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A Systematic Literature Review on European Food Quality Schemes in Romania

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Abstract: Geographical indications (GI) are designated by a member's region or regions within a designated area when the particular quality, reputation, or other characteristics of a product are related solely to its geographical origin and manufacturing process. Manufacturing methods are carried out according to an established Code of Good Practices. The aim of the study was to offer an overview of the current status of the literature related to geographical indications in Romania. A comprehensive and systematic literature review was conducted, and the search process was carried out using keywords such as 'Romanian geographical indications' and 'Romanian food labels.' These specific words must be found in the title, in the abstract of the papers, and also in the keywords section. Agricultural and food products with geographical indications (including wine and spirits) are included in the research. Products and food not related to the agricultural environment, along with services, were not included. It was discovered that, in order to improve the situation concerning geographical indications in Romania and raise consumers awareness, it would be necessary to introduce new national certification that could be more accessible to both producers and consumers, and that would promote regional taste and encourage the preservation of culinary traditions.

Keywords: traditional food; EU food labels; food policies; European context

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1. Introduction

The globalization of production, consumption, and commerce leads us to the conclusion that a region's competitiveness in global markets depends heavily on its ability to capitalize on its cultural, regional, and economic characteristics. By using this set of tangible and intangible areal characteristics, space-sensitive producers could respond to the need for product differentiation against the monopolistic competition that characterizes many agri-food markets in a globalized economy. From a territorial point of view, similar areas can reach varying levels of formal 'institutionalization' depending on their space-sensitive production capacity. In the European agri-food field, geographical indications (GI) provide a combined framework and legal basis for this process [1].

Marketing techniques and consumer perceptiveness often associate traditional foods with pre-industrial and pre-capitalist farming, but also with the idea of specific holidays and closed communities. Through the context of food market extension, the European Union (EU) has created quality schemes as a legal tool to regulate the ownership and control of certain foodstuffs [2]. A quality scheme is aimed at providing equal benefits to producers and consumers in all member states.

A Geographical Indication (GI) identifies a product as belonging to its member's region or a region within a designated region when certain qualities, reputations, or other characteristics of the product are associated solely with its geographical origin [3]. This designation means that a geographical indication not only guarantees the geographical

origin of a product, but also a certain level of quality. In Europe, this quality usually refers to the presence of certain local factors (both environmental and human) and is usually summarized by the French term terroir [4]. Therefore, Geographical indications (GIs), when protected by specific legislation, provide a geographical link to a product that prevents misuse and counterfeiting of the enlisted name and assures consumers of the authenticity of the product.

Accredited Geographical Indications are made in accordance with good practice standards that indicate the production process of an asset, its details, and the geographical perimeters of the production area.

To apply for the GI label, applicants must testify that their products are 'traditional' within the geographical limits of their production areas [5]. Only goods manufactured in accordance with the Code of Conduct are allowed to use geographical indications, limiting the outsourcing of production from established regions.

Geographical indications (GIs) were introduced to the economic environment as a distinctive category of Quality Scheme products under the Agreements on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) of the Uruguay Round (1994) [6,7]. They have been integrated in Europe, in a "sui-generis" model, since 1996 under Regulation 2082/1992, modified by Regulations 510/2006 and 1151/2012 [6].

The European Union (EU) regards Geographical Indications as an essential policy instrument for multiple purposes: (a) to ensure fair competition of agricultural products and food with value-added characteristics and attributes for both farmers and producers; (b) to reduce consumer information asymmetry; (c) to promote rural development policies in rural areas [6].

The main characteristics of the Quality Schemes are: (a) most manufacturing processes must occur in a defined geographic area; (b) manufacturing process recipes are authentic (mixing of ingredients); the raw materials are original, and the production process is traditional and/or contains characteristics exclusively related the respective region; (c) the product in question has been on the market for at least 50 years; (d) the product must be part of the culinary heritage of the society/community.

"Protected Designation of Origin PDO" (food and wine), "Protected Geographical Indication PGI" (food and wine), and "GI Geographical Indication" (alcoholic beverage) are part of the EU system of labelling [8,9]. Traditional production processes are certified by other quality certification systems, such as "traditional professionalism guarantee," STG, or, for other products made in more extreme conditions such as mountain, "mountain products."

In terms of properties, the main differences between PGIs and PDOs are the percentage of raw materials used (at least 85% for PGI), usually provided from the country of origin, and also the production steps that must take place in a designated geographical area. GI is commonly used for spirits and aromatic wines.

