

Development of Gastronomic Regions in Sweden

Litterature study

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Summary

A report, 'Gastronomiska Regioner'¹, was a project conducted as a collaboration between the LRF (Lantbrukarnas Riksförbund), Restaurangakademien, Södertörns Högskola and Jordbruksverket with the aim to know what a Swedish gastronomic region is and how building it. The definition that is given is about collaboration, coordination and interaction with a long-term customer oriented view, defying a geographic area with raw materials and products characterized by region's natural conditions, know-how and culture. There is also the need to have an innovative force that will renew region's production. This would, at the end, be beneficial for region's tourism industry, rural development and adding value to the regions through their activities and unique products.

The aim of this study is to know more about the advances of Sweden in term of gastronomic regions, their ways to develop it and if they can essentially be qualified by these terms. The methods used are literature review, subject-specific websites and contact with the different actors that are engaged in this subject.

It can be seen that all around the country a lot of initiatives are taken to increase the interest of food for consumers and to promote local production that could, at the end lead to the promotion of the different regions.

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INTRODUCTION

With one Bocus gold and three Bocus silver, Sweden is classed number three at the worldwide prestige gastronomy competition behind Norway and France. There are ten restaurants with a Michelin star in Sweden and two with two stars. On the World's 50 Best Restaurants list, the two best Swedish restaurants are ranked in 19th and 23rd places. In 2010, Östersund, the only city in Jämtland was awarded the title of Creative City of Gastronomy by UNESCO. All these facts prove that Sweden is a culinary nation and has the resources to be known abroad as it is also helped with websites as Try Swedish, open invitation from the country of Sweden to taste and explore the world of its food culture or Visit Sweden the official travel and tourist information web site.

A survey handled in 2008, by the Ministry of Agriculture, shows that 76 percent of the Swedish population considers food and culinary experience as an important part of a holiday. Three out of four believe that a dining experience in rural areas can be a holiday destination in itself. The same year, former minister of Agriculture Mr. Eskil Erlandsson, presented his and the Government of Sweden's Food vision - Sweden - the New Culinary Nation. The new national objective was that Sweden, with its unique landscape, quality of food and knowledge will be Europe's new Culinary Nation. To achieve it, government decided to invest SEK 105 million per year from 2012 to 2014. A part of the Rural Development Program was also dedicated to it by supporting investment and for training in food and food craft².

But there is also a need to promote the country, and precisely the regions, to Swedish consumers to make them more aware and proud of the wealth of their landscape. The same survey has shown that Swedes were interested in local food with 40 of them thinking that it is important that the food is regionally or locally produced and 95 percent would buy more locally products if they found it in stores. It can be seen as a potential to work regionally and promote gastronomic regions. As it will be seen, there are a lot of initiatives that are going on all over the country.

DIFFERENT REGIONS, DIFFERENT DEFINITIONS

'Gastronomiska Regioner' report is a project based on focus groups, seminars, group interviews and individual interviews with key people in eight Swedish counties. One of the chapters is dedicated to present different counties with their main structures and experiences. It has been shown that there are different point of views about what a gastronomic region is and how and why developing it. It mostly depends on how the development of the concerned region is so far. Thus, different approaches can be identified.

SÖDERMANLAND

THE NEED TO DEVELOP A COMMON STRATEGY

In Södermanland it has been pointed out the issue of a common strategy. There is a lack of a common structure principally because producers don't need to merge or make effort as everything that is produced can be sold easily. Thus, for Södermanland, culinary region is considered as a big change comparing to the work that had been organized so far. They came to the conclusion that it is important to be able to create commitment around the new way of thinking and to create interface and connection between the existing structures. One work has been done in the way of collaboration in Stockholm County where was recently launched the strategy "Proud food in Sörmland - a food strategy 2014-2020"¹.

JÄMTLAND

IMPORTANCE OF CRAFT FOOD

The region of Jämtland is a fertile ground. Benefiting from near-constant sunshine that typically blazes over northern Sweden in summer, we can find various products in this region as fruit, berries, vegetables, mushrooms, fish, elk and roe deer roam.

