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DEVELOPMENT AND CROSS BORDER COOPERATION IN THE AREA OF AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS AND TRADITIONAL FOOD

Project No BSB 1101

Study on the Current Situation of Traditional Products in Bulgaria

Designation and Market Potential

COMMON BORDERS. COMMON SOLUTIONS.

CROSS BORDER COOPERATION

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1. Definitions and Legislation at EU and country level

The European Union has developed and introduced a system of protection of Geographical Identifications (GI) and traditional specialties guaranteed (TSG) for the names and the quality of the agricultural products and foodstuffs which is adopted by all member countries, including Bulgaria. GIs and TSGs are indications (primarily geographical names) that identify a product (a good) as originating from a given area where the quality or reputation of the good is essentially attributable to its geographical origin. A key feature of GIs is, therefore the link between the geographical origin and the quality of a good. The EU has placed GIs at the centre of its quality policy for food and agriculture products. Through the GI system, the EU intends to provide a tool to support the quality and tradition of registered products and to assure consumers that the goods are genuine rather than imitation products seeking to benefit from the reputations of the originals.

The Protection of GIs assures:

- Valuable intellectual property right (collective right)
- Protection of the name (not of the product) against any misuse, imitation or evocation and any other practice liable to mislead the consumer
- Protection is unlimited in time (cancellation possible after 7 years of non-use)

The GIs are: 1) Protected Designation of Origin (PDO) and 2) Protected Geographical Identification (PGI)

Protected designation of origin (PDO)

The Protected designation of origin is the name of an area, a specific place or, in exceptional cases, the name of a country, used as a designation for an agricultural product or a foodstuff:

- which comes from such an area, place or country,
- whose quality or properties are significantly or exclusively determined by the geographical environment, including natural and human factors
- whose production, processing and preparation takes place within the determined geographical area.

In other words, to receive the PDO status, the entire product must be traditionally and entirely manufactured (prepared, processed and produced) within the specific region and thus acquire unique properties.

Protected geographical indication (PGI)

The protected geographical indication is the name of an area, a specific place or, in exceptional cases, the name of a country, used as a description of an agricultural product or a foodstuff:

- which comes from such an area, place or country,
- which has a specific quality, goodwill or other characteristic property, attributable to its geographical origin,
- at least one of the stages of production, processing or preparation takes place in the area

In other words, to receive the PGI status, the entire product must be traditionally and at least partially manufactured (prepared, processed or produced) within the specific region and thus acquire unique properties.

Traditional specialities guaranteed (TSG)

The TSG quality scheme aims to provide a protection for traditional food products of specific character. Differing from PDO and PGI, TSG does not certify that the protected food product has a link to specific geographical area. According to Art. 3 of Regulation 1151/12, to qualify for a TSG a food product must be of "specific character" (the product must be clearly distinguished form other similar products) and either its raw materials, production method or processing must be "traditional" (there must be evidence of usage on the domestic market that allows transmission between generations for at least 30 years).

A TSG creates an exclusive right over the registered product name. Accordingly, the registered product name can be used by only those producers who conform to the registered production method and product specifications.

Over time many products from different EU and non – EU countries have registered in the EU system as having GIs, including about 1300 agricultural products and foodstuffs and almost 2000 wines and spirits. According to the latest EU-wide study on GIs, the sale of GIs represents about 5.7 % of the total EU sales of food and drinks. Nevertheless, the relative importance of GI sale values, both in relative and absolute terms, varies significantly among Member States. According to the same source, in France GIs represent about 14 % of the sales of food and drinks. In Germany they represent about 4 %. In absolute terms France, Italy and the UK have the largest sales values.

The (national) domestic market is typically the largest market for GIs. Overall, domestic sales represent roughly 60 %, intra-EU sales represent another 20 %, and the remaining 20 % is represented by extra-EU sales. The US comprises the main export market. Other relevant export markets are Canada and Switzerland.

The EU legislation related to GIs comprises:

- Regulation (EU) No 1151/2012: Agricultural products and foodstuffs - PDO, PGI, TSG,
- Regulation (EC) No 1308/2013: Wines – PDO and PGI
- Regulation (EC) No 110/2008: Spirits – GI
- Regulation (EU) No 251/2014: Aromatised wines

GI protection system requires that a group of producers or a producer organization applies for registration of a GI. Individual producers are not allowed to apply. In the application, producers must explain the geography-quality link, define the area of production and the so-called product specifications and, when relevant for the quality of the product, a description of the production method. Application are screened for an approved based on the existence of a quality-geography link and the quality features described in the product specifications. This screening is meant to guarantee that only products of high quality are protected as GIs. In addition to an ex ante screening of applications, GI certified product are subject to inspection by an independent inspection body that checks for compliance of the GI certified product with the product specifications. These ex post inspections are meant to ensure the products labelled as GIs, indeed possess the characteristics stated in the specifications.

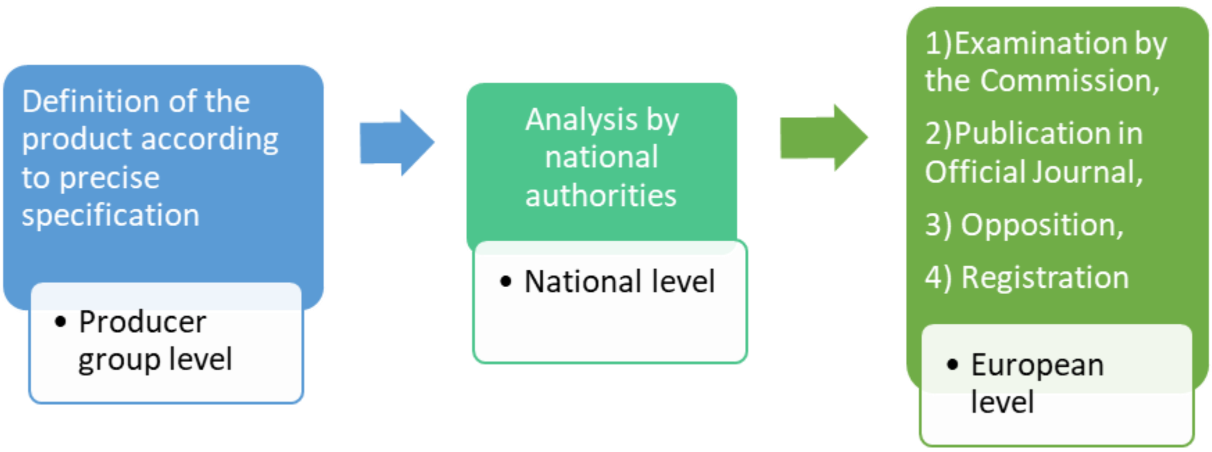
In addition, all producers within the GI area who comply with the product specifications are entitled to use the GI name to label their products. Both these conditions are meant to avoid obstacles to the functioning of the single market and the creation of monopolistic power from the side of the GI producers. Such obstacles would limit market efficiency and welfare.

The producer groups play a key role in the GI application phase. Additionally, they are in charge of promotion activities. They are also responsible for monitoring the use of the GI name and can take actions to ensure legal protection. Nevertheless, the GI regulation does not give producer organizations any power to control the supply of the GI product nor the ability to exclude any producers from GI certifying their product.

The role assigned by the regulation to producer groups is important for several reasons: It provides an institutional framework for joint actions favouring economies of scale and facilitating the entry of small farmers into the GI market while at the same time preventing producer associations from gaining market power by controlling the supply of GIs. Finally, GI regulation calls for legal protection of GIs. This means that Member State must be proactive in protecting of GIs and must initiate investigation in cases of presumed infringement and misuse.

In **Bulgaria,** the GI and TSG schemes are controlled by the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Forestry (MAFF) which adopts the EU policy and legislation. The Ministry is also the body entitles to register and monitor the GIs at the national level. The application process is as follows: Group of producers submit a set of application documents. After the MAFF's approval is obtained, the application package is forwarded to the European Commission where the GI is enlisted in the EC journal of the identifications. The procedure usually lasts up to six months. There is a two months' period of opposition and after that the GI is officially registered.

Figure 1: Application procedure for PDO, PDI and TSG



The Bulgarian legislation concerning GIs and TSGs adopts the respective legal documents issued by the EC. Some of the documents on national level include:

- ✓ Ordinance № 6 of 5 May 2011 on the specific requirements for exercising official control over the use of protected geographical indications and foods of a traditionally specific nature
- ✓ Ordinance № 5 of 13 August 2019 on the preparation and submission of requests to the European Commission on agricultural products and foodstuffs with protected geographical indications and traditional specific character
- ✓ Ordinance № 4 of 28 May 2019 on the terms and conditions for the use of the optional quality term "mountain product" and for the control over its use. (promulgated SG, issue 45/2019)
- ✓ Law on the implementation of the Common Organization of Agricultural Markets of the EU
- ✓ EC guide for applicants for registration of PDOs and PGIs - preparation of the single document
- ✓ Green Paper on agricultural product quality: product standards, agricultural production requirements and quality schemes