The PDO Seal of Approval represents a proper indication of where the product was produced. All transformation steps from raw materials to final products must be carried out in specific regions [9]. An essential condition in the case of wine is that the raw material (grapes) must come only from the place where the wine is produced.

The PGI label shows an association between a specific region and a specific brand of product. In this case, at least one of the production steps must take place in the country of origin. For PGI-certified wines, 85% of the raw material (grapes in this case) must be sourced exclusively from the designated region where the wine is made [9].

The "Traditional Specialty Guaranteed" (TSG) highlights a number of traditional practices such as compositions and ingredients or specific recipes not necessarily associated with a particular geographic area. TSG-registered product names are protected against counterfeiting and misuse. Agrifood certified as TSG can be manufactured by any manufacturer that adheres to the established manufacturing practices. The feature that distinguishes them from other foods in the same category is their "specific" character [9]. Foods certified with the TSG label are often products of a specific country or region; however, their international recognition may be of interest to producers in other countries.

It must be said that there are serious methodological requirements to separate the impact of geographical indication policies which govern food labeling from other closely related characteristics. It is not easy to separate the quality impact of the product itself from its place of manufacture. It is not easy, either, to obtain the GI label declaring that the location/product combination is regulated.

In addition, GI-marked products also have trademarks and, as can be seen from the literature review below: GIS labels and trademarks do not always perfectly match. The scarcity of valuable information does not make these oppositions any easier [7].

Áron Török et al. (2020), in the paper entitled Understanding the Real-World Impact of Geographical Indications: A Critical Review of Empirical Economic Literature, attempted to collect empirical studies focused on the economic impact of Geographical Indications (GI). This paper examines three different aspects, including market size, price premiums, and implications for rural development, by using a systematic literature review approach.

However, despite the scarcity of data, there is broad literary work on GI. Due to this limitation, most of this literary work is theoretical or conceptual and draws results based on this as opposed to analytically validated data. To date, few attempts have been made to summarize the evidence-based literature on GI [7].

The current GI literature review focuses primarily on European systems and provides only an overview of accessible reserves in terms of methods and subjects (some examples above). The primary purpose was not to evaluate the empirical results, and the GI literature was considered from a specific point of view (e.g., publications from a specific geographic region, community welfare, or consumer preferences).

A literature review on the recognition of food quality indicators in an international setting was conducted by Marchesini et al. [10], where quality attributes were related to Geographical Indications. Réquillart [11], in his conceptual work, reviewed consumer willingness to pay for GI products and eight previous studies on this topic were included in his paper. The methods used to evaluate GI systems were collected by Barjolle et al. [12], who also outlined the findings of the EU-funded SINER-GI project which was created to focus attention on GI. A study conducted by Teuber and her co-authors focused on health effects and concluded that consumers are inclined to purchase local GI foods. The study was directed only towards the economic (mainly theoretical) literature on GI [13,14].

A meta-analysis of studies was conducted by Deselnicu et al., with the aim of evaluate foods with geographical indications, and the findings were that "brands [trademarks] and geographical indications may have a similar purpose in product differentiation and thus can be substitutes for each other" ([15], p. 43).

A similar method was used by Deselnicu et al. [16], who gathered 25 GI evaluation studies, and the results were that the GI premium price is decreased when another product differentiator is available (e.g., brandsor processed food products trademarks). In their research, Herrmann and Teuber [17] collected several Willingness to Pay studies, and the results relate that the origin of a food product is taken into consideration by consumers to a great degree as a result of quality and cultural preferences. WTP for organic food was studied by Bienenfeld [18], which undertook a meta-analysis. The literature on consumer eagerness to pay a premium price and how they react to locally-produced food was reviewed by Feldmann and Hamm [19].

Consumer responses related to EU quality labels was the main focus of the study made by Grunert and Aachmann [20]. Mirna de Lima et al. [21] conducted a meta-analysis of the research papers available in the database of Elsevier in Brazil with the subject of the implications of GIs. Dias and Mendes [22] guided their bibliometric analysis of articles by using EU GI tags. According to their findings, the most examined subjects were PGIs, olive oil, dairy products (in particular cheese), and chemical composition.

Using a meta-analysis and an analysis of discrepancy, Leufkens [23], in his attempts to measure and assess the overall eagerness of marginal consumers to pay for the European GI label, he established that consumers have an increased eagerness to pay for GIs; on the other hand, there are serious discrepancies between the manufactures.

