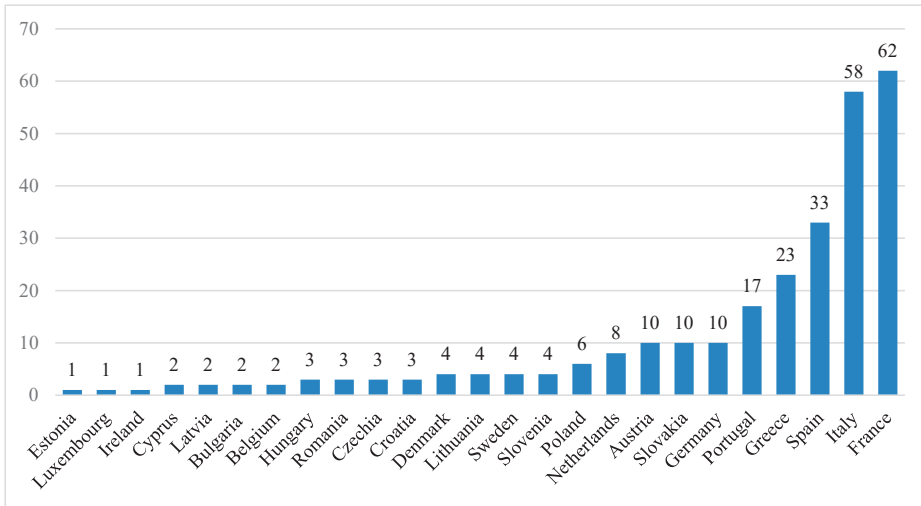


Figure 4. Number of PDO, PGI and TSG quality schemes certified dairy products in EU member states (December 2023)

In Romania there are 3 dairy products certified at European level, of which 1 is PDO (*Telemeaua de Ibănești* - certified in 2016) and 2 PGI (*Telemeaua de Sibiu* - certified in 2019 and *Cașcaval de Săveni* - certified in 2021) (Figure 5 and Table 3).

In addition, traditional dairy products from Romania benefit from various attestations and certifications, recognized both at the national level and at the level of the European Union, respectively Traditional Product (138 products)

and Established Romanian Recipe (8 products) (Figure 5 and Table 3).

The evolution of the attestation of dairy products in Romania, within the PDO, PGI, Traditional Product and Established Romanian Recipe quality schemes, is significant and highlights the increased interest in valorising and protecting authentic dairy products and the close connection between the distinct characteristics of the products and the geographical region specific (Figure 5 and Table 3).

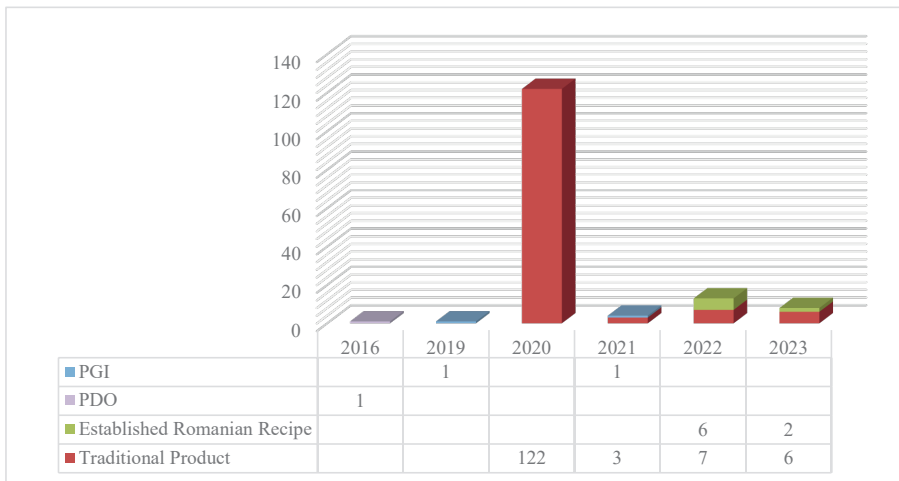


Figure 5. Evolution of dairy products' PDO, PGI, Established Romanian Recipe and Traditional Product certification in Romania (December 2023)

Increased interest and efforts in the valorisation and promotion of authentic Romanian products have led to the certification of a large number of dairy products in the Traditional Product category, of which 122 dairy products in 2020, 3 dairy products in 2021, 7 in 2022 and 6 in 2023.

The certification of the first dairy products (6 products) as Established Romanian Recipe was achieved in 2022. In the following year, 2 more products from this category were certified (Figure 5 and Table 3).

