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SUSTAINABLE RURAL DEVELOPMENT THROUGH LOCAL GASTRONOMIC POINTS

ABSTRACT

Local Gastronomic Points are units represented by private kitchens in the countryside, which can operate in agricultural farms, mixed farms, fish farms, wineries, wine farms, fruit farms, hunting grounds, monasteries, etc., where culinary products are prepared according to recipes specific to the area and served directly to the final consumer. The raw materials come, predominantly, from primary production from peasant household farms or from local producers and from authorised sanitary-veterinary and food safety units in the area. Thus, a multitude of short food chains and more sustainable local agri-food systems are created. Since traditional food depends to a large extent on agriculture, hunting and fishing, the specific development of links with tourism can lead to the stimulation of the activities of local entrepreneurs, at the same time being able to boost the development of communities.

Appeared relatively recently, in 2016, at the initiative of Ivan Patzaichin Association – Mila 23, the Local Gastronomic Points began to develop in different rural areas in Romania, reaching a number of 318 units and representing true models of social innovation and sustainable rural development.

Key words: sustainable rural development, local agri-food systems, Local Gastronomic Points, gastronomic tourism.

JEL Classification: Q01

1. INTRODUCTION

Appeared in 2016, at the initiative of Ivan Patzaichin Association – Mila 23, the Local Gastronomic Points (LGP) are units represented by private kitchens in the countryside, which can operate in permanent or seasonal households, in farm stables, fish farms, wineries, wine farms, fruit farms, hunting grounds, monasteries, etc., where culinary products prepared according to recipes specific to the area are served, directly to the final consumer (MARD, 2021).

The raw materials come, predominantly, from the primary production of peasant household farms or from local producers and sanitary-veterinary and food safety authorised units in the area. Thus, a multitude of short food chains and healthier and more sustainable local agri-food systems are created, by promoting and selling food directly from the agricultural holding, especially from the peasant household, close to the primary production source. Local Food Systems are made up of all the “actors”, processes and activities related to obtaining agri-food products in an area/region, from cultivation to the final form of consumption. This includes all the activities starting with sowing/cultivation, harvesting, storage, transport, processing, packaging, marketing, up to the final sale of the products obtained, and the “actors” are agricultural producers, suppliers, buyers, etc. These systems are considered to be an immeasurable asset to the development of sustainable communities as they are the main source of fresh agri-food products for local shops, farmer markets and restaurants. The impact of these systems on the communities is important from several points of view: there is access to agri-food products as fresh as possible; if the products are also promoted through training/information activities regarding the method of production, processing, capitalisation, history (for traditional products), method of preparation/cooking, etc., the level of education of people regarding the importance of healthy food increases; premises are created for environmental concern at community level (Dobay *et al.*, 2009).

In the current period, in the Romanian countryside, when capitalising on the products from their own farms, producers encounter difficulties due to (1) generous supply of plant (vegetables, fruits, etc.) and animal products (dairy, meat products), therefore, fierce competition implicitly; (2) low purchasing power of the population; (3) reduced degree of association for marketing agri-food products, etc.

In the rural areas where accommodation facilities exist, the requirements for authorisation and operation of a restaurant, as well as the high cost of kitchen equipment, have led to a reduction in the possibilities of offering meals to tourists, despite the existence of many experienced people with vast culinary background, practical skills and experience implicitly passed down from one generation to another.

The establishment of Local Gastronomic Points represents an opportunity to capitalise on products from own farms, to obtain additional income and to create informal networks within rural localities. Being supported by an adequate legal and institutional framework, Local Gastronomic Points have started to develop in Romania and are true models of social innovation through the prism of the interconnections they create between different actors of the local agri-food systems, at the same time contributing to the promotion of rural areas.

2. STATE OF KNOWLEDGE

In the literature, there are several terms used when referring to food and tourism, such as: “food and wine tourism”, “tasting tourism”, “gourmet tourism”, “culinary tourism”, “food tourism” or “gastronomic tourism”. These notions are often used arbitrarily, although there are clear distinctions between these terms. Food tourism, through the lens of cultural anthropology, means understanding tourists’ interactions with place through its food (Ellis *et al.*, 2018). Gastronomy is defined as the art of selecting, preparing, serving and enjoying fine food or “the art or science of eating well”, it actually means understanding the production and preparation of food and drink, and where, when and why is consumed (Gillespie, 2001).