2. Country Profile: Bulgaria

2.1. An overview at the physical and demographic aspects of the eligible area

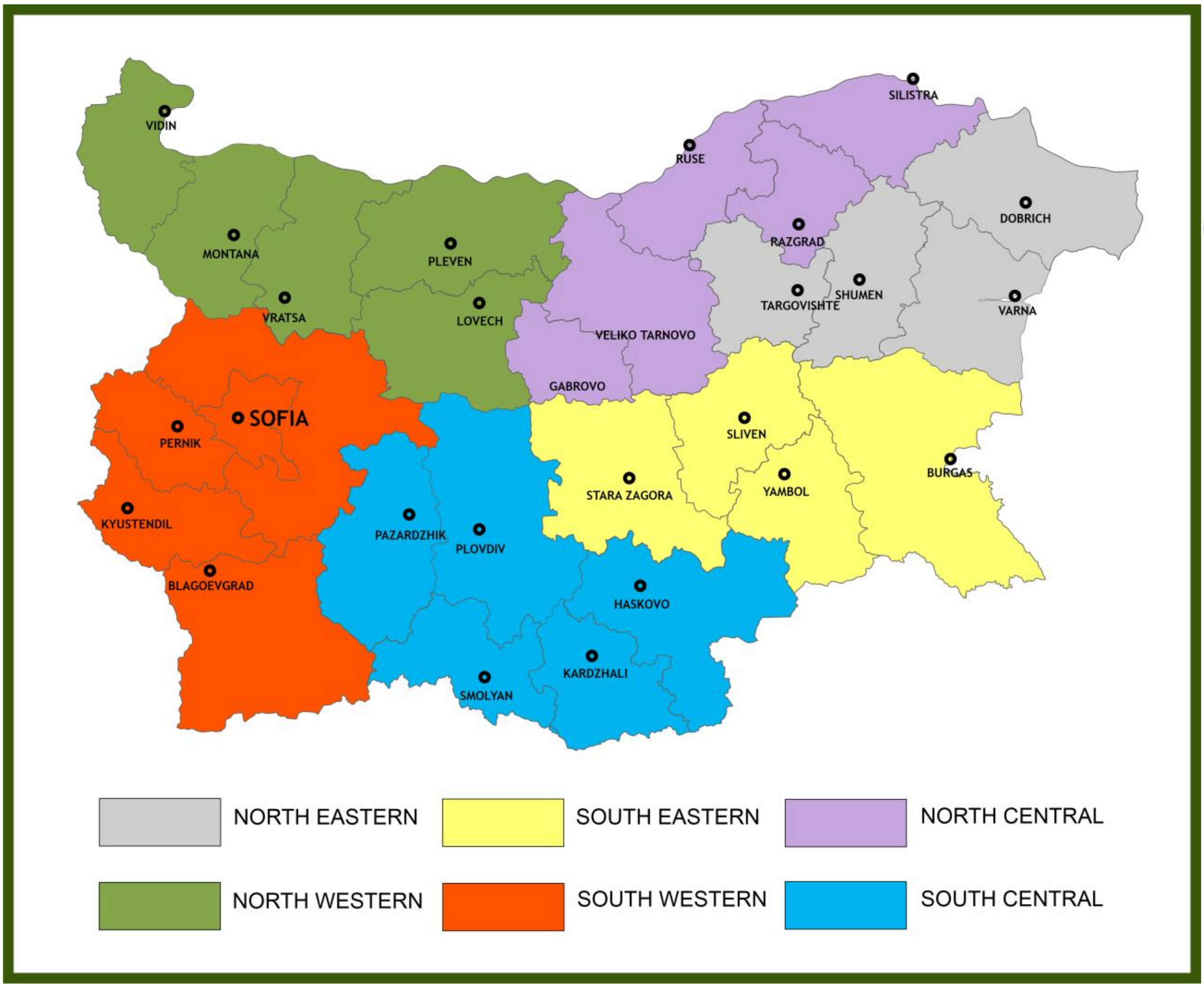
Bulgaria occupies the eastern portion of the Balkan Peninsula in South-eastern Europe. Situated on the crossroad between West and East and founded in the 7th century, Bulgaria is one of the oldest states on the European continent with turbulent past and strategic importance. Bulgaria borders Romania to the north along the Danube River, Turkey and Greece to the south, North Macedonia to the southwest, and Serbia to the west. The Black sea lies to the east.

Bulgaria is remarkable for its variety of scenery: rugged mountains and peaceful valleys stretch from west to east, while the Black sea coast offers amazing golden sand beaches and attract a number of visitors. Bulgaria boasts a mix of Eastern and Western cultural heritage, which is evident in its cuisine, its architecture, religion and traditions. Within a relatively small compass, the Bulgarian landscape exhibits striking variety. Open expanses of lowland alternate with mountains cut by deep river gorges. The country is divided into several distinctive regions. The administrative division encompasses six regions of planning.

The eligible areas as per the Black Sea Cross-border Cooperation Program are North East and South East planning regions. The **North East** region is the smallest planning regions in Bulgaria and covers 14 645 sq. km. It borders the Black Sea on the East and Danube River on the north which gives it a strategic advantage in terms of transport connectivity and trade. The major administrative districts are: Varna, Dobrich, Shumen, Targovishte. 60% of the land in the region is arable, including some of the most fertile soils (so- called "chernozem"). The water supply is relatively low with fewer river, sweet lakes and dams and deep underground waters, which poses many challenges before the agricultural industry in the region.

The **South East** planning region is the third biggest region in Bulgaria, with an area of 19 664 sq. km, that covers almost a quarter of the country's areas. It borders Black Sea on the east and Turkey to the South. Its main districts are Bugras, Sliven, Yambol and Stara Zagora. The climate conditions, paired with fertile soils availability are the main advantages for the agri-industry development in the region. The water supply is rather limited, but better than in the North East Region.

Fig.1: Bulgaria: Six regions of planning



Demographics

The population of Bulgaria is roughly 6 925 000. In the last three decades the country was seriously hit by the demographic challenge. As a result of emigration and negative growth, Bulgarian population has decreased during the transition years. In addition, it is increasingly aging. Thus, the demographic crisis is one of the major weaknesses of the Bulgarian industry in terms of labour force and skills supply. This negative trend is particularly visible in the rural regions of the country and the labour shortage is especially evident in the agricultural industry.

Ethnically, the population is a mix of Bulgarians (80%), Turks (10%), Romans (5%) and others (5%). The Turks, Bulgaria's largest minority, live predominantly in the northeast regions and in the eastern Rhodope Mountains region. Roma (Gypsies) is the other sizable minority. Other ethnic groups living in the country are Armenians, Russians, and Greeks, as well as Romanians and Tatars. The official language is Bulgarian, but in some regions with dense ethnic population, Turkish, Roman languages and a number of dialects are spoken. The ethnical diversity reflects also the variety of culinary practices and traditional meals typical for the different regions.

The North East planning region has population of 929 035 (Eurostat, 2020) or 13,2% of the country's overall population. The South East region is home to more than 1 032 079 inhabitants.

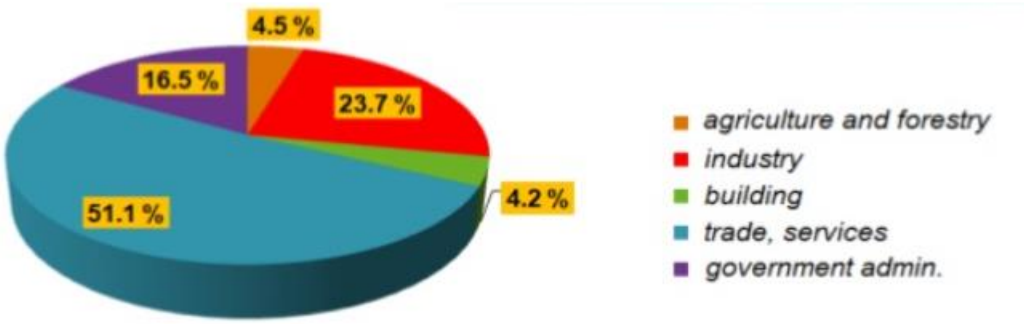
Bulgarians are residing mainly in the cities (74% vs. 26% who lives in the villages). Internally, the movement of population has been from rural to urban areas. In the 50-year period from 1949 to 1999, for example, the populations of Varna (the largest Bulgarian sea port) rose more than eleven fold. The demographic structure is closely related to the urbanization process. The largest share of young working people are moving to the cities, while senior people are remaining in the villages. Respectively the birth rate in the urban areas is higher, thus leading to further increase of population in the cities and continuous shrinking of the villages. Those tendencies have negative impact on the agricultural sector which depends heavily on human resources situated in the rural areas.

Economy

The Bulgarian economy is marked by several important events, such as the rapid industrialization after the World War II and the communist regime which dominated until the early 90s. After this, the liberalization of price controls and the transition to market economy was often accompanied by a havoc, which led to inflation, heavy foreign debt and high unemployment. The financial stability was eventually restored with the assistance of international financial institutions and with introduction of currency board in 1997 which is still in effect, up to this date.

By the beginning of the 21st century, with the privatization of the state-run industries, the restructured Bulgarian economy had markedly improved. The adherence to the European Union in 2007 offered new opportunities for economic activities and led to substantial industry growth and a significant increase in the Gross Domestic Product. Since the introduction of the Currency Board, and the following macroeconomic stabilisation, the country experienced a period of robust growth (till 2008), followed by the crisis (2009 - 2011) and modest recovery since then. The world pandemic of Covid19 is largely felt throughout the country with a significant drop in employment opportunities, economic stagnation and grim forecast for the future. It is expected that the recovery process will be long and painful. Fortunately, the agricultural sector was one of the least effected and has a brighter chance to recuperate faster.

