

D4.5 National Synthesis Report on Case Studies in France: AOC- Beaufort AMAP



Qap

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Encouraging Collective Farmers Marketing Initiatives (COFAMI)

Background and objectives

- Collective action by farmers has played an important role in the history of European agriculture and rural development. During the 20th century the joint actions of farmers in many EU countries gave rise to the foundation of agricultural marketing co-operatives, resulting in better market access, increased farm incomes and regional employment. More recently farmer collectives have made an important contribution to the spread of sustainable production methods.
- Now European agriculture is facing a range of new challenges. Farmers have gradually lost control over supply chains, due to the growing power of retailers, and are also confronted with a general decline and reorientation of policy support. At the same time, there is a need to respond to changing consumer demands for food safety, quality and an attractive countryside. Again, collective action may help in finding appropriate answers for these new challenges.
- Against this background the COFAMI project studies the potential role of collective farmers' marketing initiatives (COFAMIs) in finding adequate responses to changing market and policy conditions. More specifically it aims to identify the social, economic, cultural and political factors that limit or enable the development of such initiatives. The project also seeks to identify viable strategies and support measures to enhance the performance of collective farmers' marketing initiatives.

Steps in the research

- At the start of the research a **conceptual framework** for the study of COFAMIs will be developed. A review of relevant scientific literature and a 'quick-scan' of 8 previous EU research projects which included COFAMI cases will provide the basis for this.
 - For each study country a **status-quo analysis** of collective marketing initiatives and relevant contextual factors will be made. This involves an overview of existing COFAMIs, their aims, organisational forms and strategies, relations with other supply chain partners, and relevant market and policy environments.
 - A series of 18 in-depth **case studies** of different types of COFAMIs will be conducted. These will provide more detailed insights into the influence of different factors that limit and enable the development, performance and continuity of COFAMIs. The performance of initiatives in terms of social, economic and environmental impacts will also be assessed.
 - In the **synthesis** the results of these different research activities will be integrated into general conclusions about the relative importance of various limiting and enabling factors for different types of COFAMIs. Support strategies for COFAMIs and measures to improve their performance and dissemination will also be formulated.
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Project results and consultation

Participatory methods and stakeholder consultation will play a key role in all stages of the project, to ensure that research outcomes are grounded in field experiences and policy debates. A National Stakeholder Forum will be established in each participating country. In addition a European-level expert group of scientific and field experts will be formed to broaden geographical coverage beyond the 10 countries represented in the project.

The research will provide farmer groups, support organisations and government agencies with insights into different collective marketing strategies, their success and failure factors, and suggestions of measures that support COFAMIs. Additionally, the project will contribute to scientific and policy debates on the role of farmers' initiatives and new supply chain arrangements in promoting sustainable rural development and the supply of safe and quality food.

All project results will be made available through the project website www.cofami.org

Project partners

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Summary

The COFAMI French case studies

1. This report presents an analysis of the four case studies carried out for the COFAMI project, between November 2006 and November 2007:

- two deepened cases: the AOC Beaufort cheese system and AMAP, community supported agriculture form in France,
- two brief cases, which by their specific features and closeness with the longer cases, help to draw some lessons to be learnt: the AOC Reblochon cheese and the Italian community supported agriculture form, GAS, *gruppi de acquisto solidale*.

AOC Beaufort and Reblochon Alpine cheeses

2. Some characteristics of the Beaufort system reveal its strong internal dynamism and coherence:

- A long history in a very specific territory,
- The stability of its organisational configuration,
- A pragmatic marketing policy,
- The AOC managed and enriched as a collective heritage.

3. Some other characteristics reflect the anchoring of the system within the territory and within the relational net built with surrounding stakeholders:

- The complicated interactions between milk / cheese production and tourism,
- The positive impacts on local agricultural economy,
- Environmental impacts, rather difficult to measure.

4. Key questions emerge from the analysis, on the future of this collective initiative

- The stability of the power structures in the cooperatives: it can also be considered as hindering the renewal of young generations in the management of the collective life,
- The marketing system and the relations with wholesalers: the concentration process of the wholesaling sector is at work: how Beaufort system can anticipate the modification of the power relation which may result from this modification?
- The trade off between tourism and mountain agriculture: how decentralised policy supports will manage the uncertainties weighting on the future of mass tourism in ski resorts, while snow will become a rare resource because of global warming, and the drastic changes of the CAP to be expected with major impacts on local agriculture

5. The history and characteristics of the structuring of the organisations in Beaufort and Reblochon are clearly different.

- Strong continuity for Beaufort organisations,
- Weakness and conflict of interest for Reblochon organisation,
- Capacity to regulate and regenerate the AOC cahier des charges within a high value and small volume focus, for Beaufort,
- Major difficulties to elaborate and implement a sectorial strategy, for Reblochon.

6. As a cheese producer, industry has a minor role in Beaufort and a dominating position (70%) in Reblochon. It has been a driving force in the volume growth of the last 5 years and increasing use of the product as tartiflette, food ingredient. With its important maturing capacity, it controls the relation with retailers.

- In a way, the strong presence of the industry has probably contributed to maintain in the territory a significant milk production activity,
- This kind of actor manages rather well food safety and industrial quality standards. It may not be at the origin of big Reblochon quality accidents,
- It promotes a “retailable” cheese, standardised, without defaults nor virtues.

7. While the identification between Beaufort and its mountain territories is strong, in terms of production, consumption, clear non reproductibility of the product elsewhere etc, the situation of Reblochon is more complex:

- the consumption decreases in the production area,
- as food ingredient, the valorisation of tartiflette in its relation to territory is difficult,
- Competing Tartiflette is produced also out of the AOC territory.

Community supported agriculture in France and Italy

8. The AMAP dynamic development corresponds to a double crisis:

- A crisis of intensive agriculture legitimacy, which generates a blossoming of alternatives, whatever economic, social or technical;
- A crisis of consumption, with a search for meaningful consumption and quality: this concern finds expressions in responsible, ethical or fair consumption.

The 1st AMAP appears in Spring 2004 in France.

9. AMAP model is not *stricto sensu* a farmers marketing initiative; it is a hybrid form: consumers build a collective form (association) to take the control of their own food marketing and involve producers. This relationship between consumers and producers is made possible because in that specific system, consumers and producers are keen to share a common “vision of the world” and economic interests.
10. The main goal of AMAP is to establish solidarity between consumers who demand food quality and farmers who need less pressuring marketing channels.
11. The principle is to pre-fund farmers production by constituting a group of consumers or an association. This group defines with farmer(s) the kind of productions needed by consumers, quality, organises the weekly delivery. Risks are shared as well as advantages. Farmers can limit their losses and plan their productions. Producers do not spend too much time in packaging or in being present at open markets. AMAP members do it.
12. Another strong characteristic is the political visibility of the Alliance, supportive network to AMAP: the Alliance is an alternative actor, promoting another discourse on globalisation, on agriculture – society nexus and on the relation between agriculture and environment.
13. In France, AMAP focus is *local food* and agriculture. The project is originally related with the defence of small farming. This defines the web of relations between consumers and producers: mainly local and the national political orientation and positioning. In Italy, the GAS focus is *life style*. It generates activities which refer to fair trade and ethics: they include food, services and other types of products and services. The relation with proximity seems to be looser and groups can purchase to big retailers. The broad spectrum of activities and ambition of Italian GAS may make them rather attractive and consensual. May be more than AMAP with their politicised and activist image.
14. In Italy, the system is much more flexible and finally the organisational process is in the hands of local members. The forms are much more diverse: informal, associative, cooperative. It seems that the national network works as a political coordination body and platform to exchange experiences and develop new activities (energy at the moment).

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Introduction

This COFAMI field investigation has been carried out between November 2006 and November 2007.

The main inputs of the case investigation have been provided by some 30 interviews of persons, considered as representative resource persons, from /within Beaufort and Reblochon systems and AMAP, Alliance for the maintaining of small farming. a community supported agriculture form of direct selling.

All cases are located in region Rhone Alps and more specifically, in the counties of Isere, Savoie and Haute Savoie, i.e. Alpine area, both valleys and mountains.

Several criteria have been mobilised for the selection of those situations to be observed and analysed:

- The importance of the AOC strategy for French agriculture and especially for the Alpine region,
- The contrasted collective processes observed in Beaufort and Reblochon cases and the lessons to be learnt from those differences,
- The dynamic development of community supported agriculture as new form of direct selling.

Those three French cases propose different ways to negotiate with consumers and distribution.

A fourth case is briefly presented in the report: the Italian community supported agriculture form, GAS, Gruppi di acquisto solidali. It confirms the dynamic development of this kind of direct relation between consumers and producers, based on ethical and fair principles. Although, it shows another way to make it concrete, with a much broader focus of services and products provided, than in AMAP case (strictly oriented on food).

Common features of the context in which the French initiatives develop, need to be mentioned:

- The struggle for preserving natural resources (especially land and water) in Alpine region,
- The lack of active support to agriculture in very touristic areas,
- The continuous concentration process of the distribution system, which forces actors to develop new projects for marketing their products ,
- A crisis of consumption pattern, with a search for meaningful consumption and quality, especially within wealthy categories of consumers.

More specific issues are related to :

- The capacity building and *patrimonialisation* of the know how and knowledge, crystallised in the AOC building, for Beaufort,
- The reasons of the strong dynamism of AMAP,
- The difficulties faced by Reblochon actors to maintain quality and consumption and strong tensions within the *filière*.

Part 1 – The AOC Beaufort cheese collective promotion system

Summary

This field investigation has been carried out between November 2006 and May 2007.

The main inputs of the report have been provided by the interviews of 15 persons, considered as representative resource persons, from /within the collective system and from outside.

The main issue of the work has been to understand how the Beaufort collective promotion system has been in condition to influence, integrate, react to, compensate hindering and facilitating contextual factors.

Some characteristics of the system reveal its strong internal dynamism and coherence:

- A long history in a very specific territory,
- The stability of its organisational configuration,
- A pragmatic marketing policy,
- The AOC managed and enriched as a collective heritage.

Some other characteristics reflect the anchoring of the system within the territory and within the relational net built with surrounding stakeholders:

- The complicated interactions between milk / cheese production and tourism,
- The positive impacts on local agricultural economy,
- Environmental impacts, rather difficult to measure.

Key questions emerge from the analysis, on the future of this collective initiative

- The stability of the power structures in the cooperatives: it can also be considered as hindering the renewal of young generations in the management of the collective life,
- The marketing system and the relations with wholesalers: the concentration process of the wholesaling sector is at work: how Beaufort system can anticipate the modification of the power relation?
- The trade off between tourism and mountain agriculture: how decentralised policy supports will manage the uncertainties weighting on the future of mass tourism in ski resorts, while snow will become a rare resource because of global warming, and the drastic changes of the CAP to be expected with major impacts on local agriculture?

1. Introduction

The field investigation has been carried out between November 2006 and May 2007.

The main inputs of the report have been provided by the interviews of 15 persons, considered as representative resource persons, from /within the collective system and from outside. The investigation got the logistic support of UPB and SDB which opened their data bases to provide names and advices.

The objective of this work has been to answer the following question:

How the Beaufort collective promotion system has been in condition to influence, integrate, react to, compensate hindering and facilitating contextual factors?

The issues at stake in the report intend to structure the answer to this question:

- The hindering and stimulating impacts of contextual factors ,
- The organisational configuration of this collective initiative, giving coherence and strength,
- The capacity building and *patrimonialisation* of the know how and knowledge, crystallised in the AOC building.

The brief impact assessment presentation points out the positive role of AOC cheeses on agricultural economy and the more contradictory environmental effects.

The size of the territory covered by the initiative, its specific historical trajectory, the strong mountain collective spirit and the niche market of the Beaufort have produced a very successful collective initiative. Is this initiative exemplary or very specific?

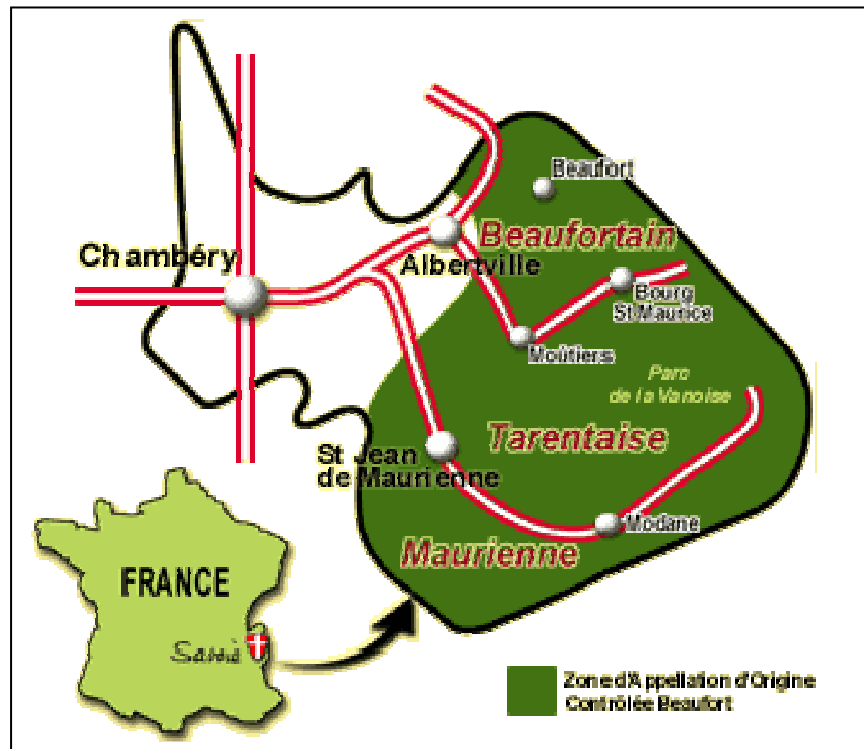
2. General description

The AOC Beaufort organisation can be characterised as a territorialized productive system, based on high valorisation of mountain agriculture milk, processed into cheese, called Beaufort. The cheese is recognized as high quality and expensive cheese, marketed at the country level.

The production capacity is located in three valleys – Beaufortain, Tarentaise and Maurienne – of Savoie county, Alps, close to the Italian border. The official Beaufort area, defined by the AOC *cahier des charges*, covers 450 000 ha of the 630 000 ha of Savoie county. Within this area, agro-climatic conditions are rather diverse between valleys and mountains.

