CHAPTER 9

DIVERSIFYING RURAL ACTIVITY

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Agriculture still has an undeniable place in the rural areas of the Mediterranean, playing a plethora of complex and changing roles. The future of the rural Mediterranean is still closely bound to the future of agriculture, not only as a sector in itself, but also through its capacity to integrate with the other sectors of the local and national economies and, more broadly, its capacity to contribute to the development process.

Since the debate surrounding the "Health Check" of the Common Agricultural Policy, the challenge in Mediterranean countries in the European Union is to ensure that production and the multifunctional role of agriculture co-evolve in line with the demands and growing expectations of consumers. In Southern and Eastern Mediterranean Countries (SEMCs), agriculture is both a major source of employment and a social safety net for the most vulnerable rural populations (World Bank, 2007). The challenge for agriculture and rural development is therefore the same: to lift out of poverty entire sections of the population that have until now been forced to diversify as a means to survive or, worse, to migrate in desperation to the cities where the future is not necessarily any brighter.

The situations, practices and considerations presented in this chapter are based on a review of recent literature and on the first-hand observations of the authors. They provide food for thought in a debate that, despite having failed to produce, so far, any miraculous recipes for success, remains open to discussion and to sharing experiences.

Rural areas in the Northern Mediterranean: multifunctionality and diversification

The rural areas of Europe (European Union of 27) are extremely diverse in terms of population, culture, demographics, socio-economic structures and natural resources. Characterised by diversity and instability, they are also undergoing profound changes progressing in different directions and at varying speeds. In the Mediterranean countries of the European Union, which have a shared tradition, rural areas have, despite some specificities, followed comparable paths of evolution in the face of the pressures, risks and opportunities they have encountered. This leads to competition but also encourages the sharing of experiences and best practices.

Obviously, it is critical that the politicians who will decide the future of these areas and their communities should fully understand and appreciate the diversity of "the countryside". Prompted by the inadequacy of the OECD criteria and the lack of an alternative shared model for the definition of rural areas, Italy has revised the OECD methodology and adapted it to its national context. An ad hoc classification was developed that would better take into account the differences between the Italian farming and agro-food systems and the various ways in which rural areas are integrated with urban and industrial areas and, in general, the relationship of the countryside with socio-economic development in the country (Mantino, 2008). The classification, developed in a national strategic plan to implement the European Rural Development Policy, inspired decision-makers at the regional level to elaborate regional rural development plans. Four types of rural area were identified:

- *Rural areas in commuter belts*: characterised by their high population density and the relatively low importance of agriculture in the local economy, which is based on the service and manufacturing sectors. Agricultural and agro-food activities, although spatially restricted and under threat from urban agglomerations and pollution, provide employment opportunities to a sizeable proportion of the population and benefit from the proximity of urban markets.

- *Rural areas with specialised and intensive agriculture*: these areas may be characterised as rural, significantly rural or urbanised rural, and are densely populated with positive demographic trends (a growing population that is generally younger than in the other types of rural area). The heart of the agro-food and agro-industrial system is concentrated in the fields and valleys of these areas, organised in specialised branches or districts. Alongside the dominant agro-food sector there is well-structured tourism and a high concentration of artisan SMEs. However, these areas must contend with some problems in terms of infrastructure and services as well as pollution related to and exacerbated by intense pressure on resources.

- *Intermediate rural areas*: mountainous or hilly areas characterised by an ageing population. Agriculture has a significant role in the local economy, more so in terms of land coverage and jobs than in terms of productivity, resources or contribution to added value on account of high production costs and commercial difficulties. In these areas, a non-agricultural local economy, complementary to and integrated with agriculture, has developed based on the economic development of the countryside and of local natural, cultural and gastronomic resources through tourism and artisan activities. However, infrastructure and services are still inadequate for the needs of local people and economic actors.

- *Rural areas with significant development problems*: in these marginal mountainous or hilly areas, characterised by considerable infrastructure and service deficits verging on neglect, the local economy is essentially dependent on extensive agriculture that is generally un-modernised and unproductive, and which is often still in the hands of the older population.

In France, rural areas are tremendously heterogeneous. The demographic trend in most rural areas is positive, essentially on account of the acuity of the commuter belt phenomenon and the increase in the residential function of rural areas. However, whereas commuter belt areas are seeing their populations swell, elsewhere the trend is for people to leave rural areas, resulting in an ageing population. At the catchment area level there is no association between demographic trends and the level of services available. In fact, rural areas within commuter belts often have worse provision than the very remote rural areas, which enjoy good inherited levels of provision. At the same time, services are being neglected in particular in small villages in isolated rural areas. Although one French person in four lives in a rural area, only one in five works in one. Rural areas still do not provide employment commensurate with their demographic significance.

In the productive parts of the countryside, agriculture continues to be modernised: work productivity is growing, the number of agricultural labourers is falling and the employment of permanent staff is on the rise. In recent years, only farms that are "professional in the dominant agricultural activity" have grown, whilst farms that are "residential" or "multi-activity professional" have decreased. Although the agricultural and agro-food sectors are no longer dominant in terms of employment and added value, they remain an essential element of the rural landscape, and farmers are an important part of the structure of society. Agriculture makes an even more marginal contribution to the diversification of the rural economy which on the one hand is associated with services to the local populations and basically accompanies the migration of urban populations who live in rural areas and, on the other, is evolving towards the leisure and tourism sectors of the economy.

Today three faces of rural France are emerging, which obviously require tailored development strategies.

- *The countryside of the city*: highly attractive and with great economic potential, where the dense economic fabric encourages the creation of micro-enterprises.
- *The new countryside*: striving for a balance between adequate provision of basic services to the resident population and the development of alternative economic activities such as tourism;
- *The more vulnerable countryside*: characterised by economic and demographic decline, but has a rich natural and cultural heritage to be turned to economic advantage.

In Spain too, where more than 90% of land is rural, there is significant regional variation in rural areas (Ceña and Gallardo, 2008). Agricultural added value still makes a sizeable contribution to GDP, at least bigger than in most countries of the European Union (European Union of 25), thanks to modernisation efforts over the past few decades, the contribution made by certain irrigated production systems and the high value of out-of-season produce in some areas. However, agriculture is not the main source of income in rural areas, and there has been gradual diversification of the rural economy in line with de-agrarisation and tertiarisation. A quarter of foreign immigrants arriving in Spain move to small rural villages where they are able to find work (a source of labour that has become indispensable for the agricultural sector) and somewhere to live.

In Greece, many households have left the countryside over the past few decades, to set up home in the small urban centres that have developed in rural areas as a result of specific public policies since the 1970s, in search of work opportunities that have often led to the creation of family micro-businesses. For these households, migration to urban areas has not meant deserting the land or above all agricultural activity, which is managed from a distance using local immigrant labour and the support of neighbours. Greeks who have emigrated abroad or to big cities harbour strong attachments to their villages and areas of origin. These sociocultural links, along with strong family ties and solidarity networks, have been crucial catalysts in many local development processes and initiatives, and are therefore important factors in the tertiarisation and diversification of the rural economy affected by de-agrarisation. In some areas more than others, agriculture is modernising yet losing its economic importance, whilst still retaining its essential place in the socio-economic fabric of the Greek countryside. For example, family ties and relationships of mutual support explain how small shops and restaurants in rural areas remain economically viable despite aggressive competition from big supermarkets and shopping centres.

The rural area of Mouzaki in Greece

Some small territories in Greece that were once marginalised have managed to improve their situation and their cohesion within the region by transforming their sociocultural relationships into economic solidarity networks. The micro-region of Mouzaki, despite the loss of its historical role and the small size (4000 inhabitants) of the town that is its rural centre, has today become a territory with a real identity. Through traditional activities (wood, construction, commerce), almost 500 companies over the past twenty years have enabled the development of second homes in this mountainous backwater, supported by its diaspora. The innovation here lies in extracting value from non-material factors (family ties, social networks) linked to local identity.

This can be characterised as a neo-ruralisation movement, because this marginalised rural area has managed to turn its particular resources to advantage by integrating its diaspora. Following a period of a decline in the region, including falling population numbers, Mouzaki – like most small rural Greek towns – has seen its population grow substantially since 1980. It is becoming a centre that provides services and somewhere for some of the population of the mountain villages to live during the winter, and also a multi-activity centre for the residents of neighbouring villages. Although official census figures put the population of Mouzaki at 4000, its winter population exceeds 7000.

The development process in Mouzaki was essentially set in motion by the transformation of the mountains into a place of consumption by its diaspora (second homes). The general interest in the region created a favourable climate for micro-investment. Local businesses have invested significant capital into the region. The main beneficiaries have been construction and public works. Other sectors (weekend tourism, local agro-food products) have also benefited, by finding new outlets.

Using second homes as a means of strengthening the ties between the home territory and the diaspora has enabled socio-cultural relationships to be turned into strong economic networks which have allowed local businesses to control the emerging market and create competitive advantages over neighbouring urban centres. The organization, functioning and cohesion of this territory are heavily dependent on the coexistence of two "informal" systems: the spatial system with the economic centre of Mouzaki at its centre and the system of relationships between the whole micro-region and its diaspora. The first functions within the spatial boundaries of more than 12000 inhabitants and 450 businesses and provides various forms of cooperation within a local economy that is relatively diverse and benefits from the high level of mobility of its population of agricultural multiple job-holders, who provide a relatively flexible and qualified potential workforce. The second is based on the sociocultural and economic relationships between the diaspora, physically present only intermittently, and the district.

After a quarter of a century of implementing European policies and 15 years of interventions by the Greek Development Agency (ANKA), the production capacity of the Mouzaki region rests on three pillars:

- 2 500 family farms, specialised in extensive livestock farming in the mountain and foothill areas, and in large crops (cotton, maize) on the plains. A large proportion of the produce is sold via external trade networks on non-local markets;
- 480 traditional artisan local trading companies and family businesses that target the local market under their control, including the diaspora (construction of second homes, purchase of meat by visitors, wealthy regular clientele in the tavernas at weekends);
- 23 businesses, for the most part integrated into funding programmes under the aegis of ANKA. Two sub-groups can be identified. Those in the first group belong to the forest sector (furniture, joinery, cuisine). These businesses include the conception, manufacture and distribution of products and have the opportunity to recruit locally a flexible and qualified workforce. The presence of Greek emigrés in Germany has enabled skills and technology exchanges to be developed between local and German businesses. The current strategy focus is on market expansion through cooperation with construction businesses and companies that can commercialise their products. The second sub-group comprises agro-food companies (meat products, drinks, cheeses, tomato puree) whose markets are local, regional and national. Their raw materials come in part from local production.

