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Title : Agroecology, territorial sustainability and PDO cheeses: discussions on the Comté sector and cheeses from the Jura massif

Summary:

In France, in June 2022, the Comité National des Appellations d'Origine Laitière (National Committee for Dairy Designations of Origin) launched an initiative called the "sustainable dairy PDO approach", with the aim of integrating economic, social and environmental concerns into the collective management of cheese PDOs and their specifications. Recently, on 11 April 2024, the European Union recognised the inclusion of economic, social and environmental sustainability in the specifications for designations of origin [regulation (EU) 2024/1143].

Both the Swiss and French parts of the Jura massif are subject to agricultural development based on the presence of cheese sectors with official quality labels, supervised by rigorous inter-professional bodies. The usual operating principle is based on a technical division of labour (farm, cheese dairy, maturing cellar) where everyone has their own place, customs, rules and standards, and where the added value produced by each link is shared fairly.

However, while the economic and social sustainability of the Jura cheese system is easy enough to demonstrate and is often cited as an example, it should be stressed that on the one hand it is neither watertight nor protected from the cycles and crises that affect food markets, and on the other hand it is subject to socio-environmental issues and to the realities of climate change, with which producers have to contend. What's more, climate-related uncertainty can exacerbate crises or undermine their resilience.

In order to discuss these issues, the paper is divided into the following three sections:

- First of all, the organisation of the cheese-making system should be presented, emphasising the presence of a shared territorial rent within the territory. To this end, the results of work carried out as part of the ACYDU project of the ANR ALID are presented and analysed. They give an account of the territorial life cycle of the triptych organising the production system by measuring and modelling direct, indirect and induced jobs.

- Next, we need to look at the various regulations that govern production. There are three types of regulation: technical (production resources and practices), economic (supply regulation rules, production rights, etc.) and environmental (effluent management, etc.). Not all of these factors

have the same impact on every link in the chain. While over the past two decades the strengthening of production governance tools has mainly had an influence on production facilities (collection basin, length of milk storage, etc.), the changes in specifications discussed since the early 2010s are gradually affecting milk production and farm management (milk productivity quotas, fertilisation ceilings, access to pasture, farm size, ban on milking without a human operator, etc.).

- Lastly, the industry must face up to the demands of society and deal with global climate change, which is particularly noticeable in the mid-mountain region, especially as it is located in a karstic environment. This raises the question of the place and role of cheese designation specifications. These are an obvious guarantee of transparency, but they should not be seen as universal tools that stand on their own. Given its legal nature, the "specifications" tool has its limits as a means of regulating agricultural practices and implementing sustainable approaches. It would appear that the sectors need to make use of them, but also to constantly discuss their adaptation, debate the controversies that affect them, undertake research and popularise them in the field (in the image of the BIODIV'AOP approach). In so doing, they legitimise their role as stakeholders in an area in which they are not simply exploiters of local resources.

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