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Session 6

General session on localized agri-food systems in a changing world.

Convenor

Professor François Casabianca, INRA.

This general session on localized agri-food systems deals with a wide variety of topics such as:

- The potential of the SYAL approach to provide a vision of historical trajectories at local level
- Lock-in processes
- The analysis of territories and the localization (delocalization – relocalization) of activities
- The limits of supply chains approach.
- Innovation processes within SYAL situations, Knowledge systems and learning processes
- The role of territories as subsidiary level for Sustainable Development
- SYAL as its potential as social pillar for sustainable development.
- Technical and gastronomical cultures to be transmitted (how and by whom) to future generations.
- SYAL and solidarities in crisis time.

Sheep breeding system in Southern Albania between political transition and market integration

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Abstracts

The LAS (Localized Agri-food Systems) approach has been widely recognized as an efficient analytical framework to understand the organization and the functioning of agricultural and food production systems focusing on relationships between products, local societies and territories. In disadvantaged rural areas, in particular, it helps to understand industry activity concentration and spatial dynamics generated by food microenterprises, usually considered as backward, informal/ illegal and not competitive in the global market.

Our paper addresses the dynamics of sheep breeding and the dairy industry systems in a mountain area of Southern Albania (municipality of Vithkuq, Korça District), after the fall of communism in 1991 and the subsequent agrarian reform leading to very small farm holdings and land fragmentation. At the same time the massive out-migration of the active population in lowlands and abroad (mainly in neighboring Greece) still further degraded local socio-productive systems. Nevertheless, outcomes of the fieldwork research (diagnostic phase and field observation) show a tendency to increase in the herd size accompanied by some entrepreneurial farming and collective action initiatives aiming to improve farm productivity and market integration. The increasing demand for both dairy and meat products (due to the rapid growth of regional and urban markets) accompanied by the food safety standards at national and international level opens new perspectives for local communities to reinforce farming incomes and strengthen territorial added values through the improvement of livestock farming systems and a better valorization of their typical local products.

Drawing on the results of the field survey (semi-structured interviews with key-informants, questionnaires to breeders and dairy processors, available statistic data) the paper will focus on the following main points: a) the restructuring of traditional breeding systems generates

competition/ conflicts in grazing land use among breeders including transhumant herders from outside areas raising the question of the management of the community pastures, b) the establishment of a few modern small dairies (3 in number) that collect all milk production from the broader mountainous area, including isolated villages, reveals the constraints of oligopolistic conditions within the studied territory. Local dairies apply low producer prices discouraging stockbreeders to improve farming systems and milk quality standards; c) entrepreneurial dairy farming and collective action initiatives are spontaneous or unrelated to each other stemming from “up-down” and extraterritorial stakeholders (e.g. international consulting and development companies) missing of territorial development impacts.

Based on the LAS approach the main question to discuss is how to support stockbreeding farmers and actors involved in the dairy value chain to both improve sector productivity and activate territorial specificities (natural pastures, local adapted breeds, tacit knowledge, networks, etc) in a market integration perspective and better valorization of their local products.