Consumer choices regarding traditional food products were studied by Caputo et al. [24]. Their research found that the EU quality labels are not always recognized. They also highlighted the main reasons why consumers prefer traditional products and found that the most important ones are: sensorial attraction and non-processed texture, health and safety issues, origin, ethical concerns, and price.

Finally, their results indicated that it is not clear what the most important factors in the consumer decision-making process are regarding certified agrifoods.

In the light of the above-mentioned research, this research was built to find answers to the following research questions:

First research question: to provide an overview of the current status of the literature review related to European food quality schemes such as geographical indications in Romania and also to synthesize the research findings on this topic.

Second research question: to examine the features that characterize current research on this topic, to identify its strengths and limitations, and to determine whether there are additional places where future research should go.

The research is preceded by Section 2, where the methodological aspects that guided the realization of this review are presented. In Section 3, the main results are discussed and, in the final section, the conclusions are drawn.

2. Materials and Methods

A comprehensive systematic literature review was conducted in which the starting point of the research was to identify the geographical indications which the paper addresses: recognized at the EU or worldwide level (PGI, PDO, and TSG) and also recognized at the national level. In systematic reviews, researchers identify and critically evaluate relevant research, as well as collect and analyze data from such research [25].

The aim of a systematic review is to identify all empirical evidence that meets the prespecified inclusion criteria to address a given research aim, such as to provide an overview of the current status of the literature review related to European food quality schemes such as geographical indications in Romania. Systematic reviews also aim to synthesize the research findings on a topic or to examine the features that characterize current research on the topic and to identify its strengths and limitations, as well as to determine whether there are additional places where future research should go. By using explicit and systematic methods when reviewing articles and all available evidence, bias can be minimized, thus providing reliable findings from which conclusions can be drawn and decisions made [26]. According to Meredith (1993), a systematic literature review (SLR) enables "integrating several different works on the same topic, summarizing the common elements, contrasting the differences, and extending the work in some fashion" [27].

The methodology adopted in this paper is a systematic literature review that consists of four stages, according to PRISMA guidelines. According to Page MJ et al. [28], PRISMA is a modest set of items for reporting systematic reviews and meta-analyses that is evidence-based. PRISMA is a reporting tool for reviews and randomized trials; however, it can also serve as a foundation for systematic reviews. PRISMA focuses on how the best practices for comprehensive and transparent reporting of systematic reviews and meta-analyses can be assured by the authors. The conducting of systematic reviews, for which there are different requirements, is not addressed directly or in detail [29].

The use of the PRISMA methodology for preparing a systematic review is the optimal method because both evaluators and readers of the work can identify the paths followed by the authors.

This research was divided into four methodology steps:

Step 1: collecting the material—this is the first step, where the literature from different sources is gathered and analyzed based on the exclusion and inclusion criteria established for the final review.

Step 2: selection of the category—the second step is to order the findings into different categories according to the existing trends.

Step 3 and 4: evaluation of the material—the final steps involve reviewing the material to identify the most important key issues, insights, opportunities, and data interpretation.

The PRISMA guidelines consist of a four-phase flow diagram which describes the identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion criteria of the materials that are being revised. The records were gathered from databases and registrations, and then duplicates were removed. The screening process was conducted, first, by selecting the materials in accordance to their abstract, and the next steps were to exclude/include the records as presented in Figure 1.

