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Typical products and rural development: Who benefits from PDO/PGI recognition?

Andrea Marescotti[1]

[1] Department of Economics, University of Florence (I)
Via Curtatone, 1 - 50123 Firenze - Fax 0039 055 27 104 24 - E-mail: marescot@cce.unifi.it

DRAFT VERSION

Abstract. *The paper is focused on the links between rural development and typical products. After taking in exam the many connections typical products may have with rural development dynamics, the attention is directed on the role of EEC Regulation 2081/92 (PDO and PGI) for rural development. In particular, on the basis of a case-study analysis concerning a typical product of Tuscany (the cherry of Lari), the paper aims at showing how the various actors involved at a local level (agricultural firms, processing firms, local public institutions, producers and consumers associations, etc.) take part in the process that leads to the application for PDO-PGI, which are their exptected benefits, and which are the consequences the PDO-PGI approval may exert on rural development. The conclusions underline the problems that small production systems may face in applying for the PDO/PGI, and propose some research and policy recommendations.*

Keywords: Food Quality Products, Typical Products, PDO and PGI, Rural Development

1. Introduction

Rural development is progressively becoming one of the major objectives of the EU policies. Starting from the middle of the Eighties, the concept of rural development has been inserted in the Common Agricultural Policy with a quite clear definition. Rural Development policy of the European Union is more and more oriented towards the support to diversification of economic and social activities in rural areas[47,59] in order to increase quality of life and rural resources for local and external citizens. Besides, recent approaches, expressed also during the Cork Conference in 1996, consider rural development in its endogenous, integrated and sustainable dimensions: this means that community participation in the definition of objectives (bottom-up), the role of local resources (goods, skills, contextual knowledge, symbols) and the respect of natural and social environment take a central role in rural development process. The role of agriculture changed consequently: EU rural development policies aim at enhancing the multifunctional character of agricultural activities, and the integration of all the economic and social activities at a local level (tourism, craft or industrial manufacturing, services, social activities).

Both a widespread literature[1] and the policy adopted by the EU stress the importance of supporting typical products to attain this objective. As a matter of fact typical products are strictly tied to their area of origin, as they derive their characteristics from the pedo-climatic, technical and organisational peculiarities of the *terroir* they come from. They are based on some local specific rural resource, both material or immaterial, that cannot be reproduced outside that particular local context due to physic and climatic constraints, but also to immaterial resources (social capital, cultural capital[21,53]. This recalls the importance of considering the nature of “patrimonial good”[17,18,25] of typical products, and the role of local community, culture, identity, and contextual knowledge.

Typical products may be considered in their “collective dimension”, as the result of a social construction made by some actors along time and within a territory on the basis of some local resources; this construction is validated by the outside by other actors (the consumers, the State), sometimes by institutional means (such as the geographical indications). They are linked not only to the skills of a group of firms, but also with locally created public goods and with the history, habits and culture of the local community. That is why the support given to typical products is often considered an useful tool to preserve local culture and traditions, and to foster development dynamics in rural areas[2], especially in disadvantaged and mountain areas showing lack of viable alternatives[3].

Therefore typical products seem to suit the new agricultural model fostered by the recent trends of the Common Agricultural and Rural Policy in Europe (CARPE) with the so-called second pillar[22], showing a “multifunctional” character within rural development strategies[1,11].

Nevertheless not many attempts have yet been made in organising and highlighting the different issues which concern the relationships between typical products and rural development. How can typical products contribute to foster rural development? How do typical products succeed in raising local resources and conveying the local community (producers, rural citizen, local public institutions) towards a common aim? Which are the premises of success? And more particularly, does the most important legislative tool prepared by the European Union, that is EEC Regulation 2081/92 on PDO and PGI, succeed in supporting rural development dynamics, as stated in the premises of the Regulation itself?

The paper will be focused on the links between rural development and typical products. After taking in exam the many connections typical products can activate to rural development, the attention will be directed on the role of EEC Regulation 2081/92 (PDO and PGI) for rural development. In particular, on the basis of the analysis of a case-study concerning a typical product of Tuscany, the paper aims at showing how the various actors involved at a local level (agricultural firms, processing firms, local public institutions, producers and consumers associations, etc.) take part in the process that leads to the application for PDO-PGI, which are their expected benefits, and which are the consequences the PDO-PGI approval may exert on rural development.

1 See for example [2,3,12,13,15,19,20,26,27,30,33,46,48,57].

2 The definition of rural areas is quite vague and variable both in economic literature and in statistical sources. There are many definitions of rurality, often depending on the objectives of the researchers or policymakers analysis. Often rural areas are simply defined as “non urban”, stressing low demographic density, sometimes coupled to the importance of agricultural activity. Sometimes rural is very close to “agricultural”, other time close to “local” (with special emphasis on local development and small-medium enterprises). There is also a concept of rural which refer to “regional”, and finally the term is used to refer to the concept of rurality, and more exactly rural development, chosen by the European Union. The meaning of the term “rural” changes along time, adapting to the more general economic and social change. Especially in recent times, the “agrarian” and the “non urban” concepts has been substituted by a more articulated one, following the social and economic changes observed in “non urban” areas and the variability of situations and trends. Sector and spatial economic differentiation and integration are now considered key elements of rurality. In more dynamic terms, many researchers underline the importance of characterising rurality according to the presence of a dependency/autonomy relationships regards to other development centres (industrial sectors, urban areas)[12].

3 There is now an abundant literature on typical products, coming from many scientific disciplines and analysing various aspects and dimensions. To have a panorama on the main economic issues concerning typical products it may be useful to refer to the proceedings of two EAAE Seminars on quality and typical products (Parma 1997[2], and Le Mans 1999[56]), to the results of FAIR EU-funded research project *PDO and PGI Products: market, supply chains and institutions*, and to the Concerted Action DOLPHINS *Development of Origin Labelled Products: Humanity and Innovation*.

2. Typical products and rural development

Many authors underlined [7,20,28,31,60] how the evolution of modernity caused rural areas, and agriculture in particular, to follow industrial-like development paths, and to get dependent from outside actors and regulation centers, losing the power to chose, control and direct autonomous development paths. Production in rural areas is therefore subject to a “homologation” / modernisation process caused by the diffusion of behaviour models that are typical of the urban and industrial sector, both at the production and consumption level. The so-called homologated agriculture tends to lose part of its sector specificities, and to attain an efficient use of resources through scale economies and also through the transfer of resources to other sectors.

