

TRADITIONAL PRODUCERS FROM "HAȚEG COUNTRY" REGION -
CĂMARA DIN TOTEȘTI

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Abstract. In order to supplement the total income of the family, many people, in addition to the money obtained from a stable job, decided to process and sell the surplus products obtained in their own household. We encountered such a situation in the commune of Totești, where, under the logo Cămara din Totești, syrups, juices, jams, zacusca (mashed vegetables) and natural pickles are produced. In the paper we present the experience of the manufacturer, as well as the main problems he has encountered and which he currently faces in capitalizing its products.

Key words: traditional producers, organic syrup, organic jam, Hațeg Country

INTRODUCTION

With an impressive historical dowry, "Hațeg Country" enjoys a privileged position in the historiography of Romania, being one of the most important and well-known hearths of uninterrupted civilization in the entire Romanian space. Recognized for its historical importance, "Hațeg Country" represents the cradle of Daco-Roman civilization on the national territory, an area of representation for the ancient and medieval fortifications in the wall, an area full of historical monuments [1, 2].

Located in the southwestern part of Transylvania, in Hunedoara County, "Hațeg Country" having, like all the other areas called "country", well defined geographically, a natural delimitation, it overlaps the depression of the same name, bordered, to the south, by Retezat Mountains, to the east and northeast, by the Șureanu Mountains, to the west by the Țarcu Mountains, and to the north by the Poiana Ruscă Mountains [3, 4].

Prior to the 1990s, "Hațeg Country" and the city of Hațeg were an area eminently oriented towards the food industry, covering the full range of food products resulting from the processing of meat, milk, vegetables and fruits, the production of beer and bakery products. With the exception of small crafts and industrial production strictly related to the local provision of services to the population, all industrial activity was covered by the food industry capable of absorbing and retaining labor throughout the area [5, 6, 16]. The changes occurred in the last three decades have introduced structural adjustments and new directions, leading to the removal of the region from its original vocation so that today the food industry represents only about 25% of active economic entities, quantifying individual entrepreneurial initiatives (Authorized Individuals and Individual Enterprises) [11, 12].

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The data presented in the paper were taken after the interview with the producer, as well as with the existing ones at the town halls from the area. These data were supplemented with those provided by various statistical sources, as well as those presented

on social platforms with the same profile. This accumulation of data and information has been compared and processed in order to obtain an image as close as possible to reality of the course of society from the beginning to the present, future projects, as well as to highlight as accurately as possible the problems with which face this producer.

RESEARCH RESULTS

Immediately after the town of Hațeg in Hunedoara, on the road to the town of Caransebeș in the neighboring county of Caraș-Severin, somewhere at the foot of Retezat, where the Roman road is supposed to have once passed, is the commune of Totești. With a population of 1,946 inhabitants, according to the 2002 population census, and with an area of 2,203 hectares, the commune is a transit area to the Retezat Mountains and it is composed of five villages: Cârnești, Copaci, Păclișa, Rea and Totești [14, 16].



Figure 1. The location of Totești commune area in “Hateg Country”

At the entrance to the commune Totești, coming from Hateg, the Bora family completes its income by producing syrups, juices, jams, zacusca and natural pickles, under the logo “Cămara din Totești” (The pantry from Totești) [7, 9, 15]. The Bora family started this activity seven years ago, by capitalizing on the surplus of products obtained in their own household, mainly jams and syrups from the spontaneous flora.

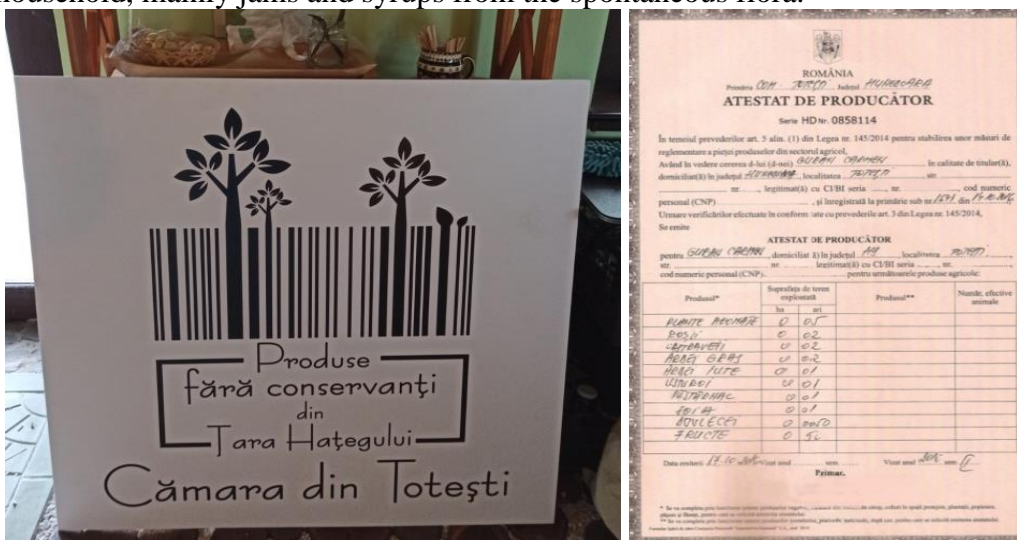


Figure 2. Promotion panel and manufacturer's certificate (photo: Adrian Băneș)