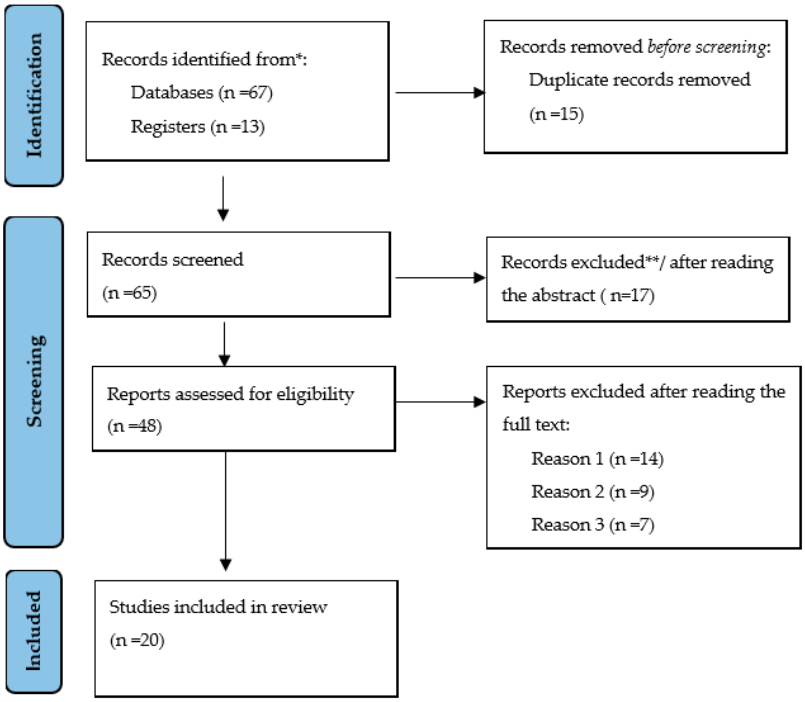

Figure 1. The PRISMA flow diagram was used as a tool to guide the selection process. * The number of records identified was reported separately from each database or register searched (rather than reporting the total number across all databases/registers). ** The records were excluded by humans, there were no automation tools involved in the process. Reason 1: multi topic approach. Reason 2: different research hypothesis. Reason 3: the results have no impact on the present research.

The most significant databases used for the first step of the methodology—collecting the material—were: Web of Science, Scient Direct, and Google Scholar. Apart from databases, research platforms such as Research Gate and MDPI were involved in the search process.

In the third category of this literature review, we decided to take into account the data collected from European and national institutions such as: the European Union official website (eAmbrosia database); the Romanian Ministry of Agriculture website (https://www.madr.ro/(accessed on 2 November 2022); CPAC—https://cpac.afir.info/ (accessed on 2 November 2022), known as the Romanian version of eAmbrosia that is only for the Romanian products; Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations—https://www.fao.org/home/en (accessed on 2 November 2022).

The search process was made using keywords such as "geographical indications in Romania" or "food labels in Romania." These specific words must have been found in the title, in the abstract of the papers, and also in the keywords section. Articles had to provide empirical data and/or analysis to be considered. The search process was limited to English studies. The entirety of agricultural and food products with geographical indications (including wine and spirits) were included in the research. Products and food not related to the agricultural environment, along with services, were excluded from this study.

The search results show that a number of 80 papers and some of the articles found were eliminated from the research because they did not comply with the requirements for fulfilling the objective; those chosen to be included in the study were sorted by category of works (review and original research or case studies) and then divided by the topics addressed (Table 1). The list of topics addressed is diverse, as a result of the inclusion of geographical indications as component elements of sustainability practices and the sustainable development of regions.

Table 1. Inclusion and exclusion criteria for selection for the literature review.

No.	Detail Information	Inclusion	Exclusion	Justification
1	Type of language	English	Different from English	A general understanding of the terms
2	Keywords	"Geographical indications in Romania" "food labels in Romania"	-	These specific key words were related to the main theme of the research.
3	Type of publications	Peer-reviewed journals	All types of conference papers, book chapters and thesis	Most of the contents were not fully available for downloading.
4	Including areas	Agriculture/ Food Security/ Food Quality	-	Including areas were related to the main theme of the research.

The second step: category selection was carried out by analyzing the collected material from the research databases (Table 2).

Table 2. Studies which reviewed the academic literature on GIs in Romania.

Authors (Year)	Paper Title	Subject	Paper Type (Conference Name/ Journal Name)
Costea C., Chiru C. (2012)	Young Consumers' Attitudes and Purchasing Intentions towards Eco-food [30]	The research also evaluated the awareness level of several EU food certification schemes (PDO, PGI, TSG) together with their role in young consumers' attitudes towards organic food. The balance goes for a high concern about health matters (genetically modified organisms, food additives and fat content), presence of natural ingredients and low awareness about eco-labeling and EU food certifications.	Conference paper (International Conference on Applied Social Science)

