



European agricultural fund for rural development – Europe investing in rural areas

RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME 2007 – 2013

Research and analysis of typical and traditional food products and productions in the municipality of Rakovski



RAKOVSKI, 2014

Introduction

This study aims at making an inventory of local typical and traditional food products and manufacturing processes, and at presenting small workshops for farm food products. The survey of food products shows the quality characteristics (sensory, organoleptic, etc.) of the individual manufacturing processes, the strengths and weaknesses and disadvantages of local production. It analyzes also the qualitative features of produce and the aspects of the relationship 'man-climate-soil-crop' that affect them. The last section contains a strategic vision for the development of traditional manufacture of food and its relation to the local cuisine with a view to the opportunities for creating a network of restaurateurs and food producers in the context of the already established relationships and connections between LAG Rakovski and LAG Elsbeere Wienerwald and the outcomes of the project they implement together.

Justification, process and working principle of the study

This study and analysis of typical and traditional food products and manufacturing processes in the municipality of Rakovski is based on the contract between the Foundation for the Development of the Cultural and Business Potential of Civil Society (FDCBPCS) and LAG Rakovski, as the principal, in connection with the implementation of a contract of 11.07.2014. The methodological guidelines of LAG Rakovski were used for performing the study as well as the principles for development of such type of research.

The study answers the following general objective:

- ❖ Strengthening the economic sector through the establishment of networks and actions for territorial promotion.

The specific objectives answered by the study are:

- ❖ Implementation of joint activities in connection with recovering the knowledge of eating as a gesture through which is expressed the cultural content of the specific rural community;
- ❖ Support for the establishment of an unique local and regional identity that is in support of the parallel strengthening of European identity in a large proportion of the local population - directly (as participants in the activities) or indirectly (as consumers, users) - based on many years of European experience;
- ❖ Connecting operators who provide very good services, allowing for integration of interconnected manufacturing enterprises and opening new markets for trading in typical produces and food products;
- ❖ Promotion of food service activities and culinary tourism as an expression of sociality, religion and culture of the area;
- ❖ Promotion of the LAG Rakovski area.

In the course of the study was used both the experience of the Foundation and that of other national, regional and European structures from Bulgaria and the EU countries. In

performing the analysis of typical and traditional food products and manufacturing processes in the municipality of Rakovski were taken into account the priorities and the guidelines for development of the country, the region and the area and were used past and current local, regional and national documents, information and statistics.

The study was carried out in July-August 2014, and a large number of experts from all areas took part in the process. Both representatives of the municipal administration and LAG Rakovski were involved as well as representatives of government entities and private businesses, associations and unions of the NGO sector. A team of highly qualified experts was set up to work on several priority topics of the study, namely: geography, demography and economics, food products and manufacturing processes, local cuisine and food service activities, analyses.

The work on the study and analysis of typical and traditional food products and manufacturing processes within the territory of LAG Rakovski went through two main stages:

First stage - determining the scope and content of the study, drawing up a work plan and methodology to serve as a starting point and strategy for performing the study, collection and processing of input information;

Second stage - preparing detailed presentations on the various topics of the study, including the analysis of strengths and weaknesses, analysis of the results, verification of facts and supplementing the information on individual topics, final layout.

Statistics, thematic studies and available reports were used as well as information from the municipal administration and LAG Rakovski and in the public space. Site visits were performed for which was developed a questionnaire (attached at the end of the study) to collect information directly from the owners of small workshops and manufacturers for further analysis.

Depending on the topic additional information was collected from external institutions. Of great importance for the qualitative analysis of the situation, for displaying trends and outlining the characteristics proved to be the expert findings and views on various issues in the analytical sections of the study, the views and opinions of the

surveyed/interviewed representatives of local community and the study and analysis of cultural aspects of the local cuisine. A complete list of information sources is available in the list of references.

The experts conducting the study and the team of Association "LAG Rakovski" offer their thanks for the invaluable support to the local community in Rakovski municipality and to the local food producers and restaurateurs who helped the study with their knowledge and experience.

Review of the economic situation of the municipality of Rakovski by sectors

The review that we offer for your attention hereunder aims to guide you briefly through the environment in which the local agri-food sector operates. More detailed analysis of the economic situation of the area covered by LAG Rakovski can be found in the other study performed in connection with the same project and in the full version of this one, but we believe that for the sake of clarity of this version it will be good to provide here at least a brief overview of sectors pertaining to food production in the region.

Public catering

Catering establishments are mainly restaurants, taverns, cafeterias and cafés. The majority of these establishments are located in the town of Rakovski. Shopping zones with stores, restaurants, ateliers for services and outdoor markets have formed in the centres of populated areas.

Regarding public catering, the following trends have been identified in the area of LAG Rakovski: not only maintaining and expanding, but opening of new commercial outlets and renovation and expansion of facilities; extension of the range of goods and services; improved quality level of service provision.

In the municipality are operating 754 enterprises. In the period 2010-2012 the number increased by nearly 11%. This increase reflects on a significant increase in output, increase in enterprises' income from operations and in net sales revenues (NSR). Net sales revenues increased by 62% over the same period. In 2012 the number of enterprises in the municipality of Rakovski forms a share of 2.2% of the enterprises in Plovdiv district and their output accounts for 7.4% of the production of the district. The structure of organizations by economic activity in 2012 shows that the largest number of enterprises operate in the trade sector; repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles (349) and agriculture, forestry and fisheries (122) - 62% of all enterprises.

Agriculture

Agriculture is a traditional sector for the municipality of Rakovski. It provides employment to the majority of the active population. It specializes in growing cereals and vegetables, pig- and cattle-breeding. The municipality has very good resources for development of agriculture - fertile soil, favourable climatic conditions for growing a variety of crops.

The agricultural land in terms of manner of use could be split down into three main groups: for agriculture, meadows and pastures and for forestry purposes. This distribution of agricultural land by manner of permanent use has the following expression:

Type of territory /hectares/	2011	2012	2013
Total area	26 397,7	26 310	26 310
For agricultural purposes	23 276,7	23 201,7	23 300
Incl. of farmland	21 003,6	20 989,6	20 967,5
incl. of arable land	18 572,2	18 560,2	18 597
Meadows and pastures	2 431,4	2 429,4	2 363,6
For forestry purposes	502,4	506,7	506,7

In general, on the territory of the municipality of Rakovski the area for agricultural purposes occupies a total of 233 611,259 decares - 88.5% of the total area of the land, and has the highest percentage in relation to the other types of land use. Farmland in the municipality of Rakovski is used mainly for growing grain and industrial crops, respectively 48% and 18% of the area. For 2011-2013, there was a significant increase in the area of farmland used for growing cereals, and a slight increase in the area for industrial crops. In 2013, vegetables were not grown. According to data from the Municipal Office of Agriculture – Rakovski, farmland by manner of permanent use - fields, rice-fields, orchards, pastures, common land - in 2013 have the following size and share:

Manner of permanent use	Size in decares	Area, %
Field	168920,8	64
Rice-field	8149,4	3
Orchard	6237,2	2,4
Pasture, common land	22926,6	8,7

Private property is the main form of ownership in the agricultural sector.