Nevertheless the homologation process doesn’t involve the whole agricultural sector in a uniform way, and in particular the most marginal and disadvantaged areas, where the capacity of reacting to the evolution of production techniques and competitive pressures is limited. Therefore a non-homologated agriculture persists. Production factors of non-homologated agriculture – owing to their specificity – are not easily transferable to the homologated model, and hence they cannot gain an adequate remuneration. This process results in a crisis of traditional farming and processing systems, and in a growth in marginality and abandon of agriculture in marginal rural areas, with evident deep social effects.

Production and valorisation processes of typical products are frequently based on specific non-transferable local assets (both of material - i.e. specific plant varieties or animal breed - and immaterial kind - i.e. local knowledge and culture). The production of typical products often represents a founding part of non-homologated agriculture, within which the resources, locked into rural areas, are the basis of rural development processes. As a consequence, the typical product may work as a rural development tool which the local community may use to allow a remuneration and therefore a reproduction of the resources, included the social, cultural and human capital. As a matter of fact empirical evidence shows how the typical product is often used as a pivot in the collective strategies of rural development.

Typical products-based initiatives are hence a part of a more general model of quality differentiation which characterises recent evolution of agro-food system, and they make reference to the innovation based on hedonic and cultural attributes, and on identities. The post-Fordist transition requires flexibility and differentiation. Competition is based on quality and differentiated food for the new consumption patterns, and production costs are less important than “quality”.

In the previous points implicit reference has been made to an «archetypal» model of typical products[19,12]: an agro-food typical product resulting from a collective and territorialised tradition. typical product is hence strictly linked to a physical *terroir*, which is revealed by a local specific know-how which in turn derives from a local social system. In the real world there is not only one «model» of typical products, but there is a set of differentiated situations: correspondence of real typical products to the «archetypal» model is not the rule. Moreover, typical products are not steady but they cover complex trajectories and are subject to evolutions depending also on the transformations at a local system scale and on firms strategies; in the same territory very often there are a number of typical products which are interrelated. As a consequence, evidence points out that typical products by itself have not positive effects on rural development concerning the sustainable exploitation and remuneration of local (natural and non natural) resources, the localisation of economic activities and know-how transmission process, the support to the reproduction of local social system. The positive effects of typical products on rural development depend on the strategies local and non local actors activate[13].

Development results from the strategies of private, collective and public actors, coupled to a structural dynamic. The typical product represents a potential resource for the rural system, as much as it stimulates aggregation and strategies leading to the creation of value through the product itself. Around the typical product local actors can build strategies for creating economic value on the basis of local specificities and resources. Sometimes typical products can be considered as “cultural markers”[52] for local populations and institutions. The typical product may acquire a “patrimonial status” for the local community. This way of considering typical products helps understanding the rationale of many promotional activities implemented on typical products, and the different interests shown by actors within and outside the production area.

3. The role of PDO & PGI for rural development

The basic question is: is PDO-PGI a means to support rural development dynamics? To what conditions? Are there more efficient and effective ways to foster rural development?

The use of a PDO or a PGI is often considered as a means to enhance rural economy and rural development, increase added value and market power, remunerate locked-in resources, obtain spill-over effects on the local economy and activate or re-enforce rural development. Nevertheless, up to now there is no much evidence on the effects the institutionalisation process of typical products may have on rural economy and development. Generally speaking it is not the institutionalisation of the resource “origin” (the collective elaboration and the public recognition of a platform which specifies the condition of exploitation of the resource “name of the place”) in itself to set the conditions of development, but how this process is constructed and the effectiveness of the promotion strategies built upon it.

PDO-PGI may help to build networks among local firms and between firms and local community. Actually actors who promote the initiative are not only producers, but also public local and non local institutions, research institutions, tourism organizations, consumer associations. The choice to ask for a PDO or a PGI may change the direction and intensity of the effects on the rural economy and rural development.

The effects of PDO-PGI on link between typical product and rural development vary according to the contents of the Code of Rules. The way production areas, techniques, and characteristic of the final product are defined affects the value of local resources in the supply chain and outside it.

PDO-PGI recognition may help firms to “update” to the modern logic of quality assurance, certification, traceability, specialization. At the same time this process may lead to exclude a big part of local firms and/or increase their production and marketing costs, or, alternatively, exclude them from the use of a traditional product name. As a matter of fact some evidences underline the difficulties faced by small-medium and/or craft firms in implementing PDO-PGI regulations as stated by Council Regulation 2081/92, in particular in marginal areas and when the quantities produced are small, and this in opposition to the expressed goals of EU policy. Small producers in peripheral regions often lack local markets, are short of the resources and skills required to enter more distant markets, and have little flexibility in production.

Can the PGI-PDO stimulate rural development in marginal rural areas? Or, at the opposite, is PGI- PDO really effective only in dynamic rural areas? Some recent studies[40] point out that in some regions PGI-PDO products are located mainly in more developed areas. As a consequence, the presence of PGI-PDO products could be the result rather than the cause of the development of rural areas.

Turning to “trajectories” of PDO-PGI, the institutionalisation may help external powerful actors (mass distribution, processing firms, traders) to extract resources and added value from the area of origin, menacing rather than fostering local development.

Even where there is an opportunity to obtain a PDO or a PGI, often local actors are not interested in applying for any legal protection: this is mainly the case of those products which have short marketing channels and rely on local consumers and tourists, or more generally where estimated premium price is not sufficient to cover estimated certification costs plus “transformation” costs (the costs required to firm in order to adapt to the content of Product Specifications).

4. To PDO or not to PDO? The case of the cherry of Lari (Italy)

In this section we will analyze a case-study, the cherry of Lari (Italy), which refers to the discussions held by producers of this typical product on the opportunities and problems that a PDO may bring to the local production system. The application process appears as a natural place to observe actors’ strategies. The different aspects which emerged from these discussions, and from some interviewees had with some local and non local actors involved in the promotion of the cherry of Lari (local public administrations, research institutes, regional agency for innovation in agriculture, Chamber of Commerce, etc.), show how controversial may be the application for a PDO-PGI for some typical products whose production system does not appear to be capable to supporting it. Besides, to certain conditions, a PDO/PGI may be seen as a menace rather than an opportunity for rural development.

