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Traditional Mediterranean Durum Wheat-Based Food Products

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Durum wheat plays a major role on nutritional, cultural, economic and social development of the Mediterranean basin, where almost two-thirds of the worldwide annual durum wheat production is consumed. The specific features of durum wheat (glassy texture, amber color, high protein level, *etc.*) makes it suitable to undergo primary and secondary transformations leading to a lot of diverse food products such as pasta, couscous, bulgur, frekeh, a variety of breads and pastries. For manufacturing, artisanal and traditional production methods are widely practiced, however heavily under pressure due to the increasing importance of globally and industrially produced durum wheat products. The identification and description of culinary practices and know-how appear as essential prerequisites to the protection and valorization of culinary heritages as well as to the maintenance of employment, especially for SMEs and small-scale businesses in Mediterranean regions and countries. Such a study is developed within the frame of the European FP7 TRAFON project. The presentation will provide an overview of the traditional Mediterranean durum wheat-based food products and elucidate main processing steps to highlight similarities and differences between production characteristics and end-use properties. Three main categories of durum wheat-based food products will be described: (1) Products consumed in the form of grains (whole grains or coarse-ground grains), (2) Products made by agglomeration of semolina (associated with the maintenance of granular structure), and (3) Products made by formation of a dough obtained by addition of water to semolina, remilled semolina and/or durum wheat flour. Based on such a classification, this paper will discuss the main bottlenecks and levers to develop these traditional Mediterranean products.

Keywords: Durum wheat, Traditional foods, Artisanal manufacturing, Small-scale businesses