Protection and Promotion of Agricultural and Food Products at European Union level through European Quality Schemes

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Abstract

This paper aims to highlight the use of European quality schemes at Community level to protect agri-food products, including alcoholic beverages. After highlighting the advantages granted to products by using these schemes to protect and, implicitly, promote those products having unique characteristics linked to their geographical origin or, as the case may be, the traditional production / processing system, the paper presents the situation at Community level from the point of view of the quantity of products protected through different quality schemes, by country and category of protected products. Among the quality schemes used at EU level for agri-food products, including alcoholic beverages in the present paper we referred to: "geographical indication" and "traditional specialty guaranteed". The paper is based on the information of European Commission in which protected products are registered through different quality schemes, through and the information contained in various scientific papers, normative acts and statistical databases.

Keywords: European quality schemes, geographical indications, traditional speciality guaranteed, European Union

JEL Code: L15, M31, Q13, Q18

1. Introduction

Distinctive quality signs (geographical indications, traditional specialties guaranteed, etc.) have, besides the role of protection, an important role in promoting agri-food products, enabling it to guarantee its quality, product individualization and differentiation, consumer information. In this context, the

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benefits of product differentiation, when targeting important attributes for the consumer, attract numerous qualitative and quantitative benefits: a higher perceived value of the product and, implicitly, the improvement of its image, increased satisfaction and loyalty of the current consumers, the attraction of new customers, the possibility to practice higher prices in accordance with the higher value of the product and, implicitly, higher revenues resulting from the sale of the product etc. Also, the use of quality distinctive signs allows rural areas to be helped by promoting products that have characteristics related to a particular geographical area, thus having real advantages for both producers and consumers.

According to the information on the European Commission website (accessed on 20.01.2019), the quality schemes used on the EU territory are: “geographical indication”, “traditional specialty guaranteed”, “mountain product”, “product of EU's outermost regions”. It is specified that EU policy on the quality of agri-food products aims to protect the names of specific products in order to promote their unique characteristics linked to geographical origin and traditional know-how (protection through "geographical indication" and "traditional specialties guaranteed"), plus the protection of products in areas with difficult geographic / meteorological conditions, such as mountains or islands ("product of EU's outermost regions"). It should be noted that, in addition to the EU quality schemes indicated, a large number of private schemes are used at Community level and there are also schemes that are applicable at national level.

From the schemes presented, in this paper we have focused on highlighting the extent to which geographical indications and traditional specialties guaranteed are used at Community level.

Geographical indications include several quality schemes, namely: protected designation of origin (PDO), protected geographical indication (PGI) and geographical indication (GI). PDO and PGI are applicable to food, agricultural products and wines and GI for spirit drinks and aromatised wines.

Designation of origin is a name which identifies a product: originating in a specific place, region or, in exceptional cases, a country; whose quality or characteristics are essentially or exclusively due to a particular geographical environment with its inherent natural and human factors; and the production steps of which all take place in the defined geographical area. (Regulation (EU) No 1151/2012)

Geographical indication is a name which identifies a product: originating in a specific place, region or country; whose given quality, reputation or other characteristic is essentially attributable to its geographical origin; and at least one of the production steps of which take place in the defined geographical area. (Regulation (EU) No 1151/2012)

Protection of the traditional production / processing system for food and agricultural products can be ensured through traditional specialty guaranteed.

A name shall be eligible for registration as a ***traditional speciality guaranteed*** where it describes a specific product or foodstuff that: results from a mode of production, processing or composition corresponding to traditional practice for that product or foodstuff; or is produced from raw materials or ingredients that are those traditionally used (Regulation EU No 1151/2012).

Agri-food products, including alcoholic beverages protected by quality signs at Community level, are recorded in the following databases: E-Bacchus database - for wines, DOOR database - for food and agricultural products, E-spirit-drinks database for spirits and Aromatised wines database - aromatized drinks based on wine products.