Table 3. Dynamic of certification/licensing of dairy products in Romania

No. of products	Product type	Certification year
Dairy products certified as Protected Designation (PDO) within Romania and the EU		
1	Telemea de Ibănești	2016
Dairy products certified as Protected Geographical Indication (PGI) within Romania and the EU		
1	Sibiu cheese (Telemea de Sibiu)	2019
2	Săveni yellow cheese (Cașcaval de Săveni)	2021
Dairy products certified as Established Romanian Recipe in Romania		
1-6	Lapte bătut 2% grăsimi; Chefir 3,3% grăsimi; Sana 3,6% grăsimi; Unt 80% grăsimi; Cașcaval Dalia; Cașcaval Rucăr	2022
7-8	Brânză telemea de vacă; Brânză telemea de oaie	2023
Dairy products certified as Traditional Product in Romania		
1-122	Cașcaval de Covasna Roby; Cașcaval afumat / afumat împletit de Covasna Roby; Urdă dulce/sărată Bangălă Fundata; Brânză de burduf Bangălă Fundata; Telemea de vacă "Ferma Istrate" Fundata; Brânză de burduf "Ferma Istrate" Fundata; Caș "Ferma Istrate" Fundata; Cașcaval "Ferma Istrate" Fundata; Telemea de oaie "Ferma Istrate" Fundata; Urdă "Ferma Istrate" Fundata; Caș Drăgoiu; Brânză de burduf Drăgoiu; Urdă Drăgoiu; Brânză telemea Drăgoiu; Cașcaval Poponeci; Brânză telemea Poponeci; Urdă Poponeci; Brânză de burduf Poponeci; Caș proaspăt/afumat Poponeci; Cașcaval "Baci Nicolae"; Urdă "Baci Nicolae"; Brânză de burduf "Baci Nicolae"; Cașcaval afumat Mănăstiresc; Telemea de vacă Mănăstiresc; Unt de vacă Mănăstiresc; Cașcaval afumat Baciul Fane; Cașcaval afumat Ciobănașul; Brânză de burduf Ciobănașul; Telemea de vacă Ciobănașul; Telemea de oaie Ciobănașul; Cașcaval afumat Moș Onica; Caș proaspăt/afumat Ferma Cățean; Brânză de burduf Ferma Cățean; Telemea de oaie Ferma Cățean; Cașcaval Ferma Cățean; Urdă Ferma Cățean; Telemea de vacă Ferma Cățean; Cașcaval Izvorul Alb; Urdă dulce Suhardo; Caș proaspăt/afumat Mihnea; Brânză de burduf Mihnea; Brânză telemea Mihnea; Urdă Mihnea; Telemea de vacă Lițoi; Caș afumat Lițoi; Urdă sărată Lițoi; Cașcaval opărit și afumat Lițoi; Brânză de burduf Lițoi; Brânză de burduf Dorin; Urdă Dorin; Telemea de oaie Dorin; Caș nefumat/afumat Dorin; Cașcaval de casă Dorin; Cașcaval Petrovan de Valea Stejarului; Brânză frământată Petrovan de Valea Stejarului; Brânză telemea Petrovan de Valea Stejarului; Cașcaval Cicos; Cașcaval Lelița; Cașcaval Sofica de Arad; Telemea de oaie/vacă Bangălă Fundată; Brânză telemea Stârp Ioan; Caș dospit Stârp Ioan; Urdă dulce Stârp Ioan; Brânză de burduf Stârp Ioan; Smântână dulce Suhardo; Telemea de vacă Suhardo; Cașcaval Suhardo; Caș de oaie Raul; Caș de capră Raul; Brânză telemea de oaie Raul; Cașcaval Genys; Smântână Botiș de Cărpiniș; Urdă Botiș de Cărpiniș; Cașcaval Botiș de Cărpiniș; Caș "Cami" de la Loman; Cașcaval afumat Deluț; Caș Deluț; Brânză frământată Deluț; Urdă Deluț; Brânză Produs de Taș; Brânză Năsal; Brânză de burduf în coajă de brad "Ferma Istrate"; Caș de oaie Căciulă; Telemea de oaie Căciulă; Cașcaval Căciulă; Telemea de vacă Căciulă; Caș afumat Căciulă; Brânză de burduf Căciulă; Urdă Căciulă; Brânză tradițională Peșteană din Fermele ADO; Cașcaval "Curtea Brăneană"; Caș "Curtea Brăneană"; Urdă "Curtea Brăneană"; Brânză de burduf "Curtea Brăneană"; Telemea de vacă "Curtea Brăneană"; Telemea de oaie "Curtea Brăneană"; Urdă Bran-Spârchez; Brânză telemea de oaie Bran-Spârchez; Brânză de burduf Bran-Spârchez; Caș afumat Bran-Spârchez; Brânză de oaie Burebista; Unt tradițional din Ozunca; Telemea de Nicolae Ciobanul; Cașcava de Doftana "Crăița"; Urdă dulce de vacă Baciul Brănean; Brânză de burduf în bășică Baciul Brănean; Brânză de burduf în coajă de brad Baciul Brănean; Caș afumat Baciul Brănean; Cașcaval afumat de oaie Baciul Brănean; Brânză frământată Viofanny; Caș Viofanny; Urdă Viofanny; Telemea Viofanny; Telemea de capră transilvăneană din Moiad; Caș de capră transilvăneană din Moiad; Telemea de capră Picurariu din Stejaru; Brânză burduf de capră transilvăneană din Moiad; Cașcaval de capră transilvăneană din Moiad; Brânză frământată de Sângeorz Băi; Urdă de capră transilvăneană din Moiad; Cașcaval tradițional Vlășie; Cașcaval Viofanny	
1-3	Cașcaval afumat Vălsăneș; Cașcaval Bangălă Fundata; Caș proaspăt/afumat Bangălă Fundata	
1-7	Brânză de vaci Romfulda din Beclean; Telemea de vacă Romfulda din Beclean; Brânză frământată în burduf Romfulda din Beclean; Brânză de vacă făcută la Sălaș; Iaurt de bivoliță –lapte acru din rădești; Caș de vacă-proaspăt din rădești; Brânză puțin sărată din Rădești	
1-6	Cașcaval văcuță ICA; Caș văcuță ICA; Urdă văcuță ICA; Telemea văcuță ICA; Brânză frământată; Sinelli de Teaca; Cașcaval de Lactomac	