Tarentaise and Beaufortain have been living in the last 20 years a very strong tourist boom, driven by huge investments to develop ski resorts capacities. Maurienne is living this expansion today.

AOC Beaufort territorial implementation



Some descriptive data on Beaufort

- **The farms**

520 milk farms produce Beaufort milk. They are small farms, as the average per farm is 80 000 kg of milk / year (national milk average per farm is more than 200 000 kg). Some 1000 persons work on those farms : many of them have multiple activity , the second one often related to ski tourism.

- **The milk**

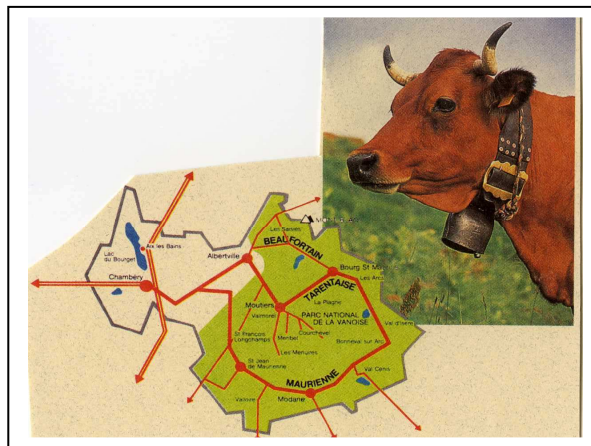
In 2005, 45 millions kg of milk were produced in the Beaufort area : 95% of this volume was processed into Beaufort and 5% into Tomme de Savoie and Bleu de Bonneval , other traditional local cheeses.

10 kg of milk are necessary to produce 1 kg of Beaufort.

Beaufort cattle counts some 11 000 milk cows, selected within two species : Tarine and Abondance.

The average production per animal can not go beyond 5 000 kg/year. This limit officializes an average production rarely overpassing 4500 l/cow/year.

The Beaufort milk price has the best valorisation in France : more than 0.55 euros/l, with some variations between purchasing processors.



- **The processing units**

- 7 cooperatives process 71.1% of the production,
- 29 independent processors (processing only the milk of their own cattle),
- 2 maturing cooperatives assume the maturing stage (which has to be 5 months minimum)
- 6 pasture associations, which manage collectively altitude pastures, collect the milk and process only summer Beaufort,
- 2 private industrial milk purchasers produce Beaufort in the AOC area.

- **The cheese**

At the end of 2006, the production of matured cheese was 4300 tons. Just for comparison, the approximate volume of Reblochon other important alpine AOC cheese is about 30 000 tons/year and Comté cheese 50 000 tons/year.

- **The marketing system**

The cheese is sold through multiple marketing channels :

- Wholesalers buy some 65% of the total production and then re-sell to retailing companies,
- Processors shops sell directly some 20% of the production,
- Specialised cheese shops , called crèmeries, sell less than 10% of the production
- The rest is either melted or sold directly to retailers.

3. Contextual factors

In this chapter, we focus on key contextual factors related to the marketing features of Beaufort system: they are fundamental to understand the interactions between the production system and market conditions. In a second part, we present a multi-dimensional analysis of the factors which hinder and facilitate the Beaufort system, as a collective farmers marketing initiative.

31. Beaufort marketing

A rigid demand

Every 10 years, the Beaufort system lives a commercial crisis : 1972, 1984, 1992-1995, 2002-2004. Sometimes , the crises are softened by special episodes like the 1992 Albertville Olympic games which provoked a boost in tourist frequentation of the region, or 2002 dioxin contamination crisis provoked by a waste incinerator near Albertville, which forced administration to withdraw important volumes of contaminated cheese, milk and hay.

To face the 2004 difficulties, expressed by high levels of stocks and decreasing selling prices, quota system has been set up to limit the production of processing units (- 7%). The price of the caseine plaque which is put on each cheese , defined by SDB, has been increased to pay for milk selling on the powder market.

- One reason to this crisis has been a wave of creation of Beaufort independent farms with impact on the production level of Beaufort and quality : 25% of those independent producers have quality problems.
- Other mentioned reasons should be rather structural : the end of financial restitution for milk powder and butter impact the cheese market by encouraging industry to put on the market new cheese brands, some of them considered as good quality cheeses (eg Saint Agur cheese). In the meantime, consumption is not elastic.

A stable multi-channel marketing scheme

The processors, coordinated and regulated within the UPB and SDB, are competitors and have the same clients and some clients of their own.

>> In the long commercial circuit with 2 or 3 intermediaries, wholesalers purchase some 65 % of the production.

There are different categories of wholesalers :

- . Wholesalers who sell to small and medium size clients : restaurants, superettes (small supermarkets) and punctually to big retailers. They are flexible, reactive. They are disappearing or are purchased by dairy groups ;
 - . Savoie dairy actors : they are dairy groups specialised in Savoie cheese products production like Reblochon, Tomme, Abondance...They have to buy Beaufort to complement their products portfolio.
 - . Comté producers and maturers : they are specialised in Comté and Gruyère cheeses and need to complement their products portfolio by buying Beaufort.
- The last two categories mainly sell to big retailing companies.

This wholesaling sector is being restructured and lives a fast concentration process. Some of the major commercial interlocutors of the Beaufort system are still family owned medium sized companies.

The commercial margin of wholesalers is approx. 10% while it can be more than 50% for retailing chains. Till now, the wholesalers have accepted the price increases proposed by the Beaufort producers. But retailers do not echo the price evolutions : decrease or increase.

From 2001 and 2005, production prices increase by a 5%, while retailers prices increased by a 30%. Beaufort is used by retailers as a high standard *produit d'appel* at 22-25 euros/kg.

Questions at stake:

- How long those companies can resist to the retailing system exigencies ?
- How the Beaufort system can anticipate and think of a possible evolution, leading to two big industrial wholesalers controlling the marketing of the product till the retailing system ?

>> The short commercial circuit

- Urban specialised cheese and dairy products shops (crèmeries). They sell less than 10% of the Beaufort production and this share is slowly decreasing (10% in 2002 and 8% in 2005).
- Direct selling shops sell some 20% of the production. They are considered as the adjustment variable. Those shops, owned and handled by the coops (or commercial subsidiaries called SICA) are more than 30, mainly located in ski resorts and the coop buildings. There are some ideas and projects to set up Beaufort shops in big towns (Grenoble, Chambéry, ; Lyon, Annecy...).

32. Contextual factors - hindering and facilitating ones

In the table below, we present a synthesis of the major contextual and impacting factors. It shows the way the system interacts with / or integrates some key structuring dimensions – like socio-political, economic, social, cultural and environmental ones.

By the way, it reveals the strengths and weaknesses of the system.

Factors	Hindering impacts	Enabling impacts
Descriptive data		
Mountain agriculture	Production costs are higher	Strongly valorised
Remoteness from urban centres		Part of the positive image of the product
Closeness from ski resorts	Very intense land pressure in the valleys (farmers talk of spoliation) and high competition on water use.	Allows important direct selling through shops in ski resorts and coop buildings. Makes know the product
Importance of agriculture for regional economy	Quantitative weakness	Qualitative importance for the territory valorisation
Socio-political / institutional factors		
Local authorities policy support	The county does not support enough landscape protection and maintenance.	
	. Local authority support goes first to ski / tourism. In some areas, farmers talk of land spoliation.	
Global agricultural institutional context		Favourable to collective initiatives and cooperatives
Economic/market factors		
Milk valorisation		The milk price is attractive, allows young

		farmers installation
Collective governance to face market crises	Weak anticipation capacity to prevent crises	
	With the retailing system: price elasticity is weak, while production elasticity seems more impacting.	Capacity to control production volumes, conditions, quality.
Commercial partners	Wholesalers face concentration and restructuring : this may change the power relation with Beaufort coops.	
Production constraints	Farms increase costs, but prices are not elastic.	
Economic (2)		
CAP changes	The end of milk quotas / CAP: a threat	
	End of restitution to butter and milk powder provokes saturation of cheese market with new products launched by industry	
	Not enough national public money to co-finance and support agri-environmental schemes	
Interactions with tourism	Pressure on agricultural lands and water use.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> . Tourism in Savoie brings consumers and makes know the product. . Tourist animation needs Beaufort . Allows farmers multi-activity (often ski teachers).and stabilise income.
Social factors		
Rural employment	Beaufort system employs 1000 persons in Savoie county (25 000 for ski / tourism). It means that agriculture has a rather marginal impact on employment compared to tourism.	
Social parity for farmers		It allows social parity for farmers, in terms of income, work load and recognition of his role.
Cultural		
Food culture	Too slow to understand major changes of food habits.	Positive perception of the relation between quality (AOC) and taste
Relation to territory		Virtuous relation between territory (Savoie mountain), tradition (history of the product), technicity (know how / knowledge) and quality
History of the initiative		History and culture of collectiveness, considered as a strength

4. The strong stability of the organisational configuration

41. A look at the time line

The last 40 years

Organisational dynamic	Key dates	Beaufort and its market
From the 17 th century, « gruyère » cheese types were produced in those mountains areas.		
For the 1 st time, in 1865, the term Beaufort appears to designate cheese.		
In 1941, 1 st attempt to build a Beaufort maturing union. Did not work really, closed in 1948.		
In 1964, the construction of a dam, Barrage de Roselend, and the flooding of mountain agricultural land and farms, are considered as a threat for Beaufort producers. Producers decide to create a collective tool.		
Union des Producteurs de Beaufort (UPB) set up by coops from Beaufortain and Tarentaise valleys, but not Maurienne valley.	1965	
	1968	AOC Beaufort appellation published
	1970	Very concerning quality problems
UPB changes orientation , with election of a new president, focussing on technical support + coops coordination	1972	Commercial crisis
Syndicat de Défense du Beaufort is created to promote the AOC : opened to all, coops + independent processors	1975	
	1976	New AOC specification decree
Intercoops commercial concertation is set up within UPB	1984	Commercial crisis
	1986	New AOC specification decree
	1992-1995	Commercial crisis softened by Albertville Olympic games
	1993	New AOC specification decree
	2002-2004	Commercial crisis
Saveguard measures taken by SDB : · production : - 7%, · milk into powder.	2004	
INAO technician based within SDB to control the respect of AOC <i>cahier des charges</i>	2004	

Comments

In this chronology, there are no major critical events, forcing actors to restructure and modify their collective organisations.

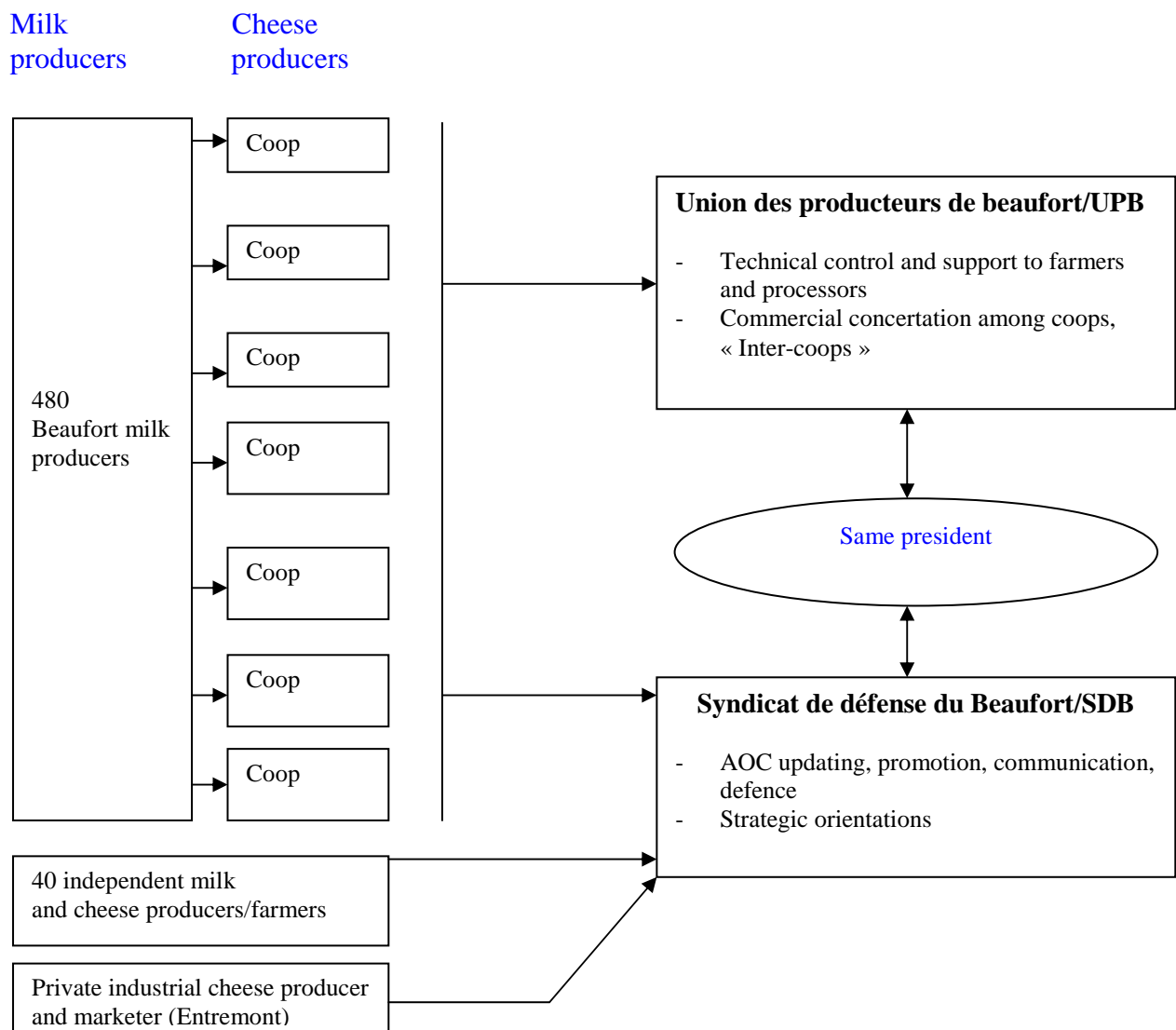
It is important to insist on the gradual construction and consolidation of the system: the growing strength of the identity of the product has been served by the AOC strategy and the setting up of appropriate organisational tools to hold the strategy.