4.1) The local socio-economic system and the evolution of agriculture

The cherry production has a secular tradition[8,58] in some hill areas of the Pisa province in Italy, in particular within the Municipality of Lari, a small village counting 1.200 inhabitants. The secular tradition of cherry-trees cultivation in the territory of Lari Municipality is also demonstrated by the presence of at least[4] 13 native cherry-tree varieties, recently catalogued also by a research funded by CNR[5] (National Research Council). The existence of unique cherry-tree varieties, coupled to the peculiarity of the soils and the climate, are at the basis of the specificity and the reputation of the cherries of Lari.

Nevertheless the cherry production in the area suffered the effects of a more general crisis and restructuring of the agricultural activities which followed the Modernisation period (1950-1980). The decline of agriculture in the hills is due both to higher production costs faced by farmers with respect to the nearby plains, and mainly to the widespread industrialisation process (furniture and motorbyke industries) close to the area, with a resulting decrease in the number of farmers (especially the professional ones) and in supply.

Nowadays the agriculture of the hills of Pisa province is mainly composed by a high but decreasing number of small family farms with de-specialised productions, a great part destined to self-consumption or local markets by short marketing channels.

People working in agriculture is usually advanced in years. There are very few professional farmers, most of them cultivating fruit trees (peach, cherry, apricot, plum), olives, and vineyards, while the bulk of the farmers are non-professional ones. Part-time farming is widespread, and agricultural activity is conceived as integration of the main source of income, which almost always comes from employment in industrial or service sectors and from pensions.

Due to lack of people - especially young people - wishing to work in agriculture, the structure of agricultural production in the area changed quite dramatically in the last 30 years: orchards, vineyards and horticultural productions were substituted with less labour-intensive crops or abandoned, thus affecting the quality of landscape and the hydro-geological asset in the area. Immigration flows into local agriculture were small, and not sufficient to compensate so a big exodus[55].

The renewed interest shown by consumers towards high-quality products and services, and by citizens towards environmental matters (pollution, biodiversity, etc.) and landscape, is offering new opportunities for agricultural and rural development in the area (typical products, direct on-farm selling, agri-tourism, etc.).

The evolution of the role of agriculture and rural areas and the increasing importance of integrated development strategies have contributed to start an important change in the institutional context. As a matter of fact, the variety of interests related to agriculture and to rural areas favoured the emergence of new stakeholders, such as consumers of local products and services, new residents, environmentalists, new groups concerned in ethic consumption, tourists, enterprises and agencies involved in local development, and favoured the development of new networks between farmers, between farmers and institutions, and between farmers and consumers, thus modifying the pre-existent relationships among the actors, both at local and national level.

Actually, Lari Municipality is not far from the seaside (about 20 miles), and the quality of its hilly landscape and environment, coupled to the proximity to the most important artistic cities of Tuscany (Pisa, Siena, Florence) may represent a leverage for re-launching agricultural activity and the economy of the area.

4.2) The production and marketing of the Cherries of Lari

Cherries growing in Italy is concentrated in four main Regions: Puglia (53%), Campania (16%), Veneto (9%) and Emilia-Romagna (8%)[37]. The production volumes, after a sharp crisis in the middle of the 90s, are now recovering: in 2000 the national production was over 150.000 tons, and the trend in new plantations let us expect a further increase. A roughly estimated cherries of Lari yearly production is 50 t., which means about 0,03% of the total italian production, but a half of Tuscan production.

Almost all the small and very small farms in Lari area own some cherry trees, but only a few are the professional producers (12-15 in the territory of Lari Municipality), none of which is specialised on cherry-trees growing. The highest level of production is reached by a professional producers, with an average production of 140 q., but he cannot pick the overall production of his cherry-trees because of lack of labour willing to work in agriculture and difficulties of the cherry picking, due to the height of the trees. Other two producers have an average production of 70 q., and the rest 10 q.[6]

As a consequence of the peculiar production structure, the bulk of cherries production is destined to self-consumption or placed to friends and on short marketing channels, and only a limited amount of production is sold on traditional market and, to a lesser extent, to some mass distribution firms.

Local consumers know and appreciate the cherry of Lari. Because of the fact that cherries are perishable and they do not ripen after being detached from the plants, the consumption area is very close to the production area, though modern techniques allows for a growing competition from other areas. This may explain why up to now there was not a great need to protect the name of the cherry of Lari from imitation.

The growing techniques are traditional, and there are few specialised orchards, while most of cherry-trees are scattered in the fields or planted on the borders of vineyards or small horticultural fields. Cherries are hand-picked and directly put in wooden boxes (no second handling is required) by family members, and no extra work force is usually needed for cultivating and picking. Once picked, cherries must be immediately marketed, as no producers owns refrigerated storage facilities, and the varieties cultivated, especially local native ones, are very perishable.

At present only a few farms use to sell cherries locally to mass distribution firms (Coop, Carrefour), which use to sell in shops in Pisa province and in the city of Pisa and Leghorn (5% of the whole production of Lari, approximately). Many farmers still use to market their cherries together with the other fruit production to traditional wholesale market in Leghorn (20 miles far from Lari) or, to a lesser extent, Pisa, Viareggio and Pontedera markets (about 80% of the cherry production of Lari municipality), while the smallest farms sell directly to local retailers. A part of the cherries is sold through the annual Cherry Festival (*Sagra delle ciliegie*) directly to consumers (5%).

A premium price of about 30% is given to Lari provenience compared to other italian regions on local market (on multiple retailers shelves). The premium price is linked to the freshness of the product and to the reputation of the production area. Local consumers prefer to buy local products, especially when dealing with fruit and vegetable. There are no problems of marketing within the local areas, and the competition coming from other stronger production areas in Italy (Puglia in the South of Italy, Emilia in the North) and abroad (France, Turkey, Spain) does not alter the positioning of the Cherry of Lari.

