

Cezar Ionut BICHESCU
Silvius STANCIU

“Dunărea de Jos” University of Galati, Romania

MADE IN ROMANIA. TRADITIONAL FOOD PRODUCTS

Case
Study

Keywords

Tradition,
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JEL Classification

D40, Q13

Abstract

Traditional food products represent a means of diversifying the food offer, while preserving the local identity, the traditions and the particularities of some communities. At the European level, the measures taken by the officials have led, in the last few years, to a significant increase of the traditional products' registration under the brands PDO, PGI or TSG. The encouragement of domestic traditional food production, offered by the Romanian authorities under the form of food products registration as traditional products or established Romanian recipe, materialized into almost 700 products which have been registered in the last few years. The national market of traditional products is characterised by a high degree of concentration, most registered products coming from only a few regions. Tradition in food production may represent a strategic advantage for Romanian production on a highly competitive national and European market, being still insufficiently exploited by local producers.

INTRODUCTION

Traditional production methods represent a means by which locally-made food products can stand out through certain recipes, which are in close connection to the tradition, history and particularities of the place as compared to conventional products, which are made at an industrial level and which are increasingly dependent on globalization, on the widespread use of food additives and on mass production. The location of traditional production is in a certain geographical area, which is recommended to be customized with the help of physical and administrative specifications.

The encouragement of traditional producers has lately become a policy promoted at the European level as a means of supporting small producers and of developing rural areas, from which most traditional products come, previously in substantially similar form or with substantially similar content.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

The information regarding traditional products and established Romanian recipes, registered nationally, were collected from the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development's (MARD) database. For the tradition certification systems at a European level, the European Commission's (EC) DOOR database was used. The collected data was organised, statistically processed, graphically represented and interpreted. In order to assess the market concentration degree, we used the method recommended by Săvoiu, Crăciuneanu and Țaicu (2010), and we calculated the values taken by the Gini-Struck Index (GSI) for traditional Romanian products and for established Romanian products.

THE EUROPEAN CONTEXT. RELEVANT EUROPEAN LEGISLATION

The EU 1151/2012 regulation is specifically drawn up for the European market, which deals with an increase in quality food products (traditional products included), while maintaining a diversity of agricultural and food production and a fair competition. This situation generates the need for agricultural and food products with identifiable characteristics, especially regarding their tradition and their geographical origin. As far as producers are concerned, covering the demand from the market involves new production efforts in order to diversify the range of products and to increase the information capacity of consumers regarding the characteristics of the analyzed products. The

implementation of some systems, which certify the originality and the quality of the products offered by traditional producers, may be beneficial for rural economy, if there is an appropriate reward for the production and promotion efforts. Consequently, the quality systems for traditional products can supplement the population's income and can also contribute to the rural development European politics. These methods used to stimulate producers are valid especially in the case of less favoured areas, in the mountain areas or in the outermost regions, in which the agriculture is an important part of economy and in which production costs are high in comparison with other production areas. The European agriculture and food market strategies intended to support the income of small farmers or producers, especially in the regions in which agriculture plays an important role and in the less favoured areas, are part of the common agriculture policy objectives.

According to the above-mentioned regulation, at a European level, there has been established a system, based on quality labels, which could help small producers of agriculture and food products from a certain geographical area, by ensuring a fair return, in relation to the quality of the offered products. The quality label designation provides uniform protection, under the form of intellectual property on the territory of the EU and a clear information of consumers regarding the properties of the product which offers a certain added value.

The EU 1151/2012 regulation specifies the terms, the protected designation of origin (PDO) definition and the protected geographical indication (PGI), as well as the establishment of the Unique European Register of protected designation of origin products and of protected geographical indications (DOOR), which is available to the public on the EC site. In addition, a quality system specific to traditional specialty guaranteed (GTS), intended to protect the production methods and traditional methods, has been put in place. The European Union supports the traditional food product producers in the marketing and information activities of consumers regarding some particular properties of products, which offer an added value to traditional recipes and products. The GTS products are registered in the Traditional Specialty Guaranteed Register, which is part of the DOOR register. Once registered at a European level, the traditional recipe ensures a protection which is similar to that offered at a national level by the State Office for Inventions and Trademarks, guaranteeing intellectual property rights to the owners. The unauthorized usage of the European quality logos for traditional products (table 1) may lead to law suits and to the payment of important material damages.