2. Literature review

Distinctive quality marks are part of the legal protection of products. Generally, industrial property experts believe that legal product protection ensures a sustainable product differentiation (Nacka, Georgiev and Dabovic - Anastasovska, 2013).

Referring to the geographical indications Addor and Grazioli (2002) stated that they are distinctive signs that allow product identification on the market and which, if properly used and protected, become real marketing tools of great economic value.

Product protection through distinctive signs offers increased chances to enter new markets. Thus, according to Bramley, Biénabe and Kirsten (2009) geographic indications offer the opportunity for agri-food producers whose added value has a strong geographic connection to penetrate more profitable niche markets. On the other hand, Agostino and Trivieri (2014), relying on the results of a research on the wine market, state that, as a result of institutionalization of quality, European producers can get higher quotas on international markets and expand exports to new destinations. For example, in 2010 out of total extra - EU exports of agri - food products and beverages, 15% were products with geographical indications, and in the same year, of the total sales of such products only 60.1% were made on the national markets, the rest of 39.9% being achieved at external markets, respectively 20.4% intra-EU market and 19.9% extra EU-market (European Commission, 2013).

The financial benefits are not exclusively generated by an extensive market expansion (as we have already mentioned), but also as a result of higher sales prices for protected products. Thus, according to a study by AND International for the European Commission, in 2012 average prices of products with geographical indication were 2.23 times higher than similar products but without geographical indication. The biggest differences between the prices of products with and without geographical indication were registered for wines (prices higher than 2.75 times, on average), followed by spirits (2.57 times) and finally agricultural and food products with higher prices 1.55 times (Chever, Renault, Renault and Romieu, 2012).

In line with the above-mentioned ideas, Agostino and Trivieri (2014) stated that geographical indications are both a means of protecting producers against unfair competition and of guaranteeing certain characteristics of the products to consumers by making them more willing to pay higher prices which makes producers less affected by price competition and allowing them to achieve higher profits for better quality and differentiation.

The use of distinctive quality signs undoubtedly also has a decisive role in protecting European culinary heritage. Bonadonna, Macar, Peira and Giachino (2017) stated that European quality systems played an important role in regaining a large and varied amount of traditional agricultural and food products and in preventing their disappearance due to economic and social development; in the absence of European quality policy, many of the products protected at European level would have been lost or at least not marketed outside their regional and national borders.

There is a real interdependence between the value of products with geographical indications and the value of resources of a country / region. Thus, on the one hand, according to Addor and Grazioli (2002), the geographical indications highlight the cultural identity of a specific country, region or area, increasing the value of a country's natural wealth and the skills of its population and giving local products a distinctive identity. On the other hand, when the place of origin is used as an attribute, resources in the region (landscape, cultural and historical and "local savoir faire") become an integral part of the product with geographical indication, the territorial attributes being thus synthesized in the product and used to increase the value of the product (Bramley, Biénabe and Kirsten, 2009).

The market benefits of using distinctive quality signs are related to changes in consumer requirements, which are increasingly interested in the quality of the products consumed. In this context, distinctive quality marks provide additional information in the purchasing decision process in order to guarantee the quality of the product being evaluated, thus being an important criterion for choice. For example, a survey conducted in 2006 in Romania (a country belonging to the old communist bloc, whose market is undoubtedly characterized by a level of consumer exigencies below those recorded in developed countries), revealed that out of 950 respondents, 20.9% considers that the quality mark applied on the packaging (PGI, PDO, other signs representing a guarantee of quality, excluding the brand) is very important in the decision to purchase agro-food products, and 30.6% of the respondents said they are important (Ţimiraş, 2007, p.312). The same study also highlighted the importance of "traditional", of the total respondents 31.2% considered important and very important in the purchase decision that the products should have tradition on the Romanian market (Ţimiraş, 2007, p.305).

