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Working Group 3

Conventional and alternative Food Systems: Idiazabal PDO cheese in the Basque Country (Spain)

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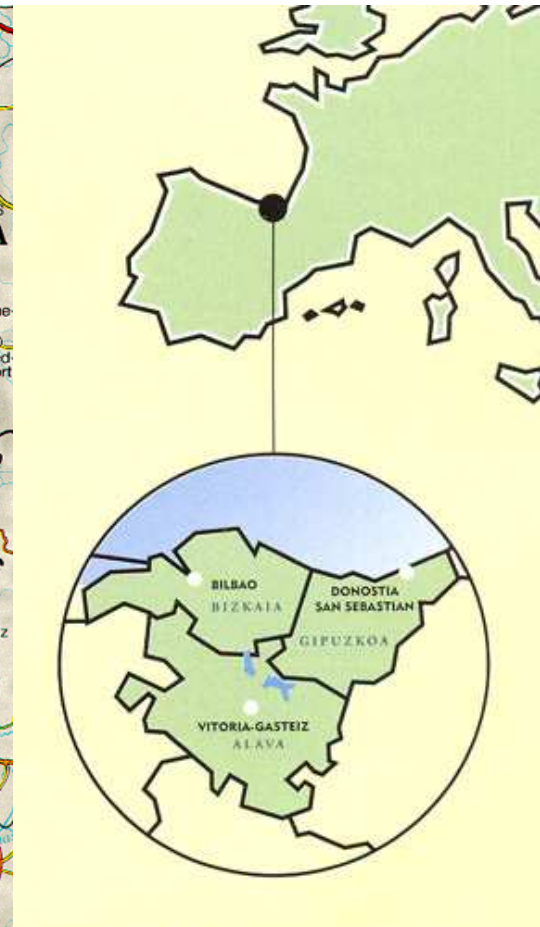
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Introduction

- Objective: to identify the advantages of the short food supply channels to commercialize cheese
- Methodology: census analysis, and interviews to shepherds
- Project financed by UPV-UNESCO ‘*Sustainable development and Environmental Education*’
(05/02)

1. The Basque Country

2,1 million inhabitants and 7,100 Km²



Northern part has a mountainous landscape and rainy climate, adequate for cattle raising



2. Historical background

Sheep production has ancient roots (before Christian era)



Shepherd has traditionally elaborated the cheese with the milk of their sheep



- Cheese factories started in last decades
- The Idiazabal PDO was created in 1987 (<http://www.quesoidiazabal.com/default.asp>).
- This certificate guaranties:
 - The sheep breed (latxa y carranzana)
 - The place where milk and cheese is produced (Basque C. and Navarra)
 - The way to manage the cattle (extensive in mountain pastures)
 - The way to produce cheese (no pasteurisation...)





3. Sheep sector

- 5,113 farms have some head of sheep (23% of existing farms), and there are 300 thousand animals
- 2,113 farms have main income from sheep
 - 27 thousand has of land (not only pasture) (12,7 has/farm)
 - 184 thousand of animals (87 Sheep/farm)
- 581 farms registered in Idiazabal PDO. We focus in the 433 located in the Basque Country
- 97% of total work from familiar basis
- 1.8 persons involved per farm (1 AWU)
- There types of farms by age of the owner:
 - < 65 and full time (31%)
 - < 65 and part-time (34%)
 - >65 (35%)

4. Food systems

- Two food systems coexist in production, transformation, distribution and consumption of this cheese:
 - The conventional system: the milk is sold to cheese factories, and distributed through big retailers
 - Short food supply channel: the milk is transformed in cheese at the farm, and sold directly to consumers (15,3% of the PDO farms). Most of the cheese is sold at the farm gate. Also at local markets, and small villages shops. The price is a little more expensive



"Shepherd's cheese competition"
Vitoria, October 2007

- The short food channel has the following advantages:
 - Generates **more employment**. In most cases the man attends the sheep and a second person, the woman, makes cheese
 - The Value Added generated by making and selling cheese **remains at the farm**. The shepherd family receives higher incomes (17 Euros per cheese of 1 Kg -7 litres- instead of 1 Euro a litre)
 - The wealth generated by this activity **remains in rural areas** instead of moving away (where the factories or distribution chains are located)
 - The shepherd **improves the self-esteem** because produces a food and not a raw material (milk), and receives acknowledge from the consumer
 - The local and **traditional practices and knowledge remains**, and that generates a **diversity of cheese** versus the homogeneity of the cheese factories
 - The shepherd maintains more independence from external influences and has **more control over the production** since has not to adapt to conditions imposed by cheese factories

Thank you...

