

AgroBioCom: Valorisation of traditional landraces with focus on market access and communication and rural tourism

Workshop report: Bohinj, Slovenia, 4. - 7. June 2025

Arno Todt, Klemen Langus, Jana Vilmann, Ângela Abreu, Cristina Amaro da Costa, Sebastian Heynen, Eva Lehmann









September 2025
www.agrobiocom.eu

Co-funded by the European Union



Content

1. Introduction 3
1.1 Relevance of genetic resources, traditional landraces and loss of agrobiodiversity 3
1.2 Valorisation and sustainable use as a promising strategy for conservation 4
2. Communication and market access 5
2.1 Tools and experiences from practice 5
2.1.1 Branding and labelling 5
2.1.2 Bio-cultural heritage, storytelling and local identity 13
2.1.3 Direct selling: local farmer markets, fairs and festivals 15
3. Rural tourism and gastronomy of experiences 18
3.1 Tools and experiences from practice 19
3.1.1 Local restaurants and gastronomy 19
3.1.2 Experiences with traditional food processing and more 21
4. Fostering local landraces – further tools and activities 23
4.1 Tools and experiences from practice 23
4.1.1 Projects for preservation and valorization 23
4.1.2 Public funding for traditional landraces 25
5. Success factors 26
6. References 27

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Traditional crop varieties and livestock breeds are playing a crucial role in maintaining agrobiodiversity within European rural regions and they are important for ensuring agricultural stability and adaptability worldwide. However, the decline of traditional landraces, exacerbated by global trends and intensive farming practices, poses a significant threat to genetic diversity. The cultivation and sustainable use are vital for preserving these important elements of biodiversity and the resilience of many valuable ecosystem services. Coupled with sustainable valorization methods and connected to community-based short supply chains and food tourism, traditional landraces present substantial potential for a nature-positive revitalizing of rural economies, promoting local culinary traditions and strengthening regional identities, at the same time.

1. Introduction

1.1 Relevance of genetic resources, traditional landraces and loss of agrobiodiversity

Traditional crop varieties and livestock breeds are crucial components of biological and genetic diversity in European rural regions. Genetic resources represent a key form of natural capital essential for stability and adaptability in agriculture and rural development [1]. The challenge of sustainably producing more food with fewer inputs can only be addressed by ensuring easy access to the broadest possible diversity of plant genetic resources, which serve as sources of new traits [2].

Moreover, traditional landraces often provide valuable cultural services, such as the maintenance of local traditions, biocultural heritage, and regional identity, as well as regulating services like landscape and biodiversity management. Some of these landraces exhibit unique characteristics in terms of flavours, appearance, production traits or ingredients. New forms of rural entrepreneurship that leverage local breeds

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and varieties, such as in tourism and green care, are emerging and expanding in rural areas [3]. Traditional landraces can serve as important sources of income and help revitalize rural communities.

Unfortunately, the cultivation of landraces has dramatically declined across Europe in recent decades. Various global trends contribute to the erosion of genetic resources and the loss of genetic diversity, driven by a range of social, economic, and environmental factors. In particular, the introduction of high-yielding varieties and breeds has resulted in a significant reduction of traditional landraces and their diversity [4].

1.2 Valorisation and sustainable use as a promising strategy for conservation

The on-farm conservation and sustainable use of traditional landraces represent a promising strategy for safeguarding genetic resources [5]. The on-farm conservation of landraces is connected to a variety of factors. Beyond their bioclimatic adaptations [6], landraces are often maintained due to their cultural significance to farmers and local communities, as well as their unique characteristics, such as distinct flavours, ingredients, and uses in traditional dishes [7].

Many consumers perceive products made from landraces as being of higher quality than those produced using high-yielding varieties and are willing to pay a premium for such items [8]. For instance, products derived from “heritage breeds” and branded as regional specialties often command higher prices due to their unique taste and cultural identity [9]. Many regions and biosphere reserves are already using typical breeds and varieties in tourism marketing. These efforts support regional marketing channels for diversity products, strengthening regional food processing and value chains, including those tied to tourism and gastronomy [10]. With the rising preference for local food [3] and short food supply chains, it is essential to improve the enabling environment for the use of diverse genetic resources. This includes forming strategic alliances with tourism, and gastronomy. The sustainable use of traditional landraces also plays a valuable role in revitalizing regional traditions and cultural heritage. This can strengthen rural identity and support branding efforts in the competitive landscape of European tourist destinations.

In conclusion, the sustainable use of traditional landraces presents a synergistic opportunity with immense potential to create value for farmers, as well as rural entrepreneurs, and tourism. This approach contributes to the diversification of rural economies and the preservation of genetic resources, ensuring benefits for both people and the environment.

2. Communication and market access

To attract the attention of consumers and visitors, increased communication about the added values traditional landrace products is needed. Consumers need information about the additional values and the background stories of these products. Consumers should be well informed that by purchasing products made from traditional regional species, varieties, and breeds, they actively contribute to the preservation of genetic diversity. Only high-quality products with its added value, particularly those emphasizing cultural heritage and ecological benefits, can justify premium pricing to consumers.