The largest leaseholders in the municipality are: "GRAND AGRO" EOOD, "AGROYOKON-92", "UCHEBEN COMPLEKS 2000" EOOD, ST "LUIGO RABOTOV", JK "GENDOV-BONCHO GENDOV", ST "BOYKO SHOPOV", "AGRIPLANET "OOD with an average size of the managed area of 3800 decares. On the cultivated land the above-mentioned companies grow cereals, vegetables and perennial crops.

"GRAND AGRO" EOOD is one of the main producers of cereals and vegetables, one of the main suppliers of large processing enterprises in Plovdiv District. After a successfully justified project for mechanized cultivation of tomatoes it won the first loan for the purchase of high-performance equipment - 2 tomato harvesters under the SAPARD Programme in 2003.

"AGROYOKON-92" OOD and "Agro Business Group 2003" OOD are the largest producers of cow's milk in the municipality of Rakovski and major suppliers of raw milk in the region for the French company "DANONE". The companies have their own herds of highly productive dairy cows. "AGROYOKON-92" OOD has a specialized workshop for the production of dairy products and has achieved a closed-loop production.

ST "LUIGO RABOTOV" grows cereals, vegetables and perennials, partners with Dutch producers and exports part of its production.

ST "BOYKO SHOPOV" grows cereals and vegetables.

The registered farmers in the District Office of Agriculture for 2009 are 646.

As an outlet for their production the farmers use the market in the town of Rakovski, which is the largest market for livestock in the country. In addition to the separate area for livestock there are also separate areas for industrial goods, agricultural goods and consumer goods. The market is managed by "Stokov Pazar" EOOD. Besides the local

market, the farmers also use the vegetable markets in the villages of Parvenets and Plodovitovo, the district centre Plovdiv and Sofia.

Production of small farmers from plant growing is used primarily for subsistence and a small part - for sale.

In the municipality's intra-sectoral specialization, plant growing holds a major position with complementary functions of livestock breeding. Cereals and industrial crops are grown.

In the period 2011-2013 the following changes in the areas and output of cereals and industrial crops were established:

- the surface area sown with wheat increased slightly, while production remained at approximately the same levels;
- significant increase in the surface area and production of barley;
- rye was not produced in the last two years;
- significantly decrease in the surface area and production of triticale;
- the surface area planted with winter oleaginous rape decreased by 20% while production decreased by about 40%;
- the surface areas sown with oleaginous sunflower and production thereof increased more than twice;
- the surface areas sown with corn and production thereof increased by more than 50%.

Livestock farming is the second major subsector of agriculture in the studied area and it is present in all populated areas. Most of the output of livestock farming is intended for sale directly to processing establishments - slaughterhouses for live animals in the town of Rakovski, in the village of Radinovo, etc. Contracts concluded in advance for the production marketing are often missing and this creates risks for the farmers.

The main livestock species bred in the municipality of Rakovski are pigs, cows, sheep, goats and poultry. The data for the period indicates a trend to increase in the number of all

species. For 2010, the numbers are respectively: pigs – 56 791, cattle – 7 156, including cows – 4 330, sheep - 16 841 goats – 8 780, poultry - 58 800, including laying hens – 40 100, rabbits – 5 150 and bee colonies - 700, and for 2009, the number of: cattle – 3 700, incl. cows – 2 800 (with a tendency to decrease), buffaloes – 200, pigs – 177 500 (with a tendency to increase), sheep - 17 800 (with a tendency to increase), goats – 9 100 (with a tendency to increase), poultry - 80 500 (with a tendency to increase), incl. laying hens - 52 000, broilers 18 000, rabbits – 5 000 and bee colonies - 800.

Livestock farming in the municipality develops mainly on family farms for meeting subsistence needs. The number of sheep and goats is large; the number of cattle decreases and the pasture for them is restricted. They are bred in small family farms. There are few large breeders, mainly of milk cows. The area had developed sheep- and cattle breeding, but in the recent years there is a trend to permanent reduction of livestock. Measures are not taken to maintain and improve breed composition and occasional stock breeding farms are used. Because of land cultivation and its fragmentation, the pastures decrease which creates unfavourable conditions for the development of animal husbandry.

In the recent years there is an increased interest in apiculture and the conditions for its development are good.

The veterinary service is good. All populated areas are served by veterinarians. A Regional Veterinary Station operates in Rakovski.

Tourism

Rakovski municipality has the potential for tourism development, although more limited compared to traditional tourist areas in Bulgaria. The surveys of experts in the field of tourism found favourable conditions for the development of this sector - environmental, rural, game hunting, cultural, culinary and entertainment tourism. The municipality has no developed accommodation facilities for tourists, which hampers the development of local and rural tourism. The combination of the small town and its natural resources is interesting (the game hunting preserve "Selski Dol", wetland "Kisimovi Dupki") and the anthropogenic resources (four Catholic churches and events of international and local

importance - international football tournament for children "United by football", "International Youth Christian Festival", "International Festival of Mummies' and Masquerade Games - KUKOVE", Vinaria, Festival of the Rural Cuisine, etc.). On the territory of the municipality of Rakovski, in the village of Stryama is located a public game breeding station Chekeritsa with two shooting lodges, where there are opportunities for game hunting tourism and photo hunting. Stryama River flows along the same village and offers good conditions for sport fishing. On the land of neighbourhood "Sekirovo" and neighbourhood "Gen. Nikolaevo" of the town of Rakovski and in the other populated areas in the municipality there are dams, fish breeding ponds and water basins, which can also be used for the development of freshwater fish and offer opportunities for development of freshwater fish-farming, and provide opportunities for development of fishing sport and water tourism.

The many feasts, cultural sites, the interesting history and the presence of numerous mounds of Thracian times provide interesting opportunities for religious, cultural and historical tourism. For the time being, the visitors of cultural events are accommodated in the schools and the Catholic monastery - "St. Maximilian Kolbe" in the town of Rakovski, the guest houses, built close to the churches, homes of local citizens.

Food Industry

The food industry unites diverse in their production and technological nature subsectors - meat, dairy, canning, milling, sugar, tobacco, brewery, wine, etc. They produce mainly food products. Food industry and most of the other light-industrial sectors should be regarded as one of the most important industrial and economic stages of agribusiness. Here agricultural produce undergo industrial processing; acquire the required user qualities and commercial appearance. Moreover, food industry helps to address the discrepancy between seasonal production in agriculture and the daily needs of the population for food products. The specific purpose of the final output and the complex structure of the sector give grounds for it to be considered separately from other light industrial sectors.

Bread-making is widely practiced on the territory of LAG Rakovski. Private producers get established permanently on the market, both within the territory and beyond. They offer improved and diverse range of packs of bread ("MIG-2" OOD). The Bulgarian-German companies "HEMAKO" OOD and "BULKET & Co." OOD produce plum mousse in Rakovski.

