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Abbreviations

CAP – Common Agricultural Policy

EU – European Union

PDO - Protected Designation of Origin

PGI - Protected geographical Indication

PO - Producer organisation

RDP – Rural Development Program

TSG - Traditional Specialities Guaranteed

UAA - Utilized agricultural area



Abstract

Working towards the development of a quality label for the Troodos agriculture, requires a prior literature review of the European quality policies for agricultural products. The review covers at the first stage the quality schemes that are based on a legislative framework, i.e. Protected Geographical Indications and organic agriculture. At a second stage, the literature review covers voluntary certification schemes that are not governed by specific legislation. In the context of voluntary certification schemes, the report summarized the EU guidelines and provides an overview of selected good practices on agro-food products. Thereafter a policy framework for designing the Troodos mountain quality certification scheme is formulated based on the review and the lessons learned from the EU case studies. The policy framework is a first step in the discussion for establishing a quality mark for the Troodos and/or the mountain agricultural and food products. It aims to describe the alternative paths for policy makers and the likely parameters that need to be taken into consideration upon designing a quality policy for the mountainous agriculture of Cyprus.



Executive Summary

In the early 1990s, the reform of the European Common Agricultural Policy led to a change in emphasis away from price and quantity supplies into policies that could promote rural development, including improvements in food quality. Geographic indicators are central among several EU policies that are placed within the context of the wider quality support policies that include quality assurance schemes and organic production. Evidence suggests that there are considerable regional differences within the EU when it comes to the use of the various quality policies available.

Origin based schemes carry with them the notion of traditionality i.e. a product with unique characteristics that are tied to the region, its geography, culture and production or cultivation practices. Origin based quality labels are provided in the EU through its legislative framework of Products with Geographic origin - PDO, PGI, TSG - and the more recent 'Mountain Quality label. The EU provides also the legislative framework for organic products, a concept that aims to meet consumer needs for a cleaner and safer food grown with respect for the environment.

Mountain agriculture is supported through the legislative framework of the EU under the quality mark 'mountain product' but the label can be given to specific products and not to a basket of goods from the region. This is an important first step towards establishing an identity for the Troodos agrofood products. An alternative path for utilizing EU quality labels could involve the establishment of an organic production zone in the mountains which would fit with the quality attributes expected from mountain farming practices.

Non legislative voluntary schemes, based on specific issues of differentiation and tied to the concept of origin, are growing in numbers around Europe and provide another option for promoting mountain products in a more collective manner. Non-legislative, voluntary certification scheme are based on a set of parameters that capitalize on production and processing practices that meet consumer needs and behavioral concerns or anxieties that can justify the quality mark.

In the literature, it is often argued that a quality mark could only lead to improved economic returns for the producers if it can meet specific consumer concerns, needs and expectations that can bring about a differentiation in the product. Furthermore, any certification scheme is bound to result in additional production costs, which would invariably lead to a higher product price but may not imply a higher profit margin for the producer. The obvious advantage of any successful certification for mountain products is the improved product visibility and consumer awareness which translates into a stronger negotiation power on behalf of the producer.

The literature review carried out confirms that mountain agriculture is central for the survival of the mountainous regions. Equally though, it becomes apparent that mountain farmers need to identify themselves in the market through an approach of differentiated products. The quality label is one



approach that can support a differentiation through a collective approach. Mountain farming is family farming and family farming is a small holders' business with no capital to create a brand and execute a marketing strategy on an individual enterprise basis. Hence a quality label coupled with policy intervention through the CAP is an appropriate mix for supporting the mountainous regions.



1. The food quality instruments

1.1 The background story

In some European countries, the notion for protecting the origin for foodstuffs has a long tradition which can be traced back to the Middle Ages. The French Roquefort cheese is dated back to the 14th century while the Cypriot legendary Commandaria is often referred to as the oldest wine of designated origin in the world, dating back to the crusades of the 12th century.

In the recent past, the French pioneered the protection of local, quality products by passing, in 1919 a law on origin labelling. In 1935 the "Appellation d' Origine Contrôlée" for wine and spirits was introduced by law, and an institution was founded to determine the respective production rules. This institution changed to the "Institut National des Appellations d' Origine " (INAO) which is still responsible for registration.

However, it was not until 1992, the year when the reform of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) led to a shift of the European agricultural policy away from direct (price) support - the first pillar of CAP - to the second pillar which targets at structural improvements of the rural economy. This policy shift led also to a focus towards improving food quality rather than increasing food quantities.

Phil **Hogan**, Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Development said¹: *"Europe is the world's top producer of quality food and drink. I am happy to say that, with an even greater emphasis on promotion efforts in 2019, we will increase awareness of this fact both in the EU and in third countries with high growth potential, to the benefit of our farmers and agrifood producers. Our increasing number of trade agreements means more opportunities for our producers to tap into and the Commission stands fully behind them to support them in the promotion and export of their products."*

The recent gradual shift of the CAP towards environmental sustainability alongside quality has meant signified a new change, one that increases the responsibilities of producers to deliver food products at a value added that is in line with the ever changing and highly demanding consumer requirements.

1.2 A jargon of terms brings about confusion

Any discussion around quality labels on agrofood products is bound to bring confusion given the different terms used when referring to them, such as local, traditional or authentic. It may therefore be essential to clarify and define these terms in order to reach a consensus on the description of the products that can be related to a quality label.

There are many definitions around the concept of traditional foods. Jordana (2000) suggests that *"In order to be traditional, a product must be linked to a territory and it must also be part of a set of traditions, which will necessarily ensure its continuity over time"*. This definition encompasses the various dimensions of the traditional food product concept that can be further enriched by the consumer perspective. Based

¹ https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP_18_6404



on the results obtained from the consumers of 6 different EU countries (Belgium, France, Italy, Norway, Poland and Spain) Guerrero et al. (2009) mean the traditional product to be “*a product frequently consumed or associated with specific celebrations and/or seasons, normally transmitted from one generation to another, made accurately in a specific way according to the gastronomic heritage, with little or no processing/manipulation, distinguished and known because of its sensory properties and associated with a certain local area, region or country*”.

Both above definitions take the place of origin as a key prerequisite for defining a product as a traditional one. Equally though, a traditional product seems to possess attributes of authenticity linked to the specificity of the place in terms of its production techniques or its sensory properties. Conversely, a local product may originate from a specific place but its value as a quality product is only meaningful if it can justify its authentic link to the place.

