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MAP Position Note

EMPOWERING RURAL AREAS IN MULTI-LEVEL GOVERNANCE PROCESSES



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MAP POSITION NOTE

MAP TUSCANY - MAP CASENTINO

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Authors: Sabrina Arcuri (University of Pisa)

Contributors: Sabrina Tomasi (University of Pisa)

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Table of Content

1. Current situation based on background research and evidence.....	3
2. Position of the Multi-Actor Platform.....	4
2.1. Identified strengths and needs	4
2.2. Existing interventions and actions	5
2.3. Recommendations from the MAP	6
2.3.1 Recommendations for future rural policies	6
2.3.2 Recommendations for future research agendas	6
Acknowledgements	7
References.....	7

1. Current situation based on background research and evidence

The theme of the governance of the local food system emerged strongly in the discussions held at the regional and local level in Tuscany, primarily for the need to integrate and coordinate initiatives and policies that belong to different sectors and policy domains (health, agriculture, welfare, environment, inner areas, labour, market). Among the different topics falling under the major theme of the food system governance, the valorisation of PATs - Traditional Agri-food Products of Tuscany (*prodotti agroalimentari tradizionali*) - has recently been high on the agenda of Tuscany regional institutions, namely the Regional Land Authority (*Ente Terre Regionali Toscane*) and the Department for Agriculture of Tuscany Region.

About 460 food products are included in the official list of Tuscany PATs compiled by the Ministry of Agriculture¹. Although these products lack a Designation of Origin (PDO/PGI²), they represent a rich cultural, technical, and gastronomic heritage for the region (Regione Toscana, 2018). The value of the PATs lies in their potential to form the basis of wider territorial development strategies, and a resource for the agri-food sector in general, according to CIA Toscana (CIA Toscana, 2022). Tuscany regional authorities have therefore pledged to promote and support the PATs, as they recognise their potential to generate broader social and economic benefits for the areas where their production takes place and the (often small) businesses involved.

A recent survey by CIA (Alberti, 2020) has found that the uniqueness of these products and the quality of both raw materials and the final products are dependent on a combination of specific environmental and historical-cultural conditions. Market outlets for the PATs highlight the connection with the territory and the SMEs involved. The same survey has found that the producers involved in the PATs' production sell their produce and foods through/at:

1. Direct sale: 70%, divided among fresh markets, farmers' markets, direct sale on-farm and dedicated shops;
2. restaurants, retailers and specialised-deli shops: 40% of producers, of which 26% declared selling their products in the national market and especially in border regions;
3. cooperatives of producers: 8%;
4. catering services: 6%, especially fresh produce;
5. large retailers: 4% (Alberti, 2020).

The survey has also emphasised the limitations connected to the current state of the art in relation to PATs. For instance, one of the main limitations to the promotion of PATs is related to their commercialisation being connected to dedicated valorisation initiatives for each individual product, while collective initiatives are lacking and most needed. Most PATs' producers are small farms, often unable to make specific investments for communication unless they take part in producers' networks, value chain strategies or wider territorial strategies. The PATs list include a broad variety of products, also in terms of the quantities available. Even if significant quantities are produced of some of these products - especially products of more common use or from producers more widespread on the territory - often these quantities are neither well documented nor linked to specific valorisation initiatives, with more difficulties to retrieve data. Conversely, PAT producers with a more restricted production area (e.g. a

¹ A complete and updated list is available at [Regione Toscana PAT](#)

² Tuscany exhibits a total of 31 products and 50 wines with the PDO/PGI quality certification (Regione Toscana, 2019).

municipality, a province or a specific geographical area) and smaller quantities have tended to build relationships and form networks with other producers, eventually leading to the promotion of all the territory where these foods are grown (Alberti, 2020). In the latter cases, local institutions have contributed to the promotion, supporting initiatives such as fairs, festivals, and other dedicated events (Alberti, 2020).

2. Position of the Multi-Actor Platform

2.1. Identified strengths and needs

Key question to address: What are the key strengths and needs identified by the MAP in relation to governance within the MAP area?

