



Black Sea Basin ENI CBC Programme 2014-2020

***“Local Development and Cross Border Cooperation in the area of Agricultural Products and Traditional Food”
“LOC-FOOD”***

Study on the current situation of traditional products in Republic of Moldova (designation, market potential)

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Abbreviations

AA – Association Agreement
AGEPI – State Agency for Intellectual Property
AIPA – Agency for Investments and Payments in Agriculture
DCFTA – EU Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area
EU – European Union
GEF SGP – Global Environment Facility Small Grants Program
GIZ – German Agency for International Cooperation
MARDE – Ministry of Agriculture, Regional Development and Environment
MEI – Ministry of Economy and Infrastructure
NSARD – National Strategy for Agricultural and Rural Development
PCA – Autonomous Commercial Preferences System
PDO – Protected Designation of Origin
PGI – Protected Geographical Indication
TSG – Traditional Speciality Guaranteed
UNDP – United Nations Development Program
USAID – US Agency for International Development

Executive Summary

This study is carried out within the project “Local Development and Cross Border Cooperation in the area of Agricultural Products and Traditional Food” “LOC-FOOD” financially supported by Black Sea Basin ENI CBC Program 2014–2020. The overall objective of the project is to support sustainable economic and social development in rural agricultural areas in the intervention region through integrated initiatives, incorporating economic, environmental, social and cultural dimensions, as well as strengthening regional cooperation. In particular, the project supports the development and promotion of local traditional agricultural food, contributing to the prosperity of the rural community, social, cultural inclusion and biodiversity conservation, by implementing common strategies for common challenges and supporting local activities, from people to people. The project targets the heart of the rural economy, which is the agricultural sector, and is expected to have a considerable effect on local development.

The purpose of this study is to assess the current situation of the traditional products sector in the project intervention area. The evaluation covers agricultural raw products, and processed ones, covering the most important aspects of the subject.

The first part of the document contains a comprehensive analysis of national legislation in the field of agri-food, how to regulate the procedures related to the conversion to organic farming. The analysis also includes the important topic regarding the DO, GI and TSG registration procedure. At the same time, the national strategic documents are created, which create the general framework for the functioning of the fields related to organic agriculture and the production of organic agri-food products.

The second part of the study provides information on the physical and demographic aspect of the project area (in this case the Republic of Moldova), the state of the production system in the field of agriculture and agri-food. These materials present the current state of organic agriculture and organic agri-food, the level of preparation of the state and agricultural entrepreneurs as the economic branch of the Republic of Moldova to change the approach of the field.

The third part already provides answers to the question regarding the level of training of the Republic of Moldova and its experience in organic farming and agri-food production and involvement in the registration process of DO, GI and TSG. It is an important topic that reflects the country's adaptability and potential for quality rallies in EU countries.

The fourth part highlights those challenges to be accepted and achieved, as well as the perspectives of the traditional food sector in the eligible area (Republic of Moldova), emphasizing the development of gastronomic tourism, which can become a driving force for promoting and developing traditional food.

The study concludes with some conclusions and recommendations relevant to the Republic of Moldova.

1. Definitions and Legislation at EU and country level

The national legislation analyzed in this section includes some relaxed topics. In general, the legislation regulates the processes of organization and operation of markets, where most agricultural and agro-food products are sold within the country. At the same time, there are some more specific topics of the study, such as: organic agro-food production, trademarks, protected geographical indications (PGI), protected designations of origin (PDO), traditional specialties guaranteed (STP), with a well-defined legislative field. Also in this context, we analyze the legislative documents regarding the subsidy mechanisms in the field of agriculture and rural development, including for the actions of registration of agro-food products with PGI, PDO, TSG.

However, in this study we will not examine the general legislation of entrepreneurship in the field of agro-food and public catering, as well as the normative conditions related to ensuring food security and hygiene in these areas, which are specific regulations of the legislation of the Republic of Moldova.

Below are analyzed aspects from several laws and legal-normative acts relevant to our study.

Law no. 115 of 09.06.2005¹ provides the basic principles and methods specific to organic farming, the rules for labeling organic products (including provisions on the national logo of organic farming “Organic Agriculture – Republic of Moldova”), the operation of the certification system for organic products, and the rules specific for the import and export of such products. The aspects relevant to our field of study regulate: i) the protection and enhancement of diversity by choosing the types of crops and species, as well as the methods of animal husbandry that can contribute to the harmonization of organic agro-food production with the natural limits of the soil; ii) the development on a voluntary basis of the entrepreneurial activity in the field of ecological agro-food production. According to art. 4 the attributions of the competent authorities are, among others, related to: a) the coordination of the activities for the elaboration of the national standards regarding the ecological agro-food production; b) elaboration of draft normative acts harmonized with European and international regulations in the field; c) elaboration and ensuring the implementation of the National Program on ecological agro-food production, approved by the Government; d) participation in the international collaboration in the field of ecological agro-food production; e) organization of training programs for economic agents, natural and legal persons in order to work in the field of ecological agro-food production, etc.

Chapter II of the Law regulates the rules of organic agro-food production (art. 5²). Chapter III describes the rules for labeling and marking of agri-food products (art. 6¹)

Government Decision (GD) no. 149 of 10.02.2006² implements Law 115/2005. The initial legal framework was based on EU legislation, including Council Regulation (EEC) no. 2092/91 on organic production of agricultural products and its indication on agricultural and food products. This document is accompanied by 4 annexes, which contain the National Program on organic agro-food production (Annex 1), the Regulation on methods and principles of organic agro-food production (Annex 2). Regulation on the system of inspection and certification of

¹ Law no. 115 of 09.06.2005 on organic agro-food production

² GD RM no. 149 of 10.02.2006 for the implementation of Law no. 115 on organic agro-food production. Published: 24.02.2006 in the Official Gazette no. 31-34 art Nr: 199

organic agro - food production (Annex 3), Rules on the import and export of organic agro - food products (Annex 4).

In order to obtain compliance with the legal framework regarding organic farming in the Republic of Moldova is adopted **GD no. 1078 of 22.09.2008**³ to establish requirements applicable to organic agro-food production at all stages of production, processing and marketing of organic products and their control; in labeling and advertising indications applicable to organic production. This refers to Law 115/2005 and GD 149/2006, but adds some new rules in accordance with the national legislation on technical regulations. It was also a new harmonization of Moldovan environmental regulations to the new Council of the European Union (EC) Regulation (EEC) No 834/2007 on organic production and labeling of organic products, which repealed Regulation (EEC) No 2092/91. An amendment to Law 115/2005 was adopted by Law no. 26 of 24.02.2011 for the harmonization of the legal framework of the Republic of Moldova with the new amendments in the EU regulations.

Order no. OMAIA107 / 2008 of 26.05.2008⁴ was elaborated in accordance with the provisions stipulated in art. 4 paragraph (2) lit. c), art. 7 of Law no. 115-XVI of 09.06.2005 regarding the ecological agro-food production and the provisions of point 1, letter (a), in art. 8 of Council Regulation (EEC) no. 2092/1991 on the method of organic agricultural production and its indication on agricultural and food products, as well as art. 27 paragraph (3) of the EC Regulation 834/2007 of the European Council of 28 June 2007 “On organic production and labeling of organic products”.

Order no. 9 of 19.01.2010⁵ establishes the rules for the establishment of the national body Authorization Commission. This Commission is responsible for authorizing inspection and certification bodies of organic agro-food production. The approved regulation describes the process of authorization of inspection and certification bodies, the functioning and responsibilities of the Commission, establishes the format of the documents obtained as a result of the certification process.

Law no. LP38 / 2008 of 29.02.2008⁶ creates the necessary framework for the application of Council Regulation (EC) No 207/2009 of 26 February 2009 on the Community trade mark (published in the Official Journal of the European Union No L 78 of 24 March 2009), Commission Regulation (EC) No 2868/95 of 13 December 1995 on the implementation of the Council Regulation (EC) No 40/94 of 20 December 1993 on the Community trade mark (published in the Official Journal of the European Union No L303 of 15 December 1995), Directive 2004/48 / EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 29 April 2004 on the enforcement of intellectual property (published in the Official Journal of the European Union no. L157 of 30 April 2004). This law through art. 4. describes the conditions for the creation of the national office, the State Agency for Intellectual Property, AGEPI, which is the only authority that grants on the territory of the Republic of Moldova trademark protection under the law. Chapter III is dedicated to regulating the trademark registration process.

³ GD Nr. 1078 of 22.09.2008 on the approval of the Technical Regulation "Organic agro-food production and labeling" Published: 26.09.2008 in the Official Gazette no. 178 art No: 1084. Date of entry into force: 26.06.2009

⁴ Order no. OMAIA107 / 2008 of 26.05.2008 on the approval of the Rules on the registration of economic agents in organic agro-food production. Published: 29.08.2008 in the Official Gazette no. 162-164 art. 466.

⁵ Order no. 9 of 19.01.2010 Regarding the establishment of the Authorization Commission.

⁶ Law no. LP38 / 2008 of 29.02.2008 on trademark protection. Published: 06.06.2008 in the Official Gazette no. 99-101 art. 362.

GD 852/2001 of 16.08.2001⁷ establishes the use of state-owned trademarks. The provisions of the proposed Regulation extend to trademarks declared state-owned, existing and legally used until January 1, 1992 by two or more legal entities.

In December 2010, the Government launched the national brand “Organic Agriculture – Republic of Moldova”. The logo applies only to organic food products, labels and packaging, which have been inspected and certified by accredited certification bodies throughout the production cycle. **GD no. 884**⁸ approves the Regulation on the use of the national trademark “Organic Agriculture – Republic of Moldova”. The content of the Regulation is based on the provisions of Laws 78-XV of 18 March 2004 115-XVI of 9 June 2005, 279/2017 and on the Technical Regulations “Organic agro-food production and labeling of organic agro-food products”. The Regulation lays down the application of the national mark on the packaging and labeling of processed, unprocessed and prepacked products, all organic categories and conditions under which products may be considered organic. It also contains a description of the procedure for granting the right to use the national trademark. The obligatory national trademark “Organic Agriculture – Republic of Moldova” is used for the marketing of organic products by economic agents, producers and processors of organic agri-food production. The document provides the rules for creating and maintaining the Register on the record of economic agents requesting and authorized to use the national trademark “Organic Agriculture – Republic of Moldova”, but so far this record tool has not been developed and applied.

By Order **no. 49 of 27.03.2015 On the establishment of the profile Commission**, a commission was established responsible for the process of examining applications and issuing the authorization for use by economic agents of the national trademark “Organic Agriculture – Republic of Moldova”, keeping the register on authorization and use national trademark “Organic Agriculture – Republic of Moldova”.

Law no. 66 of 27.03.2008⁹ regulates the field regarding the protection of geographical indications, designations of origin and traditional specialties guaranteed. In art. 3 stipulates the role and place of AGEPI in the legal protection of geographical indications (GI), designations of origin (DO) and traditional specialties guaranteed (TSG) under the law. Chapter III regulates the registration process of GI, DO and TSG (art. 14–28).

Law no. LP317 / 2012¹⁰ ratifies the Agreement between the Republic of Moldova and the European Union on the protection of geographical indications for agricultural products, concluded in Brussels on 26 June 2012.

Law no. 101¹¹ approves the national certification emblems of products with PGI, PDO, TSG, describes exactly their representation. At the same time, the Regulation is approved, which establishes the conditions and use of national symbols associated with protected geographical

⁷ GD 852/2001 of 16.08.2001 on the use of state-owned trademarks. Published: 18.08.2001 in the Official Gazette no. 100-101 art. 886.

⁸ GD no. 884 on the approval of the Regulation on the use of the national trademark "Organic Agriculture - Republic of Moldova, approved on 22.10.2014, published on 31.10.2014 in the Official Gazette no. 325-332 art. 952.

⁹ Law no. 66 of 27.03.2008 on the protection of geographical indications, designations of origin and traditional specialties guaranteed. Published: 25.07.2008 in the Official Gazette no. 134-137 art No: 527 Date of entry into force: 25.10.2008.

¹⁰ https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=7605&lang=ro

¹¹ Law no. 101 of 12.06.2014 for the approval of national symbols associated with protected geographical indications, protected designations of origin and traditional specialties guaranteed. Published: 25.07.2014 in the Official Gazette no. 209-216 art no: 447.

indications, protected designations of origin and traditional specialties guaranteed (referred to as national symbols), established for the purpose of marking products marketed under a protected name. no. 66-XVI of March 27, 2008 on the protection of geographical indications, designations of origin and traditional specialties guaranteed.

Although still in 2008 in laws 38 and 66 were established some functions of AGEPI - the national office in the field of intellectual property protection and the only authority in the territory of Moldova that provides legal protection to trademarks and GIs, DOs and TSGs, in 2014 by Law no. LP114 / 2014 changes the AGEPI statute, including the legal status, attributions, rights and obligations (Chapter II), stipulates the basic activities that AGEPI employees currently carry out.

HG Nr. 610¹² contains the regulation on the procedure for the submission, examination and registration of geographical indications, designations of origin and traditional specialties guaranteed.

GD 644/2010¹³ designates the current MARDE as a state institution responsible for the approval of specifications, finalization of general principles, approval of stages and control procedures in order to ensure compliance with specifications. Institutions such as the Agency for Consumer Protection and Market Surveillance, the National Agency for Food Safety, the Center for Vinification and Food Technology of the Scientific-Practical Institute of Horticulture and Food Technologies, as well as the Sanitary-Veterinary and Animal Safety Agency are responsible for official controls on the compliance of these products with the technical regulations and requirements set out in the specifications.