Hence, a quality product based on the place of origin needs to prove its traditional character which encompasses both its link to the locality and the reasoning for its authenticity. In this respect, the term ‘local’ is inadequate to link a product to its quality, while its authentic attributes (its differentiation parameters) seem weak to support its link to quality if not tied up with a specific place. This explanation fits exactly into the reasoning behind registering a product as PDO/PGI, an observation clearly understood by reviewing the legislative framework behind these European quality marks.

Last but not least, ‘*the growing interest in and commercial impact of the connection between food products and specific places have given rise to theoretical debates in academia about terroir, identity dynamics and cultural values*’ (Parasecoli F. 2017). Terroir is therefore an additional parameter that has long been related to wine but one which is increasingly used alongside the principles of origin to identify factors of authenticity to a product. To turn the discussion into a complicated one, terroir may be substituted by the concept of geology (which is just a part of terroir), to provide a bundle of authentic attributes in creating an origin-based quality mark (example cited elsewhere in this report).

1.3 The European legislative framework

Currently, the European legislative framework on quality products is governed by the regulations:

- EU regulation 1151/2012 on quality schemes for agricultural products and foodstuffs
- EU regulation 668/2014 on how EU regulation 1151/2012 on quality schemes for agricultural products and foodstuffs should be applied
- EU regulation 664/2014 on the logos to be used for PDOs, PGIs and TSGs²
- Commission communication: Labelling guidelines for foodstuffs using PDOs or PGIs as ingredients

² PDO - Protected Designation of Origin, PGI - Protected geographical Indication, TSG - Traditional Specialities Guaranteed



These regulations provide the framework for the EU agriculture and food quality policy. Products protected under the EU quality schemes have a privileged position, not only with respect to the legal protection, but also with respect to the eligibility of financial aid for their promotion.

The benefit for farmers of products registered as either a PDO, PGI or TSG, is the exclusive right for use of the product name. If a product is registered, the legal protection of the name is much higher than the protection for brand names. The name is protected not only from unfair competition, but also the mere use of the name in any other commercial context is forbidden. It is even forbidden for another product to claim that this product is produced according to the recipe of the protected product, even if this is the case.

But the geographical name alone will not lead to a growth in sales and profits unless it is accompanied by a corresponding product quality which differs from comparable products. In the case of the products protected by the EU system, the product specification is determined by the producer consortium registering the product, while the product specification for organic products is determined in the respective EU regulation.



2 The EU quality schemes in brief

2.1 Origin labelled products

The definitions of a PDO and PGI are clarified in article 5 of Reg. 1151/2012 while the definition of a TSG is defined under articles 17-19 and are briefed below.

Protected designation of origin (PDO)

To be eligible to use a protected designation of origin (PDO), a product must meet two conditions:

- The quality or characteristics of the product must be essentially or exclusively due to the particular geographical environment of the place of origin, where the geographical environment is understood to include inherent natural and human factors, such as climate, soil quality, and local know how.
- The production and processing of the raw materials, up to the stage of the finished product, must take place in the defined geographical area whose name the product bears. There must therefore be an objective and very close link between the features of the product and its geographical origin.



Protected geographical indication (PGI)

The protected geographical indication (PGI) also designates products attached to the region whose name they bear, but the link is of a different nature than that existing between a product with a PDO and its geographical area or origin. To be eligible to use a protected geographical indication a product must meet two conditions:

- It must have been produced in the geographical area whose name it bears. Unlike the protected designation of origin, it is sufficient that one of the stages of production has taken place in the defined area. For example, the raw materials used in production may come from another region.
- There must also be a link between the product and the area which gives it its name. However, this feature need not be, as in the case of the protected designation of origin, essential or exclusive, rather it allows a more flexible objective link. It is sufficient that a specific quality, reputation, or other characteristic be attributable to the geographical origin. Under the rules for protected geographical indications, the link may consist simply of the reputation of the product, if it owes its reputation to its geographical origin. In this case, the actual characteristics of the product are not the determining factor for registration; it is enough for the name of the product to enjoy an individual reputation that is based specifically on its origin at the time the application for registration is lodged.





Traditional specialities guaranteed

Traditional speciality guaranteed (TSG) highlights the traditional aspects such as the way the product is made or its composition, without being linked to a specific geographical area. The name of a product being registered as a TSG protects it against falsification and misuse. The purpose of this regulation is to take advantage of the typical features of products by granting a certificate of specific character. The regulation thus lays down two conditions for registration of a product name: the product must possess features that distinguish it from other products, and it must be a traditional product.



Mountain products

The existence in mountain areas of traditions and know-how relating to agricultural production and food processing offers an opportunity for mountain communities to promote the authenticity of the place through gastronomy tourism or as gourmet (niche market) products. With a view to making mountain products more clearly identifiable on the market, the EU institutions legislated on a common definition of an optional quality term, 'mountain products', in the labelling of agricultural products.

Under the EU Regulation 1151/2012 (article 31), the European Commission has adopted the concept of the optional quality term 'mountain product' in order to support products originating from mountainous regions. This scheme was established to facilitate communication with the European market on the value-added of agricultural products made in the difficult conditions of the mountainous areas.

The term is used only to describe products intended for human consumption in accordance with Annex I to the Treaty, in respect of which:

- (a) both feed materials and feed for farm animals come mainly from mountain areas
- (b) in the case of processed products, processing shall also take place in mountainous areas.

Under the basic regulation 1151/2012, legislation requires that feedstuffs and raw materials for products using that term "should come essentially from mountain areas" and in case of processed products, these "should be produced in mountain areas". Regulation 665/2014 further defines the limitations, taking into consideration the reality of producing in mountain regions. For example, the feedstuffs for animals that come from mountain areas should represent at least 50% of the annual animal diet. This share is defined as 60% for ruminants and 25% in the case of pigs (because there is a much lower level of feedstuffs grown in mountain areas).

There are also certain requirements which allow processing to be undertaken within a 30 km zone outside mountain areas. In order to ensure that facilities currently producing milk and milk products in mountain



areas are not encouraged to move away from there, processing of milk outside mountain areas is only possible in existing facilities within the 30 km zone and only if the Member State allows it.

