



Introduction: Republic of Macedonia possesses diverse production of food, due to six agro-climatologically zones, landscape and diverse genetic resources. 51% of the total land is arable and almost 50% are hilly pastures, where small ruminants are traditionally kept. That land has never been part of any improvement program and can be easily certified for organic production. Food production is still very important for national economy since agriculture is participating with 12 % in GDP, and still around 40 % of population lives in rural areas. Livestock is participating with 60 % in the agriculture. Generally, farm size is small and the production is diverse. Farmers are weak and are organizing associations. Main specific export agricultural products are wine, tobacco and lamb meat, as well as fresh vegetables. Beside lamb production, the rest of the livestock products are mainly used for national consumption. Lambs and cheese are the main products that are recognized by geographic areas and it can be differentiated from one to another region. Those products are the main focus for geographical indication and can contribute to protection of Animal genetic resources.

The legal framework for GI products

Republic of Macedonia is a country with a status of EU candidate, and still has not fully approximated the national legislation. Currently, some parts of GI are mentioned in the Law for Trade Mark, but not in compliance with EU Reg. (CE) 510/06. The working group for PDO and PGI national legislation has been established and to the end of 2009 it has to prepare the draft version.

The national institutional structure for GIs

Since there is not national legislation that is dealing with GI, currently there is no product that is in compliance with EU legislation. Hence, in the country there is no national institutional structure for Geographic Indication products. However, there are some products that have GIs and for them under the food safety regulations the institutions are controlling the quality of the products.

Those institutions are:

- Faculty of Agricultural Sciences and Food
- Faculty of Veterinary Medicine
- Institute for Health Protection

Within the activities of Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Economy, there is a program that should encourage producers to begin the process of GI. The aim is to support a group of producers to start with description and registration of their production and ensure sustainability in socio-economic terms.

Livestock GIs: Indigenous livestock breeds, local traditional methods of animal husbandry and food processing

Several local breeds in Republic of Macedonia are exist and are main source of income for the producers. Among others, in relation to GIs livestock products predominantly sheep breeds are in the focus. There are 3 indigenous sheep breeds in the country, e.g. Ovchepolian, Sharplanian and Karakachanian. Latest one is under ex-situ conservation program due to low productivity and disappearance of

trans-human system of production. The other two are widely used, but under pressure of crossing with imported breeds (Merinoladshaf and Awassi). Due to specific socio-economic tradition, sheep production is mainly semi trans-human, exploring hilly mountains pastures in summer and spending winters in valleys. Traditional products are lambs and cheese.

Lambs are main export product predominantly in Greece, Italy and Croatia, with annual value of over 12.5 million Euros. On Italian market it is recognized as Lamb form Sharplanina, and in Croatia as Macedonian lamb.

Cheese is produced mostly on farm, and 3 types of cheese common (white brine, hard and beaten one). Cheese is consumed in a country and in a market there are several GIs recognized.

- white brine cheese: Trnicko, Galicko, Berovsko
- hard cheese (kashkaval): Galichki, Korab
- beaten cheese: Mariovsko bieno

Due to HACCP implementation, most of the on-farm processors are under process of registration of their production with derogation from the general HACCP legislation.

Experiences in development of the livestock GIs with emphasis on the conservation of the indigenous breeds and areas of origin and on rural development

So far the experience in development of the livestock GIs products is limited. Nevertheless, at least in academic and political level it is clear that GIs can help in sustainable rural development, supporting environmental and social issues like biodiversity preservation, prevention from over exploration, prevention of cultural and traditional inheritance and social and territorial effects.

Few projects are running regarding development of GIs livestock products that are in direct relation to protection of animal genetic resources. One is related to protection of pure flock of Ovchepolian sheep by development of specific cheese that can be recognized on a market. Currently the project is on the phase of identifying of traditional process of production, in order to impose minimum sanitarian standards and description.

The other one is reacted to protection of local primitive pig breed by promoting piglets and other products (ham, fat, traditional soap production). However, this project is in very early stage faced with limited budget and

difficulties in identifying groups of interested stakeholders.

Third project is dealing with description of the origin, technology and tradition in producing of lambs in western part of the country, with respect to Sharplanina Mountain.

It is expected that projects will continued and will result in description of the process of production, make a structure of the institution involved in controlling and certification of the products.

Perspectives for development of livestock based GIs: areas and products with the potential to become GIs

Indigenous breeds in Republic of Macedonia are faced with endangering, due to specific socio-economic circumstances during the last few decades. Government has shown little interest in preventing those processes. One of the tools of halting the genetic erosion in livestock that can ensure their sustainable existence of the local breeds can be seen in GI products. Most of the local breeds in the country are associate with traditional products that are not promoted enough and have difficulties to prove sanitary compliance, as they are produced on farm where limited knowledge, investments and capacities exists.

One of the key for sustainable rural development can be seen in supporting development of GI products that are related to traditional production by exploring local genetic resources. Republic of Macedonia although is a small country, posses diversity in climate, landscape, landraces and diverse production of food. It is a great potential for promotion of GIs products and particularly livestock ones.

However, this issue is not treated adequately, due to limited knowledge, human resources, legal aspects and capacities in the country. It is expected that through the process of harmonization and adaptation of the national legislation to EU, at least some aspects can be overcome. Also, the pre-accession EU funds can be used for development of GIs livestock products and somehow reduce the pressure for animal genetic resources loss.

