



Promoting attractiveness, competitiveness and internationalisation of Agro-food Clusters of the Med Area

Healthy food and the Mediterranean Diet

The health benefits associated with the Mediterranean diet have been well-known for over 50 years. This diet, built mainly around the consumption of fruits and vegetables, cereals and legumes, olive oil and herbal oils, is often presented as a good model of nutritional balance. However, the reputation of this original model could be superseded due to the tendency towards standardizing our diet. Indeed, the results from the Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur section of the 3rd edition of the "Health and Nutrition Barometer", taken in 2008, have shown that the dietary behaviour of the region's inhabitants was not on the whole very different from the rest of France.

As a result, an important issue for businesses is to ensure that consumers understand the original premise of the Mediterranean model through the modified produce on offer. Businesses need to be able to make their produce appear appropriate by trying to establish a link with this famous model despite the difficulties of the current regulatory context. It is important, therefore, that businesses understand the recognised

health benefits of this diet as well as its nutritional value to consumers.

The traditional Mediterranean diet is based on using local resources, as are all the dietary systems throughout the world. They are built up progressively around resources available locally. What, therefore, are the agricultural resources available in the PACA region? Agriculture is a major sector there with lots of variety, built essentially on vegetable production.

Amongst the fruits, examples of oleaginous fruits such as almonds, walnuts and olives that are characteristic of the Mediterranean diet can be found. Despite their high energy content, they also make a good nutritional contribution with their "good fatty acids", monounsaturated (in olive oil) and polyunsaturated fats (in walnuts).

Nowadays, consumers are aware that a product's nutritional value needs to conform with Regulation 1924/2006, which relates to "Nutritional and health claims". The path leading to the authorisation of functional generic health claims seems uncertain, if the opinions given by the European agency

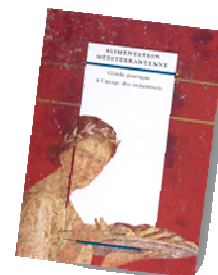
for scientific evaluation (EFSA) are to be believed. These opinions are, in the great majority, negative, as was the case for the many of the effects claimed for almonds. There are some encouraging elements on the other hand. Some rather uncommon claims have received favourable attention, such as the replacement of saturated fatty acids with mono and polyunsaturated fats and their effects on bad cholesterol; walnuts and their effects on circulatory functions; or even the polyphenols in olive oil and their effect on bad cholesterol.

OPTIMED: The programme for increasing and improving the nutritional quality of modified Mediterranean produce.

Since June 2010, and over a 3 year period, the Provence Alpes Côte d'Azur regional branch of the French innovation and technology transfer centre (CRITT), in partnership with the French technical centre for food preservation (CTCPA) and a unit of the French national institute for agricultural research (INRA) in Marseille¹, have been coordinating the "OPTIMED" project. This project aims to increase and improve the nutritional quality of 13 specially selected modified Mediterranean products. Thus fish soup, crunchy almonds, and even ratatouille, tapenade and couscous are to be put under the nutritional microscope!

This project is a continuation of PRIAM, the interregional Mediterranean diet programme, conducted between 2000 and 2003 and which showed that if most of the Mediterranean products studied presented interesting nutritional characteristics, many of them possessed uncontrolled levels of salt and fatty acids together with manufacturing processes that degraded the good nutritional characteristics of the raw

materials. Nowadays, at a time when discussions on nutritional labelling will soon be compulsory in Europe for a great majority of products, this control of the nutritional composition is becoming essential!



Practical guide on the use of the Mediterranean diet within the food industry (PRIAM 2000-2003)

Just like PRIAM, this new OPTIMED project will lead to the publication of a good practice guide aimed at the food industry, offering ways to increase and improve the nutritional quality of their products. A conference will also be organized at which the results will be released, and several scientists who are experts in the field will be invited to speak. Lastly, customized support will be given to the 10 food processing industries subscribing to the project.

¹ INRA1260/Aix-Marseille Universities I and II Joint Research Unit

CHARACTERIZATION OF THE AGROO-FOOD SECTOR – PROVENCE-ALPES-CÔTE D'AZUR

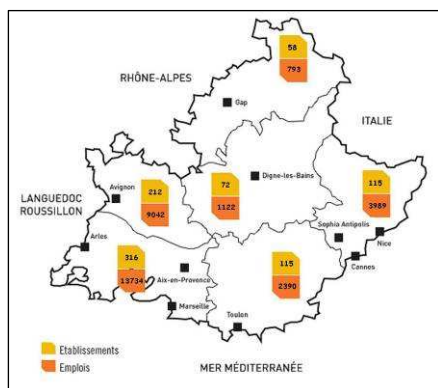
A geographically and culturally diverse region, the Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur region contains a huge variety of terrain types which have influenced its culinary heritage, imbued as it is with colours, aromas and flavours: combining tradition with modernity.