Effective branding and compelling storytelling create a distinct identity, emphasizing unique qualities such as flavour, nutritional value, and cultural significance thereby enhancing consumer recognition and loyalty. Storytelling connects consumers to cultural narratives and historical context, evoking positive emotions and fostering brand loyalty. It also serves as an educational tool, informing consumers about product benefits and sustainable practices, and promoting awareness and sustainable consumption. Selling directly to consumers presents strong opportunities to communicate a clear product identity. Direct selling activities of producers at farm shops, farmers markets or food fairs with face-to-face communication offer good opportunities for communication [11]. In this perspective, cooperation activities with gastronomy can play another key role [12]. In these direct chains, information on the special characteristics of the products could be conveyed from producers to consumers and the information needs of consumers could also be brought to producers [13].

2.1 Tools and experiences from practice

2.1.1 Branding and labelling

Products from landraces can become particularly lucrative when associated with quality marks or labelling. Such labelling adds value by highlighting the quality and authenticity of the products, creating a secure market that sometimes allows producers to invest in long-term product development. On the other hand, traditional landraces as a bio-cultural heritage with its regional traditions supports branding efforts in the competitive landscape of European tourist destinations and the revitalizing of rural identity.

Territorial brand "BOHINJSKO/FROM BOHINJ"
www.bohinj.si/en/from-bohinj/

The regional brand "Bohinjsko / From Bohinj" was created following the "Izvorno slovensko" model (www.izvornoslovensko.si). It was the first collective trademark made using this model and has been working successfully since 2012. Other local brands in the Julian Alps region were developed in the same way, such as: Bled Local Selection, Kranjska Gora, Vrhunsko, From Dolina Soče. Across Slovenia, more local brands have followed this model, including: Srce Slovenije, Taste Laško, Sevnica Premium, Jeruzalem Slovenia, Our Finest Maribor, Brežice Selection, From Bela Krajina.

The owner of the brand is the Municipality of Bohinj, and it is managed by the Bohinj Tourism Institute. Products and services get the right to use the brand once they receive a certificate of quality and geographical origin. Providers can receive a Bohinjsko/from Bohinj Certificate for culinary products, dishes and drinks served in gastronomy, handcrafted products and products in contemporary design, guided experiences, accommodations, and events. On a higher level, they can also receive the title "House of Culinary", "House of Wine" or "Open Door Workshop".



The certification system includes evaluation by external experts, based on clearly defined forms with specific criteria for each product or service category. This model allows the creation of a verified register of providers and a list of high-quality products, which are promoted through Bohinj Tourism channels. The criteria also require that products have appropriate visual labelling, technical and gift packaging, and a story that explains their uniqueness.

Once the product is certified, the provider adds the "From Bohinj – Bohinjsko" quality label to the product and uses their own visual identity for the rest. For certified products and brand partners, joint promotional activities are available. These include:

- promotional leaflets and packages with the brand's graphic design,
- participation in networking events,

- inclusion on the destination's website and online shop,
- and other direct promotional activities.

Currently there are 200 culinary products, 70 dishes and drinks at 12 inns, 130 artisan products and industrial design products, 35 guided experiences and 6 accommodation providers.



The „Bohinjsko/From Bohinj" regional collective brand is basing on the Bohinj Agricultural Development Strategy 2021 - 2030 that is focussing on producing quality food, maintaining rural identity, preserving nature cooperation in food chain, preserving the identity of the mountains, integrating farms into the tourist offer, co-existence of agriculture and tourism, knowledge and digitalization, preserving forestry.

The Bohinj region in the Slovenian Alps is going to establish a pilot area for the production of crops and vegetables, and expansion of production within the existing areas of vegetables.

Bohinj Trdinka corn

The traditional local Trdinka" corn is an autochthonous variety from Bohinj that differs from others in appearance, as its kernels are multi-coloured from yellow, orange to dark red and almost black. Once upon a time, Trdinka corn was an important part of the daily diet. Today, the cultivation of Bohinj Trdinka corn is being promoted by Bohinj Tourism. This local variety does not tolerate artificial fertilisers, which is why farmers stopped growing it in the past. It has been preserved only because local people continued planting it for their own needs.



As part of the agriculture development strategy and preservation of old varieties, the cultivation of Trdinka corn is now supported. The kernels are milled together with the husks into coarsely ground corn flour. It is most often used as a raw material for preparing the traditional Bohinj žganci (corn mush) or as an addition to modern culinary creations by local chefs. Some known dishes include: trout coated in Trdinka cornmeal, cottage cheese

soup with Trdinka corn, pudding made from Trdinka cornmeal. You can experience this local tradition as part of the guided experience with local host Marija Žvan, titled "Bohinj Corn (Turšca) – From Grain to Žganci", which presents the full process of cultivation and preparation.

Finally, to sharpen the profile of the branding, support biodiversity and giving new impulses for gastronomy the network group is organising the promotion of meat from the Cika cattle, known as “cikasto govedo" in Slovenian, that is the only preserved autochthonous Slovenian cattle breed originating from the Bohinj region.