Hall and Mitchell (2005) used the following classification:

- “gourmet” tourism” means trips to the most expensive restaurants, wineries and festivals in order to taste exclusive, special, unique products;
- “gastronomic or culinary tourism” suggests the existence of a broad interest in food and wine, which can even be expensive products, but this interest does not exclude the broader aspects related to landscape and culture;
- “kitchen tourism” is similar in purpose but the major interest is in a certain traditional cuisine and traditional recipes (Dobay *et al.*, 2009).

An analysis of the trajectory of research on gastronomic tourism carried out on the main works published in the period 1985–2015 and indexed in the databases Science Direct (Elsevier), JSTOR (ITHAKA), Web of Science (Thomson Reuters), Scopus (Elsevier), Proquest Social Sciences (Cambridge Information Group) and Sage Journals (Sage), indicate some predominant areas: tourism, leisure and hospitality management; geography, planning and development (De Jong *et al.*, 2018).

Analysing tourism and gastronomy together, greater attention must be paid to the relationship between the forces of globalisation, localisation and gastronomy as sources of national and regional identity, as well as source of local economic development (Dobay *et al.*, 2009). Despite their growing popularity, little information is available on how food tourism networks form and develop (Dougherty & Green, 2011). The food tourist has the benefits related to the beauty of the landscape, the knowledge of customs and traditions, the authenticity of the local culture and the aspects related to local gastronomy (Privitera *et al.*, 2019).

About the Local Gastronomic Points (LGPs), units specific only to Romania, whose activity was initially regulated by the Order of the President of the National Sanitary, Veterinary and Food Safety Agency no. 111/2008, with subsequent amendments and additions, various articles have been published in recent years, after the 2016 launch of the concept. In most of the articles, LGPs were analysed at local or regional level. Thus, Foris and Chirilaş (2020) wrote about the Local Gastro Association, established in the autumn of 2019 in the commune Vama Buzăului, Braşov county. Bădic and Ispas (2021) tried to identify in Braşov county,

through the case study method, agricultural households with potential for the organisation of LGPs and managed to outline a potential network of LGPs by which to promote tourist destinations through local gastronomic dishes and specialties. Mirea and Siea (2022) inventoried the traditional products registered in Romania on the territory of the counties on the banks of the Danube, as well as the tourist accommodation units in the same area, reaching the conclusion that common brands could be created for groups of counties (Giurgiu-Călărași, Brăila-Galați-Tulcea), instead of a single gastronomic brand. Stanciu *et al.* (2022) highlighted the importance of LGPs for the sustainable development of mountain villages, by the example of Sibiu county. At national level, the distribution of LGPs was analysed by Toader *et al.* (2022), based on existing data up to 2021. Sorcaru (2019) and Privitera *et al.* (2019) wrote about the important events for gastronomic tourism, organised in Sibiu county. At national level, the distribution of LGPs was analysed by Toader *et al.* (2022), based on existing data up to year 2021.

In recent years, several LGPs have been established, their number reaching more than 300. But their territorial distribution is uneven, which leads us to try to find out what are the factors that contribute to their initiation and development, in different counties and regions in Romania.

3. MATERIAL AND METHOD

In order to carry out this study, data were extracted and processed from the databases of the National Sanitary, Veterinary and Food Safety Agency (ANSVSA), of the county sanitary, veterinary and food safety departments (DSVSA), on the retail units of products of animal and non-animal origin, in order to identify LGPs in each county. The list of administrative territorial units (TAUs) with large and very large natural and human resources was also consulted, in the updated version of Emergency Ordinance 142/2008 (Decision no. 89/2023 for the amendment of Annexes no. 1–8 to Government's Emergency Ordinance no. 142/2008 regarding the approval of the National Territorial Development Plan, Section VIII – areas with tourism resources).

The information on the website of the National Agency of the Mountain Area was consulted regarding: (1) the legislation regulating the LGP establishment and operation, (2) good hygiene and culinary production practices, (3) sanitary, veterinary and safety rules for food regarding the registration procedure of the activities of obtaining and direct and/or retail sale of food products of animal or non-animal origin, (4) professional training courses for persons serving in LGPs, etc. For the visual data documentation of the study, searches were conducted on social networks regarding LGPs from different counties of Romania and representative images were captured for the analysed topic.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

What is the Local Gastronomic Point?

LGP is a unit for capitalising on local primary production, located in a rural locality, where food is prepared and served, according to recipes specific to the area, directly to the final consumer, for a maximum number of 12 people at a time. LGP can work in existing premises in private homes, agricultural farms, fish farms, stables, apiaries, wineries, fish shelters, hunting complexes, mushroom and berry collection centres, forest reserves, monasteries, as well as in other constructions and facilities in a rural locality, where one or more activities related to the primary production of agricultural products, fishing, hunting, harvesting or collection of non-timber forest products are carried out.