More or less every 10 years, there is a commercial crisis. It is mainly due to overproduction provoked by a very attractive milk price which pushes producers to rise up their milk production. Till now, this overcapacity has been regulated *a posteriori* through cheese price discounts and cheese volume reduction.

We could say that the dynamism of this system is based on long term history and actors awareness of this continuity, considered as a fundamental feature.

42. The building of the architecture of the Beaufort promotion collective system

Representation of the internal organisation of the Beaufort system



- *The UPB – Union des Producteurs de Beaufort [Union of Beaufort Producers]*

The UPB was created in 1965 as an association, by the cooperatives from Beaufortain and Tarentaise valleys. Maurienne ones did not initiate UPB.

In that time, the cooperatives needed an integrated instrument : a commercial, technical and administrative body. The cooperatives sales were coordinated by a marketing director.

But his experience generated difficulties :

- the marketing service was considered as too costly,
- this collective commercial responsibility provoked a demobilisation of processing units on quality: the coops were giving the « less good » to be sold by UPB and were keeping the best for direct selling; in 1970, there was a very serious quality problem for the Beaufort milk : quality A + B represented 40% of the total volume, while in 1995 they represented 98%.. Such a degradation meant lower milk prices.
- wholesalers were reluctant to accept UPB mediation and were treating directly with the processing units.

In 1972, a radical change is operated with the election of a new president, Maxime Viallet. He proposed a drastic change in the UPB orientations :

- ending with the joint commercial service,
- encouraging producers to be responsible for the development of their own commercial system,
- keeping the technical service opened to all, coops and independent producers,
- coordinating the promotion campaigns.

Today, the UPB represents the 7 cooperatives and is the tool of their hegemony on the whole system..

It assumes mainly the technical training of producers (farmers and processing workers) and commercial concertation. Since the cyclical crisis of 1984, characterised by marketing problems, overproduction, quality problems, the coops have structured a so called commercial coordination (in French, *concertation*) « Intercoops », within UPB.

It works like an intelligence service making circulate among members information from each cooperative processing unit on production / month, stocks / month, selling / month, collective indicative average price to wholesalers.

This coordination works as an alert system.

According to collected data, decisions and restrictive measures can be taken by UPB (like production decrease to eliminate stocks and to sustain prices). *This balance between coordination and competition could not work in case of heavy crisis.* (according to an influential coop president)

Because of the law against *entente sur les prix* (implicit agreement on prices), prices can not be written neither be considered as a prescription of the organisation. Usually, they vary marginally among competitors : from 5 to 10 centimes of euros. One of the seven coops is considered as rather uncontrollable and does not respect fully the agreements, by having an aggressive discount strategy.

Several factors may have a major influence on prices :

- quality problems forcing producers to discount the product,
- high stocked volumes,
- weak maturing capacity.

- *The Syndicat de Défense du Beaufort - SDB [the Defence Union of Beaufort]*

It is the legal body , recognized by INAO (Institut national des Appellations d'Origine) , to represent the AOC. It was founded in 1975, as a legal structuring step of the AOC.

It gathers all producers, cooperatives, independent pasture associations and local industry.

Its board is structured within 3 « colleges » :

- Milk producers : 1 representative for 8 producers,
- Processors : coop presidents + pasture associations representatives + industry representative,
- Qualified persons : 10

UPB and SDB have the same president...reflecting the very hegemonic position of the coops in this system.

SDB main functions are to define and defend the AOC cahier des charges, organise the AOC promotion and to discuss and elaborate strategic orientations. SDB is the political body, while UPB works more on technical and market aspects. It works as the main tension regulation space among the different categories of actors. When drastic decisions need to be taken and respected by all actors, SDB takes the initiatives of proposing those measures and make adopt by the board.

Clearly, the weight of the cooperatives within SDB is very dominant. Independent producers are welcome within the organisation, they can express their views, but it is known that their influence can only be limited.

Twice a year, it publishes « *L'Echo du Beaufort* », a newsletter for the members.

The AOC

Before 1975, on the 4th of April 1968, the decree of appellation of AOC Beaufort was published : it was specifying the production areas of the cheese and its very identifiable shape. This initial founding event was prepared by UPB.

Then, decrees in 1976, 1986, 1993, prepared by the Syndicat de Défense, contributed to strengthen the identity of the product :

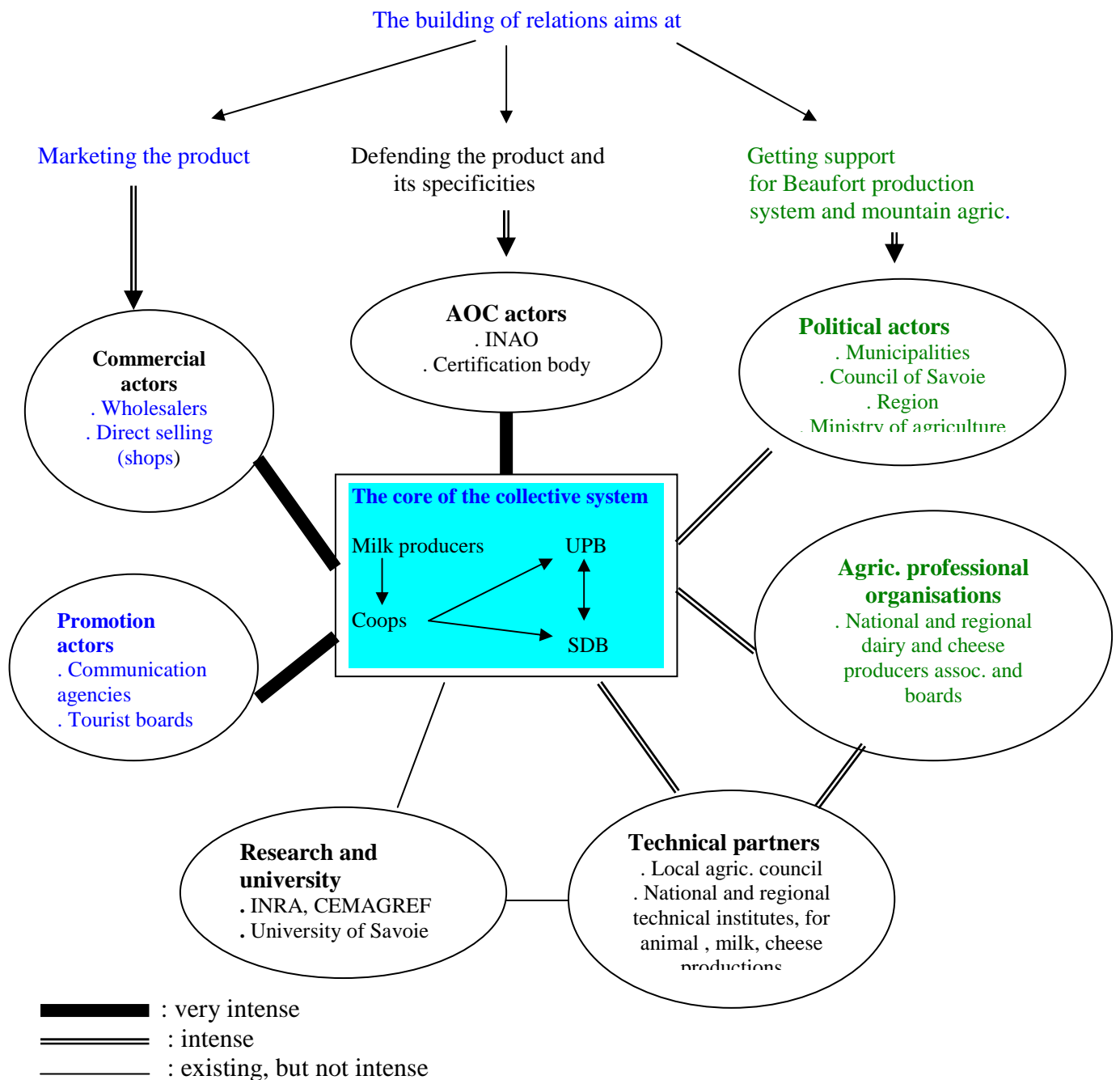
- The processed milk must come from Tarrine and Abondance cows
- Their production can not exceed 5000 kg/year,
- Ensilage is banned,
- Animal feed is based on hay and pastured grass,
- Feed complements are very limited and controlled,
- All processing stages are defined ,
- The maturing time is 5 months minimum,
- The summer Beaufort denomination corresponds to milk production season, from June till October,
- The *Chalet d'Alpage* Beaufort corresponds to summer traditional processing methods, twice a day, beyond 1500 m altitude, with the milk of a single cattle.

This *cahier des charges* (terms of references) has evolved gradually in order to reinforce quality identity of the cheese, to limit uncontrolled production increases and avoid opportunistic strategies of local farmers. In the table below (The last 40 years), we can see that those modifications of the *cahier des charges* is often related to commercial crises.

Since July 2004, an INAO technician is based within SDB to control the respect of *cahier des charges* by permanent non always appreciated controls.

43. The Beaufort broad organisational configuration

Representation of Beaufort broad organisational configuration



Comments

This web of relations is built with very different actors, according to goal and geographic competence.

We can observe that this networking strategy is multi-functional:

- Economic and commercial : to market and promote the product, at national level,
- Technical: to control and improve the quality of production system and of the products (milk, cheese), to accompany the social, cultural and economic evolutions,
- Political: to defend the specific support to mountain agriculture.

Most of those relations are defined and assumed collectively, i.e. through UPB and SDB. The commercial relations with wholesalers are ambivalent: they are coordinated at UPB level and managed in the day to day directly by cheese producers. The quality control and technical support are also managed at the producer level.

As we can see, the intensity of the relation is unequal: very high for the marketing, promotion and AOC cahier des charges defence, till existing but not very living with research and university.

This representation shows the necessity and reality of a construction aiming at enlarging the borders of the Beaufort system , beyond the core of the production collective triangle.

5. Capacity building and patrimonialisation

51. Stakeholders involvement in the Beaufort system: solidarity and collectiveness as key values to preserve

The main historical link and space of involvement of the milk producers to/within the Beaufort system is through their cooperatives. 90% of the Beaufort milk producers are members of a processing cooperative. Independent milk producers (40) who process their own milk can be members of a maturing cooperative or of a machinery/equipment cooperative called CUMA.

- *The cooperatives*

In the Alps, like in Jura, there was a tradition of village small processing cooperatives called *fruitières*. They have been progressively disappearing, through restructuring and concentration processes. Today, there are 7 Beaufort production cooperatives.

Those cooperatives are managed on the same managerial model : the direct management model.

In Brittany, the evolution of the cooperative system has been marked by the growing importance of the management functions of directors, taking the lead in the piloting and development of the cooperative groups strategies, by adopting company management model. In such cooperative groups, the link between members and their cooperative is clearly under crisis.

At the opposite, in Beaufort area, the decisional power, daily and politically, is in the hands of the president of the cooperative, elected by members at the general assembly. None of those cooperatives has a director. They may have a *de facto* director, assuming staff management responsibility, quality and production responsibility, without functional recognition. The presentation of the names and functions in the cooperatives shows clearly that all functions are under the responsibility of the cooperative elected levels : the president, the bureau (rather formal) and the board.

The marketing responsibility is obviously a key issue :

- In some cases, like Beaufort cooperative, the 2 co-presidents are sharing commercial responsibilities and contacts with the *de facto* director(s), for the biggest clients ;

- In other cases, like Bourg Saint Maurice cooperative, the commercial responsibility is in the hands of a farmer (for many years, the same person) who, *de facto*, is very influential in the life of the cooperative.

Within UPB, the « intercoops » commercial coordination gives the presidents of the 7 coops a strong influence on the whole system.

Organisational stability and weak involvement of young generations

In those cooperatives, it is rather frequent that presidents remain in their position for 15 or 20 years¹. If a member wishes to candidate and be elected at the board of administrators, better to be supported by the president...²

This stability of the power structures of the cooperatives is often questioned when mentioning with interviewees, the slow and rather difficult renewal of generations in the collective life of the system. The distance seems to be growing between some categories of members selling their milk to the cooperative and the cooperative, and between involved groups of farmers and non involved groups of farmers.

...I am a president of the coop for too long...Young farmers are sitting on comfortable situations: why should they involve as it works well...? I have difficulties to communicate with members: everything is OK... (dixit a coop president).

Are at stake on the medium term the ways farmers appropriate their collective tools, the AOC and finally their involvement in quality.

During the interviews, we could hear different discourses on this important point.

The pre-eminence and stability of the presidential function in the cooperatives mean that farmers members keep the control on the cooperative orientations : no management filtering. It is the guarantee of a vivid relation between members and their cooperative.

But there is a clear lack of involvement of some categories of farmers in the collective life. According to interviews :

- . Young farmers would not have time to invest in collective life, during the first years of installation;
- . The main problem would be with the 50 years old generation of the farmers, and less with youngest ones ;
- . The extreme stability of the presidential personal could inhibit good will of younger generations ;
- . If the stability is so high, it is because there would not have real alternative ;
- . This unequal involvement could also be observed at Syndicat de Défense du Beaufort general assemblies, where 10 to 15% of farmers participate in.

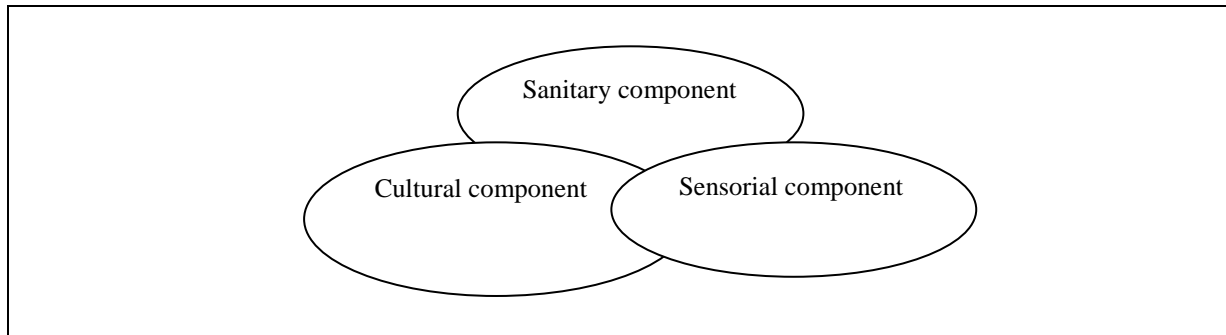
¹ In the Beaufort cooperative, there is a transition period with those co-presidents, one, rather old in the function, letting progressively a younger one taking the lead.

