

The Appellation d'Origine Contrôlée (AOC) and other official product identification standards

ALBERT Céline

Student at ENESAD (Etablissement national d'études supérieures agronomiques de
Dijon). School of higher education in agronomy of Dijon.

Advisor: Dr. Lee Meyer

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INTRODUCTION

The objectives of this report is to describe the AOC (Appellation d'origine contrôlée) system as well as the other official product identification standards in France. This should allow producers and marketers to understand and ascertain how the French systems might be adapted to the marketing of the Kentucky agricultural products, and then to find some alternative strategies to support the rural community in Kentucky.

Nowadays, the agricultural and food products' European market is saturated. The new step is not to produce a standard product, which is only differentiated by price, but to segment the market with products with unique characteristics, guaranteed, and meeting consumers' expectations. Official quality standards are effective tools to allow this and ensure a loyal competition. They bring the official guarantee on products' quality, geographic origin, and other characteristics.

There are four different marks in France:

- ◆ **The AOC “Appellation d’Origine Controlee”** corresponds to the **Guaranteed Origin Appellation** and appeared with the law of 1 July 1935. It allows the recognition of a particular product that takes its qualities from its “terroir” (the notion of “terroir” is explained below).
- ◆ **The certification de conformité (certificate of compliance)** appeared with the law of 30 December 1988. It guarantees that a product is conformable to specific characteristics or rules fixed by a “cahier des charges” (book where are registered conditions of production, production processes, check conditions...) concerning, depending on the case, the production, the processing or the packaging. The specific characteristics are based on measurable and significant objective criteria.

These standards apply mostly to poultry, meat and eggs (Qualité France eggs) and only a few fruit and vegetable products.

- ◆ **The agriculture biologique (organic farming)** means growing and breeding without recourse to synthetic chemical products. It is recognized by the law of 4 July 1980, modified in 1988. The constraints deal only with the production methods.
- ◆ **The labels: label rouge and label regional (red label and regional label)** guarantee that a product has different properties and specific characteristics fixed by a “cahier des charges” and establishing a superior quality level (especially in term of its taste). The product must be different from the other similar product commercialized, thanks to particular production or growing conditions. The law of 5 August 1960 developed the red label. The regional label is for genuinely regional products and bears in addition to its name its own special logo (Savoy Ham Pieces). It is especially used for poultry (70 % of the labels) and a little for delicatessen, meat, fruit and vegetable products (for example, potatoes from Melville, carrots from Creance).

The regulation prohibits to juxtapose a label or a certificate of compliance for the products which already have an AOC. But 3 juxtapositions are allowed: organic agriculture and AOC, organic agriculture and label or, organic agriculture and certificate of compliance.

In order to protect the geographical names the European regulation of July 1992 established three other marks that are identification of French products on the European market:

- ◆ **The AOP “Appellation d’origine Protégée” (Protected Origin Appellation)** is the European protection of the AOC.

- ◆ **The IGP “Indication Géographique protégée” (Protected Geographical Indication)** can be obtained by the French products which already have a label or a certificate of compliance and for which there is a link with the local soil present in at least the production, processing or elaboration stages.
- ◆ **The Attestation de Spécificité (Specificity Attestation)** can be given to food products having a label or a certificate of compliance and which have a traditional composition or a traditional mode of production (original making recipe).

These four French official product identification standards highlight unique agricultural products. The AOC is a very particular quality mark because it is not only limited to the products’ own characteristics but it is closely linked with what is called in France the “terroir”. This notion of “terroir” refers to natural components (geography, climate, geology...) as well as human components (skill, tradition, savoir-faire...). That is why the production is done in a specific area that confers on the product a very strong identity. The heterogeneity of the “terroirs” preserves the diversity of the products. The notion of taste is important as well. This is very well illustrated by wine with the existence of many different vineyards: as many “terroirs” and as many tastes. For the Comté (AOC for a French cheese), different “terroirs” exist inside the same appellation.

A strong organization must exist for a quality standard such as the AOC to work and be durable. This organization was developed stage by stage since the first origin appellation concerning wines. Nowadays the AOC system is part of a structural frame marked by coordination between the different actors, and of an institutional and statutory framework based on different political organizations : the INAO, “Institut national des appellations d’origine” (National institute of origin appellations), and the French, European and worldwide policies.

This structure and the uniqueness of the AOC are strength in the current market context. Moreover the AOC system with its particularities implies several consequences

concerning the rural development and the local economy and has significant and tangible impacts on the social, technical and environmental spheres as well. (1, 2, 3, 4)

1. Data and technical background on the AOC and the other official quality standards

1.1. AOC products and their importance in France (source SCEES 1996-INAO 1996)

The AOC are primarily applied to wines and dairy produces (Beaufort, Comte...). They concern some poultry (turkey from Bresse), fruits and vegetables as well (walnut from Grenoble, olives from Nyons). Two examples of AOC cheeses are described in annex 1 and 2. (5)

1.1.1. Number of producers:

Wines, brandies: 88,000 farms

Dairy products: 40,000 farms

Food processing products: 5,000 farms

The AOC producers represent 12.3% of the farms in 1988 (total number of farms: 1,016,000)

1.1.2. Turnover value:

The total turnover for the AOC is 13.5 billion dollars.

Wines: 10.2 billion including 3.1 billion from exports.

Brandies: 1.7 billion including 1.5 billion from exports.

Dairy products: 1.5 billion

Food processing products: 0.1 billion

The total turnover for both farm production and food processing industries is 147 billion.

The AOC represent 9 % of this turnover.

1.2. The organic farming products

1.2.1. In the European Union (6) in 1994:

Number of producers: 14,000

Surface: 400,000 ha

The usable agricultural land for the organic farming represents 0.12% of the total usable agricultural land.