According to **GD 1247/2018¹⁴**, the public institution “State Agency for Intellectual Property” was reorganized under the Government of the Republic of Moldova. These formal changes did not lead to the modification of the functions of AGEPI, responsible for *ensuring the protection of geographical indications, designations of origin and traditional specialties guaranteed, according to the provisions established in Law no. 66/2008 on the protection of geographical indications, designations of origin and traditional specialties guaranteed* (p. 6, letter f).

Order no. 149¹⁵ approves the Regulation on the approval of the specifications for agro-food products with a designation of origin, geographical indication and traditional specialties guaranteed (hereinafter - Regulation), but also creates the regulatory framework necessary for the application of:

¹² GD Nr. 610 of 05.07.2010 for the submission, examination and registration of geographical indications, designations of origin and traditional specialties guaranteed. Published: 13.07.2010 in the official monitor no. 119-120 art no: 691.

¹³ GD 644/2010 of 19.07.2010 regarding the designation of the competent authorities empowered with attributions and responsibilities regarding the products with designations of origin and geographical indications and the traditional specialties guaranteed and of the competent authorities responsible for the official controls regarding the conformity of these products. Published: 27.07.2010 in the Official Gazette no. 129-130 art. 729.

¹⁴ GD1247 / 2018 of 19.12.2018 on the organization and functioning of the State Agency for Intellectual Property. Published: 28.12.2018 in the Official Gazette no. 513-525 art. 1352.

¹⁵ Order No. 149 of 04.08.2015 on the procedure for approval of specifications for agro-food products with guaranteed designations of origin, geographical indications and traditional specialties. Published: 23.10.2015 in the Official Gazette no. 291-295 art nr: 2158.

- Council Regulation (EC) No 1151/2012 of 21 November 2012 on systems for the quality of agricultural products, published in the Official Journal of the European Union (OJ) no. L 343/1, 14.12.2012;
- Commission Regulation (EC) No 668/2014 of 13 June 2014 laying down detailed rules for the application Council Regulation (EC) No 1151/2012 of 21 November 2012 on systems for the quality of agricultural products, published in the Official Journal of the European Union (OJ) no. L 179/36, 19.06.2014;
- Regulation (EC) No 882/2004 of 29 April 2004 on official controls performed to ensure verification of compliance with food law and animal health and welfare rules, published in the Official Journal of the European Union (OJ) no. L 191, 28.05.2004;
- Council Regulation (EC) No 178/2002 of 28 January 2002 laying down the general principles and requirements of food law, establishing the European Food Safety Authority and laying down procedures for food safety, published in the Official Journal of the European Union (OJ) no. L 31/1, 01.02.2002.

The national regulation establishes the essential requirements for obtaining agro-food products with geographical indications, guaranteed designations of origin and traditional specialties, how to prepare and approve specifications and conformity assessment procedures, specific requirements that distinguish agro-food products with DO, GI and TSG of similar agro-food products belonging to the same category, characteristics or properties which provide added value as a result of the agricultural or processing methods used for their production or of the place of production or marketing shall be set out in the product specification. It contains approximately the same notions relevant to the field, as in Law no. 66.

Since 2011, the Scientific-Practical Institute of Horticulture and Food Technologies has *the right to delimit the geographical wine-growing areas for the production of wines with geographical indication and designation of origin*, attribution offered by MAFI Order no. 129 of 08.07.2011 on the delimitation of geographical wine areas for the production of wines with geographical indication and designation of origin.

In 2013, the National Office of Vine and Wine was created with its own statute by Government Decision no. 725 of 16.09.2013, in accordance with art. 32nd para. (2) of the Law on vineyards and wine no. 57-XVI from 10.03.2006. In accordance with point 6 par. 6) of GD no. 725 of 16.09.2013 National Office of Vine and Wine - *manages the production of wine products with protected geographical indication (PGI) and protected designation of origin (PDO), in accordance with technical regulations approved by the Government*¹⁶.

Law no. LP276 / 2016¹⁷ establish an improved framework for subsidizing agricultural producers, adjusted to good European practices. According to its provisions, the Agriculture and Rural Development Fund was established, which consists of annual allocations from the state budget for agricultural and rural development, as well as from other sources, including the European Commission's programs. Direct payments and advance grants are offered for start-up projects, including in organic farming. This law presents the general instrument on state assistance of the development process of agriculture and rural environment, modernization of the

¹⁶ Fala, An. Practical guide for identifying potential products that can be promoted under PGI, PDO or recognized as TSG in the Republic of Moldova. Chisinau, 2017, p. 16.

¹⁷ Law no. LP276 / 2016 of 16.12.2016 on the principles of subsidy in the development of agriculture and rural environment. Published: 03.03.2017 in the Official Gazette no. 67-71 art. 93.

agro-industrial sector, which will be carried out through the competent authorities, supports among others the modernization of the agro-food chain in order to comply with European quality. The basic notions of the law also include organic agro-food production - agro-food production that corresponds to the criteria established by Law no. 115-XVI of June 9, 2005 on organic agro-food production, ie “obtaining, storing and processing agro-food products without the use of synthetic chemicals, in accordance with the rules of organic production established by law and national and international standards in the field, certified in the established manner”. In order to encourage organic agro-food production, the law provides that certain categories of agricultural producers may be granted facilities. Therefore, subsidies granted under the general conditions of the value of the eligible investment are increased by at least 20% for agricultural producers engaged in the cultivation of organic crops or organic farming (Article 22).

The special eligibility criteria for organic farming are the following: a) agricultural producers are registered in the production system of organic farming; b) the applicant holds the contract concluded with an inspection and certification body accredited and authorized by the specialized central body; c) the applicant holds the certificate of conformity or authorization to confirm the conversion (art. 25, para. 9).

Law no. LP257 / 2006¹⁸ expressly does not regulate the process of selling organic agro-food products, but does not prohibit the sale of such products on the territory of agricultural and agro-food markets in accordance with the provisions of this law.

The national strategy for agricultural and rural development for the years 2014–2020 is a basis for the sustainable development of the agricultural sector and ensuring an attractive standard of living in rural areas. The Ministry of Agriculture, Regional Development and Environment has developed the Action Plan for the implementation of the National Strategy for Agricultural and Rural Development for the years 2014–2020 (approved by Government Decision no. 742 of October 21, 2015). One of the specific objectives of the National Strategy for Agricultural and Rural Development for 2014–2020 provides for the need to develop and promote the organic farming system by implementing non-polluting technologies. With the approval of the Environmental Strategy 2014–2023, national and sectoral priorities were established, including on the promotion of organic farming. The strategy places particular emphasis on increasing the competitiveness of the agro-food sector, which is also clearly reflected in the investment needs foreseen for the implementation of SNDAR – 50% of the budget being allocated to activities related to the restructuring and modernization of the agro-food sector. 30% of the planned investment needs are allocated to ensuring the sustainable management of natural resources, and the remaining 20% - to improving living standards in rural areas. One of the specific objectives of the National Strategy for Agricultural and Rural Development for the years 2014–2020 provides for the need to develop and promote the organic farming system by implementing non-polluting technologies.

With the approval of **the Environmental Strategy 2014–2023**, national and sectoral priorities were established, including on the promotion of organic farming.

The draft Roadmap for the Promotion of the Green Economy in the Republic of Moldova, which was recently developed, includes several measures on EA. As specific measures are proposed: a) strengthening the capacities of the Ministry of Agriculture, Regional Development

¹⁸ Law no. LP257 / 2006 of 27.07.2006 regarding the organization and functioning of the markets of agricultural and agro-food products Published: 08.09.2006 in the Official Gazette no. 142-145 art. 700.

and Environment (MARDE) in the development and promotion aspects of the EA. Harmonization of national legislation with international / EU standards and improvement of subsidy schemes for organic production; b) development of an electronic register for organic producers and their products; c) elaboration of an action plan for the development of AE; d) elaboration and organization of trainings for farmers in the field of AE, including on food supply chain management and certification requirements; e) information and public awareness for changing the attitude of consumers towards the consumption of organic products, their added value for the national economy, health and environment. Integration of specific teaching courses in the school and university curriculum; f) creation of pilot agricultural markets and shops specializing in organic products, support of farmers during the period of conversion to organic production through specific support mechanisms¹⁹.

By signing the **Association Agreement with the EU** – on June 27, 2014, the Republic of Moldova obtained the opportunity to improve its economic activity by facilitating the development of areas with high potential for development and export. Most of the provisions are covered by the economics component. The Association Agreement provides for the provision of favorable trade conditions, which allow preferential access to EU markets for a predetermined number and volume of products. The reduction of customs tariffs is foreseen, and for certain products their total exclusion. The areas provided by this AA are very broad, which would mean that the Republic of Moldova, in about 10-15 years, will have to modernize virtually all areas, in line with EU standards.

It was amended, by harmonization to EU requirements, GD no. 929 of 31.12.2009 regarding the approval of the “Quality and marketing requirements for fresh fruits and vegetables”, by GD no. 198 din 27.03.2017.

¹⁹ Training manual for trainers and farmers: Ecological Agriculture System / Ciubotaru Valentin, at.al; UCIP IFAD / AO BIOS. Chisinau, 2018, pp. 9-10.

2. Country Profile: Republic of Moldova

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

Republic of Moldova is located in southeastern Europe, between Romania and Ukraine, with access to the Black Sea through a 200 m section located at the confluence of the Prut River with the Danube River in the extreme south of the country. Here is located the International Free Port Giurgiulesti fluvio / maritime, which serves directly at entry / exit in / from the Republic of Moldova.

Most of the territory is a moderate hilly plateau, intersected by many springs and rivers, it is part of the Moldavian Plateau, with an average altitude of 200m and a maximum of 250m, divided into the Baltic steppe and the middle Prut valley. Black soils rich in humus and temperate climate have contributed greatly to the development of the agricultural sector throughout the history of the land. The territory was heavily deforested for agriculture in the 19th and 20th centuries, and today the Republic of Moldova has one of the smallest forest-covered areas in European countries, of 11.4% (0.38 million hectares).

The territory of the Republic of Moldova is highlighted by a diverse landscape, conditioned by the variety of natural factors (geological, orographic, climatic, edaphic, hydrographic, etc.). Due to its position and physical-geographical conditions, 2 natural areas are highlighted – forest-steppe and steppe, which include 5 landscape regions. Depending on the action of climatic factors, landscapes, specialization of agricultural production and administrative delimitation of the territory of the Republic of Moldova are defined 3 agro-climatic zones: North, Center and South.

Republic of Moldova is located in an area with a temperate continental climate favorable to the agricultural sector, with annual summary solar radiation of about 110 kkal / cm² and a sum of active temperatures, above 10 ° C of 3000 ° C for the Center area and the South. The negative climatic peculiarities are the dry periods, mainly in summer with lack of precipitation for a long period of time, excessive temperatures, low humidity and hot winds.

The main natural resources of the Republic of Moldova are the soils, which have an average creditworthiness of 65 points. The soil cover includes three zonal types: brown soils, gray soils spread in hilly regions and chernozems formed in steppe conditions on lands with lower altitudes. The main type of soil is chernozem, which occupies 70% of the land area and is relatively suitable for irrigation²⁰.

The total area of the land fund on January 1, 2019 is 3,384.7 thousand ha, of which agricultural land – 2496.4.0 thousand ha, with arable land – 1838.5 thousand ha, in the sector of multiannual plantations with 286.6 thousand ha of which: orchards – 131.2 thousand ha, vineyards – 133.1. For pastures are used 339.1 thousand ha, hayfields – 2 thousand ha, for fallow grounds – 30.2 thousand ha²¹.

The country has the following first-level administrative-territorial units: 10 municipalities – Chisinau, Balti, Bender, Cahul, Edinet, Hincesti, Orhei, Soroca, Straseni and Ungheni. 32 districts with 1681 localities, of which 982 – incorporated localities (10 municipalities, 52 cities, 917 communes), 699 villages without administration (40 – in the composition of cities, 659 – in the composition of communes). Autonomous Territorial Unit Gagauzia with 32 localities, of

²⁰ Fala, An. Study on the identification of products, beverages, dishes and handicrafts subject to registration as Geographical Indications, Designations of Origin and Traditional Specialties Guaranteed in the Republic of Moldova. AGEPI, SARDPI, Chisinau: S. n., 2018 (F.E.-P. „Central Printing House”), p. 15.

²¹ https://statistica.gov.md/public/files/publicatii_electronice/Anuar_Statistic/2019/16_AS.pdf

which 2 municipalities, 1 city, 23 communes with 28 localities and 1 locality in the composition of cities, with a population of about 135 thousand inhabitants (according to the 2014 census). The administrative-territorial units on the left bank of the Dniester, more generically known as Transnistria with 147 localities, of which 1 municipality - Tiraspol and 9 cities. With a total population of about 469 thousand people (2018 level)²².

According to the Statistical Yearbook of Moldova in 2019, the total population of the Republic of Moldova is 3548 thousand people (excluding Transnistria), of which 48.1% percent are men and 51.9% – women, 42.9% are urban population and 57.1 % – rural population (about 2 million), which is in a steady decline over the past 20 years. The population density is 116.7 inhabitants per 1 km². Life expectancy in 2018 was 69.1 years for men and 77.1 years – for women, we notice a large gap on this indicator. Out of the total number of inhabitants, 1252 thousand people are involved in various economic activities. The share of the population involved in economic activities related to agriculture, forestry and fishing is 452 thousand people or 36.1% of the total number of inhabitants of the Republic of Moldova, employed in various fields of the national economy. This represents an increase of 8.7% compared to 2010²³.