Among the leading companies in the municipality in terms of processing and food production are:

- ❖ "SNEP" OOD - dairy production;
- ❖ "AGROYKON-92" OOD - production, processing and marketing of agricultural produce, cow's milk production and trade in livestock;
- ❖ "GRAND AGRO" - production of farm produce
- ❖ "KONPAKS" OOD - production and trade with canned vegetables;
- ❖ "RUBICON" OOD - production of bread, bakery products, ketchup, mayonnaise, sauces, a chain of grocery stores and restaurants;
- ❖ "KADANS - 2" OOD - meat processing;
- ❖ "BULKET and Co." OOD - production of plum mousse;
- ❖ "GARD INVEST" EOOD - production and sale of greenhouse vegetables;
- ❖ "MIG - 2" OOD - production of bread and bakery products;
- ❖ "Honey" OOD - production and sale of honey;
- ❖ Mill "HRIKO" OOD - production of flour;
- ❖ "MIT - 33" OOD - workshop for husking rice;
- ❖ Oil factory "ELITE" - production of cooking oil;
- ❖ "TSIMA 99" OOD - production of jams and marmalades;
- ❖ "Bulmed 2002" EOOD - production and trade in honey and bee products;
- ❖ "Apimel" EOOD - purchase, processing, packaging and trade in conventional and organic honey and bee products;

- ❖ "Katrin-Co." EOOD - factory for the production of ketchup, tomato paste, chutney and various types of tomato sauces, mayonnaise, mustard, dressings, packaging of honeys and honey products, processing of wild and cultivated mushrooms, processing of fruits and vegetables. "Katrin-Co." EOOD grows 1500 decares of vineyards;
- ❖ "Evrokonserv" EOOD - produces chutney, ketchup, tomato paste and other canned vegetables and mayonnaise;
- ❖ Pastry shop "Nadezhda" - produces more than 180 different confectionery products;
- ❖ "DG Rakovski" AD – village of Stryama - production of garden products - vegetables, fruits, flowers; construction of greenhouse facilities;
- ❖ Urban Consumer Cooperative Narkoop - Rakovski – production of baker's goods and confectionery, food trade;
- ❖ "Fermersko mlyako" OOD - production and processing of cow's milk;
- ❖ "Agrindo" EOOD - trade, processing and packaging of rice, drying and storage of cereals, mainly rice.

As regards trade and services of food businesses (confectionery, bread, dairy products, etc.) the distribution is as follows:

- ❖ 144 retail outlets (grocery stores);
- ❖ 23 retail outlets (industrial goods);
- ❖ 6 cafeterias;
- ❖ 56 drinking establishments (cafés);
- ❖ 5 restaurants for cooked food;
- ❖ 3 taverns;
- ❖ 1 disco;
- ❖ 5 warehouses for wholesale of beverages and food products.

Some of the companies engaged in wholesale of food products are:

"Sheri" EOOD - owns a packaging workshop and wholesale trade in packaged food (rice, sugar, cooking oil, lentils, beans, vinegar, etc.);

"Nick 6", "Moning", ST "BMU - Josif Rabadzhiyski" - soft drinks, alcoholic beverages and tobacco products.

Prerequisites for the presence of investors in food products production and processing on the territory of LAG Rakovski are: the availability of trained personnel with experience in food industry, diverse sectoral and sub-sectoral structure of the existing facilities, good infrastructure for provision of services to the economic complex, opportunities for processing raw materials produced in the municipality - meat processing, oil crushing, processing of dairy products, bread-making, etc. These, combined with the opportunities available for vocational training and retraining for the population in the area of LAG Rakovski in the existing secondary vocational schools with focus on agriculture and production of culinary products and beverages, create good conditions for the development of the local food industry. The existing enterprises for food manufacturing and foodstuffs trade and the relatively good economic situation of these enterprises, despite generally difficult economic situation in the country, show a good level of absorption and utilization of available resources and a potential in this field.

Summary of the strengths and weaknesses related to the local economy and food production

The conclusions that can be drawn from the above-stated are that the economy of the area covered by LAG Rakovski includes all manufacturing sectors, and industry, agriculture and trade occupy a central place and account for over 95% of GDP of the territory and provide the predominant employment of the population. The structure of organizations by economic activity in 2012 shows that the largest number of enterprises operate in the trade sector; repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles (349) and in agriculture, forestry and fisheries (122) - 62% of all enterprises. Entrepreneurship and ingenuity of the local

population contribute to the development of various sectors of the economy - industry, agriculture, trade and services, etc. In Rakovski municipality, according to the number of employees, micro-enterprises hold the predominant share of enterprises. For 10 years (the period 2002 - 2012) their number increased from 410 to 681, i.e. by nearly 40%. There is a growth in the development of agriculture as well as a very good potential for development of the local economy - available industrial zone and commodity markets, many small and medium-sized enterprises, well-developed trade, favorable climate and geography, and transport connectivity. There are also weaknesses that are mostly in the still existing shortage of skilled personnel, underdeveloped relations and communication between local authorities, business and NGOs, lagging behind in achieving quality in the production and processing of food products.

And now this is the right place to note yet another already permanent weakness in the field of food industry - the lack of state policy to concentrate public resources in this economic sector. Food production is a sector of the economy, which should be a priority for the development of our country. Not for nothing is it often commented that if our country has to rely on some economic levers to get out of the situation in which it is now, it has to develop agriculture, respectively food industry and respectively tourism. The lack of enough food for the growing population on earth is a global trend, while Bulgaria has excellent opportunities to meet the needs of its population of food and even to export to other countries. The constantly developing technology in this field fosters and supports the development of this sector.

In this regard, one of the important things that can and must be done is to create a good interconnection between secondary and higher education. Part of the wonderful opportunities for the development of the local economy is the existence of the two secondary vocational schools in the town of Rakovski and in the village of Belozem focused on agriculture and on production of culinary products and beverages. The link between these secondary schools and higher education could be achieved by establishing contacts with the University of Food Technologies - Plovdiv and with other universities with similar economic profile. Given the close distance between the town of Rakovski and Plovdiv, such cooperation and mutual assistance is necessary. It is reasonable the graduates of the

secondary vocational schools with such a profile to continue their education in subjects provided by universities such as UFT.

Another problematic point, which again is related to the lack of government policy on this issue, is the uncertainty as to what are at present the business needs of professionals in the food sector. Currently, each university establishes separately contacts with business organizations in order to solve specific problems of competence of the personnel. The feedback - from business to universities - is almost missing, although the development of a skilled workforce is common problem both for the business and higher education. Perhaps for this contribute also the poor material and technical infrastructure of universities, the outdated curricula and conservatism of the academic staff of universities. Here the local authorities and civil society could work together to overcome this problem, because it will benefit all – on the one hand the society with young people finding jobs locally, and on the other hand the business with satisfied hunger for young and qualified professionals. Projects to promote student apprenticeship should definitely be implemented. This is a mutually rewarding process, as the students get involved at factories and gain experience, get familiar with the problems, and receive appropriate payment. Of those 5-10 students apprentices the business can choose suitable young professionals and keep them giving them opportunities for employment and development. The lecturers in higher education institutions are also satisfied because they receive certain remuneration for being involved in this process and indirectly affect the rating system of the university, since better employability of the alumni is reported. Very soon, with the adoption and take up of the ECVET system (European Credit System for VET) in national practice and with recognition, at last, of the importance and effectiveness of the so-called dual system, the above proposal will become part of the Bulgarian reality.

However, it should be noted that as regards payment in the food industry sector, remuneration levels are lower than in some other areas of career development, such as banking, high technology, etc. This means more work to motivate future professionals through incentives that local government, academia and relationships with foreign companies can offer. Each of these units can offer incentives within their competence. Local authorities can offer social gains, academia - opportunities for implementing

research projects, international contacts – opportunities for career in international companies in Europe and around the world. Here again it comes down to desire and pooling of efforts of various spheres of public life - education, local government, business and NGOs. Measures are needed for the development of international relations, for better and full use of EU funds and programs, for more active cooperation and participation in international professional networks. In the municipality of Rakovski there are many enterprises in the food industry that are good enough, so the potential is in place and action is needed. Future development and expansion of food production as a result of such efforts will generously reward the community and will lead to a corresponding increase in income and quality of life.