No special vertical co-ordination mechanism are used between farmers and other agents along the supply chain. On the wholesale markets there are non specialized buyers and commission agents who act as intermediaries in the marketing of the product, taking care of selling the product to local retailers or restaurants and, less frequently, to consumers. Co-ordination between producers and wholesalers or commission agents are based on trust coming from long-lasting relationships, and no particular engagement (contract) is taken or required by producers or wholesalers.

In latest years, a few Lari cherries producer were able to establish trade relationships with mass distribution firms. Selling on these “modern” channels usually ensures higher margins, together with higher price stability. Besides, the price of the product is not subject to the same fluctuations as on wholesale markets and, more in general, on traditional markets. These advantages are counterbalanced by tighter constraints and controls imposed by the mass distribution firm (delivery time, minimum quantities, packaging, etc.). Actually, in the case of the cherries of Lari, the activation of this modern marketing channel is due more to the interest shown by the local multiple retailer firms than to producers' interest.

[4] 19 cherry-tree native varieties of Lari are present in the national list of traditional products (*Prodotti tradizionali*) according to D.Lgs. n.173/98 art.8 and Decree of the Italian Ministry of Agriculture n.350/99.

[5] The research activity carried out by ARSIA (the Agency for agriculture of the Tuscan Regional Administration) and CNR[54] has been stimulated also by a regional Law (n.50/97) on “Protection of native genetic resources” (*Tutela delle risorse genetiche autoctone* (see www.arsia.regione.toscana.it). The 13 native cherry-tree varieties are censed in the Regional Bank of germoplasma, and they were declared “endangered varieties”.

[6] To give an idea of the average value of the cherries production, we should consider an average price/kg of about 4 euros. This means that the quantity produced by the most important cherries producers is sold at about 56.000 euros, while most professional cherries producers earns about 4.000 euros (10 q.). Of course the price of Lari cherries varies greatly according to the quantities produced in that specific year, to the selling period with respect to supply peak, to cherry-tree variety (for example *Marchiana*, the most traditional and widespread variety in the area, is sold at about 5 euros/Kg., while the other local varieties 4 euros/Kg.), to marketing channel used (mass distribution firms, retailers, wholesalers, direct sale, Cherry Festival).

As a matter of fact the multiple retailer firms are now stressing the importance of typical food products, even by launching lines of typical products under their own brand (private labels).

No particular quality standards are required for the marketing of the Cherry of Lari. As a consequence, the only reference is given by Council Regulation EEC n.899/87 and EC n.888/97 on Quality Standards for cherries, which contain the definition of the product, the minimum characteristics required for marketing, the classification (three classes: extra, I, II), the dimensions of the fruits, and the presentation (homogeneity of the products, conditioning, labelling).

4.3. The institutionalisation process of the Cherry of Lari

4.3.1. The *renaissance* of the Cherry of Lari

For a long time the valorisation initiatives around the product have been based on the traditional annual village cherry festival (*Sagra delle ciliegie*), that has always involved a large share of the local population for its organisation and implementation (local public institutions, schools, citizens, local tourism and cultural associations), attracting a great and increasing number of visitors. Actually the annual Cherry Festival (*Sagra* from now on) has been for a long time the only promotional initiative taken by local producers. The *Sagra* has had a fundamental role in spreading the notoriety of the product out of the area of production and it has been the first initiative capable of "creating a market". Started in 1957, in the first period the *Sagra* was conceived as a marketing event by producers. Quantities produced in those years were quite high, and the *Sagra* was the "hot day" within an intense production and marketing period, where the many producers once present on the territory came essentially for selling.

The modernisation of agriculture (and of the whole economy) in the period 1960-1990 caused a rapid decline of agricultural activities in the hills of Tuscany which accompanied local industrial development. Tools provided by the Common Agricultural Policy did not supported sufficiently the marginal or disadvantaged areas in this period. In this framework, cherries production suffered particularly, due to lack of workforce for the picking and competition from other regions.

As a consequence, the *Sagra* progressively declined as a marketing tool; at the same time, the strong identity Lari population feels with the Cherry made it possible to take the annual date on, though with decreasing quantities and both producers and consumers presences. In this period the meaning of the *Sagra* changes. After losing its importance as "product seller", the *Sagra* is kept alive by other actors (Lari citizens), aiming at preserve the village identity and its traditions and folklore, and to capture tourists and consumers from the surrounding areas. This effort is not sufficient, and the *Sagra* is menaced of extinction in the 90s. It is only for the will of a Mayor of Lari that the *Sagra* is not interrupted, while producers did not want to continue.

In recent years the growing interest consumers are showing for typical products and the issues linked to the preservation of biodiversity contributed to start some valorisation and research initiatives, thanks in particular to some non local agents (public research institutes: CNR, ARSIA, University of Florence and Pisa), that aimed at preserving the numerous autochthonous cherry-tree varieties of the Lari area. Also owing to this external attention, some valorisation initiatives are being carried out by local agents mainly not belonging to the cherry supply chain (local public institutions and cultural and tourism associations).

The growing demand has strengthened the will to improve and support the production process and the image of the product, with the collaboration of research institutions outside the area (University of Florence, ARSIA), consumers associations (Slow Food), producers association for the preservation of varieties in extinction. The increase in the demand of the product, in presence of a limited supply has caused problems of name abuses on behalf of producers and dealers coming from other areas. At the same time also public institutions at various levels (Lari Municipality, Province of Pisa, Tuscan Regional Administration, Chamber of Commerce) started to consider the product as a means to promote the area.

Owing to the increase in the demand of typical products, and to the need of taking part to promotional events during the year and also in periods far from the picking one (may-june), producers were stimulated also by the Administration of the Province of Pisa and by ARSIA, together with the Municipality of Lari, to take care of the transformation phase. As a consequence, Lari cherries producers are now discussing on the possibility of setting-up a joint initiative for processing a part of the annual cherries harvest.

4.3.2. The problems faced by the Cherry of Lari

Due to small quantities produced and to the reputation of the cherry of Lari in the provinces of Pisa and Leghorn (*Livorno*), professional producers do not face real marketing problems, and it would be very easy to sell much more quantities of cherries, as the demand is much higher. So, the process of "institutionalisation" by means of a PDO or a PGI is not a real concern of the producers at the moment.