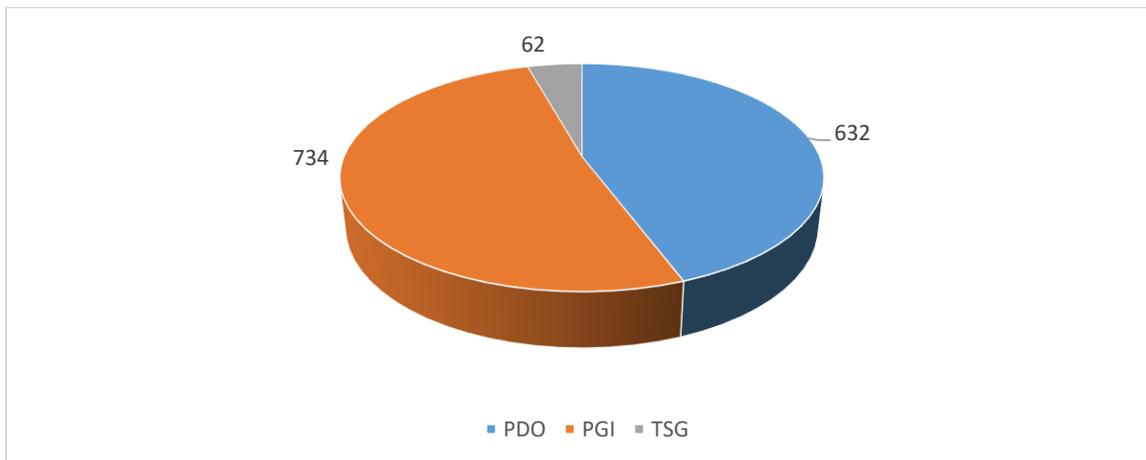
2.2 The pool of quality products

The number of origin labelled products increased from 469 in 1999 to 706 in 2007 and has reached the number of 1428 today. The European Commission has created the DOOR database³ for users to find product names that have been registered or applied for in the context of a PDO/PGI/TSG. The total number of registered products on the DOOR database is displayed on the pie chart below. The PDO and PGI quality marks are much more important than the TSG whilst the much newer mark of ‘mountain products’ is not available on the database. Another 250 products are in the status of ‘applied’ or ‘published’ which means that they are potentially new registered quality products in the next two years.

France and Italy have registered the largest number of quality products followed by Spain and Portugal. Countries that joined the EU more recently have a much lower share of quality products, while consumer awareness about the quality logos is much lower than ‘older’ European Union countries.

Cyprus has registered five products of which one PDO and four PGI and another four products have been applied for at the EU level.

Figure 1: The pool of origin-based quality products in the EU

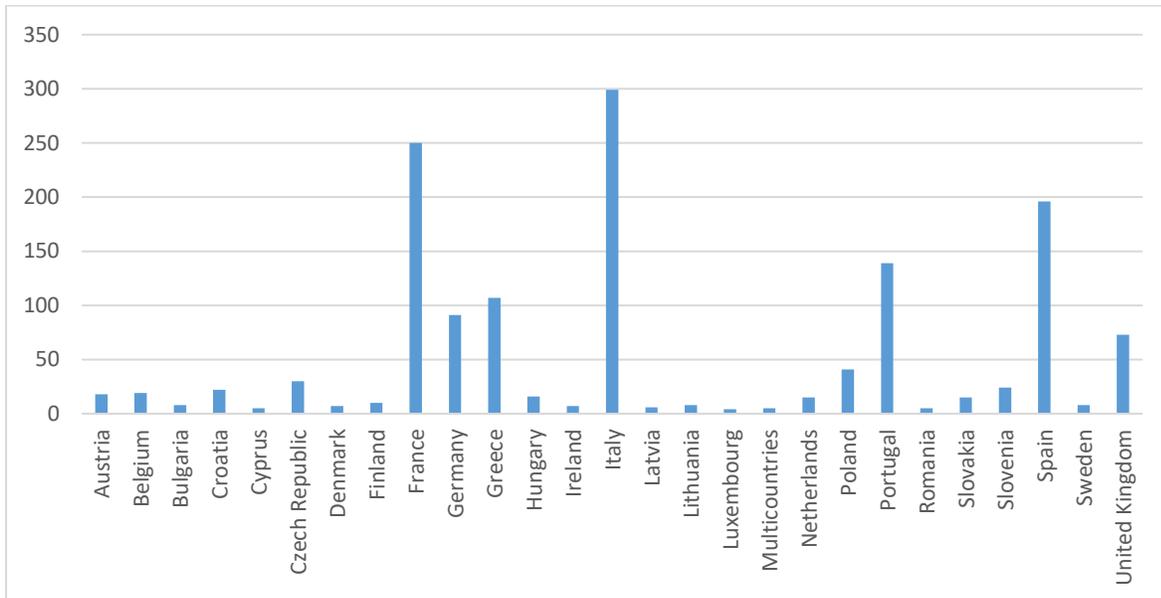


Source: DOOR database

³ <https://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/quality/door/list.html>



Figure 2: The pool of origin-based quality products per member state



Source: DOOR database

2.3 Organic products

The picture on quality products cannot be complete without organic production, as the other cornerstone of EU quality policy. Organic farming is a policy shift towards the promotion of quality products which can succeed to integrate environmental conservation into agriculture.

Organic farming in the EU is governed by Regulation EC 834/2007 which sets out the principles, aims and rules of organic production and defines how organic products should be labelled. This Regulation is further complemented by several implementing act⁴ that regulate the production, distribution and marketing of organic products. The regulations also define how and when the EU organic logo can be used. The organic logo can only be used on products that have been certified as organic by an authorized control agency or body. This means that they have fulfilled strict conditions on how they are produced, transported and stored.



⁴ https://ec.europa.eu/info/food-farming-fisheries/farming/organic-farming/legislation_en



The organic logo gives a coherent visual identity to European Union organic products sold in the EU and in the global market. This makes it easier for consumers to identify organic products and helps farmers to market them across all EU countries.

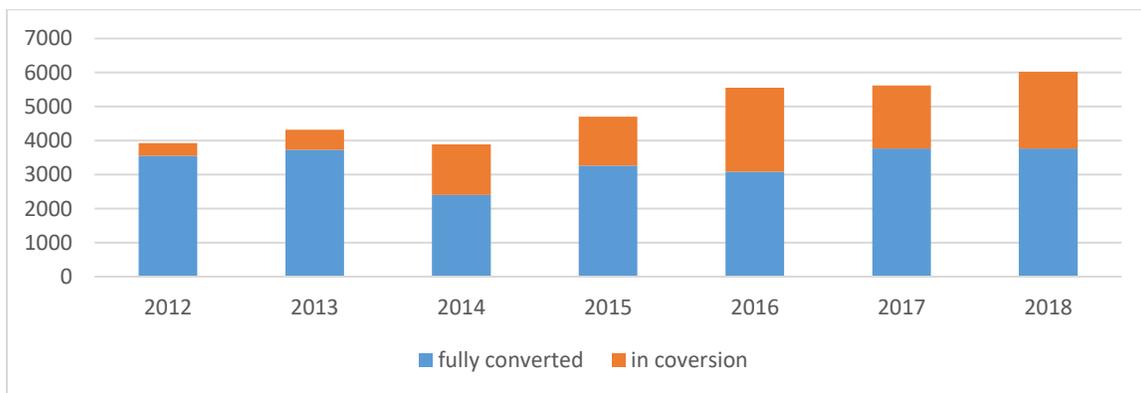
“The organic production method is regarded as playing a dual societal role, where it on the one hand provides for a specific market, responding to a consumer demand for quality products, and on the other hand, delivers public goods contributing to the protection of the environment and animal welfare, as well as to rural development (Becker and Status 2008)”.