At an international level, too, geographical indications represent a category of intellectual

property rights. According to the World Trade Organization, TRIPs Agreement (WTO, 2014), Geographical Indications are indications which identify a good as originating in the territory of a WTO Member, in a region or locality in that territory, where a given quality, reputation or other characteristic of the good is essentially attributable to its geographical origin.

European certification of tradition in the agriculture and food production by means of quality logos represents a guarantee for the consumer and a means of protecting the respective name and the product recipe. Thus, food products with specific traits or with certain particular properties, which are due to traditional production methods or to their belonging to certain geographical regions, can receive the European quality logo for traditional products, in the variants PDO, PGI or TSG. Tradition in food production is supported at a European level because it may represent an important source of income for craftsmen and a means of economic growth for the less favoured rural areas (Stanciu, 2014a).

According to the EC data (2017), in 2017, there were 1,388 European traditional products protected by means of the quality labels PDO, PGI or TSG registered in the DOOR database, a growing number as compared to previous years (Stanciu, 2014b). The distribution of European traditional products is dominated by PGI, which, with 711 allotted products, represents more than half of the products registered at European level (figure 1). Traditional specialty guaranteed are the fewest, with only 55 products registered in DOOR.

NATIONAL LEGISLATION

The negotiations for Romania's European integration led to a compliance of national legislation with that of the EU and to the implementation of some new rules regarding the registration of traditional food products in Romania. Thus, after a period in which the registration of traditional products flourished, reaching a number of 4,402 products registered at MARD, with a record level of 1050 traditional foods (table 1), followed by a sharp decline, due to the legislative modifications and to the correlation of the European certification system (Stanciu, 2014a). A decrease in the number of the traditional meat products certified in 2013 could also be explained by the influence of horse meat scandal in the Romanian sector of meat (Stanciu et al, 2013).

Although there is a certain continuity and tradition in making food on the national territory, Romania is characterized by a small number of protected products which are registered in the DOOR European database. Thus, by 2017, local food producers have registered only two products with

the logo PGI, i.e. the Salam de Sibiu (The Sibiu Salami) (Class 1.2. Meat products - cooked, salted, smoked, etc.), which obtained the certification in 2016 and the Magiun de Topoloveni (The Topoloveni jam) (Class 1.6. Fruit, vegetables and cereals fresh or processed), registered at a European level in 2011. The Telemea de Ibănești (The Ibănești Cheese) (Class 1.3. Cheeses) is the only Romanian product that obtained the PDO label. With only three registered products, out of a total of 1388 protected products at the European level, at the beginning of 2017, Romania occupies an insignificant position in the domain European foodstuff logos (European Commission, 2017).

The smoked bighead carp from Țara Bârsei (Class 1.7. Fresh fish, molluscs, crustaceans and products derivate therefrom) or the Pleșcoi sausages (Class 1.2. Meat products - cooked, salted, smoked, etc.) are currently pending European certification for PDO and PGI and PGI, respectively (MARD, 2017). There isn't any Romanian product from the category Traditional Specialty Guaranteed registered in DOOR.

Local small producers begin to realize the importance of certifying traditional recipes at a European level, the fear of association being overcome in the case of the three certified Romanian traditional products. According to the regulations in force drawn up by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development MARD, the section Food industry, the legislation referring to the tradition of national food products specifies the certification of the European quality systems in the traditional product domain (PDO, PGI, TSG), to which there is added, only at the level of Romania, of two categories of products: traditional food products and established Romanian recipes (MARD, 2017). Therefore, in addition to the European certification mechanism, which is complex and lengthy, local producers have the option to apply for the certification offered by the MARD and for the registration in the National Registry of Traditional Products (NRTP) and in the National Registry of Established Recipes (NRER). The national certification system supports local producers to obtain the national certification more easily, fact which prepares the Romanian products for the European certification. There is a difference between the notion of nationally certified traditional product and the protection of the product at a European level. The Romanian traditional product is certified on the territory of Romania, by obtaining the certificate of traditional product or of established recipe, as a consequence of the MARD certification, but for the European protection it is necessary to obtain the certification of the product's traditional character at a European level.