Main technical and agronomic aspect linked to cherry growing

CHOICE	VARIABLES	NOTES
Production area	climate soils	Most cherry-tree varieties are not self-fertilising, and pollination must therefore be done by insects (especially bees). Climate affects the possibility of insects to pollinate cherry-trees.
Wild cherry-tree and other plants to be grafted	varieties	Sweet cherry-tree varieties has to be grafted to wild cherry-tree for having better results
Sweet cherry-tree	varieties - native-non native - tree vigour - ripening period - fruit dimension - pulp colour - skin thickness	If not self-fertilising variety, fertiliser cherry-tree varieties must be put in the same plantation (15-20% depending on the variety). Some varieties are best suited than others.
Treatments	- fertilizing - fungicides - defence	
Tree growing techniques	- pruning	Tree growing techniques affect easiness of picking (height of the tree, branches disposition, etc.)
Conditioning	- refrigeration	No producers use refrigeration techniques
Processing	- final product	Some cherry-tree varieties are best suited for processing (jams, spirits) than other

Actually, cherries producers face technical and agronomic problems rather than marketing ones. During the meeting of the newly set up Producers Association the problems were identified in the need:

- to study and produce wild cherry-trees fit to be grafted ("*portainnesti*") with local and non local cherry-trees varieties; this requires the collaboration of some nursery firms and research institutes ("*vivaisti*");
- to carefully study the characters of the Lari soils in order to adapt the different cherry-tree variety to its best soil;
- to improve the phitosanitary defence tools, especially by orienting farmers to adopt organic or *integrated production* schemes;
- to study the pathologies of cherry-trees and cherry in the area of Lari

From a marketing point of view, at present no collective initiatives have been taken, or we could say no need of collective initiatives was felt by producers, as there are no marketing problems in the perception of cherries producers.

Perhaps the only problems is connected to the need of preserving a part of the cherries supply which cannot be marketed as a fresh product. This may happen in some years in which, due to meteorological events, cherries have been picked all at once in order to avoid damaging the products (for example in case of raining during the ripening season), or when the dimension of the fruit is not sufficient to be presented to consumers, or when a supply peak cannot be absorbed on normal marketing channels. Up to now no processing plant is present on the territory, and only a small part of the cherries is transformed for self-consumption into jam ("family jam"), but without licence to selling it by the Sanitary Authority.

4.3.3. What a PDO/PGI for?

In this context, The idea of applying for a PDO was mainly due to some local small non-professional producers, whose main aim was to stimulate the agricultural production in the area and enhancing cherry-tree growing, with particular reference to the native cherry-tree varieties. As a matter of fact, although the reputation of the cherry of Lari is frequently used by non local producers to sell their cherries on wholesale and retail market in the area, this does not cause marketing problems to Lari's producers at the moment, and there is not a real problem of avoiding the misuse of the name of the product on marketing channels.

The idea of PDO was "captured" by many actors, both local and "less" local ones, with the aim of using the reputation of the cherry of Lari and the fact of having so a prestigious "medal" not so much to stimulate local agricultural activities and in particular cherry production, but mainly to strengthen the image of the village and of the whole area for tourist promotion, and to foster rural development dynamics. Most of these actors are public administration, at different levels: the Region, the Province of Pisa, the Municipality of Lari. Actually, in Tuscany all local public institutions are involved in the promotion of quality and typical products, together with agri-tourism, wine routes, organic production method, and every initiative aiming at promoting the high quality of the products and services produced by the local agricultural sector.

In this context, since the beginning the interest and involvement of the local cherry producers in the construction of the Product Specifications was very limited, and they were rather sceptical about the real effectiveness of a PDO for such a small quantity of production and for such short marketing channels. At present we can observe a growing awareness in the cherry producers of the meaning of PDO and PGI, and of having a PDO for their production and marketing activity, but they feel uncomfortable in going further on the institutionalisation process because of some problems they may face once obtained the PDO[9].

During the Producers associations meetings the discussion on expected positive and negative effects of a PDO recognition has pointed out:

<u>Expected positive effects:</u>
- market differentiation on quality level products;
- market and notoriety creation (to use on long channels and with multiple retailers);
- higher sale prices;
- exclusion from the misuse of product reputation on local wholesale and retail markets;
- support to the marketing of cherry-based processed products (jams, spirits, cherry-winegar);
- stimulus to adopt the logic of quality assurance and certification procedures, at present almost totally absent;
- pull-effects on other local agricultural (especially fruit) and craft products;
- promotional effect for tourism activities;
- protection of native cherry-tree varieties which are facing marketing problems and are menaced of extinction;
- increase of public funding and support.

<u>Expected negative effects:</u>
- increase in production costs (with special reference to certification costs; transformation costs, that is the costs farmers would have to face to adapt their production process to the specifications of the code of practices would be very low according to the present draft);
- higher selection of the product;
- increase in internal competition (particularly if production zone will be wider than "historical" one);
- production increase if external investors will be attracted by the PDO of the cherry;
- expected increase in the misuse of the name (unfair competition) due to higher prices of the product with PDO;
- Lari cherries producers will not be allowed to use the name "cherry of Lari" without having a PDO certification; the "formal logics" brought on by PDO-PGI certification often "select" firms, and may exclude small and non professional firms, and more marginal areas, from benefitting from the PDO-PGI;
- Lari cherries producers can no more use the traditional mark if this will be used for the PDO.

<u>Expected neutral effects:</u>
- no exclusion effects on some Lari producers due to the homogeneity of growing cultivation and farms dimension;
- no major changes required in growing techniques or fruit characteristics to meet the Code of practices requirements (transformation costs).

4.3.4. The application for the PDO: problems and conflicts in the design of the Code of Practices

As the national regulation enforcing Council Regulation n.2081/92 requires the application being presented by an association of producers which may be considered representative of the local producers, a specific association was set up by Lari cherry producers in 2002. The Association ("Association for the protection and valorisation of the Cherry of Lari") is composed by 25 people, most of which Lari cherry producers. Some representative of Farmers Organisation and local Tourism Association are members, too. The Association is charged of drawing down the Product Specifications and the accompanying relation containing the historical and technical explanation of the peculiar link between the cherry of Lari and its terroir.