The share of organic farming area in the total utilized agricultural area (UAA) gives some indication as to the importance of this as a cornerstone of quality policy. One can also consider that organic farming serves more than one of the CAP priorities. Producing organic serves consumers’ needs for healthy and safe food, while for the producer it offers an option to improve his holding’s competitiveness. At the same time, organic farming is central to environmentally sustainable production systems, a form of production well suited to the mountains.

“The organic sector in the EU has been rapidly developing during the past years. According to Eurostat data, the EU-28 had in 2015 a total area of 11.1 million hectares cultivated as organic, up from 5.0 million in 2002. During the last decade, organic area in the EU increased by about 500 000 hectares per year. This is a big increase, but the whole organic area represents only 6.2% of total UAA in Europe” (European Commission 2013).

In Cyprus, organic farming has been steadily growing in the past years. The share of the UAA in organic farming (or conversion) is just under 5%, which is lower than the European average of 6.7%. Therefore, there is an opportunity for further growth of organic production in Cyprus. The diagram shows the evolution of land covered by organic crops for the period 2012-2018. The total area of organic crops for 2018 is 6022 hectares, according to Eurostat data⁵, growing by 55% since 2012.

Figure 3: Organic area in Cyprus (hectares)



⁵ https://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=org_croppro&lang=en



Source: Compiled by the author from statistics of the Department of Agriculture (Cyprus)

2.4 Quality products of geographic origin – the mountainous examples for Cyprus

«**Glyko Triantafyllo Agrou (registered PGI)**» is a spoon sweet dessert, which has been produced for over 70 years in the village of Agros. Its linkage to the village arises from three factors (a) raw material *rosa damascene* is produced in the village of Agros, under climatic conditions that favor its cultivation and intense aroma; (b) the harvesting of roses is a traditional activity undertaken by locals during early morning hours, when the roses have yet to fully open, and the petals are still fresh; (c) the local know-how of turning the roses into a spoon sweet while preserving the color of the petals without the addition of any coloring or preservatives. Currently this is the only product of designated origin produced exclusively in a village of the Troodos Mountains.

Hiromeri Pitsilias, Loukaniko Pitsilias, Loutza Pitsilias (applied for a PGI): All three products are currently in the process of being published at EU level. The most important factors affecting the quality of the products are the wine from the mountainous region of Pitsilia and the traditional know-how of the region. Both factors derive from the mountainous climate and steep terrain morphology of the area. As a result, the delimitation area was selected based on altitude, administrative boundaries, and factors such as historical tradition.

Agros Rosewater (file under examination by the Department of Agriculture): Production of rosewater from the petals of *rosa damascene* cultivated in Agros dates back some 80 years. The rosewater is produced by the distillation of the whole flower of the aromatic rose "*Rosa damascena*" which is grown exclusively in the geographically defined area. Throughout the distillation, processing and standardization stages no extraction of rose oil (essential oil) is made, thereby retaining the essential elements and aromas resulting from the essential oil. Its linkage to the village of Agros is directly linked to the cultivation of *rosa damascene* in the village and the knowhow developed over the years by local people in distilling rosewater with a high aromatic content.

2.5 Measures in support of the EU quality schemes

The European programmes for the promotion of quality products is basically divided into the promotion policy under Pillar I and the national schemes which fall under the RDP programmes (Pillar II).

Promotion programmes under Pillar I

The European Commission adopted the 2019 promotion policy work programme with €191.6 million to be made available for programmes selected for EU co-financing - an increase of €12.5 m compared with 2018. €89 million will be allocated to campaigns in high growth countries such as Canada, China, Colombia, Japan, Korea, Mexico, and the United States. Some of the money will be earmarked to the promotion of specific products, like table olives.



Within the EU itself, the focus is on campaigns that promote the different EU quality schemes and labels, including PDOs, PGIs and TSGs, as well as organic products. In addition, a share of the funding is targeted at certain specific sectors, like sustainably produced rice, and fruit and vegetables. The latter was specifically selected to promote healthy eating amongst EU consumers.

The calls for proposals for specific campaigns are open to a wide range of bodies, such as trade organisations, POs and agri-food groups responsible for promotion activities.

A simple programme is a promotion programme submitted by one or more proposing organisations from the same Member State, while a multi programme is a programme submitted by at least two proposing organisations from at least two Member States or one or more European organisations.

Funding through the Rural Development Programme at the national level (Pillar II)

Measure 3.1 – Support for new participation in quality schemes: This sub-measure aims to provide support for farmers and others to join schemes to provide quality schemes for products. Actions falling under this framework include, but are not limited to:

- Binding product and/or method specifications for each product which identify the production and/or farming methods and the elements that characterise the superior quality of the product;
- The design of the origin label;
- A control system in order to monitor the binding product and/or method specifications;
- A compulsory traceability system which guarantees the transparency of the scheme and assures complete traceability of products.

Measure 3.2: Promotion of quality systems of agricultural products and foodstuffs: This sub-measure supports information and promotion activities that are implemented by producer groups in the internal market. It is one of the most important measures to promote quality traditional products in a collective manner and highlight both the origin of the product and its unique quality attributes.

The main purpose of the scheme is to inform the consumer of the products produced based on specific quality systems. It covers expenses arising from information and promotion activities provided by producer groups in the internal market, which relate to products covered by the following quality systems:

- Community quality systems established pursuant to Regulations (EU) 1151/2012, (EU) 834/2007, (EU) 110/2008
- National quality systems for agricultural products, cotton or food, including farm certification systems, which are recognized by the Competent Body as complying with the criteria referred to in Article 16 (1) (b) of Regulation (EU) 1305/2013.