Territorial collective brand “Soča Valley Finest”
www.soca-valley.com/sl/navdih/certifikat-iz-doline-soce/certifikat-kakovosti/

The territorial brand "Soča Valley Finest" was created according to the same “Izvorno slovensko” model (www.izvornoslovensko.si), just like the brand “Bohinjsko / From Bohinj”. It was established in 2020 and is part of the regional collective brands across Slovenia.

The Soča River region brought together its providers under the “Dolina Soče” (“Soča Valley”) collective brand which also connects organic farmers, food producers, craftsmen and others through its corporate identity and activities.

The “Dolina Soče” branding is a destination-led initiative supporting local producers through cooperation, marketing, and the promotion of the regional identity label. It wants to promote high quality, and a compelling story with an attractive design. That means the improvement of quality at all stages of the supply chains.



The initiative has built up a network of 60 providers with 200 products and services of producers, shops, and institutions especially from the sector of Hotels, Restaurants, and Catering businesses.

The network has a documented certification system and offers the providers comprehensive visual design and packaging, individual training and consulting, presentation on destination website, other online promotion, professional photo and video material, sales in the tourist offices, participation in fairs and

other promotional events. These activities contribute to a relevant increase of value and reputation through the certificate and presentation that facilitate new positions at the points of sale with better value creation.

The Soča Valley Finest brand certificate was also awarded to Planika Dairy and the Faronika Fish Farm, who developed innovative local products, such as fish spread with chunks of smoked trout from Soča trout (Salmo trutta marmoratus) and Tolmin cottage cheese from the Planika Dairy. This Salmon spreads were voted online as the best food product in the 2020 competition by the readers of Finance and the Agrobiznis portal.

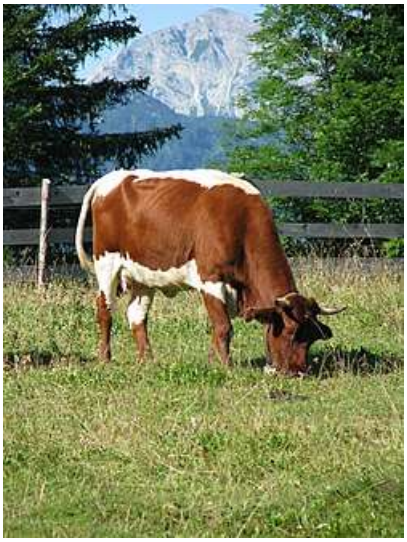
In the Soča River and its tributaries lives the Soča trout (Salmo trutta marmoratus), which has survived by chance in a small stream. The Tolmin Fishing Club is actively breeding it in fish farms and reintroducing it into the Soča river system, where it has already started to reproduce.

Planika Dairy and Cheese-Making
https://www.mlekarna-planika.si/

The Planika Diary in Kobarid is not only part of the „Soča Valley finest" certification and branding scheme but its Tolminc cheese has the label EU Protected Designation of Origin (PDO), too. In 1995 the Tolmin Agricultural Cooperative took over its own Mlekarna Planika. They decided to receive the milk only from cows grazing on the farms in the hilly areas in the Soča River Valley and the Idrijca River Valley. Today, for many of the small farms and families Planika Dairy is the only way to be able to sustain milk production and to keep the Soča Valley with its mountains cultivated.

Bohinj Cika cattle breed

With the local nature landscape and farmers oriented background Planika Diary has very good conditions to be different from other, established Slovenian dairies. A futher other opportunity to differentiate is receiving the milk and making cheese with the Cika cattle, that is well adapted to grazing in steep mountainous pastures, and to develop and communicate cattle breed (biodiversity) preserving products.



Cika cattle, known as “cikasto govedo" in Slovenian, is the only preserved autochthonous Slovenian cattle breed. Originating from the Bohinj region, this breed is closely associated with alpine dairy farming. After World War II, the population of Cika cattle

began to decline due to replacement by other breeds, bringing the breed to the brink of extinction two decades ago. Today, Cika cattle is more a dual-purpose breed with an emphasis on milk production. On around 1,000 farms throughout Slovenia Cika cattle can be found with the highest concentrations in this Central Slovenia. Despite their numbers, Cika cattle breed is considered a vulnerable breed.

Soča Valley Cheese Trail
http://www.tastycheesetour.eu/soca-valley-cheese-trails/

But in Soča Valley there are still some small farms with small-scale cheese dairy that produce Tolminc cheese and Bovec sheep milk cheese, e. g. "Pri Lovrču" in Čadrg, a village of only 40 inhabitants within the Triglav National Park. The “tasty cheese tour” project has brought together these small produces to foster economic dynamism by creation of a new tourism product and saving cultural heritage of cheese making in the mountain areas. The cheese trails offer unique experiences with the mountain delicacies and the life and work of the Soča Valley cheese-makers.



The Bovec sheep breed

The Bovec sheep (Slovene: bovška ovca) is a breed from the upper valley of the Soča or Isonzo river in Slovenia. It is raised in the Soča valley in Slovenia, in the areas of Resia and Tarvisio in Friuli in Italy, and in Styria and Carinthia in Austria. The breed is raised for milk and for meat. In 2012 a population in Slovenia was of about 2000 animals. In Austria this breed is named as Krainer Steinschaf and has a population of about 3000 animals in 2012.