In Jämtland, food craft has a strong position. The locale is awash with small-scale food producers with sustainable inclinations. Notably, the region holds one of the highest numbers of eco farms in the world. There's an old-fashioned feel to the way in which the food is produced. This traditional approach to food production explains the award of Östersund, the prestigious title of Creative City of Gastronomy by UNESCO³.

There is no strategy at the moment but the region has had an important number of initiatives with the aim to create regional added value such as Eldrimner¹, national center for artisan food that helps food artisans - in the beginning as well as in the development of the company- through counselling, courses, study, development and experience⁴.

VÄSTRA GÖTLAND

IMPORTANCE OF TOURISM

In Västra Götaland, West Swedish Tourist Board has worked, since 1999, with food as reason for travelling. There is a well-made structure that includes research, practical work and resources to build an organization that can support this development. Initiatives as Lokalproducerat (website that permits to find all kind of local products) has strengthen the focus on food.

Efforts to attract international tourists are well anchored. Västra Götaland has already developed a concept based on the destination and packaging. A large number of successful concepts are found primarily in fish and seafood tourism (as mussels or lobsters safari). Nowadays, there is a clear strategy which includes restaurant meals, meal tickets, meal fairs, food meetings, meal packages.

Another thing that can be seen as a strategy is the book Meal Tourism in Western Götaland, written by Lena Mossberg and Inger Smith and published by West Swedish Tourism Council in 2009.

The county has also been creative in using modern media as the production of a large number of YouTube videos that are showing food trips in an inspiring way¹.

SKÅNE

One of the regions that have done the most of work about developing a culinary region is most certainly Skåne, in the southernmost of Sweden through different activities and projects for the public and small-scale producers.

SMÅKA PÅ SKÅNE

A HELP FOR DEVELOPMENT

Småka på Skåne (Taste Skåne) is an effort to make Skåne a culinary region. Its activity is under Livsmedelsakademin (Skåne Food Innovation Network), the hub of the Skåne food cluster. Småka på Skåne has two main areas - development of small-scale food production and culinary tourism. It operates through projects and networks for healthy food and food experiences with roots in the soil of Skåne. With counseling and skills development, they support small businesses in their production, reaching out to the public and aim to get an attention so that more people are given the opportunity both to work with and enjoy Skåne cuisine. Their motto is: quality, pride, involvement and down on earth. They want to increase availability, visibility, quality and collaboration to develop Skåne as a food region, even abroad⁵.

ACTIVITIES IN SKÅNE

FOOD FESTIVAL

Skåne food festival, organized by Småka på Skåne and Livsmedelsakademin, gathers small-scale producers, passionate food artisans, dedicated chefs and established food companies. It is a meeting place for foodies in the aim to share knowledge, passion and tasting beverages and food from all over Skåne in one place. The 2014 edition attracted 8500 visitors and 100 participants during a 3 days festival⁵.

LOCALLY AND CAREFULLY SELECTED



If you see the symbol “Taste Skåne – locally grown and carefully selected” next to an item in a store, it means that the product meet three criteria:

- Raw materials are coming from Skåne and the processing took place in the region
- It is a craft food product
- The producer informs how the production has been done and that it took place in Skåne

The aim is to make easier for the consumer to find food from Skåne. The concept has been created with traders and launched before summer 2011 with six shops using the symbol. In 2014 they were 40 stores involved⁵.

CULINARY TOURS

One of the aims is to develop Skåne as a culinary region. Småka på Skåne work to develop culinary excursion suggestions as the region has width of artisans, and plenty of local beverage producers. As they believe, one of the best ways to experience the region is to taste its products.

They also created guides. The first one, in collaboration with children’s best tables and tourism in Skåne, presents child- and family-friendly destinations around Skåne with restaurants that are certified to be child-friendly. The other for Skåne drinks tours as the region is a beverage landscape with producers of wine, beer, must, nectar, vodka, gin, whiskey, cider and many other drinks. The soil, climate and the geographical location are favorable for the cultivation. The result is the wide range of food and drink available⁵.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

As one of the area of Smaka på Skåne is small-scale food production, they organize workshops from raw materials to management to help exports. They also offer consulting, training courses in the domain of design of packaging and labels.

