

Some considerations of Marketing Opportunities for Ark and Rescue Products

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To improve the value of products derived from rare breeds it's necessary to start from a simple consideration: the breeding is an economic activity, or better, is a business.

For the breeder, so, the choice to breed one race rather another can depend almost exclusively on economic considerations. And the turnover depends on the products: milk, meat and other derivatives products like wool, et cetera.

These simple consideration we bring to say that is necessary, for conservation of rare breeds, to add value to the products. This solution would be not so difficult unless we consider the last evolution of agrifood products. In fact, in recent years consumers are paying growing attention to the qualities of agrifood products, due to both the greater concern about food safety related aspects, but also the need of re-discovering the true values of agriculture and rurality. Secondly, it's true that the products of rare breeds often have a traditional characteristic.

Often, these products are so typical of specific geographic area because they derived directly from local culture, including breed.

It's also important to remember that the European Union provides specific legislation for the registration, certification, and protection of Geographical Indications for agricultural products and foodstuffs (EC, 1992). These are classified as either Protected Designations of Origin (PDOs) or Protected Geographical Indications (PGIs) at the European level (EC, 1992). PDO designation means the products are "produced, processed, and prepared within a given geographical area using recognized know-how." PGI designation means "the geographical link must occur in at least one of the stages of production, processing or preparation. Furthermore, the product can benefit from a good reputation". In another terms, to qualify for a PDO, the product must have qualities and characteristics which are essentially due to its region of production: it must also be produced, processed and prepared exclusively within that region. The requirement for a PGI is slightly less strict; a good reputation of a product from a given region is sufficient (rather than objectively different characteristics) if any of the steps of production, processing and preparation may take place within the region. Otherwise the protection afforded by the two terms is equivalent.

Perhaps these two labels are too much for the major part of products linked to the breed for followed reasons:

- limited quantity of production, due at low number of animals;
- large quantity of product often selfconsumed by producers;
- mass market far away
- long process to obtain the certification
- high cost to mantain the certification

Of kinds of certification exist which are very interesting for adding value such as organic and fair trade or social responsibility. But these are too expensive for small producers.

It's necessary to consider that on the first, that the priority is to increase numbers of animal in danger of extinction, for two reasons: to assure a future at the race but also to assure a basic supply to maintain the demand of product. When this two aims are reached is possible think to create a strategical plan of marketing, to include a certification process.

Many opportunities exist for voluntary certification but the costs are the major problem the small producers.

It is possible, is possible, for the Elbarn Team, to create a guidelines, or better, a specific standard for Ark and Rescue Products, with very important criteria that the breeders could to respect as:

- animal welfare
- extensive production
- traditional process of production
- fair trade

These requisites could be put inside on the standard of property of Elbarn Project and to represente a baseline, in the future, to create a certification process (with a second part or third part audti). A first audit of the Ark Farm could be made by the Elbarn Team which would allow them to use the "Ark Farm" logo on their products and thus add value. With this solution is possible to link to the standard a specific labelling, i.e. Ark Product or another fantasy name, that the producers could be applying to their products.

Obviously, it's necessary, in this last case, a strategical action of marketing of this label, i.e. newspapers, specific advertising, participation at expo (Salone del Gusto of Turin, ...), et cetera.

The cost of hiring a certification body to perform second and third audits may well be too high compared to the value of the products. Without further audits the use of the logo correctly will depend on the good will of the producers.