



Emblematic Mediterranean Mountains network ② (EMbleMatic ②)

First Transnational Meeting

26th and 27th July 2022 – Anogia, Greece

Minutes of the European Lab #1

DAY 2 - 27th July 2022 – European emblematic lab #1 – mountainous small-scale cheese making process

1. Introduction of the session

One good practice was presented for each partner territory, on the topic of mountainous small-scale cheese making process and all the related challenges / issues.

2. Let's discover 4 concrete experiences and improve our respective practices through exchanges - From production to commercialization of mountainous cheese

A. Focus on Psiloritis experience (Greece)

The cheese production: Current state of art-Problems-Perspectives

Speaker: Mavrogiannis Dimitris – Alekos Stefanakis

Study on the breeding stock in the area of Psiloritis Geo-park (Crete): to register and diagnose issues and drawbacks. The idea is to make the territory sustainable on this field.

The cheese production dynamic in Crete

Cheese production exists in Crete since ancient years and is one of the main activity and financial sources of revenue in the area. The customs and traditions of the area are closely linked with cheese production activity. Today, the practices have evolved towards more modern mode of production and fabrication, but it is still operating in the framework of family initiative.

- In this context, breeding stock (goats and sheep) is a challenge. These animals live in specific areas, rich with specific flora which contribute to their nutrition and are part of a sustainable production mode. Breeders activity is connected to their natural environment.

In Crete, the biggest amount of the cheese production comes from the geo-park. In 2019, there were one million and a half of sheep and goats in Crete (4,5% of Greece stock). The territory produces around 10% of the cheese in Greece, with more than 100 farms. It specifically increased during last decades (1990-2000) of more than 56%. This is an area with:

- Intense natural and human environment
- A developed economy (primary sector) and numerous infrastructures, fostering the attractiveness of the area for young people as well as a high birth rate,



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- An economy partly based on animal breeding

Challenges and issues

The infrastructures are existing, with numerous family farms. However, small activities are considered as less competitive in terms of price, regarding products sold in supermarket. Then, some challenges exist:

- A strong competition from the industrial cheese production sector
- A lack of cooperation between the different producers to valorize their products
- A lack of marketing and communication about the products specificities

But solutions could be found to valorize these products. The development of clusters could be an opportunity to access funding, reach better prices and improve the importance of local small-scale cheese production units.

B. Focus on Pieriki experience (Greece)

Family cheese factories: From production to direct sale

Speaker: Roukas Dimitrios

In 2014, the Greek State legalized the fact that cheese farmers could produce cheese / dairy products by themselves and sell it directly to the consumer. It was an entrepreneurial step toward more autonomy and the development of small production units.

- With the necessary licenses from the sanitary authorities, the traditional dairy products can be promoted. Cheese farming in Greece is an old art, strongly linked with the natural environment.
- Nowadays, cheese result from a standardized process while in small farms, the fermentation and mode of production are all different.

Cheese production requirement in Greece

- The transformation part should use a maximum energy capacity of 10 kilowatts
- The production and fabrication can be made in any big storage place (you do not need special infrastructures)
- The headquarters should be in the farm area but not in a built area. A cheese unit production is considered as an agricultural farm (*definition: a spot involved in the production or transformation of products*)
- There is an obligation to produce milk (the production should be milk at 50%). You can produce about 300 kilos per day if it is not a cooperative farm.
- 25 square meters are needed as a minimal area to produce the cheese.

Advantages of creating a small cheese farm

- The selling without intermediates has more advantages for the farmers. When there are intermediaries, the final product is very expensive;
- Each product is different and the producer can valorize the added-value of its products;
- The local and small units of production are a way to support the income of local cheese producers.



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In Thiva, there are about 31 farms. Most development agencies have included cottage farming in their activities and support their development. With the 2015 law, cheese producers can sell their products freely and develop Greek products label.

C. Focus on Aneser area (Greece)

Advantages and disadvantages of cheese making in Lailia - the challenges and opportunities of the mountain

Speaker: Kantios Georgios

The farm is located at about ten kilometers from the Serres municipality, and is 400 meters above sea level. The area has a lot of qualitative advantages.

The farm was created in 2016 as they wanted to verticalize their production and be able to promote their own products. The facility includes different spaces dedicated to cheese production: chemical lab, pasteurization area, production area, maturation and storage of ingredients area, and then a changing room. The farm can process around 1 ton of milk per day, starting usually in spring.

In the region, the milk is of good quality. The objective of the farm is to preserve the added-value of their products and the methods and recipes inherited from ancestors. All the process has pros and cons.

Challenges and issues

- The cost could be high and they are not so competitive in terms of price
- They cannot afford to have specialists and experts to provide them solutions within a short period of time
- It is not always possible to increase the production because of the limited available lands
- The funding opportunities are limited because of the size of the company

D. Focus on Pedraforca experience (Spain)

Marketing and distribution process for small cheese producers

Speaker: Berta Flotats

The farm was launched 4 years ago and is 30km from Barcelona. First the infrastructures were developed and then the cheese lab. In Spain, there are specific issues as it is not so advantageous to produce its own cheese. The investment is really high and the bureaucracy is not easy. They had to first be part of the sanitary register from the State and then they could sell their own products.

The farm follows ecological principles and do not use any chemical product. The final consumer is usually tourist.

The main challenge is the marketing and distribution as there are only two people working on the farm. As a small farm, they have to support the cost of the refrigerated transport. Moreover, as the place is really touristic, the consumption flows and the demand is changing according to the touristic season (summer). It is also difficult to promote the product as people are generally and more easily buying in supermarket.

To develop first solutions, they organize visits to explain people and raise



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awareness about small cheese production. The idea is to make them aware of the value of good products.

Challenges and issues

- Marketing and distribution management / cost
- Strong competition from the industrial cheese producers
- Raise consumers awareness is a challenge to promote local products and their difference compared to industrial cheese makers (how local cheese is produced, what are its specificities...)

3. Common challenges and difficulties, potential solutions and perspectives for improvement of small-scale cheese production process

- The legislative framework is important to consider when talking about local production in the field of dairy products. The idea is to facilitate the production and provide information on the existing legislative framework.
- The organization of clusters and the coordination of local producers could be a solution to give importance to cheese production and to get more advantages / recognition (in the framework of the future CAP, for example).
- A lot of farms and cottage were supported by local development agencies. The state could do this work and operate to support these small farms.
- Cheese producers face high taxes level while they don't have a lot of revenue and the production is very costly. A different taxation regime could support mountainous farming.
- The consumers mindset is not necessarily open to the consumption of artisanal products. The idea is to convince consumer that the product can be good, even without the use of chemical products. It is also a way to inform about traditional products.
- Cheese production contributes to the preservation of natural areas and of ancestral activities.