Meals are prepared from locally available raw materials, mainly from primary production at the level of peasant farm, from producers, fishermen, hunters, gatherers and collectors of non-timber forest products.

A LGP will have a daily menu with an assortment specific to the geographical area in which it operates. The products prepared and served in the LGP must be obtained from raw materials of animal and non-animal origin coming predominantly from the farm and from local producers, registered/authorised sanitary and veterinary and for food safety (MARD, 2021).

It is necessary that in the household hosting a LGP, at least the following categories of areas can be delimited (MARD, 2021): areas for storing raw materials and additions (pantries, shelves, cupboards, refrigerators, freezers, cellars, etc.); area for maintenance and sanitation-disinfection materials (stores, cabinets); waste storage area (platforms, bins); preparation area (table) (can be placed outside); cooking area; toilets / WCs, recreation areas.

LGP preparation and serving spaces must: not allow the formation of condensation, dampness and/or the appearance of mould, detachment of plaster, paint or tiles/tiles (where applicable) from walls, ceilings or floors; ensure protection against pests; allow easy, correct and effective cleaning, disinfection and deratisation (MARD, 2021).

Summarizing the information on LGPs, we mention the following distinctive elements (<https://azm.gov.ro/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/infiintare-puncte-gastronomice-locale.pdf>):

- they can function in permanent or seasonal households, agricultural farms, fish farms, stables, vineyards/fruit farms, wineries, hunting grounds;
- owners and family members can prepare and serve food products directly to final consumers in their own household;
- food products can be obtained from primary production at the level of own holding/farm, but also from other local producers;
- the raw materials from which the food is prepared must come only from authorised/registered sanitary-veterinary and food safety units;

- the primary products must come predominantly from people's own households or from local producers;
- the menu is different from that of restaurants, with a limited assortment (at most 2 types of soups, 2 main courses and possibly 2 types of dessert), specific to the area in which they operate and will necessarily be prepared and offered for consumption during the same day.

The stages of establishing a Local Gastronomic Point

In the training materials provided by the Professional Training Programme intended for people who serve Local Gastronomic Points (MARD, 2021), the following stages were mentioned:

- 1) legal registration (establishment of the legal entity: Authorised Natural Person, Individual Enterprise, Family Enterprise according to Government Emergency Ordinance no. 44/2008, Law 182/2016 or Limited Liability Company) in the Trade Register according to the Nomenclature of Economic Activities – NACE, Rev. 2, with code 5610 – Restaurants (provided that they refer to family-type public catering units – peasant households, respectively units represented by private kitchens within the premises of rural homes, where culinary products are prepared and served for consumption immediately, on premises or outside it, according to recipes specific to the area, directly to the final consumer;
- 2) fiscal registration and taxation of the activity (obtaining the Certificate of fiscal registration from the National Trade Registry Office and fiscal registration at the National Tax Administration; single or double entry accounting records, as the case may be);
- 3) sanitary-veterinary and food safety registration (at the county DSVSA on the basis of a standard application, outline of the place of activity, and a copy of: ascertainment's certificate, commercialisation book of products from the agricultural sector/producer's certificate/book of hunting member/commercial fishing permit; the unit will be assessed by DSVSA inspectors on site to determine whether it corresponds to the rules of Annex II, Chapter III of EC Regulation 852/2004).

The National Trade Register Office has accepted the certificate issued to the participants in the professional training courses organised by the National Agency of the Mountain Area, intended for people who want to establish and serve a Local Gastronomic Point, as a document that can be used in the registration process of an authorised natural person, individual enterprise or, as the case may be, family enterprise, according to the provisions of Government's Emergency Ordinance no. 44/2008 regarding the conduct of economic activities by authorised natural

persons, individual businesses and family businesses, with subsequent amendments and additions, approved with amendments and additions by Law no. 182/2016.

On November 29, 2023, the Chamber of Deputies adopted and sent for promulgation the Law for the establishment and operation of Local Gastronomic Points (<https://azm.gov.ro/>). The important changes brought by this law are the following:

- LGP is a unit for capitalising on local primary production, located in a rural locality, where food products are prepared and served, according to recipes specific to the area, directly to the final consumer, for a maximum number of 15 people at a time compared to 12 which was originally intended;
- the rural locality is represented by villages of commune residence, component villages of communes, including villages belonging to municipalities or cities;
- LGP can be established by natural persons who are local producers (on the basis of the producer's certificate for the sale of products from the agricultural sector) and legal entities, in compliance with the legal provisions in force regarding the sanitary, veterinary and food safety registration of this type of unit, at the DSVSA within the county where it carries out its activity;
- the sanitary, veterinary and food safety registration of LGPs by legal entities is carried out on the basis of the registration certificate issued by the National Trade Register Office, having NACE codes that prove that they carry out one or more agricultural production, fishing or hunting activities, for the collection of non-timber forest products, according to the legislation in force;
- incomes obtained by natural persons through LGPs are incomes from independent activities – annual net income determined on the basis of income norms, according to the provisions of Law no. 227/2015 on the Fiscal Code, with subsequent amendments and additions;
- the level of the annual income norms, by category of localities, depending on the location of the LGP, as well as their correction coefficients, are established by order of the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development;
- The Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD), through the National Agency of the Mountain Area (ANZM), compiles and manages the Register of Local Gastronomic Points based on the data from the public list on the website of the National Veterinary Sanitary and Food Safety Authority;
- MARD, through its subordinate units, can organise free courses for people who want to establish a LGP.

Dynamics of LGP registrations and distribution by counties and regions

The first Local Gastronomic Points were established in 2018 (6 LGPs), their number increasing year by year (in 2019 – 41, in 2020 – 57, in 2021 – 75,

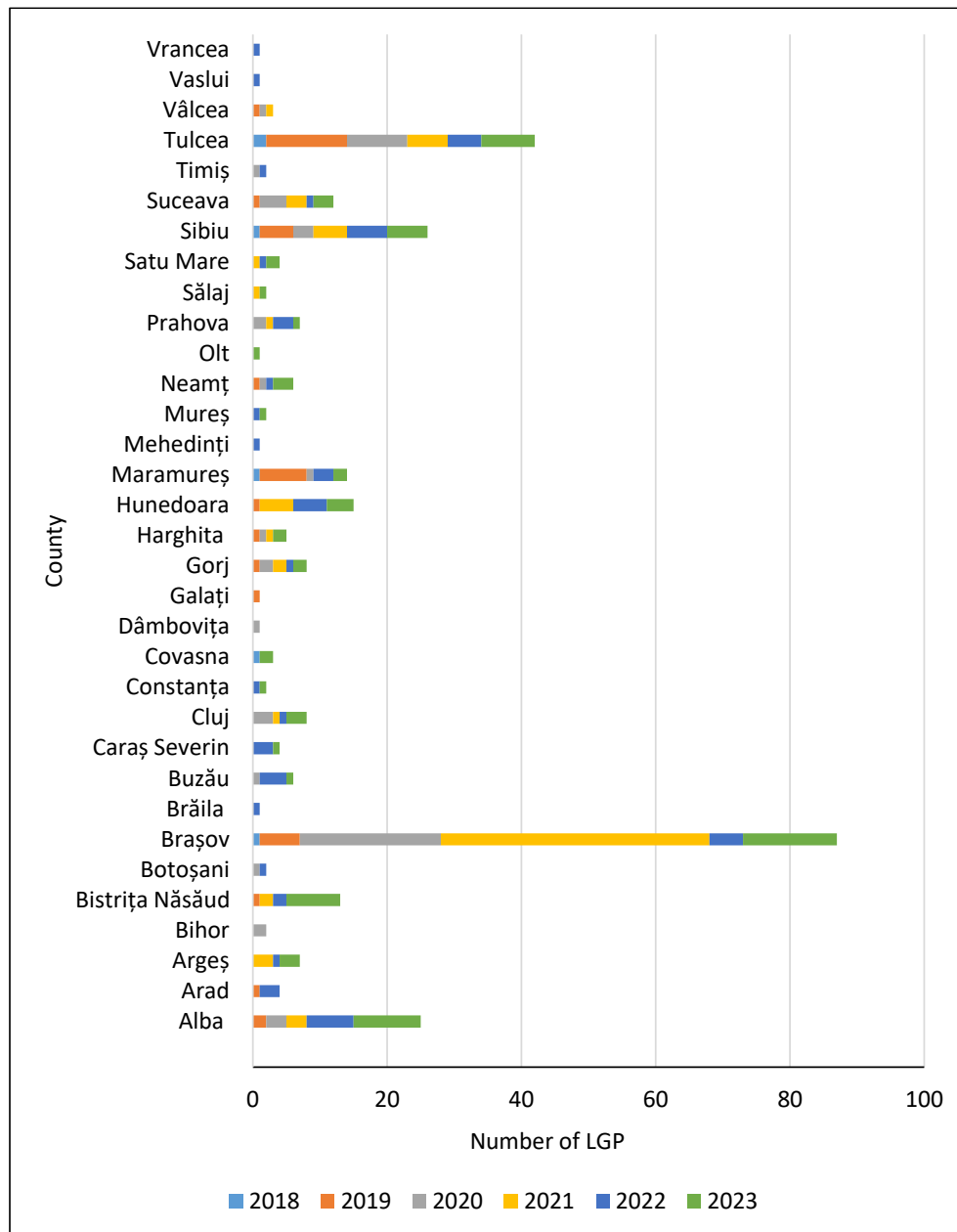
in 2022 – 60, in 2023 – 79 by the middle of the month November) so that, at present, there are over 300 LGPs unevenly distributed on the territory of Romania. The average is 10 LGPs/county.