² When doing interviews in the coops with *de facto* directors, it is un-conceivable not to have previously met or got the green light from the president.

52. AOC as a collective heritage

This diagnosis connects the unequal involvement in the collective organisations with quality problems : how to make farmers constantly (re)-appropriate their AOC, the *cahier des charges* which is based on the specification of quality standards and production norms?

The different components of quality production and valorisation



Source: ³

- *The sanitary component*: It mainly refers to technical standards to be respected: from the evaluation of milk contamination to the validation of risk factors and modification of practices.
- *The cultural component*: It relates to the ways producers and consumers perceive the history of a very specific production system (mountain agriculture) anchored in a precise territory (Savoie Alps).
- *The sensorial component*: It allows to categorise Beaufort as a high quality and expensive cheese, because of its taste characteristics. Those characteristics are diverse, according to the season, to the location of milk production, to the know how and knowledge mobilised by the cheese technicians.

Those components evolve either because regulation and standards can change, or because of the evolution of perceptions and cultural and social construction of quality and territory.

The building and the consolidation of the AOC requires to think of the characteristics of the products (milk and cheese) and of the know how : they constitute a collective heritage⁴.

The *cahier des charges* reflects the consensual ground, based on points of view, interests, logics.

This elaboration aims at making explicit elements of identity and tradition of the community. The *cahier des charges* is a tool of transmission of the know how and knowledge (very often tacit) for the younger generations : to follow the references of the *cahier des charges* requires to incorporate them in the production process, considered as necessary to obtain quality and specificity. Some know how and knowledge remain secret and can not be specified in *cahier des charges*. They can not be negotiated nor formalised. But they are a constitutive part of the tradition and identity of the Beaufort.

³ Hauwy A., Coulon JB, Chamba JF, Ballot N.: Adaptations aux questions techniques des AOC fromagères [adaptation to technical questions of AOC cheeses]. GIS Alpes du Nord, 7^{èmes} Rencontres autour des Recherches sur les Ruminants”

⁴ Faure M., 1998: Patrimonialisation des productions fromagères dans les Alpes du Nord: savoirs et pratiques techniques. [Patrimonialisation of cheese productions in Northern Alps: knowledge and practices]. In Revue de Géographie Alpine, n°4, 1998

Knowledge as a multi-stakeholders construction

The collective production and transmission of the knowledge are influenced by external interventions :

- The education of farmers in the agricultural schools is most of the time oriented towards productivist logic : so when young farmers come back to the AOC, they realize that they have to adapt to the *cahier des charges* :
 - . the milk volume is limited to 5000 kg per year (while at school they learn on how to maximise production),
 - . and animal feed is very controlled, in order to valorise local pasture grass (having major impact on taste) and terroir quality; it can not used as a milk production booster ;
- There are many external technical interventions on the farms : milk controllers, inseminators, cheese technicians, agricultural council local technicians...

The *cahier des charges* can be considered as the result of a negotiation within a broad network composed of farmers, cheese producers, technical schools and the many technicians controlling and framing the farm activity. It contains an articulation between exogenous and endogenous knowledge. And this articulation can work only if a new relationship is accepted between those who wish to valorise and protect their collective heritage and those who formalise, normalise and harmonise the quality of the processes and products.

As we mentioned before, UPB has its own technical support service, with a quality control lab. and technicians in relation with farmers, cheese makers and older generations of farmers, who hold tacit knowledge. UPB works rather autonomously and limit its collaboration with external technical actors. A technician of UPB mentioned.

*If we work more with those bodies, they would talk to us of other cheese, but us, we do Beaufort.*⁵

The decision taken by SDB in 1986 to limit the yearly milk production at 5000 kg per cow provoked tensions between SDB and animal production technical bodies, which are still with a productivist orientation. Those technical bodies considered this Beaufort reference as a drastic questioning of their own technical references, in which genetic selection plays a key role.

This example is interesting as it reflects opposite rationales :

- technical advisory bodies formatted to enhance production, in difficulty to advise farmers on how to reduce milk production,
- AOC logic, insisting on other rationales for this production limit, giving coherence to the whole system : local development, landscape maintenance, autonomous development, identity.

The consolidation of this collective heritage produces value, symbol and social link.

But actors engaged in this dynamic must get the means to achieve their goals : limitation of the milk production, local AOC hay, formalisation of knowledge and know how, collaboration with external actors having diverging interests and orientations...

⁵ Faure M., 1998, op. cit.

6. Impact assessment

The impact assessment is a difficult task. The preliminary question to be answered should be “who assesses what?” In the different Beaufort organisations, there have not been significant assessment of the impacts of this system at different levels.

The main reflections on this matter are proposed by researchers working for a long period on Savoie AOC cheeses: most of the time, their conclusions are not focused exclusively on Beaufort.

6.1. Economic impacts

- *Agricultural dynamism*⁶

The analysis of the impacts of AOC cheese on agricultural economy shows that AOC cheeses contribute to resist better than elsewhere to the decline of milk production and farms, to maintain specific production system, in better conditions than conventional farming activities.

Comparative data of milk production in France and in AOC cheese filières

	Savoie AOC ⁷	France	Difference
Jobs / 100 000 kg of milk	1.56	0.96	+ 63%
Investments: Euros / ton of milk	204 euros	79 euros	+ 158%
Added value: Euros / ton of milk	401	325	+23%
Farm subsidies / job (euros)	3552	5305	- 33%
Commercial margin	37%	18%	x 2

Source: Aftalp 1999. In Hauwy A., 2004⁸

Milk professional farms in Northern Alps mountains and France

	Northern Alps	Total France
Nb of farms	3 160	116 900
Agric. work units/farm	1.86	1.77
Average milk quota	167 600 kg	205 100 kg
Average area	62 ha	73 ha
Total direct subsidies	10 900 euros	17 000 euros
Net income / work unit	13 000 euros	13 400 euros

Source: RICA 2000, professional farms. In Hauwy A., 2004.⁸

The good milk price allows to get a comparable income per work unit between Alps and France. This income is much lower in other mountain regions: less than 11 000 euros in Massif Central and Vosges. This performance should be assessed by taking into account :

- the smaller size of the farms, with smaller quotas,
- the higher production costs in difficult areas ,
- the smaller amount of subsidies, which includes specific mountain support schemes (65% of the French average), mainly due to small maize production and weaker subsidies to grass and pasture than to maize.

⁶ Hauwy A., Delattre F., 2005: Les filières fromagères AOP des Alpes du Nord [AOP Cheese filières in Northern Alps]. GIS Alpes du Nord, Saint Baldoph.

⁷ Abondance, Beaufort, Chevrotin, Reblochon, Tomme des Bauges

⁸ Hauwy A., 2004: Impacts territoriaux des AOC fromagères [Territorial impacts of AOC Cheeses]. GIS Alpes du Nord, Saint Baldoph.

Impacts are strong on:

Number of milk cows
Comparison between districts (*canton* in French) with and without AOC, IGP.
Comparison 1979 - 2000

Districts	1979 – 2000 (%)
Without AOC, IGP	- 51%
With IGP	- 31%
With AOC Reblochon	- 25%
With AOC Beaufort	+ 8%
France (average)	- 42%

Source: RGA, 1979, 2000. In Hauway A., Delattre F., 2005⁶

Milk specialisation in 2000

Districts	Without AOC, IGP	With AOC Reblochon
Milk farms on the total number of farms	2/10	8/10
Peri-urban districts	<1/10	7/10
Tourist districts	7/10	8/10

Source: RGA 2000, professional farms⁶

Agricultural land use: permanent pasture area
(% of the total agricultural land)

	Districts without AOC, IGP	Districts with AOC Reblochon
Low land (valley) districts	35%	75%
Mountain districts	80%	95%

Source: RGA 2000, professional farms⁶

Impacts are less obvious on:

Evolution of total agricultural jobs

Districts	1979 – 2000 (%)
Without AOC, IGP	- 40 %
With IGP	- 36%
With AOC Reblochon	- 35%
With AOC Beaufort	- 39%

Source: RGA, 1979, 2000⁶

The relation between agriculture and agro-tourism:
% of farms proposing an agro-tourism activity (including direct selling)

3 Districts with AOC Reblochon	18%
3 districts without AOC Reblochon	29%

Source: RGA, 2000⁸

This relation between agriculture and agro-tourism is not so easy to analyse.

Different reasons could justify specialised AOC farms to have a weaker agro-tourism activity:

- the work load,
- the higher income resulting from the better milk valorisation, making less necessary the search for complementary resources,
- the importance of winter tourism, encouraging double activity related to ski practice and ski resorts,
- for younger generations having a family, the women have a professional activity outside the farm.

62. Environmental impacts⁹

Environmental impacts		
General remark	It seems that there is a gap between farmers “average” perception of those environmental dimensions considered as constraints and the system leaders who see its political importance for the after CAP era.	
Landscape management	Gradually the landscape is getting closed: not enough maintenance. In the highest areas, difficult to work, it seems difficult to resist to development of vegetation onto old field sites and scrub and forest substituting grassland. Only workable pastures are cleaned.	Positive impacts of mountain agriculture on landscape management. Big farms sending the animals to altitude pastures in summer, need to clean those pastures. They usually do it mechanically. Medium size farms also succeed to control pastures (not the highest).
Agricultural pollution	Overloading of manure in some places. Not all farmers spread the manure in altitude pastures. It seems that this question is more problematic for medium and small sized farms, either because of work organisation problems or little surface to spread the manure and few equipment.	Big farms are equipped to manage manure and they can spread it on large pasture areas.
Flora and fauna	It seems that there are major difficulties in carrying out concrete projects ¹⁰ : . No clear government policy, no major financial incentive, . Local actors either are not convinced by this necessity or are discouraged to develop initiatives, because of weak support. The development of Natura 2000 projects have been very controversial between public authorities and farmers.	The dominant rhetoric related to biodiversity is mountain agriculture preserves biodiversity. Difficult to measure it precisely .
	Agricultural pollution has negative impacts on biodiversity and water quality (bacteriology especially).	
	Land abandonment affects negatively biodiversity (especially for species living exclusively in open biotops like grasslands), landscapes and soils.	

⁹ Pauthenet Y., 2004: Les éleveurs de montagne face aux attentes de la société [Mountain farmers facing society expectations]. GIS Alpes du Nord, Saint Baldoph.

¹⁰ Fleury Ph, 2004: Biodiversité: atout ou contrainte de développement pour l’agriculture des Alpes du Nord? [Biodiversity: advantage or constraint for the development of agriculture in Northern Alps?]. GIS Alpes du Nord, Saint Baldoph.

7. Conclusion

What is most remarkable concerning this analysis of the Beaufort collective promotion system?

- *Some characteristics reveal the strong internal dynamism and coherence*

(i) *A long history in a very specific territory*

It is important to insist on the gradual construction and consolidation of the collective system: the growing strength of the identity of the product has been served by the AOC strategy and the setting up of appropriate organisational tools to hold the strategy: UPB, SDB and the cooperatives. This history can not be understood in terms of major critical events, forcing actors to restructure and modify their collective organisations.

The limited territory of the AOC contributes to the coherence of the strategy developed since the 60's to make the product identified as a high standard quality product. The "valley" spirit, each of the three constitutive valleys being socially and culturally different, plays an important role in making alive the solidarity among actors.

7

(ii) *The stability of the organisational configuration*

The system as it is presented in this report, has been built in the 60's. Its structuring can be characterised as follows:

- The stability of the decision making system within the two pillars, UPB and SDB, and in the cooperatives,
- and the pre-eminence and stability of the presidential function in the cooperatives mean that farmers members keep the control on the cooperative orientations : no management filtering.

(iii) *A pragmatic marketing policy*

This policy is a mix between coordination and competition between producers:

- the cooperatives have established a coordination commercial tool aiming at synchronising volumes, prices and deliveries to wholesalers,
- but each cooperative is responsible for the relation to the marketing actors.

Simultaneously, a diversification process has been carried out for the marketing of the production:

- 2/3 of the production is sold to wholesalers, through a system based on a trustful, long lasting relationship,
- 1/3 is sold through short circuit: direct selling in the coop shops and specialised urban shops.

(iv) *The AOC as a collective heritage*

The AOC *cahier des charges* is a tool of transmission of the know how and knowledge (very often tacit) for the younger generations : to follow the references of the *cahier des charges* requires to incorporate them in the production process, considered as necessary to obtain quality and specificity. Its elaboration aims at making explicit elements of identity and tradition of the community.

- *Some other characteristics reflect the anchoring of the system within the territory and within the relational net built with other stakeholders*

(v) *The complicated interactions between milk / cheese production and tourism*

Can tourism develop without Beaufort? Can Beaufort develop without tourism?

Simple questions, difficult answers.

This relation is double-fold:

- Mountain tourism (winter and summer) attract potential Beaufort consumers and offers work opportunities to farmers (mostly in ski),
- But the development of mountain tourism has been mostly conceived as a mass tourism and requires land for building programmes and water: this means an intense competition for natural resources.

(vi) *The positive impacts on local agricultural economy*

The analysis of the impacts of AOC cheese on agricultural economy shows that AOC cheeses contribute to resist better than elsewhere to the decline of milk production and farms, to maintain specific production system, in better conditions than conventional farming activities.

(vii) *Environmental impacts are rather difficult to measure*

It seems that there is a gap between farmers "average" perception of those environmental dimensions considered as constraints and the system leaders who see its political importance for the after CAP era.

On specific points, signals are contradictory:

- Landscape management: the trend to land abandonment is on going, despite the cleaning of altitude pastures. But this cleaning happens mainly in workable pastures.
- Agricultural pollution: there is manure problem, mainly because of the cost to spread it on distant pastures, or because of the small available surfaces.
- Biodiversity conservation: The discourse is that mountain agriculture contributes to biodiversity. But the implementation of concrete projects is difficult because of weak policy support or reticence of farmers. Then agricultural pollution and land abandonment do not contribute to biodiversity conservation.