1.2.2. In France (4, source: Corabio 97) in 1997:

Number of producers: 3580 smallholdings

Surface: 106,188 ha (265,000 acres) including:

Area currently farmed: 82,000 ha (205,000 acres)

Area undergoing reconversion: 24,185 ha (60,500 acres)

This represents 0.3% of usable agricultural land in France.

710 suppliers and importers.

2. Apparition of the AOC. Understand the organization through the example of wine

The first AOC was created for wine in 1935. This example is important to describe the different stages in the establishment of regulations concerning wines in order to understand the purpose of the AOC system and its functioning.

New techniques of production for wine led to high yields as well as mass production. Moreover to preserve the wines' characters it was necessary to maintain

traditional production practices. As competition on the market increased, producers of famous vineyards maintain their identities.

Under their pressure the first law concerning the origin appellation appeared in 1905. It penalized the fraudulent use of geographical appellation. The delimitation of the region was administrative.

The law of 1919 defines the appellation as a collective ownership associated to the land. Then the delimitation of the geographical area depended on the judicial authorities.

But those laws were not sufficient to solve the overproduction of table wines and to frame the use of appellation. The problem was that there were many abuses because no constraint on the production was established. Then in 1927 the law defined that the right to the appellation should be linked to the geographical origin and the conditions of production, which means the vine and the “local, loyal and constant using”.

Between 1931 and 1935 several publications stipulated that the market had to be managed. Two levels of measures were taken:

- The intervention on the production potential with the regulation of the vineyards irrigation and the interdiction of some vines and of new vineyards plantation.
- The intervention on the market in adapting the offer with the market statement. The wine production could be blocked on the farms and the excess quantities distilled.

At the same time, in 1935 the “appellation d’origine contrôlée” appeared for wines. The AOC wines were not submitted to market regulation but had to answer to strict criteria concerning the production conditions. The management was independent from the state and done by a professional structure, the “Comité National des Appellations d’Origine” (National committee for the origin appellation), which became the INAO in 1947.

In 1970 the European regulation took over to manage the wine production and control the vineyard development.

One of the measures was the classification of land. The legislator considers that the quantity and quality of the production vary with the agronomic characteristics of lands and with the topography. The notion of “wine-producing vocation” appeared. It was based on the fact that the more the soil potentialities are important and the less its wine potential is important. The classification established three categories of lands: lands well suited for quality wine production, lands marginally suited for wine grade production and lands poorly suited for wine-producing. The third category is composed with deep and rich soils good for the vegetative development of plants. People are neither encouraged nor helped to replant vineyard on those lands. The first category is for low deep, undulating lands, well oriented to the sun. The expression of the plant’s vegetative potential is limited, raisins are concentrated and then the product has a high quality level. The “Vins de qualité provenant de régions déterminées”, VQPRD (Quality wines coming from definite regions), including the AOC wines, are only produced on those lands. The second category of lands is only for table wines.

The categories were established based on the intrinsic qualities of lands, but only the lands which already had vineyards were classified; the others were systematically put in the third category.

The regulation of 1970 established another classification: the vineyard. In the EEC seven wine-producing areas were defined based on the climatic conditions. These ones were supposed to influence the natural alcohol degree of wines.

Some particular rules concerning the VQPRD were established. These rules referred to the French law on the AOC wines but were less strict. The objectives were to maintain a quality minimum and to avoid uncontrollable production extension of VQPRD. This regulation deals with the production conditions (area of production, choice of vines,

cultivation practices and yield per hectare), the protection of names and the control of products. It only defines the principles but each country must adapt their rules. For the control, for example, there are an analytical control (based on quantitative characteristics) and an organoleptic control (concerning the color, the flavor...). The rules for this second control are not precise enough and necessitate another frame than the European's.

The French regulation for the AOC wines is stricter. The wine sampling is organized by the "appellation syndicates" (explained in the glossary), under the responsibility of the INAO. A link between yield and quality was established. When the volume of produced wine becomes too high the raisin components are diluted: sugar quantity, phenolic compounds, which are responsible for the wines' color and tasting qualities.

The law of 1974 deals with the link between the yield and wine's characteristics. In some particular cases (special climatic conditions...) the yield is allowed to be higher than the yield fixed by INAO.

The law of 1993 stipulates that the "syndicats de défense" have to do a collective request to exceed the authorized yield. The INAO manages the rights to the plantation area: it fixes, for each year, a growth objective which takes into consideration the market statement and the demands proposed by the appellation syndicates. Then the annual quota is negotiated with Bruxelles. (7)

The regulation and structure established around the wines was the basis for the AOC system. Nowadays several products profit from an AOC and it is possible to describe more generally the functioning of this system.

3. Obtaining of the official quality standards and organization of the different systems

3.1. AOC : how to obtain it, organization

3.1.1. How to obtain the AOC ?

To create an AOC the producers must develop a “syndicat de défense” to manage the future appellation. They prepare a report that:

- ◆ gives reasons that justify their request,
- ◆ bring the proof of the name’s use and of the product’s reputation, giving historical data,
- ◆ establishes the link between the “terroir” and the product, showing the natural, technical and human factors that confer the unique characteristics to the product,
- ◆ includes an economic analysis (market, prices...).

This report is sent to the INAO which proposes its own document to the Regional Committee and then to the National Committee. (8, 9)

The opportunity to give the appellation is decided by INAO after having examined the evidence and appointed an investigation committee composed of experts (members of the national committee) who appraise the demand. The criteria to accept or not to give the appellation are not formalized but concern essentially the reputation and historicity of the product. Yet this is really difficult to evaluate it, especially the reputation can not be objectively measured.