Labelling in Municipality S. Pedro do Sul

The Portuguese centre sub-region of Viseu-Dão-Lafões has developed a labelling to highlight the identity of products and the local context of vegetables and fruits produced by the local farmers. The label shall contribute to the consumption of local and seasonal products and incentive local economy and also a territorial food identity. The municipality of S. Pedro do Sul has adapted the labelling for products offered at the local S. Pedro do Sul market. Farmers of the district can use this simple but efficient branding to give their products more identity. The approach supports local food production and short food supply chain at a consumers point of sale.



The Middle-Rhine Cherries brand

https://www.welterbe-mittelrheintal.de/mittelrhein-kirschen

Cherry cultivation is a defining feature of the UNESCO World Heritage region of the "Upper Middle Rhine Valley," in Germany where the cherry variety is celebrated as both a cultural and natural asset. Regional traditions and stories are intertwined with ancient varieties such as the "Perle von Filsen," "Bopparder Krächer," and "Geisepitter." Tourists from around the globe flock to the Upper Middle Rhine Valley during the cherry blossom season. The Rural Area Service Centre and the regional World Heritage Association developed a concept to preserve and promote this diversity of cherry varieties. They assumed the role of coordinating efforts between producers and processors under the Middle-Rhine Cherries brand. A wide range of cherry products — including jam, juice, chocolate, mustard, and wine — is offered to tourist outlets and restaurants. As tourism grows, there is increasing demand for seasonal fresh cherries from regional varieties, and producers are beginning to recognize the economic opportunities of cultivating these ancient cherry types leading to the extensive use and preservation of ecologically valuable orchards [14].



EU geographical indication and quality schemes

Approximately 30 years ago, the European Union introduced its agricultural product quality policy, which includes the protection of geographical indications (GIs) for

agricultural products and foodstuffs. This policy aims to emphasize the quality and unique characteristics of products tied to specific origins. From a socio-cultural perspective, GI-labelled products symbolize the distinct environmental and cultural identity of a region, blending natural resources with traditional production methods. This labelling has attracted consumer attention to the local and cultural heritage of various regions, often tied to handicrafts, gastronomy, and rural tourism [15]. The success of GI-labeled products indicates a strong consumer interest in items reflecting environmental and social values, encouraging many producers to position their products to appeal to this demand.

The label "Protected geographical indication" (PGI) emphasises the relationship between the specific geographic region and the name of the product, where a particular quality, reputation or other characteristic is essentially attributable to its geographical origin.

Products: food, agricultural products and wines.

Specifications: For most products, at least one of the stages of production, processing or preparation takes place in the region. In the case of wine, this means that at least 85% of the grapes used have to come exclusively from the geographical area where the wine is actually made.

Example: "Westfälischer Knochenschinken" PGI ham is produced in Westphalia using age-old techniques, but the meat used does not exclusively come from animals born and reared in that specific region of Germany.

Product names registered as "Protected designation of origin" (PDO) are those that have the strongest links to the place in which they are made.

Products: food, agricultural products and wines.

Specifications: Every part of the production, processing and preparation process must take place in the specific region. For wines, this means that the grapes have to come exclusively from the geographical area where the wine is made.

Example: Kalamata olive oil PDO is entirely produced in the region of Kalamata in Greece, using olive varieties from that area.

2.1.2 Bio-cultural heritage, storytelling and local identity

Effective branding and communication need trustable stories and significant cultural background that evoking positive emotions, recognition and fostering brand loyalty. Storytelling connects consumers to cultural narratives and historical context. Often, traditional landraces and its products offer an impressive local context or are a rural cultural or bio-cultural heritage as a part of local history and identity of the people.

The sustainable use of traditional landraces and its branding and communication can play a valuable role in revitalizing rural traditions and cultural heritage. This strengthening rural identity and support branding efforts in the competitive landscape of European tourist destinations.

The 'Tepka' pear variety in the village of Zasip

A very impressive example is the successful case of preserving the traditional pear variety Tepka with its cultural history in the village of Zasip in the region of Bled and its integration into local culinary practices.



In the 18th century Habsburg Empress Maria Theresa wanted to reduce a famine by planting crops, particularly in poor areas; one of the approaches were planting Tepka pear trees. The area around Bled and Zasip was so poor that all they had was the harvest of pears, and the innovative locals had to come up with many ways to use them. In this history Zasip became the centre for preparing a huge variety of dishes based on this very special type of pear. These high-stem orchard pears are not consumed fresh but are processed into pear brandy, dried for use as flour or stuffing, or cooked into compotes. The pear orchards also contribute to the preservation of the region's cultural landscape.

Bojana Pipan the grandmother of cooking with prga flour
www.bled.si/en/what-to-see-do/bled-local-selection/offer/2023091112461766/dried-pear-flour/

When it is dried it becomes “Prga”, that is used in a huge variety of tasty dishes and sweets and have found its way into high gastronomy of the Julian Alp region. And, the dried pears are grinding into a powder that can be used instead of wheat flour. Bread is baked from it, as are a variety of pastries. Bojana Pipan from Zasip is not only grandmother of cooking with Prga flour, but she organises the collective harvesting and drying of 'Tepka' pear with the still 20 farmers that are owning the old pear orchards.