The food processing industry (excluding the wine growing sector) is one of its jewels and a major part of its economic activity. This dynamic sector, which creates employment for over 29,000 employees, is the region's 2nd largest industrial employer. With 880 establishments, the food processing industrial base comprises mainly small, frequently family run, businesses: 66% of the food processing establishments in the PACA region have fewer than 20 employees. With 738 food processing businesses with export activity, the total turnover for exports has risen to €3,370,528,985.

 **Approximately 900 food processing businesses in the PACA region**

Departments PACA	N. of establishments	Representation (total PACA region)
Bouches du Rhône	316	36%
Vaucluse	212	24%
Var	115	13%
Alpes maritimes	115	13%
Alpes de Haute Provence	72	8%
Hautes Alpes	58	7%
Total	888	100%

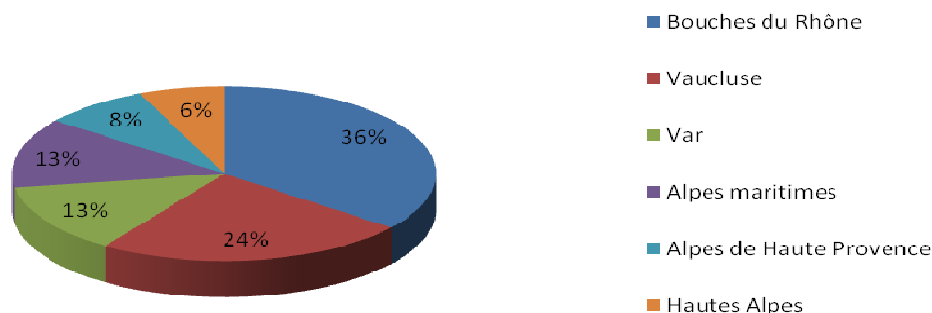
There is strong food processing industry in all the region's departments.



Division of Food production establishments and employees for the Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur region
(Source CRITT – 2010)



**Répartition par département des établissements
Agro-alimentaire de la Région PACA**



Division by department of Food processing establishments in the PACA Region (Source: FRIAA/CRITT Agronet database – April 2011)

There are inconsistencies with regard to the division of the regional territory, reflecting the demographic and economic position of the departments.

Thus, Bouches du Rhône, with 316 establishments, houses more than a third of the region's food processing businesses.

The main difficulties confronting our regional businesses have changed very little in the period 2007 to 2010. They are:

- A greater economic retail burden with difficulties gaining access to shelf space (significant referencing costs; distributor brand development; sales commission budgets and "retro-commission"; etc.);
- A decrease in margins and an increase in costs (the continual increase in the cost of raw materials and industrial services);
- Little intangible investment, in particular in Research and Development;

- The need for a permanent adjustment to new regulations (the implementation from January 2005 of hygienic packaging) and other new constraints for distributors (IFS and BRC systems of reference, EDI trade via the Internet);
- Personnel recruitment problems;
- An increase in consumer demands (nutritional quality information; healthier and more environmentally-friendly produce);
- From the end of 2008, even if agribusinesses overall have been hit by the "crisis", relations with customers have been more strained.

Despite this unfavourable environment, the regional food processing industry continues to grow.

Its 900 businesses are proof of its economic dynamism, spirit for diversification as well as innovation. Regional and Mediterranean cuisine is more fashionable than ever, motivated by consumers' need for healthy foods and the nutritional recommendations of public authorities.



This economic vitality in regional food processing industries is to the credit of our socio-professional organizations: the regional federation of food processing industries (FRIAAA) for its produce and business promotion activity, CRITT Food Processing for its technological support, the food processing industry's apprenticeship organization (IFRIA) for its training and human resources management, and the innovative programmes in the fruits and vegetables industry offered by the European centre for fruit and vegetable innovation (PEIFL).

State of the art in the PACA region and in France

Preparation of the French food processing industry (ANIA) White Paper for the 2012 presidential elections

In anticipation of the presidential elections in May 2012, ANIA is preparing a "white paper" for the food processing sector. The idea is to collect as many complaints, expectations and solutions as possible put forward by the food processing industry. This will be consolidated by all ANIA's committees. These comments will then be presented to its Board of Directors who will arbitrate and prioritize them. A copy of the white paper will be given to each presidential candidate. It will also provide an opportunity for dialogue and lobbying on our priority topics. The FRIAA will be able to draw on this document when contacting and arranging appointments with various institutions throughout our region. The paper is due to be available in September.

An e-mail address is available collecting your comments:

LivreBlanc2012@ania.net. (Source ANIA)



Jean-René BUISSON at the SME regional meeting



In mid-January, the President of ANIA, Jean-René BUISSON, met approximately fifty company directors from the Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur region food processing, at Aix-en-Provence. Various topics were raised: *Political lobbying, the relationship with agriculture, difficulties in the face of Mass Marketing, sustainable development, organic produce, exports, the need to work together, etc.* There were some lively debates, and Jean-René BUISSON claimed to be aware of the need to clarify ANIA's role and get the regional organizations and SMEs more involved.