2.2. The production system

In 2019, the share of vegetable production in total agricultural production was 71% (in 2018 – 73.7%), animal production accounted for 29% (in 2018 – 26.3%). In 2019, agricultural enterprises produced the main part of the volume of sugar beet - 90.9%, colza – 89.6%, tobacco – 80.7%, cereals and legumes for grains (excluding corn) – 77.0%, sunflower – 70.1%, soybeans – 61.5%.

At the same time, 96.8% of the total volume of pumpkin crops, 91.0% of potatoes, 86.7% of legumes, 74.4% of grapes, 63.8% of corn for grains and 62.3% of fruits, nuts and berries were produced by households and peasants (farmers)²⁴.

Under the harvest of 2019, 93.8 kg of chemical fertilizers (recalculated to 100% nutrients) were introduced in agricultural enterprises and peasant (farmer) households per hectare, compared to 79.4 kg in 2018 (or with 18.1% more), and the fattened area increased by 8.6%. At the same time, the introduction of natural fertilizers decreased and amounted to 0.05 tons per 1 hectare, compared to 0.11 tons in 2018. In 2019, the use of herbicides per 1 hectare of agricultural crops decreased (by 48.5%) , fungicides (by 26.9%) and organic plant protection products (by 4.5%)²⁵.

The state of the livestock sector continues to be mainly determined by the situation in households, in which on January 1 a.c. 85.6% of the total number of cattle are concentrated (of which cows – 94.4%), 44.8% of pigs, 97.2% of sheep and goats and most of the animal production is produced. and birds – 54.1%, milk production – 93.6%, egg production – 57.7%)²⁶. Regarding the evolution of agricultural production, we must mention an essential increase during the last decade by about 40% from 19873 million lei in 2010 to 32637 million lei in 2018. The share of vegetable production during these years was much higher than the animal one, reaching in 2018 only 9190 million lei or 40% of the volume of vegetable production (22883 million lei).

²² <https://ro.wikipedia.org/wiki/Transnistria>

²³ Anuarul Statistic al Republicii Moldova, 2019, Chişinău, 2019:

https://statistica.gov.md/public/files/publicatii_electronice/Anuar_Statistic/2019/3_AS.pdf

²⁴ <https://statistica.gov.md/newsview.php?l=ro&idc=168&id=6571>

²⁵ <https://statistica.gov.md/newsview.php?l=ro&idc=168&id=6571>

²⁶ <https://statistica.gov.md/newsview.php?l=ro&idc=168&id=6571>

After the massive destruction of state-owned farms after 1991, the animal sector is struggling to recover, requiring large financial investments. At the same time, the share of services in agricultural production increases, reaching in 2018 the level of 564 million lei or 16.4% more compared to 2010 (471 million lei)²⁷.

The main crops of vegetable production are (data for 2018): cereals, sugar beet, tobacco, sunflower, potatoes, vegetables and pumpkin crops, fruits, nuts and berries, grapes, fodder plants and others. Animal production consists of the following categories: cattle, pigs, sheep and goats, birds, milk, eggs and wool²⁸.

At the same time, globally in recent years (2010–2018), in the structure of agricultural production by categories of households, the share of agricultural enterprises and peasant (farm) households is constantly increasing. In 2018 they accounted for 64.3% of the total volume, or an increase of 12.8% compared to 2010²⁹. This allows us to see that good premises are created for the implementation of European quality standards of agricultural production in the Republic of Moldova, because producers with the status of legal entities are interested, moreover they need the market of the European Union.

2.2.1 Agricultural production

Republic of Moldova has always been recognized by its fertile lands and by agriculture, the backbone of its economy. Black soils (chernozems) in Moldova are among the most fertile soils in the world. Arable land constitutes about 74% of the total area of agricultural land, with an area of 3,384.7 thousand ha, the highest percentage in Europe.

As a result of land reform in the 1990s, the structure of agricultural land use has changed. After privatization, a large part of the agricultural land is made up of small individual agricultural plots. As a result of the privatization of agricultural land, the quotas obtained by a number of about 1 million owners of agricultural land had an average area of 1.4 ha, subdivided into lots separated by type of land (arable, orchard, vineyard). In many cases, the efficient use of these plots is not possible. The production of traditional crops such as cereals, sunflower or sugar beet depends on the scale of production and the level of mechanization and can therefore only be carried out in agricultural work on larger scale fields. In addition, farmers / peasants do not have the experience, technical skills and funding to successfully develop a production of this level.

Out of the total agricultural lands, 643.8 thousand ha (36.8%) are in the form of public property, owned by: research institutes, colleges, communal pastures and lands from the reserve fund. 1852 thousand ha (65.2%) are in private property and / or private use.

This situation has led to the development of the land market and the process of consolidating agricultural land, although at a pace that is not described in any of the available analyzes. Fragmentation of agricultural land limits the implementation of sustainable and efficient methods of agriculture and soil conservation. However, even the largest farms / cooperatives do not address soil conservation issues, which include erosion, landslides and soil degradation.

Food security is regularly affected by weather conditions. Droughts, floods and other extreme natural phenomena (torrential rains, hail, storms and frosts) occur regularly and have a significant impact on living standards and the rural economy as a whole. The recent droughts of

²⁷ https://statistica.gov.md/public/files/publicatii_electronice/Anuar_Statistic/2019/16_AS.pdf

²⁸ https://statistica.gov.md/public/files/publicatii_electronice/Anuar_Statistic/2019/16_AS.pdf

²⁹ https://statistica.gov.md/public/files/publicatii_electronice/Anuar_Statistic/2019/16_AS.pdf

2000, 2003, 2006, 2007, 2010 and 2012, 2020 have severely affected food security and living standards in rural areas and created significant economic shocks. The most recent drought, in 2020, was severe, with very large declines in agricultural crops. The temperatures in July-August registered a level 3.7-5.1°C higher than the national average. The amount of precipitation was only 15-60% of the average, and the temperature at ground level reached a record level. The effects of high temperatures on vegetation led to a 20% decrease in areas of active vegetation, feed prices have risen. The most affected are the southern regions, especially the southeast.

In terms of production volume, households and small farms (less than 10 ha) produce 72% of total agricultural production and 80% of all horticultural products, defined as high value agricultural products, classified into three main groups:

- (i) Vegetables, including fresh / chilled, frozen and dried vegetables;
- (ii) Fruit and nuts, including fresh / chilled, frozen and dried fruit;
- (iii) Processed fruit and vegetable products, including fruit and vegetable juices and preserves.

In 2010, the National Association of Producers of Organic Agricultural Products from Moldova - “APEM-AGRO” was founded. The association promotes the products of its more than 40 members by organizing joint stands at local and international fairs and tries to be the voice of the private sector in dialogue with the Government. During the years 2015–2018, 38 Producer Groups were registered for different categories of agricultural products recognized by MARDE, of which a large part are concerned with organic agricultural production.

2.2.2 Organic farming

Republic of Moldova has favorable conditions for the cultivation of a wide range of organic plants with high added value. Geographical proximity to the EU market and the growing demand for organic products can provide opportunities in this sector. The regulatory framework for organic farming was established in 2005, with the approval of the Law on organic agro-food production and a number of regulations. The signing in 2014 of the Association Agreement with the EU for the Republic of Moldova stipulated clear rules for entering the European Union market. Increasingly, the country's economically active population understands the need to return to organic farming, aware of the oversaturation of land with chemical fertilizers, ruthlessly administered during the Soviet period.

In 2020, an atlas of organic agriculture in the Republic of Moldova was developed. The electronic map indicating the certified producers of organic agricultural products in Moldova is [available online](#). The platform was created by the Public Association "Ecovisio" in a project, with the support of GEF SGP, implemented by UNDP.

The atlas contains information about each ECO certified producer operating in the territory of the Republic of Moldova, the area owned, the crop that was grown, the authority that issued the ECO certificate. At the same time, data on ECO processed agricultural product processors and producers are published. The platform is expected to be updated annually. The atlas contains several filters for selecting data combinations, which makes it easier to access the necessary information. The map is intended for state institutions, actors in the field of environmental protection and human health, but also for representatives of civil society, who need this information.

According to these data in the Republic of Moldova, there are now 152 agricultural producers holding ECO certificates for about 70 ECO crops and over 50 ECO products. The

area cultivated with organic crops is estimated at over 28 thousand hectares. Among the ECO agricultural crops can be mentioned: table and technical grape vines, peas, sunflower, wheat, alfalfa, pumpkin, corn, autumn and spring barley, sugar beet, walnut plantations, fruit trees, vegetables, herbs.

The institutions accredited by the National Accreditation Center "Moldac" and authorized by the Ministry of Agriculture, Regional Development and Environment for certification (2019) are:

1. "A Cert" with certification of 2 manufacturers
 2. "AGRECO" – with 28 certified producers
 3. "BIO Inspecta" – 3 manufacturers certified by this body
 4. "Ceres" – 4 certificates issued
 5. "Eco Certificate" – 37 certificates
 6. "CU D" – 41 certificates
 7. "ECOCERT" – 4 certified manufacturers
 8. "KIWA BCS" – 30 certificates
- "Organic Standard" – 3 certificates issued³⁰.

2.2.3 Animal husbandry

In the Republic of Moldova the form of animal ownership is very fragmented, there are very few organized animal breeding units. Mixed farms (animals and vegetable crops) are not practiced, and fodder crops are not included as part of arable crop rotations. The net effect is that the availability of grass, fodder and concentrated animal feed is limited, poorly organized and aggravated by extreme weather events, such as the 2020 agricultural season. Individual animal owners must organize their diets for their cattle, partly on the basis of the right to use common pastures and also by producing or purchasing winter fodder and bedding for animals.

The legislative basis for common rights and obligations is unclear. The responsibilities of the Local Councils regarding the measures for the management or improvement of the communal pastures are not clear. Decisions on real estate on the balance of local public authorities (City Halls) are limited to decisions of the majority of the Council on leasing (renting for sale), leasing, or sale of real estate plots.

In 2018, the value of animal production in the Republic of Moldova was 9190 million lei or 40% of the volume of vegetable production obtained (22883 million lei). In the period 2012–2018, the volume of milk produced in the country decreased by 21.5%, ie from 525 thousand tons per year to 411.4 thousand tons. There is no positive or negative stability in domestic meat production. The best results between 2012–2018 refer to the years 2015–2016 with a production of over 130 thousand tons of meat per year, but this volume is not sufficient for domestic consumption, the import being approx. one-fifth of the volume of meat produced in the country. Sales for slaughter of cattle and poultry (live) from agricultural enterprises and farms (farmer), which have in the balance of animals and households are almost equal, amounting in 2018 83.7 thousand t and 79.6 thousand t respectively. Beef and veal is predominantly from slaughtered cows (beef) and unwanted calves (beef / veal). The study of the number of animals kept in households and farms shows that the highest concentration has farms with a number of less than

³⁰https://experience.arcgis.com/experience/c9e40f5d2376449ca0293178eaf319f/fbclid=IwAR1yFpJuv5ODYDAFdV9pBzktu_AOybmXiroOvYZxHc8dsoKPOjYQOWPnpTU

5 animals in total, excluding poultry. There are only 49 farms in Moldova, which own more than 50 dairy cows.

In essence, there is no significant commercial milk or meat industry. There are insufficient milk or meat producers to make extensive use of modern technologies. The largest amount of milk comes from small family farms, where cows are milked by hand. Any quantity of surplus milk entering the official supply chain is supplied in small quantities, with a large number of bacteria, through an inefficient collection and distribution system. Milk and grape production are the most value-added agricultural products, which emphasizes the importance of milk as a food and cash flow resource for rural households.

In the last 10 years there is a trend of creating livestock enterprises with the use of modern technologies, which combine mixed farms (animals and crops), with milk processing on the spot and the production of high quality dairy products. The state assists these initiatives through the grant instrument. The data presented by AIPA show that, in 2018, 215 applications were submitted for financial support, amounting to 54 million lei for the renovation and technological development of: 37 cattle farms – 19.9 million lei, 10 farms sheep and goats – 1.4 million lei, 12 pig farms – 8.3 million lei, 27 poultry farms – 11.9 million lei, 121 bee farms – 11.6 million lei, 8 rabbit farms / other fur animals – 0.9 million lei³¹.

2.2.4 The agro-food industry

The agro-food field in the Republic of Moldova is one of the basic branches of the national economy. The main branches of regional specialization are: wine industry, sugar, canned fruits and vegetables, natural juices, essential oils, etc. This is due to favorable climatic conditions for the development of agriculture.

Most of the agricultural production is of vegetable origin, constituting about 90% of the total production volume. The agricultural potential of the Republic of Moldova can fully cover the demand on the domestic market. However, the decline in agriculture in recent decades has caused a multitude of economic problems such as underutilization of available resources (especially agricultural land), lack of jobs and skilled human resources, migration of people from rural areas, low use of new technologies. growth and processing of agricultural production. All these impediments have a negative impact on the degree of satisfaction of domestic demand in agro-food products as well as on penetration in foreign markets.

Republic of Moldova is perceived as an agrarian country, where compared to other European countries the share of agriculture in the formation of GDP is quite high. However, this indicator is declining, where in 1995 the share of agriculture in GDP was almost 30%, in 2009 it decreased to 8.5%, and in 2019 it had a share of 10.1%³².

