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Is There Potential for GI Products in Albania? The Contribution of the Theory of Planned Behavior on Farmers' Production Practices

Albania leads the Balkans in per capita consumption of lamb and goat meat, with a 2020 FAO study showing an average of 8.68 kg consumed per person. Research from 2014-2018 (Bombaj, 2018) indicated a rapid rise in meat consumption between 2010 and 2018, followed by a decline beginning in 2021. This decline coincided with a decrease in small livestock populations, which have significantly dropped over the past three years. Albanian urban consumers highly prefer lamb, a staple in the traditional diet, usually bought fresh from local vendors with little attention to quality or certification. Lambs are often sold live to intermediaries, usually butchers with their own slaughterhouses in major cities. During the 2022-2024 period, demand for lamb increased during the summer tourism season, driven by restaurants' need for fresh lamb.

Field observations and interviews show that most small livestock is consumed by farming families themselves. Farmers in mountainous regions face high market access costs (e.g., transport, market access fees), which strengthen the bargaining power of intermediaries with large-scale transport capacity.

A project (September 2023 - July 2024) examined Albanian farmers' adoption of sustainable practices, applying the Theory of Planned Behavior to study farmers' intentions. We assessed farmers' beliefs, attitudes, social norms, perceived control, and behavioral intentions toward sustainable practices (e.g., crop rotation, reduced use of pesticides). A structured questionnaire was developed from semi-structured interviews with 50 farmers, presenting farmers with real-life scenarios requiring decisions on sustainable practices. Data indicate that a 1.01 increase in attitude towards sustainable practices raises behavioral intentions by 0.1272, while social norms negatively impact intentions (-0.2968 for a 1.00 increase). Perceived behavioral control showed a positive influence, with a 1.04 increase correlating to a 0.2014 increase in intentions.



Given Albania's tourism appeal, local lamb products could offer economic value for farmers. Urban consumers and tourists are willing to pay for local meat, suggesting the potential for short, high-quality value chains. However, a lack of product specification or certification remains a barrier, as the meat—although produced from native breeds and using traditional methods—lacks a universal certification for authenticity. Farms focus on individual rather than collective solutions, leaving no standard definition or certification for “traditional” products.

These preliminary findings could guide policymakers and international partners in developing strategies that enhance value chain integration for local products with high geographic specificity and consumer appeal.

Keywords: Sustainability; Policies; Food System; Albania

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