Table 2. *Cont.*

Authors (Year)	Paper Title	Subject	Paper Type (Conference Name/ Journal Name)
Sperdea N.M. (2015)	European quality schemes [31]	The quality of food products represent increasingly a factor of competitiveness both in Romania and in other EU countries. The many products on the market and unparalleled diversity makes their choice by consumers to be made by the criterion of price and quality. EU quality schemes are a way of recognizing the quality of food products that have a sensory characteristic influenced by geographical area. Also is a way to promote agri-food joints. This paper aims to present these schemes as well as their evolution in the European Union.	Conference paper (International Multidisciplinary Scientific Conferences on Social Sciences and Arts)
Petrescu-Mag R.M., Petrescu D.C. (2017)	Product policy - food quality labelling as food patriotism. Insights on consumer label reading behaviour [32]	Food quality labelling is an important driver of patriotism. It is argued that in a decreed post-national era, national identity continues to matter and to become more and more visible within the food sector, be it land grabbing, security and safety of foods, or origin of the products. The analysis is placed within food-health strategic and legislative frameworks designed to support Europe 2020 strategy. The results indicate a good level of reading frequency on food label/packaging of country of origin, producer's name and special logos/labels (i.e., PDO, Organic Food, Fair Trade etc.). If we are to make a ranking of the determining factors in consumer choice, it can be stated that 67.6% buy a product by the manufacturer's name, about 45% of the respondents to the questionnaire mentioned that the country of origin is important, and 47.5% take considering the special labels that accompany a product.	Conference paper (Quality-Access To Success)
Bichescu C.I., Stanciu S. (2017)	Concentration and Originality on the Wine Market [33]	Geographical indications serve as a market regulatory tool for authorities, a sign of quality for consumers and a means of promotion for producers. The Gini coefficient is used as a measure of statistical dispersion. Both at a European level and at an international level, there is a high concentration of the wine product market with registered geographical specifications.	Conference paper (Sustainable Economic Growth, Education Excellence, And Innovation Management Through Vision 2020)

Table 2. *Cont.*

Authors (Year)	Paper Title	Subject	Paper Type (Conference Name/ Journal Name)
Natea M.D. (2018)	Playing with Fire or Setting Order? Protection and Promotion of Cultural Identities Through Intellectual Property [34]	Depending on the way in which the Intellectual property law is applied and respected in different European countries, the products benefiting from a PGI or PDO certification are automatically recognized as a trademark or it is necessary to submit a file to obtain this right of the brand.The article explores the different aspects of intellectual property involved in the process of traditional knowledge protection and tries to identify certain aspects that must be taken into consideration when undertaking the task of protecting cultural identities.	Conference paper (The International Scientific Conference eLearning and Software for Education; Bucharest)
Radu L. (2018)	"Enjoy! It's From Europe 2017": The Simple Programme Preliminary Results And The Funds Accessed By Romania Quality-Access To Success [35]	One of the European food promotion programs is "Enjoy it's from Europe 2017". The Agricultural Products Promotion Policy aims to help producers sell their products in an increasingly competitive global market and also to ensure local jobs and economic growth in their countries. EU promotion campaigns for agricultural products are designed to open up new market opportunities for European farmers and help them grow their existing businesses. In 2017, Romania won a grant of one million euros for the promotion of Sibiu Salami (PGI).	Conference paper (Quality-Access To Success)
Chiciudean G.O., Harun R., Muresan I.C., Arion F.H, Chiciudean D.I, Ilies G.L., Dumitras D.E. (2019)	Assessing the Importance of Health in Choosing a Restaurant: An Empirical Study from Romania [36]	Using the face-to-face interview method, during the period A survey was conducted between January and June 2017. The main goal being the identification of the main factors considered important for consumers in the city of Cluj-Napoca in the decision-making process of restaurant selection.	Journal paper (MDPI)
Chiciudean G.O., Harun R., Ilea M., Chiciudean D.I, Arion F.H, Ilies G.L., Muresan I.C. (2019)	Organic Food Consumers and Purchase Intention: A Case Study in Romania [37]	Certainly, the ECO label increases the sales figure of any product, although it is not very clearly established what special conditions that product must meet. However, the effect on the market is sometimes negative because it leads to an artificial increase in the price of these products and as a result they are classified as premium products.	Journal paper (MDPI)

