

The labeling of local products in Corsica: to feed oneself or to satisfy the tourist populations?

Since the 1980s, in order to face up to acute competition and the race for territorial competitiveness, in order to "meet" the tourist demand at that time, which was growing exponentially, not to say in the process of massification, but also because the island had remained on the fringes of the great productivist transformations of the 20th century, Corsica committed itself to a quality strategy. Thus, the food productions were invited to develop their local anchorage, their home-made production side (home-made), small flows, non-reproducible, positioning themselves *a contrario* of the image of the mass consumption product, standardized, aseptic, marketed identically by thousands ... In order to establish this quality strategy, the local agricultural sectors embarked on certification and labelling procedures leading them to obtain the first appellations of origin very early on, as early as 1975 for wine and 1983 for Brocciu¹. This may appear to be a first paradox, as the qualification of productions and products requires a certain form of standardization of practices, even if the production volumes remain low compared to what is commonly called a mass product. Since these first appellations, others followed and today there are no less than 13 products under Geographical Indications: 6 products benefit from a PGI (Wine of the Isle of Beauty, Kiwi, Pomelo, Clementine, Hazelnut of Cervioni, Charcuterie Ile de Beauté) and 8 from a PDO (wine - including 9 AO deferred², Brocciu, olive oil, chestnut flour, honey, prisuttu (ham), lonzu, coppa (charcuterie)). In other words, you will find almost all the everyday consumer goods of the past, the traditional Corsican basket consisting of cold meats, cheese, wine, bread (with chestnut), olive oil and some seasonal vegetables and fruit. Logically, local stakeholders saw in this strategy the opportunity to take advantage of an increased added value compared to "standard" (i.e. non-certified) products by responding to a rather high-end tourist demand, in search of meaning, authenticity and an image of rural Corsica of yesteryear that is somewhat fixed but very effective in marketing terms. Beyond the maximisation of profit on the territory, the idea is also to play the card of quality to develop customer loyalty and encourage them to (re) come and spend on the spot for products that contribute to the transmission of knowledge and know-how, heritage and the maintenance of the overall quality of the territory. Indeed, the environmental conditions or compensations introduced in the specifications commit the producers to co-constructing rural amenities (common goods) and a quality environment (also in the sense of the environment). In this way, the whole territory benefits from the Territorial Quality Rent thus generated by the existence of this market of the basket of territorialized goods and services. Given the narrowness of the local residential market (some 300,000 souls for a density of 40 inhab.km²), tourism functions here as a multiplier of demand, both in volume and in value.

As a lever for local development, tourism nevertheless raises the question of the distribution of the added value created along the chain of actors involved in the production and marketing of products, from the producers to the final distributors and the various intermediaries. Without mentioning the few cases of proven fraud that have unfortunately made headlines (adulterated charcuterie, milk or wine imports), the risk of the quality image of the products - and their relative value - being misused to the benefit of a few who do not always respect the commitments of the others, undermines all the sectors and distorts the long-term collective work that has been built up over time. This issue of "social justice" also affects consumers: the substantial increase in the price of labelled local products would have the effect of driving out certain segments of local consumers from access to products. Having become too expensive to be included in the basket of everyday consumption, they have become exceptional products

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(sometimes also luxury products) reserved for dedicated use (rural fairs and village festivals, change of season, Christmas parties, etc.). Having become inaccessible to the average citizen living on the territory (20% of Corsicans live below the poverty line), they are now reserved for well-informed consumers and a tourist elite ready to pay the full price, including the transaction costs of finding them and the additional services associated with the points of sale: either by going directly to the producer's premises to find the storytelling associated with the product (meeting with the producer, history of the farm, etc.), or by going to the farm itself (meeting with the farmer, etc.); or by going to the delicatessen where the salesman brings the assurance of finding the products, as well as guarantees of their supposed and expected quality (including for products without labels). Paradoxically, if the qualification of local products has a definite leverage effect on local development, largely supported by this strategy of recognition of local specificities and activation of heritage resources, it nevertheless has the consequence of sometimes making the product inaccessible to everyone, and in particular to culturally anchored consumers who would also intend, through the consumption of these products, to renew their adhesion to the territory and the local community.