By signing the Association Agreement with the EU on June 27, 2014, Republic of Moldova obtained the opportunity to improve its economic activity by facilitating the development of areas with high potential for development and export. Most of the provisions are covered by the economics component. The Association Agreement provides for the provision of favorable trade conditions that allow preferential access to EU markets for a predetermined number and volume of products. The reduction of customs tariffs is foreseen, and for certain products their total exclusion. The areas provided by the EU-Moldova Agreement are very wide,

³¹ <https://agrobiznes.md/ai-o-afacere-in-zootehnie-vezi-cum-poti-solicita-subventii-din-partea-statului.html>

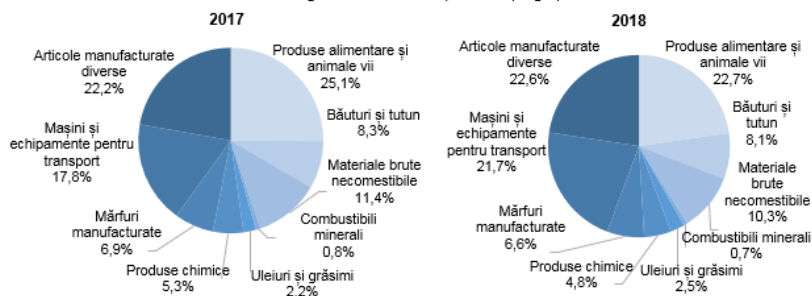
³² <https://statistica.gov.md/category.php?l=ro&idc=191>

which would mean that the Republic of Moldova, in about 10-15 years, will have to modernize virtually all areas, in line with EU standards.

Five years after the signing of the Association Agreement with the EU, which led to the creation of the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA) and the elimination of tariff and non-tariff barriers between the two sides, the Moldovan economy seems to have adopted a new model. development - the one based on exports. In the period 2006-2014 the share of the European Union (EU) in the export of goods varied around the level of 50%. After the creation of the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area with the EU, the share of exports to the EU has been steadily increasing from 53.3% in 2014, to 61.9% in 2015, 66% in 2016 and 68.8% in 2018. Throughout this period, the agro-food sector was the main beneficiary of DCFTA. The export of agro-food products increased between 2015 and 2017 by 44%. There was also an 11% increase in exports in the industrial sector. Agricultural products are part of the **top five product categories** exported to the EU: machinery and equipment; textile products; agricultural products; beverages; iron and steel. Of the total categories of products exported to the EU market, food of plant origin experienced one of the fastest growth rates, the main beneficiaries being exporters from the agro-food sector, especially cereals and other quota products, which confirms the positive effect. of eliminating tariff barriers to trade in agro-food products with the implementation of DCFTA. Entrepreneurs who have been able to establish and maintain trade relations with European partners have complied with certain technical, legislative, phytosanitary and food safety requirements. Of the top 5 European countries where Republic of Moldova exports the most products (2019) three are EU members: Romania – (26.67%), Italy – (11.28%) and Germany – (8.67%) of the volume total exports³³.

In 2018, exports of food and live animals had a share of 22.7% in the total value of exports. Within this section of goods, significant shares were registered in exports of vegetables and fruits (43.1% of total section and 9.8% of total exports), cereals and cereal-based preparations (39.2% of total section). and 8.9% of total exports), sugar, sugar preparations; honey (5.0% of total section and 1.1% of total exports), animal feed (3.6% of total section and 0.8% of total exports), dairy products and poultry eggs (3.3 % of total section and 0.7% of total exports), live animals (1.9% of total section and 0.4% of total exports), meat and meat preparations (1.6% of total section and 0, 4% of total exports), chocolate and other food preparations containing cocoa (1.5% of total section and 0.3% of total exports). Exports of beverages and tobacco accounted for 8.1% of total exports. Exports of alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages (89.6% of the total section and 7.2% of the total exports), raw and processed tobacco (10.4% of the total section and 0.8%) remain in this section of predominant goods. % of total exports).

Figura 6. Structura exporturilor pe grupe de mărfuri



Source: www.statistica.md

³³ <http://dcfta.md/cum-a-evoluat-comertul-dintre-rm-si-ue-dupa-dcfta-si-care-sunt-tendintele-in-primul-trimestru-al-anului-2019>

Exports of oils, fats and waxes of animal or vegetable origin accounted for 2.5% of total exports³⁴.

At the same time, agriculture in the Republic of Moldova remains vulnerable and exposed to a number of risks with a negative impact such as: erosion, droughts, landslides, but in addition to these natural problems, agricultural producers also face other difficulties.

At the moment in the field of agro-food processing we can distinguish several difficulties that prevent the development of processing, packaging and storage of agricultural products such as: lack of necessary infrastructure, lack of qualified staff, lack of knowledge in advanced processing technologies, lack of financial resources to purchase equipment necessary. The consequences of these difficulties are also confirmed by statistical results.

Table. Production of the main evolving industrial products

Types of products	2017	2018	2019
Meat, thousands of tonnes	54,3	60,1	60,5
Sausages, thousands of tonnes	18,4	19,7	21,2
Canned meat, thousands of tonnes	0,5	0,6	0,5
Fruit and vegetable juices, thousands of tonnes	55689,1	63210,8	81812,1
Canned vegetables and fruits, thousands of tonnes	19,6	25,6	17,9
Processed and preserved fruits, thousands of tonnes	8,2	12,5	9,4
Chemically unchanged crude oils, thousands of tonnes	86,8	106,2	124,6
Flour, thousands of tons	112,0	105,8	120,9
Groats, thousands of tons	6,7	6,2	6,6
Feed ready for animal feed, thousands of tons	87,5	85,6	70,8
Bread and bakery products, thousands of tons	130,1	128,2	130,9
Confectionery flour products, thousands of tons	35,4	36,8	39,1
Cough sugar, thousands of tons	129,0	73,9	86,9
Pasta, thousands of tons	4,2	3,8	3,8
Divine, thousand L 100% alcohol	2343,8	2583,5	2708,0
Spirits and liqueurs, thousand L 100% alcohol	2821,0	2795,5	2627,1
Sparkling wines, thousands of dal	642,4	665,4	670,0
Natural grape wines, mil. Dal	16,3	17,0	17,6
Wines from Porto, Madeira, Sheary, Tokay and others, thousands of dal	428,3	165,8	213,0

Source: *statbank.statistica.md*

Overall, the interest of entrepreneurs to enter EU markets is high, with awareness of the direct and indirect benefits of this process. Among the main benefits already felt by entrepreneurs selling in EU markets are: the possibility of marketing products at higher prices, improving product quality, access to new markets, the possibility of introducing innovations, developing professional knowledge and skills, access to more attractive financial resources, the possibility of developing sustainable partnerships and attracting investors, the culture of fair competition, favorable impact on the socio-economic development of the locality.

There is a very general level of knowledge by entrepreneurs of the benefits of working in producer associations. The existence of stereotypes regarding this form of activity and negative experiences reduce the openness of entrepreneurs to join associations. At the same time, the most

³⁴ <https://statistica.gov.md/newsview.php?l=ro&id=6256&idc=168>

important benefits that producer associations can offer, in this sense, are: strengthening the strengths of several entrepreneurs to reduce the risk of failure, increasing revenues from the activity performed. Entrepreneurs have a greater degree of skepticism about the possibility of producer associations to access the necessary financial resources and to influence the prices of manufactured products and market safety.

At the same time, there are several obstacles which, in the opinion of entrepreneurs, do not currently allow them to focus on EU markets, but also to develop, including: lack of information, especially in rural areas, on opportunities to penetrate EU markets and specific procedures; unstable legislation, which increases business costs and does not allow them to make forecasts for longer periods of time; distrust of local public authorities, which are corrupt and do not provide the necessary support; lack of advantageous financial resources; a monopoly on the local market by large companies, which do not allow producers to market their manufactured products at advantageous prices; loans for business development at very high interest rates, which are issued for relatively short periods of time; distrust of one's own strengths and fear of new challenges; lack of knowledge and experience in export-oriented business management; high level of competition in foreign markets; small production volumes that a single contractor can provide, which limits it in terms of the quantities needed for export; lack of conditions and infrastructure for storing products, which does not allow sales for a longer period of time; very low entrepreneurial culture; lack of knowledge in product promotion; lack of a national brand.

Immediately after the signing of the DCFTA Agreement, the export of agro-food products to the EU increased by 10.8% in one year, the most significant increases being in the export of sunflower seeds, soybeans, honey, dried fruits, grapes, oil, alcohol. The Autonomous Commercial Preferences System (PCA) has allowed the extension of duty-free product types to the EU market to 2102 tariff lines. For several years, most of the export quotas set by AA remain untouched. Only in the case of wheat, grapes and maize these levels are slightly reached.

Wine is the most exported agro-food product in the Republic of Moldova, ranking among the top 10 countries in the world in terms of wine production and export indicators. Exports of honey, nuts and cereals are also significant.

Domestic producers need the EU market for the following reasons:

- Commercialization of domestic production takes place in a fresh state due to the reduction of volumes of purchases and processing of vegetables by canneries.
- Poor development of services for collection, storage, transport of agricultural products for the food industry, lack of a modern post-harvest infrastructure.
- Insufficient development of wholesale markets.
- Look for opportunities to increase the marketing skills and bargaining power of producers who grow agricultural raw materials in the absence of market infrastructure within the country.
- Stimulating the increase of the competitiveness of the local production compared to the imported ones through diversification, the increase of the quality of the local agricultural products.
- Disposal of outdated agricultural production technologies and transition to the predominant use of new technologies.
- Searching for solutions to reduce production costs and stimulate labor productivity growth.



- Need for capacity building in the continuous provision of quality products to business partners.
- Stimulating through access to the EU market the creation of associations, monsters that will simplify and reduce costs for the diversification of activities in the fields of processing and packaging.

Stimulating the support from the professional associations, the local public administration bodies, but also from the scientific and consulting institutions in the rural area.

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

The emergence of organic farming at the end of the twentieth century in the Republic of Moldova was conditioned by the bankruptcy of intensive agroecosystems, based on chemicalization and mechanization. Organic farming began to flourish only in the years 2002–2004, when dialogue began with a number of organizations in the European Union on the share of vegetables, fruits, grapes, berries, produced in the Republic of Moldova and exported to EU areas. Taking into account the fact that the Republic of Moldova is a predominantly European agricultural country and that the production of the most important branch of the national economy - the agro-industrial complex is consumed on the domestic market and another part is exported, organic farming is of major importance. In this chapter we will try to finalize a real picture in the field of typical products of the Republic of Moldova and how much they are ready to enter the European market and if they meet the requirements of consumers on the EU market.

The classification of products for which the registration of the Designation of Origin (DO) and the Geographical Indication (GI) or the recognition as a Traditional Protected Specialty (TSG) is required is carried out in accordance with the Lisbon Agreement of 31.10.1958, to which Republic of Moldova acceded. no. 1328-XIV of 27.10.2000 and the Nice Classification System established by the Nice Agreement Concerning the International Classification of Goods and Services for the Registration of Marks of 15 June 1957, revised at Stockholm on 14 July 1967 and at Geneva on 13 May 1977 and amended on 2 October 1979³⁵.

This analysis is based on the provisions of the International Classification of Goods and Services for the Registration of Marks (Nice).

The Class 29 includes, in particular:

- meat-, fish-, fruit- or vegetable-based food;
- edible insects;
- milk beverages with milk predominating;
- milk substitutes, for example, almond milk, coconut milk, peanut milk, rice milk, soya milk;
- preserved mushrooms;
- pulses and nuts prepared for human consumption;
- seeds prepared for human consumption, not being seasonings or flavourings.

The Class 30 includes, in particular:

- beverages with coffee, cocoa, chocolate or tea base;
- cereals prepared for human consumption, for example, oat flakes, corn chips, husked barley, bulgur, muesli;
- pizza, pies, sandwiches;
- chocolate-coated nuts;
- flavourings, other than essential oils, for food or beverages.

The Class 31 includes, in particular:

- unprocessed cereals;
- fresh fruits and vegetables, even after washing or waxing;
- plant residue;
- unprocessed algae;

³⁵ Fala, An. Ghid practic pentru identificarea potențialelor produse ce pot fi promovate sub IGP, DOP sau recunoscute în calitate de STG în Republica Moldova. Chișinău, 2017, p. 21.

- unsawn timber;
- fertilised eggs for hatching;
- fresh mushrooms and truffles;
- litter for animals, for example, aromatic sand, sanded paper for pets.

The Class 32 includes, in particular:

- de-alcoholised beverages;
- soft drinks;
- rice-based and soya-based beverages, other than milk substitutes;
- energy drinks, isotonic beverages, protein-enriched sports beverages;
- non-alcoholic essences and fruit extracts for making beverages.

The Class 33 includes, in particular:

- wines, fortified wines;
- alcoholic cider, perry;
- spirits, liqueurs;
- alcoholic essences, alcoholic fruit extracts, bitters³⁶.

3.1. Traditional products of the eligible area

In 2018, in the Republic of Moldova there were 12 international and two national certification bodies, and of the 136 farmers who produce crops and organic products, 89 were certified by international bodies. By international bodies are certified for BIO production 73.4 thousand hectares of agricultural land, and by national bodies - 2,261 hectares. In total, there are 75.7 thousand hectares of organically cultivated land, which represents 3.9% of the total agricultural areas. In 2018, over 52.1 thousand tons of Moldovan BIO products were exported to the EU market. From a quantitative point of view, the most exported Moldovan organic agricultural product is *maize*. In 2019, over 32 thousand tons of maize were delivered abroad. Wheat was exported in a quantity of 2233 tons, and soybeans – 1098 tons. Walnuts are also in the top of exports of BIO products, in 2018 being exported 5275 tons of nuts in shell and 1577 tons of walnut kernels.

Already in 2019, 152 ecologically certified companies (including in conversion) were registered, mostly producers, but also about 10 traders and / or processors. More than two thirds are certified by international Certification Bodies (CBs), which means that they actively export to the EU. Less than a third are certified only by the two national CBs, ie they either produce only for the local market or do not yet have an exportable crop.