The benefits of geographical indications are also highlighted in a European Commission document (2010), which states that after the creation of the legislative framework in 1992 for the use of geographical indications, they were considered to be successful, registering until this moment the production of 900 names of agricultural and food products (with a market value of 21 billion euros - 2008 consumer prices), plus 1800 wine names and more than 300 names of protected spirits. Later, another document of European Commission (2013) highlighted the evolution of sales of products with geographical indications over a 5-year period (2005-2015), those rising from € 48446 millions to € 54346 millions (+ 12.2%).

3. Data and Methodology

Highlighting the existing situation at EU level as regards the number of the names protected by PGI, PDO; TSG, GI is based on the information contained in the European Commission's databases: E-Bacchus database, DOOR database E-spirit-drinks database, Aromatised wines database. The information in these databases has undergone a centralization process, and is then presented through absolute and relative frequencies by product category, by country and by total EU.

4. Results

4.1. The number of agri-food products and alcoholic beverages protected by quality signs at EU level

At the beginning of 2019, 3458 agricultural and food products, including alcoholic beverages, most of which were represented by wines (51.1%) and food and agricultural products (approx. 41.6%), were protected at European Union level by geographical indications and traditional specialty guaranteed. (Table 1 and Figure 1)

Table 1. Number of EU-wide protected agri-food products and alcoholic beverages by quality scheme and product categories at the beginning of 2019

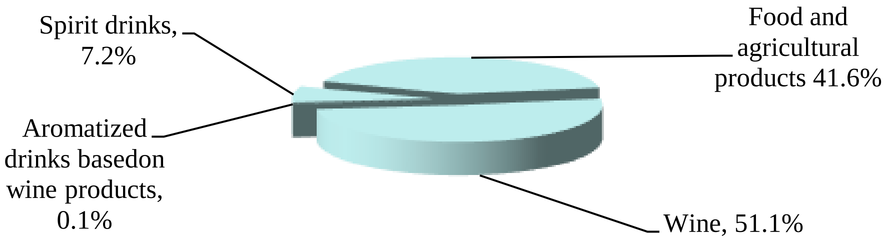
Product category	Number of products
Wine (PGI, PDO)	1766
- PDO	1306
- PGI	460
Food and agricultural products (PGI, PDO, TSG)	1439
- PDO	635
- PGI	745
- TGS	59
Spirit drinks (GI)	248
Aromatized drinks based on wine products (GI)	5
Total	**3458**

Source: Elaborated by author based on European Commission, E-Bacchus database, DOOR database, E-spirit-drinks database, Aromatised wines database (accessed on 08.01.2019)

On categories of quality schemes, for wines, most of them are protected by PDO (74% of the total), and for agri-food products PGI (51.8%) predominates, spirits and aromatic drinks being protected exclusively by GI.

Of the EU-protected products through quality signs, a part belongs to non-EU states (2 spirits and 26 agri-food products, according to the information valid on 08.01.2019). (European Commission, E-Bacchus database, DOOR database, 2019).

Figure 1. Structure of products protected by geographical indications or traditional specialty guaranteed, by product category