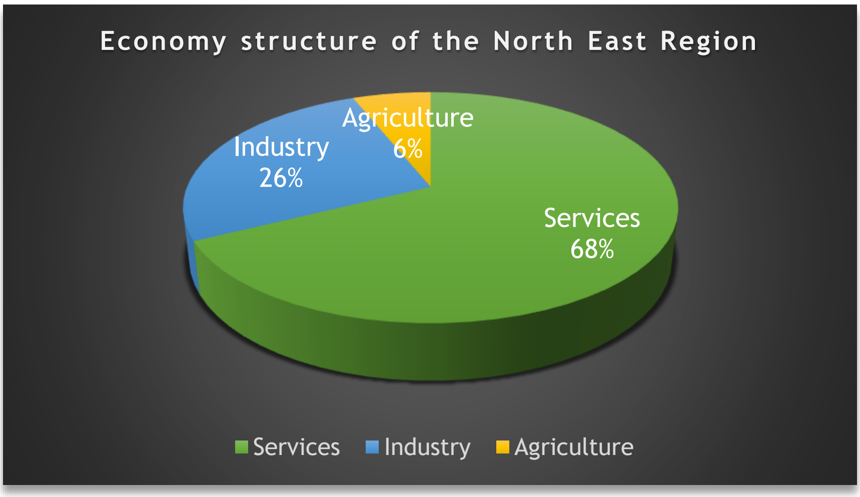
Fig.2 Share of GVA (Gross Value added) by economic sector in Bulgaria in 2018



Source: Delisivkov K., TCI 2018 European Conveference, Sofia

The North East and the South East regions of planning generate respectively Euro 5.95bn and Euro 6.7bn or 10,6% and 12% of the Bulgarian GDP. The unemployment rate in both regions (5.9% for the North East and 4% for the South East is below the EU average of 6.7%.)

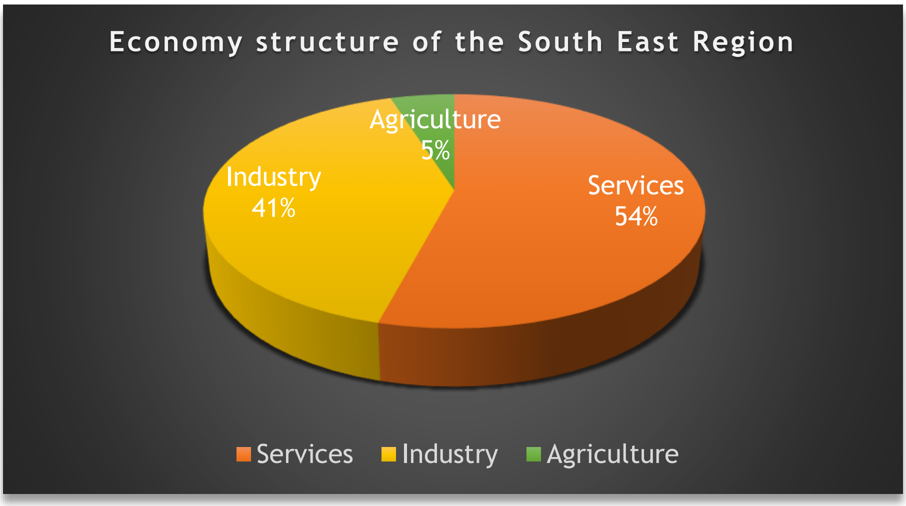
The service sector is particularly important for the North East Region and accounts for the 66,8% of the GVA (Gross Value Added). The industry share is just 27% and the agriculture – 6% (well above the country's average). The region features investment activity focused mainly in Varna administrative region, due to its appeal as a tourist and logistical centre on the Black Sea coast while Dobrich region (comprising most of South Dobrudzha) is known as the "Bulgarian granary" for its fertile soils, and is a leading crop producer.



Source: NSI, 2020

The share of the SMEs is extremely high – 98,8% or 52 982 of the enterprises are micro, small and medium-sized.

The South East Region relies mostly on the service sector (54.1%), followed by the Industry (41%), while the Agriculture accounts for only 4.9%. Due to the proximity of the Black Sea Coast, Tourism is one of the most important and rapidly growing sectors. The main industrial sectors are food and drinks production, textile, chemical industry and wood processing.



Source: NSI, 2020

2.2. The production system

Agricultural production

Agriculture

Agriculture has always been a historically important sector of the Bulgarian economy. Just few decades ago, a large share of the population was involved into some type of agricultural activity, farming or husbandry. During the communist regime, the land was nationalized and consolidated into larger state-owned agro-industrial complexes which took advantage of integrated systems of automation, cultivation and supply. In 1990 the government lifted restrictions on private farming, and almost all agricultural land was restored to the private ownership while loans for the establishment of small farms and food-processing facilities were made available.

Bulgaria enjoys excellent natural conditions for developing the agriculture and forestry sector. Cultivated agricultural land occupies about 4.9 million hectares or 44% of the total territory of the country (IBG, 2019). The favourable climate for crop production and the availability of agricultural land have resulted in well-developed plant growing and animal breeding.

Unfortunately, with the progressive urbanization of the country, the Agriculture became less and less popular as a career choice and occupation of the young generation. Today, the Agriculture accounts for less than one-tenth of the national gross domestic product and the forecasts predict even further decrease of this share (Ivanov et al, 2019)

The main competitive advantages of the Bulgarian Agri sector are:

- ✓ Favourable natural conditions for the cultivation of a wide variety of crops, fruits and vegetables
- ✓ The farming land is roughly 50% of the territory of the country
- ✓ Large diversity of soils, the majority of which are fertile, clean and unpolluted
- ✓ Most of the production is organic (GMOs are banned)
- ✓ High health and environment protection standards which guarantees the quality of the Bulgarian food products
- ✓ Availability of EU funded programs and in the sector as an incentive for growth of investment in the agricultural business
- ✓ Strong traditions in farming and husbandry
- ✓ A number of universities and high schools with focus on the agriculture, which provide skilful workforce for the sector
- ✓ A network of public and private Research centres working towards enhancement of the quality of the crops and food produce.

Agricultural sector in Bulgaria. Key elements:

- ➢ The value of agricultural output was 3.6 billion in 2018, with crop production accounting for 71% of all agricultural output.
- ➢ Steady increase in the foreign direct investment (FDI) in the sector: from EUR 0.3 million in 2014 to EUR 11.6 million in 2018
- ➢ Out of 202 720 farms, more than 82% are small-sized family farms (<2 ha), while large commercial farms (>100 ha) account for less than 2% of total farms.
- ➢ Livestock production has been declining accounting for 22.8% of the agricultural output in 2018
- ➢ The workforce is progressively aging, with young farmers (below the age of 40) representing just 14% of the Bulgarian farmers

- The income from the agriculture has been increasing over the last 10 years, but it is also a subject to higher fluctuation.

Crops

Farming is mainly represented by cereal crops which are grown on almost three-fifths of the sown land. Wheat is the most important, followed by corn (maize) and barley; rye, oats, soybeans, and rice also are grown.

Sunflower seed is the chief oilseed resource. Sunflowers, like sugar beets, grow mainly in the north. Traditionally, Bulgaria has had a leading position in exports of grapes, oriental tobacco, tomatoes, peppers, peaches, apricots and nuts to European markets. During the communist regime (1945-1989) Bulgaria was the main exporter of fresh and processed fruits and vegetables for the Eastern Bloc and the second biggest exporter of tomatoes in Europe

Table II.5. Production of Cereals in 2015 and 2016 Harvest Years

Crop	Harvested areas (ha)			Average Yield (tonnes/ha)			Production (tonnes)		
	2015	2016	Change 2016/2015	2015	2016	Change 2016/2015	2015	2016	Change 2016/2015
Wheat	1 105 916	1 192 589	7,8%	4,53	4,75	4,9%	5 011 597	5 662 721	13,0%
Rye	6 304	7 468	18,5%	1,78	2,03	14,0%	11 210	15 178	35,4%
Triticale	12 714	16 096	26,6%	3,02	3,06	1,3%	38 402	49 265	28,3%
Barley	175 957	159 830	-9,2%	3,97	4,32	8,7%	697 863	689 850	-1,1%
Oats	11 076	15 323	38,3%	1,96	2,05	4,4%	21 694	31 372	44,6%
Maize for grain	498 644	406 942	-18,4%	5,41	5,47	1,1%	2 696 923	2 226 094	-17,5%
Rice	12 410	11 988	-3,4%	5,45	5,40	-0,9%	67 684	64 773	-4,3%

Source: MAFF, Agro Statistics Department, Yields of Crops Survey

Essential oils

Traditionally, Bulgaria is known for the production and export of essential oil crops such as the valuable Bulgarian rose (Rosa Dmascena). Bulgaria is the second biggest producer of rose oil in the world. Recently the interest towards other medical plants and essential oil plants such as lavender, lemon balm, thistle, fennel, salvia and other has increased.

Table II.7. Production of Essential Oil Crops in 2015 and 2016 Harvests

Crop	Harvested areas (ha)			Average Yield (tonnes/ha)			Production (tonnes)		
	2015	2016	Change 2016/2015	2015	2016	Change 2016/2015	2015	2016	Change 2016/2015
Lavender	5 420	6 266	15,6%	3,46	3,11	-10,1%	18 768	19 504	3,9%
Rosa Damascena	3 708	3 580	-3,5%	2,29	2,49	8,7%	8 487	8 915	5,0%

Source: MAFF, Agro Statistics Department

Fruits

In 2016, 198 982 tonnes of fruits were produced. The most important fruits for Bulgaria are plums, apples, cherries and peaches. Apricots and berries are also popular. The production of nuts, such as hazelnuts, walnuts and almonds, registers significant increase over the last decade. The South East Region being the leader in fruit production claimed 29% of the total fruits output. The region produced 55% of all peaches and 50% of all cherries in the country in 2016.