Of the 152 organic producers in Moldova, almost all grow plants, with the exception of 26 beekeepers (with about 7200 organic hives). The largest producer, Rostan SRL, with production in Transnistria, cultivates organic crops on 6740 ha, while the 65 organic producers, members of MOVCA operate on average each about 100 ha³⁷. The Atlas of Organic Agriculture, published in 2020, indicates an ecological area (including in conversion) of 28,547 ha. This would represent 1.1% of Moldova's agricultural area.

Currently, the most requested BIO products in the EU are:

Of Class 31:

³⁶ Clasificarea internațională a produselor și serviciilor în scopul înregistrării mărcilor (CIPS), ediția a 11-a, versiunea 2020: <https://osim.ro/wp-content/uploads/MarciIndicatiiGeografice/Clasificarea-Nisa-editia-a-11-a-2020.pdf>

³⁷ <https://agrobiznes.md/raport-ecologic-pe-tara-suprafete-cultivate-producatori.html>

- Fruits and berries such as: strawberry, raspberry, currant, gooseberry, sea buckthorn, blueberries, cherries, apricots, peaches, nuts (fresh, frozen or canned);
- Cereals (wheat, barley);
- Sugar beet, hemp (for organic clothes);
- Vegetable protein (soy, sunflower, peas, beans);

Of Class 30:

- Oilseeds (rapeseed and flax for oil);
- Honey;

And in Class 29:

- Fish etc.

In the Republic of Moldova, the cost of organic products compared to conventional agriculture is equal in vegetable growing, animal husbandry, beekeeping, and the other branches of agriculture and, in particular, in fruit growing and viticulture it is 15-20% higher. Based on the information presented, it can be mentioned that one of the basic opportunities in increasing the profitability of organic farming in the republic is *the delivery of BIO products on the EU market*.

From 2019 in the Republic of Moldova is practiced the creation of shelves of Moldovan organic products to promote them widely abroad. The Eco Moldova shelf has already been exhibited in 34 diplomatic missions abroad and 6 local partners (MEI, MARDE, USAID, EU Delegation, GIZ, and State Chancellery)³⁸. In this way, local eco-producers will be more easily targeted by consumers from abroad and will be able to establish partnerships with representatives from these countries.

3.1.1 Agroproducts produced in the eligible area (unprocessed)

In different historical periods, the territory of the current Republic of Moldova has undergone several experiments in the field of agriculture, being a kind of "polygon" for testing innovative plant varieties or growing species that were not specific to the place, which led to increased chemical fertilizer volume, the predominance of extensive agriculture, resulting in the physical change of the appearance of the territory (deforestation of forested areas, drying of swamped areas, etc.).

After gaining political independence, the same destructive philosophy applicable to agriculture was maintained for a long time. The creation of progressive legislation did not immediately lead to a change in land use. Only the opening of the European Union market and the markets of other developed countries has stimulated a change in approaches in the field of agriculture and the agro-food industry. In this sense, the country already has some successes, which stimulate the further implementation of organic farming in relation to several species of plants grown on the territory of the Republic of Moldova, return to traditional local species, only adjusted to current climatic conditions. This approach is beginning to predominate in the field of animal husbandry. In recent years, Republic of Moldova has positioned itself as a country with a great potential for the production of organic products in the field of agriculture and animal husbandry. More and more households are switching to green technologies. With each passing year, the number of products sent abroad increases - cereals, seeds, nuts, hazelnuts, organic blackberries. The trend of greening winemaking processes is actively developing.

³⁸ <https://agrobiznes.md/produsele-eco-moldovenesti-expuse-in-34-misiuni-diplomatice-de-pestre-hotare.html>

From the whole spectrum of unprocessed agricultural products, we present here the most representative of the space of the Republic of Moldova that are already present or may become present on the food market of the European Union.

Class 29, unprocessed products:

1. Eggs from birds (chickens) that have not been fed genetically modified feed or synthetic vitamins and that have been raised in the ground have a stronger shell and higher vitamin content. In the Republic of Moldova there is no organic farm that has passed certification to certification bodies. Until 2007, Republic of Moldova massively exported eggs to Romania, but once the neighboring state joined the EU and introduced new sanitary and phytosanitary rigors, this market closed.

2. Meat from grass-fed animals has a higher content of Omega-3 essential fatty acids and has a lower risk of contamination with *Escherichia coli*. Currently, in the category of products of animal origin, Republic of Moldova exports to the EU only bee honey, in small quantities, and egg powder³⁹.

Class 30, unprocessed products:

3. Bee honey is one of the few Moldovan food products of animal origin that can be exported without restrictions on the European Union market. The signing of the Free Trade Agreement with the European Union (2014) contributed significantly to the development of beekeeping. Until the signing of this Agreement, honey from Republic of Moldova was not a top product. It is now at the top of exports to the European Union. The agreement provided several facilities and the export procedure is simplified. Honey arrives much easier and faster on the shelves of stores in Romania, France, Germany or Italy, but also smaller but still considerable markets such as Poland, Slovakia and Denmark. In recent years, exports have grown 10 times to \$ 14 million annually. 90 percent of the honey exported by the Republic of Moldova is to the European Union. If until now honey was exported in barrels, now the trends are changing. The Republican Veterinary Diagnostic Center issues a report, without which export is not possible. The rest of the necessary documents are obtained from the National Agency for Food Safety and from the Customs Service. Exporters also require a certificate of origin EURO 1⁴⁰, which allows them to export honey duty free. Currently, there are almost eight thousand beekeepers, and the total volume of honey production is about 6,500 tons per year. Although Moldovan honey has been exported to European markets for a long time, the sector's potential is still very little exploited in this regard. At the level of 2018, out of the 22 authorized exporters of bee honey, only four have long-term delivery contracts in EU countries.

At present, in the Republic of Moldova there are over 6,000 apiaries in the conventional system with about 225 thousand bee families. According to official data, in 2018 about 5,000 tons of bee honey was produced, of which exports amounted to 4,123 tons worth 11.7 million US dollars, mostly honey is exported to the EU. Some honey producers in recent years in addition to natural honey such as polyflora (field flowers with sunflower), linden, sage with sulfine, buckwheat, etc. produce lip balms with additions of lavender, mint oils, natural honey-based soaps with various floral oils, etc.

³⁹ <https://sputnik.md/analytics/20200114/28847992/Moldova-export-oua-carne-UE.html>

⁴⁰ Certificatul de circulație a mărfurilor EUR.1, care confirmă originea mărfurilor exportate în statele Uniunii Europene în cadrul Acordului de Asociere între Republica Moldova, pe de o parte, și Uniunea Europeană și Comunitatea Europeană a Energiei Atomice și statele membre ale acestora, pe de altă parte.

The National Beekeeping Development Program in the Republic of Moldova for the years 2018–2025 takes into account all the deficiencies of the branch, aims to solve them in the medium term, refers to the development of a unique country brand for the promotion of national beekeeping products. Ten beekeepers from Republic of Moldova were certified for the production of organic honey, and another 13 beekeepers received certificates confirming the second year of conversion for the production of ECO honey. At the same time, the company Apicola Lux CC, which will later sell organic honey, was certified for the production of honeycombs for organic beekeeping, being the first company in the Republic of Moldova certified in this field. The ecological conversion and certification process took place within a partnership between the USAID project “Performance Agriculture in Moldova” and the Apicola Lux CC Company. Certification of the production of organic honey and organic bee products was carried out by a recognized certification body for the purpose of equivalence, in accordance with Regulation (EC) No 834/2007, which during the last two years monitored and inspected the Moldovan processor and beekeepers.

From 2020, honey harvested from certified beekeepers is marketed as an organic product. Mandatory requirements for organic honey certification included making hives and bee materials from natural products, placing apiaries away from various sources of pollution, sources of nectar and pollen are mainly made up of crops produced according to the rules of organic farming, spontaneous vegetation or crops treated by methods with low impact on the environment⁴¹.

Clasa 31, unprocessed products:

4. Republic of Moldova ranks 6th in the world in terms of **walnut** exports. The Global Walnut Export Market is about \$ 2.5 billion annually, and Moldova owns 4.3% of this market, exporting walnuts for 100–120 million dollars annually. In the world top of walnut exporters, before our country is the United States of America, which holds 39.5% of the market, Mexico – 22.5%, Chile – 9.2%, Germany – 5.3%, Ukraine – 5.3%, followed by the Republic of Moldova with 4.3%. Across the country, there are plantations in the form of field curtains, small orchards next to households and commercial orchards. The total area of walnut plantations in the early 2000s was about 6000 ha. The Walnut law⁴² led to the elaboration of the National Program for the development of nut crops for the years 2006–2015. According to the Program, the nut sector had to expand the area of commercial orchards by 1000 ha each year.

There are several companies in the domestic market that process nuts, but not all of these companies have a BIO certified product. At the level of 2019, the EU provided for the export batch of shelled walnuts in the amount of 8-14 thousand tons, of which only a volume of 3665 tons were capitalized.

5. The berry sector has grown rapidly in recent years and is supported by MARDE. From 2013 until now, the areas cultivated with baciferous crops have increased about four times, and the global harvest has increased more than 10 times. The berry production sector remains an attractive sector with significant growth. From 2013 to 2017, the area planted with berries in the Republic of Moldova increased every year by 3–4%. If in 2017 we had 1000 hectares of berries, then at present, in the Republic of Moldova are registered approximately 4.1 thousand hectares of berry plantations from which in 2019 were collected approximately 15.5 thousand tons of products. In 2018, the export of berries increased compared to 2016 by 36% and amounted to

⁴¹ <https://joblist.md/ru/news/economie/lista-cu-producatorii-locali-de-alimente-care-livreaza-acasa>.

⁴² <http://www.law-moldova.com/laws/rom/gretskom-orehe-ro.txt>

about 3000 tons, or 1000 tons more. The largest consumers of berries in the EU are Germany, France, Great Britain, and Belgium. The most cultivated berries in the Republic of Moldova are the traditional ones: strawberry, raspberry, black currant, blackberry, but there are also new ones such as sea buckthorn, goji, teaberry, gooseberry, black aronia.

Currently, there are about 800 berry growers in the Republic of Moldova, of which only 7 farmers produce organically certified berries, even if both on the local and international market the berries certified as organic are well listed. At present, in the Republic of Moldova are registered about 4 thousand hectares planted with berries, on which are grown over 11 types of berries, the most widespread being strawberry, raspberry, black currant. So far, there are only two profile associations, each bringing together around 80 producers, given that the total figure would be almost 700, and the areas of berries are around 4,000 hectares, registered last year.

6. Organic fruits reduce the risk caused by pesticides, and if consumed in season they have superior sensory characteristics, compared to those that ripen during transport. According to the Ministry of Agriculture, Regional Development and Environment, in 2019 the fruit area did not change much compared to 2018. In the Republic of Moldova fruit tree plantations have an area of about 104 thousand ha, of which apples have the largest share – 56.0 thousand ha, plums – 22.6 thousand ha, peaches – 5.7 thousand ha, cherries and sour cherries – 7.5 thousand ha, apricots – 4.5 thousand ha⁴³.

Moldova is among the top 10 apple exporting countries in the world, with an annual production of over 500 thousand tons. Apple orchards occupy about 56,000 hectares, and the areas of intensive orchards, which allow obtaining uniform and high quality fruits, are constantly growing. In the north of Moldova, in the districts of Briceni and Donușeni there are apple orchards, where pesticides have not been used for a long time to protect trees against pests.

Currently, in the Republic of Moldova plums are produced on an area of about 22,000 hectares, with an average annual production of 90,000 tons. Moldovan plums are available from July to November. Plums rank second in the top of the most exported fruits in Moldova, and the country is among the top 10 exporters in the world, according to the volume of plums delivered fresh. In addition to exports of fresh plums, Moldova is one of the main producers of dehydrated plums. Both fresh and dried plums from Moldova have seen a double increase in exports in recent years.

At the same time, our country has more than 7,500 hectares planted with cherries, and the areas occupied by intensive orchards are growing. In the coming years, intensive plantations will contribute to the exponential growth of cherry production in Moldova, which currently reaches about 15,000 tons per year. Moldova is in the Top 20 world exporters of cherries.

Currently apricot occupies an area of 4,500 hectares, and each year the areas expand by over 200 hectares. The volume of production has increased exponentially, as intensive orchards have borne fruit. Despite the still relatively small apricot plantations, Moldova harvests 20,000 tons of fruit annually, placing it among the top 20 exporters in the world, by volume, with exports growing by an average of 5% annually.⁴⁴

7. Fresh vegetables. In recent decades, several vegetable growing centers have appeared near large cities in the greenhouse. But we do not always have access to organic products, in most cases the goal is to make a profit and then the health of the consumer is taken into account.

⁴³ <https://agroexpert.md/rus/articole/volumul-stocurilor-de-mere-prune-si-struguri-de-masa-in-depozitele-din-moldova>

⁴⁴ <https://moldovafruct.md/product-category/fruit-suppliers/>

This especially applies to non-seasonal periods. At the same time, in recent years more and more people in Moldova have begun to understand the direct link between diet and disease. And today the preference to consume organic products in our country is not a fad at all. The highest percentage among consumers of organic products in Moldova is young mothers, who want to protect their children from all kinds of harmful chemical ingredients. In second place are followers of a healthy lifestyle - people passionate about yoga, vegetarians, and vegans. In third place are those who for health reasons are forced to eat healthy foods (allergies, diabetics, people with a sick heart, etc.). According to surveys, 58% of respondents are willing to buy organic food, even at a higher cost. Speaking of the origin of consumers are the inhabitants of cities, who do not have the opportunity to deal with the growing of vegetables, fruits and other organic products.