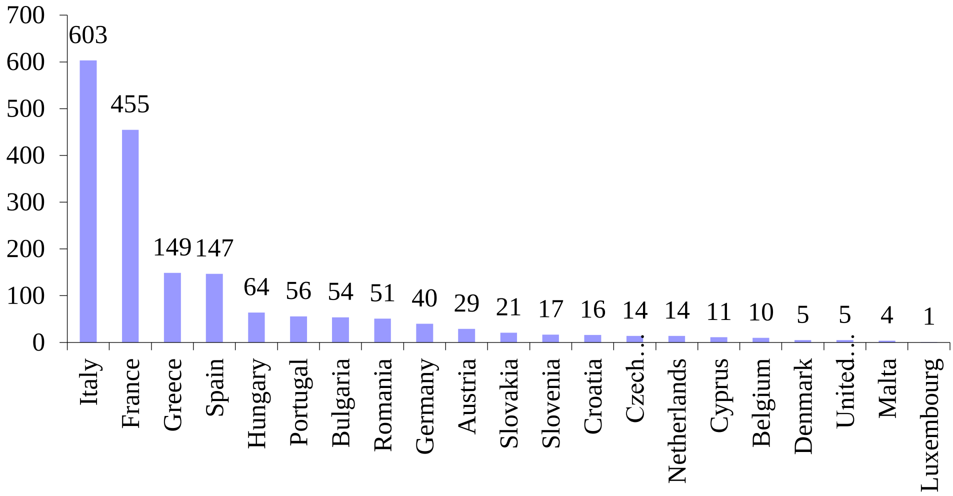


Source: Elaborated by author based on European Commission, E-Bacchus database, DOOR database, E-spirit-drinks database, Aromatised wines database (accessed on 08.01.2019)

4.2. The number of protected wines through quality signs in EU

According to information in the E-Bacchus database, at the beginning of 2019, at the EU level, 1766 PDO or PGI wines were protected. Over the course of time, another 176 wines have received protection but at this time they no longer have protection. The country distribution of the PDO or PGI wine number is shown in Figure no. 2.

Figure 2. Number of protected wines (PDO, PGI) at EU, by country



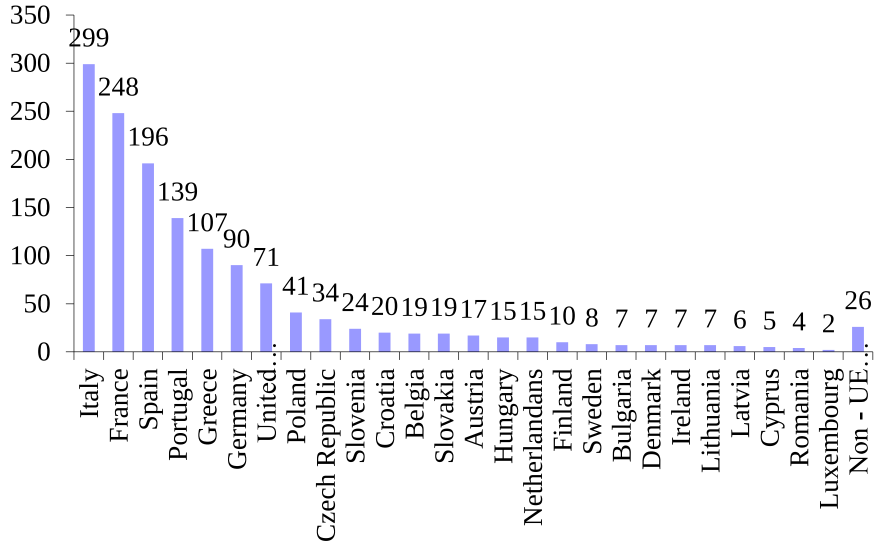
Source: Elaborated by author based on European Commission, E-Bacchus database (accessed on 08.01.2019)

There is a high concentration per countries of the number of protected wine names, over 75% of the total EU-protected names being registered in Italy (34.1% of the total), France (25.8%), Greece (8.4%) and Spain (8.3%).

4.3. Number of food and agricultural products protected by geographical indications and traditional specialties guaranteed at EU level by country

According to the DOOR database, 1439 products were protected at the community level in early 2019, with country distribution shown in Figure 3.