They organized, each year, a competition: Horse End, in the aim to create innovative food products using local ingredients. The assessment points are the eating experience, the market potential, the regional connections, the innovation and the technology⁵.

BEVERAGE STRATEGY

The beverage strategy's vision in Skåne is "Scania is the leading beverage region in 2020" of the Nordic region. With this strategy, the aim is to identify Skåne beverage soul through crops, craft-work, production, nature and culture.

The strategy in the region can be summarized in four points:

- Develop and define the uniqueness.
- Strengthen growth and increase employment in beverage industry.
- Have a common tool for prioritizing public resources.
- Make Scanians prouds, so that they know about products and buy drinks from Skåne.

It is builds on the Skåne soil - it is the earth where Scanian flavors take shape. As in other Nordic countries, Skåne get its character from long, light nights, very rainy and cold winters. Thus, taste has a sense of purity, simplicity and freshness. In Skåne there are also fantastic growing conditions, rich soils and a favorable climate that provides aroma with many nuances. All of this create a wide range of drinks like apple drinks (apples are the strongest raw material), liquors (the most famous brand is Absolute Vodka), beers (the number of breweries increased in the 2000s), wines. That is a good base to develop the region as the leading beverage one in 2020 in the Nordic region⁶.

SKÅNE TERROIR ATLAS

As Louise Andersson, working on strategy in rural development, informed me, the organizations Smaka på Skåne, Livsmedelsakademin, Centrum för Innovativa drycker, Tourism in Skåne, SLU Alnarp and Länsstyrelsen Skåne have co-started the discussion to develop an atlas of terroirs in Skåne to find out if there is a link between taste and place. They have a good base to work with as Länsstyrelsen Skåne published, in 2007, The Rural Development Programme of Skåne based on the English method Landscape Character Assessment where the region has been divided into 26 landscapes areas. In 2013 Smaka på Skåne published Beverage strategy of Skåne 2013-2020. According to that they are planning to start the atlas with beverages.

Centrum för Innovativa Drycker is currently writing a report on a study about the difference in taste of apples depending on where they have been cultivated, to look for any terroir effects in Skåne. Preliminary results indicate that there are no regional effects. This gives a new perspective of the work with the atlas of terroirs in Skåne.

So, there are a lot of initiatives that are going on in the region to help small-scale producers to develop their market and also to promote Skåne as a culinary region.

LABELS

As it has been shown, Skåne is a good example of the development of gastronomic region and the importance of using labels. As we have seen, it has a regional symbol showing that the product has grown locally and was carefully selected. It is a way to prove its quality and origin. But Skåne has also one product that can be recognized, not just regionally, but internationally, as it is certified under EU scheme. Indeed, Skånsk Spettkaka is protected under PGI (Protected Geographical Indication).

REGIONAL AND LOCAL LABELS

Consumers are becoming more conscious about food and tend to search for local, quality and healthy products. In this vision there is the development of a lot of labels that inform them of the quality of the products to avoid a misleading. These are 3 examples, among others, at different levels.

SMAKRIKET FOR SWEDISH CONSUMERS

Smakriket is a label that offers regional and local products from different parts of Sweden, focusing on the origin, taste and high quality. They want to encourage producers to produce the right product at the right place at the right time.

- The fact that a commodity is marked with Smakriket means that 100% of the raw materials originate in the specified area.
- A product (with multiple commodities) is marked with Smakriket means that the main raw material (at least 50% of the raw materials used) originates from the specified area and that the product is processed in some way in the specified area.

Today, there are 21 Smakriket across the country. The name "Smakriket" is always complemented with a clear geographic origin of the raw material or product (eg "Smakriket Jämtland", "Smakriket Osterlen" or "Smakriket West Coast")⁷.

Våra Smakriken



This label is a tool to promote regional food and thus it is more adapted to promote products for Swedish consumers.