8. Wheat. Demand for Moldovan organic wheat is growing every year, both on the domestic and international markets. In organic farming in the Republic of Moldova, wheat occupies the first place among all agricultural crops, and in crop rotation can occupy a share of up to 50%. Due to its high protein and gluten content, organic wheat is used for food purposes. At the same time, it is widely used to increase organic animal production and is included in the food ration. The price of organic wheat is significantly higher than the conventional one, both in the Republic of Moldova and on the international market in general⁴⁵. At the level of 2019, Republic of Moldova had a large batch of exports to EU countries of wheat in the amount of 19–26 thousand tons of wheat, of which were recovered only in the volume of 8833 tons. As a grain product, spelta is also produced for export by several local producers.

9. Soybean. Most organic soybeans are destined for feed production. Due to its high protein content, soy is the most popular animal feed. And the amino acid content allows its use as food for all animals. At the same time, soybeans must be heat-treated to reduce the risk of mold development. Soybean cake, soybean meal, fatty extruded soybeans are used as animal feed. Soybean oil is also obtained in the processing. Soybeans contain less oil, compared to sunflower or rapeseed (soybeans – 19%, sunflowers – 45%), while the concentration of protein is higher (soybeans – 40%, sunflowers – 15%). Only 2% of all soybeans produced globally are used for food production⁴⁶. The area occupied by soybean production in the Republic of Moldova in 2018–2019 is 687 ha⁴⁷. Soybean exports to EU countries were lower than the calculations established at the beginning of the period – 1221 tons of soybeans out of 1800–2300 tons per year.

10. Corn is an energetic fodder crop. Ideally, it replenishes the diet of households with protein-rich clover fields. Maize is also grown for seed. In organic farming the same varieties of maize are used as in traditional (conventional) production. Most varieties can be grown for both silage and grain. Much of the corn is grown for silage⁴⁸. In 2019 for corn export to the EU our country had a batch of 20–34 thousand tons of corn, of which were exported only in a volume of 9191 tons.

11. Sunflower is the main oil crop in the Republic of Moldova. Compared to other oilseeds, it provides maximum oil yield per unit area. Sunflower seeds of modern varieties and hybrids contain 50–54% fat with high taste and nutritional properties. Sunflower is an excellent

⁴⁵ http://movca.md/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/grau_ntw.pdf

⁴⁶ <http://movca.md/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/soia.pdf>

⁴⁷ http://movca.md/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Soia_Ecologica_site.pdf, pag. 21.

⁴⁸ <http://movca.md/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/corn2-3.pdf>

honey plant. Sunflower is also used in a variety of ways: as an oil crop, as a green manure or as a decorative flower. The sunflower fields are an extraordinary beauty for any landscape. And due to the long period of vegetation, they are also attractive to entomophages. This crop loosens the soil in cereal crops⁴⁹. At the level of 2019, the Republic of Moldova exported to the EU countries 15593 tons of sunflower seeds, which was practically within the limits of estimates of 14–18 thousand tons for that year, of which 4400 tons of BIO sunflower seeds.

12. One of the most exported BIO products is **lavender** seedlings. In 2019, over 350 thousand lavender seedlings were exported from the Republic of Moldova.

13. Grapes: worldwide, the Republic of Moldova ranks 15th in the world in terms of the world's largest exporters of fresh table grapes, but, according to the volume exported per capita, the Republic of Moldova is in the TOP 3 world exporters of grapes. fresh table grapes. At the same time, Moldova usually offers the most competitive table grape prices among the top 25 exporting countries; its fastest growing market is the EU, led by Romania and Poland. At the level of 2019, the export to the European Union constituted almost 17 thousand tons (Romania - 14.7 thousand tons, Poland - 1.3 thousand tons)⁵⁰.

3.1.2 Processed Products in the eligible area

The agro-food export from the Republic of Moldova is determined by a lot of geographical, political, economic, specialization factors, which favor it, among which can be mentioned: favorable geographical position of our country's market, being located at the intersection between CIS and EU (having chances large in becoming a transit point for products between them); quite favorable climatic conditions in obtaining various ecological products; the availability of relatively cheap labor resources; the availability of sufficient land, with a fairly high soil fertility, which can contribute to increasing the volume of quality agricultural products, subsequently being successfully exported, etc. During the years (2014-2017) the main Moldovan agri-food export market became the EU (the leading countries being Romania, Italy, Germany, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and Poland), where in 2017 the respective export was 649, 5 million US dollars, which compared to 2016 registered an increase of 20.1 percent, and compared to 2007 an increase of 3.6 times⁵¹.

Moldovan companies produce a wide range of processed products, including concentrated juices, jams, baby food, fruit sauces and canned vegetables. Here we will present some products that have become or will become exported to the EU market after complying with specific requirements of the process of alignment with the standards of EU countries.

Class 29, processed products:

Fruit drying in the Republic of Moldova is practiced by about 76 small and medium enterprises, increasing the number of small and micro enterprises. The increase of fruit plantation areas and access to raw materials at an affordable price, state support for investments in post-harvest development, fluctuations in entrepreneurial activity and the need for high value-added products, make fruit processing attractive by dehydration. In 2018, the export of dried fruits from the Republic of Moldova to 28 countries of the European Union was: plums – 1,688 tons at an

⁴⁹ <http://movca.md/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/sunflower.pdf>

⁵⁰ <https://agrobiznes.md/proгноза-moldova-ar-putea-inregistra-un-nou-record-la-exportul-de-struguri-de-masa.html>

⁵¹ Enachi N. The main aspects of exports of agri-food products from the Republic of Moldova. In: Collection of selective articles of the International Scientific Conference "Competitiveness and Innovation in the Knowledge Economy", September 28-29, 2018, Chisinau, Vol. I, E-ISBN 978-9975-75-932-8

average price of 2,025 euros per kg and dried apples – 550 tons at average price 3.82 euros per kg. Artisanal production of dried fruits in individual households for own consumption, market orientation of niche products with high added value is a trend for the growth of new enterprises⁵². Plums occupy the first position among dried fruits processed in Moldova, according to the National Bureau of Statistics. Apples represent about 70% of the total area of orchards in the Republic of Moldova, occupying the third position in terms of total dried fruits, according to the National Bureau of Statistics.⁵³.

1. Plums are the most widespread of the dried fruits that are produced in the Republic of Moldova. The special appreciations that the plum has, are due to the high productivity of the trees, the high quality of the fruits, the extended period of their capitalization, the numerous valuable varieties, with the ripening from very early - to very late and the diversity of taste. The term of operation of a plum plantation is 20-25 years. Many possibilities for capitalizing on fruits are known: fresh consumption, dehydration, processing as jam, jam, magiun, compote, brandy, etc.

The largest plum producers in the world are, according to statistical data from the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations for 2014, China (6.1 million tons), Serbia (over 738 thousands tons) and Romania (over 512 thousands tons), followed by Chile (306 thousands tons) and Turkey (305 thousands tons).

In our country, the average plum production is 100 thousand tons, the average harvest is over 5.3 tons per hectare. Plums hold a major position in terms of production and marketing among the total dried fruits processed in Moldova. Stanley and Anna Späth varieties are preferred for drying. Prunes can be marketed with and without seeds. The tendency of the industry is to add maximum value and to trade at higher prices, because of this the pitted plums constitute 80-85% of the total export. The extraction of the kernel is in most cases performed manually. An attempt to launch automated seed extraction operations at one of the drying companies failed due to the inability to provide products of equal size. Regarding smoked, dried plums, usually by direct burning of fruit tree vines, in improvised domestic conditions, the execution of all operations in domestic conditions reduces the ability to add value, and the sanitary processing conditions are generally poor. There are also many small-scale drying companies that are not equipped to extract kernels, cut, sort, re-hydrate or calibrate products. As a result, the market receives a large quantity of low-quality, low-priced dried fruit, hand-packed in corrugated cardboard boxes or plastic bags of various sizes, which are the only value-added operations applied to these products prior to export.

Competitive advantages of the plum cultivation and processing activity:

- Growing demand on the local market and exports (on the market of Russia and Belarus, EU) for fresh and dried plums;
- The investment is recovered in more than 2 years of full fruit (7 years after planting);
- Presence in the country of companies that export fresh and dried plums, companies producing juices, jams, compotes, etc.

Producers of prunes independently or in partnership with other local businesses also produce sweets such as plums with chocolate. For the export to the EU of prunes in 2019, 1200–1600 tons

⁵² Guide for small and artisanal producers: drying plums and apples. http://movca.md/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Ghid_uscare_prune_mere-25.06.2020.pdf, pag. 4.

⁵³ Guide for small and artisanal producers: drying plums and apples. http://movca.md/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Ghid_uscare_prune_mere-25.06.2020.pdf, pag. 24.

per year were planned, but they were capitalized only in a volume of 298 tons, ie only one fifth of this lot.

2. Cold pressed oils processed from organic seeds. Cold pressed organic oil is 99% assimilated by the body, being twice as rich in vitamins A, D and E as any other type of refined oil. Local producers obtain premium quality cold pressed vegetable oils from flax seeds, pumpkin seeds, sesame seeds, armory seeds, almonds, walnuts, etc. Of all kinds of pressed oils for export to the EU in 2019, only a batch of 11-15 tons of lavender oil was expected, but no data on exports are available.

3. Sunflower kernels. In Moldova, sunflower is cultivated on quite large areas, and statistical data show that in 2018 the Republic of Moldova harvested 804 thousand tons of sunflower with a yield of 2.1 tons per hectare on an area of 385 thousand ha. 66% of sunflower seeds are shipped to foreign markets, 34% are processed by domestic capacity. About 90% of the processing of sunflower seeds in the Republic of Moldova is provided by the enterprises of the Trans Oil Group. There are companies such as SRL Unicaps that produces seeds for export and holds a certificate issued by KIWA BCS, the product has the status of an organic product.

4. At the same time, **fruit processing** and experiments in this field in recent years have led to the emergence of a number of small businesses that produce healthy sweets from dried fruit in chocolate, chips and fruit pistil, crackers from germinated seeds.

5. Another field of processing of grown products is the **processing of vegetables**, especially the production of pickled vegetables (tomatoes, cucumbers, peppers, and pumpkins), green peas, beans, canned corn.

6. Another important area for the domestic market is **dairy products** such as cow's and goat's milk, cheese, curd and cow's milk, sheep's and goat's milk. There are several important companies in the Republic of Moldova, which cover most of the domestic demand for dairy products. *JLC* (concern JLC Group) is the leader of the dairy market in the Republic of Moldova, with a production of over 80 varieties of dairy products. The company's products are manufactured based on classic technologies that maintain the freshness and natural character of the product. *Lactis* cheese factory in Rascani with a section for drinking milk, casein and butter. *Lactis* is one of the oldest enterprises in the industrialization and marketing of milk. *Lactis* presents consumers with high quality products and a rich assortment of dairy products, which is constantly growing. *Lapmol SRL* is one of the leading producers of dairy products in the Republic of Moldova with traditions of almost 20 years, offers healthy, high quality dairy products, manufactured locally or by the best international producers. *Sana* (Fabrica Oloi Pac SRL) ensures the quality from feed to transport, price stability for the products that arrive on store shelves, quality preparation of dairy products. *Sana* has its own cattle farm and base for the production and processing of milk and dairy products. *Vilador* (SRL Prisvio) is the producer of goat dairy products that immediately captured the market with high quality products that meet the needs of consumers. *Vilador* has its own goat farm and dairy products are prepared according to a specific and traditional recipe. *Heuvelland* is a successful Moldovan-Dutch business in the production of 100% natural cheese. The company produces about 86 tons of cheese every year, but sells only on the Moldovan market. *Sălașul Baciului SRL* is a small family business that produces Italian cheeses in the Republic of Moldova. The family owns their own sheep and goat farm, using equipment from abroad to produce the best cheeses. *The butter factory in Floresti SA* is on the list of the largest dairy producers in the Republic of Moldova. The products are manufactured under the MilkMark brand name. Dairy products are recognized for their quality

and freshness. Milk-Prime recently launched, this company has only one store open in Chisinau, and the company's basic products are yogurt and ayran, which is made by Turkish technology without the addition of salt and sugar. *Agromix SRL* the company that produces soy products: soy milk, tofu cheese and humus without the addition of other substances, so the concentration of soy is very high. The company aims to increase the product range.

7. Processed meat products. Republic of Moldova has the highest rate of meat consumption, with a network of very rich sausage companies. In this respect, the business market in the Republic of Moldova is very well developed, meat being the most consumed food product in every kitchen, almost at every meal. Sausages are one of the categories that enjoy a high consumption, Moldovans being true meat lovers. The dishes most often purchased by Moldovan citizens are sausages, sausage, and salami. In recent years, smaller companies offer the consumer semi-prepared culinary products such as sausages, mici, pelimeni, roll.

Class 30, processed products:

8. In addition to meat, Moldovans consume a large volume of **bread and other cereal products**. Lately, more and smaller bread producers are opting for the production of bread based on mayonnaise, with malt hops and bee honey, made from wholemeal flour, other high-quality bakery products and without sugar content. Another product is cereal flakes, which can be eaten for breakfast with milk, kefir, and yogurt.

9. Unpasteurized natural vinegar is prepared from apples, pears, quinces, grapes, raspberries, strawberries, blackberries, etc. The best known, however, is apple cider vinegar, which is also produced by local producers. Among the companies that make apple vinegar we can mention ICS “Natur Bravo”, the company “Triodor”, “Haruz Grup SRL”, etc.