In practice, Measure 3.2 covers all PDO, PGI and organic products registered in the EU from Cyprus. No national quality systems exist to benefit from such support. For the discussions ahead on certification of



mountain products, one must take into consideration the provisions of Article 16 (1) (b) of Regulation (EU) 1305/2013 which states that,

“quality schemes, including farm certification schemes, for agricultural products, cotton or foodstuffs, recognized by the Member States as complying with the following criteria:

(i) the specificity of the final product under such schemes is derived from clear obligations to guarantee any of the following:

- specific product characteristics,
- specific farming or production methods, or
- a quality of the final product that goes significantly beyond the commercial commodity standards as regards public, animal or plant health, animal welfare or environmental protection;

(ii) the scheme is open to all producers;

(iii) the scheme involves binding product specifications and compliance with those specifications is verified by public authorities or by an independent inspection body;

(iv) the scheme is transparent and assures complete traceability of products”.



3 The context of non-legislative voluntary certification schemes

3.1 The pool of voluntary certification schemes and the EU guidelines

Certification schemes for agricultural and food products that are not covered by a legislative framework, provide assurance that certain characteristics or attributes of the product or its production method or system, as they are laid down in specifications, have been observed and make the product a unique one. Certification schemes and their associated specifications may cover a wide range of attributes that occur at different stages of the production process. While certification schemes, by definition, employ third-party attestation, there are certain, branding specific schemes, which operate on the basis of a label or logo without involving any certification mechanism. Such schemes do not bear strict specifications on the product or product process but act as branding instruments to link the product to a specific region or even a country e.g. “made in Italy”. Such schemes should not be rated as certification schemes but may only be branding instruments on a collective basis.

The use of certification is most appropriate when the obligations undertaken by the participants are more complex, laid down in detailed specifications and checked periodically. The development of certification schemes is driven mainly by (a) factors such as societal demands for certain characteristics of the product or its production process relevant mostly for Business to Consumer (B2C) schemes or (b) retailers desire to ensure that their suppliers meet specified requirements that usually adhere to food safety and hygiene, relevant mostly for business to business (B2B) schemes.

An inventory compiled for the Commission in 2010 and referred to in the publication ‘EU best practice guidelines 210/C 341/04’ lists more than 440 different schemes, most of which were established during the last decade. A more elaborate market Study on the functioning of voluntary food labelling schemes (Ipsos 2013), identified 901 voluntary food labelling schemes across the EU27. The largest number of schemes identified were in Spain (20%), Germany (12.5%), and Italy, the Czech Republic, France, and Portugal following. Most voluntary food labelling schemes identified were found to be private ones (65%). In this study, Cyprus was recorded with one voluntary certification scheme, possibly referring to the Global Gap scheme.

Due to the growing number of private, voluntary certification schemes, the European Commission has set out a Directive for practicing and granting such certifications. This Directive sets out best practice guidelines covering quality certification schemes for agricultural products, foodstuffs, associated production methods and management systems.

Although some agricultural and food certification systems cover compliance with mandatory standards, these guidelines are specific to voluntary certification systems. They are intended to ensure quality levels in areas such as taste, color or odor as well as, for example, good environmental conditions, animal welfare or 'fair trade' factors.



The guidelines are designed to make these voluntary certification systems more effective by:

- highlighting best practices
- clarifying the requirements imposed by the systems
- increasing market opportunities and reducing costs for farmers and producers
- protecting the reputation and limiting the responsibilities of wholesalers and retailers in relation to claims made for products and brands
- providing reliable information to consumers about the products and
- ensuring compliance with EU internal market rules, about anti-competitive behavior.

The Guidelines advise that the systems, although set up by expert groups, should be structured to encourage the involvement of all stakeholders, i.e. producers, farmers, public authorities, stakeholders and customers. Furthermore, the directive indicates that,

- the certification should be issued by an independent body
- system members should accept regular inspections, with clear criteria and checklists
- limits on sanctions need to be established, with clear procedures for addressing non-compliance
- reinforcement mechanisms must be in place, with ongoing involvement in the future evolution of the system.

The Guidelines recommend that food labels do not mislead or make false claims about a product in relation to:

- the nature, identity, attributes, composition, quantity, durability, origin, method of preparation or reception
- the attribution to the food of its effects or properties that it does not have, or of characteristics while in fact all similar foods have these same characteristics
- advertising or promoting in a way that discredits the safety of other products on the market or the credibility of official controls.

Following an extensive research, Ipsos (213) concluded that the adoption of Commission guidelines among scheme operators seemed rather low. Increasing transparency and minimizing consumer confusion seemed to be the key drivers for schemes to follow the guidelines while lack of awareness, administrative burden and cost of compliance were identified as key obstacles for adhering to the guidelines provided.

3.2 The broad types of voluntary certification schemes

In the literature review, certification schemes can be divided into the following three categories:

Pre-farm gate schemes which are developed in order to assure the trade (retailers, packers) about product safety. This product safety is based on the production methods and specific organization standards at the farm level. The most prominent example in this category is GLOBALGAP.



Post-farm gate schemes developed by the food industry and retailers to ensure the safety of their own branded products. Such schemes include the BRC, SQF2000, HACCP and other similar ones that certify the hygienic conditions at all stages of processing of the products.

Differentiation schemes which aim to distinguish certified products from others by highlighting certain product or process attributes (e.g., observance of strict animal welfare or environmental requirements; organic farming; social standards; high organoleptic product quality; origin; etc.) and communicating this to the consumer by means of a logo or label. Farmers and producers can use such schemes to improve their marketing position and obtain higher prices for their products.

Pre and post farm gate schemes are often demanded or imposed by the trade on producers/ processors whereas differentiation schemes are voluntarily practiced by producers/ processors and target at the end consumer. *“Differentiation schemes are by far the largest (and growing) group in terms of number of existing schemes”* (European Commission 2009).

Differentiation schemes have emerged in response to the perceived demand for products with characteristics resulting from particular farming methods. Some of the main drivers for this type of schemes include:

- a desire for consumers to give preference to local and seasonal products from farming systems that sustain both nature and society e.g. Leaf-Marque (UK);
- the environmental concerns of combating climate change, managing natural resources such as water and soil more efficiently, and preserving biodiversity, e.g. Demeter scheme on biodynamic agriculture;
- promotion of nutritional qualities of foods that simultaneously link with improved animal welfare, e.g. Label Rouge (France);
- social concerns for helping producers and workers (in developing countries) move from a position of economic and social vulnerability to one of security and economic self-sufficiency, e.g. the Fair Trade label (international);
- animal welfare schemes which certify that higher than the minimum requirements are met for products of animal origin e.g. Neuland (Germany).

3.3 Case studies on voluntary certification schemes

3.3.1 Environmental sustainability – the LEAF marque

<https://leafuk.org/>



LEAF (Linking Environment And Farming) is an organisation that delivers a certification scheme based on practises of sustainable farming. The LEAF Marque is an assurance scheme recognising produce that have been grown to LEAF’s Integrated Farm Management (IFM) principles. Investment in the LEAF Marque certification enables the producer, to demonstrate his environmental commitment and provides a genuine commercial advantage in the marketing of premium and assured food in the market.