Table 2. *Cont.*

Authors (Year)	Paper Title	Subject	Paper Type (Conference Name/ Journal Name)
Nistoreanu P., Tanase M.O., Gheorghe G. (2019)	PGI and PDO logos and products in the Romanian market. An exploratory study [38]	The main goal was to highlight the reputation of traditional products manufactured in Romania that have already confirmed the certification of geographical indication or are with the submitted documentation, in the process of being approved by the EU Commission. A secondary aspect was the determination of the degree to which the IGP and respective DOP logos are a determining criterion for customers who intend to buy a certain product. Following an exploratory study, carried out in March 2019, it was concluded that most respondents did not know (80.3% for the PGI logo and 78.6% for the PDO logo) the meaning of the PDO and PDO logos.	Conference paper (BASIQ International Conference: New trends in sustainable business and consumption)
Stanciu S., Popescu G., Pet E., Dimitrescu C. (2020)	Evolution of geographical indications in European Union based on eAmbrosia [39]	Evolution of geographical indications based on data from eAmbrosia applying statistical methods. Geographical indication products represent an opportunity for the development of the local economy, more important in rural areas, but also in disadvantaged areas. The number of geographical indications depends on the agricultural potential of the European Union states, the support measures and their cultural and gastronomic heritage.	Conference paper (Scientific Papers-Series Management Economic Engineering in Agriculture and Rural Development)
Vintila I. (2021)	Common regulatory issues and proposals to harmonise nutrition and health claims regulations [40]	Although the origin of the certification processes is in France and Italy, in accordance with the large number of certifications, it is important that these practices expand and harmonise with the legislation in the Balkan area. The review of the literature in the field leads to the proposal of research directions regarding the requirements for the certification and labelling of products from Eastern Europe in such a way as to increase the chances of obtaining PGI or PDO labels.	Journal paper (Nutritional and Health Aspects of Food in the Balkans)
Borda D., Mihalache O.A., Dumitras L., Gafitianu D., Nicolau A.I. (2021)	Romanian consumers' food safety knowledge, awareness on certified labelled food and trust in information sources [41]	Even if some products are certified at EU or national level, the danger of them being contaminated in various phases of production or delivery is not excluded. Also, in extreme cases, they can be counterfeit or have misleading labels. Therefore, it is very important that the Romanian authorities benefit from the necessary tools and practical possibilities to carry out rigorous control along the entire food chain in such a way as to ensure optimal conditions for food safety.	Food Control Volume

Table 2. *Cont.*

Authors (Year)	Paper Title	Subject	Paper Type (Conference Name/ Journal Name)
Zugravu C.A., Gafitianu D., Nicolau A.I. (2021)	Food, nutrition, and health in Romania [42]	Even if in Romania there are many products with potential for certification through EU schemes, this was not considered of strategic importance and therefore their specificity and traditional influences remained known only at the local or regional level. Because these products are important to ensure food sustainability, local authorities have implemented principles of attestation of traditional food products.	Journal paper (Nutritional and Health Aspects of Food in the Balkans)
Dumitras, D.E., Harun, R., Arion, F.H., Chiciudean, D.I., Kovacs, E., Oroian, C.F., Porutiu, A., Muresan, I.C. (2021)	Food Consumption Patterns in Romania during the COVID-19 Pandemic. [43]	As a conservation instinct, all populations tend to reduce their choices to a minimum in times of crisis, namely to the basic food categories: vegetables-fruits, meat preparations, bakery products and dairy products. A research using questionnaires collected information about the change in consumption habits before and after the Covid health crisis.	Journal paper (MDPI)
Jitea, M.I., Mihai, V.C., Arion, F.H., Muresan, I.C., Dumitras, D.E. (2021)	Innovation Gaps and Barriers in Alternative Innovative Solutions for Sustainable High Nature Value Grasslands [44]	Geographical indications are necessarily related to a certain region and how the characteristics of the certified products are influenced by the particularities of the respective region. An important factor for increasing the number of certified products can be the knowledge and awareness of the importance of HNV pastures (Nature Value Grasslands) in Romania.	Journal paper (MDPI)
Muresan, I.C., Harun, R., Arion, F.H., Fatah, A.O., Dumitras, D.E. (2021)	Exploring Residents' Perceptions of the Socio-Cultural Benefits of Tourism Development in the Mountain Area [45]	Rural tourism is a source of development for isolated regions or with economic difficulties due to restricted access to natural conditions. The increase in activities related to tourism also brings some disadvantages in the degradation of the road infrastructure and, respectively, the decrease in the quality of life of local residents through overcrowding. Research based on a questionnaire is important for finding ways of action that can ensure the economic development of this isolated area in accordance with the preservation of the traditional atmosphere.	Journal paper (MDPI)