The number of local businesses has grown by 52% since 1995. This increase has affected Mouzaki in particular and even more so the neighbouring village of Mavromati (117%), and the rest of the region to a far lesser extent. These businesses cover the entire gamut of social, commercial and consumer services. Some small outfits have seen a significant boom (relative increase in their size and modernisation). Today, the number of artisan, commercial and service businesses in Mouzaki is disproportionate to its population and its sphere of influence.

Source: Goussios (2008).

Adapting to emerging challenges

The changes that are shaping the landscapes and socio-economic fabric of the rural areas of the Northern Mediterranean can only be understood through analysis of national and local specificities and with profound knowledge of the "Mediterranean rural tradition". Local factors interact with the major forces of change that are affecting more generally, albeit to varying degrees, agricultural and rural areas and their communities.

One of these forces is globalisation, which opens up new emerging markets, but also brings with it exposure to the pressures of competition. This is stimulating the agricultural and agro-food sectors to modernise their production methods and work organization in order to meet the market requirement for quality products with high added value. Producers in the sectors most affected by globalisation fail to get satisfactory prices for their products, which tend to be less competitive than imported products. For consumers, globalisation that on the face of it increases competition is in fact no guarantee of lower prices, whilst standardisation will mean that they will see some erosion of the diversity and identity of the products on sale in the supermarkets.

The production of material goods (food and non-food, processed or not) in a sufficient quantity and of satisfactory quality is not the only recognised function of agriculture, which is no longer thought of as a purely sectoral activity. This primary sector can also produce non-material private and marketable goods, such as tourism services, and help to revitalise the local economy and maintain a vibrant social fabric in rural areas. Through agricultural activity, producers contribute to the production of non-tradable public goods such as landscape, environment and culture (Hervieu, 2002). There is also a link between the production of certain goods and certain types of agriculture and/or farmer profiles.

Recognition of agriculture's multiple economic, social and environmental functions, and therefore of its multifunctionality, has since the 1990s legitimised demand and growing public expectations in this regard that cannot be ignored and which are another major force in the transformation of rural areas. Many of these expectations come from new residents who have arrived from the cities, and whose relationship with the countryside is complex. They bring with them new lifestyles that require new services: immigrants, after a short stay in the capital, are moving to the countryside in search of work and accommodation; entrepreneurs are in search of new business opportunities; tourists require leisure services. Since the 1996 Cork Conference, the growing expectations of consumers and citizens have gradually been taken into account by the Common Agricultural Policy, as is evidenced by the various changes that it has undergone, notably its rural development pillar – even if budgets and mechanisms have not always lived up to the ambitions.

In future, implementation of regional rural policy will increasingly be based on the multifunctionality of agriculture which, in leaving behind the dualist interpretation of the European model (specialised and competitive agriculture in areas with the greatest potential versus multifunctional, diversified, niche agriculture in more marginalised and disadvantaged areas), provides the unifying paradigm of an agriculture plunged deeply in the diversity of rural areas and that is sensitive to the needs of the various rural actors. The concept of the multifunctionality of agriculture reveals very clearly the extent of agriculture's integration into the fabric of the countryside and assumes that it will be anchored in modern society in new ways (Dufour, 2007).

In the framework of a competitive and multifunctional agriculture, considerable importance is attached to diversification, both of farming and, applying a broader notion of the concept, of the local economy. In ensuring additional incomes, diversification becomes a strategy for the survival of farms and of farming professions as well as a means of revitalising the rural economy. At the same time, it is a tool that can help meet the challenges facing rural areas: thus, it can meet some of the needs of society and convey the multifunctional potential of agriculture.

Agricultural diversification means developing profitable activities using the human, cultural and material resources of the farm. A distinction can also be made between strictly agricultural diversification, which involves non-conventional crops and livestock (bio-fuels), and structural or entrepreneurial diversification, which involves the development of non-agricultural activities based on the farm itself and largely carried out by the farmer and his or her family. This type of diversification includes traditional sectors, such as contract processing, the preparation and production of agricultural products, direct sales, farm tourism and new domains less closely linked with agriculture, such as craft activities, gainful leisure activities (educational farms, sport and leisure or health activities) and eco or bio-fuel production (Nihous, 2008; Salvioni, 2008).

The main reasons for the diversification of rural areas are increasing farms' incomes and reducing their dependency on the CAP and their vulnerability to changes to the CAP or price fluctuations, expanding trade, increasing the customer portfolio or developing new markets (Nihous, 2008). Some farms and some regions have stronger reasons and a greater potential for doing so, and the spread of certain production methods – organic farming for example – can create the necessary preconditions for diversification to develop. For example, a territory characterised by an already competitive agro-industrial sector might adopt a strategy of ecological or environmental diversification, as with the district of Parmagiano Reggiano in Italy, where some production is becoming diversified and turning to organic methods.

In the Northern Mediterranean countries, the diversification of rural areas is still under-developed, despite the opportunities offered by the European Rural Development Policy. The competitiveness of agro-food systems remains the main planning priority for 2007-2013. Analysis of budgetary resources shows that these countries are among those that determine the highest amount under axis 1 (competitiveness) (Spain 47%, Greece 45%, Italy 42% and France 38%), and modest amounts under axis 3 (quality of life and diversification), i.e. less than 20% (Greece, Italy, Spain), 11% France.

Some analysts emphasise the disharmony between the concepts of multifunctionality and diversification proclaime in European rural development policies, and the inertia of farmers in implementing this. Some of them believe that the transition of the vocation of peasant towards a new vocation that requires the coming together of skills and knowledge (Hervieu, 2002), characteristic of a diversified farm, seems difficult and poses a real problem of legitimization. Thus, in France the Ministry of Agriculture and Fishing has recently decided to put in place an operational and territorialized provision to encourage diversification in the rural setting, on the basis of the following reports: from 1988 to 2000, the number of diversified farms has fallen due to the tendency to abandon product lines considered to be marginal, or that are not integrated into the farm's plans; diversification is more widespread among farmers over the age of 50 than among young people, who prefer to focus on their primary, strictly agricultural activity.

Using agricultural and food identities to create value

Local speciality products can play a critical role in rural diversification, as they are the main way of creating value from the resources of a territory. Regulation CEE 2081/92 on the Register of Geographical Indications and Appellations of Origin of agricultural products and foodstuffs provides that "whereas, as part of the adjustment of the Common Agricultural Policy the diversification of agricultural production should be encouraged so as to achieve a better balance between supply and demand on the markets; whereas the promotion of products having certain characteristics could be of considerable benefit to the rural economy, in particular to less-favoured or remote areas, by improving the incomes of farmers and by retaining the rural population in these areas."

Local speciality products are created by a marriage of natural environmental factors with traditional production methods, and can only be reproduced over time if local "organisational structures" enable them to become recognised and to distinguish themselves. Only then can such products become a driver for development, through their ability to reach markets, involve other sectors of the local economy with which they have direct or indirect links, and in so doing stimulate a transformation of the local production structure, building relationships with markets and developing other economic activities such as tourism, food services or commerce.

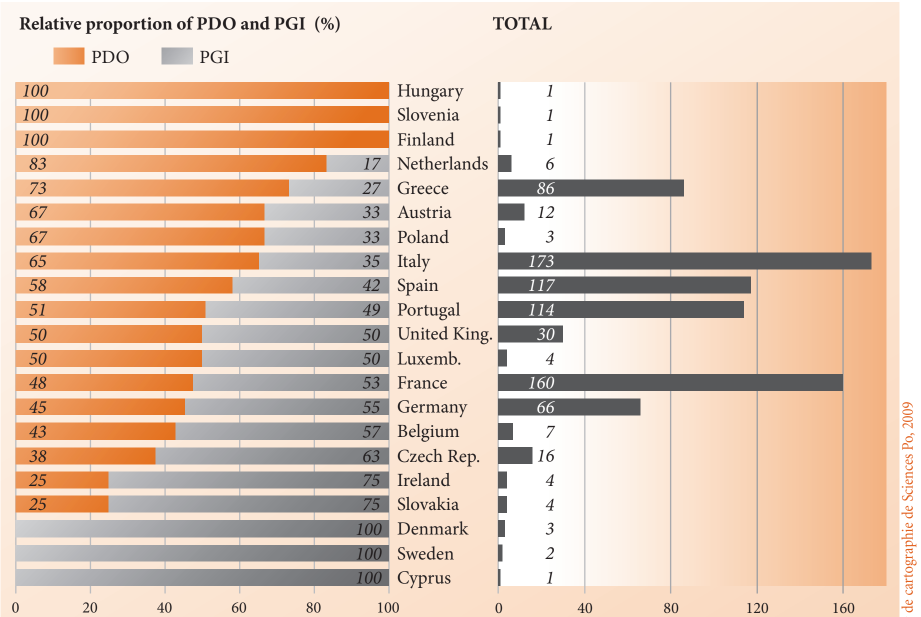
In recent years the market seems to have been characterised by strong growth in demand for quality products. The success of the policy of creating value from a product's quality and origin must be considered within the general context of increasing interest by all economic actors, who wish to facilitate consumer choice and respond to consumer expectations with regard to food safety, taste, pleasure and the preservation of gastronomic and cultural values. In 1992 the European Union passed a series of regulations relating to systems to protect and create value for agro-food products (PDO, PGI, TSG) which equate to a consumer "guarantee", providing a commercial boost for economic operators and contributing to the development of the areas concerned. Interestingly, some 80% of the products that have received European Union certification, under the three categories, come from Mediterranean countries.

In France, there are today approximately 200 000 farmers and more than 13 000 agro-food businesses (cottage industry, small and medium-sized enterprises or industrial) and suppliers (hatcheries, food companies…) affected by the policy of creating value for agricultural and food products. Symbols for designations of quality and origin encourage variety as well as the diversification of production. They allow producers to market diverse products with specific, clearly identifiable characteristics, and encourage access to markets, especially for smaller companies. The products concerned, which are guaranteed to meet the specifications, enjoy easier access to mass-market distribution and the export market. Symbols are also tools for market segmentation with a genuine economic purpose: they meet an identified consumer need, enabling them to spot the products sporting their national or community logo. Determining the specifications for a product requires a collective organisation of producers and their downstream partners, the efficiency of which is a crucial factor for success in an approach to differentiation based on origin or the quality of agro-food products. It also gives producers more weight in negotiations with supermarket buyers, which means that they can then hope to receive some of the value generated from consumers. Here are some figures showing the benefits for producers of designations of quality and origin: the retail price of a cheese with a designation of origin is 30% higher on average than that of competing cheeses; for wines, the price differential is 230%, which trickles down to producers of the raw material; the price paid to producers for milk destined for the manufacture of cheeses with designations of origin is 20% higher on average than for milk for other purposes (Le Goff, 2008).