Table II.8. Production of Fruit, Harvest Years 2015 and 2016

Fruit crops	Harvested areas (ha)			Average Yield (kg/ha)			Production (tonnes)		
	2015	2016	Change 2016/2015	2015	2016	Change 2016/2015	2015	2016	Change 2016/2015
Apples	4 765	4 111	-13,7%	12 260	10 887	-11,2%	58 419	44 755	-23,4%
Pears	528	410	-22,3%	5 593	4 859	-13,1%	2 953	1 992	-32,5%
Apricots and sour apricots	2 481	2 554	2,9%	5 715	6 070	6,2%	14 179	15 503	9,3%
Peaches and nectarines	3 711	3 816	2,8%	9 521	7 975	-16,2%	35 334	30 432	-13,9%
Plums and cherry plums	6 827	6 705	-1,8%	5 299	7 253	36,9%	36 176	48 630	34,4%
Cherries	8 055	8 463	5,1%	6 136	4 549	-25,9%	49 423	38 496	-22,1%
Sour cherries	1 207	1 137	-5,8%	2 838	3 119	9,9%	3 425	3 546	3,5%
Walnuts	5 055	6 280	24,2%	718	790	10,0%	3 627	4 959	36,7%
Almonds	574	987	72,0%	739	852	15,3%	424	841	98,3%
Hazelnuts	496	544	9,7%	728	410	-43,7%	361	223	-38,2%
Raspberries	1 522	1 833	20,4%	4 497	4 582	1,9%	6 845	8 398	22,7%
Others	433	351	-18,9%	-	-	-	1 856	1 207	-35,0%
Total	**35 654**	**37 191**	**4,3%**	**-**	**-**	**-**	**213 022**	**198 982**	**-6,6%**

***Source:** MAFF, Agro Statistics Department, Fruit Production - Harvest 2016*

Vegetables

The output of vegetables was 812 300 tonnes in 2016, including 113100 tonnes from greenhouses. The production of the tomatoes was the most important – accounting for 17% of the total produce. Other significant items were potatoes, cabbage and peppers. Fresh and dried legumes (such as peas, beans, lentils and chick peas) were about 27 000 tonnes per year, while leafy vegetables (spinach, leek, lettuce and parsley) were 7916 tonnes in 2016, root, tuber and bulb vegetables, excluding the potatoes (such as onions, garlic, carrots, beetroot, radish, celery) were 26 000 tonnes for the same year.

Apicultures

Bulgaria has a long-lasting tradition in honey and bee products production. The favourable natural, climate and ecological conditions also have beneficial influence and contribute to the gradual increase of these products' yield through the years. Apiculture represents alternative employment for the population of underdeveloped rural regions providing additional income. The rough estimate number of bees' families is 754 105 in 15 306 colonies, which represent a 19% increase compare to the previous year. The largest number of colonies was bred in the Northeast region (22% of the total number), while the Southeast region comes forth with 18%.

Viticulture and wine production

In 2016 the areas planted with vines were 51 000 ha. The most significant region for vineyard cultivation is the Southeast region which accounts for 18 110 ha or 36% of the total vine areas in the country. The red wine varieties have a dominant role in the structure of the vineyards (63%), followed by white wine varieties (32%) and the table varieties (just 5%). The Southeast and Northeast regions recorded the highest average vine yields respectively 5,993 kg/ha and 5,925 kg/ha, which proves their suitability for such type of cultivation. The production of grapes in the Southeast region was 78 581 tons in 2016, representing 37% of the total vineyards output in the country.

Organic farming

In recent years, organic production in the country is developing rapidly with a tendency to increase in bot: the number of operators and the output. More and more farmers turn to organic farming, and huge number of consumers seek healthy production unpolluted by artificial fertilizers and other chemical ingredients. The motivation of both producers and consumers comes as a consequence of land's ecological balance and their own health cares. Organic production in Bulgaria showed an increase of areas where organic production methods (including transition areas and organic areas) were applied, as well as certified ecologically clean areas where wild growing crops like mushrooms, herbs and berries were harvested. More than 90% of the domestic organic produce is exported to EU countries such as Germany, Switzerland, France and the Netherlands.

Bulgaria has good prerequisites for organic production development including:

- Well preserved, unpolluted areas (about 90% of the land in Bulgaria is suitable for organic farming)
- Ban for GMO products
- Sector's development is being stimulated by support opportunities for organic producers under Rural Development Programs
- The increasing number of producers, processors and merchants joining organic production control and certification system
- Consumers' interest towards organic goods shows that more and more people realize this type of production benefits.

Information regarding organic production's status in Bulgaria is based on organic farming control entities annual reports data. Examples of such organic control institution, officially approved by the Minister of Agriculture and Food include: Bulgarkontrola PLC, CEREC – Certification of Ecological Standards Ltd, Lakon — Private Institute for Quality and Organically Produced Food Products Certification Ltd, Agro Organic Control Ltd and others

At the end of 2016, the total number of organic operators registered in the Ministry of Agriculture and Food was 7,262 - by 1,089 more than in the previous year. In this number, 6,961 are producers, 3 aquaculture producers, 177 organic production processors and 121 traders (importers, exporters, wholesalers and retailers). The number of subcontractors was 1,068.

In 2016, areas within control system (either in transition or undergone transition towards organic production) occupied a 3.2% share of total utilized agricultural area in the country.

Table II.37. Harvested Organic Areas in 2016, ha

Type of crops	Areas that underwent transition period	Harvested areas
Grain and cereals, including rice	8 837	2 838
Industrial crops	6 179	5 184
Fresh vegetables, melons, strawberries, cultivated mushrooms (total)	1 153	1 086
Permanent plantations	11 372	7 409
Permanent pastures and meadows	5 826	3 601
Forage crops from arable lands (green crops)	1 740	1 621

Source: *MAFF, according to organic production control entities' annual reports data*

Out of the organic plant production, the most important is that of grains and cereals (wheat, corn, barley and oats), herbs, medical and essential oil plants, and fresh vegetables and fruits. There are evidences of increase interest in organic nut production (walnuts, hazelnuts, almonds and chestnuts), as well as the organic vineyard cultivation (including both, wine and table grape varieties). Organically cultivated non-traditional crops, such as artichoke and kiwi, though occupying small areas (741 and 6,7 ha respectively), indicated organic producer's efforts to meet market demands and diversify their production.

Animal husbandry

The livestock production in Bulgaria accounts for 23.3% of the total agricultural output. There are traditions in the sheep, pig and cattle breeding, poultry farming, and bee-keeping.

The national animal husbandry policy continued to be aimed at protecting farmers' interests, enhancing market orientation, increasing productivity and competitiveness of Bulgarian production. Livestock breeding remained one of priority sectors. The support for the sector involved a combination of state financial instruments and EU Funds mechanisms aiming to increase livestock breeding and livestock production, producing high quality food safe for consumers' health, raising farmers' incomes and fair standard. Unfortunately, despite the measurements, the livestock production keeps a lasting decreasing trend and is evidently less attractive.

Table II.13. Number of Animals in 2015 and 2016 and Estimation for 2017

Number of animals	01.11.2015	01.11.2016	Change 2016/2015	Projection for 01.11.2017
Cattle – total, incl.:	550 201	557 866	1,4%	565 000
cows – total	352 571	357 199	1,3%	364 000
- Meat-breed cows	76 411	85 870	12,4%	94 000
Buffaloes – total, including:	10 843	12 273	13,2%	13 000
female buffaloes	6 796	7 589	11,7%	7 600
Sheep – total, including:	1 331 894	1 360 087	2,1%	1 360 000
ewes – total	1 116 997	1 128 876	1,1%	1 130 000
- meat-breed sheep	92 447	102 655	11,0%	103 000
Goats - total, including:	276 919	237 543	-14,2%	238 000
breeding goats	219 869	199 438	-9,3%	201 000
Pigs - total, including:	600 068	616 426	2,7%	630 000
Total breeding sows exceeding 50 kg	58 149	64 509	10,9%	66 000
Birds total*, thousand birds, incl.:	15 600	13 700	-12,2%	14 500
hens and pullets	6 980	7 158	2,6%	7 200
chickens for meat	7 278	5 290	-27,3%	6 000
waterfowl	1 245	1 145	-8,0%	1 200
other poultry	97	107	10,3%	100
Equidae (horses, asses, mules or hinnies)	114 000	115 729	1,5%	116 000
Bee families**	747 434	754 105	0,9%	760 000
Rabbits	52 000	36 366	-30,1%	37 000

**Data as of December 31; **Data as of October 1.*

Source: *MAFF, Agro Statistics Department, BFSA – for equines and rabbits;*

The Northeast region accounts for 67 600 animals, or 12,1% share, while the Southeast region produced 106 600 (or 19.1%) of all cattle animals in Bulgaria in 2016

The Poultry industry includes chicken, egg-laying hens, turkeys, ducks, geese and others and was totalling of 13 700 000 in 2016, with the chicken and hens representing almost 91% of it. The Northeast region is one of the leading regions for Bulgaria for poultry production (22% of the total), and the leading region for egg production (322 065 eggs were produced here in 2016, which is 25% of the total for Bulgaria).

Organic husbandry in Bulgaria remains less developed than organic plant production, although in recent years there is an upward trend in organically bred animals. The interest in the sector continued to grow, due to organic farming support possibilities within new programming period framework. Mainly cattle, sheep, goats and bees are bred organically in the country.