Figure 3. Number of food and agricultural protected products by geographical indications (PDO, PGI) and traditional specialty guaranteed (GTS) at EU level, by country



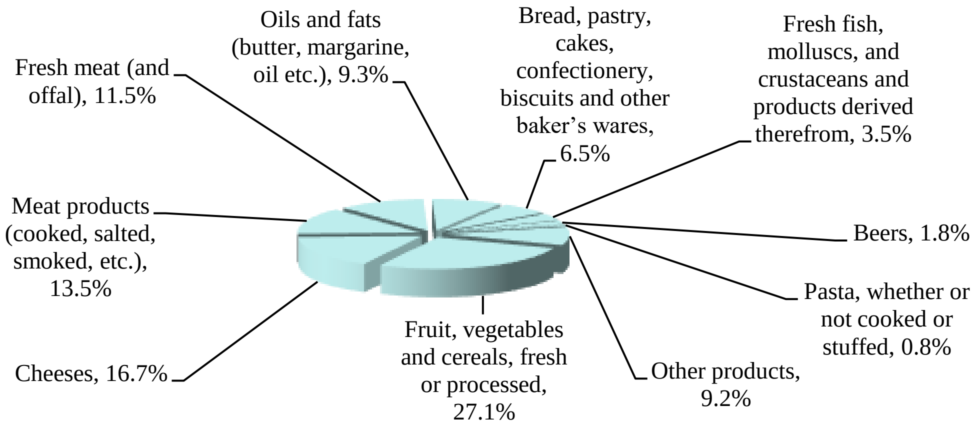
Note: For a number of 4 products, the application for registration was filed by two states (Czech Republic and Slovakia) and therefore is reported in both states.

Source: *Elaborated by author based on European Commission, DOOR database (accessed on 08.01.2019)*

Of the total protected names, most belong to: Italy (20.8%), France (17.2%), Spain (13.6%) and Portugal (9.7%), together accounting for 61.3% of the total number of registered names.

By categories of products, the largest share is: fruits, vegetables and cereals, as well as cheese and meat and meat products (Figure 4).

Figure 4. Structure of EU-protected food and agricultural products through PDO, PGI, STG, by product category



Source: Elaborated by author based on European Commission, DOOR database (accessed on 08.01.2019)

The distribution by country and product class of the names of protected food and agricultural products is presented in Table 2.

Referring to the category "Fruit, vegetables and cereals, fresh or processed" at Community level, Italy holds the highest share in total protected names (28.7%), followed by Spain (15.9%), France (14.4%) and Greece (11.5%).

France and Italy ranked first in the "Cheeses" category with 22.4% and 22% respectively, followed by Spain with 11.6%.

For "Meat products (cooked, salted, smoked, etc.)", Italy and Portugal outnumbered the other states with 22.2% and 21.1%, respectively.

The Fresh meat (and offal) category is represented to a significant extent by France (46.4%), followed by Portugal and Spain (by 18.7% and 12% respectively).

In the case of "Oils and Fats (butter, margarine, oil etc.)", Italy, Spain, and Greece are the countries with the largest share of Community-registered names (34.3%, 23.1% and 22.4%).

Table 2. Number of EU-protected food and agricultural products through PDOs, PGIs and GHGs by country and product class

Country	Fruit, vegetables and cereals, fresh or processed	Cheeses	Meat products (cooked, salted, smoked, etc.)	Fresh meat (and offal)	Oils and fats (butter, margarine, oil etc.)	Bread, pastry, cakes, confectionery, biscuits and other baker's wares	Fresh fish, molluscs, and crustaceans and products derived therefrom	Beers	Pasta, whether or not cooked or stuffed	Other products
Austria	6	6	2	-	1	-	-	-	-	2
Belgium	4	1	3	-	1	2	-	5	-	3
Bulgaria	-	-	6	-	-	-	-		-	1
Czech Republic	3	3	5*	-	-	9	2	9	-	3
Cyprus	1	-	1	-	-	3	-	-	-	0
Croatia	4	-	7	3	4	1	-	-	-	1
Denmark	2	3	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	0
Finland	1	-	2	1	-	3	2	1	-	0
France	56	54	19	77	10	3	5	-	2	22
Germany	23	9	18	5	1	9	7	9	2	7
Greece	45	21	-	2	30	2	1	-	-	6
Hungary	5	-	4	1	-	1	-	-	-	4
Ireland	-	1	1	1	-	1	1	-	-	2
Italy	112	53	43	6	46	15	5	-	5	14
Latvia	2	1	-	-	-	2	1	-	-	0
Lithuania	-	2	1	-	-	1	-	-	-	3
Luxembourg	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	1
Malta	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0
Netherlands	4	8	-	-	-	2	1	-	-	0
Poland	10	5	8	1	1	7	1	-	-	8
Portugal	28	12	41	31	6	7	1	-	-	13
Romania	1	1	1	-	-	-	1	-	-	0
Slovakia	1	10	4*	-	-	2	-	-	-	2
Slovenia	1	4	8	-	2	2	-	-	1	6
Spain	62	28	17	20	31	17	5	-	-	16
Sweden	1	2	1	1	-	2	1	-	-	0
UK	8	17	5	14	-	1	14	2	-	10
Non - UE	10	-	1	1	-	1	3	-	1	9
Total	**390**	**241**	**194**	**166**	**134**	**93**	**51**	**26**	**11**	**133**