The acceptance of the proposal depends on two conditions:

- the product’s reputation must be sufficient to justify the protection by the AOC system,

- the proposed production rules, which must allow to make the product's reputation, must be sufficient to guarantee that the product can be reproduced.

For wine, producers who want to put an AOC on wines must apply to the INAO and justify the demand with economic arguments. In each syndicate, the rights are distributed between the producers, taking into consideration the INAO priorities, which can concern the farmer's statute and the farm structure. (7, 9)

3.1.2. INAO

The AOC is under the control of the INAO. The law of 2 July 1990 established that the INAO includes three national committees:

- the wines and brandies' national committee,
- the dairy products' national committee,
- the national committee of the other products different from the ones previously cited.

The last bill (10 June 1998) added a national committee for the IGP (Protected Origin Indication) within the INAO.

It is composed of professional representatives, administration's representatives and qualified personalities with consumer's representation. Each committee gives its opinion about the issues concerning its designated products. It establishes a budget and the general policy of the institute.

A part of the national committees' decisions is based on the regional committees' opinions. These regional committees are composed of professional representatives and administration's representatives of a region (10). They only exist in the wine industry at this date.

The “syndicats de défense” of the appellations are composed of producers and are the only negotiator of INAO, and more precisely of regional committees, concerning the appellation’s management.

The INAO has a ruling power concerning:

- ◆ recognizing the AOC and determining the production conditions,
- ◆ the promotion and the protection of the origin appellations, the AOP (Protected origin appellation) and IGP (Protected origin indication) in France and in foreign countries.

It has a consultative role as well concerning all the issues relative to the origin appellations:

- ◆ labeling and presentation of products

Since the July 1990 law, on the advice of the INAO, the Agricultural and Forestry Office is allowed to give its opinion on every development or urbanization project that could undermine the production area or conditions, the quality or the image of appellation products. (1, 11, 12)

3.1.3. The AOC and the framing of the producers

In order that the AOC system functions, all the actors of the channels must have a certain logic and organization. The entire production-transformation-marketing process has to be managed in order to have not too much variation in the quality and to maintain its market reputation. Moreover, the producers must on one hand respect the “cahier des charges” and on the other hand they must submit to European and French regulations especially concerning food safety.

The first structure existing to guide producers is the “syndicat de défense” of the appellation. Composed of the producers, this structure is the negotiator with the INAO. It

can submit propositions to the INAO concerning for example, the modification of an appellation's decree. It must always be aware of the market and regulation changes and manage the appellation anticipating the evolution of the social, technical and marketing context. That is why the producers must build together and constantly the appellation's rules. (13)

The syndicates can be involved in other activities as well. For example they organize sampling for wines or cheese.

The "syndicats" also deal more with the AOC's regulations. Another structure exists which is more concerned with the technical constraints of this regulation and its application to the producers. Among those structures are the UPB (Union des Producteurs de Beaufort "Beaufort Producers Union") and the CIVs (Comites Interprofessionnels des Vins "Interprofessional Committees of Wines).

Those interprofessional committees attend to coordinate the different actors of the channels. They may give a technical support and accompany the farmers into their steps in order that they reach the quality level requested for the "cahier des charges" (it could be for example a health quality level). Moreover they are in charge of the product promotion. The committees are financed by taxes on the products.

Another organization which may help the farmers is the chamber of agriculture which may give technical and marketing support by providing the services of a technician (producers must pay for the technician services). (13)

Finally, a cooperative system is very widespread in France. Often, the farmers sell their raw material to the cooperative which is in charge of the making and marketing of the products. For the Beaufort, for example, cooperatives collect the milk, transform it into cheese and age it. Cooperatives may have stricter requirements than the "cahier des

charges”. In order to evaluate each criteria, there is a notation scale. This one may be different for the AOC and for the cooperative. The price paid to the farmers for their product depends on this scale. Sometimes farmers may have payment for a better quality product and penalties if the quality is lower than the required one. For example, for the Racamadour (cf. Annex 1 for the description of this cheese), the milk receives 5 centimes premium per liter if it contains less than 100,000 bacteria per liter. (13, 14)

3.2. How to obtain the other official quality standards, regulation

The labels, the organic farming and the certificate of compliance are certified by private bodies recognized by relevant authorities. The certification guarantees that the product has certain characteristics and that its production and processing meet certain technical norms. The organizations must be independent and impartial to come up to the French norm NF EN 45011 (coming from the European norm). Those official quality standards are under the control of the CNLC “Commission nationale des labels et des certifications de produits agricoles et alimentaires” (National committee for the labels and certificates of agricultural and food products).

The CNLC is composed of three sections:

- ◆ the section “exam of referential” which gives its opinion on the “cahiers des charges” for the label, the certificate of compliance, the IGP and the specificity attestation
- ◆ the section “organic farming” which gives its opinion about the European regulation projects, about the “cahier des charges” of animals products and about all the issues relative to the development of organic production mode
- ◆ the section “recognition of bodies which give the certification” which gives its opinion about the request for the recognition of certificate organizations, with

regard to the European norm EN45011, and the efficiency of the established control plan.

Each section is composed of producers, processors, distributors, craftsmen, consumers, relevant organizations which give the certification...

The recognition of quality for the certificate of compliance and organic agriculture is on an individual basis while the label is collective (group) basis. The producers have to do two reports:

- ◆ a “cahier des charges” describing the product characteristics, the making process rules, the control methods and the labeling conditions
- ◆ a request for the recognition of the organization which give the certification. This request includes the whole quality system ruling the certificate and which allows to insure the independence and impartiality of the certificate body and the check plan for the considered product.

If the producers apply at the same time for an IGP or a specificity attestation, they must do a third report, which bring the proof of the link to the origin or of the product’s traditional nature.