With more and more orders, the Bora family has expanded both the range and quantity of products sold, of which we list [10, 13]:

- wildflower and herb syrup (wild poppy petal syrup, lilac flower syrup, elderflower syrup, vanilla-flavored wild rose petal syrup, acacia flower syrup, wild mint, sage, hyssop, flavored with coffee beans, wild mint syrup, jasmine flower syrup, sage syrup (leaves and flowers), fir bud syrup, juniper bud and cones syrup);
- fruit syrup (summer cherries, mountain blueberries, mountain raspberries);
- sugar-free extracts (steamed extracts that are drunk like syrup, with water, mineral water, in lemonades or cocktails), from mountain blueberries, black currants, mirabelles, mountain raspberries, fruit mix (raspberries, gooseberries, apples, mirabelle);
- jam, marmalade:
 - from wild flowers (dandelion petals with ginger and lemon, lilac flowers flavored with cinnamon sticks and scotch whiskey, wild poppy petals flavored with scotch whiskey, acacia flowers flavored with rum, shock flowers, wild rose petals and sage;
 - fruit jam (figs, raspberries and mountain strawberries, mirabelles, mountain blueberries, blackberries, quince with star anise and cinnamon sticks;
 - sugar-free products (cinnamon apple orchard flavored with cinnamon, red currant jam, mountain blueberry jam, plum jam).
- sauces, zacusca, pickles (garden tomatoes with grilled capia peppers and grilled peppers, garden tomatoes with fresh basil, garden tomatoes with grilled peppers and a little hot pepper, hot pepper jam with cherry tomatoes), "Orange Sweet Chilly" with orange hot peppers, carrot and parsnip sticks, eggplant zacusca, ciolomada (assorted pickles), vegetable stew, fibsters in mustard sauce.



Figure 3. Products marketed by "Cămara din Totești"
(photo: Adrian Băneș)

The range of products obtained is limited in quantity to only a few dozen jars in each assortment, in one year managing to obtain a total production of 1500-2000 pieces.

The raw material used in the manufacture of these products comes from its own garden, where it does not use pesticides, from the peasant gardens in the area, which also do not use pesticides and from the spontaneous flora of the Retezat Mountains. As a fertilizer, use only compost produced in your own household, thus trying to obtain products that are as natural as possible.



Figure 4. Collection of spontaneous flora products
(source: <https://camaradintotesti.wordpress.com> [8])



Figure 5. Processing of products offered by "Cămara din Totești"
(source: <https://camaradintotesti.wordpress.com> [8])

In order to market the production, the Bora family authorized their kitchen to certify the food safety of the products, their marketing being carried out on the basis of the producer certificate obtained from Totești City Hall.

The production is sold through its own store (open at her home) and based on the telephone or online orders received, personally performing the route Totești - Deva - Hunedoara, once a month, respectively Totești - Timișoara, twice a month. In addition, by participating in fairs and workshops that take place in various cities, it promotes and markets another part of the products. Also, as a result of the promotion through online

means, "Cămara din Totești" is frequently visited by groups of tourists, to whom it presents the products, their origin and their way of manufacturing. The success of the online promotion of the products, as well as their special quality can be seen from the people who follow the posts on the social media page (over 5,700) of the manufacturer, as well as through the mostly maximum reviews (Google Maps score 4.3 out of maximum 5) obtained.

In the future, the Bora family wants to double its production, as it has a growing demand, both in the area and in the rest of the region and abroad, while maintaining its micro-business character. In order to promote small businesses and, implicitly, the area, together with several other such producers, it wants to create a "Union of producers from Hațeg Country", in order to market the products obtained under the brand "Made in Hațeg Country".

CONCLUSIONS

We must mention from the beginning that the business of the Bora family is one of supplementing the income, not a basic one. The traditional producer "Cămara din Totești" tries to bring to consumers' attention traditional recipes without preservatives, which are prepared from organically grown products in their own gardens and orchards and from berries, flowers and plants from the heart of the Retezat mountains. This goal is achieved through local partnerships with other traditional producers, as well as with associations such as ASAT (Association for the Support of Peasant Agriculture), online promotion, participation in various fairs and events in the area and in the country.

The local partnership between small producers and consumers is practically a mutual commitment in which the latter benefit from the products obtained from a certain area (generally a small one) and which guarantee a natural or organic production, practically a form of cooperation between consumers and small producers, to ensure access to locally produced healthy food.

If we refer to the problems faced by "Cămara din Totești", a big one is the high price of food safety tests, which must be done for each batch and for each range of products, which entails an increase in the price of products.

Other issues that resulted from the discussion with Ms. Bora are:

- Lack of an active and constant market for the sale of this type of products;
- Competition from large producers and distributors;
- Abundance in food supply markets in other countries, often much lower quality;
- Excessive bureaucratization of legislation and institutions;
- Reduced access to rural consultancy services, due to the non-existence of these positions at local level;

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