In this context, we wonder about the reasons and choices that have set the island on the path of development at work, acting in a way as a well-established form of dependence on tourism. This path makes this sector of activity the first outlet on the island for quality agricultural products, a sector of activity that has been hit hard by the striking current events due to Covid-19, reminding us how great the vulnerability of the territory may be in this case. Questioning the model of territorial development and the current specialization in a high-end tourist economy and an agricultural economy that does not, or no longer, strictly speaking meet the basic needs of resident consumers, we propose to discuss the development trajectory that has been confirmed over the last two decades while returning to the few "weak signals" that are expressed as bursts tending to call into question this dominant model (new offers for residents such as winter vegetables, breaks in consumption patterns, reappropriation of agro-ecological values, among other examples).

To discuss this dependence on the trail that we have just highlighted, we will use the example of two products that are archetypal examples of the choices made in recent years in terms of labelling, examples that illustrate the interplay of opposing and sometimes even contradictory players: wine and cheese. In line with the quality issue, the wine industry has been committed for a long time (1975) to a process of label construction, formalising the links at the origin, on a geographical and technical level as well as on a symbolic level (bottle, use of names, etc.) and thus illustrating a winning strategy and a successful trajectory on a collective level (see above: 9 PDO wines and 1 PGI in Corsica). A large part of the top-of-the-range wines (the PDOs) remain on the island and find an outlet in direct sales (at the estate) and in restaurants, while the mid-range wines (the PGIs) are mainly exported to continental markets. On the other hand, as far as cheese is concerned, no official INAO labeling has made it possible to "regulate" the use of the word "Corsica" (apart from Brocciu, which is a co-product of cheese), including for productions based on imported milk.

This situation thus generates a more than confusing situation where the evocation of the word (brand names, symbols on labels) allows some to get out of the cumbersome quality procedures and others to capture the effects of reputation at a lower cost. Indeed, Corsica's reputation effects (including the flourishing signs of origin) lead to the attraction of uncertified products, often sold as more authentic than labelled products and which satisfy some tourists eager for a

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change of scenery with the informal side, This paradox of reputation as an obstacle to the "moralization" of the market also deserves to be mentioned and is well illustrated here by the situation of cheeses where the players are torn between the desire for labeling, micro-regional, regional or simply non-choice. Mechanically, this situation leads to a weakening of the signs of origin in favour of the "local" without guarantee. In fact, some farmers fall back on identifications based on "Casanu" or "raw milk" production methods. But even like this, the risk of trivialization of the product exists as soon as the breeding or processing practices are not defined (one thinks for example of the shared use of the same chemical or microbiological inputs and the same processing techniques between certain farmers and dairy farmers who are so disparaged).

So in this context, if we have to change the model, how do we do it? How can we get out of our dependence on tourism and embark on a path that would be less vulnerable, more virtuous, because it is less dependent on the outside world, because it promotes food sovereignty? Here we put forward two ideas, which are mutually responsive! 1) How can the supply evolve so that it also meets the needs of residents? The question of price levels and accessibility will then have to be asked. And that of export (physical traffic off the island and tourist consumption on the island) as a means of enlarging the market and avoiding its saturation. 2. How to change the demand of residents to make the relocation of a feeder farm possible? This implies observing, for example: the replanting of winter vegetables by producers but also by residents themselves; the way residents consume to identify their diet and what they put in their food basket. What constitutes the diet of the inhabitants of Corsica today and how does it still fit into a "Mediterranean diet"? Some "non-identity" products are doing well, such as Corsican veal. Why not take inspiration from this approach, which today is proving to be a success? As we can see, there is no lack of obstacles to initiate a new path that breaks with the dependence on trails and allows to balance the identity function and the nourishing function of Corsican agriculture.

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