At the date of 31st july 2003 the Association has already had many meetings aimed at discussing the various aspects of the Product Specifications, and problems and opportunities that may come from the presence of a PDO. Besides, in the meetings other problems were discussed, especially those concerning the future of cherry-tree cultivation in the area and the possible measure to take in order to solve - at least partially - some of the technical, agronomic and marketing problems.

It is worth mentioning that no producers associations were active in the area before the idea of applying for a PDO was launched[7]. So the application for the PDO has had at least one important effect on rural development: that of making producers meet together and start discussing the problems of cherry cultivation and local agriculture more in general, thus reinforcing the solidarity and cohesion between farmers. The activation of the PDO request stimulated producers to keep more in contact to each other and to start a deep discussion on the problems of the cherry trees in Lari. The discussions (both formal and informal) touched also wider aspects on local agricultural and rural development.

All the producers agreed on the potentiality of a PDO for the cherry of Lari, although at the beginning few of them knew the meaning of PDO or PGI. During the discussions held by producers within the Associations regular meetings to draw the Code of Practices some problems were faced, but they did not give way to any conflict between Lari producers. On some "hot" issues there were different points of views among producers, especially on the role of native cherry-tree varieties, but none of them was so strong to block the project. The agreement has been favoured by some factors, among which the proximity (both cultural and geographical) of producers, the homogeneity of growing techniques and marketing channels used, the small number of persons involved in the project, the absence of big producers or market leaders (the so-called *channel-captain*), that prevented from the creation of fronting parties.

Among the main concerns of the producers there are the certification costs they will be obliged to pay in order to market their product as Cherry of Lari PDO, and the need of "being controlled", especially from non professional producers. This, coupled with the risk of not having sufficient increases in the sale-price, is one of the main hindrances to producers' action on the PDO.

Other problems faced by producers regard a) the role of native cherry-tree varieties, b) the delimitation of the production area and c) the use of the traditional mark of the Sagra (the annual cherry festival) for the PDO.

a) the role of native cherry-tree varieties

As we have seen, the production of cherries in Lari area is strongly characterised, at least to the local producers and to research bodies and public local and non local institutions, by the presence of many native cherry-tree varieties, together with new varieties "imported" from other italian regions (Emilia-Romagna, Puglia) and from abroad (France). The presence of such a high number of cherry-tree varieties allows for a longer period of picking and marketing (may-june), and to lessen the risk of failures.

Actually, the more recently introduced cherry-tree varieties (the "imported" ones) often display a greater effectiveness from an agronomic-technical (for example less growing vigour, higher resistance to parasites attacks or to low temperatures), and productivity point of view, and better characteristics for marketing (for example for having a harder skin, thus allowing a longer period for marketing and staying

[7] There is a traditional lack of cooperation between small local farmers for production and marketing activities (actually common to the whole Tuscany), but a strong solidarity between them within social life. Besides this, cherry growing is a typical activity of the area, and it gives way to a strong cultural identification of local population and producers, reinforced by the presence of native cherry-tree varieties. This could partially explain also why cherry-tree cultivation was not totally abandoned, considering the fact that 10-15 years ago incomes from the cherries were not sufficient to cover production costs.

on the shelves in the retailer shops) and for consumers (bigger and/or sweeter fruits, no staining juice, longer preservation time)[8].

Only one native cherry-tree variety, the *Marchiana* variety, shows competitive characteristics for the fresh consumption if compared to the new ones[9]. Other native varieties cannot even be found (only some trees still remain), while other 3-4 native varieties (in particular the *Papalina*, *Gambolungo*, *Morella*) show excellent characteristics for processing (very thin skin, excellent flavour, sweet) but not for the "modern" market. That is the reason why all the native varieties of Lari are "endangered" species: the Lari producers who want to sell to the market (especially the professional ones) do not want to grow the native cherry-tree varieties, but the *Marchiana*. The other native ones would be fit for jams, but no professional plant for transformation is actually working in the area.

During the discussion for the Code of Practices most producers insisted to include all the newly introduced varieties, maintaining that the native ones "have no market" and are only "fit for the garden". Other more traditional and "amateurs" producers insisted for stressing the importance of the native ones not only for biodiversity keeping, but also for marketing purposes (high quality image, niche markets, connaisseurs, pull effect), and for providing a special indication to add to the package ("Traditional native cherry of Lari") to be used for marketing purposes.

The discussion is important also for the decision if applying for a PGI or a PDO: as a matter of fact, the excessive emphasis on the recently-introduced cherry-tree varieties may be a hindrance for obtaining a PDO, because it may lessen the link between the product and its origin

b) the delimitation of the production area

As the Producers Association is mainly compsed by Lari farmers, and the cultivation of the cherry-trees, although concentrated in Lari Municipality, is traditionally present also in some neighbouring Municipalities (such as Casciana Terme, Crespina, Terricciola, and to a lesser extent Capannoli and Palaia), it was discussed the opportunity of extending the area of production outside the Lari Municipality borders.

The discussion on expected positive and negative effects (from the Lari producers' point of view) of widening the production area has underlined:

Advantages:

- the possibility of reaching scale and scope economies in the certification procedures and costs, in production, and especially in marketing (higher possibility of collective marketing and promotion activities);
- the reduction of parasites attacks risks and soils over-exploitation thanks to the possibility to grow cherry-trees where this cultivation is not yet present;
- the control on the misuse of the name could be stronger if the PDO was used by producers of a wider area, as they could act as "sentries" on the territory;
- the support of local institutions may be stronger (Regional and Province Adminstration, National and Local Farmers Organisations, other Municipalities, Research Institutions);
- pull effect for the other horticultural and fruit production of the hills;

Disadvantages:

- the increase of internal competition; at present Lari producers do not compete with the cherries producers of the other nearby municipalities, the latter not having the possibility of using the name Lari;
- (connected to the previous point) the fear of having new big investors coming from the outside attracted by the PDO, who may plant hundreds of cherry-trees and crowd out the other traditional producers; actually, considering the small quantities yearly produced, this may be a real and serious concern;

[8] The recent trends in consumption and the need of the "modern" agriculture is orienting research towards three main direction in cherry-tree varieties selection: a) the extension of the ripening period by a selection of cherry-tree varieties which ripen earlier or later compared to the "traditional" ones, thus capturing more added value on sales and easening the picking operations; b) the selection of self-fertilizing (*autofertili*) varieties in order to push the plantation specialisation further; c) the selection of cherry-tree varieties producing bigger cherries with a sounder pulp[36].