Behind France and Italy, Spain is in third place for PDO and PGI (cf. Chart 1). According to data from the Spanish Ministry for the Environment, Rural Areas and the Sea (MARM), sales revenues from quality foods rose from 386 million Euros to 650 million

Euros in 2004, an increase of 68%. However, despite the increase in the number of designations and the economic value of production protected by designations of quality, these still only represent 2% of ordinary food production (Ceña and Gallardo, 2008).

Chart 1 - Distribution of PDO/PGI in Europe, 2008



Sources: WDI and FAO.

In Greece, as in other Mediterranean countries, there is another form of quality product with a strong presence in rural territories: traditional, "authentic" products, such as wild herbs and medicinal or aromatic plants. These are products where the quality-assessment certification process is based on traditional skills and knowledge, on a conveyed image of a "natural" product and/or on faith in the producer. These products are not yet integrated into the official process of recognition and certification, not in local development projects, and tend to rely on individual initiative to meet demand that is related both to the Greek people's attachment to their home territories and to the development of rural tourism.

A large proportion of quality products contributing to the image of a territory is destined to be consumed in situ in the context of the tourist trade (commerce, restaurants, cake shops…). They are also sold through networks of families and friends and on local markets. These forms of marketing in circuits that are small, and of varying degrees of formality, are controlled by the producers directly, by integrating the spheres of influence of family and relations. The sale of products on distant and more structured markets relies more on cooperative unions or companies and businesses, and the lack of collective forms of organisation prevents producers from negotiating directly with supermarket buyers. However, we should not underestimate the importance of the role played by natives to a region, who, since the 1980s, have been instigators in the creation of specialised shops in big cities, selling products from their territory of origin. This phenomenon of opening up rural territories to urban and foreign markets via networks of diaspora has grown in recent years and is contributing to the emergence of distant markets that can be directly controlled by producers (Goussios, 2008).

Designations of quality and origin affect a territory on several levels: the effects may be economic (essentially direct or indirect employment), social (directly related to the economic effects), such as those relating to the safeguarding of a culture or a heritage, or social cohesion, and environmental, such as the protection of landscapes and of natural resources (animal and plant biodiversity, farming practices that are particularly environmentally friendly). The economic impact is essentially to be found in the value generated by the designations of quality and origin, which help to slow the deterioration in the value of agriculture and keep small farms afloat. Their contribution to the protection of landscapes also allows some regions to develop and retain a strong potential for tourism. Agricultural and agro-food economic activity, directly or indirectly, and tourism contribute to a region's economic dynamism regardless of natural disadvantages. In this respect, the contribution made by protected designations of origin (PDO) to protecting the landscape is a consequence of certain agricultural practices required by the specifications, such as the proportion of grass in animal feed, which helps to maintain pastures and grasslands in general, or the requirement to put animals out to pasture. In mountain areas, the production of cheese with a protected designation of origin helps to keep landscapes accessible by maintaining prairies, whereas land in areas without a designation of origin is gradually being closed off.

Beyond these regulations, quality production is a major component of Europe's agricultural modernisation policy. Funding is therefore planned within the framework of the Common Agricultural Policy to ensure strategic positioning by raising quality and creating value for agricultural or food products. The new European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) now offers support for improving the quality of agricultural production methods and products, improving the environment and countryside, encouraging tourism in the context of the diversification of the rural economy, conducting studies and making investments to maintain, restore and give value to cultural heritage.

Harnessing added value while protecting the environment

Organic farming is another extremely common diversification strategy. The emergence of organic farming in some Northern Mediterranean countries in the 1960s and 70s was due to the efforts of a few pioneers. The sector then experienced varying levels of growth depending on the relative importance of factors that in Europe have generally depended on the growth of the organic sector, such as the introduction of financial support measures, the gradual structuring of the national organic movement or demand on the domestic market. In some countries, such as France or some regions of Italy, standards for the sector were adopted prior to the European Economic Community regulation No. 2092/1991. This demonstrates particular sensitivity towards the organic sector and a desire to see the development of an organised community and the local market. It is also no coincidence that France and Italy now have some of the most expanding markets in Europe, after Germany and the United Kingdom.

In production terms, Italy has been the European leader for several years, with more than a million hectares being organically farmed and more than 50 000 organic operators (Sinab, 2007). The Italian market for organic products is valued at more than 2.5 billion Euros and represents 1.8% of the total national agro-food consumption. It does not seem to have been greatly affected by the credit crunch. Further developing the domestic market and establishing the presence of Italian organic products on international markets are among the objectives of a national action plan for the organic sector, established in 2005, which also aims to provide a structure for the organic sector and promote the sector through awareness-raising and improvements to the institutional information system. The remarkable expansion of organic agriculture in Italy in recent years is attributable to a number of factors: financial support from the European Union, the hard work of a few pioneers, the effect of food scares and the search by many farmers for economic alternatives and methods of protecting the viability of their farms. In some regions, a favourable institutional environment has facilitated the emergence of individual and collective initiatives that link organic farming with rural development practices, such as agrotourism or other ways of creating value from the local heritage (see ""Organic theme routes" in the Apulia region"). In several protected areas in Italy these initiatives are encouraged at the territory level using an integrated and multi-sectoral approach (Pugliese, 2007). Emerging synergies between the organic sector and the *SlowFood* and fair trade movements could lead to interesting developments.

"Organic theme routes" in the Apulia region, Italy

The Pro. Bio. Sis project, which received funding within the framework of Interreg IIIA Greece-Italy 2000-2006, in three provinces of the Apulia region in Italy, aimed to facilitate the promotion of sustainable rural development compatible with tourism in the territories concerned by developing and promoting organic production systems.

The relationship between organic farming and rural development, a synergy with tremendous potential and that has many facets (economic, social and environmental) is a specific component of the project. A review was conducted of "best practices" in the region, which is to say a review of individual and collective initiatives able to demonstrate that adopting the principles and methods of organic farming can make a useful contribution to the process of local development.

On the one hand, the review showed that there were a significant number of diversified organic farms that were individually extremely active in increasing the value of local resources through tourism and leisure, educational and gastronomic activities, etc. On the other, it emphasised the lack of collective initiatives. This prompted the idea of redrafting the guidelines for the development and management of theme routes, with the aim of integrating organic farming systems with other agricultural and non-agricultural activities based on the multi-functionality of rural areas, by involving other kinds of operator and local economic actors.

An organic theme route is defined as:

- *a journey in the world of organic farming* to discover its delights and the countryside that is associated with it;
- *an opportunity to create a network* around the organic sector, by involving all the operators in making people aware that the organic "culture" is about something more than the strict "health and nutrition" reference point of organic products;

- *a chance for tourists to make a sustainable and responsible choice* and get to know a territory in a different way.

To live up to these ambitions, an organic theme route must be:

- *aesthetically pleasing*, which means it must be developed in a "typically" rural environment with an attractive landscape;
- *rich in attractions*, which means it must enable visitors to find out about the history and the most important natural resources of the local area, as well as including initiatives that generate value from the cultural heritage and local products that are the basis of its uniqueness and its identity;
- *varied*, which means it must include an appropriate array of visits, tastings, accommodation, dining, and shopping in order to continue to stimulate visitors' curiosity and meet their expectations;
- *complete*, which means it must touch on all of the unique characteristics of the local area, even "minor" aspects that are normally less visible but that often provide unforgettable experiences; they must also try to involve all categories of operator and attract a wide range of visitors with different interests.

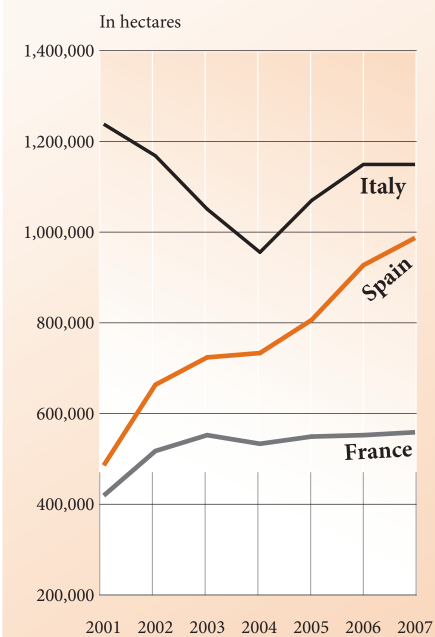
Planning and executing the setting up of an organic theme route can prove to be a complex but extremely effective exercise so long as, from the outset, there is a procedure to ensure the involvement of all actors and collective learning. The guidelines redrafted in the framework of this project are targeted at a range of public and private actors all affected, one way or another, by the future of rural spaces and their communities: local authorities, local development agencies, associations, farms and other private operators, scientists and technologists.

Source: Cataldi et al. *(2008).*

Spain has caught up considerably with Italy in terms of coverage in recent years, but not in terms of the number of operators. Organic farming is a major objective of the Spanish Rural Development Programme's agro-environmental measures. The strong dynamism of the sector translates into an increase in the number of organic farms, from 1233 (1995) to 19 211 (2006). The proportion of land being farmed organically grew from 0.13% (1995) to 5.19% (2006). In 2004, organic production had an estimated value of 250 million Euros and involved more than 1700 processing plants. However, the consumption of organic products remains low: it equates to less than 1% of what the Spanish spend on food. Almost 80% of production is exported, mostly within Europe, especially Germany, Holland, France or the United Kingdom, so far as fresh products in particular are concerned. The reasons for the low levels of organic consumption include high prices but also a lack of promotion and the lack of distribution methods; consumers do not recognise the products, have difficulty associating quality products with a logo or stamp, are not informed about their beneficial properties, and do not find them in the places where they usually shop. To overcome these shortcomings, the Ministry of Agriculture, Fishing and Food (MAPA) has adopted a complete plan of interventions to encourage organic farming, in order to promote the development, awareness and commercialisation of organic products (Ceña and Gallardo, 2008).

In France, organic agriculture has been through a period of stagnation; the revival is recent and there is once again a strong determination, through a national plan of action, to meet the demand of the ever-growing domestic market. At the end of 2006, 11 640 farms were using organic methods, farming 560 838 hectares, or 2% of the national agricultural land that was in use. According to recent estimates, the market for organic products has grown to 1.6 billion Euros, or 1.1% of the food market, including drinks. On average, since 1999, the market has grown by 9.5% per year when all sectors are taken together.

Chart 2 - Organic land area in France Italy and Spain, 2001-2007



Source: Eurostat and MOAN.

