Why a valorisation strategy?

The DIVERSIFOOD project has considered the promotion and market valorisation of food products based on diverse genetic resources as an integral part of a broader, collective action. The aim of this action is strengthening and promoting the entire production-processing-consumption systems, so guaranteeing the sustainable use of the genetic resources. The framework of analysis is more detailed in the Factsheet #12, where the five case studies developed by the project are also introduced.

Main elements of valorisation strategies of the selected cases

Despite their diversity, the case studies show relevant common features.

The importance of interaction that develops among the actors involved in the various areas of action, including researchers, facilitators and advisors. Within this collaborative environment, actors may share views, different forms of knowledge and expertise, cooperate and define common goals.

Recognition of the specific properties of diverse varieties and of the aspects concerning their cultivation. Participatory experimentation and assessment, in the specific farming contexts, are crucial here. Technical aspects are involved, for the need to adopt suitable techniques, but also organisational and legal aspects, associated with the particular (often lacking) rules regulating the circulation of these varieties; as well as ethical issues, for the need to recognise their values, and economic aspects.

Shared definition and co-production of the final product quality. This leads to a redefinition of processing technology, by adapting it to the characteristics of these varieties and to the objective of maintaining/improving the nutritional and health quality of the final products. As crucial is to manage the qualitative attributes through suitable institutional tools and arrangements along the chain (e.g. codes of practice, norms and rules, protocols, agreements).
Suitable marketing and communication practices are another important step to ensure the economic and cultural valorisation of the product qualitative attributes. Chain actors, individually or collectively, are engaged in choosing proper market channels (mostly short and integrated with local communities), labelling, trademarks, forms of protection from misappropriation, messages to communicate the added value of the production systems and related products. There is often a strong commitment to raise awareness of the initiative in general among civil society and policy makers.

Relations with other initiatives, locally and outside the territories are relevant for all the case studies: allowing sharing knowledge and catching new opportunities, they give rise to more incisive actions to valorise biodiverse products and, more in general, enhance agrobiodiversity.

Positive impact. According actors’ assessment, the initiatives contribute to the sustainable use of agrobiodiversity and to other positive environmental impacts, as well as provide economic and socio-cultural benefits. Their future development is seen embedded in and strategic to a territorially-based development.

The way forward

The case studies have pointed out the following aspects as important to support production-consumption systems in their efforts to enhance agrobiodiversity:

### Policies
- Create enabling conditions for seed reproduction and circulation, based on the recognition of different quality criteria and of the rights of farmers and associated networks working on seed selection, production and improvement.
- Support initiatives aimed at reinforcing networking and invest in facilitation, looking at the role played by actors closely involved in the initiatives.
- Introduce incentives to support the maintenance of the existing initiatives and the development of new ones.
- Foster the entering of biodiverse food products in consumption habits through health/education/food policies.

### Research
- Foster the adoption of a comprehensive approach, aimed at analysing all the aspects involved in enhancing agrobiodiversity through product valorisation.
- Foster the adoption of transdisciplinary approaches, aimed at integrating scientific knowledge with traditional and experiential knowledge and expertise.
- Invest more on participatory approaches and active involvement of chain actors and local communities in the research of suitable varieties and in the definition of the quality of final products.
- Incentivise the research on the health and nutritional features of the biodiverse products and on their relationship with varieties and production methods.

### Marketing & Communication
- Incentivise forms of labelling and certification systems able to take into account the variability and heterogeneity of biodiverse varieties and products, as well as to protect these varieties from misappropriation.
- Improve communication practices by providing a clear and detailed information, aimed at conveying the meanings of biodiverse food products in relation to the characteristics and aims of the production systems.

Suggested readings