• *Questions for the future of this collective initiative*

- *This stability of the power structures in the cooperatives*

It is an important issue when considering the slow and rather difficult renewal of generations in the collective life of the system. At stake on the medium term are the ways farmers appropriate their collective tools, the AOC and finally their involvement in quality.

- *The marketing system and the relations with wholesalers*

Some key questions have to be mentioned:

- . How long wholesalers can resist to the retailing system exigencies ?
- . How the Beaufort system can anticipate and think of a possible evolution, leading to two big industrial wholesalers controlling the marketing of the product till the retailing system ?
- . How to face the saturation of the French cheese market?

- *The trade off between tourism and mountain agriculture*

This is a fundamental dimension. It raises:

- . the perspectives of mass tourism in ski resorts, while snow will become a rare resource because of global warming,
- . the struggle for natural resources as land and water between tourism and agriculture,
- . the evolution of a relation based on interdependence,

. and the role of local policy makers, who have systematically given priority to the *white gold*. The drastic changes of the CAP to be expected soon tackle the way policy makers can or wish to compensate those shifts through decentralised appropriate support instruments.

8. References

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L'Echo du Beaufort, twice a year, from 2000 to 2006.

Websites

www.fromage-beaufort.com

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Part 2 - The Reblochon AOC Cheese

1. Background and rationale

The Reblochon AOC is mainly produced in Haute Savoie and a bit in Savoie (Alps). The historical starting point is more or less similar as Beaufort case: strong collective dynamic based on the dissemination of *fruitières*, small village cooperatives, collecting and processing milk..

But the concentration of *fruitières* and the penetration of big dairy companies like Lactalis have totally modified the situation: industry and retailers have taken the major part of production (70%) and distribution (80%). Cooperatives which have lost the control of the filière, try to struggle but have less impacts.

There has been a long period of overproduction, and persistent quality problems. Half of the production is melted to do "tartiflette", a kind of fondue.

This case works as a counter - example in relation with the strong Beaufort persistent collective construction: the situation of Reblochon is characterised by the weak self-regulation, the division of stakeholders and conflict of interest within the same organisation...

People of Beaufort are interested by Reblochon case as it represents what should be avoided.

2. Resources used

- Papers produced by French researchers, agricultural and Reblochon actors;
- Reblochon filière Interviews (3):
 - . President du Syndicat Interprofessionnel du Reblochon, in Haute Savoie,
 - . A technician from INAO, Institut National des Appellations d'Origine, in Chambéry,
 - . The director of one of the 4 private companies; in Haute Savoie.
- Beaufort filière interviews, talking of Reblochon,
- No EU research projects identified.

3. General description of the satellite case

The cheese

It is possible to find the origin of Reblochon at the 13th century, when farmers exploring altitude pastures had to pay the owner of the land for this use. When the owner was coming for control and money, the farmer was milking cows uncompletely and was finishing the milking (by *reblochant* the cows) when the owner had gone away
The initial AOC quality sign acknowledgement was obtained in 1958.

There are two Reblochon : *Reblochon laitier* and *Reblochon fermier*. On the 17000 tons of Reblochon¹¹, 3000 tons are *fermier* type. This production was 10000 tons in 1993.

- The *reblochon fermier* is self processed by farmers: produced twice a day, right after milking, from the raw, still hot milk from their own cows.

¹¹ Just a recall : 4500 tons of Beaufort and 50 000 tons of Comté

- The *reblochon laitier* is produced once a day, with milk which has staid in frozen tanks and not automatically from own cows.

Production structure

Reblochon milk producers are approx. 900, located in low valleys and higher parts of the agricultural lands of the AOC territory. On this total, 160 are *fermiers* producers.

They get from the processors a reasonably high price for their milk : 0.47 or 0.48 centimes/l.

There are 15 Reblochon producers in Haute Savoie county:

- 4 private industrial dairy companies : Lactalis, Verdandet, Chabert and Masson. They produce 70% of the production. Half of it produced by Lactalis.
- 11 cooperatives which produce 30%.

A village fruitière, owned by 10 to 12 farmers, processes 5 000 to 6 000 l. milk/day, while Lactalis processes 40000 l/day.

Most of the cooperatives are mainly milk collecting cooperatives.

They subcontract the milk processing and cheese making activity to an independent cheese maker, who works within the cooperative building, with cooperative equipments. It is called the *indirect management* (gestion indirecte) system.

This cheese maker is responsible of the production, first 10 days maturing and then selling of the cheeses to maturing companies, located in the AOC territory.

On those Haute Savoie 11 cooperatives, only 2 do the maturing and sell directly their production:

- The Cooperative de Thônes, owned by 80 *fermiers* producers, processes some volume of cheese,
- The cooperative fruitière de Mieussy is direct management cooperative, producing itself.

The Cooperative du Val d'Arly, in Savoie County, which produces, matures and sells the cheese. Being also on the AOC Beaufort territory, this cooperative subcontracts its milk processing into Beaufort production to a Beaufort cooperative.

There are a lot of small and medium family owned maturing companies (190 to 200), but the 4 major industrial actors manage a significant part of this maturing and control the relation with the distribution.

Even the *fermiers* producers sell most of their cheeses to maturing companies and do not access directly to distribution. It means that they do not control one of the crucial steps of the quality production.

This structure is rather close to the Comté one, where the maturing step escapes to producers and fruitières.

Quality issues

...There are a lot of cheeses on the market which are expensive and low to medium quality..., according to the President of Reblochon Union.

It is in the production area that consumption has decreased in the biggest proportion : this is considered as a negative signal. Usually in the production area consumers are considered as *connaisseurs*. In the last 3 years, this cheese has lost 2%/year of its market share.

Half of the total production is melted for tartiflette : this means that half of the production is not really submitted to taste and quality standards. This use has transformed an important of the production into a food ingredient. Tartiflette not being a protected sign, there are good tartiflette products produced out of the AOC territory, which is a major threat (Haute Marne)

Some reasons have been evoked during interviews :

- genetic and low fat standardisation of the milk cows,
- industry and retailing companies standardisation processes impose *de facto* a specific density of the cheese paste which can resist to mechanisation and by the way limited maturing,
- quality problems can also be related to milk production and animal feeding with complements. The terms of reference, updated in 1999, are rather flexible on this point: Up to 25% of milk cows food needs can be satisfied with hay produced out of the origin area. This means that on 6 winter months, this ratio can be of 50% if the summer season is self-sufficient. And nothing is said on complements.
- maturing skills have been progressively lost, while it is a crucial stage of the production.

The percentage of lack of conformity with the AOC terms of reference is about 30 to 40%, which is high. The INAO, the national institute for quality signs, has launched alerts to Reblochon actors. The worse situation to face is when cheese have “no defaults, no virtues”. It seems that the organisational weakness of the filière makes it rather passive in front of those signals. No reactivity.

Organisational features

All actors of the *filière* , private actors and cooperatives, farmers are members of the Syndicat Interprofessionnel du Reblochon (SIR), single professional representation.

The President is a farmer, 300 000 l. of quotas. He is also president of his village fruitière and voice-president of FDCL, county federation of milk cooperatives. During the interview, he insisted a lot on his role as a promoter of the re-birth of local fruitières, to help farmers to re-appropriate their tools and escape to industry control.

The board is structured within 4 colleges. The participants of those colleges – milk producers cooperatives, cheese producers, *fermiers* reblochon producers and cheese maturers – are not elected. They are selected by their entities for this representative function. And those entities are not, in their majority, exclusively dedicated to Reblochon, with exception of *fermiers* producers. The 3 other categories are generic and organised on a county base and not a specific product base. This a crucial dimension. Cooperatives have not set up a specific organisation to develop their own reflection and product strategy and weigh on the key actors of the filière, like in Beaufort.

In other words, the Syndicat Interprofessionnel du Reblochon is a multi-stakeholders organisation. Members are mainly focused on the defence of county milk and cheese production, but not specifically on Reblochon AOC.

The negotiation on the milk price is always a critical phase in the life of the Union. For instance, there is a strong pressure from farmers for a 2008 higher price. The objective would be to get 4 additional euro centimes / liter. Who can accept to pay such a price? The biggest actors, namely Lactalis big private dairy company.

Such kind of negotiation generates strong contradictions within and outside the organisation, between large and smaller processing actors. Cooperatives competing against each other and against the large processors are unable to weigh on this negotiation: this is mainly due to the absence of self-regulation space combining cooperatives and their farmers interests.

After summer 2007, the context is temporarily favourable to farmers:

- the bad summer weather contributed to lower the milk production, the hay production, to increase Reblochon consumption and to eliminate the high stocks of cheeses.
- There is an additional pressure , from the brutal increase of the agricultural commodities spot prices on the world market, including milk.

4. Lessons learnt for the main Beaufort case

Self-regulation and collective organisation

The history and characteristics of the structuring of the organisations in Beaufort and Reblochon are clearly different.

- Strong continuity for Beaufort organisations,
- Weakness and conflict of interest for Reblochon organisation,
- Capacity to regulate and regenerate the AOC cahier des charges within a high value and small volume focus, for Beaufort,
- Major difficulties to elaborate and implement a sectorial strategy, for Reblochon.

Those features have many impacts.

The quality management

5 years ago, the non-conformity in Beaufort was high, close to 80%. But a drastic reaction has been implemented under the responsibility of UPB and SDB to reduce this rate which can be close to 15-20%.

At the opposite, there is no significant evolution in Reblochon. This stagnation is partly due to the importance of tartiflette use in the recent years till 50% today. It is also due to a lack of mobilisation of the main professional body SIR, unable to conceive and implement a quality strategy for the product..

Role of private industry

As a cheese producer, industry has a minor role in Beaufort and a dominating position (70%) in Reblochon. It has been a driving force in the volume growth of the last 5 years and increasing use of the product as tartiflette, food ingredient. With its important maturing capacity, it controls the relation with retailers.

- In a way, the strong presence of the industry has probably contributed to maintain in the territory a significant milk production activity,

- This kind of actor manages rather well food safety and industrial quality standards. It may not be at the origin of big Reblochon quality accidents,
- It promotes a “retailable” cheese, standardised, without defaults nor virtues.

Question: can industry be a driving force to regenerate the product, its image, its market share, its price, as an AOC product, easily identifiable, non reproductible in other regions?

Anchoring in a territory

The identification between Beaufort and its mountain territories is strong: in terms of production, consumption, clear non reproductibility of the product elsewhere etc...

The situation of Reblochon is more complex:

- the consumption decreases in the production area,
- as food ingredient, the valorisation of tartiflette in its relation to territory is difficult,
- Tartiflette is produced also out of the AOC territory.

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Part 3 – A French community supported agriculture form: AMAP - Alliance for maintaining small farming

Summary

For several reasons, this case study is relevant:

- At the 1st stakeholders forum organised last fall in Grenoble, this issue of direct selling came often on the table as a possible option for farmers to keep added value;
- Among the different direct selling channels, AMAP development is very dynamic, especially in urban and peri-urban areas, often driven by alternative groups of citizens.

It refers to community supported agriculture form of development.

AMAP development corresponds to a double crisis:

- A crisis of intensive agriculture legitimacy, which generates a blossoming of alternatives, whatever economic, social or technical;
- A crisis of consumption, with a search for meaningful consumption and quality: this concern finds expressions in responsible, ethical or fair consumption.

The 1st AMAP appears in Spring 2004 in France.

The main goal of AMAP is to establish solidarity between consumers who demand food quality and farmers who need less pressuring marketing channels. More into details, the objectives are:

- To struggle against land speculation and desertification of rural space;
- To propose to producers alternative marketing channels and an income guarantee;
- To try to limit the domination of retailing companies on the food system;
- To consume local fresh, of the season and quality products, not automatically organic;
- To propose to consumers to develop their awareness to environment, taste and agricultural production issues.

The principle is to pre-fund farmers production by constituting a group of consumers or an association. This group defines with farmer(s) the kind of productions needed by consumers, quality, organises the weekly delivery. Risks are shared as well as advantages. Farmers can limit their losses and plan their productions. Producers do not spend too much time in packaging or in being present at open markets. AMAP members do it.

Briefly, this principle is based on financial engagement to pre-fund the production, solidarity in case of production problems and associative commitment to participate in the activities and especially in the delivery system: packaging, distributing, waiting for consumers...

AMAP model is not *stricto sensu* a farmers marketing initiative; it is a hybrid form: consumers build a collective form (association) to take the control of their own food marketing and involve producers. This relationship between consumers and producers is made possible because in that specific system, consumers and producers are keen to share a common “vision of the world” and economic interests. There is a convergence between engaged consumers, with high purchasing power and small and medium farmers, searching for alternatives to productivist agriculture monoculture.

Another strong characteristic is the political visibility of the Alliance, supportive network to AMAP: the Alliance is an alternative actor, promoting another discourse on globalisation, on agriculture – society nexus and on the relation between agriculture and environment.

1. Introduction

The proposed second case study is the AMAP model.

What is an AMAP?

The acronym means : Alliance pour le Maintien d'une Agriculture Paysanne. In English: Alliance for the preservation of small farming. And the alliance is developed between producers and consumers (or consum'actors).

For several reasons, this case study is relevant:

- At the regional stakeholders forum organised last fall, this issue of direct selling came often on the table as a possible option for farmers to keep added value;
- Among the different direct selling channels, AMAP development is very dynamic, especially in urban and peri-urban areas, often driven by alternative groups of citizens;
- It is of course a very different kind of collective organisation than the Beaufort cooperative based system.

AMAP development corresponds to a double crisis¹²:

- A crisis of intensive agriculture legitimacy, which generates a blossoming of alternatives, whatever economic, social or technical;
- A crisis of consumption, with a search for meaningful consumption and quality: this concern finds expressions in responsible, ethical or fair consumption.

The methodology used to carry out this case study was based on a series of ten interviews at the county Alliance level and at two local AMAP, AMAP du Manival and AMAP de Montbonnot, including meetings with consumers and farmers.

2. General description

21. The AMAP model and principles

History

This system has nothing new. 20 millions Japanese consumers buy their vegetables on this way. This model was created right after the war. Most of fresh vegetables consumed in New York city are sold through this channel. In Quebec, there are many associations of this kind. In France, the first AMAPs appear in Spring 2004.