Atelier de cartographie de Sciences Po, 2009

France has put in place various policies for the development of organic farming: the Agricultural Orientation Act of 5 January 2006, which provides for a specific tax break for organic farmers (a tax credit for three years, for the years 2005, 2006 and 2007); specific support in the framework of the National Strategic Plan 2007-2013, which provides for European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) assistance in the form of "territorialized" agro-environmental measures; support within the framework of the "quality" measures of the French national Rural Development Programme (PDRH), which encourage the adoption of food quality regimes, including organic farming, by contributing to fixed costs (certification costs for example) and support awareness-raising and product promotion activities. The development of organic farming also includes funding for activities designed to enable organisation of the sector by facilitating relationships between its various actors. Thus, 2.7 million Euros of funding is earmarked for activities to support the creation of a structure for the organic sector, especially downstream. Lastly, the French Agency for the Development and Promotion of Organic Farming (Agence BIO), which takes the form of a Public Interest Group, is charged with promoting interprofessional dialogue and working to ensure the balanced development of this sector, through communication particularly. This entire gamut of instruments will be strengthened within the framework of the Organic Farming Action Plan 2012 announced by the Minister of Agriculture. Organic farming is much less developed than in other Mediterranean countries in the European Union.

Diversifying to revitalise communities and heritage

For two decades, rural areas on the Northern shores of the Mediterranean have seen a new lease of life that may be called into question by the scarcity of fossil fuels. For the moment, this rural dynamism still has great resonance, thanks, in particular, to growing tourism demand and new expectations in terms of land management. Changing tourist trends (a hankering for the "authenticity" that is associated with local culture, local products, meeting local people, immersion with nature etc.) has encouraged many rural territories to turn to tourism in an effort to reinvigorate their economy locally.

Rural tourism is not a new phenomenon in Europe, but the market has become more sophisticated. There has also been a resurgence in interest in rural tourism, which has come to be seen as an effective way of achieving vital diversification of the rural economy. Although rural spaces are no longer interchangeable with the agricultural world, agriculture does play an important part in the image game, and its contribution to heritage and tourism is not insignificant. This is encouraging to farmers who want to invest in tourism as a means of diversifying, thus changing its place in society.

There is a lot of evidence to shows that rural tourism, as a cross-sectoral activity, has become a driver of sustainable economic development of local areas, by opening up new market places for typical and traditional agricultural production, by publicising the produce of local artisans and playing a marketing role for the local area. Today, there are a range of tourist products offering various leisure activities as well as a plethora of accommodation types and dining experiences that are giving a new lease of life to some parts of the countryside and redefining the territorial organisation of some rural areas (Dubois, 2004).

In France, rural tourism occupies a special place in economic tourism. In 2005, tourism-related spending rose to 108.11 billion Euros, of which approximately 59 billion was on overnight stays; 19.3%, or approximately 20 billion Euros of this was in rural areas. Rural tourism thus represents almost a third of French tourist visits (28% of overnight stays). However, rural tourism is largely non-commercial (in 2005, 78% of overnight stays in the countryside were in second homes or with family or friends) and generates little income (Ministry of Tourism, 2007).

Types of tourist accommodation that are specific to rural settings (B&Bs and rural holiday cottages) are increasingly popular with foreign and French customers. Farmers have an important contribution to make to the development of tourism in rural areas. They offer services that complement the conventional services offered by hotels, cafés, restaurants and open-air catering, and therefore, with good reason, can receive aid from the Ministry of Agriculture.

Table 1 - Rural Tourism in France

	Rural areas	Other areas
French territory	80 %	20 %
Tourist visits	28 %	72 %
Tourism spending	19.30 %	80.70 %

Source: French national Tourism Directorate (2005).

Rural tourism emerged in Spain in the 1980s. Today it is booming, thanks in particular to women joining the labour market. In 2003 Spain had 50 000 beds in approximately 7 000 establishments (5% of the country's tourism beds). The development of rural tourism has been helped in particular by support from the European programmes Leader I, Leader II and Leader +, as well as the Spanish plan Futures II. Although it has become a factor in renewed value being placed on the environment and the development of rural areas, it has not developed evenly across all the regions of Spain. The lack of a Federal body of rural Spanish tourism has resulted in forms of development being extremely diverse from region to region. Development models have been influenced by the context and structure of local tourism (Ceña and Gallardo, 2008).

In Greece, accommodation provision in rural areas continues to increase, for two reasons: on the one hand, because tourism is considered to be the only thing capable of reversing the trends of job losses in an agriculture that is in decline, and of depopulation. On the other hand, it is because it is seen as something that gives women an opportunity to find paid employment in rural areas where agriculture, animal husbandry and construction have remained largely masculine activities, unlike in the cities where the industrialisation and then tertiarisation of the economy have given women the opportunity to work.

Rural tourism and the value that it creates for local and traditional products have thus encouraged work for women and new innovative practices such as the creation of women's cooperatives producing and ensuring the commercialisation of local and traditional products (Goussios, 2008). Over and above this tourist activity, the whole of Greece is now affected by the new residential and leisure functions of rural areas, stimulated in particular by the diaspora and the role of cultural organisations. This phenomenon contributes a great deal to the cohesion of territories and to a better connection between the various sectors of activity – unlike tourism investment projects that have failed to integrate other sectors.

Rural areas in the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean: boom and new adaptations

The weak economic growth of SEMCs in recent decades seems to be attributable to political instability and to an institutional and economic climate that is unattractive to investment. High levels of unemployment have also been exacerbated by strong population growth. The structure of GDP shows that services and industry have a dominant role in these countries' transitional economies. Agriculture, which retains considerable importance, represents 10 to 20% of GDP, but there is a downward trend, a universal phenomenon in countries with a growing GDP.

Significant geographical redistribution of the population has led to strong metropolisation. In urban areas, families must work several jobs in order to be able to afford a decent standard of living, thus encouraging smaller households and families living separately, as well as the desocialisation that comes with the increase in single person households (Padilla, 2008). The transformation and rapid industrialisation of modes of food consumption, which co-exists with the preservation and renaissance of traditional food, are manifestations of recent societal changes. Although the Mediterranean is becoming more urbanised, a considerable proportion of Southern and Eastern Mediterraneans still live in rural areas, and these are still poorly developed. The rapid increase in the acuity of disparities between rural and urban incomes, as well as extreme poverty, which is ubiquitous in rural areas, are an important source of social and political tension. Emigration to now overpopulated cities or abroad is no guarantee of finding new opportunities.

Despite emigration, the rural population in most SEMCs continues to grow. For example, it exceeds 40% of the total population in Algeria, Morocco and Egypt, and is reaching 30% in Tunisia and Turkey (IFAD, 2007). Inhabitants of rural areas are small farmers, women, business owners, herdsmen who are becoming less and less nomadic, fishermen and artisans, seasonal workers on big farms, the "land-less", young rural inhabitants without jobs and with poor qualifications, and refugee populations who are obviously the most vulnerable groups. Given the high cost of accommodation in towns and the weight of sociocultural constraints, many of them continue to live in the country even when they work in the city, commuting daily. Moreover, although they do not always appear in the official statistics, migrants are in increasing numbers deserting rural areas completely and moving to commuter belt areas in search of other work opportunities; these are another "frontier category" in the make up of the rural Mediterranean population. Many of them take advantage of the proximity of urban markets and grow on micro-farms in order to sell the surplus and so earn a little money.

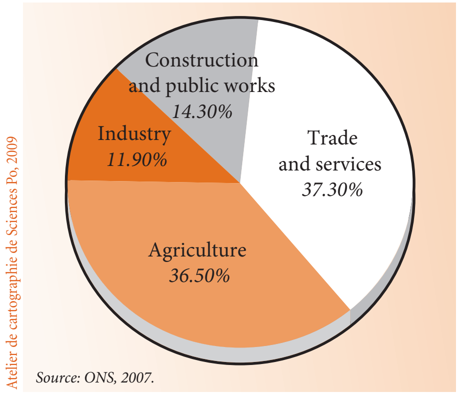
In Algeria, there is a trend towards the urbanisation of the rural environment that surrounds cities and key rural towns, which translates into the emergence of "buffer zones" around urban areas. This type of urbanisation serves above all to attenuate the migratory pressure on urban centres. However, the living conditions in these rural environments often remains poor. In Morocco, for example, they are without basic sanitation (piped drinking water in homes and sewage networks).

In the cities, which are gradually becoming overcrowded, there are fewer job opportunities. At the same time, rural areas still do not provide adequate non-agricultural sources of income. Lack of employment is one of the major causes of poverty in rural areas, as the diversification of economic activity remains very poor almost everywhere in the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean. Agriculture alone cannot absorb the available rural labour force, which keeps on growing. The mismatch between the number of new rural workers and the number of agricultural jobs being created is growing (World Bank, 2007), and only those who manage to cling on to their farms, often by supplementing their income with other activities, are saved from the rural exodus. For those who stay, the alternatives offered in the formal sector in industry, construction and the public sector are limited.

Most must adapt to precarious and badly remunerated employment in the informal sector: in small retail shops, repair workshops and various informal services. In Tunisia, there are a growing number of yellow vehicles of all shapes and sizes (although rarely luxurious), classed as "rural transport" and parked at the various exits to the city to provide transport to the thousands of rural residents who spend the day in town, in particular on building sites. This new line of work, along with the small grocers scattered throughout cities and rural villages that are already facing strong competition from urban commerce, is one of the few alternatives to agriculture in the Tunisian countryside (Hassainya, 2008).

One major obstacle to diversification is the agricultural economy's strong dependence on the climate, as climatic conditions determine the level of demand for goods and services on the local market. In Morocco, for example, a dry year will cause a significant fall in the number of jobs created by agriculture. For 2000-2001, jobs lost in cereal crops

Chart 3 - Distribution by sector of rural employment in Algeria



alone were estimated to be in the order of 14 million work days, which equates to a loss of earnings of approximately 70 million dirhams (6.3 million Euro) (Ahouate and Tamehmachet, 2008). Local agricultural conditions determine the viability of non-agricultural businesses, which are highly dependent on local markets because considerable communication and information shortcomings mean that they lack the connections to larger markets.