Typical and traditional food in Rakovski municipality

Overview of typical and traditional products and foodstuffs

Bulgaria is the centre of a rich culinary culture and this applies in particular for traditional food products and foodstuffs of the municipality of Rakovski. For this richness contribute:

- ❖ topography and climate favourable for the production of agricultural products;
- ❖ diverse historical and cultural influences in the context of different cultures and ethnicities that were in place;
- ❖ diverse religious affiliation;
- ❖ diverse practices in exploitation of natural resources;
- ❖ diverse livestock breeding and crops growing practices in time.

Data on the eating habits of inhabitants in our lands from more than two millennia ago are found in manuscripts that Byzantine writers and philosophers have left as heritage. For example, the famous philosopher Theophrastus (372-287 BC) had left information on the flora in Macedonia and Thrace, as he was interested in natural science. He says: "In Thrace there is much thyme, in Philippi broad beans is grown, which is used both for food and for fields fertilization."

Archaeological finds in the years and the laboratory analyses thereof show that in the fourth century in what is now Bulgaria were produced grapes, wine, cereals, oils, etc. Einkorn emmer and wild wheat (farro), wheat, barley, millet, lentils and peas were grown. Some archaeologists argue that between the Neolithic and the Bronze Age the main cereals were six-row spring barley and wild wheat (farro). According to V. Georgiev, in Moesia viticulture was well developed. In Thrace, food was procured by hunting, livestock breeding and farming. Back to Thracian times dates the inherited preparation of vine tips (slips of vines). The chopped tips (without the leaves) were placed in a wooden or clay pot on a layer of barley, then were soaked with salt water and pressed on top with a bag full of wood ash. After staying for 1-2 months the so prepared slips of vines were used for food.

Excavations of mounds in Pliska show what the population there had eaten in the VIIIth century, when Bulgaria was permanently established there. From a feast given for a funeral, S. Georgieva found bones of pigs, sheep, cattle, poultry, and horse. Also there, during other excavations, were found bones mainly of goats and less of pigs and cattle. During excavations of commercial premises in Preslav (Chankova) were found animal bones, mostly poultry, parts of pitchers, pots, cups, bowls and lids. There is also evidence of the use of honey, as the Slavs knew and kept bees and produced honey.

The arrival of the proto-Bulgarians imported new eating habits to the established population. For example, during the long treks they ate a lot of meat (sheep, horse, beef, game, fish) - fresh or dried. They also consumed milk. From mare's milk they prepared kumis. Some data indicates that during these treks they took with them lasting paste products such as trahana.

Data on the development of horticulture in Bulgaria is found in some documents from

the Ottoman domination. Such document is the law of 'Market Toll' in some towns, issued a few decades after the conquest of Bulgaria. It specified the levies on produce on the market. Most often were taxed the offered in large quantities cabbage, cucumbers, spinach, kohlrabi, carrots, turnips, garlic, onions, broad beans, peas, lentils, melons and watermelons. In these laws for the first time was mentioned that vegetable gardens near Aitos and Yambol were irrigated using water-wheels. A document dating from 1498-1513 mentions beans - the first American crop that penetrated the Bulgarian lands. The price of beans at that time in comparison with other vegetables was extremely high. Today beans are available and widely used foodstuff in the municipality of Rakovski.

As per information of voyagers who have passed through our lands is established that along with cereals the population of Thrace grew for subsistence broad beans, lentils, peas, cabbage, watermelons, melons, pumpkins, cucumbers, onions, leeks, garlic, parsley, celery, lettuce (Pierre Belon de Mans, 1542). Abundant information about how the Bulgarians ate in the past can be found in the works of our writers. In his story "Christmas Eve in the Capital", Ivan Vazov wrote: "On the table were laid dishes with Lenten fares and snacks, stuffed cabbage and vine leaves, pickled peppers and carrots, beans, jam, honey, apples and as a climax to the feast - a deep porcelain bowl with pickled cabbage brine thickened with chopped pickled cabbage, abundantly dressed with olive oil and deliciously sprinkled with paprika - one of the most lusted dishes for this night."

The question that arises is how has it come to this wide variety of foods and dishes on Bulgarian table? One reason is that many peoples have passed through our lands and have influenced both our cultural development and eating habits. Peoples passing through our lands have brought with them to our territory their products, which they have borrowed from the places they came from. Examples are Chinese tea, cocoa, Indian black pepper and Zanzibar clove. Yet the Turks and the Greeks have had the greatest impact on our national cuisine because of their long and direct contact with our people. This is indicated by the many dishes with Turkish and Greek names. Under the influence of the Turkish national cuisine appeared the 'heavy red roux' with much fat, the hot pungent dishes (probably under the influence of the Arab and African cuisine), the kebabs (orman kebab, kavarma kebab, chomlek kebab), the hotchpotch (meaty and meatless, 'tyurlyu' hotchpotch),

sherden (stuffed abomasums), tripe, moussaka etc., the heavy sweet desserts such as baklava, sutlyash (milk with rice), pilaff, Turkish delight, halva, kadaif, etc. From the time of the Arab-Turkish influence have also remained some words such as 'mehana' (tavern), 'kruchma' (pub), 'hanche' (inn with a tavern and a place for the night), 'hambar' (granary), 'satur' (chopper), 'kyufte' (meatball), 'meze' appetizer, 'sudzhuk' (sausage), 'sherbet' (sorbet), 'gyuzleme' (cheese-, meat-, pumpkin-, etc. pastry), coffee and many others. 'Sazdarma' (corned beef) and 'tarator' (cold yogurt and cucumber soup) are also inheritance from the Turkish national cuisine. The dish 'sarmi' is also of Turkish origin - minced meat with spices, wrapped in vine, cabbage or dock leaves. The Turks imported the 'Spanish peppers' - mainly hot varieties from which by drying and grinding cayenne pepper was prepared.

From our southern neighbour Byzantium, which later gave rise to Greece originate many names, such as 'tigan' (pan), 'paralia' (low round table), 'pirustiya' (trivet), 'skara' (grill), 'trapeza' (table), 'midi' (mussels), 'zehtin' (olive oil), 'kesteni' (chestnuts), 'dafinov list' (bay leaf), 'maslini' (olives) and many others. Lemons, pomegranates and laurel leaves appeared in Bulgarian cuisine through Greece.

From the Czech cuisine we have borrowed the dough with yeast and the potatoes. Sowing them in the Middle Rhodopes is associated with the development of the "Sharenska" mine where Czechs worked in 1830. From the Romanians we have taken 'karnacheta' (grilled sausages) and 'cozonak' (sweet Easter bread). It could be said that the modern Bulgarian cuisine is a set of traditional dishes from the time of the proto-Bulgarians and the Slavs, and dishes and food from Europe and the other continents.