Objectives

The main goal of AMAP is to establish solidarity between consumers who demand food quality and farmers who need less pressuring marketing channels. More into details, the objectives are presented as follows by an ATTAC document¹³:

- To struggle against land speculation and desertification of rural space;
- To propose to producers alternative marketing channels and an income guaranty;
- To try to limit the domination of retailing companies on the food system;

¹² ISARA Lyon, 2006: Fonctionnement et reproductibilité des AMAP en Rhone Alpes [functioning and reproductibility of AMAP in Rhone Alpes region]. Under the tutoring of P. Mundler. Lyon.

¹³ www.local.attac.org/attac83

- To consume local fresh, of the season and quality products, not automatically organic;
- To propose to consumers to develop their awareness to environment , taste and agricultural production issues.

AMAP refer to social or solidarity economy sphere or third sector, as a set of alternatives to the dominant economic system, tackling socio-economic practices, with a finality which is not the maximisation of profit, but the answer to social and environmental needs un-satisfied by the market or public policies¹⁴. This ISARA report quotes Alain Lipietz: *what specifies solidarity economy is that the initiative comes from citizens mobilised in doing something...* collective utility, social links, environmental protection are some features of solidarity economy.

In that sense, AMAP are based on the following dimensions:

- Contracted exchange, between each consumer and each producer,
- Reciprocity between producers and consumers :
 - . For the producers:
 - . Economic engagement, by providing periodically quality products according to the contract,
 - . Associative involvement by investing on a human relationship with the AMAP group (pedagogy, information, animation),
 - . Accountability, by communicating information about the farm functioning (economic and financial situation, technical processes...).
 - . For consumers:
 - . Financial engagement by purchasing in advance part of the crop on a defined period,
 - . Economic engagement by showing solidarity in case of production accidents,
 - . Associative involvement by participating in the life of the group.

Principle

The principle is to pre-fund farmers production by constituting a group of consumers or an association. This group defines with farmer(s) the kind of productions needed by consumers, quality, organises the weekly delivery. Risks are shared as well as advantages. Farmers can limit their losses and plan their productions. Producers do not spend too much time in packaging or in being present at open markets. AMAP members do it.

Briefly, this principle is based on financial engagement to pre-fund the production, solidarity in case of production problems and associative commitment to participate in the activities and especially in the delivery system: packaging, distributing, waiting for consumers...

22. AMAP in practice

Different scenarii are possible for the creation of AMAP:

- A variable number of families create a group or an association and ask to the Alliance to be connected to producers or they have already identified farmers (sometimes just one farmer);
- Producers may contact the county Alliance and ask for establishing contact with a group of consumers;

¹⁴ ISARA 2006, op.cit, p. 4.

- Usually the producer(s) are identified by Alliance and then proposed to a group of consumers.

When the contact is established, the group self-manages, with a coordinator (general referent) and product referents, to follow the relations or contact new producers on the same range of products. AMAP members define together the kind of products they would like to receive, the places and pace of delivery. From then, a weekly basket price is fixed for a 3-4 persons family, and finally the price of the consumer subscription (6 months or 12 months). Those AMAP contact new farmers to complement the basket and increase the diversity of the basket content. Those farmers usually deliver to several nearby AMAP.

Who are the amapians?

Data are available on the characteristics of AMAP population in Rhone Alpes¹⁵. They reflect rather well AMAP philosophy :

- Age: 39% are between 25 and 34 years old, 34% are between 35 and 49;
- Education: 46% are graduated, and 78% are under-graduated,
- Socio-professional categories: 4% are workers, 41, 5% are employees, and 29% are highly remunerated categories.

Those *amapians* represent a rather specific part of the population: in majority, they buy organic food (while most of the population doesn't), are reluctant to go to supermarkets, get involved in the local associative tissue, are sensitive to critical discourses on the economic dominant system. Their motivations are food quality, better understanding of agriculture, wish to support small farmers, and coherence between ideals and daily practice.

AMAP du Manival , Crolles, main coordinator:

I think that the membership to AMAP is a very meaningful act (acte militant) , as we need to involve ourselves, to accept to eat seasonal vegetables (it is obvious in theory, but less easy in practice). Behind this term of militant , i add that it is also to defend common values in relation with retailers, GMOs , environment...

Farmers

It is not easy to get a photography of the profile of farmers getting in the AMAP model.

In fact, there are different logics at work:

- New farmers, looking for securing their income on a whole season with cash in advance and market, invest heavily in the stabilisation of their production system: those ones may deliver most of their production to one or several close AMAP;
- Already settled farmers, looking for a diversification of their marketing channels, besides open air markets or retailers.
- Not all are organic farmers. In the guiding principles of AMAP, farmers who are not organic have a 3 years conversion period. After those 3 years, if they have not converted, they have to justify it to AMAP.

The impacts of the prices negotiated between producers and consumers may be different according to the category of producers.

¹⁵ Transrural Initiatives, 2006: Les Amap, un partenariat exigeant entre producteurs et consommateurs [AMAP: an exigent partnership between producers and consumers]. 4/07/2006

Prices

According to data collection done by ISARA¹⁶, AMAP prices are higher than conventional food sold in open air markets or supermarkets, but very comparable to organic product prices sold in open air markets or specialised shops. If we take into consideration other factors like time and transportation costs to go to shops and markets, then AMAP prices may be considered as attractive to consumers, as AMAP system is based on proximity, from work or home. It seems that producers do not do big differences between prices to AMAP and prices of products they sell in open markets.

According to AMAP principles, prices must respect the remuneration of the producers and be fair to consumers: this principle should lead to lower prices for consumers. It seems that this expectation is not really satisfied at the moment¹⁷. New farmers with high investments, not fully performing production system may have difficulties to get a decent income from this kind of contract, especially in the first years. For the other ones, it secures the marketing of the production and allows to save time.

If the AMAP model wishes to expand towards more diverse categories of the population, then this expansion may be first targeted towards people looking for quality and organic products, but reluctant to get involved in a rather long term relationship.

23. Alliance P.E.C. - Paysans Ecologistes, Consommateurs¹⁸ in Rhone Alpes region and Isère county

Alliance PEC Rhone Alpes

At the end of the 90's, several associative organisations launched and signed a platform, considered as the political basis of the creation of Alliance PEC¹⁹ by those organisations:

- *For a sustainable agriculture, offering incomes which guarantee agricultural employment and quality products accessible to all consumers,*
- *For the preservation of biodiversity and natural resources,*
- *For a partnership between agriculture and all society components.*

At Rhone Alpes level, the association Alliance PEC Rhone Alpes is created in December 2001 by county Alliances and regional structures of partner organisations (Confédération Paysanne, CORABIO, FRAPNA...). In 2006, the status are modified to open the board to AMAP and producers representatives. The Alliance Rhone Alpes works almost exclusively on AMAP development.

The board of Alliance Rhone Alpes is organised in 3 colleges:

College A :

- Regional partner organisations: environmentalists, farmers,
- County representations of Alliance in the region.

College B:

- Local AMAP representatives

College C:

- AMAP producers.

¹⁶ ISARA, op. cit., p. 34

¹⁷ Transrurales Initiatives, op. cit. p.7

¹⁸ Farmers, ecologists, consumers.

¹⁹ <http://www.alliancepec-isere.org/article1.html>

It presents its main objectives as follows:

- To improve the conditions for sharing experiences and assessing practices between AMAP in the region, through 4 *Comités de Développement des AMAP*²⁰ organised in Rhone Alpes,
- To facilitate exchanges between AMAP and producers,
- To provide, when necessary, common means for the development and consolidation of AMAP. The Alliance collects financial contributions and public subsidies (for training sessions, expertise, encounters...),
- To help AMAP to control their development in the elaboration of common rules (terms of references).

Those AMAP Development Committees work as multi-stakeholders space for sharing experiences and reflecting on practices. It involves at regional level some 300 persons , so called *AMAP developers* , who are voluntary persons, employees, consumers, producers...To facilitate the organisation of those encounters, 4 County Territorial Development Committees have been structured: around Lyon, Grenoble, Valence , Annecy. Each territorial Committee is supposed to organise 3 meetings per year to elaborate propositions on the basis of AMAP principles: one on the *relations consumers – producers*, one on *production* and one on *consumption*.

Alliance Paysans Ecologistes Consommateurs Rhône-Alpes intervenes in the public debate related to agricultural practices at local and international levels and their impacts on environment, consumption, and rural tissue. It supports all kinds of direct selling and short marketing channels: farm selling collective marketing point , local open air markets and AMAP.

It gives support to local AMAP creation. It also participates in the elaboration of another European agricultural policy and in the anti-GMO campaigns along with its partners..

Number of AMAP per county in Rhone Alpes region²¹

Ain	4
Ardèche	4
Drôme	5
Isère (Grenoble county)	22
Loire (Saint Etienne county)	5
Rhone (Lyon county)	11
Haute Savoie	8
Savoie	?
Total	59
In project	23

As we see, Isère county has the biggest concentration of AMAP. Some of them are urban and other ones are peri-urban.

Alliance PEC Isère

It is an association with similar objectives, established at Isère county level.

It is member of the national and regional associations Alliance PEC. It is also member of other networks, like:

- *Alpesolidaires* connecting organic peri-urban farms and urban consumers,

²⁰ AMAP Development Committees.

²¹ www.alliance-rhonealpes.org

- *Res'OGM, Collectif Nord Isère sans OGM, CIRO*, associations which participated in field trial destructions, as soon as in 1997 in the county.

Specific objectives of Alliance Isère²² are:

- to encourage debates in the public sphere on agriculture – society – environment nexus;
- to develop *concertation* with local politicians in charge of public policies,
- to protect agriculture land,
- to encourage AMAP development by providing support directly to AMAP, and through the *Comité Territorial de Développement d'AMAP* (CTD) of Isère²³.

According to Alliance Isère President, there are few relations between Alliance Isère and the regional Alliance.

24. A local AMAP: AMAP du Manival, Crolles (Isère county) at 30 km from Grenoble

In Isère county, the first AMAP was created in April 2005.

AMAP du Manival was created in September 2005. It needed almost one year before the very opening of the Crolles AMAP, with one meeting per month with interested persons, potentially members and consumers. Alliance Rhone Alpes played an important role by helping to structure the organisation and by informing on potentially interested local producers.

This AMAP not being an association, there is no collective contract and each *amapian* signs a contract with each producer. AMAPO of Crolles is a de facto association or a consumers group. The twin AMAP of Montbonnot, which is a split of Crolles, has an associative status because of municipality pressure to allow the use of the sport hall during the delivery days.

AMAP of Montbonnot main coordinator:

...The main advantage of being an association is that each member signs an internal regulation which may protect the group in case of conflict with a disturbing element (as it may happen in any group). This internal regulation should be an instrument for the Alliance to involve a bit more amapians and also to avoid some possible drifts. Today there is only a moral and verbal agreement between the Alliance and each AMAP. If an AMAP wishes to work with a wine producer at 300 km or if an AMAP wishes to work with intensive farmers, the Alliance can 't do anything. The internal regulation or the status of the association could frame all this...

At the beginning, there were 30 families ready to subscribe to the basket delivery for six or twelve months. Then the number raised up and the decision has been taken to split the AMAP in two, with a twin association in a nearby small town of Montbonnot. Now each AMAP has 30 families, members of the association. And the demand is intense to increase the activity: AMAP Crolles and Montbonnot have a waiting list of 100 potential members.

This population is young, composed of families with children and couples without children sharing the weekly basket. The main criteria for people to select the AMAP is the location of the basket delivery: most of them do not live in Crolles, work there and pick up the basket when finishing the working day..

Seven producers are involved in this marketing system, contributing to a rather well diversified basket: goat products, cow dairy products, beef meat, sheep, bread, fruits,

²² <http://www.alliancepec-isere.org/article10.html>

²³ AMAP Territorial Development Committee in Isère

vegetables and poultry products (eggs and chicken). Usually they deliver their products to several close AMAP: in the Crolles valley, there are some five ones.

In average, AMAP may represent one third of producers sales.

The rest goes to specialised shops or producers selling point, open air markets and even retailers for the biggest ones. Producers express very clearly that AMAP system is the most advantageous for them: good relationship, payment in advance, guarantee of sales, less time spent to sell.

At the beginning of the year (September), contracted producers receive the whole value of what they will deliver. In Crolles, for instance the vegetable producer receives some 8000 to 9000 Euros cash in advance. Even in case of production accident, the money is not blocked. The relation is very much based on trust and mutual engagement. Producers do not need to be organic, but the AMAP has the right to go on farm, organises special days for members and dialogues with the producer on his production system.

Some producers may deliver to AMAP and also to other channels, like collective selling points.

Comparative advantages and constraints for farmers between AMAP and collective selling point

	Advantages	Constraints
Amap	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Is a substitute to open markets. - The market is sure. - Payment in advance - Consumers are engaged, aware - Solidarity : consumers come to help at the farm - Allows dialogue and understanding through joint meetings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Time consuming - Delivery is a weekly constraint, that farmer has to assume alone - Consumers sometimes forget solidarity and behave conventionally - Relationship depends a lot on the interactions between the Amap referent person and the producer.
Collective selling points	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The selling point is opened like a shop: long time exposure of the products - No competition: each producer is exclusive - Group effect: convenient for managing together opening hours of the shop - Comfort: air conditioned in summer and heating in winter 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Management of the collective initiative is time consuming and requires negotiation, discussions...

3. Contextual factors

In this chapter, we focus on key contextual factors related to the AMAP marketing features: they are fundamental to understand the interactions between the producers and consumers.

31. The expansion and consolidation of AMAP as alternative channel in the food market

Different factors may influence the way AMAP model may develop:

- The conditions of the competition between AMAP and other food marketing channels,
- Expectations and attitudes of consumer categories which could be targeted by AMAP.

The closest competing channels are open air markets and specialised shops for organic products. Determining factors in the trade off made by 'aware' consumers are: prices, proximity, quality, diversity of the basket, associative life of AMAP, the basket commitment, mainly.

The strong development of AMAP reflects its attractiveness within a specific category of consumers: young, active, medium to high income, looking for alternative food sources, quality and meaning of the consumption act. The price is one among many other criteria.