The recognition for the certifying organizations is for a testing period of one year. At the end of this period, the recognition may be confirmed for three years. Each year the organizations must give an annual report concerning their activities. This report has to be approved by the section.

For organic farming, the grower must declare his intention to practice organic farming to the relevant authorities (the DDAF “Direction Départementale de l’Agriculture et de la Forêt” that means the departmental directory of agriculture and forestry). This is right as well for all the operators who transform, condition, conserve or import organic products from another country (out of the European Union). The declaration is done with an official form distributed each year. Organic farming products

can be recognized by the notation “Organic Farming” on their packaging; by the “AB” logo; and for vegetable products whether processed or not - by the mention “Organic Farming, EEC checking system”. To be commercialized each product must be submitted to a check and obtain the certification of an organization recognized in the France. (1, 15)

3.3. The protection of geographical names

A joint commission was created to protect the geographical names through the AOP and the IGP. It is composed with representative chosen by the CNLC, by representatives chosen by the INAO and by estate representatives.

This commission examines the elements of “cahiers des charges”, which accompany the request for AOP or IGP and concerning:

- the product’s name,
- the link between the product and the geographical origin.

The joint commission’s opinion is imposed to the CNLC. (16)

3.4. Conclusion about the organization of the AOC

The AOC system includes a technical structure which allows, thanks to a coordination into the channels, production of goods with unique characteristics required to obtain the AOC. But this system is included into a more regulation structure which allows to manage the products on economical and political spheres.

As a matter of fact the AOC products are present on the market and then must adhere to rules. The cooperatives and interprofessional committees deal with the economical aspects of the AOC (marketing, promotion). The products take advantage of a particular protection, thanks to the INAO, and especially geographical names’ protection. But the INAO is a governmental organization and then have to stay out of economical aspects to

respect the principles of free competition and free access to the market. Nowadays, this is a big controversy.

However this system's functioning can not be independent of the agricultural and food policy of the French, European and worldwide scales.

4. The political context

4.1. The worldwide policy

The AOC is especially affected by international trade policy which tries to establish common criteria to facilitate the exchanges of food products. The regulation is limited to some imperative demands :

- ◆ protection of the consumer's health and security,
- ◆ information of the consumer,
- ◆ transactions loyalty,
- ◆ protection of environment,
- ◆ harmonization of controls.

It only fixes demands of results but not the means to reach them. (1)

4.2. The European and French policies

4.2.1. The agricultural policy

It is possible to deal with those two political scales at the same time because the major axis are given by the European policy and transcribed in the French context.

The PAC (Common Agricultural Policy) established in 1963 by the EEC prevailed to a surplus production and to an intensive agricultural system. The reform of 1992 had three main objectives :

- ◆ to control production,
- ◆ to sustain incomes,
- ◆ to maintain the rural population and to highlight the environment.

Nowadays, the issue is more and more about sustainable farming. Current policy includes four aspects:

- ◆ an economically viable production system,
- ◆ the upkeep and the valorization of natural resources on the farm,
- ◆ the upkeep and the valorization of other ecosystems on which farming activities have an influence,
- ◆ the creation of a natural environment with an esthetical quality.

Several measures have been adopted to enforce the policy. (17)

4.2.1.1. Measure to sustain disadvantaged areas

In order to avoid the rural depopulation in some regions where the production conditions are really hard, Europe and France implemented a system of financial help. In France the farmers in mountain and hilly areas and in the disadvantaged areas may profit by indemnities to compensate the natural and permanent handicaps. (17)

4.2.1.2. Environmental measures

There are several operations which are supposed to act in favor of the the environmental protection :

- ◆ to reduce the use of fertilizers and pesticides,
- ◆ to introduce (or maintain) the organic farming,
- ◆ to make the plant production extensive,
- ◆ to reduce the livestock density,

- ◆ to use practices which respect the environment,
- ◆ to breed animals of threatened breeds,
- ◆ to keep up abandoned lands,
- ◆ to fallow and maintain some lands for at least 20 years,
- ◆ to manage some lands to allow their access to the public,
- ◆ to develop an agri-environmental training.

In principle those operations are sustained with payments and guide organizations as part of local programs established on several years (usually 5 years). The regional programs should fit well with the local conditions. A regional and a departmental committee sustain them. All the indications relative to the skills to use are registered in the “cahiers des charges”.

In France, the national measure that represents the most important part of the financing is “the grass incentive” to “maintain the extensive production”. This incentive is a bonus to other incentives concerning the breeding conditions and is given when there are less than 1.4 livestock units per hectare. (17)

4.2.1.3. The Programmes de développement durable or PDD (sustainable development programs)

The PDD is an the agri-environmental measure established in France to use and preserve the heritage that the farmers own and to develop as well as possible a quality system and then respond to the society’s expectations. Each PDD associates about 20 farmers. A territorial diagnostic is done which includes the economical and environmental pros and cons. An audit is realized on each farm to be used as a base for the global contract between the farmer and the State. The farmer will be helped to pass progressively from a conventional agricultural system to a farming system respectful for the environment. (17)

4.2.1.4. The DJA “Dotation aux jeunes agriculteurs” (Endowment to young farmers) and the Prêt JA “Prêt aux jeunes agriculteurs” (loan to young farmers)

There are several helps given by France to encourage young people to settle in a farm.

The DJA is a subsidy given to young people depending on the area where they settle. Its amount is higher in mountains or other disadvantaged areas. It can go from 82,000 F (\$13,700) to 172,00 F (\$28,700).

The “Prêt JA” is a loan at a reduced rate. it finances expenses done during the settlement, especially when the Young recover totally or partly a farm.