[9] The *Marchiana* native cherry-tree variety is called by Lari producers the "Queen" of the Sagra (the annual Festival).

- the fear of having to modify the traditional name from the Cherry of Lari into the Cherry of the Hills of Pisa, thus losing the reputation effect of the name and the leadership of Lari.

The main problem may be synthesized as follows: some external producers will be able to use the reputation of the cherry of Lari without being Lari citizens, while some Lari producers, owing to the fact that they are not professional producers and/or they cannot afford to pay the certification costs, will not be able to use the name Cherry of Lari on their product.

Up to now no outside producers or municipality showed interest in the PDO of Lari (probably due to the fact that the information on the initiative of applying for a PDO is not enough widespread), but the Province Administration of Pisa, the Regional Administration, and the Farmers Organisations wish to widen the area.

In other terms, the definition of the geographic boundary is going through a difficult negotiation process in which many different stakeholders are involved. Political local institutions are interested in reaching a wider area, while producers would like a smaller area. The excessive enlargement of the production area, coupled to certification costs, would lead "historical" Lari producers to compete with non-traditional producers. Which is the right criteria to be used when defining the production area? Historical, natural, human, cultural, "political"[16]?

c) the use of the traditional "Sagra" mark

At present there is a traditional sign used by producers, by Lari Municipality and by the local Tourism Association to promote the annual Cherry Festival and all the other events linked to the cherry and the promotion of the locality. This sign, drawn about 50 years ago, is now very well known in the area, and consumers recognise it immediately.

As PDO application asks for specifying the mark used for the packages, some producers proposed to use the old sign, but most producers opposed, believing that they could no more use the sign for no PDO cherries. This concern underlines how the PDO is not yet seen by producers as the only way to resume their activity, but as one of the possible tools for enhancing their marketing.

4.3.5. The multifunctionality of the Cherry of Lari

The economic impact of the cherry production in the territory of Lari Municipality is by far less relevant than its social and cultural importance. Cherries producers are few, added value very small if compared with the economy of the area, which is nowadays based on craft and industrial production of furniture, motorbike industry (Piaggio-Fiat) and services. Even if we compare the value that the impact of the cherries production with total agricultural added value, the percentage would be very low.

Fifty years ago, when agriculture still was a founding economic activity in the area, there were even regular markets during the months of may and june for cherry production in the village of Lari, with high quantities produced and many families whose life heavily depended on the "cherry economy". Nowadays, although there is a trend which seems to favour a resumption of cherry-tree growing in the area, the importance of the Cherry of Lari is linked to its character of "cultural marker" for local population identity and social cohesion, while its contribution to the local economy is partly lost. So, from a purely economic point of view, we should say that the impact of the typical product (and of the PDO) on rural economy is very limited, as in the bulk of agro-food typical products in all the European Union.

Another way of considering the impact of PDO on rural development is to evaluate how it contributes to multifunctionality, now at the centre of EU interests and EU rural development model. Of course the expected effects of the PDO on the cherry of Lari would vary according to how the Code of Practices is drawn (especially with regards to the area of production), and how the whole movement around this typical product will succeed in enhancing some change in local farming activities.

Considering the present status of local farming activities, the structure of farms and marketing channel used for selling the product, it is difficult to expect a quick "success" of the denomination. The take-off of the PDO will be strictly tied to how the cherries producers of the area will react in front of certification costs, but mainly on how the producers will face the new logic of certification and controls. It is reasonable to expect a very slow movement and low use of the denomination in the first years, and an increase in the use of PDO according to how the leader producers, if any, will move on the market. Of course much will depend also on if and how the Producers Association will act and succeed in fostering collective actions, especially with regards to collective marketing and promotion.

An expected result of the PDO recognition, if sufficiently used, would be an increase (or at least a conservation) of the multifunctional character of the Cherry of Lari:

- *biodiversity*: the emphasis put by the Code of Practice (in its draft latest version) on native cherry-tree varieties (together with the attention on protection showed by the Regional Administration and Arsia) should help the biodiversity conservation (if the native varieties will be kept on place and improved by research and technical assistance activities). Consumers demand ask for bigger and harder juicy cherries. Only one out of the 13 native cherry varieties can compete with “modern” varieties selectioned by agronomic research and “imported” from other italian regions (Emilia-Romagna, Puglia) and countries (France, Germany, Canada). The other native are too much small or perishable to be marketed, and productivity is lower compared to modern ones. Professional producers have gradually shifted from local to modern cherry-tree varieties, menacing local biodiversity. The presence of a high number of non professional farmers keen of traditional varieties has up to now impeded native varieties to disappear;
- *environment* would be preserved by obliging PDO cherry of Lari producers to adopt integrated pest management techniques, and impeding the use of chemical inputs on cherry-trees during flowering;
- *landscape* has been taken into account, by prohibiting non-traditional growing techniques in the Code of Practice. Though not yet fully emerged, a technical problem may hindrance the complete recover of the cherry growing. Actually traditional cherry-trees are very high, and the harvest is quite difficult and labour-expensive. The average age of the local farmers and the lack of external labour supply limit the total amount of the production marketed, and may lead farmers to change cherry-tree varieties and cultivation techniques, abandoning traditional ones;
- *local culture and traditions* would be strenghtened by the protection of product reputation;
- *social cohesion* has been reinforced by the very process of institutionalisation, which forced producers to know each other better and to discuss the problem of the cherry-tree growing and, more in general, of the whole agriculture and economic and social activities in the area;
- *rural economy* should be fostered, keeping and hopefully increasing cherry-tree growing thus preserving territory from phisical and socio-cultural erosion; indirect effects on local economy (restaurants, bars, agri-touristic farms, visits to the medieval Castle of Lari) should benefit from the PDO reputation; in the short term, PDO will be kept by the Lari Municipality, the Local Tourism Association and the Province Administration for using for promotional initiatives regarding the whole territory.
- *rural development dynamics* would receive new inputs, and the strict collaboration between the Local Tourism association (*Associazione Pro-Loco “ViviLari”*) and the recently set up Producers Association signals the integration and convergence of diversified interests and movement.