What is considered as specific attractive features of the model, such as associative engagement, payment of the basket subscription in advance, duration of the contract (6 or 12 months), explicit solidarity between the consumers and the producers may become un-attractive elements for other categories.

Does the issue of the potential expansion of the AMAP model mean that the model characteristics should evolve and adapt to other expectations?

- The price does not seem to be a hurdle to attract new categories, but probably not the more modest income ones. In the focus groups organised by ISARA for its study²⁴, some hypotheses were formulated by participants such as decreasing prices according to the size of the basket or the number of baskets delivered weekly;
- The diversity of the basket content should be an objective: if some AMAP propose a diversified basket with vegetal, animal and dairy products, other remain rather focused on vegetables and fruits. At Crolles AMAP delivery day, in summer, it is rather common to hear: *what can i do with some much peppers?*
- The more flexible duration of the contract is also a proposition: a more progressive duration, 3, 6, 9 months could allow new comers to test and see if AMAP correspond to their needs; but then it is a key pillar of the system which is under question: how to conciliate solidarity with producers, engagement of consumers towards the association and producers, if the contract becomes more precarious? Are AMAP enough equipped to manage a more complex subscription system?
- The payment in advance offers to consumers a guarantee of fixed price for a year and to producers the anticipated receipt of the crop. It is a strong motivation of new producers to get in relation with AMAP. But it may inhibit lower income candidates. Could AMAP make more flexible also this payment system?

As we see, those possible evolutions may have significant impacts on the philosophy of AMAP which made its success. In order to attract less aware or less ready to engage consumers, will AMAP modify its specificity and possibly lose its core public?

AMAP of Montbonnot coordinator reacted to such perspectives.

It reflects the strong resistance of AMAP leading actors to possible evolutions towards softened specificity and principles. It recalls that AMAP dynamism is based on its radical discourse on consumption and agriculture.

- *The Alliance does not want to go towards less militant public. If people do not want to get involved in AMAP or if they do not wish to accept AMAP principles, then they have nothing to do within. It could de-credibilise totally the movement and existing AMAPs: it would be a bit like organic food with 0.9% of GM residues*

²⁴ ISARA, 2006, op. cit. p. 25

- *It is useless to look for broadening the influence as there are not enough producers and production to satisfy the 100 persons being on the waiting list in Crolles and Montbonnot...ISARA should sleep quietly, people are coming to AMAP massively and are more active than expected.*
- *In reality, AMAP have set up a payment system which makes possible to pay in several times.*
- *The engagement for 6 or 12 months can not be removed: the first objective of AMAP is to avoid the wasting of production: if you ask a producer to deliver 50 salads a week and then after one month you ask him only 30 salads, he will throw the remaining 20. Contracts are supposed to help producers to plan their production.*

32. Contextual factors - hindering and facilitating ones

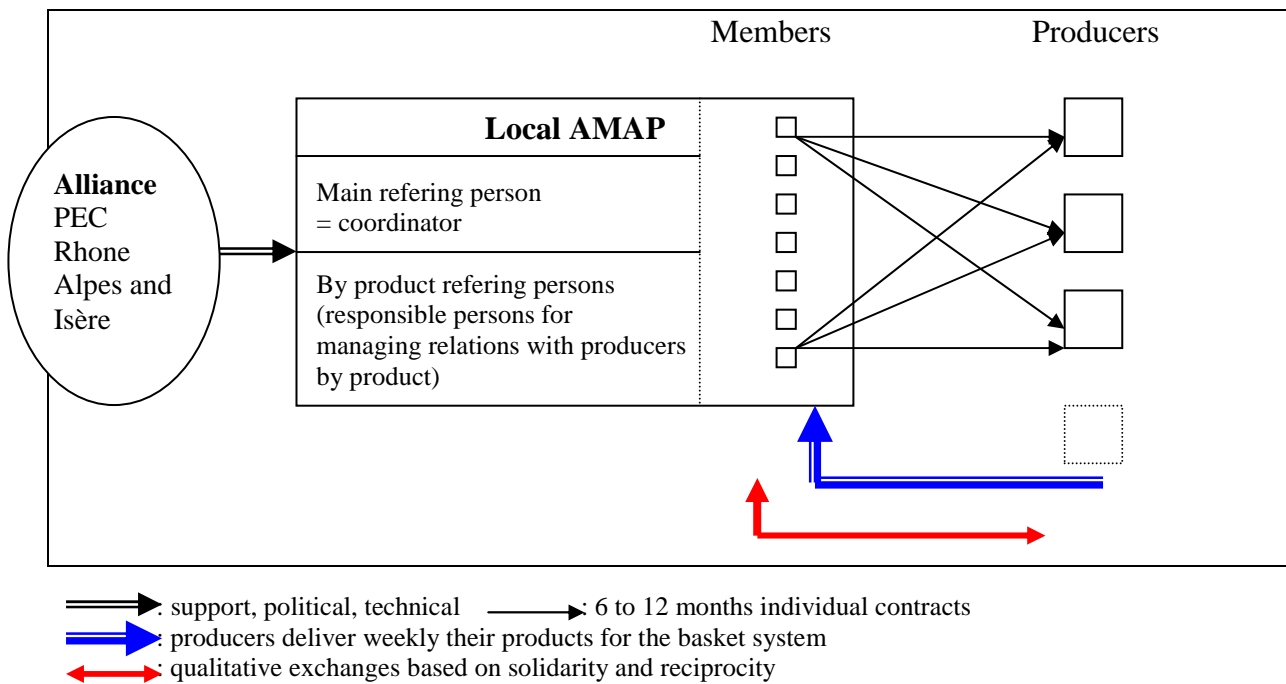
In the table below, we present a synthesis of the major contextual and impacting factors. It shows the way the system interacts with / or integrates some key structuring dimensions – like socio-political, economic, social, cultural and environmental ones. By the way, it reveals the strengths and weaknesses of the system.

Factors	Hindering impacts	Enabling impacts
Descriptive data		
Peri-urban agriculture	Production costs are higher	Important market, easily accessible
	Very intense land pressure	Allows important direct selling
	Difficulty to find new producers for diversifying the baskets	
Socio-political / institutional factors		
Local authorities policy support	Local authority support goes first to non agricultural land use: building and economic. Farmers talk of land spoliation.	In some places, there are contradictory signals, with local support to AMAP.
Global agricultural institutional context	Not favourable to small farming systems.	Some major agricultural professional organisations support direct selling and /or AMAP specifically.
Economic/market factors		
Prices	Inhibits modest income people to come in.	Are attractive enough for high income people
Duration of the basket subscription	Too long for less aware candidates	Offers the guarantee of a fixed price for a long period
Subscription payment in advance	Inhibits modest income people to come in	Offers to producers the possibility to get anticipated payment of the delivered production
Production constraints	Costs may increase, but prices are not elastic during the contract period between producers and AMAP.	Expressed solidarity between AMAP and producers in case of production accidents.
Competing marketing channels	The attempt of local retailers to attract local producers may hinder AMAP expansion.	This permits larger part of the population to access to food quality.
Social factors		
Social parity for farmers		It allows farmers to improve or guarantee income and recognition of his role.
Cultural factors		
Food culture		Positive perception of the relation between quality, taste and small farming

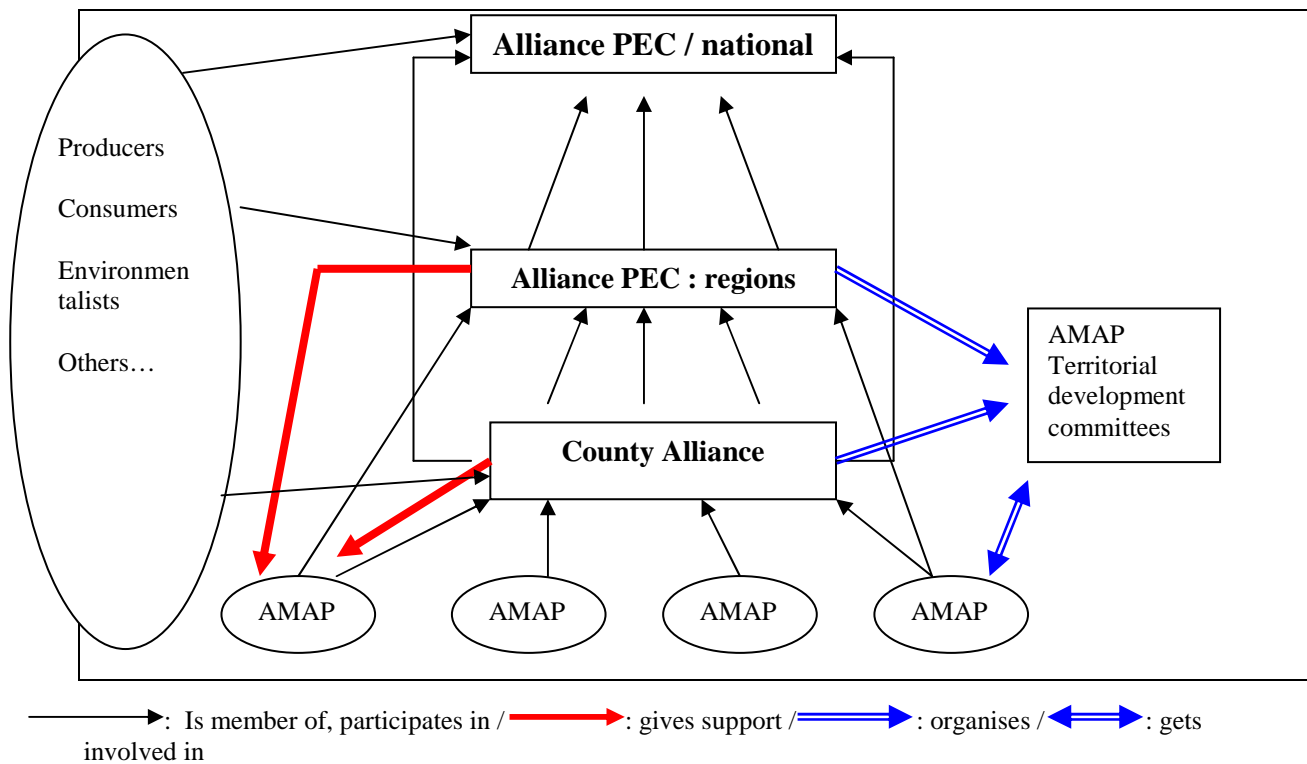
Search for alternatives		The model is coherent with the increasing influence of alternative discourses on globalisation, agriculture, GMOs, dominating position of agri-business...
Consumption culture		It contributes to develop responsible, fair relations between consumers and producers at local level.
Agriculture and society		Participates in a better understanding of agriculture by urban people.
Relation to territory		Maintains agriculture in the peri-urban tissue, with a positive impact on environment.

4. The organisational configuration

41. The AMAP collective system



42. The broad organisational configuration



When the Alliance was created at national level early 90's, one main goal was to lobby for the CAP reform. Progressively, the creation of regional and county Alliances have modified

priorities. Decentralised Alliances work on more specific issues like GMO opposition, AMAP development, organic markets, organic food at school...

5. The building of coherence based on shared vision and interests

The AMAP system is based on key principles and values and on shared economic interests. It corresponds to a growing concern for consumers and producers and may explain the success of the particular form of food collective marketing.

- *A common vision of agriculture*

Consumers and producers share a vision of food and agriculture, as a common heritage. Focusing on food quality, sustainable agriculture, support to small farming and rejection of the dominating retailing system are key criteria for attracting consumers and producers to work with AMAP.

In the building of the relationship between consumers and farmers, discovering and knowing what is agriculture is an important concern which drives exchanges, visits, participation in meetings, help to farm works.

- *Solidarity and collectiveness*

AMAP members are encouraged to invest in the life of the association in the many tasks to make it work smoothly: distribution, communication, animation...The subscription system means as engagement and solidarity expressed towards producers.

AMAP producers supply consumers with quality products according to the terms of the contract. They also invest time in AMAP associative life. And they commit to be transparent and communicate on their production system.

- *Shared economic interests*

For small and medium sized farms, the guarantee of selling the products through the contracts, the payment in advance, the time saving dedicated to marketing are very important: for the AMAP of Crolles and Montbonnot, AMAP represent some 30% of the sales, along with open market (one or two) , producers selling point and sometimes retailers.

For consumers, they get quality products once a week at one delivery point, at fixed price (less expensive than in specialised shops and close to open markets).

- *A strong network to implement this coherence*

Beyond the many local initiatives, there is a strong organisational networking dynamic, driven by farmers organisations, alter-globalisation organisations (ATTAC), environmental organisations...This configuration has a very political visibility, with clear stand-points on CAP, GMO, sustainability, environment...

6. Conclusion

The AMAP system is probably one of the most dynamic forms of direct selling.

We have seen that it is not *stricto sensu* a farmers marketing initiative; it is a hybrid form: consumers build a collective form (association) to take the control of their own food marketing and involve producers. This relationship between consumers and producers is made possible because in that specific system, consumers and producers are keen to share a common “vision of the world” and economic interests. There is a convergence between engaged consumers, with high purchasing power and small and medium farmers, searching for alternatives to intensive single cropping.

Another strong characteristic is the political visibility of the Alliance, supportive network to AMAP: the Alliance is an alternative actor, promoting another discourse on globalisation, on the agriculture – society nexus and on the relation between agriculture and environment.

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Part 4 - An Italian Community supported agriculture form: The GAS (gruppi de acquisto solidale)

The case of Italian Community supported agriculture form - The GAS (gruppi de acquisto solidale)²⁵ should be considered as a satellite case to the AMAP French case study. Both are examples of community supported agriculture in Europe.