The label requires members to follow a set of IFM tools around nine areas in order to achieve production that safeguards the natural ecosystem.

LEAF Demonstration Farms are working farmers committed to the sustainable farming practices of IFM. These sites proudly demonstrate best practice IFM to a variety of different groups through farm walks, talks and demonstrations.

From an environmental point of view, the use of certification systems that link agriculture to the preservation of ecosystems is an important step towards an uplift of the farmers’ role as stewards of the landscape and ambassadors for sustainable agriculture. This perception of rural activities is particularly important in regions where farming is considered a multifunctional activity and where competitiveness in terms of price is rather impossible.



3.3.2 Animal welfare & organoleptic value – The Label Rouge quality certification scheme

<https://www.iaao.gov.fr/eng/Official-signs-identifying-quality-and-origin/Label-Rouge-Red-Label>



The **Label Rouge** is a French national sign, that is assigned to products which by their terms of production or manufacture have a higher level of quality compared to other similar products marketed. The Label Rouge program aims to deliver high-quality products, mainly meat, with poultry as the flagship product, based on standards of improved animal welfare.

On the consumer side, the quality label emphasizes attributes such as taste and food safety. The average consumer can note a positive difference in taste between Label Rouge and conventional poultry – in fact, regular taste-testing is a certification requirement to prove that these products are 'vividly distinguishable' from conventional poultry, according to the program.

At all stages of its production and processing, the **Label Rouge** product must meet the requirements defined in the specifications, validated by the *Institut national de l'origine et de la qualité* (INAO) and approved by a ministerial order published in the Official Journal of the French Republic.





Independent third-party certifying organizations ensure that standards are being followed. Inspection occurs once for each flock, twice a year for feed mills, monthly for processing plants and twice a year for hatcheries. Each visit includes bacteriology tests and process control inspections. There are five taste tests a year. Monitoring of maintenance over time of the high eating quality is ensured by performing regular sensory analysis and organoleptic tests that compare the Label Rouge product with the current product.

The basic standards set by the quality label are animal welfare standards that go above the European and national minimum requirements. The standards for broiler production are summarized in the table below:

Genetics	Only certain genetics are allowed – slow growing breeds suited for outdoor production.
Buildings	Buildings are a maximum of 4,304 square feet. No farm can have more than four buildings. Building must be at least 98 feet from each other.
Maximum density in building	The maximum stocking density is 0.98 square feet for a bird. No more than 4,400 birds are permitted in each building. Chickens require 2.2lb of litter each.
Access and size of range	All birds have access to the outdoors from 09:00 until dusk after six weeks of age, and must be outside for at least 42 days of grow-out. Range requirements are 22 square feet per bird. About two acres of land are needed per house. 1.2 feet of pophole exits are required for 100 square feet of building.
Feed	Feed must consist of at least 75% cereal and must be non-medicated; starter rations can be 50% cereal because of a higher soybean content. Rations cannot contain animal products, growth stimulants or other additives. Fishmeal is not permitted. Synthetic amino acids are allowed.
Other	Although routine medications are not allowed, antibiotics prescribed by a veterinarian are. Coccidiostats are permitted but must be withdrawn five days before slaughter. Vaccination is allowed; beak and toe trimming are not.
Slaughter age	Birds must be grown a minimum 81 days.
Sanitation period	There is a minimum sanitation period of 21 days between flocks.
Transport	No more than two hours travelling time or 64 miles to processing plant



3.3.3 The GEOfood brand

Taking advantage of the UNESCO Geopark concept, a network in which Troodos is also a member, Magma Geopark in Norway leads the project under the name GEOfood with its main objectives being:

- To create common criteria for developing food experience in the UNESCO Global Geoparks
- To boost local food as unique Geopark experience
- To valorize the local SME's in the food and tourism sector in the Nordic Countries
- To promote the creative industries, like local chiefs and local video makers
- To expand the tourism offer within specialized packages focused on local food



GEOfood is expanding and several UNESCO Global Geoparks adopted the brand to promote the connection between the unique Geoparks's geological heritage and the local food traditions. Branding local product and restaurant with the GEOfood label means to sustain local communities in developing sustainable practices, keeping the connection with the soil, the landscape and the culture of the territory. The GEOfood concept is also aiming to suggest a tourist opportunity for unique and authentic experiences thereby creating opportunities for gastronomy tourism in the Geopark regions adopting it.

The criteria for joining the GEOfood network are noted below:

- Only producers or enterprises within the territory of an approved UNESCO Global Geopark can use the GEOfood logo.
- With regards to the location of the enterprises or the cultivated field/farms, each Geopark could decide if establish one buffer zone that must be contiguous to the Geopark.
- The choice for a buffer zone must be described in the label together with the other geological information. The buffer zone choice must be motivated due to the fact that products or factory are located nearby the Geopark borders and/or due to the coherence within the geological phenomena.
- The producers must be located in the Geopark area or in the selected buffer zone. GEOfood producers cannot be located outside the Geopark or outside the buffer zone area.
- The raw materials that constitute the GEOfood products must come from the Geopark area (or buffer zone).
- The raw material can be processes outside the Geopark (or and) outside the buffer zone.

GEOfood certifies for agricultural and processed products as well as for restaurants who serve these products. The restaurants that wish to join must elaborate GEOfood menus with at least 50% of local raw products (local: originating from the Geopark area or the buffer zone).



3.3.4 The French “High environmental value” (HEV)

The HVE certification is an official recognition of the French Ministry of Agriculture and is based on requirements with obligation of results for a certain number of environmental indicators (biodiversity, phytosanitary strategy, management of the fertilization, management of the water resource). The three-tiered system, originally introduced in 2011, encourages farms and vineyards to focus on increasing biodiversity, decreasing the negative environmental impact of their phytosanitary strategy, managing their fertilizer inputs, and improving water management. Once an operation has attained the third and most stringent level of the certification process, it is deemed worthy of the title “High Environmental Value” (“Haute Valeur Environnementale” - HVE).