ÖSTGÖTAMATMÄRKNINGEN FOR LOCAL CONSUMERS



Trademarks are playing an increasingly important role in companies and organizations marketing. Östgötamat economic association wants to make it easier for consumers to find the local food both in the grocery store, restaurants and on gourmet journey. The brand aims to help customers to differentiate local producer's raw materials in the variety of products available in grocery stores.

A brand is also a quality that speaks to who, what and how something looks and how it was produced. Östgötamat brand is bringing that food is produced in Östergötland.

It has been developed to communicate with local/regional customers⁸.

MATHANTVERK CERTIFICATION



Mathantverk is a certification created by Eldrimner, national center for artisan food that helps food artisans.

It stands for unique products with rich flavor, high quality and distinctive identity. These are made from mainly local produce processed with care, small scale and often on the farm. The hallmark of artisan food is to the human hand and know-how is involved in the entire production chain. This provides healthy products without unnecessary additives and products can be traced to its origin. It has been developed as artisan food is increasing in Sweden. Certification is a way to show consumers that artisan food is available in the country⁴.

KNOWING MORE ABOUT PDO/PGI

In order to know which Swedish products could have origin labelling, but also to know its impact on rural development in the country, a lot of work has been done in Sweden to learn more about the certification. PDO (Protected Designation of Origin) and PGI (Protected Geographical Indication) are two schemes that are well used in Europe and especially in countries as Italy and France where they have been shown to be useful to promote regions through their products. Great examples are: Parma ham for Italy or wines in France as Bordeaux or Burgundian wine.

There are currently 585 PDO and 621 PGI registered in total⁹.

DEFINITION

The definitions of PDO and PGI are given in Article 2 of Regulation 510/2006 of Council Regulation.

PDO, Protected Designation of origin, means the name of a region, a specific place or, in exceptional cases, a country, used to describe an agricultural product or a foodstuff:

- ✓ Originating in that region, specific place or country
- ✓ The quality or characteristics of which are essentially or exclusively due to a particular geographical environment with its inherent natural and human factors
- ✓ The production, processing and preparation of which take place in the defined geographical area.



PGI, Protected Geographical indication, means the name of a region, a specific place or, in exceptional cases, a country, used to describe an agricultural product or a foodstuff:

- ✓ Originating in that region, specific place or country
- ✓ Which possesses a specific quality, reputation or other characteristics attributable to that geographical origin
- ✓ The production and/or processing and/or preparation of which take place in the defined geographical area¹⁰.



Thus, the difference lies in the link between the features of the product and its geographical origin, which is weaker in the case of a PGI.

There is another registration called TSG (Traditional Specialities Guaranteed) but it is not used a lot this is why it has not been developed in that report. The registration seems not to be very attractive for a producer. The main advantage of this system is that a product, bearing a certain name, has to be produced according to a certain recipe. Though the name of a product that is registered as a traditional speciality is protected from misuse by products with another recipe, producers do not get the level of monopoly power as in the case of a protected geographical indication¹¹.



CONTEXT AND NEEDS

According to Regulation 510/2006, the context and needs are the following:

- ✓ **Economic importance and geographical linkages:** the promotion of high value products linked to geographical areas presents opportunities for the development of rural economies and, in particular, of remote and less favored areas.
- ✓ **Consumer trends and information asymmetry:** There is a trend of increasing consumer demand for quality food products and products with traceable geographic origins. But with the wide diversity of products it is difficult for the consumer to get its bearing. So a scheme can be a good way to give clearer information about the product.
- ✓ **Protection:** Products often possess specific characteristics or enjoy a positive reputation linked to the area where they are being produced. In this context, the regulation is important for protecting producers against use not in good faith. The product name protection through the PDO and PDI scheme is quite wide. Registered names are protected against direct or indirect commercial use, misuse, imitation or evocation of the protected name on a non-registered product, false or misleading indication about the provenance, origin, nature or qualities of products on packaging, advertising material or documents relating to the product that might give a false impression as to their origin. In addition, upon the creation of the Single Market, there is a need that the approach to geographical names be harmonized across the EU¹⁰.