Analysis of the Qualitative Characteristics of Local Produce and Dishes and their Strengths and Weaknesses

Food is a direct emanation of life; it summarizes the distinctions of a culture and gives the most authentic vision of people's lives. Eating local dishes, we acquire knowledge and deepen your perception of the culture of the area. In this context, the field study performed within the project "*The Tastes of Yesterday*" showed that in the past, in the populated areas

on the territory of LAG Rakovski people and their environment were complementary in terms of production and consumption of food. This is quite a logical connection taking into account the impossibility to store food for a long time in the warm seasons or the lack of technology to enable agricultural production out of season. Eating has constituted a support element not only for the survival of individuals and the economy of the territory, but it also has been an essential component to express social relations, gaming activities, the attitude to the divine, whose image has often accompanied the procession that finally reached to the tables laid for religious feasts. Thus, food products emerged as a result of the efforts of people to preserve milk, meat, fruit and vegetables, and meals - as diverse ways of using the food products. They show the direct connection between culture, religion and way of life of the local community.

Here it is necessary to open a bracket and to mention the danger of the food market globalization, which seriously threatens local production, traditions and knowledge. This process is particularly dangerous for Bulgaria, where depopulation of rural areas, abandonment of land, seizure of land for non-agricultural purposes and the aging of the population in the villages have their acute exacerbations. Therefore, the implementation of the project "*The Tastes of Yesterday*" attains a special significance, as it aims to perform joint activities in connection with the recovery of the knowledge of eating as a gesture by which the cultural content of the rural community on the territory of LAG Rakovski was expressed. At the same time, one should not go to extreme and aspire for remaining with the eating habits and culinary at the existing or earlier level because the world develops and this process cannot be stopped.

The typical and traditional food products for the region of Rakovski are cheeses, sausages, round loafs, desserts, beverages and pickles, which are a way of preserving and using primary products (milk, meat, fish, cereals, fruits, etc.). These numerous products are a result of the knowledge passed down through the generations in different parts of the world. They are the result of the ingenuity and skills of the local community, and for these was said enough in the study of the cultural aspects of the local cuisine of Rakovski Municipality (*The Tastes of Yesterday* Project), which analyzes the cultural and ethnic aspect of the local cuisine. The experts had the opportunity to taste typical products and

meals of the local cuisine.

Tasting is an important tool in the assessment of products, as it is used to reveal the subjective qualities of the food and the personal preferences of those who prepare the food product. Thus, by tasting and carefully examining a product are determined the sensory characteristics of the food and the organoleptic qualities of the product.

Sensory characteristics of food are determined by:

- ❖ the appearance;
- ❖ the colour;
- ❖ the consistency (liquid, solid, brittle, juicy, tender, smooth);
- ❖ the taste (sweet, salty, bitter, sour);
- ❖ the flavour.

For determining the organoleptic qualities of a product are required three elements:

- ❖ balance - harmony between taste and flavour of a product;
- ❖ terroir - the ability of the product to show the organoleptic characteristics associated with the territory of origin;
- ❖ complexity - how organoleptic characteristics develop in the course of the tasting.

A simple product ends in the nose and the palate with the same organoleptic characteristics established at the outset. In a complex product there is a change in the course of tasting and the feeling about it develops and lasts longer. Comparative tasting is also effective and helps to analyse a product. In these cases, a product produced by different manufacturers is tasted and the results are compared. This makes it possible to experience the product's main characteristics, which make up its specificity and identity.

The study of local products showed that the way of processing the raw material may result in a large difference in the final product - different types of cheeses, sausages and the like. Handicraft practices allow for such unique products. They succeed better than raw products to tell stories and reflect the local culture. Originally they have occurred as a

result of the efforts of people to ensure livelihood and survival of the offspring and later have changed to meet the needs of the market or to adapt to the changing climatic conditions and production technology, the change of seasons. The specific local product called 'matan' can be given as an example.

'Matan' is a refreshing beverage similar to buttermilk, which is made of yogurt. It takes about 10 l of yogurt and water. The sour milk is poured in 'butalka'¹ and beaten until butter is obtained on the surface. Gradually cold water is added to gather the butter. With a wooden spoon the butter is separated from the liquid. After removing the butter, the resulting liquid is 'matan', which is poured into pitchers or bottles and is ready for consumption.

Foods or so-called 'dishes' from the municipality of Rakovski also deserve attention. Typical and traditional local dishes from the past, much more than now have been prepared from produce which had cyclic production and were dependent on the alternation of the seasons, which in turn determined the cooking of meals associated with the seasons in the year. These factors inevitably dictated the composition of the dishes. Thus, typical of the region proved to be basic products such as cabbage, rice, pork, pork fat, milk, flour. Traditional also proved to be the link between the diet and holidays, mostly religious, when the days were really exceptional, different from everyday life, and all, even the poorest, were preparing a festive menu. Starting from specific meanings inherent to each holiday, the most outstanding were Christmas, Easter, Shrovetide, and the days of the various saints. Always complying with what the field has provided in the season, in these conditions were cooked special dishes, which in themselves dictated the taste of the feast, whose flavours were spreading in the house already during cooking and to this day can provoke in people emotion that animates those much awaited for days, beyond the food per se.

In this connection may be mentioned dishes like 'Boliarski sarmi', beans with leeks in baking tin, 'mominska kirosiyka', soup with leeks, pork with pickled cabbage brine 'Brezovska baking tin' and many other where rice, meat and cabbage are widely used. Here we will only provide the recipes for 'Boliarski sarmi' and beans with leeks. The

¹ Narrow, tapered wooden vessel in which the milk is manually pushed (beaten) until butter is obtained.

appendix "Recipe Book" to the above-mentioned study of culinary traditions is richly illustrated and provides diverse, traditional dishes for the area of Rakovski.

'Boliarski sarmi' is made with pork, raw sausage, rice, onions, mushrooms, pickled cabbage, butter and spices. The leaves are separated from the cabbage, the hard parts are removed and the cleaned leaves are boiled for 10-15 minutes. The meat and the sausage are cut into pieces and fried in a pan. The minced meat is added. The onion is chopped finely and stewed; the rice and stewed mushrooms are added. Everything is mixed and spices - black pepper, cumin, paprika are added. The cabbage leaves one by one (if small-two or three may be used) are put on a flat plate; stuffed with the mixture and rolled. The stuffed cabbage leaves are put in a baking tin, a cup of broth or hot water is poured, pieces of butter are added; the dish is sprinkled with paprika and baked.

Beans with leeks are logically cooked from beans, leeks and spices. The dish is prepared as follows: The beans are boiled. The leeks are cut into small pieces and fried in heated cooking oil. Then paprika is added. Once the leeks get fried well, the beans are poured and sprinkled with mint. The dish is left to simmer for a while; salt and pepper are added; then everything is poured in a baking tin and baked until browned.

There are several features that are important for the image of local products and dishes of Rakovski municipality. Firstly, it is the diversity of natural food products as a result of the favourable geographical location and climatic conditions. On the territory of Rakovski are easily grown a variety of fruits, vegetables and cereals, and livestock and poultry are bred. Yet, it can be said that the most respected to date are rice, cabbage, pork and bakery products.

Another feature that is left from our past and is traditional for the local cuisine is the strong seasonality of food. In summer and autumn there are plenty of vegetables and fruits, while in winter their range is limited to a minimum. In winter, in the past and today at home, home-canned food is widely used - flat sausages and salted bacon are made; fruits and vegetables are dried, jams, marmalades, compotes and pickles are prepared. The autumn season is the most favourable in terms of eating. Then there are plenty of various fruits and vegetables which, for the territory of Rakovski, include almost all known fruits

and vegetables for Bulgaria.