The HEV logo is associated with a value statement and can be placed on both processed and unprocessed products containing at least 95% of base materials from farms certified as having High Environmental Value. The presence of the logo on processed products makes it possible to highlight for consumers the efforts of farms committed to the highest level of the environmental certification scheme

3.3.5 The Italian Sistema di qualità nazionale produzione integrata (SQNPI)

<http://www.ccpb.it/en/blog/certificazione/integrated-crop-management/>

The Italian Sistema di qualità nazionale produzione integrata (SQNPI) certifies horticultural production in line with regional Integrated Crop Management guidelines. Integrated Crop Management is an eco-friendly cultivation method using techniques that guarantee lower environmental impact and a reduction of the release into the environment of chemical substances, integrating these with natural input. Companies engaged in agricultural production and/or processing of agricultural products can obtain this certification provided they follow certain cultivation practices, governed by Technical Standard NTPI/01.

3.3.6 IP-SUISSE

www.ipsuisse.ch

Founded almost 30 years ago, the "Swiss Association of Integrated Farmers" is one of the most important agricultural producer and sales organizations in Switzerland. Around 18,500 IP-SUISSE farmers produce environmentally friendly and animal-friendly food for their daily needs on their family farms.

IP-SUISSE defines the guidelines for sustainable label production, develops and defines programs of measures for compliance with them on the farms and has them checked by independent institutions. The uniqueness of this scheme relates to its dual commitment to environmentally and socially sustainable production methods and operational behavior.





It therefore focuses on the following areas and takes actions above the minimum requirements set by local legislations:

- Biodiversity, achieved through actions that support rare species, wildlife zones
- Animal welfare, is improved through space limits and free movement in open fields that go beyond the minimum requirements set by legislation
- Climate IP-SUISSE aims to reduce greenhouse gas emissions (CO2 equivalents) on their farms by 10% without affecting agricultural production. A catalog of measures is compiled through cooperation with Agroscope, the federal competence center for agricultural research. Measures include the construction of photovoltaic systems, the reduction of mineral nitrogen fertilizers, the increase in nitrogen efficiency, the preservation or build-up of carbon stores in soil and biomass as well as minimizing methane emissions in cattle farming.
- Social responsibility is met by incorporating actions such as caring for the disabled and the children
- Fairness in terms of prices for the consumer and family incomes
- Measurable – using a point system and in collaboration with research organisations the results of the cultivation practices to the environment are measurable

3.3.7 Origin based label – Produced in Kent

<https://www.producedinkent.co.uk/>



Produced in Kent is a trade organisation dedicated to supporting & promoting all types of food, drink and craft businesses in Kent. It was established in 2008, with the joint venture of the Kent County Council with the 'Produced in Kent' and Hadlow College, a leading land-based sector educational institution, to support the agricultural, food and crafts of Kent district (UK).

The 'Produced in Kent Member logo' can only be used by Produced in Kent members, and in accordance with the Style Guide. The quality label is just based on the origin of the producers and the products are supported by a multitude of activities such as the Kent food routes, the taste of Kent awards and frequent open markets in locations around Kent. Produced in Kent is a strong, widely recognised brand, benefiting and promoting its membership businesses while the organisation also provides business support, advice and sales opportunities to its members.

This quality mark is a self-declared certification scheme with no quality assurance parameters tied to it but is based on the branding of the area which is a well-known agricultural region of the UK. As a quality mark, it cannot receive any support from the CAP policy tools, its case though highlights the strength of collectively marketing products based on the place of origin.



3.4 Support schemes for the mountainous regions – The Euromontana case

Euromontana is the European multidisciplinary association for the co-operation and development of mountain areas. It includes around 70 regional and national mountainous organizations throughout across 20 European countries, including regional development offices, local authorities, agricultural organizations, environmental associations, forestry organizations and research institutes.

Euromontana's mission is to promote better conditions, sustainable development and quality of life in mountain areas. To do this, Euromontana facilitates the exchange of information and experience between these areas by organizing seminars and major conferences, conducting studies, managing, developing and participating in European projects and partnering with European institutions on mountain issues.

Euromontana runs several projects for the support of mountain areas across Europe and plays an important role in shaping up policies for rural development. Reference is made here to an older research project, “Mountain Quality Food Products” that ran in the period 2002-2004. The project has led to the following important findings:

Concerning the quality of mountain agricultural products, it is concluded that agricultural practices in these harsh environments have a positive impact on the region (in terms of multifunctionality). This means that it is most likely the combination of extrinsic characteristics and intrinsic quality which produces the set of values that offers the basis of a 'mountainous' identity.

The study also shows that the highlands producing food products have higher costs both in production and in distribution. It is therefore important, within the current economic context, to create added value for mountain production. Agriculture also contributes to the preservation and development of the heritage of mountainous areas related to biology, the environment, culture, landscape, traditions, etc.

In order to deepen the study on mountain food products in Europe launched as part of this project, the Steering Committee identified the following:

- Strengthen knowledge about the "links" between mountain conditions and the intrinsic characteristics of these areas' nutritional products and about the relationships between mountain products and their region, particularly in terms of their "positive externalities". landscape products, the rural economy and the preservation of know-how, cultural heritage, local farming, etc.
- European Consumers' perception and interest in mountain products and the prospect of considering different ways of integrating communication strategies.



4 The impact of quality labels on food products for the rural and mountain communities

A valuable tool for producers:

In examining the impact of the different types of quality labels for rural and mountainous regions, it is essential to review the background theorems about the value of Geographical Indications (GI) for the rural communities. GIs are at the core of origin-based quality labels; hence literature reviews have primarily emphasized the impact of these types of quality labels on the economic and social welfare of their users. The term ‘users’ refers to the entrepreneurs who opt to follow the rules defines by GIs and S. May at al (2017) note that *‘GI systems are developed as an instrument for small and medium sized farmers and processors in a cooperative scheme, but we also discovered the efforts of multinational companies to collect GIs as a part of their global brand portfolio’*.

In terms of their general purpose, F. Parasecoli (2017) notes that *‘Geographical Indications are meant to increase the value of goods, enhancing their reputation and protecting them from the competition of similar products. At the same time, they constitute entry barriers for producers located outside the area defined by the GI regulations and administrative requirements’*.

In creating a competitive advantage, quality labels may be seen as a necessity for the survival of mountain farms, since price competitiveness is an almost impossible task. The lack of a quality label creates a major drawback for mountain products since unbranded product remains a commodity with price being the only competitive parameters. According to McMoran et al., 2015, in such a situation (lack of a visible quality label), *‘existing markets therefore fail to adequately recompense mountain producers for the additional costs they encounter, or the positive externalities they deliver’*. Obviously, this would require clear and direct linkage between the territorial quality attributes of mountain foods and the products that consumers encounter.

Recent artisanal delicacies that claim fundamental and long-lasting connections with specific places are increasingly available in stores and restaurants, prominently featured in media, and provide a great potential for the establishment of niche markets that can add value by diversifying from the global market of bulky and non-branded commodities that seem to dominate the markets through the dominance of multinational retail chains.

