

The rural food way

Mmmmm, smells like something fresh and tasty!
This is the smell of the Balkan!

- Are rural areas still feeding the cities?
- ▲ How do rural food systems function?
- Who produces what food, how and for whom?
- ↷ Do rural residents have access to local food? What about visitors?
- What is the role of farmers in food systems?

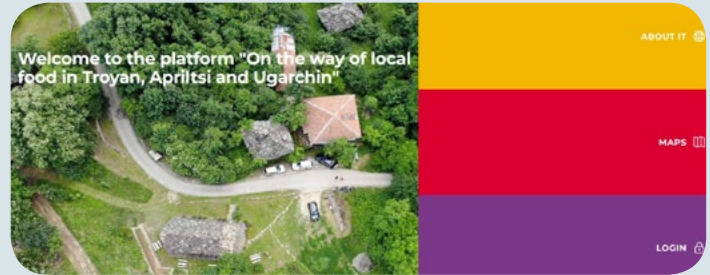
The **RUSTIK** project has been seeking answers to these questions since December 2023. To goal is to understand whether food is a resource for rural development, but also to create a sustainable tool for access to local food.

The **RUSTIK** team from Sofia University „St. Kliment Ohridski“, together with the Local Action Group Troyan-Apriltsi-Ugarchin (**LAG TAU**), is conducting a series of studies to identify and get to know the actors in the food system of the three municipalities - Troyan, Apriltsi and Ugarchin. The aim is to:

- Encourage demand for and access to local foods;
- ▲ Make local food producers more visible;
- Identify key issues that require special support;
- ↷ Encourage creation and development of local food policies.

We have already informed you [here](#) about some of our finds in Apriltsi, Troyan and Ugarchin. In this post, we would like to tell you about the Geographical Identification System „On the way of local food in Troyan, Apriltsi and Ugarchin“ (**GIS**), which our team has been developing since April 2024. The aim is to spatially and quantitatively get to know the food producers on the territory of the municipalities of Troyan, Apriltsi and Ugarchin, to identify existing data gaps, to locate them, but also to create an information tool that the Local Initiative Group Troyan-Apriltsi-Ugarchin and other stakeholders can use to identify specific groups of producers and activities to support and encourage their development. You can explore and learn more about the system at this link:

<http://gis.migta.eu:8080/en/>

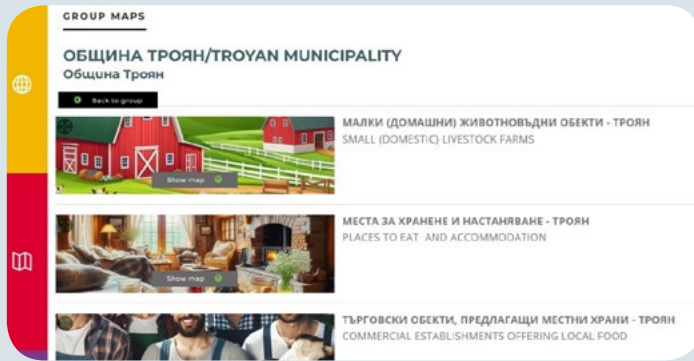


The data in the system have been organized into seven thematic maps, each presenting information at the level of municipality and locality. The maps contain data on:

- **Small domestic holdings with livestock.** These are establishments where mainly group animals such as hens, rabbits, beehives, etc. are kept; the number is current and comprehensive for the territory as of May 2024.
- ▲ **Places for eating and lodging** – different categories of places for eating are located - from tourist canteens to restaurants in different categories, as well as guest houses, hotels and other types of accommodation places; The data in the map is up-to-date and comprehensive as of December 2023.
- **Retail outlets offering food from local producers.** Our team searched for such outlets on the territory of the three municipalities by the method of observation. Their number is not exhaustive as the supply of local food is very dynamic. You can get involved in identifying such places and contribute to the co-construction of the map by following the link, accessible through GIS:
<https://app.maptionnaire.com/q/9gs3p4hd28>
- ↷ **Organic producers:** this map identifies the registered organic producers in the three municipalities. The data is up-to-date and comprehensive as of December 2023.
- **Livestock holdings:** This map identifies all livestock holdings where individual animals are sub-

ject to animal health inspection. These are mainly large and small ungulates. The data are up-to-date and comprehensive as of May 2024.

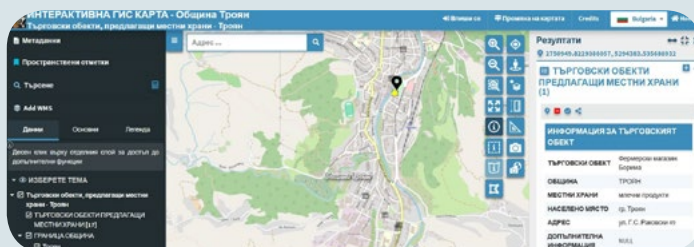
- ▶ **Beekeepers:** registered apiaries are identified and located on this map. The data is up-to-date as of May 2024.
- **Food festivals, vocational secondary education classes and local markets:** here are the localities in the municipalities that organise their own local food festival, as well as municipal markets and schools that offer vocational training in food processing and production.



All the data available in the system will be updated in January 2025 to reflect newly appearing food-related sites, but also missing ones. In 2005 a new map with registered enterprises working in the agro-food sector (NACE_rev2/A) will also be developed.

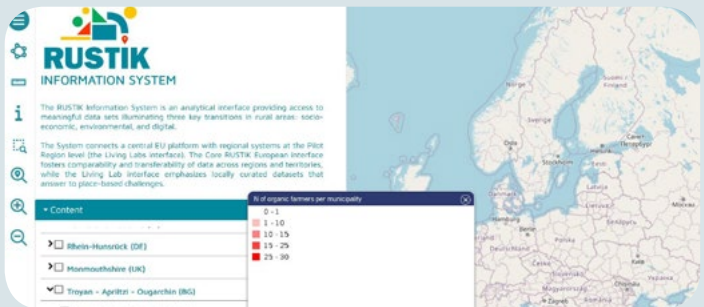
The data organized in these seven thematic maps are available separately for each of the municipalities of Troyan, Apriltsi and Ugarchin. When opening each map, the central field of the map displays the sites themselves; in the right field appears information about each individual site - what it is called, where it is located, what local food it offers. Information about individual sites is continuously updated.

The platform is not set up for commercial purposes, i.e. food cannot be ordered and delivered through



it. It is also not set up for promotional purposes, i.e. it includes food producers that are available in the publicly accessible registers maintained by various state institutions in Bulgaria, as well as outlets that our team has identified as meeting the criterion for local food production. The platform was created as an information tool, the data in which is updated and verified by the Local Action Group Troyan-Apriltsi-Ugarchin and is used by the LAG in its activities for the implementation of the **LEADER/CLLD** approach and for the implementation of tasks related to the application of the Common Agricultural Policy of the European Union in Bulgaria. The data from the GIS system “On the way of local food in Troyan, Apriltsi and Ugarchin” are available for general use by anyone interested in finding information for their personal or business purposes about what is produced, where it can be bought or tasted on the territory of the three municipalities.

The data from the GIS system will be integrated into a larger geographic information portal - **RUSTIK Data Viewer**, developed by the RUSTIK project. Other data relevant to the territory of Troyan, Apriltsi and Ugarchin can be found in RUSTIK Data Viewer as well. They are related to socio-demographic, economic and environmental indicators.



Some of the data we record could be also used to complement the information available in **Rural Observatory portal** - the European Commission’s rural areas.