The purpose of the certification is:

- ✓ ensuring the quality and diversity of products;
- ✓ increasing the market shares of PDO/PGI products;
- ✓ the returns along the supply chain¹⁰;

REASONS TO APPLY AND NOT TO APPLY

A lot of studies tend to explain advantages and disadvantages of the labels. The one of London Economics (2008) gave many reasons to apply and not to apply that can be found in the literature. Some of them are developed below.

REASONS TO APPLY

As the application process for PDO/PGI often motivates the foundation of a producers' group, a benefit of the scheme is the reduced transaction costs for members of the producer and/or retailer group. Barjolle and Sylvander (2000)¹² concluded that the better the collective organization and management of the supply chain by the product association is, the greater the impact of the scheme will be.

There is also another important reason, benefits. A study conducted by O'Connor & Co. (2006)¹³ identified that geographic indications (GIs), such as PDO/PGI can yield a price premium, which in some cases is significant, over comparator products. Examples include Lazio Artichoke (1.5 - 2 times comparator price), French cheeses with GIs (additional €3 per kg over non-GI French cheeses), Italian "Toscana" oil (20% premium), Bresse poultry (price is 4 times that of commodity poultry meat) and milk used for French Comté cheese (10% price premium).

REASONS NON TO APPLY

On the contrary, the schemes can have disadvantages for producers.

First, the costs due to administrative or 'transformation' costs (costs incurred to adapt structures and production process to the Code of Practices). According to Belletti and Marescotti (2006)¹⁴, this can explain why sometimes, even where there is an opportunity to obtain a PDO or a PGI, producers are not interested in applying as the estimated premium price is not sufficient to cover estimated certification costs.

One of the major issues about the schemes is that the application will dictate, at the end, who can use a name and who cannot, with potentially significant economic consequences for applicant businesses. The delimitation is proposed by the applicant group and then this can create disputes as some individuals may feel unfairly treated. Producers that work on neighboring land, and that feel to have similar or identical characteristics to the defined area can object to the registration (but the guidelines are quite vague). This can be the cause of dispute between producers. And this is one important concern in Sweden as it is seen as a barrier to competition that could lead to problems on the common market²⁵.

SITUATION IN FRANCE AND SWEDEN

Following, a comparison of the number of labels present on the market for Sweden and France⁹:

	PDO	PGI
Sweden	2	3
France	92	121

PDO registrations in Sweden are:

- Upplandskubb (2014), old bread from Uppland, served preferably with pickled herring or lard butter and red onion. It is unique to Sweden because it is the only bread to be baked in a water bath. It will ferment for three hours or longer and baked at least four hours. The bread should rest a day before being cutted, leaving juicy and spicy bread.
- Kalix Löjrom (2010) is the designation of the roe of small salmonid fish species vendace (*Coregonus albula*), harvested specifically from the Bothnia Bay archipelago of the Baltic Sea in northern Sweden.

PGI registrations in Sweden are:

- Bruna bönor från Öland (2010) only Stella I, Bonita, Katja and Karin varieties may be used in the cultivation of "Brown beans from Öland."
- Skånsk Spettkaka (2000), a pastry, one of Skåne specialty. A batter consisted of, among other things, eggs, potato flour and sugar, coiled very slowly during baking on rotating wooden skewers in front of an open fire or gas flames.
- Svecia (1997), first Swedish food item that received a protected geographical indication, is a Swedish cheese with a fresh and rustic flavor with characteristic saltiness.

What we can note is the difference of period to take the registration between Sweden and France, according to PDO. The first PDO labels were registered in 1996 in France principally with dairy products.

EXPLANATION OF THE DIFFERENCE

It is interesting to try to find out why such a disparity exists between France and Sweden according to the number of PDO and PGI in each country.

IMPORTANCE OF THE INSTITUTIONS

This can be explained by the institutions responsible for the administration of PDO/PGI which the nature differs depending on member States. Such variation is one of the main sources of differences in implementation across the EU.