Origin based, mountain-related branding and certification may therefore offer considerable potential for supporting the marketing position of products grown and / or processed in the mountains. Scholl et al. (2012) suggest that *‘Consumers associate mountain products with positive attributes of purity, authenticity, and support for rural development, and are willing to pay a premium’*. A similar claim is made by Euromontana (2003, 2004) by noting that *‘The specific characteristics of mountain foods linked to the*



qualities of mountain environments and/or their modes of production gives them considerable currency as high-quality niche products’.

5 A proposed framework for a certification scheme that can support the Cyprus mountain farming

5.1 Defining Troodos and the mountainous region

Any discussion regarding the support to mountainous agriculture has to start by defining the meaning of the terms ‘mountainous’ and ‘Troodos’. Taking the definition of ‘mountains’, a fast and simple way is to incorporate the definition provided in the RDP 2014-20 program document (based on the European definition for the LFAs) and include the communities noted in the relevant list (see www.paa.gov.cy). This would undoubtedly raise some issues regarding communities that are adjacent to the boundaries and possess the same characteristics as the communities within the definition e.g. Evrychou, Temvria in Solea Valley. One may opt to widen the definition, but the questions lies as to how one decides on the extended boundaries.

Another option is to capitalize on the term ‘Troodos’ and delineate the mountainous agriculture in communities that belong to the Troodos Geopark list of Appendix II, thereby taking advantage, if selected, from the concept of the Geopark and the example of the GEOfood scheme. This would again pose a problem, since it will leave out mountainous communities located in the Pafos district which (a) are not included in the Troodos Geopark boundaries and (b) are not widely known as communities of the Troodos massif.

5.2 Capitalizing on existing certification schemes

It is logical to suggest that the quality mark for mountain products should primarily aim to get an approval from the EU label of “mountain products”. Such an initiative would capitalize on the European quality label with its defined requirements which in turn allows for access to marketing funds through the RDP 2014-20 (measure 3.2). However, the EU label of “mountain products” can only be given to products on an individual basis e.g. Troodos apples, and not to a basket of agricultural and processed products from the particular region.

A basket of goods can be certified through the existing voluntary scheme of the GEOpark provided that the certification parameters are enforced with a set of actions beneficial to society and/or the environment to give substance to the quality label.

5.3 A quality mark for whom

The quality mark needs to be established for the benefit of local primary producers and small food processors who live and work in the mountains. The quality mark should therefore be in line with their capabilities in terms of production and cultivation practices while at the same time it should provide a



value added for the consumer. It is therefore essential to understand the capabilities of these producers in adopting a quality label that is not just based on the place of origin but one that can incorporate additional parameters that can ‘differentiate’ the products.

5.4 Designing the framework and thinking ahead

Consumer perceptions and expectations regarding their willingness to buy quality products are examined in Work Package 3.3. The analysis is based on reviews from previous market and consumer research studies that have investigated behavior across the general concept of quality labels for Europe and to a lesser extent for Cyprus. The general consensus on literature reviews verify the necessity to link any quality mark that is based on origin to (a) attributes that can be understood by consumers, (b) attributes that can touch the concerns or expectations of consumers regarding the sustainable survival of the mountainous ecosystems. Furthermore, any quality mark must be able to fund its marketing and awareness actions on a systematic basis in order to establish the market penetration and prove itself successful.

The discussion so far has set several key issues that need be considered upon deciding for a certification scheme for the benefit of mountain agriculture

- (a) The scheme should be broad enough to cover a wide basket of agricultural and processed food products
- (b) A definition of what constitutes the mountain region of Cyprus is a necessary step ahead of any scheme. Equally important and relevant to the definition of a ‘mountain community’ is the necessity to define the boundaries of the Troodos region. A possible compromise is to create a scheme that can be applicable to (a) the Troodos Geopark area and (b) the Pafos mountain area based on the definition provided in the RDP.
- (c) The quality label must possess substance that goes beyond the place of origin. The examples of certification schemes cited in this report indicate the importance of agricultural practices that meet the expectations, needs or concerns of the consumers. An overview of the possible parameters that can support a certification scheme for the mountains is presented in the figures below.



Figure 4: The framework of certifying mountain products

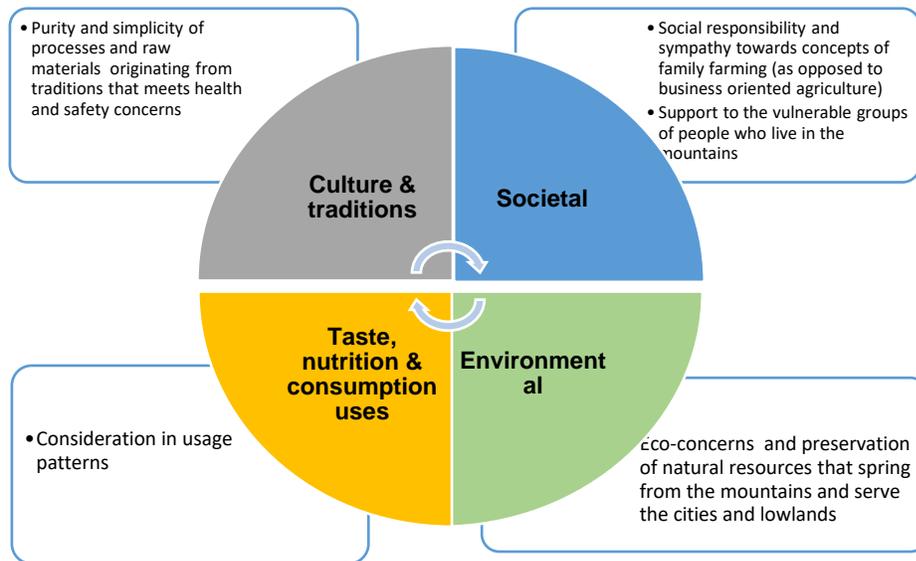


Figure 5: Hiromeri from Pitsilia of Troodos, an example of certifying cured meat products based on the proposed framework



The literature review carried out confirms that mountain agriculture is central for the survival of the mountainous regions. Equally though, it becomes apparent that mountain farmers need to identify themselves in the market through an approach of differentiated products. The quality label is one approach that can support a differentiation through a collective approach. Mountain farming is family farming and family farming is a small holders' business with no capital to create a brand and execute a marketing strategy on an individual enterprise basis. Hence a quality label coupled with policy intervention through the CAP is an appropriate mix for supporting the mountainous regions.



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