The following counties are above the average: Braşov (87), Tulcea (42), Sibiu (26), Alba (25), Bistriţa Năsăud (15), Suceava (12) (Figure 1).

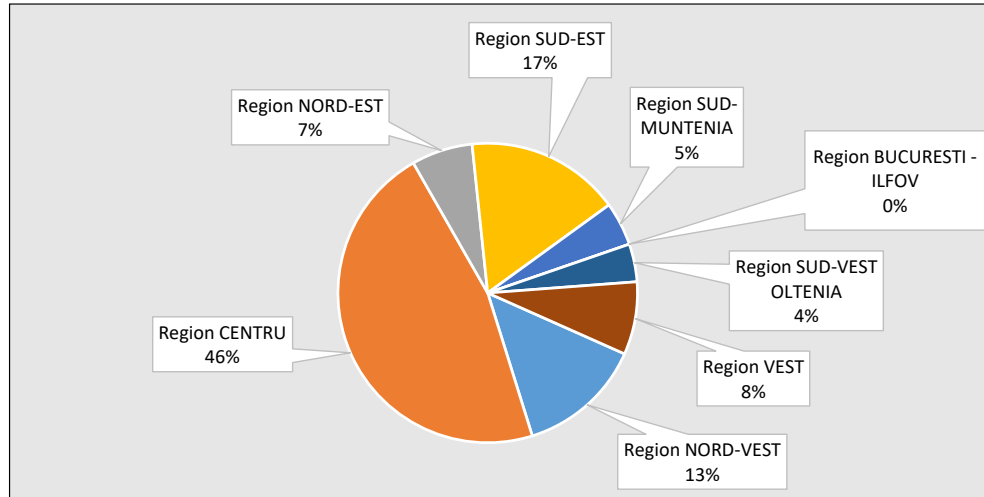
By regions, most LGPs are in the Centru region (148), followed by the Sud-Est region (53), Nord-Vest (43), Vest (25), Nord-Est (21), Sud Muntenia (15), Sud-Vest Oltenia (13) and Bucureşti-Ilfov (0) (Figure 2).

Most LGPs are located in the counties where two important associations for the development of rural tourism are active: “Ivan Patzaichin – Mila 23” Association in Tulcea county and “Gastro Local” Vama Buzăului Association, Braşov county. “Ivan Patzaichin – Mila 23” Association was founded in 2010 at the initiative of the multiple European, world and Olympic kayak-canoe champion, Ivan Patzaichin, together with the architect Teodor Frolu, out of a desire to help local development in the Danube Delta region and in other areas from Romania, by protecting the cultural and natural biodiversity of water areas in Romania, promoting the Romanian hydrographic heritage, bringing Romanian traditions back up to date, promoting the cultural profile of the Danube Delta and encouraging a healthy lifestyle (<https://rowmania.ro/despre-noi/>). “The story of local gastronomic points began a few years ago, when the late Ivan Patzaichin, through the association he led, laid the foundations of such points in the Danube Delta. He took steps so that the people who prepared the meal and served it to tourists would no longer perform this activity “in the dark”. He approached the Ministry of Agriculture and managed to develop many such local gastronomic points in the Delta”, explained Dorian Lungu, the founder of Gastro Local (<https://adevarul.ro/stiri-locale/brasov/mostenirea-lasata-de-ivan-patzaichin-punctele-2254809.html>).

The Gastro Local Association has the role of promoting all its members, as well as the traditional gastronomy of Romania, it continuously creates a brand recognised at national and European level, provides consultancy to those local producers who want to open a Gastro Local Point, concretely supports and encourages local producers in the countryside; it is a network based on common values and traditions, respecting cultural and gastronomic diversity, which supports the development of the local economy, the sustainable development of the Romanian village and local tourism, as well as the cultural and gastronomic heritage from the Romanian countryside (<https://gastrolocal.ro/despre-noi>).



Source: Authors' calculations based on county DSVSA data.
 Figure 1. Distribution of Local Gastronomic Points by counties.