Another constraint on the development of entrepreneurial activities in rural areas other than agriculture is the "weakness" of human resources: the vast majority of agricultural workers are illiterate (in Egypt, 80% of illiterate people work in agriculture when all categories are taken together: self-employed 55%, employed agricultural worker 12%, non-paid work 33%. Only 12% of workers educated to degree level are employed in the agricultural sector); half of employed agricultural workers are in seasonal jobs (in Egypt, 50% of all agricultural job holders are seasonal farm workers but only 11% of non-agricultural job holders are in seasonal jobs) and a third of agricultural work is unpaid. Rural women undertake unpaid agricultural work and given their low levels of education have very little chance of getting a paid non-agricultural job. In Egypt, 83% of women in rural areas work in the agricultural sector, often being paid little or not at all; only a small number of women do paid non-agricultural work. In Algeria, there are still many disparities in the rural environment. The number of rural women in employment remains low: in 2006 they made up only 5.5% of the total active population. One unemployed woman in four is rural, a quarter of whom are aged between 20 and 29 years old. Of the paid work that is done by rural women, 39% is in industry, followed by 33% in agriculture (Benghabrit-Remaoun and Rahou, 2006).

This means that the agricultural sector has at its disposal plentiful but poorly qualified and unproductive human resources, which is hindering the emergence, spread and adoption of innovation. In this context, the current state of the agricultural labour force is clearly a real handicap preventing the evolution of agriculture. Assessments of investment in the rural environment have revealed other significant limitations on the diversification of economic activities, notably, apart from the poor quality of roads and infrastructure (electricity and drinking water supply, refuse collection services), poor access to credit and financial services, insecurity of property rights, weak government structures and legal institutions and a lack of coordination between private and public actors.

In Egypt, poor access to formal credit is a huge limitation. The Principal Bank for Development and Agricultural Credit is the main service provider. The obtention of credit is conditional on ownership of agricultural land, or in other words excludes farmers who do not own land. Owning farmland is likewise a condition for the purchase of "inputs" in agricultural credit cooperatives. Small farmers are thus forced to make deals with the big land-owning farmers who buy them the inputs in exchange for half their value. Informal credit generally dominates in the rural world, particularly among small or landless farmers. Clearly, this unfavourable scenario helps discourage outside investment, which explains the presence of businesses close to urban areas, which are better served. Even agro-food industries have historically been set up on the outskirts of towns in order to benefit from the basic infrastructure (roads, electricity, water, ports) – well away from the biggest cereal-growing farms.

These shortcomings combine with a lack of vision on the part of institutional actors, who identify the rural environment with agriculture, or with a pool of cheap labour without social or trade union coverage, which is not conducive to the emergence of a framework that stimulates diversification. This makes it an imperative to save rural society from the position of weakness in which it finds itself. Despite the loss of economic importance and the considerable fluctuations of the agricultural sector, agriculture is not only a valuable economic alternative, but remains undeniably a driver of development for rural areas in the countries of the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean. Moreover, exploring various routes to diversification of the local economy is becoming a necessity.

Linking agricultural development with carefully targeted social safety nets

The vast majority of poor people live in disadvantaged regions, left behind by technological progress. In these areas, improving agricultural production whilst providing social safety nets to populations is a key orientation for political action. In some contexts, it is necessary to reduce the vulnerability of the weakest categories of farm by consolidating agricultural employment and stabilising agricultural incomes in order to allow a rural economy that is still highly dependent on agriculture to retain a minimum level of vitality.

In Tunisia, the Government classifies farms into one of three categories, on the basis of size and turnover: 1) large farms (cereals and irrigated); 2) small and medium-sized farms of an economic nature (PMEACE); 3) small-scale family or social farming (PACFS). The Ministry of Development and International Cooperation (MDCI) puts 24% of farms in the “social” or “family” category that is the most at risk of poverty and vulnerability. These farms have a net income from farming of less than 3 500 Tunisian dinars (approximately 2 000 Euros), the farming viability threshold. Farming is their main occupation. They rely on family labour and occasionally recruit seasonal workers. Women are more likely to be involved, in raising cattle and poultry, carrying out craft work, processing food, or doing specific tasks in the fields, such as hoeing. These family farms, in particular the poorest of them, make practically no call on formal credit, access to which is limited by distance and bureaucracy. However, 87% of them say that they would make use of credit if it were more accessible and adapted to their needs. Informal loans between family members, neighbours etc. are relatively common, in particular between those family farms that are better off. Some studies point to other limitations that also apply to the agricultural sector as a whole: poor capacity for investment, insufficient access to credit, weak organisation among farmers, poor access to information on popularisation, training, research and the market, an ageing population, fragmentation of land.

It has become vital to reduce the vulnerability of these farms in order to stimulate the non-agricultural economy that is dependent on them. On the one hand, this means enabling dialogue between farmers and institutions, and meeting the need of all farmers to overcome the inadequacies of agricultural systems; on the other hand, it would be desirable to have well thought-out social programmes carefully targeted at the needs of communities and rural areas, in order to attenuate the impact of reforms relating to the liberalisation process (World Bank, 2006).

Diversifying by promoting agricultural and agro-industrial activities with high added value

Insofar as urban incomes are rising, eating habits are becoming more varied and opportunities on international markets remain attractive, rural economies could be developed by promoting activities with high added value in order to diversify agriculture and, in some contexts, steer it away from cash crops. Following the green revolution, the high added value revolution is now generating a second wave of growth in employment. The dynamic sector of crops and livestock products with high added value, which are labour-intensive, has strong potential for increasing employment and raising rural incomes (World Bank, 2007).

Moreover, a private agro-industrial sector establishing a link between agricultural producers and consumers can be an important engine for growth in the agricultural and rural sectors. In order to ensure the success of this approach, it is important to promote the involvement of small farmers through targeted public-private partnerships and initiatives promoting a more favourable investment climate for small and medium-sized enterprises. Eliminating the strangling bottlenecks that prevent the participation of SMEs could increase the effectiveness and impact of the development of the agro-industrial sector in poverty reduction (World Bank, 2007).

In some SEMCs, despite good agricultural performance in recent decades, many examples demonstrate that agriculture is not making the contribution that it could to the national economy. Fully realising agriculture's potential means increasing the value of the most competitive well-known products. There are clearly opportunities here: the demand for raw and processed products with high added value is growing rapidly on domestic and world markets, stimulated by higher incomes, rapid urbanisation, changes in eating habits in favour of more processed and high-quality products, the liberalisation of trade, foreign investment and technological advances. The countries of the Mediterranean therefore have great potential in agro-food on account of their soil and climate, their culinary and cultural traditions, and the existence of an artisan and industrial base that is already significant.

Among activities for export, we might draw attention to: out of season crops; products with a strong Mediterranean or country association; cooked and frozen meals on the basis of local recipes and products; organic farming; the harvesting of aromatic and medicinal herbs (see box entitled "the role of aromatic and medicinal plants in the development of the rural economy").

At the same time, local markets comprising millions of consumers are growing rapidly and becoming increasingly demanding, opening the way for the development of activities to strengthen local capacity to meet the domestic market in order to limit the effects of dependency on foreign goods and avoid the too rapid introduction of imported modes of consumption: products with short shelf life (dairy product lines), modernisation and reliability of the cold chain, aquaculture and fish farming, mineral waters, bio-fuels, industrial baking, food distribution, slaughtering, the processing of red meats (Anima, 2005).

The role of aromatic and medicinal plants in the development of the rural economy

Aromatic and medicinal plants offer a promising alternative for the economic development of rural areas in the Mediterranean owing to their more rational use of water, the lower cost of farming and harvesting them, and the fact that they offer higher incomes per farming unit than conventional crops, as well as significant potential for creating added value and employment through processing and marketing them. Moreover, aromatic and medicinal plants provide a niche market for women in rural areas, who are closely involved in the various phases of processing (drying and distillation) and marketing. This means that the development of this sector would have a considerable effect on the contribution made by women to rural household incomes. For other vulnerable categories of the rural population, such as young people, landless farmers and marginalised small producers, harvesting such plants is an additional means of subsistence and a way of diversifying family incomes in the interests of better risk management vis-à-vis various climatic and economic hazards.

In rural areas in Morocco, aromatic and medicinal plants offer a genuine economic alternative. The country has rich and varied biodiversity comprising more than 4200 species, with very marked endemicity. There are between 500 and 600 aromatic and/or medicinal species, the exploitation of which allows the export of 1000 tons of essential oils and extracts and almost 400 tons of dried herbs with a value of 300 million dirhams, creating approximately 500 000 days' work. Since the 1980s, Morocco's biggest customer has been France. Demand is now growing in the United States, Japan, Spain, Switzerland and Germany for products exported in the form of dried plants for use by herbalists and for flavouring food. There is a lot of potential for the development of processing systems for wild and endemic plants. Their use for medicinal purposes, as well as for the preservation and flavouring of food is deeply rooted in society. Plant resources are found in regions where they are an important source of income for the local population and thus a springboard for local development. Other regions are starting to promote the techniques for this kind of cultivation.

However, a number of technical, organisational or resource management-related limitations reduce the added value of this activity. On the technical level, the poor quality of products results from a lack of technical and technological knowledge and poor commercialisation skills. In order to regain its competitiveness, the sector must improve the quality of its products and ensure the protection of its label. Efforts must also be made at the marketing level. So far as the organisational limitations are concerned, remember that professionals in the sector receive no supervision. Those who harvest wild plants generally work piece-rate and are rarely unionised. Meanwhile, resource management suffers the pressures of the local population and cattle, and the lack of awareness of local people about the protection of the environment and the importance of aromatic and medicinal plants. In some contexts, we are increasingly seeing the negative environmental and social effects of unregulated over-exploitation of these resources.

Source: Ahouate and Tamehmachet (2008).

In Morocco, the agro-food industries are, with a turnover of more than 60 billion dirhams (more than 40% of the industrial sector's share of GDP and 8% of national GDP in 2005), by far the main manufacturing sector, ahead of textiles or chemicals and thus a pillar of the Moroccan economy. According to the most recent statistics (2005), the Moroccan agro-food industries employ 71 000 people in more than 2000 companies. Most of the industry comprises small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). However, although SMEs make up 95% of the agro-food industries, they are responsible for only 45% of agro-food production, whilst the fifty biggest companies (big national groups such as ONA or Holmarcom or foreign companies such as Nestlé, Unilever, Proctor and Gamble) carry out close to 55%. The products supply both the local market (essentially staple goods such as sugar or oil) and the export market (fresh and processed products, such as canned vegetables or fish).

These numbers aside, the sector does have a number of vulnerabilities. In particular, supply is a major problem for the agro-food industry. The links between farmers and processors have never been conducted appropriately, with relations between them so confrontational that they make it impossible for the sector to grow. Other handicaps include a lack of qualified labour, a weak packaging industry that does not meet the needs of the sector etc. Packaging costs are high due to the need to import raw materials, the cost of energy and the monopolies or quasi-monopolies of manufacturers. For all these reasons, the local packaging industry does not seem to be a source of competitive advantage for the sector.