Characteristic of the local cuisine is also the technology for making traditional dishes - old cooking techniques are used, such as fireplace with live coals, hot clay plate, earthenware for cooking. This of course requires a longer process of meal preparation. Boiling, stewing and baking are applied more often, while frying or frying in egg and bread crumbs were taken up at a later stage. Products poorer in water, such as cereals and meat are usually boiled; root crops, vegetables from the cabbage family and vegetables with pods are stewed and water-rich vegetables, pome fruits and meat of young animals are baked. The technology for cooking a traditional dish requires in these cases more careful combination of vegetables, meat and spices, agreement between products in terms of colour, fragrance, flavour and nutrients. Lamb is cooked with parsley, spinach, onions, rice; pork - with beans, pickled cabbage, etc. Mainly animal fat - lard and pork fat - is used. Typical and still preserved tradition is to prepare meat dishes without adding fat and use of more fatty meat that is smothered in its own fat with some water. Meals cooked this way are much tastier, more attractive and bring out the specific fragrance of the meat. Their nutritional value is much higher than that of the meat dishes cooked with addition of vegetable oil, not to mention the modern food with palm oil. No fat is added when cooking pork with pickled cabbage and rice, boiled mutton, fat chicken or turkey with cabbage, etc. Dairy butter began to be used much later. With dairy butter are prepared some dishes of vegetables, trahana, polenta, pancakes, etc. Milk (milk and yogurt) is rarely used for cooking, but dishes with spinach must always be served with yogurt. Here besides gustatory improvement is achieved also a healing effect because in certain seasons of the year certain products, including milk, correct the changed proportions of the necessary nutrients.

It should be mentioned that along with being definitely delicious, traditional local dishes are healthier than the contemporary. The boiling of products, 'simmering' in earthenware, boiled sauces and thickenings, and smothering in its own sauce with spices and vegetables is far healthier than the processing of products at high temperature, heavy roux and frying with eggs and bread crumbs. Not to mention cooking in thin walled trays and pots with pouring off a large amount of water, which takes away the taste of the dishes

and they become a kind of the familiar from our recent past 'canteen food'. Instead of the traditionally established in the past animal fat, used in accordance with the meat that is being cooked, today usually is used vegetable oil. In the past, vegetable oil was used mainly for salad dressing, it can also be used for stewing vegetables, but when frying, it obtains acrolein derivatives, which besides the irritating effect on the secretor apparatus of the mucous membranes of the digestive system, have a harmful effect on the whole organism by helping to accelerate atherogenesis and carcinogenesis, leading in turn to serious diseases. In this sense it is impossible not to mention the observance of fasting associated with our major religious holidays which helps the body to purify and dispose of accumulated toxins. Today, when religious celebrations are associated only with lavish meals and holidays, and the consumption of meat is a year-round and daily, higher rate of morbidity and mortality of the Bulgarians and is recorded. The achievements of medicine are not sufficient to avoid the fatality of poor eating habits, it is necessary to understand and make sense of the forgotten knowledge that our ancestors have put in preparation of their food.

Traditional Food Production in the Municipality of Rakovski

Overview of existing food production and workshops for agri-food products

Food is a direct emanation of life. In this sense, foodstuffs arise as a result of the efforts of people to preserve milk, meat, fruit and vegetables. Dishes and traditional meals are various ways to use the products. They show a direct connection with the culture, religion and way of life of the local community. Since the term "traditional food" is not a specialized concept, it generally includes also craft food and food of traditional-specific nature. Craft food is a food category with distinct specificities and food of traditional-specific nature is food that have protected geographical designations and guaranteed traditional specialties.

Characteristic of traditional or craft foods is that processing methods that are passed from generation to generation are applied and are now threatened with extinction. Manufacturers of traditional foods know well the ingredients they use, know their origin and specificities. They know in details the manufacturing process, its history and development, and at the same time they show intuition, experiment and continuously improve the product, while maintaining its traditional appearance and nature. They stand with their name and are responsible for the products they produce - their impact on people and on the environment.

For the municipality of Rakovski it can be said with regret that today the traditional manufacturing processes and craft foods are disappearing. There are very few small workshops and small industries, where the aim is quality and salubrity of food instead of quantity and low cost. Food industry, as already noted in the preceding paragraphs of this study, is well developed in the municipality of Rakovski, but it is concentrated in medium and large enterprises where production technologies are advanced, employing processes and ingredients used by world-known food brands and chains. This type of industry contributes to fast, easy and low-cost food production, but the questions about how much this food is really healthy remain. Today more and more often is discussed the topic of the real price that people pay with the consumption of industrially produced foods. The widely

used preservatives, chemical additives and derivatives of petroleum products in the food industry are analysed and for a number of them is proven that they are carcinogenic, while the 'real' food appears to remain inaccessible even in rural areas, like the municipality of Rakovski. Inaccessibility comes mainly from the lack of government support, extremely high administrative pressure of state institutions for compliance with standards, which in most cases are not applicable to the manufacturing of craft products, the relatively high cost of such products and last but not least the limited quantity that can be produced in this type of production. Some very small craft food manufacturers are forced to work under extremely difficult conditions and competition.

Although few in number, in the municipality of Rakovski still exist small industries for food products that are close to the craft foods of the Rhodopes and Gotse Delchev, and the team conducting the study was able to identify and record them. For the purpose of the study, here are presented only some of the visited workshops for agri-food products that are typical and representative of the whole sector.

APICULTURAL FARM "BAKARDZHIISKI"

The apicultural farm was established by Ivan Bakardzhiiski and the whole family is involved in beekeeping and work on the production of honey. They keep about 170-180 beehives. Separately the family manages an orchard, a field of grain crops and home grown pigs. The apicultural farm produces annually about one ton of honey, also royal jelly and other bee products, and creates bee colonies. The farm is supported under the Rural Development Programme with direct subsidies for each colony. The farm has created its own label, which is put on the jars of honey. The honey of the Bakardzhiiski family is known and desired in the area of Rakovski municipality. In the Annex to the study are shown photos of the apicultural farm and talks with Ivan Bakardzhiiski in working environment.



FARM "VANEVI"

It is hard not to smile when seeing the full of life and energetic owner of a farm for yogurt "Vanevi". Proud of what he has achieved with hard work and overcoming countless difficulties, Todor Vanev passionately tells us how he managed to create from scratch a farm where to produce genuine Bulgarian yoghurt. And this is really an achievement for the dairy sector. Todor's yogurt is made of 100% fresh cow milk, without any chemical or other additives, with starter culture containing Bulgarian bacterium and without prior extraction of the butter from the milk. The achieved is really impressive, given the huge competition in the sector, the high cost of legalization and putting into operation of a dairy farm for cow milk. The truth is that since long ago 'real' yogurt has been missing from the Bulgarian stores. Technological processes used in standard dairy farms for processing cow milk exclude making yogurt from cow milk only. Todor Vanev admits with pain that many of his fellow citizens and acquaintances thought him crazy when he started to realize his dream. Today he can boast that his yogurt is bought like hot cakes and he even fails to meet the demand.