10. Herbal teas and tinctures, spices, sauces with aromatic plants are in high demand on the domestic market of the Republic of Moldova. One of the producers of this kind - the Monastery from Zăbriceni, Edineț district, registered the “BioCămară” PGI. At the same time, a number of other small businesses are concerned with the production and sale on the domestic market of spices, various sauces with herbs.

Small producers of various eco products and consumers, who prefer these products, have joined forces in the EcoLocal Association for direct communication that will lead to the development of the local market of eco and artisanal products. The purpose of this Association is twofold – to raise the welfare of local organic, artisanal and traditional food producers; and at the same time, raising the level of consumer awareness with reference to organic, artisanal and traditional products for a healthy diet.

3.2. Labels in the Region

3.2.1 Products (PDO, PGI or TSG)

The agreement concluded between Republic of Moldova and the European Union⁵⁴ provides for the mutual recognition and protection of both European GI products on the territory of the Republic of Moldova and Moldovan products on the territory of EU member states. But at the time of concluding this Agreement (2012) there were no Moldovan agricultural and food products in this list, other than wines, spirits and aromatized wines, which were to be protected in the European Union, especially the names of *Ciumai* and *Romanesti* wines. At the same time, the Agreement contains a commitment to add new geographical indications to the Republic of Moldova as soon as possible. Also in the document it is proposed to include 3 names such as Cricova, Milestii Mici and Divin provided the completion of the process of registration of these geographical terms in the Republic of Moldova as geographical indications under the relevant legislation of the Republic of Moldova on geographical indications.

Given the existing premises of economic development, increasing the demand for traditional products for domestic consumers, but also exceptional export possibilities, with the establishment of the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA) between the Republic of Moldova and the EU, during 2017–2018 the European Union project “Support for ensuring the enforcement of intellectual property rights” was carried out, in which a regional study and 3 sectoral studies (for honey, fruit and berries) were carried out in 2017, to identify products subject to registration as GI. Thus, following the research, products, beverages, dishes and handicrafts subject to registration as PGI, PDO and TSG in the Republic of Moldova was identified.

The AGEPI as project implementing body in 2018 conducted the National Study on traditional products that would have the potential to register as a GI or TSG. The national identification study had as area of intervention the 3 economic and agropedological areas of the Republic of Moldova (North, Center and South areas), 32 districts, UTAG and the municipalities of Chisinau and Balti. As a result of the study, 67 products, drinks, dishes and handicrafts were identified, of which 30 products (or about 45%) from the Center area, 24 (36%) products from the North area and 13 products (19 %) from the Southern area of the Republic of Moldova. The 67 products, dishes, drinks and handicrafts identified in the study, are applied 9 organizational-legal forms of formal and informal economic activity of agricultural producers, entrepreneurs and craftsmen, in particular: (i) Individual Enterprises (IE) – 5; (ii) Limited Liability Companies (LLC) – 24; (iii) Peasant Households (PH) – 8; (iv) Entrepreneurial Cooperatives (EC) – 4; (v) State Public Institutions (SPI) - 1; (vi) Public Associations (AO) – 2; (vii) Joint Stock Companies (SA) - 1; (viii) Informal Producer Groups (IPG) – 12; (ix) Popular Craftsmen (PC) - 10.

For each of the 67 products, beverages, dishes and handicrafts identified with plausible prospects for registration, promotion and subsequent trade on the domestic market and in perspective for export, a case study analysis was performed. In the subsequent evaluation stage by excluding the products, which did not include all the specific conditions attributed to the registration of the GI and based on the economic interest shown by the producer groups, a List of 7 potential products subject to registration as a:

(i) Meat products – *Kaurma de Bugeac* (sheep and beef product);

⁵⁴ Agreement between the Republic of Moldova and the European Union on GI protection of agricultural products and foodstuffs.

- (ii) Cheeses – *Cheese of Magura* (goat's milk);
- (iii) Bee products – *Codrii honey*, *Codrii Tigheciului honey* and *Dolna honey mousse*;
- (iv) Fresh / processed fruits and vegetables – *Pistil de Valea Răutului* (dehydrated fruit and berry product) and *Special Plums of Lalova*⁵⁵.

Some of them went through the registration procedure and joined those who were registered by 2017.

At the moment AGEPI from the Republic of Moldova manages the registration of TSG, IDP, DOP for 8 categories of products, one of them is part of the category of non-food products - handicraft products, the other 7 categories refer to food products. At the level of 2020 we have registered at AGEPI products in 4 categories, of which:

- Drinks (7 products);
- Vegetables and fruits (5 products);
- Dairy products (3 products);
- Bee products (1 product).

The most visible progress in promoting designations of origin and geographical indications is in the **wine sector**, namely:

- 2 Designations of Origin “Ciumai” and “Românești” are already protected on the territory of the Republic of Moldova and the EU;
- 5 Geographical Indications were registered at AGEPI (three geographical indications “Codru”, “Ștefan Vodă” and “Valul lui Traian” - for wines, already protected on EU territory and a new geographical indication “Divin” - for aged wine brandy, which is being worked on to ensure protection in the EU).
- 6244 ha of vines are registered for the production of grapes with PGI.
- 55 PGI producers (of which 18 - grape producers) registered in the Wine Register.
- Certified 720 lots of wine with PGI in a total volume of 169459 dal.
- 40 names of PGI wines are made available to the consumer.

Dairy products:

- 1) PDO “Popeasca Cheese”
- 2) PGI “Cheese of Magura” (EU SARDPI Project)

Vegetables and fruits:

- 1) PGI “CĂLĂRAȘI rose petal jam”,
- 2) PGI “Zabricei”
- 3) PGI “Special Plums of Lalova” and TSG “Plums stuffed with walnut kernels” (EU SARDPI Project)
- 4) PGI “Pistil from Valea Răutului” (EU SARDPI Project)
- 5) PDO “Agrișe de Marinici”

Bee products:

- 1) PGI “Honey from Codrii Moldovei” (EU SARDPI Project)

Drinks:

- 1) PGI “Apricot brandy from Nimoreni”.

⁵⁵ Fala, An. Study on the identification of products, beverages, dishes and handicrafts subject to registration as Geographical Indications, Designations of Origin and Traditional Specialties Guaranteed in the Republic of Moldova. AGEPI, SARDPI. – Chișinău: S. n., 2018 (F.E.-P. „Tipografia Centrală”), p. 47-49.

All these were registered by AGEPI between the years 2013–2020 for some support was provided within an EU-supported project

3.2.2 Enterprises

The companies that have registered *dairy products* are:

1. PGI “Brăza de Măgură” is produced only at the processing unit of PRISVIO S.R.L from the village of Slobozia-Măgura, Sângerei district. The legal address of the company is: str. Independenței no. 38/2, ap. 31, MD-2072, Chisinau, Republic of Moldova.
2. PDO “Brânza de Popeasca” is registered by the Producers Group / economic entity: Ștefan Vodă Sheep and Goat Crackers Association.

Companies that have registered products in the category *Vegetables* and *Fruits*:

1. The holder of the IGP “Zăbriceni” is SRL “Biocamara” founded by the Religious Community of the Monastery with the Patronage “Nașterea Domnului” from Zăbriceni village, Edinet district.
2. The holders of the PGI “Plums different from Lalova” and TSG “Plums stuffed with walnut kernels” was registered by the Union of Legal Entities Association of Fruit Producers, Processors of the Medial Dniester, Lalova village, Rezina district.
3. PGI “Călărași rose petal jam” is registered by the Union of producers and processors of fruits and berries in Călărași, an employer association, with the legal address: Călărași str. no. 10, Calarasi town.
4. PDO “Agriș de Marinici”: the holders of the right to use is the Producers Group from Marinici (the group within the AO BACIFERA Bunch Producers Association), with the legal address str. Costiujeni no. 14, Chisinau mun.
5. The Union of Legal Entities Association of Small Producers and Processors of Fruits and Bacteria in the Center area was the initiator of the registration of the PGI “Pistil de valea Răutului”.

Companies that have registered products in the *Drinks* category:

1. The “Association of Divine and Brandy Producers of Moldova” was founded on 07.02.2011 by 10 members, enterprises producing divin and brandy, from the geographical area that includes the entire territory of the Republic of Moldova. They are the ones who have the right to use the “Divine” Protected Geographical Indication. The legal address of the association is: str. Toma Ciorbă no. 38, Chisinau. The members of the Association of Divine and Brandy Producers from Moldova (3 members on 01.10.2018) are: “Călărași Divin” SRL, Tiraspol Wine and Cognac Factory from “Kvint” SATÎ and the Joint Stock Company “Букет Молдавии”.
2. The holder of the PGI “Codru” is “The wine association of the geographical region delimited Codru”, with the legal address str. Ion Creangă no. 25, Chisinau mun. The members of this Association (18 members on 01.10.2018) are: Agroaudit SRL, SC “Wine International Project”, SC “Chateau Vartely” SRL, Winery “Cricova” SA, CVC “Milestii Mici”, LLC “Doina Vin”, “FCP Asconi SRL”, Tiraspol wine and brandy factory “Kvint”, SRL “Ever-Vin”, “Mileștii Mici” Winery SRL, “Viișoara Mileștii Mici” SRL, IM “Bostavan Winery” SRL, SC “AgroVitaComerț” SRL, “Dionysos Mereni” SA, “Castel Mimi” SRL, ME “Colinele de la Redi” SRL, “Migdal-P” SA, “Azolux” SRL, ME “Alianța-Vin” SRL and SRL “Strășeni-Vin”.
3. The holder of the right to use the PDO “Românești” wine is the company Românești S.A., with the legal address of Românești village, Strasen district.

4. The geographical production area of the PGI “Nimoreni apricot brandy” is the locality of Nimoreni, from Ialoveni district. The association of producers and promoters of strong alcoholic beverages from Nimoreni, employers' association, registered at Al. Bernardazzi str. nr. 49/5, MD-2012, Chisinau mun., has the right to use this protected geographical indication.

5. The Wine-growing Union of the Delimited Geographical Region “Ștefan Vodă” was founded on 07.02.2011 by 12 members of wine enterprises, from the mentioned geographical area. This entity registered the “Ștefan Vodă” PGI. The members of this Association (8 members on 01.10.2018) are: IM “Vinăria Purcari” SRL, ÎCS “Suvorov-Vin” SRL, SRL “Bogatmos”, “Bravo Wine” SRL, “Basarabia Lwin Invest” SRL, ÎM “Sălcuța” SRL, IM “Lion Gri” SRL and Agrofirma “Cimișlia” SA.

6. The holder of the right to use the PGI “Valul lui Traian” is the Vine-Wine Union of the Delimited Geographical Region “Valul lui Traian”, which was founded on 08.09.2011 by 14 members of wine enterprises, from the mentioned geographical area. Members of the Wine Association of the Delimited Geographical Region “Valul lui Traian” (34 members on 01.10.2018): SA “Imperial Vin”, ME “Chateau Vartely” SRL, Fautor SRL, Vitalis Land SRL, Sudvinex SRL, SC “Vinaria Țiganca” SRL, SA “Vinăria din Vale”, SRL “Razmost”, IM “Kazayak-vin” SA, ÎM “Vinăria Bostavan” SRL, SA “Mold-Nord winery”, SRL “Vinia Denovi”, “Cricova winery” SA, “Podgoria Vin” SRL, SC “Tomai-Vinex” SA, “Corten-Vin” SRL, “Agrogled” SRL, “Agrosudresurs” SRL, “Valerom” SRL, “Eniija” CAP, SA “Congazcic”, “Cairim” CAP, “Valahvin” SRL, PH “Scutaru Ilie Petru”, SA “Vinuri de Comrat”, SRL “Colina Viilor”, IM “Vinia Traian” SA, “Agrovin-AV” SRL, “Moldagrovin” SRL, ÎCS “DK-Intertrade” SRL, SRL “Cafadar”, CAP “Glia”, PH “Glutonic Ion Trifon” and PH “Sacara Nicolae Dumitru”.

7. The holder of the right to use the wine with PDO “Ciumai” is the company Ciumai S.A., Vinogradovca village, Taraclia district, Republic of Moldova, MD-7426.

Products from the **Bee products** category:

1. The PGI “Honey from Codrii Moldovei” was registered after the Union of Legal Entities “Association of Producers, Processors and Exporters of Bee Products from Codrilor area” with the legal address str. Vasile Alecsandri no. 109, Chisinau mun., Republic of Moldova, MD-2009.

3.3. Traditional cooking recipes

Due to the fact that on the territory of the Republic of Moldova live several ethnic groups in this compartment we special present some recipes that represent the culinary traditions of several ethnic groups, such as Moldovans / Romanians, Bulgarians and Gagauzians.

