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**Contribution from
PORRÚA,
ASTURIAS - SPAIN**



PRODUCTION AND MARKETING FOR REGIONAL PRODUCTS

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The global market, with societies with more and more size and the direct intervention on the world raw material market are putting in real danger the survival of our primary sector and dissociates the territory as the food production basis. In the most important policy of the European union which is Common Agriculture policy, we only have started reflection in the last years about the importance of territories. Since the conferences of Cork (Ireland) and Salzburg (Austria) about rural development, we can think future policy is going to be different. A way of competing with agro food products is to motivate the commercialization of local and regional products also called "typical" or "traditional". These are different products of standard products because they have special characteristics like the raw material, a different way of production and manufacturing or an old tradition and "savoir faire".

Traditional and manufacturing products have normally more expensive production costs and this makes the danger of disappearance because they cannot be so competitive. To motivate them, it is necessary to work all together, farmers and producers and make marketing directed to people that are ready to buy these products even if they are more expensive than substitutive products.

For many years, the "guarantee of region of origin" have been a way to strengthen these products. In Spain, they have been regulated in 1932 for the Wine statutes. There are specific guarantees of territory for several products. These guarantees started in 1992 and have a control of planned actions of marketing, quality, publicity and promotion, package and presentation, and distribution too.

Now, there are some institutions dedicated in rural development like Proder and Leader, interested in typical products with or without guarantee as an instrument for rural development and they call them local products. The improvement of these local products and the beginning of the ecological agriculture have allowed to create differentiated products that strengthen territorial resources, based on quality signs that allow us to organize marketing actions controlling the ways of distribution.

Local and regional products, food products or manufactured products show the human values and personality of a geographic region where they have their origin. In this changing globalized society, small villages have an important opportunity. New technologies permit us to know better the full range of our local produce.

In Spain, the growing importance of regions in a politic and economical level, our bigger autonomy and decentralization have impulsed local and regional products. In a country where tourism is the most important activity, traditional alimentary products have motive rural tourism specially gastronomic products. Rural areas have been able to develop new initiatives against the reconversion of familial economy and its negative impact on population.

In Asturias and in Porrúa, the crisis of our milky production after getting in the European Union has incited the recovery of manufacturing ways of production of an important variety of cheeses. Many small local manufactories have opened trying to recover traditional values from

which cheeses are a good example. In the eastern part of Asturias where Porrúa is located we can say that cheeses and shepherds are the best symbols of our culture and our identity. On one hand, shepherds go with the cattle to the high mountains where they form our beautiful landscape and maintain the ecological value and environment. On the other hand, manufactured cheeses made in small fabrics allow to create an alternative economical development for our villages.

In our gastronomy, there are not only cheeses but also other products like cider that has had recently its protected designation of origin. Ten years ago, there were small family producers but now, the fabrics are growing and are now competitive in quality and production. They have an important distribution capacity. We can explain this changes because regional market has progressed with a big and growing consumption. Hotel establishments with their “tapas” (small plates of food) and cider are starting to be now a national and international offer.

This important recovery of our traditional products is the opposite strategy of big production and distribution societies. Commercialization and local raw material supplying are always an unsolved problem. We will always need support from our local and regional institutions to safeguard recurring problems. This will be very difficult in costs but not in quality. I think it is going to be very important to change in the future the European agriculture policy of common market organisation to actions with a territorial and ecological view valuing farmers work and environment.

It's up to us to fight, if it is possible, against consumer habits of urban areas with multinational big fast food enterprises. We should choose slow food. I think our reasons and arguments to believe in our products are stronger than mass media and that our products won't get lost while our territories will be vital.