In order to obtain those helps young people have to submit to some condition:

- present a project for which the realization will allow to have a decent income since the third year of the settlement,
- be between 21 and 35 years old,
- have enough professional qualifications: diploma of a sufficient level and 6 month of an internship in a farm,
- be a farmer as a main activity.

In supplement to those financial help, young people may profit from a technical support.

(18)

4.2.2. The food policy

The French and European policies as far as food is concerned is very exacting, especially for food safety and quality.

The demand for quality is increasing a lot and a quality assurance system is more and more established in food processing industries in order to control all stages of a product's processing and to respond to consumers' expectations.

Moreover the sanitary quality and food safety become more and more important with an increasing use of HACCP method. But those requirements are easier to manage in industries than in farms.

The regulation becomes stricter. Especially we can notice that the bacteriologic quality of milk takes more importance. The new French regulation (1998) requires a decrease of the germs and cells rate in milk. This could cause difficulties for AOC cheeses and especially for raw-milk cheeses.

Another important measure is called "traçabilité", which means that for each product we will be able to go back to who produced the raw material and what the stages of its making are. This should allow, in case of a problem, to know the origin of this problem.

4.3. Conclusion on the policy

On every scale, the agricultural policy turns towards quality, environment protection and sustainable development. So on some aspects of the AOC system seems to fit well with this policy.

France tries to analyze and to reply to local needs and established several measures to maintain the rural population and environment.

But on the other hand, the food policy and the increasing requirement concerning food safety and quality impose more and more constraints for the producers.

5. Economic, social and environmental impacts of the AOC and other impacts.

5.1. The economic impact of the AOC

On the economical sphere, the AOC imposes several constraints on the producer, however the notoriety of this mark offers many opportunities of development. The economic impacts of the AOC may be classified into two categories: the financial and non-financial impacts.

5.1.1. The financial impacts

The first part of the AOC is a set of rules, describe in a “cahier des charges” which is established for all the producers and that describes the practices to use and the production conditions. These restrictions usually increase production costs (investment in material, labor...).

In order to commercialize the product several conditions are required and, especially, the norms concerning the international market are very strict. The producer must enforce standardization norms on packaging, size and weight... Moreover the transformation activity necessitates strict hygiene, especially with the European directive of 1 January 1996 concerning the building, the building’s equipment, the staff, the food products and the processing waste.

To apply those norms, the producers have to attend a training to acquire technical and practical knowledge and they must accept official controls (health controls...).

Since all of those constraints have a financial cost, producers have to sell their products at a higher price than conventional products if they want to make profit.

The fact that the product has specific characteristic allows it often to be sold a good price, capturing value for the farm production. For example, the milk for the Rocamadour

cheese is paid 3.40 francs on average by the cooperatives whereas normal milk is paid 2 francs. (14)

5.1.2. The non-financial impacts

The AOC is usually considered as a “visa” for the producers, it gives them entry into restricted markets. As a matter of fact the AO products have a strong personality due to its “terroirs” of production. They are specific and unique and then not substitutable on a market. On the contrary the conventional products are submitted to the competition and the productivist logic. They must be produced at the lowest cost to survive on the market whereas the uniqueness and low supply confer on the AO products a high added value. This benefits to some the disadvantaged areas that could not be competitive in producing classical products. The example of the Comté cheese illustrates well this fact. The Comté is produced in a mountain area and there the topography and the cold climate reduce milk production and raise its production cost compared to the plains areas. If the milk was not increased in value by the transformation into cheese, the producers could not continue to produce in the current market context. The AOC, closely linked with the “terroir”, enables farmers and processors to valorize the real agronomic and natural potentiality of a geographical area. Farmers living in areas in trouble may maintain or increase their incomes in producing raw materials for an AOC product or in developing transformation and sale activities. Moreover those two activities require labor and then the AOC could enable the creation and maintenance of jobs in disadvantaged areas.

If we reason in term of commercial, the AOC quality mark helps the farmer to find other opportunities to sell his products. As a matter of fact the sales of farmer products is usually established on a confidence relation between the farmers and the customers. Direct marketing at farms or on the local markets builds good relationships but is limited to a local population. But if the farmer wants to find an outlet further (for

example in urban areas where the demand is important) he needs to be known and recognized by customers. Yet it is very difficult to construct an image to a product all the more as the rural areas may be geographically and culturally apart from the urban areas. That is why it is necessary to have a collective dynamic among producers. Then the AOC constitute an essential trump for the marketing thanks to the notoriety due to a strong image and to the promotion done around this mark. The Rocamadour producers for example do not have the financial means to lead big promotion operations. Their cheese has just been recognized as an AOC in 1996 and since, the product has been identified by the consumer thanks to its label (this is the same label for all the producers) according to the syndicate of Rocamadour appellation. (2, 12, 14, 19)

5.2. AOC and the social aspect

In the current society, consumers are offered plenty of products. All of them seem to be similar and then, as no other criteria may be used as a reference for the consumers, their choice is usually led by the price. Quality marks such as red label, AOC... enable the consumers to get their bearing among the products and to identify them. Beside the concept of quality gains more and more importance. Some statistical data (source SCEES) showed that, between 1980 and 1996, the proportion of AOC wines and VDQS (wines of superior quality) in the total expenses devoted to the wines passed from 39% to 70%. Before the interest of consumers was limited to the final product whereas now they want to know the whole process and the raw materials' origin. (20)

The main qualities acknowledged to farmer products by the consumers are the “wholesome and natural” character and the “taste”. Those factors assemble at the same time the products' own characteristics and the symbolic ideas that the consumer has on this product and that, in the case of AOC, may be linked with the tradition, the landscape, the authenticity...