Table 2. *Cont.*

Authors (Year)	Paper Title	Subject	Paper Type (Conference Name/ Journal Name)
Muresan, I.C., Harun, R., Arion, F.H., Brata, A.M., Chereches, I.A., Chiciudean, G.O., Dumitras, D.E., Oroian, C.F., Tirpe, O.P. (2021)	Consumers' Attitude towards Sustainable Food Consumption during the COVID-19 Pandemic in Romania [46]	There are different consumer behaviours depending on the influencing factors to which they are subject. For example, in the situation of the health crisis, consumers chose rather to stop supporting local producers and to act on the principle of the lowest cost compared to the possible superior characteristics of traditional products which, however, had a higher price in relation to those offered by supermarkets. The research was located in the northwest development area of Romania	Journal paper (MDPI)
Popa D., Nica I.C. (2021)	Sustainable Development of a PDO or PGI form the Voluntary Scheme "Traditional Product" [47]	The paper's objective is to analyse the legal framework of the Romanian voluntary scheme in comparison with the European quality schemes: PDO or PGI, in order to identify common ground between the two documentations. Also, the advantages of registering first a product as traditional will be presented, as well as the advantages after registering a product as a European quality scheme. A case study for the registration of the PGI "Cascaval de Saveni" will be used as a model to illustrate the pathway for the producers.	Conference paper (International Conference on Economics and Social Sciences)
Stroe M. (2021)	Territorial Embeddedness and Geographical Origin Certifications in the European Union: The Case of a Romanian Cheese [48]	Through the analysis of the application file of the Telemea de Ibăneşti cheese, registered by Romania under the quality scheme PDO, it is determined how the applicants incorporate territorial elements into the construction of geographical origin. It is captured how producers use bioregional discourses, with the aim of creating the territorial incorporation of food products, suggesting a symbiosis between nature, animals and human actors.	Journal paper (Transylvanian Review)
Muresan, I.C., Harun, R., Brata, A.M., Brata, V.D., Chiciudean, D.I., Tirpe, O.P., Porutiu, A., Dumitras, D.E. (2022)	Factors Affecting Food Consumers Behaviour during COVID-19 in Romania [49]	Consumers' behaviour in choosing products is usually analysed in relation to various factors of influence in the economic field. A special situation is represented by the health crisis, to which a large part of the population was exposed, especially in the urban environment. After the systematic analysis of the bibliography, a questionnaire was established on the basis of which the behavioural tendencies of consumers in choosing food products in crisis situations were studied.	Journal paper (MDPI)

Table 2. *Cont.*

Authors (Year)	Paper Title	Subject	Paper Type (Conference Name/ Journal Name)
Brata, A.M., Chiciudean, D.I., Brata, V.D., Popa, D., Chiciudean, G.O., Muresan, I.C. (2022)	Determinants of Choice and Wine Consumption Behaviour: A Comparative Analysis between Two Counties of Romania [50]	As emphasised in the title, the work is based on the analysis of two main aspects, namely: (i) Analysis of specialised literature to establish the determining factors that lead to the choice of a certain type of wine for consumption. (ii) the second researched aspect is in the form of a comparative research based on questionnaires between the behaviour of consumers from two counties located in the central part of Romania.	Journal paper (MDPI)

The third step was: evaluating the material to find implications and perspectives and to synthesize future research on the topic (Section 4).

The research methodology included an analysis of the database of certified products from Romania in the form of tables and the list of certifications, as well as the correlation of the number, and categories, of certified products with the geographical positioning on the maps of the regions and their characteristic elements. This was carried out to establish a ranking of the main factors that must be prioritized, initially by the authorities but also by producers, in order to increase Romania's competitiveness in the agri-food sector.

3. Results and Discussion

From the online databases, by using the key words "geographical indications in Romania" or "food labels in Romania," and after applying the inclusion/ exclusion criteria, the search returned the following results in terms of studies reviewing the academic literature on GIs in Romania: a total of 20 items.

The concept of Geographical Indications and Intellectual Property was only introduced in Romania in January 2007, when Romania joined the European Union, and, from that date until present times, there have not been many studies or research papers related to GIs.

The limited number of data collected, combined with the fact that, in Romania, at this point, the knowledge on and awareness of certified labelled products is a developing process, leads us to the conclusion that the subject was not fully covered by the literature review and further research should be conducted. However, we can consider this study as a starting point for future research materials.

Even if the Geographical Indications from Romania were taken into account in this paper, the conclusions must still be placed in a European or even in a world context. There are some aspects on which future scientific research should focus: why are there so few PDO and PGI certified products in Romania? What are the solutions to increase the number of certified products?

In the Mediterranean regions, there is a very large number of certified products, in the order of hundreds, which is explained by a long tradition of certification and the appetite of customers for certified products.