NATIONALLY CERTIFIED TRADITIONAL ROMANIAN PRODUCTS

National definitions refer to the application of the European legislation at a national level. Thus, traditional products are foods which are made on national territory, for which local ingredients are used and which do not have food additives in their composition. The ingredients used for making the traditional product must be produced in a certain area on the national territory. The traditional product presents a traditional recipe, a method of production and/or processing and a traditional technological procedure, being different from other similar products belonging to the same category (The Joint Order of Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, Ministry of Health and the National Consumer Protection Authority, 2013). According to MARD (2013), The Joint Order 724/2013 repealed the Order of the Minister of Agriculture, Forests and Rural Development no. 690/2004 for approving the rules on the conditions and criteria for certifying traditional products, published in the Official Gazette of Romania, Part I no. 938 of 14 October 2004.

Since 11th of November 2013, all Romanian traditional products must obtain the certificate of tradition. Thus, the tradition conditions must comply with the specifications written in a national task book, in which reference is made to the name, the ingredients, the technology and the production methods, the packaging methods or the characteristics of the finished product (table 3). The certification of traditional foods at a national level follows a series of stages, which are similar to the European ones. Producers, individuals or small businesses can start the certification process by means of an application submitted to the competent ministry through county offices. The verification of the traditional character of a product is made by specialists from the County or Bucharest Agricultural Departments. The certification of a traditional product is based on a standardised procedure, available to traders in a Good Practice Guide for certifying traditional products (MARD, 2014). The registration of traditional products is made in NRTP, the applicant submitting a registration application of the traditional product together with the corresponding documentation, at the County or Bucharest Department for Agriculture depending on the region where the traditional product is made. The MARD empowered representatives for this domain (specialists in the sector of food industry – traditional products) verify if the submitted documentation corresponds to the stipulations of the order 724/2013 and notify the applicant in writing of its compliance. Otherwise, the trader is notified, in writing, of the nonconformities so that

he can change them in order to comply with the stipulations from the above-mentioned order and submit a new application. If the application is approved, the specialized inspectors verify the production place declared by the trader, the results of the inspection being written in an inspection report. When selling traditional products, the trader must comply with the marketing conditions stipulated in the legislation in force, the display at marketing location the of the NRTP registration certificate photocopies being mandatory. The traditional product is labelled with the general elements stipulated by the Government Decision no. 106/2002 regarding the labelling of foods, with the subsequent amendments and, if necessary, with the supplementary labelling elements stipulated by the specially issued normative acts. The use of the term “geographical” is authorized under a name which is not part of the regulations regarding the protection of geographical indications and of food products’ name of origin. At the end of 2016, in NRTP, there were 558 registered traditional products, almost half of them being registered in 2014 (figure 2).

The label is filled in with the national logo and the position at which the product was registered in NRTP, stipulated in the traditional product certification order (figure 3). The situation of the traditional products’ registration in the NRTP in Romania, on years and on counties, is presented in figure 4. In 2004 most products were registered (297 products), year which was followed by 2015 (203 products) and 2016 (58 products). The distribution of traditional product registration on counties and regions is irregular, Transylvania and Muntenia being better represented at a national level.

According to the NRTP registrations, cumulated for the period 2014-2016, four counties (Brasov, Maramureş, Alba, Satu Mare) cover more than half of the certified traditional products at a national level, while there are 12 counties in which traditional producers didn’t apply for any product certification.

ROMANIAN ESTABLISHED RECIPE

The Romanian established recipe represents a Romanian food product made in compliance with a recipe used at least 30 years before the entry into force of the Order regarding the certification of food products obtained in accordance with established Romanian recipes (2nd of April 2014), to which traders in the food sector sign up voluntarily in view of registration. MARD manages the certification process of the products obtained by means of established Romanian recipes, registers them in the National Registry for Established Recipes (NRER), awards the certificate of food

product obtained in accordance with an established Romanian recipe and the specific logo (figure 3), by means of which the certified food products are labelled and by means of which the competent ministry guarantees their high quality.

The empowered representatives of the MARD, MH and NACP verify the compliance conditions and criteria that led to the granting of the certification and the national logo for a product obtained according to an established Romanian recipe in the production unit, the manufacturing unit and in the outlet location. If the product is registered, the consumers will be sure that they will consume food products prepared after established Romanian traditional recipes, with a high and constant level of quality and composition. At the beginning of 2017, in NRER there were 125 registered products, almost 60% of them being certified at MARD in 2015 (year in which there were also certified 74 established recipes). The first two months of 2017 brought only two new products registered as NRER (figure 5).