There is also an absence of the marketing approach that might offer employment opportunities to small agricultural enterprises wanting to transform their production. Indeed, the proportion of business by companies in the sector that is conducted loose remains sizeable: 50% for olives, 90% for capers, 100% for apricots, and 100% for juices. This is worrying when viewed in comparison to competing countries, such as Turkey, where most companies export in separate packaging and sub-mark a priority. Although Morocco is the world's biggest exporter of capers, "nobody was able to meet a foreign customer's request for capers in vinegar", says Fenagri, the National Agro-Food Federation. A marketing vision would also enable new niches to be identified, by diversifying what is on offer (argan oil, poultry processing, organic products…) (Vallée and Flandrin, 2005). However, the Moroccan agro-food industry has been successful on international markets – exports of processed cheeses, for example, are growing. This industry, one of the few that has been able to be built on the back of a local market, produces 32 000 tons of cheese per year and exports close to 15 000 tons to Arab countries (Libya, United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia).

In the context of the promotion of agricultural and agro-industrial activities with high added value, organic farming and typical and traditional products represent innovative approaches that marry the modernisation of agriculture with the link with territory and tradition. On the regional scale, the first Conference of Ministers of Agriculture held in Venice in 2003 in the framework of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership made specific mention of sustainable rural development, organic farming and geographical designations. These issues were then included as non-commercial elements in the Euro-Mediterranean roadmap for agriculture intended to guide the process of trade liberalisation. Organic

Agro-food processing as a driver of development in Karaman Province, Turkey

Karaman Province is considered to be a model for the agro-food industry in Turkey: agricultural products are processed there into products with high added value (flour, biscuits, fruit juice, cheese etc.). Karaman is situated in the region of Central Anatolia, and comprises 6 zones, 10 towns and 160 villages. According to census figures from 2000, the province has 243 210 residents, of whom 58% live in urban and 42% in rural areas. The economy of the province is above all reliant on farming activities. Of 940 743 hectares, 25.79% is arable land, 6.85% is lying fallow, 34.15% is grassland, 22.27% forests and 6.8% non-agricultural land. Karaman Province has 13 826 dairy cows, 11 591 head of cattle, 374 141 sheep, 59 093 goats and 11 696 angora goats.

Since the early 1990s there has been a remarkable improvement in employment levels, thanks to the stepping up of investment in the agro-food industry, which has turned to production for export. Thus, the agro-food sector has made a great contribution to reducing unemployment. Employment participation rates in Karaman province are 69% for men and 44% for women, as compared to 48.4% and 24.4% respectively for Turkey as a whole. Karaman first began to attract attention in the mid 1980s, when its biscuit-making industry grew to the point that almost half of all biscuits made in Turkey were made there. There are 37 businesses in the province (biscuits, bulgar wheat and bakery goods). One third of biscuits and one fifth of bulgar wheat produced in Turkey comes from Karaman Province. Karaman's centre has become a magnet for immigrants from neighbouring provinces seeking work. Around 450 000 tons of biscuits and derivatives (waffles, cake, crisps, confectionary, chewing gum etc) are produced in the region each year. In 2006, the value of exports reached 56 million dollars (compared to 32 million in 2000); the main partner countries are in the Middle East. The GDP of the region increased by a factor of 20 between 1995 and 2001. Statistics for 2001 show that the agricultural sector in the Province accounts for 50.8% of the region's wealth; the food industry makes up 30% of manufacturing in the region.

The effects have been remarkable:

- Products with high added value, obtained through on-site processing of agricultural products, have made a strong contribution to the region's economy;
- Industry in the region has improved, due to the processing of agricultural products;
- The presence of this web of agro-food SMEs has created jobs, especially for young people, reducing emigration towards the cities;
- The concept of quality production has been developed in the province;
- The province has seen accelerated economic and social development;
- Innovative approaches to agro-industrial processing and marketing have been adopted.

There have been some negative effects, which must also be mentioned, such as the increase in environmental pollution and the use of agricultural land for non-agricultural purposes.

Source: Elci (2008).

farming and geographical designations are also referred to together in the chapter on sustainable agriculture and rural development of the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development (MSSD) adopted in 2005 by the United Nations Environment Programme's Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development (MCSD). The potential and multiple synergies between organic farming and geographical designations are increasingly being taken into account by investors, national governments, private operators and non-governmental organisations (NGOs).

According to a review by the Mediterranean Organic Agriculture Network,[1] in 2006, in the countries of the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean and the Balkans, 344 000 hectares of cultivated land and 20 669 farms were engaged in organic farming. If harvesting of wild aromatic and medicinal plants is included, the total surface area is more than 2 million hectares. Turkey, Tunisia, Egypt and Morocco are the most important countries in terms of production. The European Union, the United States, Japan and the countries of the Gulf are the biggest export markets for organic products from the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean and the Balkans.

Table 2 - Organic Farming in Southern and Eastern Mediterranean Countries and the Balkans, 2006

<table>
<tr><th colspan="3">Country</th><th>Organic land area without wild plants (ha)</th><th>Organic land area with wild plants (ha)</th><th>Operators (number)</th></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="8">Potential Candidate Countries to the EU</td><td rowspan="6">Balkan countries</td><td>Albania</td><td>171</td><td>1 201</td><td>93</td></tr>
<tr><td>BH*</td><td>714</td><td>488 804</td><td>60</td></tr>
<tr><td>Croatia</td><td>6 012</td><td>23 670</td><td>342</td></tr>
<tr><td>Macedonia (FYR)</td><td>509</td><td>2 101</td><td>104</td></tr>
<tr><td>Montenegro</td><td>25 051**</td><td>158 851</td><td>15</td></tr>
<tr><td>Serbia</td><td>906</td><td>1 102 906</td><td>48</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2"></td><td>Turkey</td><td>100 275</td><td>192 789</td><td>14 737</td></tr>
<tr><td>Sub-total</td><td>133 638</td><td>1 970 322</td><td>15 399</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="12">Mediterranean European Neighbourhood Policy Partner Countries</td><td rowspan="5">Mashrek</td><td>Egypt</td><td>14 165</td><td>14 165</td><td>460</td></tr>
<tr><td>Jordan</td><td>1 024</td><td>1 024</td><td>25</td></tr>
<tr><td>Lebanon</td><td>3 470</td><td>3 470</td><td>213</td></tr>
<tr><td>Palestinian Territories</td><td>641</td><td>641</td><td>303</td></tr>
<tr><td>Syria</td><td>30 493</td><td>30 493</td><td>3 256</td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td>Sub-total</td><td>49 793</td><td>49 793</td><td>4 257</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="4">Maghreb</td><td>Algeria***</td><td>1 550</td><td>2 400</td><td>61</td></tr>
<tr><td>Libya</td><td>-</td><td>-</td><td>-</td></tr>
<tr><td>Morocco</td><td>4 216</td><td>104 216</td><td>n. d.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Tunisia</td><td>154 793</td><td>220 476</td><td>952</td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td>Sub-total</td><td>160 559</td><td>327 092</td><td>1 013</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">TOTAL</td><td>343 990</td><td>2 347 207</td><td>20 669</td></tr>
</table>

*Notes: *The Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Republic of Serbia are the two entities that make up Bosnia-Herzegovina, according to the Dayton Peace Agreement; the Ministry of Agriculture is at the entity level; ** Including grasslands; *** The figures for Algeria under-estimate wild plants and pastures.*

Source: Adapted and updated from Al-Bitar L. (2008).

1 - http://moan.iamb.it/

Over the past two decades organic farming in the Mediterranean has, thanks to the ideas and determination of its pioneers, investment by private operators, the financial and technical support of financial donors and, more recently, the action of governments, become a very dynamic and promising sector. Although the level, pace and potential of its development obviously varies between countries in the region, it is not difficult to identify a number of problems and opportunities that are common to all organic operators in the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean.

There are three routes to the development of organic farming that appear to have developed in sometimes parallel, sometimes diverging, fashions, but that are increasingly being forced to converge on account of the pressing need for a permanent and constructive dialogue between the various public and private actors (Pugliese and Al-Bitar, 2008). The first of these three routes is essentially through the activities of the pioneers of organic farming and of many associations, often supported by local authorities and financial donors, and sometimes partnered by foreign NGOs; these actors ensured that the principles and methods of organic farming were disseminated among small farmers and women farmers, and enabled the creation of an awareness of and a national movement for organic farming. In conjunction with initiatives for responsible and solidarity-based shopping, they became ardently involved in promoting organic farming in the local market, which generally still tends to be under-developed in most of these countries.

A community supported agriculture initiative in Morocco

Local Solidarity Partnerships between Producers and Consumers (LSPCC), known variously as Associations pour le Maintien d'une Agricultre Paysanne (AMAP) in France and Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) in Anglo-Saxon countries, are close partnerships between a farm and a group of consumers. The consumers buy a share in the season's harvest in advance, in the form of "baskets" of the farm's produce, at a price agreed with the farmer. This commits consumers and producers to the same motivation: promoting healthy and socially just agriculture. The first LSPPCs were set up in the 1970s, first in Japan and then Germany and Switzerland. France did not begin its AMAP experiment until 2001. The advantages of the system are many: it gives farmers a guaranteed income that allows them to maintain their farming activity; consumers have access to fresh and seasonal produce; and lastly both partners are guaranteed a fair price.

Morocco has also been won over by this model, which combines social development with environmentally-friendly production methods. In Shoul, near Rabat, a number of associations have set up an organic market gardening project, since 2007, in one of the poorest rural communities in Morocco. An entirely new idea in Morocco, this programme for market gardeners brings together consumers and producers, the countryside and the city, in the same way as other LSPCCs: subscription to a basket scheme (monthly or quarterly depending on families' financial circumstances) finances the production of organic vegetables and cereals. The advantages are the same, namely fair remuneration for the producer and access to quality produce for consumers. This has not only enabled the diversification of production in the region (dominated by stock farming and harvesting) but also improved the economic integration of local producers. The success of this project will allow the creation of the first LSPCC in Morocco very soon.

Source: Ciheam, 2008.

Organic farming and rural development in Turkey: the case of Project Wheat

In 2005, the municipality of Istanbul and its public enterprise Public Bread Company (IHE) set up the project *IHE Contractual Organic Agriculture and Organic Bread Project* (Project Wheat). In ten provinces of Eastern Anatolia and the Black Sea region, where there is considerable poverty, the project aims to support the production of organic wheat, which is then processed in the IHE establishment. In 2006, small shops and supermarkets in Istanbul sold 10 000 loaves of bread (each weighing 400g) produced by the IHE, using 8 000 tons of organic wheat (and wheat in conversion), bought at a price 40% higher (20% for wheat in conversion) than the price of conventional wheat from 1 400 producers under contract involved in the project. The number of producers is planned to be increased to 12 500 over a period of five years. IHE provided the farmers with advance payments and subsidised inputs (organic fertilisers and seed), covered the costs of certification and financially supported migrants who wished to leave the capital and return to their villages to work on the project.