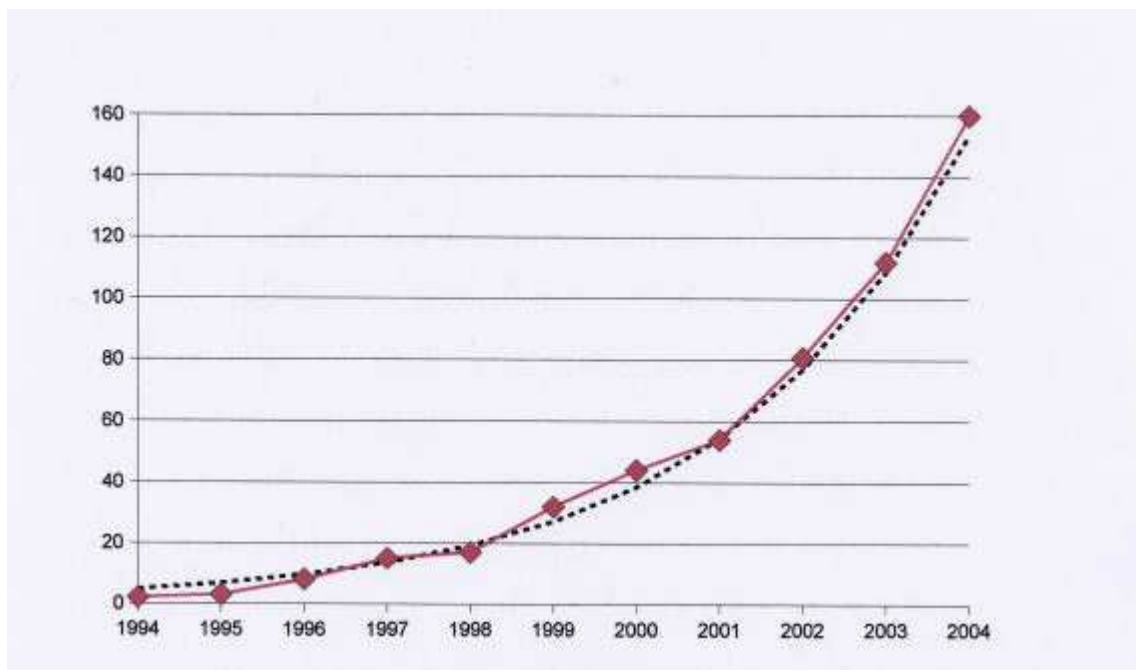
1. Background and rationale

Like in France this CSA system is probably the most dynamic form of direct selling models²⁶. In 2004, the total number of Gas in Italy was 207. Since 2004, the growth has been extremely fast. In 2007, there are some 360 groups. In Tuscany, the first groups appeared in 2000 and 2001, i.e. earlier than in France. There would be some 44 groups in 2007 (27 in 2005), with high concentration in Florence and Pisa.

Usually, a buying group is set up from a number of consumers that cooperate in order to buy food and other commonly used goods directly from the producers or from big retailers at a discounted rate

This presentation is mainly based on Tuscany data.

Evolution of the number of GAS groups in Italy till 2004



Source: Saroldi A. 2005 : "I GAS verso il punto critico", Atti del 5° convegno GAS, Fiera "Fa'la cosa giusta!", Milano, 19-20 March 2005

²⁵ Solidarity purchasing group

²⁶ www.retegas.org

2. Resources used

Articles, Italian research, internet and no access to previous EU research projects.

3. General description of the satellite case

GAS Membership

In average, GAS groups count on 20 to 25 family units.
Around those groups, networking can be intense.

Members of the group are between 30 and 50 years old, with exception of Pisa groups counting a significant number of students. Their level of education is considered as medium or high.

The main motivations of members are:

- to put into practice ethic and critical consuming,
- to practice ethic economy, taking care of social and environmental issues,
- to support small and very small farmers, anchored in the territory,
- to consume organic products, at good price,
- to respect work conditions ,
- to have in mind impacts on local policies.

In a Solidal buying group the guidelines in the choice of the products and the producers are the respect for the environment and the solidarity between the members of the group, the traders and the producers. More in detail, these guidelines lead to the choice of local products (in order to minimize the environmental impact of the transport), fair-trade goods (in order to respect disadvantaged producers by promoting their human rights, in particular women's, children's and indigenous people one's) and reusable or eco-compatible goods (to promote a sustainable lifestyle).

What gives birth to a GAS may be variable: some consumers or producers with strong ideological motivation can take the initiative. When some friends develop a trend toward a less consumerist way of life, the idea of undertaking shared purchase initiatives is quite natural. When the idea becomes more concrete, a fair amount of effort is needed for the search of some local producer that meet the Solidal criteria; the next step is the establishment of an internal structure in the group in order to collect the orders and redistribute the products.

In a second stage, a strong stimulus may come from the participation of potential members in study circles, developed and funded through the European Social Funds.

In that process, the big question for groups is on how to manage the growth, in terms of logistics, orders, distribution...Some groups decide to split for being more manageable, others prefer not to grow and supported the creation of new GAS with tutoring system.

The producers

Producers are selected by groups according to some criteria:

- the farm size: they are usually small or very small producers. Most of the time they are full time farmers. But it happens that some of them are part time;

- the distance to the farm : it should be short to avoid too much transport;
- new farmers should be introduced by consumers or producers who know them already, as a way to build a trustful relationship with the group;
- the availability of the producers to deliver information and knowledge on their production system and their products;
- the adherence to low environmental impact agriculture, like organic or bio-dynamic agriculture, in some cases, it can be labelled, but in most of the cases, trust is enough. Sometimes converters to organic farming are also encouraged to join the groups;
- the social sustainability is also an important criteria to measure the quality of human relations on the farms;
- the price of the products, the good quality / price ration: this should not be a hurdle fore people to join GAS groups.

The number of producers per Gas is variable. Usually, one producer per type of product is enough. But in bigger groups, several producers per group may be necessary.

The range of products: beyond food and agriculture

Most of the products purchased by GAS are food products, according to season availability; wine and olive oil, fruits and vegetables, bread and other oven products, pasta, rice, cereals, flour, cheese, meat, honey...

In the recent years, there has been the creation of GAS territorial networks (Pisa urban area or Florence...), allowing GAS to organise collective purchasing , gathering more groups for products, like Sicilian oranges.

Many groups go beyond food. They purchase and deliver cleaning and hygiene products and progressively broaden the scope of products, from textile till access to non for profit telephone operators, internet servers, open source software, bank services, insurance and now energy. It means that GAS intervene in many aspects of the daily life.

Fresh food products are weekly delivered, while non fresh food and other kinds of products are delivered every one or two months.

Organisation

Most of the GAS remain informal and self-managed. Self-management (*autogestione*) is considered as the most appropriate form, being coherent with the major goals of the movement.

Few groups have set up a formal organisation like a non for profit association. In some cases, they develop under the umbrella of existing organisations like social cooperatives or fair trade associations. By the way , they immerse within broader networks, local or territorial, focused on political or economic alternatives.

In average, the groups do not have their own location or office. They meet and deliver products in public places like churches or social centres; private houses can also be used. In some cases, this may raise cold/fridge problems.

Usually, for each producer, there is a collective (GAS) order. In large groups, there is a turnover of referent persons in charge of the contracts. This rotation can be a problem: not all groups are enough mobilised to assume this rotation of responsibilities. In small groups, each member is in charge of the relation with one producer. Internet is the key channel among members and between members and producers. The referent person receives and sends to members the price list of the producer, collects individual orders and sends them together to the producer.

In most cases, the payment to producer is done when collecting orders or when delivering the products. The referent person is responsible for the payment. It happens payment to be done some weeks in advance.

A very demanding task in a G.A.S. is the continuous search for producers and products that satisfy the most stringent ethical requirements. To share this kind of information, different groups join in a local, territorial network. According to Retegas national network defining major orientations, there are 7 regional networks.

Some limits

- As the running is based on self-management, the efficiency will be variable according to the education and training of active members. To improve this management capacity, training should be organised on a systematic way.
- Very few groups have their own place and equipment to distribute the products: collective platforms should be set up to deliver properly food products, with the support of local authorities.

4. Lessons learnt for the AMAP case

The focus

In France, AMAP focus is *local food* and agriculture. The project is originally related with the defence of small farming. This defines the web of relations between consumers and producers: mainly local and the national political orientation and positioning.

In Italy, the focus is *life style*. It generates activities which refer to fair trade and ethics: they include food, services and other types of products and services. The relation with proximity seems to be looser. Oranges can come from Sicily. Groups can purchase to big retailers. The Italian parliament has recently modified some financial legislation which gives GAS the possibility to have financial activities.

The broad spectrum of activities and ambition of Italian GAS may make them rather attractive and consensual. May be more than AMAP with their politicised and activist image.

Members involvement

It seems that formally members involvement is more exigent in France: payment in advance for 6 or 12 months, helping days at the farm, sharing responsibilities. In reality, when listening to some producers, it seems that the demand and attitude of members may be rather conventional and consumerist.

In Italy, without details, we can say that the involvement is high and rather demanding , especially in multiple products groups.

Organisational features

In France, setting up an AMAP needs the support of county Alliance, which can be considered as the umbrella organisation. Rules, principles and modalities of organisation are very detailed.

In Italy, the system is much more flexible and finally the organisational process is in the hands of local members. The forms are much more diverse: informal, associative, cooperative. It seems that the national network works as a political coordination body and platform to exchange experiences and develop new activities (energy at the moment).

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Part 5 - Conclusion

The types of COFAMI which have been studied are rather different, in terms of activity, organisation, history. Here, we refer mainly to AOC Beaufort cheese system and AMAP.

Common enabling and hindering contextual factors which influence or interact with their development

(i) Factors related to geography

Both initiatives are located in Alpine region, i.e. in a region where urban development is dynamic and tourism a key employment provider.

This characteristics has several consequences:

- the pressure on natural resources, like land and water, is very intense and hinders any further agricultural development,
- the economic importance of agriculture in regional economy is declining.

Beaufort as well as AMAP contribute to maintain agricultural presence and tissue in peri-urban, valley and mountain areas, despite pressures. This relation to territory is essential, for agricultural activities as well as other activities on the territory such as tourism.

The main compensation to such negative effects is that proximity to urban population, in towns or ski resorts, stimulates direct selling, in the cooperative shops, collective selling points, farms or through AMAP.

(ii) Factors related to policy

Local development policies do not fully recognise the importance of such agricultural activities on territory, landscape and environment. They are, by default, unfavourable to agriculture.

Moreover, the major agricultural professional organisations (APO) have never been very supportive to Beaufort and AMAP.

- They have been criticising Beaufort, for dividing and weakening the milk sector by proposing an elitist strategy,
- Among APO, only Confederation Paysanne got involved in AMAP and Alliance political project building.

Obviously, the reform projects of the CAP and the possible disappearing of the milk quotas open an uncertain horizon for milk actors of the Beaufort system. This is a crucial issue on their agenda: what will happen and how to be prepared?

(iii) Factors related to prices

Both models, Beaufort and AMAP, succeed to propose to producers a high or decent price for their products: milk purchased by Beaufort processing actors, cooperatives or industry and food products ordered by consumers (AMAP).

This reality is attractive for young farmers who wish to set up a farm. In the case of AMAP, an additional advantage is the payment of the crop in advance which brings a very useful cash. This trend is a paradox when taking into account the tourism and urban pressure on land : the result is that new farmers installation is mainly possible by substituting retired farmers.

(iv) Factors related to distribution and consumers

AMAP defines itself as an alternative to the concentration and domination of retailing system on the food market. But Beaufort collective actors do not have a broad margin of manoeuvre vis-à-vis distribution concentration:

- direct selling is perceived as a necessary strategy and the development of cooperative shops is a priority,
- the capacity of the collective actors to face and anticipate the decreasing number of wholesalers and possible modification of the power relation remains unclear.

(v) Social and cultural factors

Despite the fast modification of the food pattern in France and the growing influence of collective , fast food, food culture remains valorised, as a pillar of the French way of life. On their way, Beaufort and AMAP cultivate and contribute to food culture, by valorising the quality and taste of their products and by proposing a legitimate price for those characteristics.

(vi) Organisational factors

We can consider that the organisational configurations adopted and built in the two kinds of initiatives are answers to those contextual factors: they aim at adjusting or anticipating them. It is interesting to mention a common feature which drives those organisations: the common sense of engagement and voluntarism. This constitutes a strong force to face contextual factors.

Specific issues concerning the ability of AOC cheese actors to deal with these contextual factors

The collective power structure

We have observed a strong stability of the power structures for Beaufort organisations. This self-regulation capacity can also be considered as hindering the renewal of young generations in the management of the collective life. In comparison, we have noticed the weakness and conflict of interests in Reblochon organisation.

On one side , it helps Beaufort actors to regulate and regenerate the AOC cahier des charges within a high value and small volume focus. They have the legitimacy to make adopt those changes. On the other side, it is difficult for Reblochon Union to elaborate and implement a sectorial strategy.

The economic control on productive evolutions

One of the major issues for AOC cheeses is how to control volumes and quality and maintain with the retailing system a favourable power relation. The political choices operated by the

Beaufort *filière* has probably been more successful than the choices by default of the Reblochon *filière*.

As a cheese producer, industry has a minor role in Beaufort and a dominating position (70%) in Reblochon. For Reblochon it has been a driving force in the volume growth of the last 5 years and increasing use of the product as tartiflette, food ingredient. With its important maturing capacity, it controls the relation with retailers.

- In a way, the strong presence of the industry has probably contributed to maintain in the territory a significant milk production activity,
- This kind of actor manages rather well food safety and industrial quality standards. It may not be at the origin of big Reblochon quality accidents,
- It promotes a “retailable” cheese, standardised, without defaults nor virtues.

Community supported agriculture answers in France and Italy

Political positioning

A strong characteristic of the French AMAP is the political visibility of their umbrella organisation Alliance, working as a supportive network to AMAP: the Alliance is an alternative actor, promoting another discourse on globalisation, on agriculture – society nexus and on the relation between agriculture and environment.

It means that AMAP development is rather framed by Alliance, in terms of initiative (who takes the initiative?) and modalities of creation.

In Italy, the system is much more flexible and finally the organisational process is in the hands of local members. The forms are more diverse: informal, associative, cooperative. It seems that the national network works as a political coordination body and platform to exchange experiences and develop new activities (energy at the moment).

The main focus

In France, the AMAP focus on *local food* and agriculture. The project is originally related with the defence of small farming. This defines the web of relations between consumers and producers: mainly local.

In Italy, the GAS focus on *life style*. This generates activities which refer to fair trade and ethics: they include food, services and other types of products and services. The relation with proximity seems to be looser and groups can purchase to big retailers.

The broad spectrum of activities and ambition of Italian GAS may make them rather attractive and consensual. May be more than AMAP with their politicised and activist image.