Source: Authors' calculations based on county DSVSA data.
Figure 2. Regional distribution of Local Gastronomic Points.

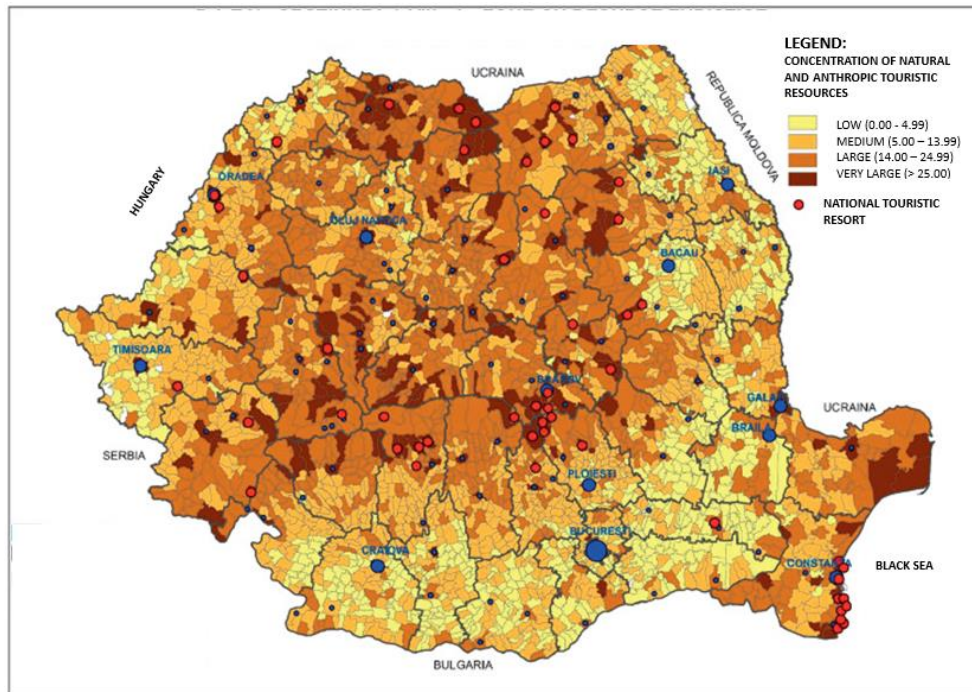
Networks are powerful means of sharing knowledge and increasing access to different types of resources, and knowledge-based networks have an important role as factors of territorial cohesion (Dobay, 2011) because: innovation is a localised process and innovation systems tend to be limited within functional systems; sharing complex knowledge requires face-to-face interaction; people interact in close geographic proximity; geographic proximity strongly influences the durability of interaction links by reducing their maintenance costs. Sustainable development is facilitated by maintaining these diverse and active knowledge-based networks.

Touristic resources and Local Gastronomic Points

A number of definitions related to food tourism suggest that food is an important motivation for tourists to travel to a certain destination (Boniface, 2017; Hall *et al.*, 2003; Henderson, 2004; Kivela & Crofts, 2005). On the other hand, there are studies that suggest that research on food tourism is not methodologically sound enough because a causal relationship between the purpose of travel and the activities of tourists could not be demonstrated, and that further research on the motivation of food tourism is needed (McKercher & Chan, 2005; McKercher *et al.*, 2008; Lee *et al.*, 2014). To meet tourists' needs, countries should conduct research to understand consumers' motivations and behaviour, and based on it to create gastronomic tourism products (Tovmasyan, 2019).

In Romania, Privitera *et al.* (2019) highlighted the need to pay more attention to the link between the destination image and culinary events.

Regarding the identification of tourist destinations, we consider that the map of areas with touristic resources can be an important starting point (Figure 3).

