Consuming the rural idyll through food
Analysis of the consumption of rural foodstuffs by urban populations in Portugal

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Aims

- To identify the consumption habits of small-scale rural food products by urban residents
- To understand the factors that influence consumption patterns

How?

- Through the analysis of the results from a survey directed to a sample of Portuguese urban residents (N=1223)
Food is a relevant part of the culture and identity of a territory, reflecting both material and immaterial aspects:

- Biophysical conditions
- Local environment and natural resources
- Main agricultural productions, activities, and traditions
- Specific know-how and visions of the world local populations have developed during centuries

Small-scale rural food products – and the way they are transformed, prepared and presented – are part of the culture and tradition that are closely tied to territory characteristics;

In this sense, food is “more than just food” (Figueiredo, 2013); it is part of a territory’s heritage and legacy.
Food is also considered a major part of what has been defined as the ‘rural idyll’, contributing to foster positive images and social representations on rural areas and acting as a pull factor regarding rural tourism destinations.

Food is an important part of the tourists’ experience of a destination and may contribute to foster, especially in peripheral and disadvantaged rural areas:

- The development of traditional local productions’;
- The liaisons between tourism activities and local social and economic fabrics.
Methodology

- A questionnaire applied to a sample of the Portuguese population over 14 years old (applied between 11/2013 and 10/2014 and combining personal interviews and online answers).
- A total of 1839 valid questionnaires were obtained (59.8% - personal interviews / 40.2% online).
- A quota sampling approach was adopted based on the following criteria:
  - The municipality of residence categorized in three levels:
    - level 1 municipalities – most urban;
    - level 2 municipalities – the intermediate
    - and level 3 municipalities – the most rural
  - The parish of residence (categorized in two groups – urban or rural, according to INE classification)
  - Gender
  - Age
In this paper we aim to identify the consumption of small-scale food products of rural areas by urban residents and the factors that influence this consumption. Therefore, only respondents that live in one of the two major Portuguese municipalities, Lisbon and Porto (N=1223), were picked to carry the analysis.

First, a descriptive analysis was carried out to characterize the consumption patterns of rural areas’ food products of urban residents, the motivations and constraints associated with this consumption.

Afterwards, an exploratory study was carried out using a backward stepwise logistic regression analysis, in order to identify the factors influencing the consumption of rural food products.

The dependent variable is a binary choice indicating whether respondents had purchased rural food products or not. The independent variables included in the model were related to their images of the rural areas, their links to these areas and their socio-demographic profile.
Sample Profile

- **Residence**
  - 69.8% of the respondents live in Lisbon
  - 30.2% live in Porto

- **Gender**
  - 56.5% of respondents are female
  - 43.5% are male

- **Age**
  - 13.1% - 15 to 24 years old
  - 61.1% - 25 to 64 years old
  - 25.8% - 65 or older

- **Education levels**
  - 46.3% of respondents have higher education
  - 19.2% of respondents have only gone through, at most, primary school education

- **Activity**
  - 43.4% are employed
  - 31.2% are retired
  - 15.7% are students
  - 8.1% are unemployed

- **Income**
  - 62.4% have relatively low net monthly household incomes (lower than €1500).
  - 6.3% of respondents have a net monthly household income higher than or equal to €3500.
## Discussion of results

**Have you consumed food products of rural areas?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>938</td>
<td>76.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>285</td>
<td>23.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Most consumed products**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vegetables</td>
<td>611</td>
<td>65.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fruits</td>
<td>381</td>
<td>40.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wine</td>
<td>185</td>
<td>19.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Olive oil</td>
<td>163</td>
<td>17.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cheese</td>
<td>151</td>
<td>16.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meat</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>14.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honey</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>8.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other dairy products</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>8.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eggs</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>7.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bread</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>7.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 1. Consumption of food products of rural areas*
## Discussion of results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main motivations to consume the products</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>These products are healthier</td>
<td>395</td>
<td>42.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>These products have a better flavour</td>
<td>390</td>
<td>41.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>These products are more reliable</td>
<td>273</td>
<td>29.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Willingness to support local producers</td>
<td>168</td>
<td>17.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>These products are organic</td>
<td>143</td>
<td>15.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>These are national products</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>12.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Major constraints to consume the products</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>These products are more expensive</td>
<td>232</td>
<td>23.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>These products are difficult to find</td>
<td>185</td>
<td>18.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is difficult for me to go to rural areas</td>
<td>157</td>
<td>16.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>These products are produced in a small scale</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>12.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. Motivations and constraints to consume the products
Discussion of results

**Figure 1. Determinants of the consumption of food products of rural areas**

- The model Chi-square is 172.820, p<0.05;
- Nagelkerke $R^2 = 0.208$;
- Hosmer and Lemeshow test = 15.021, p=0.059;
- 77.3% of cases are correctly classified.
More than three quarters of the respondents consume small-scale, rural produced foodstuffs.

They consider those products to be healthier, better flavoured and more reliable than other products.

The respondents’ attachment to rural areas, including the frequency of visits to these areas, their images of rural areas, and their sociodemographic profile are the factors that have most impact on the consumption of these products.
Grazie mille!
Obrigado!

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