The distribution on counties, according to the last MARD records (2017) is presented in figure 6. Argeş county, with 16 registered products during 2014 – 2017 dominates the national ranking, being followed by Prahova and Sibiu, with 11 recipes each, and Bistriţa Năsăud, Botoşani, Mureş and Suceava, each with 10 registered products as established traditional recipe at the competent ministry.

The concentration of the traditional product national market

The assessment of the concentration degree at the level of Romanian traditional products registered at MARD can be carried out by means of the values taken by the Gini-Struck Index (GSI), which are calculated by using the methodology recommended by Săvoiu, Crăciuneanu and Ţaicu (2010):

$$GSI = \sqrt{\frac{n \sum gi^2 - 1}{n-1}} \quad (1),$$

where,

- n represents the number of terms of the series under study;

- gi represents the weight factor of i traditional products, related to the total number of registered products.

The values obtained for the concentration parameters, by applying the above-mentioned methodology, for the assessment of the traditional product market concentration degree at a county level, are presented in table 2. A total of 42 regions was taken into account (the 41 counties and Bucharest)

In the case of established recipes, the market concentration degree assessment was globally carried out, taken into consideration the small number of registered products.

The results obtained for GSI indicate a high degree of market concentration for both food categories, with higher values for the Romanian traditional products.

CONCLUSIONS

The paper carried out a presentation of the local traditional product market in the European context. There have been analysed the means of managing tradition in the Romanian food production, both through the European quality labels PDO, PGI, TSG and through the national systems represented by the MARD certification and the registration in NRTP and in RNER. With only three certified products, Romania is underrepresented at the level of registered products in the European database DOOR. At a national level, there has been progress both in the compliance of national legislation with the European one and in certifying local traditional products by means of NRPT and RNER. The assessment of the market concentration degree, with the help of the method based on the Gini Struck Index indicated a high concentration level for both product categories, with higher values in the case of Romanian traditional products.

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ANNEXES

Table No.1.
Logos and traditional product description at a European level

No.	Traditional product	Tradition criteria	European logos
1.	Protected Designation of Origin (PDO)	A product, which originates from a certain region and, only in exceptional cases, from a certain country. The quality/characteristics of a product is/are due to the geographical environment (with its own natural and human factors). All the production stages are performed in the delimited geographical area. Food product which comes from a restricted region, with a specific tradition in its preparation, the staff and the ingredients coming from local, strictly controlled regions.	
2.	Protected Geographical Indication (PGI)	A product, which originates from a certain place, region or country, which has a certain quality, reputation and characteristic, which can be mainly attributed to the geographical origin of the product. At least one of the production stages are performed in the delimited geographical region. The certification is more permissive, only the traditional preparation recipe is guaranteed; the ingredients and the workforce may partially come from outside the product's origin region.	
3.	Traditional Speciality Guaranteed (TSG)	The product is the result of a production process or of a composition which corresponds to traditional practice for that type of food. The product is specific or is produced from traditionally used ingredients/raw materials. The product is certified to be made after a recipe, which is traditional for the respective country/area, but the workforce and the ingredients used may come from a much larger geographical area.	

Source MARD, 2014

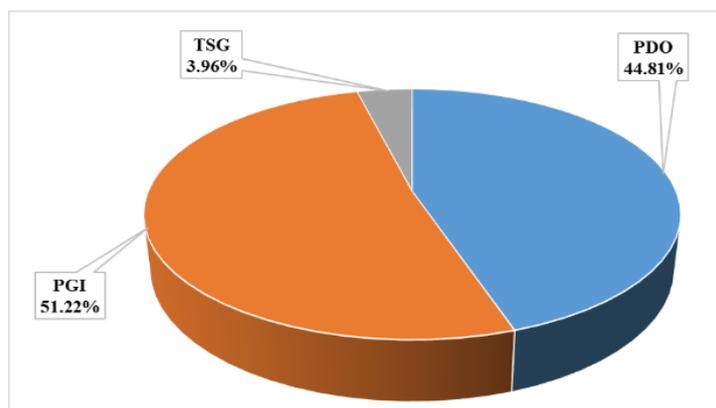


Figure No. 1. The distribution of European traditional food products registered in DOOR
Source: Author, by using EC Data (2017)

Table No. 2.