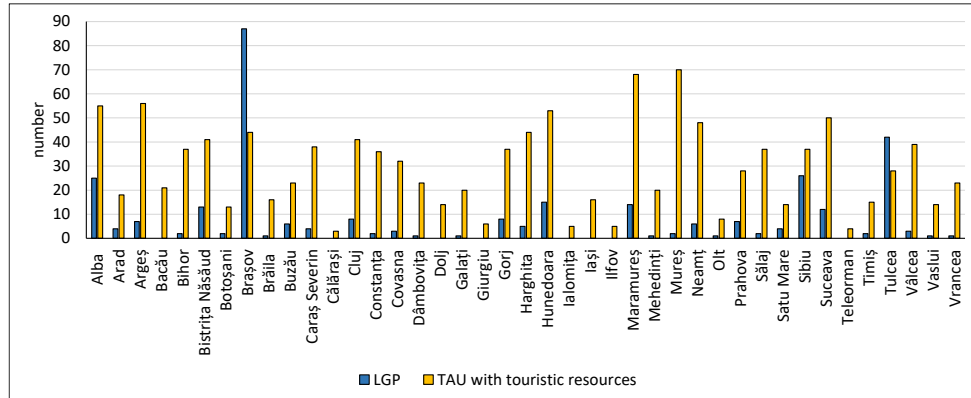


Source: Decision no. 89/2023 for the amendment of annexes no. 1-8 to Government's Emergency Ordinance no. 142/2008 regarding the approval of the National Territorial Development Plan Section VIII – areas with tourist resources (Annex no. 2 to Government's Emergency Ordinance no. 142/2008) <https://lege5.ro/gratuit/geztgmbqgu2ti/patn-sectiunea-a-viii-a-zone-cu-resurse-turistice-zone-cu-resurse-naturale-si-antropice-hotarare-89-2023?dp=guytmnjygu2tcny>

Figure 3. Areas with touristic resources (natural and anthropic).

If we analyse the number of territorial administrative units (TAU) with large and very large (natural and entropic) tourism resources in each county compared to the number of LGPs (Figure 4), we shall notice the following:

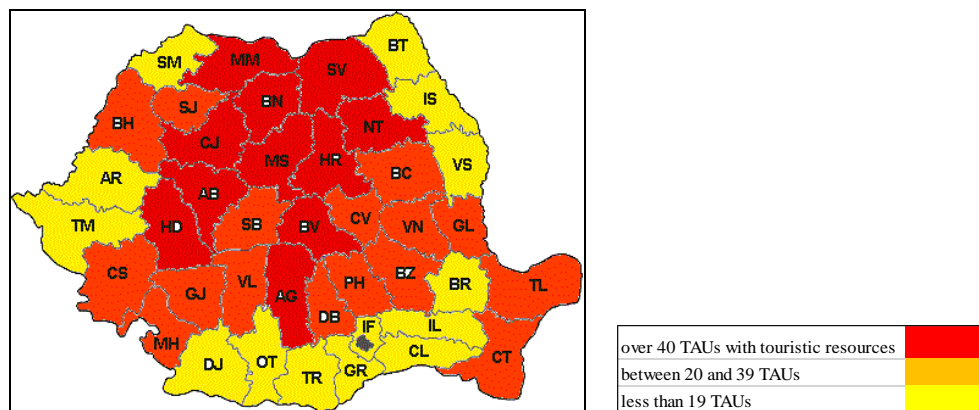
- in two counties (Braşov and Tulcea) the share of LGPs is much higher compared to the potential offered by touristic resources;
- in Sibiu county, LGPs cover about 70% of this potential;
- in Alba County LGPs are approaching half of their potential;
- at over a quarter of the potential we can find the following counties: Bistriţa Năsăud, Satu Mare, Hunedoara, Buzău, Prahova;
- between 10 and 24% are the counties: Suceava (24%), Arad (22%), Gorj (22%), Maramureş (21%), Cluj (20%), Botoşani (15%), Timiş (13%), Argeş (13%), Neamţ (13%), Olt (13%), Harghita (11%), Caraş Severin (11%);
- under 10%: Covasna, Vâlcea, Vaslui, Brăila, Constanţa, Bihor, Sălaj, Galaţi, Mehedinţi, Dâmboviţa, Vrancea and Mureş;
- the counties where LGPs have not been established yet are: Bacău, Iaşi, Dolj, Giurgiu, Ialomiţa, Ilfov, Teleorman and Călăraşi.



Source: Authors' calculations based on county DGSVSA data and Appendix no. 2 to Government's Emergency Ordinance no. 142/2008, with subsequent amendments and additions.

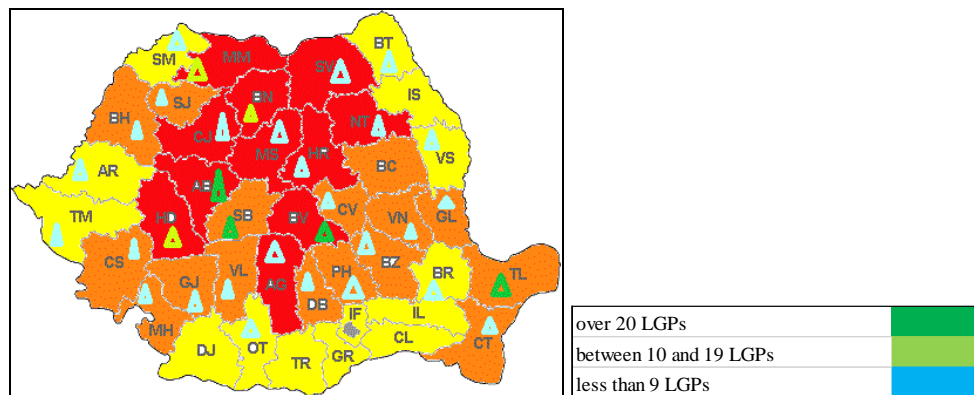
Figure 4. LGPs and TAUs with high and very high tourism resources.