The Trglav farm with pear schnapps “Tepkovec”
https://www.bled.si/en/what-to-see-do/bled-local-selection/offer/2020012012141792/tr-glav-tepkovec-brandy/

Another good example of successful preserving and using the traditional Tepka pear variety is the local production of Tepkovec, schnapps made of fermented and distilled pears. The Trglav family farm is just some hundred meters from the centre of Zasip, where Andreja Pogačar produces the high-quality pear brandy and liqueurs based on long-standing tradition. But is not only Tepkovec the family is producing. They have more than thirty different flavours of schnapps, from traditional versions like Smrekovec that is flavoured with soft, young spruce tips.



S. Pedro do Sul - Beans Capital of Portugal

The centre region of Portugal and especially the mountainous area around S. Pedro do Sul, is famous for the huge tradition and variety of beans. With about 25 bean varieties, this territory held this important genetic heritage and has been working to keep it. Two seed collections were made, one in 2014, "Agriculture and rural development: biodiversity and health promotion" [16], and another in 2023, "Among beans and other species from the orchards of S. Pedro do Sul" [17], provided information about the varieties produced and production sites. The collection and care are special traditions of women's work. Sample boxes of beans are already showcased in the local tourist office.



Since 2014 the municipality of S. Pedro do Sul organizes a yearly beans festival and fair in cooperation with local producers, gastronomy and tourism. In this festival there are beans from 20 producers, who can't come to the fair (age, distance). For this reason, the municipality collects the beans and sells it at the fair. Before the festival the producers are encouraged to produce and receive a monetary support for producing the beans. In 2025, five varieties of beans were identified as at risk of not having seeds and five farmers were recruited to produce it and then offer a portion for seed.

2.1.3 Direct selling: local farmer markets, fairs and festivals

Selling directly to consumers offers very good opportunities to communicate the a very special history and quality of local products from traditional landraces and their product identity. Developing opportunities and occasions of direct personal contact provide not only points of communication and selling but can creates unforgettable experiences for consumers and visitors at the same time. Farm shops and farmer markets as well as food fairs and rural village festivals provide very good possibilities for face-to-face contact, communication and experiences. In this perspective, cooperation activities with gastronomy can play another key role [12].

Local farmer markets and fairs

Nature market of biosphere reserve Upper Lusatia

Since 1998 at the Upper Lusatian Heath and Pond Landscape Biosphere Reserve Centre, twice a year, the nature markets take place. There is a special focus on taking into the Sorbian culture and actors account, an autochthonous minority of people, that is with rich traditions, art and own language with deep roots in Upper Lusatia. High-quality, healthy, and beautiful products from the region are offered. Personal contact with the producers makes it possible to find out directly about the origin, production method and quality of the products. Smaller agricultural and craft businesses in particular can present their regionally typical and environmentally friendly production at the markets. Regional restaurateurs, bakeries and butchers as well as farm shops of agricultural and pond farms offer a diverse culinary spectrum from fish products to goat's cheese and venison sausages.



Other market events of the project partners

Similar market events are realised successfully in the Slovenian Biosphere region. Local producers who have been awarded certificates under territorial brands have priority for market stalls. Stalls with local products are part of every event, and on selected days, they are also present at local markets. In the Croatian tourism region of Bura/Zadar the municipality realises a local fair every day during the tourist season. For local farmers the participation with stalls is free of charge. Traditional varieties of figs are typical for that region. Special fig cakes and a fig coffee are presented and sold as innovative products. During the tourist summer boat show an olive oil award with different local olive varieties is rising public awareness for crops diversity.

B2B fairs

Turizem Bohinj in the Slovenian Alps Biosphere Reserve is going to organise business to business events. They shall enable better local connections between farmers, restaurants, hotels and other local producers to improve local cooperation and a short food supply chain in the region.

Local food festivals

A calendar of rural food festivals in Portugal



In the region around S. Pedro do Sul, Portugal, there is a large number of food festivals, with relation to the traditional landraces of cattle, with beans, chestnuts, oranges and other. Livestock and crops play an important role in the rural life and local identity. The municipality, farmers and other producers, as well as restaurants, tourism and thermal baths are working close together. The Municipality is managing the calendar of yearly events like Festa da Castanha e do Mel (chestnut and honey festival); Feira dos Saberes e Sabores (small fruits fair); Festa da Laranja (orange festival); Festa da Vitela (veal festival); Vila Maior - Aldeia Bio (Vila Maior - organic village).

In addition, the festivals offer local people and tourists very interesting occasions to come together for celebration and good experiences, and tasting and buying products.



Here you can watch an impressive video on Festa da vitela with the traditional Arouquesa cattle breed. https://youtu.be/aZNItFNJ3j0.
Arouquesa is a traditional triple-purpose-cattle, that is adapted to the mountains. In Portugal they still work as draught cattle. But today most times mother cow husbandry is practiced. In 1902 Arouquesa beef was the winner of the "Award for the Best Beef" in Paris. Beef from cattle reared by traditional methods within a specified area of central Portugal has “Protected designation of origin” status and may be marketed as Carne Arouquesa DOP.