Adhering to the project's objectives produced several multidimensional benefits:

- an increase in producers' incomes (not only through a guaranteed premium price but also through the improved returns that resulted from the use of better inputs);
- support for local development by reducing migration towards the cities and promoting back-migration;
- increased attractiveness of organic farming for producers and consumers by developing the local market;
- the creation of an environment favourable to development for the institutions involved;
- the promotion of organic farming in Turkey and, consequently, the protection of the environment and human health.

The collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture, local institutions, research centres, universities, farmer organisations and NGOs was fundamental to the success of the initiative. The regional departments of the Ministry of Agriculture even changed their training and popularisation programmes to include organic farming. An evaluation of the initiative undertaken in 2007 concluded that the project has been a real success and can serve as a model to be used in other regions of the country.

Source: Engiz (2008).

The same associations may also be involved in the export (sometimes sporadic) of small quantities of traditional and organic products sold in Europe, for example, in small specialised shops, which is enabled essentially by specific collaborative relationships between these local associations and the foreign operators involved (NGOs, certificators, exporters). Often these are little success stories that would not be sustainable without the support of financial donors.

Without any doubt, the main outlet of organic produce from Southern and Eastern Mediterranean countries remains the export of larger quantities to European markets, and this is the second route to the development of the sector, initiated independently of the first by private foreign and local operators who undertake almost all stages in the line, from production to putting goods on to the market. They provide the producers under contract with all the inputs and the necessary services, including technical assistance and certification. Most of the added value created by the organic market and a significant part of the land area and organic farmers in these countries are to be found in this approach.

The third route, which might be described as "institutional", is linked to the recent commitment by several governments attracted by the potential of the organic sector and its positive contribution to the commercial agro-food balance. In this instance, public intervention is characterised by the creation of a legislative context and the introduction of various forms of financial support to the sector, of varying degrees of effectiveness but that for the time being are continually evolving. As in the first approach, international cooperation has often played a vital role and allowed institutional capacities to be strengthened and networks to be created to allow the exchange of information and best practices.

Products of quality (organic and conventional) give value to local skills and the cultural heritage of particular districts. Evidence shows that differentiation and typicality can be elements of a response to the problems of marginalisation. Since 1995, giving value to produce typical of the mountain regions of Mediterranean countries has been an objective of the FAO-Ciheam "Mountain products" project. In the current context of liberalisation, the value created can allow producers in mountain regions – faced with high transport costs, a lack of infrastructure, inadequate technology and the difficulties of access to market – to stand up to the growing competition from systems and areas of production that enjoy more favourable conditions. Indeed, the emergence of networks of public and private actors (product distribution channels and local and national administrations) show that those able to distinguish their produce, their services, even their regions of production, gain in productivity. The Mountain Products project has made it possible to take inventory of more than 50 typical mountain products in the Mediterranean. The project also provided a dynamic information system to collect knowledge likely to encourage the development of these products.[2]

According to the final report of the Femise programme on products of the Mediterranean (Ilbert, 2005) in Algeria, studies have shown the existence of a quality and "local speciality" approach, especially for Deglet Nour dates and the olive oil of Kabylie. This kind of approach is a recent phenomenon and stems from local dynamics that are changing and made vulnerable by the difficulty of access to the external agro-food market. The low level of involvement by public authorities and big economic operators in supporting quality-based approaches leaves the way open to such local dynamics and rural development initiatives. Some producers, researchers and operators have become aware of the importance of local speciality produce and are trying to turn them to economic advantage. In Morocco, with the exception of some national initiatives (argan oil), the development of logos indicating quality runs up against weak organisation in the distribution chain and a regulatory framework that is partially non-existant. However, the diversity of agro-ecological spaces and the skills and consumer expectation for these quality products do exist.

In Tunisia, some products, such as wines and spirits, have benefited from logos indicating protected designations of origin for decades.

2 - See www.cybermontagne.org/

The establishment of quality sectors of agricultural and agro-food produce in Tunisia

As a Mediterranean country with a very long tradition of arable and livestock farming, Tunisia has always had unique products connected to nature and to the land, in the broadest sense of the term. In 1999, the Tunisian Government promulgated Act No. 99-57 of 28 June 1999 on protected designations of origin and designations of origin of agricultural products and their application. The act targets the protection of the specificities and peculiarities of natural and processed agricultural and food products, vegetable or animal, and giving them value by granting them a PDO and a geographical indication.

In the framework of the Project to strengthen agricultural support services, a project implemented by the Ministry of Agriculture and Hydraulic Resources (MARH), with a loan from the World Bank (loan No. 7 306), the component entitled "Improvement and enhancement of the capacity of interprofessional groups" (2003), also referred to as the "quality component" is coordinated by the Agency for the Promotion of Agricultural Investment (APIA) and benefits several Interprofessional Groups (IG): IG vegetables, IGV; IG fruits (including dates), IGF; IG Fishing products, IGFP, IG bird and rabbit products, IGBRP; IG meat and milk, IGMM. Some of these designations are more recent, often where Interprofessional Groups have been amalgamated in the framework of restructuring carried out since 2003. The quality component has six objectives:

- to identify and publicise the brand image of the quality of Tunisian agricultural and agro-food produce;
- to define the level of quality (standardisation, protected designation of origin, geographical indication, organic farming etc.) within Tunisian agricultural production;
- to improve the provision of services to various operators within the distribution channels so that they grow and market products that will be recognised, remunerated and identified from the producer to the consumer;
- to ensure the rapid dissemination of information between producers, service providers, processors and the market;
- to promote Tunisian agricultural products with particular characteristics by providing detailed and complete information about these products in various modes of communication in relation to a clearly identified target group of potential consumers;
- to train Tunisian operators in promotion, marketing, packaging, distribution, etc., in order to facilitate better access to national and export markets.

Technical support was entrusted to a group of three French experts from the French Agricultural Research Centre for International Development (CIRAD), the French National Institute for Agricultural Research (INRA) and the French National Institute of Designations of Origin (INAO). The group undertook several missions to the field with the Agency for the Promotion of Agricultural Investment (APIA), the Interprofessional Groups, the Tunisian Union of Agriculture and Fishing (UTAP), the Tunisian Union of Industry, Trade and artisan activities (UTICA), the National Office of Oil (ONH), central and regional administrations of the Ministry of Agriculture and other affected Ministries, and private operators. Many other national and foreign experts were also involved.

The creation of a "quality network" was one of the activities of the project. Quality "cells" were set up at the level of the IGs and the National Office of Oil and cover several sectors, such as fruit, vegetables, farm produce, red meat and milk, products of the sea, olive oil. These cells comprise management staff and experienced technicians specialising in technical and commercial fields. The teams worked with professionals from the sector to make Tunisian and foreign consumers aware of the quality of Tunisian agricultural products. The network is run by APIA.

Two types of study were carried out with the key objective of promoting the quality of Tunisian agricultural products (assigning logos, PDO, PI, AB etc) with a view to improving access to export markets. The project also included training activities in Tunisia and abroad that affected first of all the staff of the quality network (training courses relating to quality, food safety and export), and then the professional producers and exporters, on themes relating to quality, packaging, the preparation of the product for export, international commerce techniques (quality of red meat, export of fruit and vegetables, quality of poultry products, Eurepgap, processing and export of fishing products, marketing of fishing products, ISO 22 000).

The research activities are intended to improve the quality of products, develop products for specific niche markets and perfect new biological control, packaging or processing techniques. Fourteen themes were developed by teaching and/or research establishments of the Institute of Research and Agronomic Higher Education (IRESA).

Lastly, an agriculture portal is planned, with a promotional purpose, aimed at the commercialisation and export of agricultural products. Based at the National Observatory of Agriculture (ONAGRI), the portal will have links with the various sites of national and private institutions and bodies operating in the sector. It will be an electronic trading hub for Tunisian food products.

At present, the quality component's most significant result is the approval by the Technical Consultative Commission of Designations of Origin of several Tunisian agricultural products, such as the Gabès pomegranate, the Sbiba apple, the Deglet Nour date from Nefzaoua (Kebili) and the Deglet Nour from Jérid. Steps have been taken towards acquiring recognition of collective brands for the following products: king prawn; Mediterranean sardine; Cap Bon harissa; Sidi Bouzid lamb; black Thibar (sheep) and an application is being considered to grant a PDO to an olive oil from Sahel (Monastir regions). The planned budget of the component was 5.02 million Tunisian dinars, and it will probably come in, on completion, at 4.2 millions.

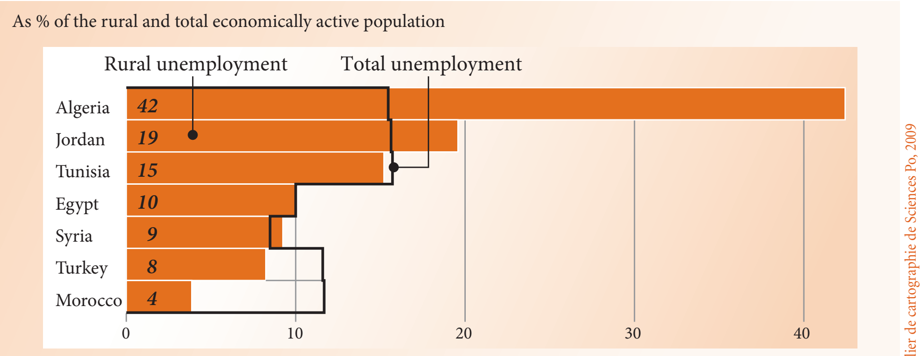
Source: Hassainya (2008).

In Turkey, the certification of produce of quality origins is a tradition that has been the subject of laws and regulations since 1502 under the Ottoman Empire. Today, the country defends a strong protectionist policy by geographical designations because it is one of the countries, like India or China, that would like to see an extension of geographical protection in the WTO. A regulation on the protection of geographical designations (Act No. 555 of 27 June 1995) was adopted, and this was strengthened in 2003 by a law governing geographical designations within the Institute of Patents. In 2008, there were 95 products enjoying protection under the regulations on geographical indications, 53 of which were agro-food products (Tekelioglu and Demirer, 2008). The economic importance of these products and their advantages in terms of income are clear: four products with geographical designations – Giresun hazelnuts, Malatya apricots, Aegean sultanas and Antep pistachio nuts – make up 60% of the total of Turkish agro-food exports.