Todor Vanev is only 30 years old and is among the youngest farmers in the area of Rakovski municipality. He started 10 years ago with two cows thanks to his grandmother Velichka and grandfather Todor, after whom he is named, and now he cares for 150 heads

of cattle. His dairy farm has 60 milking cows and 40 heifers bred of own offspring. One of the animals on the farm was awarded third place for the most beautiful animal at the Second National Exhibition in Cattle Breeding in Sliven, where the ranking was announced by an independent arbitrator from Germany. For the production of yogurt he uses only milk that is produced in his own farm.

"I have been with the cattle since very young and I like to take care of them," says Todor and adds that ten years ago he eagerly anticipated the end of his military service in order to engage seriously in livestock breeding. Everything he knows about the business, he owes to his grandmother and grandfather. So Todor continues the family tradition, but on new, larger scale – he takes loan after loan, buys new equipment, renovates and expands the cowsheds, equips them with modern milking station, maintains the hygiene and the quality of milk that comes from his farm. He buys milk vending machines and installs them in Plovdiv and in his home village Stryama; he owns refrigerated van equipped for mobile milk vending. He owns a certificate from the Food Agency and his farm is first category – he has the right to sell his production; he has a contract with a dairy in the village of Manole to buy his raw material, but he does his best to sell his milk alone, because he is sure of its quality, and dairies on the one hand often dilute milk with other impurities and on the other hand offer degradingly low purchase price.

There are several farmers with more livestock heads in the village of Stryama, like Dian Dimov, Vasil Panov and Vitali, but Todor is the youngest. He constantly keeps himself informed on the new developments in the sector and opportunities for applying with projects. Therefore he managed to get approved a project under Measure 121 for modernization of agricultural holdings and purchased a new tractor and manure spreading trailer. The investment is for BGN 170 thousand, of which BGN 86 thousand is EU funding.

"It is impossible to buy new equipment without this support," says Todor and hopes that one day the created by him will be continued by his children. He gets a subsidy of BGN 240 per head and hopes that the government will change its policy for the dairy sector with the approaching end of the quotas for milk production, which, he predicts, will lead the sector in Bulgaria to complete collapse.

"Farming is a thankless and hard work, but when you do it with heart and know your job, it is easier." He is grateful to his father, who is with him and takes care of the land. Currently it is 700 decares but Todor's ambition is to make it 1000 decares.



FARMER MILKO BUROV

The main activity of Milko Burov is production of milk. He has been involved in it for years; registered as a farmer for the first time in 2000. He started breeding a small number of cattle and over the years it increased. At present he has 68 milking cows, 21 calves and buffalo-calves to 1 year of age, 1 calf over 1 year and under 2 years, 3 bulls and 14 calves and buffalo-calves over 1 year of age for breeding purposes. Thus the total number of livestock is 107. The main breed is Red Danish. Livestock on the farm is controlled by herd reproductivity.

Like every beginning, the farmer went through many ups and downs, until the idea of what a modern farm should look like became clear. Thanks to his creativity and ambition to make it during this period, the owner proved to be one of the largest livestock farmers in the town of Rakovski and Rakovski Municipality. He breeds dairy cattle to produce cow milk, of which currently there is a shortage on the market in terms of high quality raw milk, to meet the capacity of the dairy industry. Most of the milk - about 100% is sold the

dairy factories of the company Mlechni Produkti OOD (“Milk Products”) – Plovdiv.

He cultivates both farm land on lease and his own land in the neighbourhood of the town of Rakovski for production of feed for his dairy farm. The produced feeds are used entirely for the farm’s own needs - for feeding the animals. Cultivated land and existing livestock form the economic size of the farm - it is above the minimum size required to apply under the Rural Development Programme under the measure for dairy cattle. The total cultivated land declared in IACS is 635,210 decares, of which 121,980 decares of wheat, 86,500 decares of barley, 52,300 decares of triticale, 45,200 decares of rye, 67,210 decares of alfalfa, 262,02 decares of natural meadows.

FARMER SVETOSLAV BALABANSKI

Svetoslav Balabanski is an example of a young and ambitious farmer. He started with the support of his father, who for a long time granted his own land on lease and later decided to start to cultivate it on their own. At present they manage 100 decares planted mainly with pumpkins, vegetables and corn. Last year the production of pumpkins was highly appreciated by citizens and resellers of agricultural produce; a bakery was also among the satisfied customers. For the time being, he has no ambition to process the produce. He relies on support from the Rural Development Programme, which provides him with direct subsidies, and hopes to modernize his production with the support of an approved project by LAG Rakovski.

A new point in development is the new cherry orchard. He is proud with the planted about 50 young trees and hopes that within a year or two he will collect his first harvest.

FARMER ELENA AYANSKA

Elena Ayanska is another example of a young Bulgarian farmer - last year funded under the Rural Development Programme, measure Young Farmers. This year she signed a contract with LAG Rakovski for funding of a project for the purchase of specialized agricultural machinery and development of a drip irrigation system.

Elena and her family manage 60 decares, of which 35 - planted with walnuts and 10 – with plums. Elena’s great pride is the strawberry production, which traditionally is very laborious and capricious, and furthermore difficult to sell on the market due the influx of import from Greece. Elena also produces honey and hopes to extend the varieties of fruit trees, although she acknowledges with pain that each year calculating the profit and their own investment makes them hesitant to continue. On the background of the difficult to access market where the price dictates and not the quality, and the exhausting labour invested in agricultural production, Elena told us about the obstacles that state institutions artificially impose with the numerous documents and requirements, long wait of approvals unfair state employees who inspect on site and even impose financial sanctions arising from technical errors of SFA employees without a chance of pleading innocence or getting due payment after identifying the real culprits.

The aligned and clean rows with strawberries and the courage and hard work of Elena’s family please the eye and the soul. Her membership as a farmer in a network of producers, restaurateurs and retailers is a chance for her and her produce to be promoted and appreciated.



ANGELINA EOOD - PRODUCTION AND SALE OF UNPROCESSED AGRICULTURAL PRODUCE

The main activity of ANGELINA EOOD is the production of unprocessed agricultural produce. The leased and rented farmlands by the company are located in area of the town of Rakovski. The sole shareholder of the company is Peter Iossifov Indzhov who is also the manager. The land cultivated by the company for 2011/2012 was 909.600 decares. The farmer has focused his interests mainly on the production of grains and oil plants. ANGELINA EOOD, Rakovski was registered as a farmer for the first time in 2011. As main activity is specified agricultural land cultivation and production agricultural produce. The main products of Angelina EOOD are wheat, sunflower, barley and rapeseed.

ST "BOYKO SHOPOV" - PRODUCTION AND SALE OF UNPROCESSED AGRICULTURAL PRODUCE

The main activity of ST "Boyko Shopov" is cultivation of agricultural land and production of agricultural produce. The areas currently cultivated by the company are more than 6 500,000 decares. The output is diverse as the areas are sown with wheat, barley, corn, rapeseed, sunflower, alfalfa, apples and plums. ST "Boyko Shpov" has been involved in farming since the end of 1995 and was registered as a farmer in 2003. ST "Boyko Shopov" has two approved and implemented projects under the SAPARD Programme for the purchase of specialized agricultural equipment "Bolgar TC 80 P "and development of plantations of plums - 70 decares and apples - 30 decares with drip irrigation of the whole area, as well as a project in 2009 under the Rural Development Programme 2007 - 2013 for the purchase of specialized agricultural equipment.