1. “SĂRMĂLUȚE PITICE DE LALOVA”⁵⁶

„Sărmăluțe pitici de Lalova” is a traditional Moldovan specialty that is a filling of rice and / or wheat and corn groats mixed with grated carrot, green parsley, tomato paste, paprika, pepper, onion, lard, salt and then rolled into small leaves . Cabbage leaves (fresh or pickled), vine leaves (fresh or pickled) are used as packaging. The “sarmale” have a pleasant, attractive appearance, light in color, white-pink, slightly colored from the paprika, with a pleasant smell and taste, specific to the basic additions and appropriate seasoning. The preparation process includes: (i) preliminary processing of the ingredients; (ii) preparation of the filling or “bulgur”; (iii) preparation of the sauce; (iv) sarmale modeling; (v) forming and arranging sarmales in a ceramic pot; (vi) boiling the sarmales in the oven, and (vii) presenting and serving the sarmales. The term “sarma” comes from the Turkish word “sarmak”, which means “roll”, or “package”. It is therefore a mixed filling and then rolled into large leaves. Traditionally, in Moldova, sarmale was also served from the ancestors at the holiday table, but it was the housewives from Lalova who brought the fame of the “sărmăluțe pitice” with a pleasant, attractive appearance and smell. In the village of Lalova, near the Țipova and Saharna monasteries, there is the rural pension “Hanul lui Hanganu”. The menu here comes to complete the picture: only traditional Moldovan dishes, from fresh food, homemade – “racituri”, baked pies, chicken soup, “sărmăluțe pitice de Lalova”. The “Hanul lui Hanganu” agrotourism pension brought the fame of “sărmăluțe pitice de Lalova” to the “Terra Madre International Gastronomy Festival 2008”, held in Torino, within several editions of the “Bucharest Food Festival” International Gastronomy Festival – an event dedicated to gourmets, chefs, gastronomy specialists and all those passionate about the techniques and secrets of gourmet cuisine, and in several festivals and fairs organized in the cities of Chisinau, Balti, Rezina and other localities in the country.



2. “Kaurma rece” (in the Gagauz language – Kaurma, in Bulgarian – Kavarma)⁵⁷



Lamb or beef with and without bones, well fried, sprinkled with onions and herbs, which is served both hot and cold. For cold serving, after cooking, all the bones are removed, the kaurma being poured into different shapes, where it cools. In this state the product can be stored for several weeks, in a basement or other cool place, and offered for sale in the markets of the south of the Republic of Moldova. Kaurma has been prepared since ancient times in the Gagauz localities on the eve of the great

Kasym holiday, which is also the day of the name of all those named Dumitru, as well as the day of the patron saint of Ciadâr-Lunga locality, where the Monastery of the Nuns of St.

⁵⁶ <http://hartia-ig.agepi.gov.md/#List/Mode=1/AreaId=28/CategoryId=8>

⁵⁷ <http://hartia-ig.agepi.gov.md/#List/Mode=1/AreaId=35/CategoryId=2>

Dumitru is located. On this day, animals are slaughtered for ceremonial meals, most often a lamb. Traditionally, on this day, popular festivals and noisy gatherings of neighbors, relatives, friends are organized around rich meals. Every year, this holiday becomes more and more popular, the national – kaurma being successfully promoted in the markets of the south of the Republic of Moldova and in its capital, Chisinau.

3. “PLĂCINTA MIRESEI”⁵⁸

“Plăcinta Miresei” is a traditional specialty that has different shapes (round, square, rectangular), with a reddish hue, 1-2 cm thick, wavy surface, fine smell, pleasant baking. The pie is not soft, retains its shape and is slightly crunchy. For the preparation of the pie, local products are used: high-quality wheat flour, to which water and salt are added, mix well until a homogeneous dough is obtained. The basic products used to make the Bride's Pie are: homemade cow's cheese, homemade chicken eggs, greens (parsley, dill), potato, onion, black pepper, fresh (or pickled) stewed cabbage, pumpkin, cherry, apple. The Bride's Pie is a traditional specialty specific to the villages of Căplani, Carahasani, Antonești and Tudora in the Ștefan Vodă district, being an attribute and a mandatory tradition at weddings. At the wedding, the bride would not go to the groom without this pie. The Bride's mother would give her a pie with cow's cheese and a boiled chicken. This being a secular tradition. All the ingredients used to prepare the pie come from the mentioned localities. Apart from weddings, now the Bride's Pie (with different filling) is offered at various ceremonies and festive meals, as well as to tourists visiting wineries in the Ștefan Vodă Wine Region.



4. RED SWEET PEPPER CONDIMENT FROM VALEA PERJEI⁵⁹



In the manufacture of the spice, dried pepper pods are used, which, after processing, acquire the color red-orange or dark red and obtain the consistency of powder. Pepper, the raw material of the product, is grown locally by farmers, according to old traditions and recipes, passed down from generation to generation. Drying red pepper outdoors is followed by drying in an oven in baking trays after baking the bread. The pepper can be considered ready to crush if it reaches the state of crushing. It is crushed in a large mortar or in a coffee grinder. It is then sieved through a sieve and stored in a glass vessel. The crushed red pepper spice has been produced in Valea Perjei village, Taraclia district, for at least 150 years. According to archival data, vegetable growing was one of the traditional occupations of peasants in Bulgarian villages in southern Bessarabia (Republic of Moldova), peppers being grown here since the early nineteenth century. This product is used in the preparation of both Bulgarian and Gagauz

⁵⁸ <http://hartia-ig.agepi.gov.md/#List/Mode=1/AreaId=34/CategoryId=5>

⁵⁹ <http://hartia-ig.agepi.gov.md/#List/Mode=1/AreaId=35/CategoryId=4>

dishes. Red pepper is one of the ingredients used in the manufacture of the well-known kaurma preparation.

5. “OREZ DE POST CU PRUNE”⁶⁰

“Orezul de post cu prune” is a traditional specialty based on highlighting the original qualities of dried / dehydrated Moldovan plums, obtained in the gardens next to houses, grown in most areas / geographical regions of the Republic of Moldova. Serve the rice with plums hot or cold. It can be served either as a main course (if not very sweet) or as a dessert. The special appearance, the caloric value, as well as the sour taste of Moldovan plums in the food “Fasting rice with plums” determine the persistence of the product



in the traditional local cuisine. Moldovan plums have always been widely used for food. In the Central, North-East and South-East areas of the Republic of Moldova, the fruits of the plum variety “Vinete de Moldova” (Moldovan) confer excellent taste qualities, and the quality of fruits obtained on bright slopes with light soil, is superior to those grown in other areas. This local plum variety has centuries-old cultivation traditions and are traditionally used to prepare “Fasting rice with plums”, and for gourmets it is proposed to use lightly smoked plums. The long tradition of producing and using the product “rice with plums” (fasting) in the Republic of Moldova is directly related to the preparation of ceremonial meals during the fasting periods of Orthodox believers. Namely, at memorial meals, at birthdays, christening meals etc., usually representing dessert. It is usually served at the end of the meal. Moldovan plums are equally highly appreciated and representative at events promoting the country abroad: tourism and winter holidays.

6. ÎNVÂRTITĂ CU NUCI (DE POST)⁶¹



“Învârtita cu nuci” (fasting), is a dessert and a traditional specialty for those who fast and not only. It is prepared from ancestors, usually around the biggest religious holidays with the use of high quality flour, honey, fresh yeast, walnut kernels with sugar (as a filling). The originality of the product is justified by the special taste and the satiating effect ensured by the qualities of the local walnut kernel. Practically in all the geographical areas defined for the Republic of Moldova we find it under

different names.

“Învârtita cu nuci” is described as an important food product in the basic books about the occupations of the locals (example in "200 recipes for dishes, cakes and other household chores" - authors: Mihail Kogălniceanu and Costache Negruzzi. Dacia Clusiu Publishing House. Iași, 1841). The geographical area of the product spread is based on the increased density of the rural population and the basic traditional occupations of the locals, including religiously, because it is a product allowed in fasting according to the Orthodox faith. In all geographical areas of the Republic of Moldova, walnut kernels are used in abundance by the inhabitants of

⁶⁰ <http://hartta-ig.agepi.gov.md/#List/Mode=1/AreaId=1/CategoryId=4>

⁶¹ <http://hartta-ig.agepi.gov.md/#List/Mode=1/AreaId=29/CategoryId=8>



villages and towns for the preparation of baked goods, but especially of the walnut spinach around the most important holidays: Christmas and Easter.

4. Challenges and prospects of the traditional food sector of the eligible area

The main challenges in the field of agri-food and the conversion of agriculture to the dimensions of organic / organic agriculture are related to several areas:

1. *The legislative field.* Although in the Republic of Moldova the legislation is already relatively well adjusted to EU standards, taking into account the provisions of the Association Agreement with the EU, in the opinion of experts requires an increase in funds for conversion of land for organic agriculture and animal husbandry, equipment and processing of agricultural products in the agri-food field.
2. *Marketing and promotion of organic farming and organic products.* For the most part, there are currently no state-level promotion programs. Mainly the initiatives of promotion, information and media coverage of the products, especially the traditional ones, are assumed either by the local entrepreneurs, especially the small ones, or by Associations that unite the efforts of the producers for promotion through local fairs and social networks.

The perspectives of the development of the traditional food sector in the Republic of Moldova according to the authors of the study are possible in three distinct directions:

1. Further increase the quality of traditional products mainly with appropriate promotion for further increase of export quotas on the EU market.
2. Educating the local population to increase interest in traditional local organic products and foods.
3. Increasing the share of gastronomic tourism in domestic and receiving tourism by creating the necessary conditions, promoting and raising awareness of the importance of the wine-gastronomic tandem.

At first sight, we have all the premises for the development of tourism, but also for the traditional products to become an attraction in themselves for the country's visitors. The Law on the Organization and Development of Tourism in the Republic of Moldova (No. 352-XVI of November 24, 2006) defines tourism as one of the priority areas of the national economy. Being a service sector, tourism contributes to the development of the country's economy by accumulating capital within approx. 12 types of activities specific to the industry, attracting in its activity approx. 20 branches related to the tourism sector: public catering, transport, production and trade of goods, equipment, souvenirs, cultural, sports, leisure activities, medical services, etc.

Among the forms of tourism to be promoted (according "Turism 2025") are gastronomic tourism – a motivational form of tourism, intended for people who love to discover the secrets specific to traditional cuisines from various destinations. Hospitality, traditions and culinary habits are the basis for the development of this form of tourism. The gustatory qualities, the specificity of the dishes can serve as an important motivation for the tourists who aim to feed themselves with selected dishes characteristic of the tourist area visited.

In this sense, the development of gastronomic and wine tourism can be greatly boosted, if the state will focus on stimulating the development of domestic and hospitality tourism, because the presence of tourists in the country is an exclusive condition for promoting gastronomic traditions from here. Among the major trends in changing consumer preferences is the growth of new ways of traveling. Experience tourism, cultural and food tourism, rural tourism and agrotourism, as well as redefining health tourism create new opportunities. The gastro-cultural circuit being considered part of an experience trip is on the third place in the top of the occupational preferences of the tourists besides the circuit of light adventure tourism and rural tourism (with accommodation) for which the tourists spend the most on average.

For the Republic of Moldova is a good opportunity to launch an important agrotourism offer, with a variety of local wine products, organic food, "slow-food" and traditional agricultural techniques. Here the strong part is the attractive prices for services and products compared to other countries in the region, but the problem lies in the poor promotion of gastronomic offers. An important role is played here by the Moldovan diaspora, which in recent years has contributed to the promotion of traditional Moldovan cuisine and products abroad. Campaigns to promote traditional dishes should be carried out similarly to Moldovan wines made through the Wine of Moldova country brand. It would be a solution to create such a logo / symbol that would incorporate the philosophy of traditional cuisine and local organic food. (proposals adapted according to the National Tourism Development Program "Tourism 2025").

Through the forms of active tourism already practiced in the Republic of Moldova there is also wine tourism – motivational form of tourism practiced by tourists to visit wine enterprises and wine regions in order to combine the pleasure of wine tasting with the opportunity to know the local lifestyle, rural and cultural activities. At the same time, the development of gastronomic tourism with traditional products promoted is closely related to wine tourism. At the national level there is the National Tourism Program "Wine Road in Moldova", but it is outdated, unchanged since 2004. During the last two decades in all legislative and strategic documents wine tourism is treated as a form of tourism of major importance for the Republic of Moldova. The tourism development strategy recognizes wine tourism as a "business card of the Republic of Moldova", the tourist packages proposed for marketing for foreign tourists usually including objectives such as wine cellars. The excursions organized by the wineries present the technological process of wine production accompanied by tastings, as well as events that offer tourists the experience of getting involved in the grape harvesting process and / or in the wine production process, are important tourist products in national context. The National Wine Day, held annually in October, and the festivals organized during the year of Fridays are essential tourist attractions, which contribute to the development of the country's image on foreign markets.

Surveys conducted periodically on leaving the country (airport, customs) show that the greatest satisfaction foreign tourists receive from the hospitality of Moldovans, visits to wineries in the country and traditional local cuisine, which is usually associated with wines.

At the same time, a new approach to the development of wine tourism is needed and first of all it is recommended to revise the National Program "Wine Road in Moldova" (adopted by Government Decision no. 554 of 24.05.2004), in order to adjust it to good European practices and attested developments on the local and international market. The conclusions derived from the international experience are the following:

1. The niche of wine tourism is a relatively new segment, which is growing in popularity internationally;
2. The number of tourists in this segment is constantly growing;
3. The quality of Moldovan wines is to be valued and emphasized in relation to international standards;
4. Wine producers need to be supported by national and local public authorities;
5. The sector is to implement the principles of sustainable development;
6. A key factor in stimulating wine tourism is the efficient use of information technologies;
7. Wine tourism is to be promoted in parallel with the development of the wine industry itself.



The existence of relevant practices in the field of agriculture and organic agri-food industry, the adjustment of national legislation to the provisions of the Association Agreement with the EU, the increase in the number of registered products at national level as DO, IG or TSG allows us to see a positive trend. The increase of quotas for export of agricultural products from the Republic of Moldova on the EU market will continuously stimulate the increase of product quality, the conversion of agricultural land from conventional to organic. At the same time, educating the local consumer and increasing the importance of gastronomic tourism and maintaining the importance of wine tourism will greatly increase the importance of organic products, products registered as BIO and with protected geographical indications or designations of origin. The existence of the option of registering the Traditional Specialties Guaranteed will stimulate the process of rebirth and preservation of the original traditional recipes.

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