Then the AOC products, with their specificity and their strong identity, are more products for gastronomy than ordinary food products. The “terroir” and “vineyard” notions and the taste characteristics are associated with those products.

The gastronomy is entirely integrated in French culture. Yet the AOC products, closely linked with each area’s natural and human characteristics, are the reflection of an historical and an ancestral savoir-faire. Through the diversity of the “terroirs”, they maintain the cultural and traditional particularities of France. (19)

5.3. The AOC and the environmental aspect

Instead of standardizing the production methods, the AOC product tries to valorize the environment’s natural potentialities and in this way converts the handicaps into advantages. Each area’s geographical uniqueness is preserved, which maintains the biological diversity as well as the landscape diversity in France. For example breeds of alpine cattle were saved by the norms relative to the Beaufort cheese. (2, 19)

In addition, this valorization of disadvantaged areas maintains productive activities and population in those areas and thus maintains territories which are at risk of being abandoned.

Finally, the AOC products’ “cahier des charges” defines production practices that usually go in the direction of an environment protection. For example, cows that produce the milk for the Comte are not allowed to be fed with silage. Silage is a very polluting crop because it necessitates a lot of nutrients. To preserve the natural environment seems to be logical with the AOC. Since the environment is a key part, environmental protection is critical to maintain the product’s image. It is necessary that production practices are compatible with “sustainable agriculture”. (15)

5.4. Other factors

5.4.1. Adoption of new technology

As previously mentioned the AOC imposed particular production conditions written in a “cahier des charges”. Then farmers who want to convert their production into an AOC system have to adapt to new techniques, which may mean change the time of work, the material, the employed techniques and then the organization of the farms. Moreover the farmers may need to learn new techniques or to develop marketing skills, which necessitate a good technical abilities, often realized by training and assistance provided by the chamber of agriculture or interprofessional committees.

5.4.2. International trade

The segmentation of the market is very important in the current economic context of competition. The strong identity of the products allows them stand out on the national and international market.

Annex 3 presents the AOC products’ export levels. We can notice that the export of AOC labeled products, thanks to their reputation, is high, especially wines. Of all the AOC products it is those produced in high quantities which are exported. (2, 21)

In fact, as it is shown through the example of Rocamadour, that small quantity limits promotion and marketing operations. Through cooperative efforts, gathering several producers, products can be sold on a larger and further market whereas a single producer sells more easily and with better profit on a local market (no freight costs or loss due to a middleman). The sales on the international market depend on two factors: the scale of production and the notoriety of the product. (14)

5.5. Conclusion about the impacts of the AOC

According to some authors the AOC system has a significant economical impact on the local community; it is a local development motor (13). It decentralizes the production of goods in maintaining and creating production and transformation activities in rural areas. The example of Rocamadour shows the success of an AOC system. As a matter of fact, the Rocamadour has had the AOC since 2 years and the production has already increased threefold with several young farmers involved in goat breeding. But the stakes of the AOC are not only economical; they are social and environmental as well. It allows preserving some traditions and values.

The AOC is a good tool for rural development because it connects all the elements of the rural community. In France there is a strong interaction between farmer products, gastronomy, landscape and tourism. On the one hand the natural and human resources are used to produce goods (craftsman's products) which, associated with the landscape, will attract tourists. On the other hand, tourism enables productive activities to employ people in rural areas. The environment is kept and valorized. For example, the region in the center of France is really tourist, with the “château de la Loire”. As far as gastronomy is concerned, there are a lot of wines and traditional recipes and several AOC for goat cheese. In this region people have developed scenic routes and gastronomic visits with people traveling by bus. Gathering to propose farms visits, samplings...the farmers manage to attract people outside the traditional routes.

Tourism and AOC products are complementary. But in disadvantaged areas those two activities necessitate a lot of dynamism from the farmers and the local population and a collective effort to be effective.

CONCLUSION

The political tendency was is supportive of the AOC. It is very important to preserve natural resources and the landscape in order to keep the potential of the natural environment and to maintain the rural community and to allow it to develop itself. The AOC fits very well with the sustainable agriculture model thanks to its strong link to the “terroir”.

Moreover, AOC products may be a reply to the current economic context and the need of quality. They allow segmenting the market and constituting, with the other quality marks, markers for the consumers. In order to preserve the uniqueness of those products and all the values hidden behind them (culture, tradition...), and to keep the consumers' confidence it is necessary to protect the origin. It is easier to destroy an image than to build one.

The AOC is an well-adapted system in France because France is a rural country with a large diversity of landscapes and climates. It is attached to its history, its traditions and its culture. There is a strong link between gastronomy and “terroir” that makes France a good place for tourism. In order to sustain the rural community, farmers are encouraged to diversify their activities with tourism and processing activities. Then the strong effort of farmers is necessary to succeed in the new activities of sale and reception that create new relationships between producers and consumers.

But especially, an AOC system will work if there is a compromise between the individual strategy, the collective organization and the social stakes.

Finally, from the study of the AOC system, we can highlight several key points that may be used as a basis to analyze the Kentucky situation and then which should allow to give some hypothesis about the possible alternatives for Kentucky farmers.

The human factors

- Farmers must be motivated and have the will to expand their activity and to have more contact with their customers (more welcome activities). This is a question of attitude. It seems to me that people with more education or with a background different from agriculture are more open to new activities. They dare more to take risk and initiative.

- Farmers must work with other farmers and people and not in a competitive spirit. They must try to cooperate and exchange their experiences, knowledge and information. They must have a mutual step for the promotion and the marketing of their products. This will allow them to have lower costs, to be stronger and to have more weight on a market.