“Frika” traditional farmer's and culinary festival in Soča Valley
https://www.soca-valley.com/en/in-search-of-adventure/traditional-events/frikafest/

In Tolmin in the Soča Valley of Slovenian Biosphere region the Frika Festival in mid of October marks the symbolic return of shepherds with Cika cattle from the high



mountain pastures, where they churned milk in small communities on the mountains all summer, while the cattle munched on the best vegetation between the Alps and the Mediterranean. The people of Tolmin combined the traditional Farmer's Festival with the festival of the Soča Valley culinary delicacy “Frika”, and created the “Frika Fest”. At the two-day event, where everybody can taste and buy unique cheeses from the Soča Valley, with Tolminc cheese at the forefront.

Living rural traditional food festival in Croatia

In the rural hinterland of the Croatian tourism region of Bura/Zadar once a time in the year in August the village Zelengrad of 60 local inhabitants celebrates a big rural festival. About 3.000 people come together every year for traditional bread and cheese for free. Together with a traditional goat competition race and row pulling competitions such traditional food event makes the rural village a living experience.

3. Rural tourism and gastronomy of experiences

There are various important synergies between the conservation and of traditional local landraces through valorisation and a regenerative, rural food tourism. Such community-based activities as local famer markets, local fairs and food festivals can serve as authentic local experiences for visitors. Besides that, these activities offer effective market access for valorisation of products with traditional local varieties and landraces, not only reaching tourist but local people, at the same time.

Further, traditional local landraces, seen as a kind of food biodiversity, can be a key component of rich and diverse gastronomy, providing restaurants with the chance to work with lesser-known varieties with locally grounded authentic history, that allows to differentiate from other offerings at the market. It provides gastronomy with valuable opportunities to promote local cuisines and traditions and fostering authentic experiences rooted in local cultural identity [18].

The idea of rural food tourism that allows to “taste of place in order to get a sense of place” follows the broader idea of "food experience" and should be considered with a focus on the potential of local contexts [19]. Local food is an integral part of a community's heritage, reflecting the lifestyle and cultural essence of the people, passed down through generations. It is increasingly recognized as a powerful tool for

destination development [20]. Local food in the context of regenerative rural tourism has the potential to promote local entrepreneurship and create opportunities through increased tourist spending. Food tourism which emphasis interaction with local residents (community-based tourism) and authentic cultural experiences, is emerging as growing trends among European tourists [21, 22.]

3.1 Tools and experiences from practice

3.1.1 Local restaurants and gastronomy

Various restaurants in the AgroBioCom partner regions took over local traditional landraces and food, partly adapted to a modern culinary, and adapted their offers to authentic individual styles. The development is basing on high quality of products and direct cooperation with local farmers and local rural tourism activities. Often the particularity and quality of the products and the authentic additional values are presented in the menu cards; special dishes or menus with the traditional landraces and local food are offered to the guests.

Restaurant Sunrose 7, Bohinjska Bistrica (Slovenia)
https://www.sunrose7.com/

Culinary heritage revitalisation of traditional landraces and varieties. Menus are showcasing a successful reactivation of traditional culinary culture in Bohinj. The first local chef is collaborating with Bohinj tourism organisation and is playing a key role in reviving the use of the indigenous corn variety “Trdinka” and “Mohant”, a local cheese with EU protected designation of origin.

Restaurant Kurej, Zasip (Slovenia)
https://www.bled.si/sl/kaj-videti-poceti/kulinarika/gostinski-obrati/2022030315363884/gostilna-kurej/

The restaurant is located in the village of Zasip with long history of cultivation and use of Tepka pears. They are offering tasting menus featuring dishes made with Tepka pears, illustrating best practices in linking local producers with the gastronomic offer.

Hiša Linhart, Radovljica (Slovenia)
https://www.hisalinhart.si/

This inn is part of a wider local effort to connect food producers, chefs, and the community in Radovljica. It works with local suppliers (like the Radol’ca market), participates in culinary initiatives (such as Okusi Radol’ce), and supports food education through projects like Uroš Štefelin’s cooking school. Chef Uroš Štefelin, a key figure in this movement, has been awarded a Michelin star and a Green Star for sustainability. The kitchen combines traditional recipes with modern approaches,

helping to shape a new Slovenian cuisine. Special attention is given to preserving ingredients from the past, including traditional landraces, which are used to keep local food heritage alive for future generations.

Pri Hrvatu, Srednja vas (Slovenia)
https://www.bohinj.si/ponudnik/gostilna-pri-hrvatu/

Pri Hrvatu Inn is renowned for its house specialties, basing on local traditions with some local landraces. Famous are the “irovi štruklji” (cheese dumplings) prepared according to a traditional recipe, and trout served in two exceptional variations: Pijana Bohinjska postrv (drunken Bohinj trout) and trout coated in trdinka flour.