Table II.39. Number of Organic Livestock that Has Undergone Transition Period and Obtained Organic Production by the End of 2015 and 2016

	2015	2016
Cattle	1 243	2 195
Sheep	10 681	7 897
Goats	3 173	3 669
Bee families	93 118	140 905

Source: *MAFF, according to organic production control entities' annual reports data*

In 2016 according to the control entities data, the organic animal production was as follows:

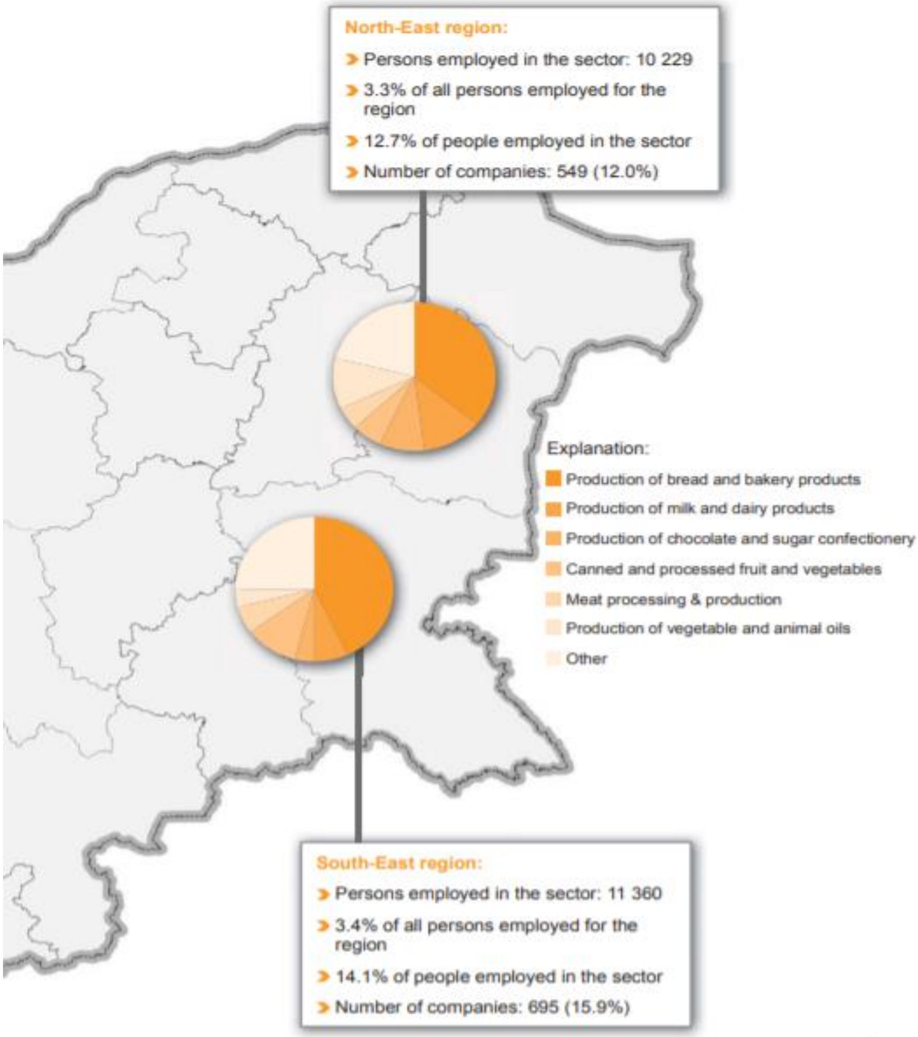
- Milk: cow's milk – 967 141 tons, sheep's milk – 267 519 tons, goat's milk – 664 926 tons
- Apicultures: 1490 tons of honey
- Meat animals: sheep – 7 897, goats – 3 669, turkeys – 3 726, geese – 200
- See farm products: mussels – 1400 tons

The agro-food industry

Food sector is essential for Bulgaria.It is especially important for the Nort East and South East regions of planning.

In 2016 there were 549 food companies in North East region that employed 10 229 people. In the same time, in the South East region, the number of food companies was 695 with 11 360 people employed in the sector. For both regions the production the majority of the food companies are specialized in production of bread and bakery products, followed by milk and dairy product and chocolate and sugar confectionery.

Fig.3: Food industry in North East and South East region



Source: MAFF, 2016

Among the few strengths of the food industry in Bulgaria is the fact that number of multinationals such as Coca Cola, Nestle, Heineken produce here, introduce new technologies and quality products.

Vegetable and Fruits

One of the oldest, most important and promising sectors of the food &beverage industry of Bulgaria is the canning industry (generating about 6% of the total food production). The canning industry is traditionally export-oriented and accounted for 7% of the total national export in 2010In 2015 85 000 million of tons of fruits were processed (the majority of which cherries, apples and peaches) which resulted in 70 000 million tons of fruit products (33% canned, 18% frozen, 17% juices, 2,6% dried and others). The processed vegetables in the same year was 98 000 million tons (mostly tomatoes – 35,4%, peppers – 23,5%, potatoes - 7,3%, egg plants, peas and mushrooms). They resulted in 78 000 million tons of products including canned (66%), frozen (18%) and packed fresh (3%) vegetables and vegetable juices (11%)

Animal products

Bulgaria has a long tradition in meat processing. Local producers use some unique recipes for salami, flat sausage (soudjuk) and other meat products. At present, the country holds several protected geographical indications for an authentic product (example: the flat sausage from Gorna Oryahovitsa or Gornooryahovski sudjuk). The meat processing industry is represented with more than 380 companies (including slaughterhouses and meat processors).

Pork is the most consumed meat, but more than half of it is imported (the largest share in Bulgarian agri import). Poultry is the second bigger meat industry with industrialized stock-breeder. Important export products are the duck meat and the duck lever.

The meat production in 2016 was 139 000 million tons, which brought an income of Euro 346 billions. Out of them, the sausages, salami and similar accounted for 72%, the smoked, salted and dried meat products for 13% and the others (including canned meat produces) for 15%

Along with the traditional pork, beef and lamb, Bulgaria also is ranked among the world's top 10 producers of goose, donkey and rabbit meat and one of largest for foie gras (goose liver) production in Europe

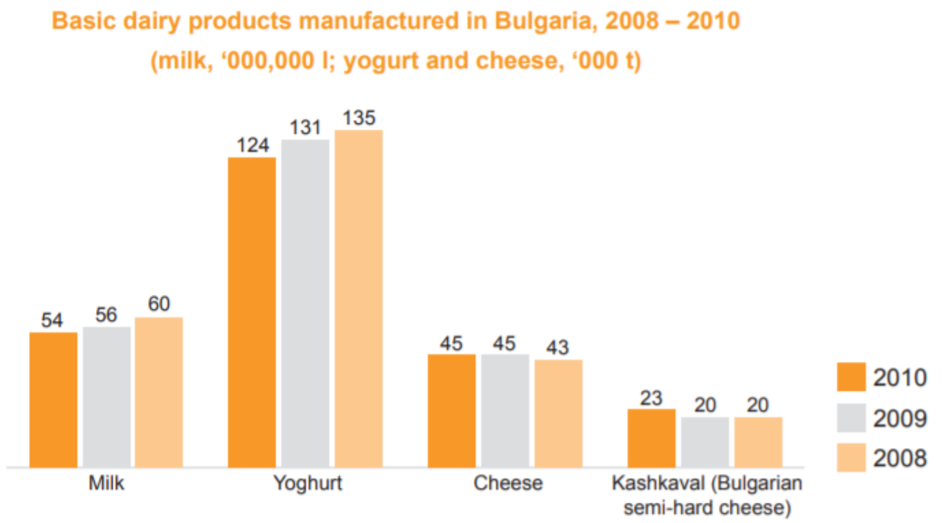
Table II.15. Production of Animal Products in 2015 – 2016

Product	2015	2016	Change 2016/2015
1. Milk — total (thousands liters), including:	1 118 704	1 114 846	-0,3%
Cow's milk	998 093	988 900	-0,9%
Buffalo's milk	9 179	9 184	0,1%
Sheep's milk	71 810	76 986	7,2%
Goat's milk	39 622	39 776	0,4%
2. Meat – total in carcass weight (tonnes), including:	205 307	212 356	3,4%
Red meat	99 653	102 716	3,1%
White meat	105 654	109 640	3,8%
3. Eggs (thousand)	1 285 779	1 331 273	3,5%
4. Honey (tonnes)	11 388	10 218	-10,3%

***Source:** MAFF, Agro Statistics Department*

Milk and dairy products

For millennia, yoghurt has been Bulgarians' staple food. This unique product was first discovered by Thracian tribes living on the land of today's Bulgaria. Bulgarian yoghurt owes its health-promoting and anti-aging quality to the existence of so called Lacto bacterium Bulgaricum which has the potential to neutralize the harmful and toxic substances coming from the environment, explaining the longevity of the people whose daily diet included Bulgarian yoghurt. The beginning of industrial production was back in 1960, at the dairy plant Serdica - Sofia, where the machine pasteurization of milk was first introduced



Sugar and confectionery sector

Sales of confectionery products have increased significantly in the last three decades. The sector boasts long traditions and excellent quality of products and attracts significant foreign investment from companies such as Nestle and Kraft Foods which established their own production capacity in the country. In 2010, confectionery sales were estimated at 41 million tonnes, or EUR 421 million, while sugar, sweets and chocolates are amidst the country's main export products (about 140,000 tonnes per year). The sector is expected to continue its growth in the future

Bead and bakery products

Bread and farinaceous products are traditional for the Bulgarian cuisine. The market of those is heavily fragmented with 60% of the products coming from small and medium-sized companies. There are almost 3000 bread and bakery processors around the country and the annual production of wheat flour is 500 000 million tons. Bulgaria is one of the key wheat exporters in the Black sea region. The bread produced in the country is roughly 352 billion tons per year, while 197 billion are "other" bakery products such as pastas, rusks, biscuits, wafers, cakes and fresh pastry

Water and non-alcoholic beverages

Bulgaria is one of the richest countries in Europe in mineral and spring waters. It has more than 250 deposits of mineral water (in comparison, France has just 64, while Spain - 89) The capacity of the deposits is between 0.5 and 63 l/sec. The total capacity exceeds 3 100 litres/sec and the temperature of the spring waters varies from 13°C to 102°C. As a result, 44 brands of water are currently sold on the market. They have various mineralization and health impact. The consumption of soft drinks per capita is relatively low compare to other European countries. The share of mineral water is 27.5% of the soft drinks market

Wine production

Bulgaria has more than 220 industrial wineries with a total capacity of 710 million litres. Bulgarians inherited their wine-making skills from the ancient Thracians, who, along with the god of wine Dionysus, also worshiped the growing of grapes and the making - and drinking - of wine. Between 80-90% of the wine produced is exported and consumed abroad, ranking the country among the 20 top wine exporters.