Traditional products registered in the period 2005-2013 at MARD

Year	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Products	280	695	774	325	450	279	1050	438	111

Source Stanciu, 2014a

Table 3

Mandatory criteria to obtain the traditional product certification in Romania

No.	Elements	Conditions imposed by the task book	Details
1	Product name	Uniqueness at a national level	It is not allowed to register traditional products due to their provenance, geographical origin or the application of a technological innovation
2	Raw materials and ingredients	Local, traditional characteristics of raw materials/ingredients	Without the addition of food additives, colorants, flavours, vitamins, minerals or sweeteners
		Place of origin and sensory, physical, chemical and microbiological features	Aspect, consistency, colour, taste, flavour, smell, water content, fat content, salt, proteins, acidity, density and specific bacterial flora (where applicable)
3	Production conditions	Production technology (specific, local, authentic and constant-invariable)	All the production stages will be mentioned, including the operations which are carried out manually.
		Production means. Machinery and equipment adequate for food production	The list of the production equipment and the machinery technical and functional characteristic description will be submitted.
		Space and technological flow	The space sketch and the location of the equipment used (a drawing of the space where all the stages of the technological flow take place, from the reception of the raw materials/ingredients to the finished product, with the indication of the production flow)
4.	Product characteristics	Detailing the main characteristics that define traditionalism	Aspect, consistency, colour, taste, flavour, smell, water content, fat content, salt, proteins, acidity, density and specific bacterial flora (where applicable).
5	Packaging and sale	Ensures the quality, the origin and the identification elements	The description of the specific elements regarding packaging (the material from which the packaging is made, its properties and its influence on the finished product).
6	Specificity description of the finished product	Organoleptic (sensory) characteristics	Colour, taste, smell, flavour, consistency, aspect
		Physical and chemical characteristics	Water content, proteins, fats and other characteristic components
		Photo and section description of the drawing	Characteristics specific to the finished product: form, specific method of production and/or of processing (traditional technological production method and/or of processing, which differentiates the product from other products within similar categories).
7	Production capacity/quantity produced per year/365 days	Limitation of the maximum quantities of product manufactured by the registered trader for each outlet/total outlets	Average maximum quantity – 150 kg (l)/day of certified traditional product/ maximum 400 kg (l)/day of certified traditional products, except for bread and traditional bakery products, which cannot exceed the average quantity of 300 kg./day of certified traditional product and no more than a total of 800 kg./day of certified traditional products.
8.	Data/records/ bibl. references connected to production history	The historical connection between the product and its production place; The demonstration of tradition in obtaining the product	Documents that show the transmission of tradition from one generation to the other, the historical connection of the traditional product with the place of production or a Notoriety statement awarded by a local association of traditional product producers.

Source Author, by using MARD, 2014

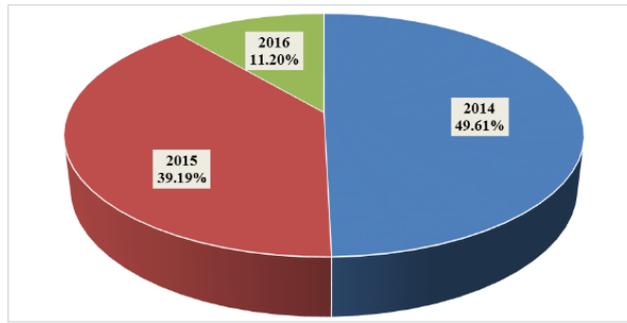


Figure No. 2. The registration of traditional Romanian products in NRTP during 2014-2016
Source Author, by using MARD Data (2017)

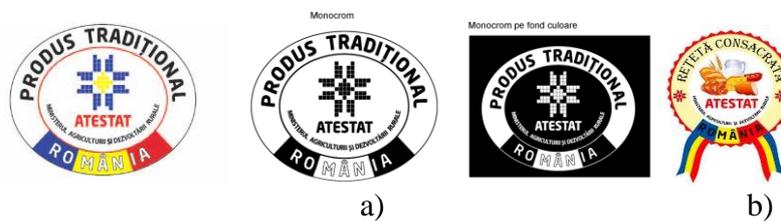


Figure No. 3. MARD logos for traditional products a) and for established Romanian recipe b)
Source MARD Data (2016)