In the case of Romania, there is great potential for products that meet some certification conditions; however, their manufacturers have not applied yet for Certification.

A possibility to improve the situation is the introduction of a new national level certification that will be more accessible to both producers and consumers, and that will promote regional taste and encourage the preservation of culinary traditions. Some of the studies that were analysed were focused on similar topics such as "Romanian consumers' knowledge and awareness regarding certified labelled food" or "the evolution of the GIs".

The literature review articles identified were summarized in Table 2.

As a result of Romania's EU membership, food certification schemes were introduced. The application of the European community approach would enhance consumer confidence in products and ensure fair competition between producers.

However, as can be observed in this paper, there is no ascendent trend when it comes to geographical indications in Romania—there are only a few agri-food products certified, Romanian consumers and producers are not fully aware of the benefits brought by a certification scheme, and, also, the literature review on this topic is not as considerable as can be found in another European countries. The lack of marketing policies and efficient involvement of the public bodies led to an uncertain status of the geographical indications in Romania. Up until now, this subject was not fully covered by the literature and there is room for more research to be done.

4. Conclusions

We can conclude that, although multiple analyses have been carried out regarding the fact that there are not many certified Romanian products, we can state that they had in mind more theoretical aspects and less practical ones.

The research is oriented more on secondary topics of marketing and consumer behavior. There is a research gap regarding the motivation of producers to certify products and the concern of authorities to create a framework for the development of small producers. We consider that these are the new recommended research directions.

Starting from the distinction between mass production and niche agriculture, the literature review analyses the main factors that influence the decision of consumers to pay more, sometimes, in the case of products with a geographical indication, emphasizing the importance of labelling systems for traceability in ensuring product quality.

Geographical Indications will not only improve the price of products or serve as a marketing strategy, but will also provide additional benefits such as improved production methods that are more environmentally friendly and sustainable, as well as rural development and agrotourism.

It was considered useful to propose a way in which the manufacturer can help to improve the favorable image of a certified product on the market. For this, research has referred to accessible marketing strategies such as fairs, exhibitions, and gastronomic tourism. However, this initiative must also be supported by local and central authorities.

In conclusion, a new Certification, courses for producers and association strategies would be useful and necessary to increase the number of Certifications.

5. Recommendations and Suggestions

In Romania, there are very few certifications recognised at the EU level because, in the first years after joining the EU, there was no market and no concern to target this segment, mostly due to the lack of knowledge from both producers and consumers. When we refer to lack of knowledge, we mean that, compared to the countries from South-West Europe, where traditional practices and food products are considered cultural heritage, in Romania, the consumers cannot yet associate traditional practices with certification schemes or labels. Another reason why there was a decreased interest in applying for a certification scheme was the fact that the certification process involves a series of procedures, and it is a time-consuming process. In addition to what was mentioned before, the academic environment has only begun to pay more attention to this subject in the last few years. Therefore, there are few scientific papers and almost no reviews indexed in databases in this field.

From the analysis carried out on the categories of products certified with GI, we can easily distinguish that those that were initiated by commercial companies with experience and financial strength enjoy success on the national level and upon export (Salam de Sibiu, Telemea de Ibănești or Magiun de Topoloveni). Financial resources and the possibility to work with experts in the field make a notable difference between large companies and small producers. In the case of small producers, in order to succeed in certifying their products, the most convenient solution is to be part of a group of producers or an association. The

most significant example is the case of Telemea de Sibiu, which was initiated by a group of individual producers, and is more successful locally and nationally.

From the point of view of research and specialised literature, our recommendation is to gradually raise the number of publications on these topics—the most suitable to begin with are studies that measure the willingness to adopt such certifications, addressed to both producers and Romanian consumers, because, this way, the awareness of the importance of certifications on the part of both parties can increase. This can be considered as being a top to bottom approach where not only the research field should be involved. The major actors in this process are the national authorities and public bodies that must step up and take real measures regarding how Romanian consumers and producers perceive European certification schemes. There is a multitude of works published that refer to a locally certified product or to the attitude of consumers towards such products which, apparently, have no connection with the topic proposed in the title of this review.

The reason why we included these works in the analysis is that we are confident that, amongst them, we can identify products with the potential to switch the certification from the national level to one European certification scheme that is more suitable, and publications help to increase the level of knowledge, which leads to the possibility of an association of individual producers. Such an association would have increased economic power and would be a better approach when it comes to applying for certification at the national or EU level.

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