* for 4 products, the application for registration was filed by two states (Czech Republic and Slovakia) and is therefore reported in both states.

Source: Elaborated by author based on European Commission, DOOR database (accessed on 08.01.2019)

In the category of “Bread, pastry, cakes, confectionery, biscuits and other baker's wares”, Spain and Italy also hold the highest shares (18.3% and 16.1%).

As regards “Fresh fish, molluscs and crustaceans and products derived therefrom”, the United Kingdom (27.5%) and Germany (13.7%) are the countries with the most protected names.

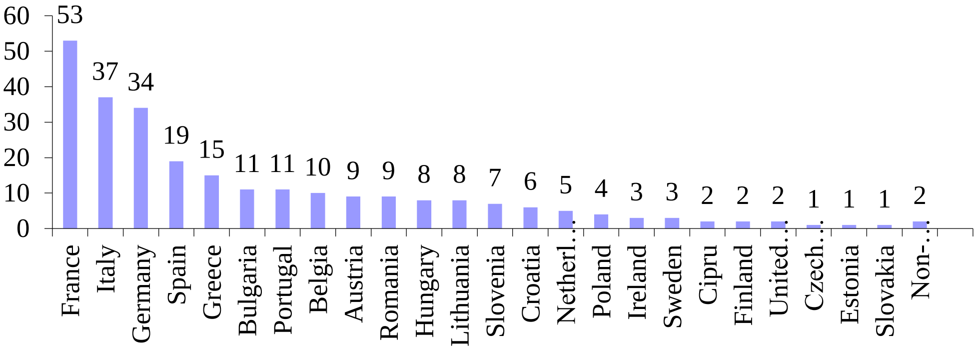
“Beers” are mainly protected by Czech Republic and Germany (both with 34.6% of total protected names), followed by Belgium (19.2%).

The category “Pasta, whether or not cooked or stuffed” is represented by Italy (45.5%), followed by France and Germany (both with 18.2% in total protected names).

4.4. The number of spirit drinks with geographical indications (GI) registered at EU level, by country

In the category of spirits, protected at EU level through GI are 248 products, the countries with the most protected names being: France, Italy and Germany. (Figure 5)

Figure 5. The number of GI EU-protected spirituous beverages, by country

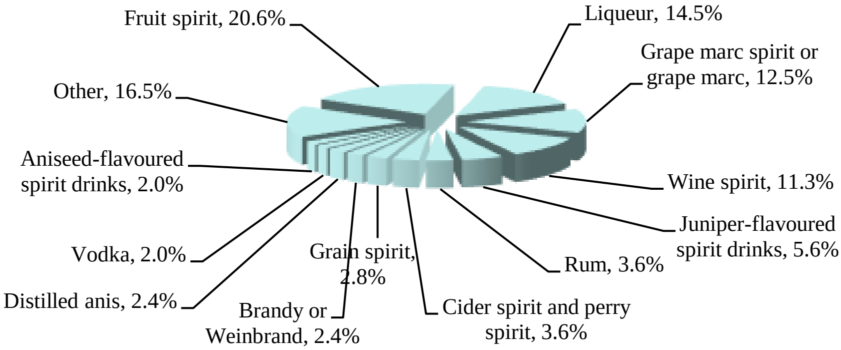


Note: For a number of 9 products, the application for registration has been filed by two or more states, being reported to all the states concerned.