Os Amigos de Covas do Monte, Covas do Monte (Portugal)
pt.restaurantguru.com/Os-Amigos-de-Covas-do-Monte-Portugal/menu

A Associação dos Amigos de Covas do Monte owns more than 500 goats of a traditional local breed. In the restaurant they offer only one very traditional dish: goat meat slowly cooked in wood ovens for 5-10 hours with traditional potatoes or bread.

Somos aldeia, Rompecilha, São Pedro do Sul, (Portugal)
www.facebook.com/somosaldeia/

Somos aldeia is a small local food restaurant with many dished with traditional local varieties of feijoca beans and local vegetables and fruits. The connected traditional small grocery store offers various organic fruits and vegetables produced exclusively in the village, as well as local sausages and jams. Guests posted on social media: “SOMOS ALDEIA is a space with a little different character”.

Casa Arouquesa, Viseu (Portugal)
www.casaarouquesa.pt/

Casa Arouquesa offers only two dishes with the very good meat of that traditional cattle variety Arouquesa. In their presentation they are focusing on the high meat quality and meat flavours of this cattle variety and typical Portuguese food, salpicão and pataniscas, accompanying the meat dishes.

Tipico Do Mezio, Castro Daire (Portugal)
www.facebook.com/pages/Restaurante%20Tipico%20Do%20Mezio/2392884230937527/ ,

The restaurant Tipico Do Mezio is run by a local association and busy with traditional varieties of the typical Portuguese food salpicão, that is a meat stew with rice and the traditional feijoca beans. A living museum showcases traditional techniques of processing und textiles and products from the fields of the region.

Wjelbik, Bautzen (Germany)
https://www.wjelbik.de/sorbisches-restaurant-lausitz

The restaurant Wjelbik (small vault), is managed by a Sorbian family of the autochthonous minority, that is rich in traditions, art and own language with deep roots in Upper Lusatia region. Monika Lukasch/Mónika Lukašowa lives her Sorbianness comprehensively and tastily in the culinary delights in her restaurant, in her "work clothes", the Sorbian traditional costume, and often enough also as an unofficial city and Sorb ambassador in Bautzen/Budyšin. She offers not only special Sorbian menus like the "Sorbian Wedding Dinner", but also plans to serve dishes with meat from traditional local landraces, as well.

Bistro Biser and family farm Dedić, Maslenica (Croatia)
https://biser.hr/

Bistro “Biser” and family farm Dedić are owned by Vladimir and Darko Dedić. While the Bistro is located in Maslenica (Zadar county) the farm itself is located in another part of Croatia in Slavonia region (near Cernik). In 2013 the family decided to establish an OPG family farm with marketing the products in their own restaurant. The family cultivate a vineyard (Graševina), an orchard, an olive grove, and a vegetable garden. They also produce some of the cured meat products to offer in the restaurant. The primary goal of this type of business is to offer the guest something new and different, and local quality experiences that are unique and possible through the fresh farm product quality in the restaurant.

Pet Bunara, Zadar (Croatia)
https://petbunara.com/

“Pet Bunara” is striving for culinary excellence experience by using as much as possible in-season, locally-grown ingredients, including organic, sustainable meat, game, fish, poultry, vegetables and grains. They cultivate their own herb garden to provide the freshest ingredients possible as well as organic grown olive & fig yards. Constantly they are changing and adapting throughout the years, driven to be on the top of Zadar’s gastronomic scene.

3.1.2 Experiences with traditional food processing and more

Many tourists are seeking for lasting experience. Often traditional techniques and methods of harvesting and food processing are a part of the cultural heritage of rural regions. Sometimes these techniques are related to traditional varieties or breeds. Reviving the traditional techniques in interaction of visitors with local residents (community-based tourism) can offer authentic rural experiences that can come easily with rural food tourism and gastronomy.



Traditional rye harvesting in Covas do Monte (Portugal)



In the small Portuguese mountain village “Covas do Monte” close to S. Pedro do Sul visitors have the opportunity to participate in traditional rye harvesting events. Farmers let them cut and dry the grain using the old traditional techniques. The activity "Harvesting and building rye huts" took place in mid of June in Covas do Monte.

Wine harvesting and olive picking in Briševo (Croatia)



In the Croatian village of Briševo, just seven kilometres from Zadar the family farm Butić offers tourist tractor tours to their wine yards and olive orchards to participate in harvesting. Grape smashing with feet, as a part of traditional wine making, is offered, as well.

Truffle hunting in Istria (Croatia)



In the little rural village of Paladini the Karlić family offers tourists truffle hunting experiences with dogs on orchards that were infected with black truffles. Often guided tours with trained dogs take place in the forests of Istria, where the truffle hunters and their dogs search for both white and black truffles. Visitors can learn about truffle hunting techniques and the overall tradition of truffle hunting in the region and have the opportunity to taste truffle-infused dishes. Experiencing the beauty of nature and forest in particular is an additional value.

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International Wild Flower Festival in the Bohinj Alp region (Slovenia)

Every year in May and June the "International Wild Flower Festival" takes place at various locations in Bohinj Alps region, which comprises 24 villages and covers an area of more than 300 km². The festival is a composition of botanical tours, cultural events and culinary experiences dedicated to wild plants, the floral wealth of Bohinj and the local offers. The festival integrates wild nature and biodiversity as a regional image building factor into sustainable tourism development (1600 plant species, 72 wild orchids, 7000 animal species). The festival connects the local people and visitors in the concern for and recognition of biodiversity and the importance of preserving the protected area.