CONFECTIONARY SHOP "NADEZHDA INN" EOOD

Nadia Chonkova has been manager of confectionery shop "Nadezhda Inn" EOOD for more than 10 years during which the struggle for establishing confectionery products on

the market, ensuring the most suitable production conditions and finding funds for stable company operations are continuous. The confectionery shop is again a family project, coming once again to prove the good results that joint efforts bring. Immediately after the family came back from Germany, where they worked in restaurants and



kitchens, they decided to open their own confectionery workshop. At present the confectionery shop produces more than 100 kinds of cakes, cookies and pastries, and at the premises where the sweet temptations are made work 7 nice ladies alongside with Nadia. A new workshop is in the process of putting into operation where under better conditions, with better equipment (purchased with the financial support of the Rural Development Programme and LAG Rakovski) and more space, the making of cakes and sweets will continue.

Confectionery is a vocation that wants one's heart and soul in what is done. Looking at the beautiful cakes and undoubtedly after tasting some of Nadia's sweet temptations, the teams of FDCBPCS and LAG Rakovski are convinced of this. The difficulties that the confectionery shop faces occur on a daily basis, but they only contribute to strengthen the will and determination in wanting to offer their sweet marvels to both young and old in the region of Rakovski, and not only there. Recently the company offers its products at a stall at Kaufland in Plovdiv, and proposals for opening new outlets are hailing from other parts of the country which is a logical development when one works with passion and heart.

AGRINDO EOOD - PRODUCTION OF GRAIN CROPS - RICE, WHEAT AND SUNFLOWER

Agrindo EOOD was founded by Mrs. Tanya Pachova in June 2002. She is the owner and

manager of the company. Initially, the company was engaged in trading and processing of rice after purchasing equipment from Indonesia. The initial capacity was 2,5 tons per hour. Later Agrindo EOOD improved its product line by purchasing equipment from Zaccaria Brazil and increased its capacity to 16 mt/h. Moreover, the company began distribution of its products on the local market, in the local chain stores and export of rice to Turkey, Romania, Slovakia, the Czech Republic, Poland and Albania. An integral part of Agrindo EOOD is the continuous growth and expansion of ideas and experience through which the company remains competitive on the market. The aim has always been to provide high quality rice at competitive prices, different varieties of rice with high quality, fully certified in the EU and the non-EU markets. After the accession to the EU, the aspiration is to meet the business needs of the customers in order to achieve higher economic growth. In the future, the company hopes to find opportunities for export of agricultural and food products to Central and Eastern Europe and the Mediterranean.



Summarized information and a list of existing manufacturing processes and workshops for processing and sale of agricultural and food products in the municipality of Rakovski (without claiming to be exhaustive) can be found at the end of the full version of the study - Appendix 2 - available in Bulgarian.

Strategic vision for the development of traditional food production and its relation to the local culinary art

Traditional food from the old Bulgarian cuisine could not return to our table without a clear regulation of the way in which small producers of local food products could offer their limited production on agricultural or other markets. As long as production of traditional foods and meals remains only within the family, customers in Bulgaria will practically consume only what they buy from large chain stores, and of course, what they make on their own at home of the grown in the yard or bought at the market fruit and the vegetables. Therefore, regardless of legally imposed and observed standards in food production, hardly anyone can guarantee that food bought from the supermarket will never cause stomach upset. Nobody talks anymore about salubrity of food from the supermarket or fast food restaurants, because with so many artificial preservatives and colorants labelled on the packaging, it is not even possible. On the other hand, the imposed way of production and supply of food in Bulgaria slowly but surely dooms to extinction traditional fruit and vegetable varieties, animal breeds and cereals. It is already hard to find Bulgarian garlic and potatoes, apples, not to mention corn and other cereals. In order to avoid the risk in the near future to turn out that we eat only products from hypermarkets, it is imperative to regulate the production of craft food from small producers so that they could be free to put it on the market without fearing sanctions. It is urgent to regulate the existence of farmers' markets and craft (nonindustrial) foods stores where small local producers of traditional food can offer directly their products. The effect of such a step is more than what can be expected due to the direct positive impact on the economy, health care, employment depopulation of rural areas, etc.

As regards the return of the specific taste and flavour of the local traditional dishes, logically we will have to re-establish the traditions bequeathed by our ancestors, namely:

- ❖ Fine, high quality foodstuffs processing;
- ❖ If possible, high quality, natural food products that are produced by organic methods and have the typical rustic look and taste;

- ❖ Complete compliance between the products and the used oil/fat;
- ❖ Complete compliance between the basic product and used spices;
- ❖ Preservation of the naturalness of products and strict observance of the technology for their manufacturing and preparation;
- ❖ Heat treatment should be carried out at low temperature – so-called ‘simmering’;
- ❖ Foodstuffs should be cooked more often by stewing and frying, if necessary, should be only for a short time;
- ❖ If possible, meals should be cooked in traditional earthenware - casseroles, hot clay plates, clay baking dishes, pitchers, etc., and with old cooking technologies – on live coals, broiled in an oven, etc.
- ❖ To use boiled thickenings with added water, broth, tomatoes, etc.

Observing these typical of the national cuisine technologies will contribute to improved nutrition; our cuisine will become healthier and we will have the chance to take advantage of ‘the tastes of the past’ with their typical romance and tranquillity.

As mentioned at the beginning, the majority of traditional craft foods in our country are not subject to marketing, they are closed in the family and manufacturers do not perceive themselves as business entities. These specificities require:

- ❖ Identification and mapping of traditional foods;
- ❖ Study of the microbiological and biotechnological characteristics;
- ❖ Development of hygiene standards that guarantee the specific taste, without requiring unaffordable investments;
- ❖ Provision of expert support for producers;
- ❖ Provision of state and institutional support for the production of craft food;
- ❖ Establishing connections among producers and setting up a network, which will provide better opportunities for information provision and points for delivery of the products.

An alternative and opportunity for small food producers is joining movements and networks that promote traditional foods and manufacturing processes, relying on the growing interest of people who want to reconnect with nature. There are already several products that slowly but surely become trade marks for the specific regions, such as:

- ❖ Nafpavok – raw dried sausage of pork, which is stuffed into the duodenum and stomach of the pig. This sausage is a traditional food from the village of Gorno Driglishte, near the town of Bansko;
- ❖ Yogurt and cheese from Karakachan sheep - each sheep gives 50-60 liters of milk per season with a fat content between 5-8% and of very high quality;
- ❖ Trahana – yogurt mixed with vegetable paste (tomato purée or paste of bell peppers optionally) with added various spices (black or red pepper, thyme, basil, savoury) and kneaded in stiff dough. When it dries well, it is grated or crumbled into small pieces.

In this sense, there are organizations and networks that seek out traditional old recipes and offer them to travel agencies and tour operators involved in cultural and culinary tourism. The purpose of these activities on the one hand is to give opportunities to people who wish to get acquainted with different delicacies typical for specific location, and on the other hand to stimulate small-scale production and producers who rely on traditions and natural processes for the preparation of food products without chemical enhancers. In this direction are the planned activities under the project “*The Tastes of Yesterday*” that envisage establishing a network of producers and restaurateurs in the region of the municipality of Rakovski for transfer of competencies and survey results concerning the cultural aspects of the gastronomy of the past and the local food products, for those employed in the restaurant business who have joined the network, elaboration of regulations for quality within the network, promotion and presentation of the network in the EU.

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