The Southeast region is also the biggest producers of white and red table wines (359 676 and 175 964 tons respectively for 2016) and the biggest producer of red and rose wines with PDO (Protected Designation for Origin) and PGI (Protected Geographical Indication). The North-eastern region on the other hand is leading producer of white PDO wines. The Table below summarizes the above discussed figures.

Table: Quantity of wine and grape, produced by wine production companies in 2016

Region	Volume of produced wine and grape must, hectolitres								
	Wine with PDO* (quality)		Wine with PGI** (regional)		Other wines (incl. table wines)		Must	Total wines	
	White	Red and rosé wine	White	Red and rosé wine	White	Red and rosé wine		White	Red and rosé wine
Northeast Region	1 277	42	28 008	7 027	22 877	10 746	627	52 163	17 815
Southeast Region	935	1 701	67 711	104 677	359 676	175 964	4 858	428 322	282 341
Southwest Region	0	0	2 190	10 119	32 787	58 733	3 597	34 977	68 851
South Central Region	0	1 596	25 813	84 322	28 755	78 330	28 044	54 568	164 248
TOTAL WINE:	**2 212**	**7 299**	**135 344**	**225 640**	**470 729**	**366 562**	**37 207**	**608 285**	**599 500**

Source: Executive Agency on Vine and Wine
****PDO — Protected Designation of Origin; **PGI — Protected Geographical Indication***

According to NSI (National Statistics Institute) the export of bottled wines in 2016 amounted for 20,017 thousand litres. The main export countries are Poland (59%), Russia, UK, Romania and the Czech Republic

Table: Variety of wines, unique for Bulgaria

	Location	Aroma	Color	Sugar levels	Acidity level
Pamid	East and South-East region	Fruity, light, rustic	black, for production of red light table wines	18 – 24%	levels 4-5g/dm3
Mavrud	South region	Pleasant aroma of wild berries and spice	Red, for the production of dark ruby full-bodied red wines	17 – 23%	6.1 to 10.7 g/dm3
Rubin	North region	The full-bodied taste of Nebbiolo and the spicy peppery aroma of Syrah	“Bluish-black colour, for production of high-quality dessert and table wines”	23 - 34%	
Broad Leaved Vine of Melnik	South-West region	“Intensive aroma dominated by the fruity taste of cherry, with sufficient body and typical spicy tang”	Purple, for production of strongg red wines with cherry colour	20 - 24%	6-8 g/dm3
Gamza	North region	“Earthy, light red wines with strong tanin and fruity flavour”	Dark bluish-black, for production of light ruby-coloured wines	19 - 22%	
Dimyat	South region	These grapes are juicy, tasty and fresh, with vanilla after-taste	Green, for production of white table wines and a high-quality component for brandy/rakiya		
Misket	South region	“Harmonious taste and pleasant Misket aroma, dry, with trace of apricot, wild strawberries and honey”	“Pinkish-red to violet, for the production of table wines със straw yellow colour”	18 - 21%	5.4-6g/dm3

Source: Food and Agriculture in Bulgaria, 2013

Beer

Beer production in Bulgaria has long traditions: the first brewery opened in 1882 and some of the leading international manufacturer are presented on the market. In 2010, 5.7 million hectolitres of beer were produced

3. Panoramic view of typical regional products: brands, certifications, traditional cooking recipes

3.1. Traditional products of the eligible area

Agriproducts produced in North East and South East regions

The North East planning region embodies the biggest share of the arable land of the country. The most developed production here is of crops and cereal. Wheat, corn and sunflower seeds are the main agri-cultures. In the western part (Targovishte and Svishtov regions) vineyards and orchards (mostly plums and apricots) are also cultivated.

The South East regions, due to the warmer climate is famous for its vineyards, orchards and vegetable gardens. Here grows one third of all the grape in the country. The main fruits are peaches, cherries and apples, while the vegetables are mostly represented by onion, tomatoes and cucumbers. This region encompasses several environmentally clean areas near the East Stara Planina and Strandja, which makes it particularly suitable for organic plant growing and bio animal breeding.

Some of the typical products for the North East and South East regions are:

Shablenska kapia (red sweet pepper)

Shablenska kapia is a red sweet pepper, traditionally cultivated in the North East region. The pepper is usually big, fleshy, with a high sugar content and a distinctive aroma, which is mostly released when grilled or roasted. In addition, it is high in Vitamin C, fibers and antioxidants.

Silistrenska kompotna kaisia (apricot)

This sour-sweet apricot is of a medium size (50-55 g.), egg-shaped and of a dark orange color with red blushes on the sides. The fruit is easily pitted and fleshy, which makes it particularly suitable for canning and compotes (from where the name is derived). The towns of Silistra and Tutrakan are famous for their apricot orchards. In Tutrakan, the Apricot festival is held annually

Kazanlashka rosa (oil-bearing rose)

The valley of Kazanlak occupies the western part of the South East Region. It is famous for its production of essential rose oils out of this beautiful rose flower (a part of the Rosa Damascena family). Bulgaria is one of the leading exporter of rose oil with more than 350 years of traditions in this sector. The roe oil is used in perfumery, aroma therapy, cosmetics and confectionery. It also has a valuable medical qualities and is a natural antiseptic and stimulant. In May, the rose harvesting period attracts many tourists from the country and abroad. This is also the time when the Festival of the Rose is held

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Dimyat (wine vine)

The North East region has favorable conditions for growing several varieties of vineyards, especially white wine vines such as Dimyat. This is an acient, traditional vine robust to cold weather that bear fruits late in September with an excellent yield. It is used not only for white wine production but also as a brandy distillate.

Hinap (variety of date)

This unusual fruit tree used to be very popular in the past, but now It is almost extinct and can be found only in the South East territories of the country. It has high nutritional value and powerful medical properties. It is consumed raw, canned or dried.

Slivenska praskova (Peach from Sliven region)

The Sliven region is one of the biggest fruit producer in Buglaria. The peach orchards grow on over 25 000 ha of land. One of the most prominent varieties, known for its excellent taste qualities, high sweetness and firmness of the fruit is the Slivenska praskova

Strandzhanski chai (Herbal tea from Strandzha)

Known also as the "miraculous herb from Strandzha". This plant has a number of health benefits with pleasant aroma and taste, and variety of bio active substances. It helps in prevention and combat of virus infections and digestion problems. Could be consumed as a hot or cold tea, after the leafs and flowers are picked, dried and brewed or soaked in hot water.

Samardala (herb and spice)

The Samardala is very typical Bulgarian herb, which is used for making of a spice named "sharena sol" (multi-colored salt). It is also known as "wild onion" or "Bulgarian onion" or "Bulgarian garlic". It can be found growing wild in the forests out of bulbs and its flowers are beautifully bell-shaped. The plant contains valuable essential oils, sterols and flavonoids. It is included in the List of medical herbs and is proved to reduce the bad cholesterol and to normalize the high blood pressure. It also has anti-inflammatory qualities.

Dobrudzhanski dini (Watermelons from Dobrudzha)

Medium sized watermelons traditionally grown on the fields of Dobrudzha (North East Region). They have national reputation and became an unofficial brand on the local markets.

Albena Sunflower

“Albena” sunflower is a hybrid sort of sunflower seeds selected and produced by the Dobrudzha Agricultural Research Institute. The hybrid was registered in 1988. It is particularly popular in France where 42% of the sunflowers fields are sawn with this variety. Albena sunflower is a peak achievement of the Bulgarian agro science.

Chernomorski kalkan (Black sea Turbot)

The Turbot is a sea bottom fish. Recently the species' reserves have decreased dramatically. It is often considered a delicacy of the Black sea for its low fat content and excellent taste qualities. It is often cooked either fried or grilled (in this case, it is best to marinate beforehand). According to many, the best way to prepare turbot is to stew and bake in a sauce.

Dobrudzhanski bob (dried beans from Dobrudzha)

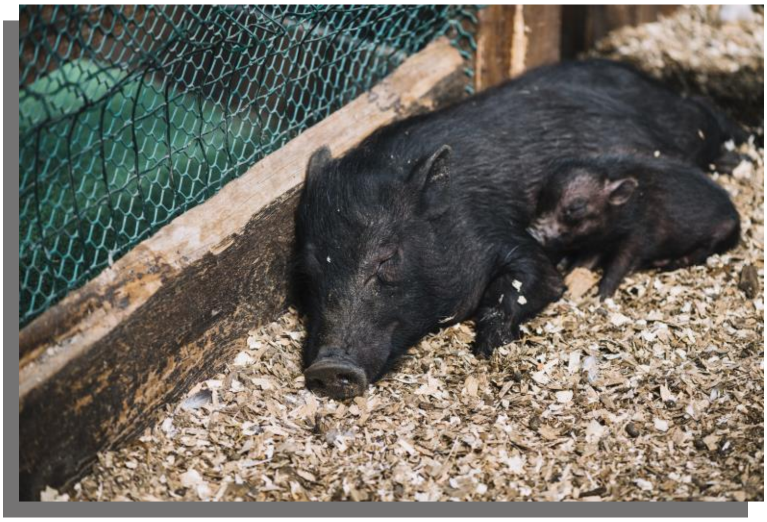
This name refer to several different varieties (Elexir, Ustre, Blian and Skitia). The beans are white, small to medium size, tender and with excellent flavors and taste when boiled It is already used as a brand name by several companies because of its premium qualities and good reputation.