Developing non-agricultural rural economies

Thousands of unemployed young people in SEMCs leave the countryside in search of work in the cities. This migration cannot be a solution for everyone, and unemployment is sometimes higher in the cities than in the countryside (see Chart 4). As agriculture's progress will not be sufficient to meet the challenge of employment in the rural environment, the non-agricultural rural economy must also become a source of new jobs. Alternatives to agriculture should be explored, in particular in the manufacturing sector, which remains very tied to the urban environment given the even more significant limitations in the rural environment.

Chart 4 - Rural and total unemployment rates in the Mediterranean



Source: Radwan (2007) according to national surveys.

In the service sector, alongside the small activities of commerce and transport, rural tourism is emerging as a route to the diversification of household incomes. Although the benefits of tourism, such as employment creation, income production, infrastructure improvements, need no longer be demonstrated, its negative effects are also apparent in the countries of the South. Even assuming that eco-tourism and fair-trade tourism have less impact than mass tourism, it should not be forgotten that, for example, there is fierce competition in these countries for access to basic goods such as water, and the effect on land-owners can be considerable. Moreover, although tourism is a great creator of jobs, these are often low skilled and poorly paid, often cash in hand and particularly precarious. Lastly, tourism development can also lead to the desertion of food-producing agriculture in favour of activities, such as the sale of souvenirs or begging, which do not provide any benefit from a social and cultural point of view (Collombon, Barlet and Ribier, 2004).

Of the countries along the Southern shores of the Mediterranean, Morocco is one that has decided to invest in tourism as a means of improving the development of its rural territories. In the framework of the Moroccan tourism initiative "Vision 2010", a programme entitled "Tourism: a vision, a challenge, a desire" was launched for the period 2001-2010. Signed by the General Confederation of Moroccan Enterprises (CGEM) and integrating the objectives and orientations of the Economic and Social Development Plan 2001-2004, this programme is based on three main axes:

- to construct a realistic yet ambitious vision of the development of the sector by 2010;
- to identify trump cards to be exploited and the challenges that will need to be overcome to achieve this;
- to put forward a voluntary comprehensive strategy capable of releasing the powerful dynamic of tourism development in order to allow the country to feature among the most attractive destinations in the world.

Alongside traditional tourism, Morocco has begun to focus on rural tourism in order to stimulate economic recovery in remote areas and encourage expatriate Moroccans to visit and invest in their country and region of origin. Every year, Morocco welcomes between 150 000 and 200 000 tourists who visit the Atlas Mountains, the desert and the countryside. As long ago as 2003, the country launched a rural tourism initiative that encompassed all the factors affecting the development of the sector: from construction to training, from regulation to awareness raising and promotion. In this context, the Ministry of Tourism adopted a strategy for the development and consolidation of tourism in the rural environment, based on the French concept of Tourist Host Country (PAT). A Tourist Host Country covers a well-defined territory, possessing its own identity and enjoying a maximum of attractions. They sometimes span several regions and develop a structured range of tourism provision. The PAT project aims to lead tourists to discover the rural areas of Morocco by means of theme routes that enable them to meet local people and see their way of life outside the usual tourist circuits. This experiment initially involved the territories of Chefchaouen around the park of Talassemtane, the PAT of Ifrane/Mid-Atlas around the park of Ifrane and the PAT of Immouzer Ida Outanane.

Another cooperation project with France, supported in particular by the French Development Agency, aims to improve tourists' access to rural villages. This project aims to stimulate the local economy in order to dissuade people from leaving for the cities or abroad and encourage expatriate Moroccans to come back and invest in their country. It intends to develop "tourist host arteries" in the remote areas such as Chefchaouen, Ifrane, Imouzzer, Ida Outanane, as well as places that already had strong tourism but that are in need of renovation and support, such as the Grand Atlas, the Rachidia desert, Ouarzazate and Zagora. It even intends to invest in the remote douars, where there are plans to install twenty new rural inns. Nine of these rural inns, at Taroudant, Tiznit, Ouarzazate, Haouz, Tata, Chtouka ait Baha, Rachidia and Zagora, have already begun to receive visitors. This project's strategy for promoting rural tourism consists of providing villages with roads leading to the inns, electricity, drinking water and sewer networks. The Moroccan Social Development Network (ADS) provided the training, but the day-to-day operation of the inns is up to their owners, locals who have returned home to the area and retirees. The idea is also to instil in Moroccans an awareness of the superb resources they have and a sense that they can take advantage of them. This means turning to financial advantage the character and numerous advantages of Moroccan villages that until now have only benefited foreigners, great fans of this type of tourism. The communities involved are also beginning to understand that good and welcoming conditions for tourists increase the importance of their heritage and their natural treasures. The project also helps to improve the social conditions of the inhabitants of the douars in which the inns are situated, whilst strengthening the State's policy for combating rural emigration. It has rehabilitated remote mountain regions and improved the standard of living of the people there, by providing new jobs (manufacture of traditional local products, guides for camel treks or for visits to historic sites of which there are many in the region).

The experience of the Migration and Development Association for the development of rural areas in Morocco

The Migration and Development Association (M&D) was set up in 1986 by around 50 immigrants who were obliged, following the closure of an industrial plant in France, to return to their countries of origin, in particular Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia. In Southern Morocco, in collaboration with immigrants living in Provence, French nationals working for EDF and Moroccan villages, the Association undertook the electrical hook-up of eight villages in the province of Taroudant, a mountain province with a semi-arid climate whose population continued to live in extremely marginalised conditions, without electricity, drinking water or sewer system, often without a pharmacy and sometimes without a school. The region was known as a great source of non-skilled labour for big Moroccan cities and for Southern Europe.

In each of the villages, M&D set up a village association by introducing the principles of village management that subsequently made it possible for other development projects concerning infrastructure, social or environmental development to be implemented. These village associations, in conjunction with the migrants in France, became real vectors of local development in mountain areas thanks to a particularly participative approach (all projects are self-funded by the village associations and the migrants at the level of 40%), a partnership approach (the local institutions are involved in the process) and a dynamic of constant trade between Morocco and Europe.

The action of creating local jobs and injecting value into local agricultural resources is translated into the establishment of pilot workshops around olives, argan, saffron, dates, and henna. These workshops processed the raw agricultural material in order to keep the added value and jobs in situ. There was also a project to support one thousand women weavers, who make Berber rugs, by making them aware of their rights, providing technical training and equipment, and creating sales cooperatives. In this way, the project affects rural tourism. 18 rural inns were set up as well as guesthouses. Each partner village adopted a "Solidarity Tourism Charter" and they established a network organisation: the Network of Village Associations of Solidarity Tourism. A Berber cooperative of tourist services is being set up to take on the function of a regional reception agency. It will monitor respect for the specifications and the quality of the services provided to the inns and the families who host customers in guesthouses. In the context of this approach, the promoters of the rural tourism project are also thinking about setting up a museum that would exhibit local heritage and building a centre to offer tourists leisure, cultural and commercial activities: an organisation of local festivals, the sale of local produce, henna rituals etc.

Source: Collombon, Barlet and Ribier (2004).

In order to emphasise the Government's commitment to the development of its land in this way, the Moroccan Ministry of Tourism and the Craft Industry, in partnership with the National Federation of the Hotel Industry (FNIH), organised a national day of tourism and the environment with the theme "For sustainable and ecologically responsible tourism", which addressed good environmental management at the hotel level. Held in Casablanca in July 2008, this is to be the first of an annual event bringing together all the parties involved to take stock of environmental problems in the tourism sector, focusing in on specific topical themes.

Since the 1990s, Turkey too has decided to diversify into alternative forms of tourism in order to become more competitive with other European countries. Some regions in particular, such as Central Anatolia and Northern Turkey, have been very committed to the promotion of rural holidays (walking holidays, trekking, rafting etc). Very recently, local authorities have started working with NGOs to develop rural tourism through specific projects designed to turn local traditions and natural, architectural and cultural resources to economic advantage. There are also a number of private companies that have sprung up specialising in rural tourism, who hope to offer visitors alternative holidays close to nature. This new trend is improving the standard of living of local communities, through the restoration of old houses, improved access to villages, new work opportunities, and opportunities to escape isolation (Akca, 2006).

Lastly, the Turkish Ministry of Culture and Tourism has established a Tourism Strategy with a horizon of 2023, which aims to promote alternative forms of tourism such as agricultural tourism, ecotourism and "plateau tourism" (tourism connected with Turkey's high plateau regions). A number of measures are planned in order to create the basis for the development of these kinds of tourism: to improve road infrastructure, to provide training to local communities to help them to manage their tourism activities (business administration, quality, sale of produce), to encourage the opening of house museums presenting the ecological and ethnological characteristics of the region.

Agriculture first and foremost

The persistence of considerable disparities between different areas is one of the major challenges for sustainable development in European rural areas. If policies fail to adequately take into account the heterogeneity of rural areas, there is a risk that the already apparent trend of rural areas becoming either over-populated or deserted will be exacerbated, with unacceptable implications with regard to the recommendations of the Lisbon and Gothenburg strategies.

We know that economics play an important role in the construction of a balanced relationship between urban and rural areas. The competitiveness of the agricultural and agro-food sectors will remain pivotal to the economy of many rural areas. However, we cannot ignore the vast range of economic alternatives that are being developed in rural areas near cities or those that are emerging in the more isolated and marginalised environments, thanks to a range of local and non-local actors and interests.

A favourable socio-economic and institutional framework will allow Northern Mediterranean countries to diversify farms and rural economies, who can also generally depend on the advantages afforded by infrastructure and modern technology (including ICT). This is not the case for many rural communities in the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean Countries, which are certainly driven by dynamic and enthusiastic thinking, are aware of their potential, but that are situated in isolated areas with very poor infrastructure, physically and culturally separate from the urban centres and the opportunities they can offer. Consequently, such communities continue to be little visible and their regions remain unattractive.

In this context, the range of diversification options remains narrow, and is even more closely tied to the agricultural sector, and to developing profitable niches, in particular the processing of agricultural produce or growing organic or local speciality agro-food products. This sector can also be combined with crafts and cottage industry and more recently with rural tourism, which are autonomous from agriculture; the development of these activities, as with other economic alternatives to agriculture, is often a result of external influences (foreign NGOs, cooperation projects, the remittances of migrants). It goes without saying that the sustainability of these activities and their becoming part of the structure the local economy remains contingent on rural communities adopting them, which is achieved in particular by strengthening the capacities of local actors and providing training, especially to young people. It is also important to put in place strong policies to minimise infrastructure problems.

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