Source: Elaborated by author based on European Commission, Aromatised wines database (accessed on 08.01.2019)

By product categories, most of the protected products fall into: fruit spirit, liquor, grape marc spirit, grape marc, wine spirit. (Figure 6)

Figure 6. Structure of EU-registered spirits through GIs by category



Source: Elaborated by author based on European Commission, Aromatised wines database (accessed on 08.01.2019)

4.5. Evolution of EU-protected number of wines, food and agricultural products by country

Over time, the number of agricultural and food products, including alcoholic beverages, protected by quality signs at EU level, increased on the one hand due to the enlargement of the Community area (the time of accession of the different new Member States was also the beginning of the European protection approach for different agri-food products), but also as a result of the increase in the number of protected names belonging to the old members, on the other hand. Thus, an established approach of some of the old member states: Italy, France, Spain, Portugal and Greece, is being observed in time, which stands out from the perspective of most protected names at Community level, to protect new and new products. Referring to the enlargement of the EU, we mention that the right to register quality signs at EU level is not conditional on membership of the EU, but it is clear that entry into the EU and, together with it, the right to free movement of goods has increased much of the interest of manufacturers in the new member states to protect their own products and implicitly for specific quality signs, thus increasing the chance for products to be accepted by European consumers. For example, after Romania and Bulgaria joined the EU on 1 January 2007, 52 new Romanian wine names were registered in the same year (one of which was later removed from the Register of Protected Designations of Origin and Protected Geographical Indications in the EU) and 53 Bulgarians, according to the European Commission, E-Bacchus database (2019), representing 76% of the total of the wines registered in that year at Community level.

The evolution of the number of wines, food and of agricultural products protected at Community level by PDO, PGI, STG, categories with a total of 92.7% of protected designations at Community level is shown in Table 3.

Generally, the country-by-country distribution of protected names for the different product categories is directly related to the existence of factors dependent on the production of certain agricultural products: climatic factors that make it possible to obtain products with special properties, in which countries such as France, Spain, Italy, Greece or Portugal enjoy real benefits, but also the size of agricultural areas for crop production or livestock production which condition the production (for example referring to wines 3 of the top 4 Community countries with the most protected names - Italy, France, Spain own more than 3/4 of the EU wine grape area, and over 80% of total wine grape production, calculated on the basis of data for 2016 provided by Eurostat, 2019), to which add permanent interest and support for manufacturers to protect the products when they meet the conditions required for obtaining different quality signs.

On the other hand, for certain categories of products, the distribution of protected names is also in line with the culinary preferences of the population in different areas. Thus, countries recognized for the preference of the population towards certain products have significant weightings in these categories in all EU-protected names.

For example, for wines, France and Italy, the countries with the largest number of protected names at EU level, are also the countries with the highest wine consumption per person worldwide (45.1 litres for France and respectively 45 litres for Italy, according to data for 2018). (Statista, 2019)

Also, of the 11 names protected in the EU in the “pasta, whether or not cooked or stuffed” category, 45.5% belong to Italy, the Italians being known for their preference for pasta. According to a report by the International Pasta Organization (2014), Italians are the world's largest pasta consumers with average consumption per person of 25.3 kg in 2013.

44.4% of all cheeses are protected by France and Italy, which are renowned for their increased preference for this category of food. According to a report by the International Dairy Federation (2010), in 2009 the French consumed 26.1 kilograms of cheese per person on average, while the Italians consumed 20.9 kilograms / person. Values well above the EU-27 average (16.6 kilograms cheese / person).