Pamid (wine grape)

Pamid is grown in the Thracian valley, which is one of the most important wine producers in the country Ancient tradition and wine making heritage makes the region prime wine tourism destination. Pamid is one of the most popular input material for red wine.

Chernomorska mida (Black Sea Mussel)

Those black mussels can be captured on the shore or cultivated in several eco-farms on the North East Seacoast (near Kavarna). They are rich in proteins and minerals. They are an exquisite delicacies roasted, boiled or cooked into a number of traditional and regional dishes. The premium quality of our mussels can be attributed to the low salinity and pureness of the Black sea waters.



East Balkan swine

This unique animal is at least 2500 years old. It is a relict with ancient history and limited area of distribution (can be found mainly on the North-East Balkan peninsular. The swine lives in the open which allows for more environmentally friendly breeding process. Due to its free style of life, the meat is rich of intermuscular fats which makes it more tender and juicy when cooked. Since the growing process is slower compare to the farm-raised pigs, the meat is rich of melanin and is crimson red. The meat is also richer on fibers and proteins with less fat contents which makes them wonderful dietary product.

Processed Products in the North East and South East regions

Rose honey (Rose petal jam)

The jam is made out of the rose (Rosa Damascena or Kazanlachka rosa) petals. It has distinctive color and aroma and a number of health benefits.

Gjulovitza (rose bandy)

This is an alcoholic beverage typical for the Rose valley. It is made out of brandy with an added aroma of rose water or rose oil.

Green fig jam

This jam is typically produced in Sozopol (South East region) and is made out of green (not ripe) figs.

Dobrudzha bread

The bread is sacred according to the Bulgarian beliefs. The bread symbolizes life, health, family and home. Its importance is rooted in the fact that the bread is a staple on each meal and is largely consumed. Dobrudzha is the granary of the country, where most of the wheat is harvested. That is why, the association between bread and Dobrudzha is quite natural.

Chardonnay from Pomorie

The South East coast offers favorable conditions for growing of white wine vineyards (such as Dimyat, Muscat, Rislin etc.). The wine produced out of those has supreme flavors, quality and tastes. Chardonnay from Pomories, such as the brand “Black sea gold” wins international awards from renown wine competitions.

Trahana (Pasta)

Trahana is a traditional product for the Strandzha – Sakar region. It is similar to the Italian pasta and is made out of sour dough. In the past, this food was a main staple for the

Bulgarians, because it is affordable, easy to prepare and easy to store for a long period of time.

Osmarski pelin (alcohol bevarage)

This famous whine is prepared in Osmar village (near Shumen, in the North East region) and has a distinctive bitter taste, because of the sagebrush herb (pelin) from where its name is derived. The wine is prepared out of grapes (Dimyat, Miscet, Bulgar) and other fruits (apples, quinces) and herbs.

Karnobatska Grozdova (brandy)

This is type of brandy, made out of white vineyards (sort Muscat Otonel). Its aroma is a natural result of environmentally-wise processing techniques. The vineyards are grown in the Karnobat valleys, and reach full sweetness thanks to the warm, sunny weather in South-East Bulgaria. The brandy is kept into old oak barrels which enriches the flavors of the drink.

Madzhun/ Petmez (natural sweetener)

This is a thickened sweet syrup made out of sugary fruits such as watermelons, plums, pumpkins, sugar beet and sugar cane. It is used as a liquid sweetener and is traditionally eaten on bread or cereal. For its production several hours of boiling and stirring are needed, which is usually done in big pots over open fires. Though, traditionally popular, the production of madzhun is quite rare today.

Smiadovska lukanka (salami)

This is traditional Bulgarian dried and pressed meat product. The recipe was coined in Shumen region (village of Smiadovo). Findings suggest that it was produced for the first time 200 years ago. According to the legends, the original products was made out of lamb and the original recipe was well kept by its first producer (and never found). Today, the salami is produced almost entirely out of pork. In 1933, the product wins a prize on the Food Fair in Bary, Italy and became internationally recognized.

Trushia (canned pickled vegetable salad)

The Trushia is made out of various vegetables such as carrots, cabbage, peppers, cauliflower etc. which are marinated in vinegar and canned. It is traditionally prepared in the late Autumn and consumed the whole winter. Some fermentation processes occur, which makes this salad particularly tasty and with a number of health benefits.

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Gevrek (dough product)

Gevrek is similar to pretzel or bagel. This simple treat is usually made out of wheat flour and boiled or grilled on embers. In some towns, as Dobrich for example, it can be bought from traditional bakeries and consumed as a street food.

Lyutenitza (Tomato Pepper Spread)

The Bulgarian word "lyut" means hot or spicy and originally, lytenitza should be made out of hot chili peppers, but it is not always the case. This wonderful appetizer is valued by all Bulgarian for its great taste and multiuse. It is easily canned, stored, ready to use when needed and goes along with various dishes as an appetizer or garnish (it is paired nicely with grilled and BBQ meats, or with cheese).

Dobrudzhansko olio (Sunflower oil from Dobrudzha)

This oil is produced out of sunflower seeds that grow in the fields of Dobrudzha. It has gained national recognition for its supreme qualities and nice texture.

Krockmach (soft cheese)

This cheese is produced out of sheep milk and is typical for the North East region. The processing technology is quite unique, since it is literally made by thickening of milk (at last for two hours) till the milk becomes solid. It is then salted and left for a week, while stirring occasionally till it hardens even further. It is stored in pottery small containers where it ripens for few weeks more before consumption.

Green cheese

The green cheese "was discovered" in 2007 by Slow Food experts quite by chance. No one has expected to find a moldy cheese on the Balkan peninsular (the only two other countries in Europe where moldy cheese is produced naturally are France and Italy). The green cheese can be found in the region of Cherni Vit (Central Region). It is produced in wooden boxes and containers and while ripening mold appears on its surface. The mold gives extra flavor to the cheese making it a unique and very unusual product even for the majority of the Bulgarians.

Zalapishki babek (meat delicacy)

This meat product comes from Strandzha region. It is prepared out of cut (not minced) meat combining 69% pork, 30% veal and 1% lard and spices amidst which cumin, black pepper and red paprika are most important. The salami is processed with smoke from walnuts leaves for 24 hours and is dried in an open air for another 30 days.

3.2. Labels in the Region

Products (PDO, PGI or TSG)

At the moment, according to information from the Ministry of Agriculture, Foods and Forestry (MAFF), there are altogether 8 GIs for Bulgarian food products: one PDO, two PGIs and four TSGs. According to e-Ambrosia, an electronic food and wine register supported by the European Commission, there are about 50 registered Bulgarian PDO wine and spirits products.

Five of the food products mentioned above are produced either in North East or South East planning regions. Those are:

Strandzhanski manov med (Manna honey from Strandzha region) - PDO

This honey is produced in the eco-clean region of Strandzha mountain. The main food of the bees is the sweet manna which is formed by small insects in the oak tress of the regions. The manna is sweet and juicy and the honey produced out of it is darker than the other types of honey, combining sweet, sour and bitter aftertaste. It has numerous healthy benefits and higher abundance of microelements such as potassium, magnesium and lithium. It also has various antioxidants such as phenol.

Among the lists of producers are included: Stoyan Todorov (sole trader), Manol Todorov, Kosti Ltd and others

Bulgarian Rose Oil - PGI

This is one of the most symbolic national product, also called the "Bulgarian gold". It is an essential oil produced by specific rose breed – Rosa Damascena and the area of production is called "Rose Valley" (in South East region), near Karlovo, Kalofer and Kazanlak. The product is of very high quality and has big price premium. More than 90% of the annual production is exported. The registration of the GI exists mainly to prevent acts of unfair completion and bad faith producers who cell rose oil from other countries, stating that it is made in Bulgaria (Bulgarian rose oil).

The registration document provided by MAFF shows that there are 12 companies registered as producers of Bulgarian rose oil. Exmples: Bulattars production company Ltd, Bulgarian Rose SA, Naturebase SA, Rosarium Ltd and others.

Kayserovan vrat Trakiya (meat delicacy) - TSG

Kayserovan vrat Trakiya is a raw-cured delicacy of uncut meat. It is prepared from fresh boneless pork collar and is pressed repeatedly during curing and coated with Kaiser coating (mixture of natural herbs and white wine)

There are six producers of this product, namely: Lotos Ltd, Bella Bulgaia SA, Eco-MESS Ltd and others

Role Trapesiza (meat delicacy) - TSG

The name of this exquisite delicacy derives from Trapesiza fortress in Veliko Turnovo, the old capital of Bulgaria. This is a pressed raw-dried meat product manufactured from pork and a mixture of herbs, spices and salts. It has clean surface of a red color and a nice salty and spicy taste. It is ready for consumption.

It is produced by eight companies from all over the country including Actual Ltd (Silistra), Dimitar Madzharov Ltd (Plovdiv), Tandem B Ltd (Sofia) and others

Govezhda pastarma (meat delicacy) - TSG

The pastarma is made out of pure, fresh beef. It is raw-cured and coated with herbs and salts (usually thyme, sage, savory and rosemary).

The registered producers are: Aktual Ltd (Silistra), Eko-Mes Ltd (Pazardzhik), Lotos Ltd (Dimitrovgrad) and others

Two more products have applied under the GI protection scheme. Both of them are well known and largely consumed dairy foods with long traditions and unique qualities. Those are:

Bulgarsko kiselo mliako (Bulgarian Yogurt) – Applying for PDO

The product (called in Bulgaria "sour milk") is well known for its supreme nutritional qualities and health benefits. It is produced after a fermentation process out of cow, sheep, goat or buffalo milk. One of the starter bacteria – Latobacillus bulgaricus is closely associated with the region of Bulgaria and is believed to be used at least for 4000 years up to now. Though there are many types of yogurts around the world, no one taste just like the Bulgarian. It is rich of enzymes and probiotics and capture the free radicals and toxins, thus possessing many health, anti-aging and detoxifying qualities. It is largely used in everyday cuisine (the national consumption is more than 400 000 tons per year) and is a basis or an important ingredient of many traditional drinks and dishes –

such as airyan (cold yoghurt based drink), tarator (cold soup with cucumbers), hot soups, cakes and pastries etc.