4. Fostering local landraces – further tools and activities

4.1 Tools and experiences from practice

Beside the discussed approaches of preservation of traditional local landraces through valorisation, other public funding and activities are existing to foster sustainable use and awareness of traditional crop varieties and livestock breed.

4.1.1 Projects for preservation and valorization

Testing of old grain varieties (incl. "Champagne Rye")

The German biosphere reserve in Upper Lusatia coordinates the examination of 10 ancient grain varieties facing climate changing dryness, better diversity of agriculture and development of a regional value chain of food. Part of the examination and testing are poppy, millet, emmer wheat and champagne rye. There are very successful results with champagne rye that is high dry resistant and can be cultivated



with very low input. The cultivation area in the biosphere reserve is approximately 150 hectares. A short regional value chain with farmers, mill, bakery and brewery and valuable products has been developed.

Preservation of the “Saxon Chicken”

Further, the Upper Lusatia biosphere reserve is coordinating the preservation of old domestic animal breeds. Together with the Schubert poultry farm the biosphere experts support the ancient breed of Saxon chicken and bring it back to Upper Lusatia. In former times Saxon chickens were used to be valued as very robust because of their insensitivity to the climate. Since the old breed lays fewer eggs than other breeds, it could no longer keep up in terms of performance over time. Today the breed as extremely rare and threatened with extinction. Registered breeding population 2016 was 680 animals (Germany). Within the project their number increased over 1000 animals in 2025. Marketing of meat and eggs works well at the local village people.



Preservation of the “Red Mountain Cattle”

Another project of the Upper Lusatia biosphere reserve refers to the traditional landrace of “Red Mountain Cattle”. In former times the breed served of three purposes: providing milk, beef and draught power. The biosphere experts increased the number of animals from four in 2013 to 60 in 2025. Current fields of action are construction slaughterhouse, marketing of meat and sausage, land care grazing in of special areas.



Preservation of the “Drežniška Goat”

In the Trigalv National National Park the management support the traditional local sheep and goat breeds and keeping in mind their importance for community identity, biodiversity preservation, and sustainable farming. An important example is the Drežnica Goat. That is named after the village



Drežnica, while some people call these goats Bovec goat. It is the only goat breed listed among Slovenian autochthonous, traditional breeds of domestic animals. Today the Drežnica goat is the most widespread on the area of its origin, mostly around Bovec and Drežnica, in Tolmin. There is thought to be between 880 and 900 goats of this breed, with population's trend being stable. Animals of this breed are middle-sized darker goats, that are being used both for production of milk and dairy products as well as obtaining goat meat.

4.1.2 Public funding for traditional landraces

Traditional landraces as a LEADER regions funding criteria

The LAG strategic plan of the European LEADER Region "Bura" close to Zadar in Croatia provides a program for investment in agricultural production and processing that contribute to improved economic sustainability and the quality of agricultural products. Farmers can receive project funding with an amount from 5.000 until 30.000 Euros. One of the central criteria of project selection is the use of traditional landraces. There are such traditional landrace projects funded, e. g. a farmer with Croatian autochthone goat breeds with 350 animals involved in land care and meat production.



Other examples from European rural regions

Another example of public funding for traditional livestock breeds comes from the Portuguese partner region of S. Pedro do Sul, where farmer can receice financial support for the birth of native breed cattle such as Arouquesa breed.

In the aera of crops the Croatian LEADER Region "Bura" gives traditional varieties of green olive trees to farmers and other local actors for free to increase the local diversity of this important crop species. Further, in villages of that region traditional fig tree varieties are planted for free, if local inhabitants take over the godfather-ship and care.



5. Success factors

A common vision and a common mindset

The development of a common strong idea, what is to do, to improve the community - supporting local entrepreneurship and preserving landscapes and cultural identity - needs a clear common vision where to go, coming from, who we are. That will bring the people together with one story and one identity. That common mindset means to become the power of one with the competence of many.

Cooperation

Cooperation is everything. To become one power with the competence of many you need integration and cooperation. Local farmers, millers, baker and brewers, restaurateurs and retailers pass the balls to each other and will playing in one team. The local actors know each other, recommend their products and offers to their customers, and exchange ideas and knowledge. Particularly important is close cooperative action of nature, tourism and farming for use and conservation of nature and landscape.

Communication and networking

There has to be a story of doing something good for nature, locality, personalities and identity that is communicated. Connecting and networking with the stakeholders means reaching hearts and heads and training one story and one identity. Communication and connecting offers opportunities for positive experiences internally and for visitors at the same time and it helps to create high-quality local products and services.

Coordination

Somebody must carry the idea. A good coordination helps integrating the various actors, particularly nature, tourism and farming in one vision and common activities. There are organisations that are able to building bridges as permanent partner and connector such as Biosphere reserves, municipalities or LEADER local action groups. Maintaining the local personal contacts is one of the challenges. It is a contribution to a strong local rural community.

Co-funded by
the European Union

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