- The success depends on the local community involvement as well, especially at the beginning to help start when the reputation is not yet established. In the beginning, products can be sold to the local population and then the producers expand their market. If the local population supports the farmers in buying their products and talking about them to their acquaintances, the product will gain attention. Moreover, the local actors (commercials, associations, persons who have lodgings or tourists activities), the elect, the local population can join the farmers to develop community projects such as performance to attract tourists and keep the life in the community... Success is the product of community will and effort.

The economical factors

Financial factors

The product must allow the farmers to have enough incomes to maintain their agricultural activity and maybe to create employment, which simply means that they must be profitable.

Non financial factors

- One of the benefits of an AOC system is to support and develop the rural community, the production must be entirely integrated into this environment, which means to take into consideration the real potentialities of this environment as well as its constraints. As a matter of fact, the conventional production system often demands too much investment and then leads to high production costs (for example, in hilly regions slopes make mechanical harvesting difficult). So the system which is used must be adapted to the environment (for example a certain cattle breed...)

- But the added value depends a lot on the price people are willing to pay on the market and on the consumer's demand. It is important to know people's expectations as far as quality and tastes are concerned, as well the values that lead their shopping (product's features, sustain farmers, health,...). There is a strong link between people's value and the product's image. This one is partly due to the consumers' perceptions, which depend on their culture, background...

- What is very important is to choose the kind of image the farmers want to give from the product, if they prefer to highlight the products' features (composition, taste...), the production characteristics (organic, natural, traditional, with particular process...) or the geographical origin.

Technical factors

- Farmers who want to begin a new activity need to learn the new techniques of production, to acquire marketing skills, to have access to information...And then, for example, they should seek training (practical and theoretical). The producers will need help during all the beginning stages.

- A good framework is necessary as well as a strong organization to help farmers with technical considerations, to fix the rules concerning the production systems, to promote the farmers and their products on the market and to keep the image unsullied.

To sum it up:

The human factors are:

- ♣ motivation,
- ♣ communication,
- ♣ initiative,
- ♣ commitment.

The economical factors are:

- ♣ a production with high added value (based on the valorization of the natural and human potentialities of the environment),
- ♣ a strong and personalized product image due to unique characteristics and representing an essential marketing tool.

The technical factors are:

- ♣ a technical help during and after the start up,
- ♣ a strong structure to defend farmers' interests and surround the producers with a good organization which defines the rules for the production, the functioning...

ANNEXES

Annex 1: An example of AOC: le ROCAMADOUR

History of the Rocamadour

The Rocamadour, called “fromage de Rocamadour” (cheese from Rocamadour) or “Cabécou de Rocamadour” before, is one of the oldest local origin’s products of the Lot region’s agriculture.

It was traditionally made with goat milk in the “terroir des Causses” by farmers. In the past this milk could be mixed with ewe or cow milk. It was destined to feed families; the excess was sold by farmers on the local markets.

Research conducted during the AOC request discovered many old writings witnessing of the Rocamadour’s age and notoriety. For example, in a lease dating from 1451 between the bishop from Evreux, the lord of the region, and his vassals, the cheese was cited as a sharecropping value.

History of the AOC

The Rocamadour was recognized as an AOC in 1996 after 7 years of a long procedure. The appellation area corresponds to the chalky area of “Causses du Quercy” including the Lot region with extensions in the South of the Corrèze, in a part of the Dordogne, in the North of the Tarn et Garonne and in a part of the Aveyron. The homogeneity of this area has been proved by experts in studies conducted for the AOC request.

At the end of the 1980s the Lot’s goat herd had decreased to only 40 to 50 producers with small flocks. The production represented only 4 to 5 million cheeses sold on local markets. There was no milk collection done for the milk. Now thanks to the AOC and the professionals’ dynamism the channels include 120 producers including 80 farmers, with a total of 10,000 goats, 4 private craftsmen and cooperatives. The production is 14 millions cheeses.

60 % of the making is done in farmers’ workrooms and 40 % in craftsman’s workrooms that collect milk or clotted milk from farms. In the past the cheese commercialization was regional and extended to conquer new markets in France and abroad. Nowadays there are three main channels:

- the direct channels for 15 % of the production (sales in the farms and on local markets),
- the short channels (25 %): sales to the dairymen, restaurant, groceries,
- the long channels (60 %): sales to wholesales and big handling.

The last channel is mainly used by large producers and craftsmen who sell out of the region. The importance of the short and direct channels can be explained by the fact that it is a very touristic region and then there is a real seasonal potential of local consumption.

However, the amount of cheese produced increased so much that local markets are now almost saturated. Recently the craftsmen have developed expeditions outside the department, essentially in the Southwest, the Parisian region, near Lyon and the Southeast. A little part of the production is sold in Germany.

Conditions of production

The production conditions allow affirm the link of Rocamadour with the “terroir” and concern the breeding methods, the milk production methods, the making and maturing techniques.

We can describe some particular conditions:

- The goat breed must be Alpine or Saanen. The maximum number of goat per hectare of grassland is 10.
- 80 % of the feed must come from the AOC area and the amount of concentrated food per day must be less than 30 % of the total dry matter.
- For farmer workrooms, the milk, which will be processed, must come from the two last milkings at the maximum.
- The clotted milk must be drained at least 12 hours. The molding is realized in single mold with clotted milk in which the solid must be between 28 and 35%.
- The maturing follows defined conditions concerning the temperature and the hygrometry.
- Cheeses can be commercialized 6 days after the removal from the moulds (this small lasting may be explained by the fact that the maturing is quick because of an average cheese height of 1.6 cm).

The respect of these production conditions is checked by the INAO. Each operator of the channels is recognized by the INAO after it verified that the makers and people who do the maturing followed all the production conditions and that the cheeses were standard.