Starting with exchanges about the social and economic burden on SMEs in the region and their role in its development, he expressed a desire to offer solid solutions taking greater account of their needs, without, in doing so, creating a division between SMEs and Big Firms. In the meantime, he is suggesting that regional businesses make direct contact with his teams with any questions they may have, or any obstacles they are facing, and he has undertaken to do what is necessary to



respond to their problems. Those involved in this breakfast meeting appreciated this excellent, friendly opportunity, and unanimously acknowledged the quality of his undertaking to lobby for their interests.

EVENTS

Conventions

Sécur Food

29-30 Nov, Issy les moulineaux

7th Food safety and traceability conference and business convention.

Tel. +33 01 41 86 41 47

www.securfood.com

Exhibitions in France

CFIA Metz

18-20 October, Metz

The Agri-food Event at the heart of Eastern France, 2nd season.

www.cfiaexpo.com

Abroad

Pack Expo

26-28 September, Las Vegas convention center

North America's largest packaging & processing show

www.packexpo.com

Cyprus Halloumi

Halloumi, fresh or mature, has always been the flagship of Cyprus' authentic cuisine. For centuries, this product is a key constituent of the Cypriot diet and has been closely associated with the culture and traditions of the local people. With an



estimated annual per capita consumption of 8 kilos, Halloumi exceeds by far in preference of all other cheeses, Cypriot and imported. It's suggested that halloumi may have its origins in the Beduin tribes of the Middle East who probably found its long keeping attributes ideal for their particular way of life. Yet, its presence in Cyprus is lost in time, definitely produced on the island before the Turkish invasion of 1571.

In older times, the process for making halloumi played a particular role in the lives of rural people since apart from covering their basic food requirements, it constituted a social activity between village families and neighbors, especially among women. Gradually, along with the domestic production of halloumi, small, commercial dairy units were set up in many villages making halloumi and other traditional cheese products, serving the needs of nearby communities.

Halloumi is an unripe, semi hard white cheese with a texture between cottage cheese and mozzarella. Halloumi may well be eaten raw but it tastes best when cooked, fried or on charcoal. It is this distinctive characteristic that makes halloumi a unique cheese. The versatility of halloumi allows for its presence in a broad range of Cyprus dishes. It may be consumed fresh in salad or sandwich, grated over pasta, as a stuffing in ravioli and pastries or in the more Cypriot style as a side to chilled wedges of ripe watermelon making this an excellent appetizer especially during summertime. It can be served hot on pita bread with a slice of tomato, or in a toasted sandwich including cooked lountza, tomato and cucumber.

The key ingredient in making halloumi is fresh milk which, according to the Standard, CY 594/1985 is either sheep or goat or a mixture of these with or without cow's milk. The remainder materials are rennet (excluding rennet coming out from the stomach of pigs), salt and mint, fresh or dried. Traditional halloumi is a semicircular shape, about the size of a large wallet, weighing 220-270 g. The fat content is approximately 25% wet weight, 47% dry weight with about 17% protein. Recent technological improvements have allowed major dairy manufacturers to adjust halloumi characteristics to suit different





market tastes. Hence, halloumi is also made from or semi-skimmed or skimmed milk for people who can accept less taste for a more dietary cheese.

Halloumi is currently registered as a protected Cypriot product within the US (since the 1990s) but not the EU. The delay in registering the name halloumi with the EU has been largely due to a conflict between dairy producers and sheep and goat farmers as to whether registered halloumi will contain cow's milk or not and if so, at what ratios with sheep and goat's milk. Halloumi is Cyprus' major cheese export product with volumes showing a year-on-year increase. Total volume exports have grown from 3,000 tons in the year 2000 to 5,500 tons in 2006. The UK remains by far the major export market taking around 32% of the total exports followed by Germany (14%). Supermarket chains in the UK and other European and USA markets are placing halloumi in their gourmet sections.

<http://www.cyprusfoodndrinks.com/cgibin/hweb?-A=67&-V=authentic>

http://www.bbc.co.uk/food/halloumi_cheese

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BzDUiYpEyro>



www.pacmanproject.eu

www.pacmanproject.eu is the first output of the PACMAN operation. Designed as a portal, it is structured in several thematic areas easily and immediately accessible, useful and flexible. The PACMAN portal responds to the aims of the project, through a clear vision of the overall contents of the project, a detailed description of the partnership and updated news and information of ongoing events at European level on the agrofood sector. Visiting www.pacmanproject.eu you will be able to find the project contacts and the state of the art of the activities and the final products will be downloadable as to inform the users on the project midterm and final results.