6. Conclusions: who benefits from PDO/PGI recognition?

The recent “history” of the initiatives taken by a diversified set of actors, both local and non local, belonging to the supply chain or external to it, shows how the typical product may represent a pivot element within rural development strategies, when some pre-conditions are fulfilled.

Actually the case analysed shows that the real interest of the actors involved since the beginning came from the “outside” of the production system, while the supply-chain actors (the Lari cherry producers) seem not to show a great interest, and they are much more worried than hopeful. As a consequence, at present the “extended territorial strategy” is dominant on the “supply-chain” one in the case of the Cherry of Lari[13,46]. In extended territorial strategies local actors use the typical product as a tool to increase the competitiveness of the whole local economic system. Actors attach value to the typical product mainly for its capacity of attracting consumers and promoting at the same time a differentiated basket of products and services localised in the area. The need to manage or the increase product reputation rent connected to the origin is not so strong. That is why local associations and local public institutions, not directly linked to the supply chain, are playing a central role, and supply chain firms (the farmers) have to be “stimulated” to take part to the initiative.

The role a typical product may have within an extended territorial strategy is well exemplified by the case of the cherry of Lari, where a production which is marginal to the local economy is identified as a “cultural marker” by the local community and perceived as a lever for attracting consumers to a whole basket of goods and services supplied in the area. The reputation of the cherry of Lari may act as a catalyst for developing other activities in the area. The very application for the PDO comes partially from

the desire of local public administration and touristic association to “use” the reputation of the symbolic product to promote the whole territory (the castle, the agriculture, the agri-touristic activities, the fiests, etc.).

The final aim that aggregates the local actors in the implementation of an extended territorial strategy is the exploitation a collective rent of localisation connected to territorial quality, which comes from the combination of the collective rent of reputation linked to the origin of the product, and the rent due to the specific territorial localisation; the latter is obtained through the economic valorisation of specific advantages (both natural and constructed) coming from the rural space and the quality of local products and services[39,48].

In this framework the PDO tool appears not to be the best suited for the development of the cherry growing.

Protection of the name? IF PDO/PGI is a legal protection tool, as in the logic of the reg.EEC 2081/92[10], there seems to be no need up to now for the cherry of Lari, as the damages from the misuse of the name are not so high.

Marketing strategies? If PDO/PGI is a way of enhancing the production of the cherry of Lari, the costs-benefits analysis conducted by producers make them prefer other tools. As for many typical products, the PDO mark increases the product image for consumers, but in particular outside the area of production. At the local level consumers and retailers are more attracted by the firm label or just by the provenience from Lari, and within the local marketing networks the PDO label does not add a significant value to the product. A PDO label can create a competitive advantage in particular in areas where the product cannot count on local rooted culinary traditions which foresee the use of the product.

Increase producers competitiveness? If PDO/PGI is considered a way of increasing producers competitiveness, it should be carefully analysed the structure of the production systems and the menaces that may come from both an enlargement of the production area and the entry of new (big and professional) producers. In the case of the cherry of Lari these events are actually considered as potential menaces for Lari traditional producers, leading to a decrease of competitiveness of Lari producers (those who should promote the application…) inside the denomination.

Positive externalities and multifunctionality? If PDO/PGI is conceived as a means to create or increase positive externalities the typical product produces, there are more effective and efficient tools to reach it. In the case of the cherry of Lari, there is not a direct menace to the production of positive externalities, except the risk of losing biodiversity when local varieties not fit for the (present) market and consumer will be left by producers. But it would not be the PDO to save (directly) these varieties, but rather a changing in consumers’ quality perception and in producers’ marketing messages. On the contrary, the expected increase in price and the need of selling the product to more distant consumers may cause a further decline in these local varieties, more perishable and subject to damaging.

Extended territorial strategies? If PDO/PGI is seen as a means to capture the value of the product image to benefit other local collective or individual marketing initiatives (the cherry as a *flag*), it may not be fair to push producers to bear the bulk of the burden (certification costs, control procedures, higher selection in the product) without a sufficient remuneration. Anyway, other tools appear to be more efficient, and are at present discussed within the Producers Association.

Even though PDO application will not be pushed further and presented to the EU, the activation of the application process and the debate on the contents of the Product Specifications held withing the Producers Association reached the aim of stimulating producers to take consciousness of their potentialities and opportunities, and menaces and problems as well. The discussion with external experts (agricultural economists and technicians, some of them member of the association) helped to focus the problems and to identify possible solutions. Young farmers showed increased interests, and some producers showed their intention to make new investments on cherry plantations and transformation plants for jam. Besides, the local public institutions are supporting other project aiming at providing technical assistance, research, promotional activities, and the Municipality of Lari has promoted and

[10] It is worth noticing that the term “Protected” Designation of Origin instead of the most frequent “Controlled” (*Controlée* in France, *Controllata* in Italy, as in the wine sector) reveals the real aim of the Regulation, not so much conceived for giving information to consumers but rather to protect the name of EU agro-food typical products from misuse. This is demonstrated also by the poor knowledge of the PDO/PGI signs shown by EU consumers, and by the interests and efforts made by the EU in protecting EU denominations within TRIPS agreement.

joined to the National Association of the Cherries Villages, founded in 2003 with the aim of further increasing promotional activities on the cherries.

Many agro-food typical products in Europe show the characteristics of the cherry of Lari: short marketing channels, limited quantities produced by non-professional farms, strong production tradition often based on native unique resources which makes the product a cultural and identity element for the local population. In these cases, owing to the complexity of the procedures asked by the Reg. EEC 2081/92, the PDO/PGI is probably not the best tool to support these traditional farming systems and the economic and cultural externalities they are able to produce. At the opposite, in some situations the activation of the application procedure may alter social cohesion and cause conflicts among producers in the construction of the Code of Practices (for example between industrial and craft firms, or between producers located in mountain areas and in the plains)[2,10,49,50,51], or may benefit only extra supply chain actors which use the product name reputation without bearing the costs of keeping it alive.

These situations should make us reflect on the potentialities and limits of the PDO/PGI, and ask for a revision of the regulation itself: should a less complex and costly acknowledgment procedure be planned to extend protection to the small traditional production systems? Which other institutional tools may be set up to support typical foods?

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