RUSTIK

Troyan-Apriltsi-Ugarchin (TAU)

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Experiment Overview

Objective

To explore the potential of the local food system in enhancing territorial development by examining the existing relationships among local and non-local food-related actors, as well as identifying untapped opportunities.

Relevance

The primary challenge identified in the TAU pilot region is the underexplored potential of the local rural food system to serve as a resource for local development.

There are significant knowledge and data gaps regarding the linkages between food production and consumption in the Pilot Region (PR), as well as a lack of cooperation among local actors, which limits the region's ability to achieve territorial development through food systems.

Key innovation

Develop data-driven local food initiatives to support the transition from agriculture to broader food-related activities; identify new data sources and datasets; address existing data gaps.

Experiment Progress

Research activity (1): Mapping food related actors in the local food system using data from publicly accessible sources

Research activity (2):

Reflections

A real-time participatory experiment with restaurants, designed to collect data, offers valuable insights into:

 \rightarrow the circulation of local and non-local food within the territory;

Conducting in-depth interviews with different food **Result:** related actors GIS⁴ • GIS platform to integrate data from different sources to Result: identify number of food producers and type of food in 9 55 in-depth interviews (73 hours) transcribed with every settlement in the Pilot Region; Sonix and reviewed by USOFIA team; Seven food related thematic maps indicating existing • New data collected local food in different settlements in the PR 💡 Data gap identification **Participatory methods** Self-reported methods Research activity (3): Real time experiment in two restaurants in the PR to inform Research activity (4): guests about local food suppliers and about local food used Conducting participatory observations in two by restaurants to collect data from different sources. specific food places: local food festivals and local shops **Result:** 365 questionnaires about restaurants guests **Result:** experience with local food (4/10/24); 2 local food festivals data about number 6 months data about restaurants sales and type of participants of local and other food; 10 local shops – data about local food • Restaurants' data about sales from on sale in the shops a vitrine/ self with local food *Geographical Identification System

To see the GIS platform On the way of local food in Troyan, Apriltsi and Ugarchin scan this QR code

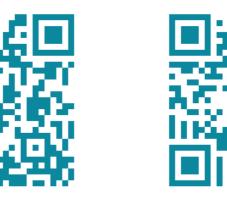
Our preliminary findings so far:

- \rightarrow No support for local cooperation concerning food, i.e. the development of agricultural activities (payment per hectare; investment in agricultural machinery) is supported but not the development of food-related activities;
- \rightarrow Existing food production facilities have limited capacity and many food producers don't plan to extend them because of the expected administrative burdens;
- \rightarrow Many different types of informal practices exist everywhere;
- \rightarrow Famous local food brands are suffering from loss of authenticity due to a broken local value chain, e.g. ordinary plum brandy is made with alcohol, flavourings and imported plums; the same with another local sausage, made from imported meat

- \rightarrow customers food preferences;
- \rightarrow administrative obstacles to cooperation between local actors through food;
- \rightarrow positive and negative experiences from collaboration with local food actors.

To see booklets developed together with restaurants to promote their local food suppliers visit:







The development of the GIS system revealed:

- \rightarrow significant data gaps in public food-related registers;
- \rightarrow a substantial number of small households that are not officially registered as farmers or food producers but collaborate informally with other food actors. These households supply natural local food to restaurants but are reluctant to turn this domestic practice into a formal business initiative.

Challenges

- \rightarrow Developing the GIS system;
- \rightarrow Building trust with local actors.

Learning

This complex data experiment requires interdisciplinary knowledge, as well as spending weeks in the pilot region to collaborate closely with local food actors.

Next steps

- \rightarrow Process and analyze the collected data;
- \rightarrow Integrate new data into the GIS system;
- \rightarrow Write articles to present our findings and develop new concepts;
- \rightarrow Formulate policy recommendations and design specific initiatives that can be promoted and supported by the activities of LAG TAU.

To learn more about our research

experiment journey visit:

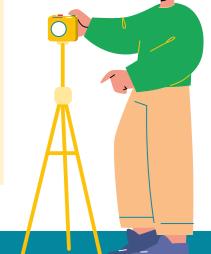
https://rustik-he.eu/tau-bulgaria/

- \rightarrow Lack of some food-related facilities, such as slaughterhouses;
- \rightarrow Lack of food traceability initiatives difficult to make a direct link between local food and sustainability;
- \rightarrow Consumer awareness of food origin and sustainability is critically low.
- \rightarrow Taste and culinary are important, but not the origin and nutritional characteristics of food;
- \rightarrow Many administrative burdens prevent the use of natural, seasonal and sustainable local foods, e.g. restaurants are not allowed to make their own minced meat but must use ready-made products; bakeries can sell sandwiches with legumes but not salads.

However...

We found many young people developing food-related initiatives, entrepreneurs eager to collaborate and support local food, numerous initiatives promoting natural local food, and a growing number of organic farmers. Food needs to be supported by specific local policies.







K Research and Innovation

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