- In France, it is the INAO (National institute of the origin and quality) that is in charge of the schemes. It is a public institution under the care of the Ministry of agriculture, food and forestry. It is responsible for the implementation of French policy on products under official signs of identification of the origin and quality: PDO, PGI and TSG, AOC (Appellation d'Origine Contrôlée), IGP (Indication Géographique Protégée) and Label Rouge (French labels) and organic farming. About 270 agents are accompanying producers in their registration procedure. After the obtaining, they continue this support especially in the context of label inspection throughout the life of the product¹⁵.

Thus, there is a high level of guidance and interaction; help is provided to applicants in completing the application in order to give them the best chance of success. In particular, personal help is available, often through face-to-face meetings to discuss the application, as well as through telephone calls and e-mail correspondence¹⁰.

- In Sweden it is Livsmedelsverket (National Food Agency) that is responsible of the schemes. It is a government agency under the Ministry for Rural Affairs. It is working for food security and probity in food and healthy eating habits¹⁶. Unlike the INAO, the work on NFA is not just dedicated to origin and quality schemes. This is why the guidance and interaction available to applicants is less intensive, less personal and more passive. Much of the help available comprises general advice available online or through other published¹⁰.

FOOD CULTURE

One of the explanations for the difference in the number of PDO/PGI between France and Sweden can lie on the difference of habits and wishing about food.

A study, made by Torbjörn Bildtgård¹⁷, a researcher in the Department of Social Work, Stockholm University, aimed to compare where Swedish and French would prefer to eat if they had the choice and what their definition of well eating was.

FRENCH RESPONSES

French mainly replied that they wanted to stay at home, which means: at their house, but also, with a wider sense, it designates the region or even local community where they live. A place where you can find, according to them, everything you need, with local specialties, fresh and natural products. Natural products refer, for French, to food that has been produced with traditional practices with as less food-processing and industrial farming techniques (GMOs, pesticides...) as possible. They are perceived as authentic and real.

This is explaining, according to Torbjörn Bildtgård, because of the historical government concern to create a French national identity. Over the course of the 20th century, the connection between food and place was accentuated through the AOC (Appellation d'Origine Contrôlée) system^{18, 19} that was originally to assure that a product was coming from one defined place. But with the time, it emphasizes the connection between terroir and product such that a label had to meet a set of predefined criteria that make the product typical of a certain place. Like in Sweden, children are educated early about taste and regional products with the creation of a national Week of the taste (Semaine du Goût) where children learn about local products, meet producers, eat and learn to discern different tastes.

SWEDISH RESPONSES

For the Swedish, they would like to go to a distant country in order to eat well, like countries of the Mediterranean region or Southeast Asia. They want a food that is both healthy (rich in vitamins and minerals) and low in fat and good tasting at the same time. A large importance is according to wilderness that seems to mean that is does not contain any superfluous. There has been no genetic manipulation, no hormones, no pesticides or fertilizers, no refinement, no additives. The food is literally untouched by human hands. This is the definition of natural food for Swedish.

Torbjörn Bildtgård explains that it is possible to trace the roots of a Swedish governmental concern about food and health back, at least, to the early 20th century²⁰. The concern was linked to the wider ambition to increase the individual citizen's contribution to the productivity of the nation, both as a worker and as a health-care consumer. Many measures have been taken at schools so it can guarantee a satisfactory nutritional intake for schoolchildren, independent of their circumstances at home, that could have an impact also in their adult life.

IMPORTANCE OF THE CLIMATE

In a number of studies, it is tried to understand the reasons for discrepancies in uptake of the PDO/PGI scheme in different EU countries, and more specifically, in understanding why most registrations are taking place in southern EU countries.

There is a wide variation in the level of usage of GI protection measures across the EU Member States, and the fact that the products registered are concentrated in Southern Europe²¹. They suggest that it may be due to climate and weather. Temperate climates in Southern European countries mean that products tend to be heavily agricultural and are more likely to be harvested, produced and prepared locally. In Northern European countries because of more severe weather there are producing less products and thus more likely to deal in finished products¹⁰.