Source: ec.europa.eu/agriculture/eAmbrosia

In order to achieve the second aim of the study, the distribution of the producers of products from the PDO, PGI, Traditional Product and Established Romanian Recipe categories was carried out on the map of Romania. A strong connection was noticed regarding the diversity of certified dairy products and how traditions are preserved in the respective regions (Figure 6). According to the data obtained from the Catalogue of Certified Products and Activities (CPAC), Transylvania is the region with the

largest variety of producers of traditional dairy products, with a total number of 99, of which 1 producer of dairy products within the PDO quality schemes, 7 producers of PGI dairy products, 77 producers of dairy products certified as Traditional Product and 14 producers of products certified as Established Romanian Recipe. This diversity of traditional dairy products indicates an increased concern for the preservation of traditions and the quality of local products.



Figure 6. Distribution of producers of dairy products certified through quality schemes (Source -map of Romania <https://xn--urlaub-in-rumnien-2qb.de/ro/regiuni-romania/> Original: Product logo allocation and caption)

The interest in protecting and promoting authentic Romanian products remains constant, whilst upholding the significance of preserving Romania's cultural values and gastronomic traditions.

CONCLUSIONS

The certification of food products through the PDO, PGI and TSG quality schemes is essential for highlighting the authenticity and superior quality of food products from different geographical areas of the European Union. These schemes attest to the respect for the gastronomic traditions and distinct particularities of each region, contributing to the consolidation of the local culinary identity. Italy, France and Spain are examples of countries with a rich gastronomic diversity, offering certified products that reflect their commitment to protecting and promoting regional traditions.

The sector of dairy products certified by the PDO, PGI and TSG quality schemes stands out for its diversity, authenticity and respect for gastronomic traditions. Italy, France and Spain are recognized as leaders in this industry, offering consumers high-quality, authentic and certified dairy products, reflecting their dedication to excellence and protecting the gastronomic heritage specific to geographic regions.

The evolution of the certification of dairy products in Romania demonstrates an increased

interest in protecting and promoting authentic products. Efforts to preserve and promote authentic dairy products remain particularly important for Romania, intending to preserve the country's gastronomic traditions and cultural heritage.

Transylvania is a real epicenter of authentic and quality dairy products. The generous distribution of certified dairy products in this region underlines the firm commitment to the preservation of local gastronomic traditions and the promotion of authentic cultural values. This phenomenon confirms the relevance and gastronomic prestige of Transylvania both domestically and in the international context, contributing to the promotion of the Romanian culinary identity.

The protection and promotion of PDO, PGI, Traditional Product and Established Recipe dairy products represent an important step in the preservation of cultural heritage and in the affirmation of Romanian gastronomic values in an international context.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This research work is a part from PhD thesis elaboration of the first author of the article and was carried out with the support of the Faculty of Animal Productions Engineering and Management, University of Agronomic Sciences and Veterinary Medicine of Bucharest, Romania.

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