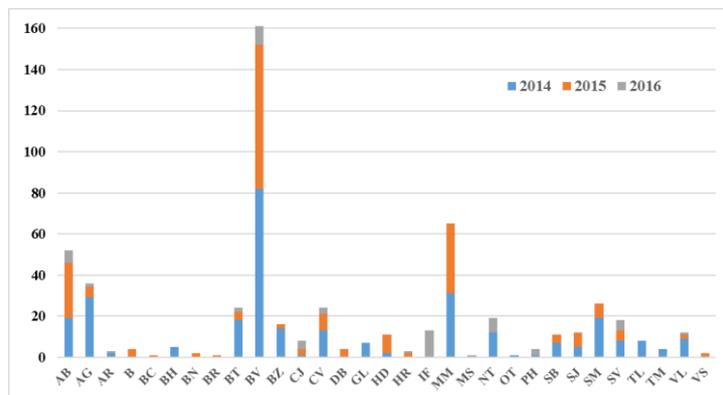


Figure No. 4. The distribution on counties of traditional products registered in Romania (2014-2016)
Source Author, by using MARD data (2017)

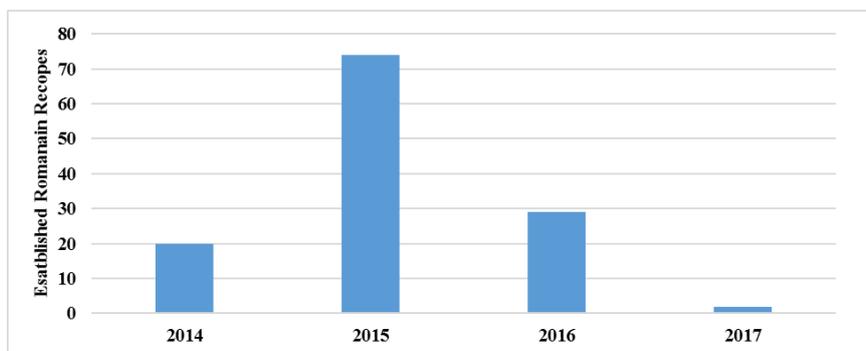


Figure No 5. NRER registrations during 2014-2017
Source Author, by using MADR Data (2017)

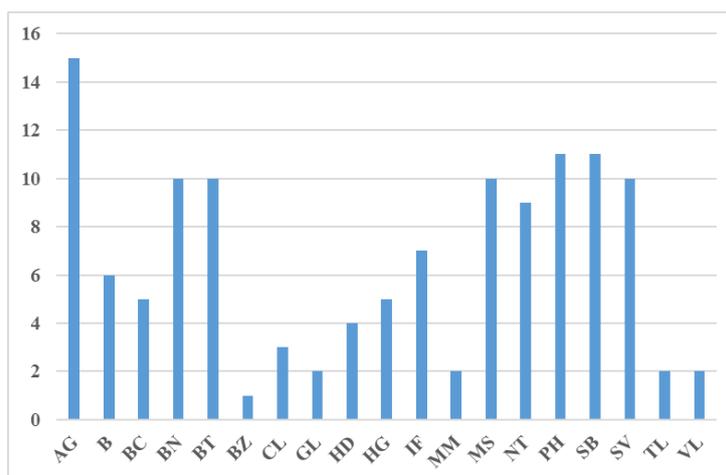


Figure No 6 *Established Romanian recipes on counties*
Source Author, by using MARD Data (2017)

Table No. 4.

The concentration of the traditional product market registered at MARD (2017)

Indicator	2014	2015	2016	2014-2016
Traditional products				
Total counties (Bucharest included)	42	42	42	42
$\sum gi^2$	900.3616	1740.6392	1206.8966	1217.5460
GSI	30.3694	42.2146	35.1612	35.3160
Concentration	high	high	high	high
Established recipes				
2014 - 2017				
Total counties (Bucharest included)	42			
$\sum gi^2$	720			
GSI	27.1576			
Concentration	high			

Source Author, using MARD Data (2017)