Table 3. Evolution of EU-protected number of wines, food and agricultural products by PDO, PGI, STG, by country

Country	Period									
	Before 2000		2000 - 2004		2005 - 2009		2010 - 2014		2015 - January 2019	
	Wine	Food and agri-cultural products	Wine	Food and agri-cultural products	Wine	Food and agri-cultural products	Wine	Food and agri-cultural products	Wine	Food and agri-cultural products
Austria	20	11	6	1	2	1	1	1	-	3
Belgium	-	8	2	1	7	3	-	3	1	4
Bulgaria	-	-	-	-	54	-	-	5	-	2
Czech Rep.	-	-	-	3	10	19	4	11*	-	1
Cyprus	-	-	-	-	11	1	-	1	-	3
Croatia	-	-	-	-	-	-	16	-	-	20
Denmark	-	2	-	1	-	-	4	3	1	1
France	390	99	27	34	7	34	27	52	4	29
Finland	-	1	-	3	-	2	-	4	-	-
Germany	31	24	-	8	8	9	-	38	1	11
Greece	28	75	66	9	40	2	15	15	-	6
Hungary	-	-	-	-	62	4	-	10	2	1
Italy	372	97	84	47	50	50	97	75	-	30
Latvia	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	4
Lithuania	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	6	-	1
Ireland	-	2	-	1	-	1	-	1	-	2
Luxembourg	1	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-
Malta	-	-	-	-	3	-	1	-	-	-
Netherlands	-	4	9	2	3	1	-	3	2	5
Poland	-	-	-	-	-	15	-	21	-	5
Portugal	44	74	3	16	8	26	1	9	-	14
Romania	-	-	-	-	51	-	-	1	-	3
Slovakia	-	-	-	-	16	4	4	11*	1	4
Slovenia	-	-	-	-	17	1	-	20	-	3
Sweden	-	1	-	3	-	-	-	3	-	1
Spain	66	43	35	41	36	44	9	51	1	17
UK	-	23	-	6	-	6	4	22	1	14
Non-UE	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	16	-	9
Total	**952**	**464**	**232**	**178**	**385**	**224**	**183**	**380***	**14**	**193**

* for 4 products, the application for registration was filed by two states (Czech Republic and Slovakia) and is therefore reported in both states.

Source: Elaborated by author based on European Commission, E-Bacchus database and DOOR database (accessed on 08.01.2019)

69.2% of all beer-protected names belong to Germany and the Czech Republic, countries that are the world's top in terms of consumption. Thus, according to Statista (2018), in 2017, Czech Republic ranks first in the world in beer consumption (137.38 litres / capita), and Germany ranked third in the world (95.95 litres / capita).

5. Conclusions

Distinctive quality signs are real tools available to operators at Community level to protect their own products with unique characteristics linked to their geographical origin or, as the case may be, to the traditional production / processing system and to promote their own rural areas. The advantages of using these signs are: product differentiation and individualization, the ability to penetrate niche markets or external markets, improve the image of products through quality assurance, association with home country resources, higher pricing, consumer information, European culinary heritage preservation of etc., which are equally enjoyed by producers and consumers.

In the context of the benefits presented at the European level, the number of protected names through quality signs (PDO, PGI, STG, GI) increased annually to 3458 at the beginning of 2019, of which 51.1% represented wines, 41.6% food and agriculture products and 7.2% spirit drinks. Among the member countries, it is particularly noteworthy Italy and France with the most protected names, both in terms of wines, food and agricultural products or spirits; followed by countries such as Spain, Greece and Portugal, a fact justified in particular by the climatic favourable conditions to agricultural production and / or by the areas reserved for agriculture activities. Apart from the conditions necessary for the realization of the various agricultural productions, for certain categories of products (wines, beers, cheeses, pasta) we can find a distribution by country of the protected names linked to the culinary preferences of the population; countries with a significant number of registered names also remarked from the perspective of the high consumption of the population in these product categories.

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