Strengths:

- Awareness that participation and involvement of all actors are of the essence for legitimising decision-making.
- A variety of initiatives are in place, and Tuscany has been working since many years as an arena for experimentation on new forms of governance in rural areas and in the agri-food domain (e.g. rural districts, bio-districts, food policy councils, wine and taste routes). Many types of actors are involved, different governance configurations take place based on their specific context;
- Many of these forms of governance are regulated by regional/national legislation and/or are promoted and supported by the regional government.
- Rural tourism, with a diversified offer available (heterogeneity of rural areas with notable countryside capital).
- In Tuscany, the regional government is leading the initiative for the creation of a Centre for Training and Competences on Traditional Agri-food Products (PAT) (*Centro delle Competenze per la valorizzazione e promozione dei PAT*). It is currently in operation, with the first participatory process almost completed (see interventions and actions, section 2.2).

Needs:

- Coordination, integration, and support to existing initiatives: many initiatives risk creating fragmentation and loss/misuse of resources.
- Participatory governance needs to be continuously animated, facilitated and needs good communication.
- Making the whole agri-food sector – beyond just agriculture – in rural areas more appealing to young generations of farmers, by emphasising the connection between high-quality, high-added value productions and sustainability.
- Training and education of producers and all other supply chain operators involved in the PATs' market segment: investing on quality products requires knowledge on the characteristics of the product, on the type of market and available commercial channels, marketing strategies and tools, and communication strategies.
- Communication and initiatives for sharing knowledge on the value of PATs, targeting civil society (individuals and organisations).

- Creation of new job opportunities in sectors which are strategic for the sustainable development of rural areas, to retain and attract inhabitants, especially young and skilled people.
- Overcoming localism and parochialism that hinder cooperation especially between small villages and towns.

2.2. Existing interventions and actions

Regional Centre for Training and Competences on Traditional Agri-food Products (PAT) (*Centro delle Competenze per la valorizzazione e promozione dei PAT*)

In the last months, a participatory process has been carried out for the Regional Centre for Training and Competences on Traditional Agri-food Products, an initiative led by regional authorities (namely: the Land Authority and Regional Department for Agriculture). At the outset of the process, a call for proposals was issued, to collect the ideas of all the stakeholders about the valorisation of Traditional Agri-food Products (PAT; see section 1).

About 20 proposals emerged, related to the objectives to be pursued for the enhancement of the PATs and related supply chains. These objectives then led to 8 working groups (each person could join a maximum of 3 groups), each focusing on a specific objective and coordinated by a representative from research or civil society. In relation to participants, it is worth emphasising that working groups' members participate not in an individual but in an institutional capacity. The groups cover the entire ideal pathway towards valorisation, with a cascading approach encompassing: community and stakeholder animation, organisation of supply chains, valorisation in the strict sense, promotion through rural tourism, the relationship between the PATs, agrobiodiversity and environmental sustainability, the qualification and participatory guarantee systems, the historical valorisation of PAT, training and research, and the co-design of local policies. Outcome of the process will be released as guidelines for the valorisation of the PATs, taking into account all the stakeholders' contributions, which will include policy recommendations to inform regional and local decision-makers (process to end in June 2023).

2.3. Recommendations from the MAP

2.3.1 Recommendations for future rural policies

- Provide incentives for participation (to forums, platforms, etc.) and ensure a clear and effective communication to reach out to all potentially interested parties.
- Promote and encourage cross-sectoral cooperation between different municipalities, departments and/or initiatives: not only complex problems (e.g. food system, sustainability) need cross-boundary solutions and governance, but competition in fragile areas or among small municipalities could contribute to a further exacerbation of disparities.
- Streamline administrative procedures for accessing funding and other services in rural areas. When this is not possible, provide guidance and support: smaller rural municipalities/small businesses can hardly afford the competencies and human resources needed to comply with some administrative requirements or address complex tasks.
- Provide long-term funding: project-based funding constraints do not allow going beyond short-term objectives and limit them to the requirements of funding calls rather than the other way around.
- Increase funding flexibility to address – and adapt to – a variety of governance instruments and contexts or, when there is no room for flexibility, provide a fix for mitigating the effects of exclusion.

2.3.2 Recommendations for future research agendas

- Conduct a complete mapping of PATs, and related best practices, including a detailed account of availability, production costs and supply chain for each product.
- Conduct interdisciplinary research and investigate the nutraceutical value and organoleptic characteristics of traditional products (e.g. PAT, local varieties): this could represent an additional value and provide a further element of differentiation from similar products.
- Engage with – and expand – the networks already in place in the areas under investigation: it is necessary to support existing initiatives and invest in their continuity beyond EU projects, avoiding overlaps and waste of resources.
- Increase data collection and availability in rural areas: governance instruments for sustainable food systems are often based in territorial entities with blurred boundaries, which do not correspond to any government level or territorial unit (e.g. the NUTS level).

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