THE EXPERIENCE OF APPELLATION OF ORIGIN

Most researchers tend to explain the different rates of usage by pointing to differing legal and administrative set-ups, and differing traditions of protecting food products under various types of laws. For example, some suggest that as northern and eastern European countries lack a tradition of protecting appellations of origin, they lag behind the EU Regulation system. The north-south is divided within the EU in terms of the number of names protected, as reflected by the fact that the countries with a long experience of protection of appellations of origin²² (France, Italy, Spain, Portugal) are the one that have the most of products registered¹⁰.

PERCEPTION BY CONSUMERS

The certification could be a good tool for Sweden as it exists in other countries in Europe and it is a guarantee of quality. But it would be interesting to wonder if the schemes are really well-known by consumers.

Apparently consumer awareness of PDOs/PGIs is growing^{23, 24} but they suffer from relatively weak spontaneous consumer recognition. National schemes and symbols (AOC in France and producer consortia marks in Italy) are better recognized than PDOs/PGIs because they are more established and are more familiar to consumers.

A consumer survey, administered across all 27 Member States to the person responsible for all of the household shopping, shows that recognition of the symbols for PDO and PGI is low in EU27 Member States: just 8% of main shoppers recognized any of the PDO or PGI symbols. We can wonder if the level of recognition is linked to the number of PDO/PGI registration. Having a look at France, it is possible to notice that even with a high number of PDO/PGI (157 in 2008) the recognition is of 4%, almost like in Sweden (3%) that just has 2 PDO/PGI¹⁰.

As mentioned, the case of France can be explained by the fact that consumers are more familiar with the national quality symbols which have been in place for a long time in the country.

WORK IN SWEDEN ABOUT PDO/PGI

COULD IT BE EFFICIENT?

A preliminary reflection about geographical origin designations in Sweden has been done in 2012²⁵. The aim is to describe how PDO, PGI and TSG are used to create rural development in European countries and the report also includes a concluding reflection about the implementation and the role of the certifications in the realization of “Sweden – the new culinary food nation”.

DISADVANTAGES

It has been shown that it is the lack of experience and knowledge, rather than inability or lack of opportunities that has led Sweden not to be able to take advantage of these certifications in the same way as other EU countries.

According to Joakim Larsson, that has worked with the PGI certification of Svecia, Livsmedelsverket (NFA) has, devoted substantial resources to inform the public and build knowledge about other certifications as Nyckelhålet but it has not been the same in PDO and PGI cases. The Swedish strategy has, among other things, emphasized the importance of meeting the environmental sustainability goal. It is characterized by product labels which guarantee quality and food safety as well as care for the environment. NFA service is dedicated to a numerous of labels as in comparison to France that has a whole authority, the INAO only devote to it. In addition to about 300 full-time employees, there are five national committees composed of laymen and experts.

As we have seen before, one other concern about PDO/PGI in Sweden is that the certification means that producers who do not qualify or do not exist within the specified geographical production area cannot use the certification. This can be classed as a barrier to competition.

AVANTAGES

Larsson points out that the main advantage of Svecia PGI certification is that there are no more competing imports, since the certification has a strong legal effect. Thus the European schemes could help the export of Swedish food since it is known in other EU countries. He also thinks that there is a need for the public to be more aware about these but also, and mostly, producers in the primary stage as they do not know that it can be an option for the domestic market and for export.

The application of PDO and PGI could contribute to an increased homogenization by Swedish producers as they use the same standard as their counterparts in Europe. The fact that more and more Swedish restaurants have Michelin stars is probably something that can facilitate to strengthen the market position and competitiveness of Swedish traditional foodstuffs. The report also shows that value-adding activities both before and after the certification process is important to have a successful financial results.

A LIST OF FOOD PRODUCTS

A survey of the prevalence of traditional Swedish food and agricultural products linked to a particular geographical region has been conducted during 2014 by Jordbruksverket (the Agriculture Department), with the potential to be certified. 300 products have been chosen, with some that can be found in many regions, such as moose and cloudberries. There are also products that have a strong Swedish identity, but lack a direct link to a specific geographic area.