The applying organization is the Association " Bulgarian traditional diary products".

Bulgarsko bialo salamureno sirene (Bulgarian white cheese) - Applying for PDO

This is another staple in the Bulgarian traditional cuisine. It is a type of brined cheese made out of the milk of goats, sheep, cows or buffalos or the mixture of it. It is slightly crumbly with 44-48% of fat content. It is similar to Feta cheese, but saltier and with more distinctive, pungent aroma and taste. In Bulgaria, it is produced in blocks and consumed every day with a salad or as a side dish, or in various pastry products (such as our famous "banitza')

The applying organization is the Association " Bulgarian traditional diary products"

3.3. Traditional cooking recipes

The main features of the Bulgarian cuisine are slow cooking and use of fresh vegetables. Bulgarian traditional cooking techniques are healthy, economically efficient and ecofriendly. Many recipes are passed from generation to generation and are considered a part of the national wealth and heritage. Bulgarian cuisine is a wonderful blend of original and unique products as well as influences from abroad, reflecting its historical and social development. It combines Oriental tradition as well as West European adaptations of French, Italian, Austrian-Hungarian and Anglo-Saxon gastronomy. Our cuisine is traditionally free of preservatives, additives and chemicals. Bulgarian cuisine employs stewing and roasting techniques, which contributes to their healthy impact. Spices are heavily used, mainly red paprika, parsley and dill. In many Bulgarian families (especially in the villages), the tradition of canning and preserving the produce is valued and kept.

The typical ingredients are vegetables (cabbage, carrot, turnip, onion, beet and garlic), meat (mainly pork, poultry and lamb), cereal (wheat, ray, barley, oats) and legumes (lentils, peas, okra). Since 16-17 centuries new edible American plants were introduced in Bulgaria, such as beans, pepper, tomatoes, potatoes, corn, sunflower etc. Rice and eggplants were imported from the East. Most of the spices, considered today as staples in our cuisine are imported relatively late (including black pepper, cinnamon, cumin etc.).

Tarator (Cold yogurt cucumber soup)

Served cold, this cucumber soup is delightful, refreshing and nutritious. The ingredients include: yoghurt, cucumber, garlic, salt, water and dill (walnuts can be added if desired). All vegetables and herbs are sliced in fine pieces and mixed with the liquid ingredients. Some ice cubes can be added before serving.

Dobrudzhanska kavarma (pastry)

This is a form of “banitza” (another Bulgarian typical pastry dish) which originates in Dobrudzha (North East region). It is prepared from filo pastry with filling of eggs, milk and cheese. The original recipe calls for skim milked, which can be obtained by adding some lemon juice or other acid to a fresh milk. It is eaten for breakfast, light supper or as a side dish with some other food. Video instructions (in Bulgarian) of how to prepare Dobrudzhanska kavarma can be found here

https://kanal3.bg/kuhniata-na-zvezdev/recepti/67?show=video#void

Kavarma-kebap Strandzhanska mosaika (Meat and vegetable grilled-stew dish)

This is a delicious dish coming from Strandzha region (South East Bulgaria).

It is made out of pork, lard (or vegetable oil), green onion, peppers, tomatoes, carrots, mushrooms, pitted olives, pickles, parsley, herbs, salts and spices. The whole mixture of ingredients is stewed on the stove and then grilled in the oven in a traditional closed pot, call “gyuvech”

Chushki bjurek (Fried red peppers stuffed with cheese)

Another simple, yet tasty and nutritious dish which combines typical local ingredients such as red sweet peppers and white brined cheese. The recipes starts with preparing the mixture for the stuffing out of white cheese, eggs and yoghurt. The peppers are then filled with the mixture, coated in bread crumbs with eggs and then fried in vegetable oil.

Midi po Bourgaski (in "Bourgas" style)

This tasty recipe is based on fresh back sea mussels which are boiled whole (with the shells), mixed with rice and sprinkled with tomato sauce. At the end of the cooking, fresh parsley is added. It pairs well with white wine or mastika (Bulgarian brandy flavored with mastic or anise)

4. Challenges and prospects of the traditional food sector of North East and South East regions in Bulgaria

The food and agri- sector in Bulgaria has long established traditions, rich heritage and bright prospects for the future. However, there are certain challenges that could potentially hinder its development, namely: The agricultural land becomes more concentrated in large farm owners and is dedicated to mass crop production, thus leading to loss of diversification and limits the small size, bio production. On the other hand, the food production is also heavily industrialized with large companies prevailing in the sector, achieving economies of scale and strong price competitive advantage. Small farmers suffer additionally from limited access to markets and rigorous competition by cheap imported produces and food products. The food supply chain is usually long, thus permitting for several intermediaries to deviate the profit from the original producer. Depopulation of the rural areas and migration of young people to the big cities is another negative trend that drains human resources out of the land. In general, there are gaps in market and production history for artisan food product, which occurred as a result of the 40 years of communist regime. Small, family companies have not established long-term consumers' thrust and traditions (as in some other countries) and have to compete on a very saturated food market with the big monopolistic companies which often discourages the free entrepreneurship spirit. Finally, along with the process of globalization and democratization of the society, there is a negative trend of loss of culinary heritage, gastronomic identity and taste. The fruits and vegetables are less evident at the family table, while pre-packaged, frozen, sugar-rich or highly process food become more popular. The contemporary typical Bulgarian cuisine is steadily shifting towards adopting western world convenience food models and abandons the traditional healthy, but time-consuming techniques of cooking. There have been some initiatives to reverse this negative trend, such as the Slow Food movement and the "Let's save the Bulgarian Taste" campaign. Those initiatives include identification of potential GI candidates and support for producers and local communities in the application process.

The organic market in Bulgaria is relatively new and still small, yet rapidly growing. Over the past few years there was a boom of country's organic products market. The number of specialized shops as well as the number of large retail chains included into organic food distribution increased. Most of Bulgarian organic food and products are destined for foreign markets. Bulgaria is a traditional producer of various types of certified organic honey with excellent quality indicators being exported to the world market. Bulgarian organic fresh fruit and vegetables, milk and dairy products, jams, chutneys, dried fruit and nuts have excellent taste qualities and are highly valued in the European and global market.

The GI protection system is still at its initial stage of its development. The number of registered PDOs, PGIs and TSGs is very small compare to other European countries. More efforts should be put in this direction, considering the potential benefits of GI scheme for all stakeholders are numerous: The **producers** are benefiting from protection against misuse, imitation and evocation as well as a price premium that can be obtained due to a stronger brand image. The **consumer** has guarantee about the origin, the quality and the authenticity of the product. Finally, the **society** as a whole should encourage GIs adoption since GIs helps local economy, environment and community by creating income and jobs, promotes biodiversity by encouraging sustainable growth of local plants, animal, crops etc. and enhances the savoir-fair and the old established traditions. Moreover, the heritage preservation, especially in the rural areas has a positive impact on tourism development (since local, GI products could be incentive for travels to remote areas). In general, GIs leads to local development and prosperity.

Fig. 4: Economic, environmental and social benefits of the GIs protection scheme in Bulgaria

Economic benefits

- Fair food prices;
- Income for local economies;
- Higher life standard;
- Synergies with relevant local business;
- Diversification of rural tourism;
- Effective and balanced use of EU funds

Enivonmental benefits

- Preservation of resources
- Preservation of nature-friendly traditional agriculture;
- Decrease of green gases and mitigation of climate change;
- Preservation of soil fertility;
- Preservation of wild species and habitats

Social benefits

- Employment and education at local level;
- Decrease of depopulation and consolidation of local communities;
- Diversification of local social services;
- Strengthening the contacts between urban and rural population;
- Access to fresh and healthy food

Source: Dimitrova D. (2017)

For the future, in terms of food and agri-sustainability several trends have to be embodied by the society and supported by the government:

- ✓ Local plant and animal varieties have to be preserved by the communities and via specially designed governmental activities
- ✓ Partnerships with Research centres and institutes can stimulate development and adoption of new, local varieties and breeds with a guaranteed genetic identity and improved qualities.
- ✓ Government and the European Union has to continue providing special measurements of support of local, small, organic, bio and climate-smart agriculture
- ✓ Small scale producers have to unify their effort and cooperate on common grounds in order to achieve sizable market and legislation impact. The need of forming of so-called “groups of producers” is especially evident in GI application process.
- ✓ Identified local breeds and varieties should receive additional support, such as promotion on national and international level, subsidies for preservation of extinct breeds, training and education initiatives aimed at preserving the agri, food and culinary-heritage, etc.
- ✓ A number of products, foods and recipes have to undergo transition from home-made to market oriented production.
- ✓ Raising awareness among the local farmers and the society as a whole on the potential benefits derived from PDO/PGI and TSG identification and assistance with application process.

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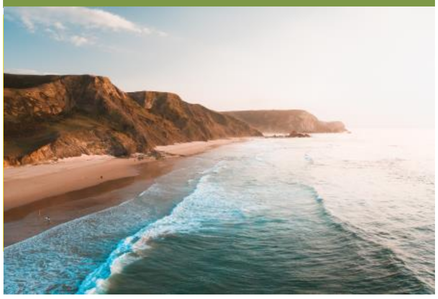

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CROSS BORDER COOPERATION