The Rocamadour’s Features

The Rocamadour producers’ syndicate asked a laboratory to conduct a sensory analysis in order to characterize the product. This described the distinctive organoleptic criteria of the Rocamadour.

Some significant criteria highlight the cheese’s originality:

- The color of the rind varies from beige to ivory or cream.
- The rind’s appearance is velvety and scored. This skin is moderately thick and can be more or less attached to the pastry depending on the maturing degree.
- The smell is well developed, very complex but dominated by features reminding the goat, the ferment, the byre.
- In the mouth and with the rind, the flavor is very balanced but there is a salted flavor well marked. When we take off the rind, the salted flavor predominates but the other flavors are changed.
- The aromas have an medium intensity with goat and fermentation but there is as well aromas reminiscent of cream and butter.
- Secondary aromas are mushroom and byre. Without the rind the taste seems more milky.
- The consistency has a large influence on the sampling. The Rocamadour appeared to be creamy, sticky but as well melting, mellow and greasy. Without any rind the pastry nature becomes more present.

ANNEX 3:

Picodon de l'Ardèche et picodon de la Drôme

COUNCIL REGULATION (EEC) No 2081/92
APPLICATION FOR REGISTRATION: Art. 5 () Art. 17 (X)
PDO (X) PGI ()

National application No:

1. Responsible department in the Member State:
Name: Institut National des Appellations d'Origine - 138, Champs Elysees - 75008 Paris
Tel: (1) 45 62 54 75 Fax: (1) 42 25 57 97
2. Applicant group:
 - (a) Name: Association de Defense et de Promotion du Picodon de la Drome et du Picodon de l'Ardeche
 - (b) Address: Le Number One, Rue Frederic Chopin, 26000 Valence
 - (c) Composition: producer/processor (x) other ()
3. Name of product: Picodon de l'Ardeche or Picodon de la Drome
4. Type of Product: (see list in Annex VI) Class 1.3 - Cheeses
5. Specification:
(summary of Article 4 (2))
 - a) Name: (see 3)
 - b) Description: Small unpressed soft whole goat's milk cheese covered with a thin natural rind of surface mould; shaped like a 1- to 3-cm-high circular puck; at least 45% milk fat.
 - c) Geographical area: Ardeche and Drome departements and a few communes in the Gard and Vaucluse departements
 - d) Proof of origin: Goat herding has been omnipresent in the region for ages, as shown by edicts ordering the slaughter of these troublesome animals, which were overrunning the area. There are few written traces of the production of cheese under the name of 'Picodon', derived from the dialect term 'Picaoudou'. The first written trace dates back to 1863 and mentions 'Picodon'. The cheese was praised in Provengale songs and mentioned in soldiers' letters to their families in 1915. The designation was recognised in 1983.
 - e) Method of production: Obtained by coagulating whole goat's milk with a slight adjunct of rennet. Clotting takes from 16 to 48 hours. The fresh curd is ladled into a mould perforated with holes of set dimensions. The mass is taken out of the mould after 12-48 hours, dry salted, dried, and ripened for a total of at least twelve days from the time of renneting.

- f) Link: This cheese is typical of this poor arid mountain region, the geological characteristics and climate of which were suitable for raising goats only. The manufacture of this cheese, which has been handed down from generation to generation, has persisted in this area and is an indispensable source of income.
- g) Inspection body: INAO, 138, Champs Elysees, 75008 Paris
DGCCRF, 59, Bd V. Auriol, 75703 Paris CEDEX 13
- h) Labelling: Legal obligation to display the INAO logo + acronym, the phrase 'Appellation d'Origine Contrôlée' and the cheese's name. Phrase 'Fromage fermier' or 'Fabrication fermière' (farm product) Phrase 'Affinage méthodes Dieulefief (Dieulefief ripening)
- i) National requirements: (if any) Decree of 29 December 1986

EC No:

ANNEX 3: Exportation of AOC products

The wines (AOC and VDQS) represent 59 % of wines exportations in volume and 85 % in value.

Products of other sectors (dairy products, food-processing products) are not easy to distinguish in the exportations but some exportation figures are good to notice:

- The Roquefort : 13.3 % of the produced quantity is exported
- Bresse poultry: 10 % of the production is exported
- Chasselas de Moissac: 10 % exported
- Walnuts of Grenoble: 40 % exported

Nowadays, the INAO has 240 proceedings in foreign countries to fight against fraudulence and usurpation of names.

GLOSSARY

AOC : Appellation d'origine contrôlée (guaranteed origin appellation)

To be recognized as an AOC, a product must:

- comes from a delimited geographic area (where the raw materials are produced and transformed and where the product is elaborated),
- have well defined production conditions,
- have a well established reputation .(4)

AOP: Appellation d'origine protégée (protected origin appellation):

This is the European protection for the AOC.

Cahier des charges:

This is a book which describes all the constraints to produce a product and the way to ensure that those rules are respected. The rules can concern the production of the raw material, the different stage of the making, the labeling...

CNLC: Commission nationale des labels et des certifications de produits agricoles et alimentaires (National committee for the labels and certificates of agricultural and food products)

IGP: Indication géographique protégée (Protected geographical indication):

This is the European protection for some Red label and Certificates of compliance.

INAO: Institut national des appellations d'origine (National institute for the origin appellation)

Syndicates of defense or of appellation:

This is the name given to several producers who gather to create mutual rules to defend the same objectives. Syndicates of defense of the appellation are obligatory for the AOC.

Terroir:

The notion of terroir includes at the same time human characteristics (tradition, savoir-faire, culture...) and natural characteristics (geography, geology...).

VDQS: Vins de qualité supérieure (Wines of superior quality)

VQPRD: Vins de qualité provenant de régions déterminées (Quality wines coming from definite regions)

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