This list has been shortened to 100 products, by taking into account four criteria:

1. There are producers of the product in the geographical area
2. The product has been in production for at least 30 years
3. This product is not generic but can be linked to a specific geographical area
4. The product has no existing trademark protection

The next stage of the selection will be to examine whether the product has opportunities for increased sales and prices, if it can go on exports and have touristic potential. This will lead to a list of 20 products, or so, that could have the certification.

This work has been in the following of the target set by the government that Sweden, in 2020, will have tripled the number of protected Swedish products (in Europe there are over 1,200 PDO/PGI/TGS products registered)²⁶.

HOW STRENGTHENING A GASTRONOMIC REGION?

The three main ideas in this part have been given me by Kolleen Guy, specialist of the history of food and wine in Europe. She is the author of an award-winning book on the history of the champagne industry and numerous articles on food, wine, and history. She is currently a professor of modern European history at the University of Texas at San Antonio. These following thoughts are based on her current work looking at France and Italy.

In 'Gastronomiska Regioner' report is given a tool for the development of gastronomic regions, based on their work and observations, where it is possible to find the importance of the same following ideas.

IMPORTANCE OF THE COLLECTIVE

First, it is important that those involved in the industry or food production area (farmers, food makers, crafts people, etc.) must have a collective stake and agreement in what the key elements of production are, to have a clear goal and strategy. Professional associations and community practices (markets, festivals, etc.) are critical parts of that building of a collective history around food and production.

IMPORTANCE OF THE STATE

The state can play a critical role in promotion of regional food products through education in the schools (lessons in geography and history are particularly important) and the promotion of regional products in the market. Sometimes protections (such as the quality labeling schemes of the E.U.) are critical to the growth of the regional markets. The Italians have been masterful at using the E.U. quality labels to bolster their regional agricultural markets.

MORE THAN TASTE

Consumers need to see these regional foods and specialties as part of something bigger than simply taste. So, for example, they may see these products as part of their national culture or a part of an ecologically-friendly lifestyle. Often this type of promotion comes from taste professionals (chefs, writers, bloggers etc.). These three factors together, I would argue, have been very effective in developing successful regional agricultural markets. Without one or more of these factors, we see markets that are incompletely developed (as is the case, for example, in Mexico).

CONCLUSION

The objective of this report was to find out more about Swedish gastronomic regions, how they can be defined, developed and the work that has been done since. Based on the information of this study it is possible to draw a few conclusions: there is a real will, from many regions, to develop themselves, gaining more knowledge in their food culture to create added value. Gathering people to make them aware of unique products and everything that is going on in their county is an important point so that local consumers will be proud and able to sing products' praises.

One other thing that can have a real impact on gastronomic regions is labels, as a quality guarantee, and especially the EU schemes PDO/PGI. They have shown their efficiency in other countries where the products, under these certifications, have become region's symbols. But for that there is a need to find which the unique products are without forgetting the storytelling that is an essential part in a product success. There is also the need to have a support structure helping for the product's application and monitoring. But it could be also interesting that this structure promotes the schemes and communicate both to producers and consumers.

It would be a good start to have a global study with all Swedish producers, which have taken the schemes, about the impacts of it and if it has been helpful for their growth. In a master thesis about PDO/PGI and their significance for the growth of food industries in France and Sweden, two Swedish companies using PDO and TSG agreed to say that certification is good in the point of view of protection but they are not sure that they can reinforce their trademarks²⁷. Maybe a national scheme would create more value and would be less restrictive for producers. But as it has been talked with the committee board of Nordic Taste and Flavour Centre during my oral presentation, one issue is that Sweden does not have a high density of people and so, in regions as Norrbotten it appears to be hard to develop regional products to local consumers. Then it would maybe be interesting to promote products as a part of the Nordic region as it has been discussed during the workshop "The Nordic Region as a sustainable gastronomic region" in #NORDICFOOD2024 project, held in Copenhagen, where they explored the future of Nordic food as an element of the region's tourism and lifestyle²⁸.

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