If we assume that in each TAU with large and very large tourism resources there should be at least one LGP, it follows that we could have a minimum of 1200 LGPs at country level. From the point of view of the number of TAUs with large and very large natural and human resources, a great potential for the establishment of LGPs is found in the counties: Mureş (70 TAUs), Maramureş (68), Argeş (56), Alba (55), Hunedoara (53), Suceava (50), Neamţ (48), Braşov (44), Harghita (44), Bistriţa Năsăud (41), Cluj (41), Vâlcea (39), Caraş Severin (38), Sibiu (37), Gorj (37), Bihor (37), Sălaj (37), Constanţa (36), Covasna (32), Tulcea (28), Prahova (28), Buzău (23), Dâmboviţa (23), Vrancea (23), Bacău (21). There are only a few counties where the number of TAUs with large and very large tourism resources is below 10: Olt (8), Giurgiu (6), Ialomiţa (5), Ilfov (5), Teleorman (4) and Călăraşi (3) (Figure 5).



Source: Authors' calculations based on Appendix no. 2 to Government's Emergency Ordinance no. 142/2008, with subsequent amendments and additions.

Figure 5. TAU zoning with large and very large tourism resources.



Source: Authors' calculations based on Appendix no. 2 to Government's Emergency Ordinance no. 142/2008, with subsequent amendments and additions.

Figure 6. LGPs and TAUs with high and very high touristic resources.

Figure 6 shows the distribution of LGPs and the counties with TAUs with large and very large tourism resources. From this point of view, Romania has the conditions to intensively promote the establishment of LGPs as an alternative to increase the income available to the persons who have the necessary resources to serve food, according to recipes specific to the area, directly to final consumers.

Enabling factors for the development of LGPs in Romania

The five driving forces identified for the development of food tourism, according to the specialised literature, are: food tourism as political capital; food tourism as a visionary state; what it means to be a foodie; the drive for prosperity and exclusivity; interesting experiences in a post-modernist world (Yeoman & McMahon-Beatte, 2016).

Successful destinations around the world have begun to realise that there is great potential for food tourism to provide a sustainable tourism product and are using food to create cultural and social capital. Creating a network of food and beverage suppliers that provide an authentic experience based on high-quality and unique products that are rightly priced is the prerequisite for satisfied visitors. This cannot be achieved without the involvement of all stakeholders in the area (Hamarneh & Kiráľová, 2016). There are quite a few localities in the world that maintain the appropriate conditions to form food clusters, *i.e.* where there are partnerships between the public and private sectors under the leadership of facilitators for the development of food clusters (Lee *et al.*, 2016; Rachão *et al.*, 2019).

The results of a relatively recent study (Rousta & Jamshidi, 2020) indicated that taste, quality, health importance, price, emotional value and prestige had a significant impact on tourist's attitude towards local food. While food image did not influence the intention to visit the food tourism destination, it positively affected the intention to recommend the local food.

Romania offers a wide range of tourism experiences, which can support economic growth at local, regional and national level. The types of tourism

activities available in Romania can be grouped as follows (MET, 2022): nature and adventure; winter sports and skiing; culture and history; health and wellness; sea and sun; city breaks; MICE – tourism for meetings, incentives, conferences, exhibitions; gastronomy. In order to ensure economic benefits, it is important to strengthen the links with specific sectors such as agriculture, aquaculture, food industry by: optimising the supply from local sources of agricultural products, aquaculture and other processed foods; creating authentic tourist experiences that use local traditions in agriculture, fishing and culinary area; development of “souvenir” products from the field of agriculture or food; development of LGPs (MET, 2022).

Although they appeared relatively recently, LGPs have begun to be considered as an important element for the revitalisation of rural localities. In our opinion, their development depends on several factors, such as:

- appropriate institutional and legislative framework – Order of the President of the National Sanitary, Veterinary and Food Safety Agency no. 111/2008, with subsequent amendments and additions; Law for the establishment and operation of Local Gastronomic Points;
- funding and fiscal facilities – NRDP 2014–2020 Submeasure 6.2 “Support for the establishment of non-agricultural activities in rural areas”; NRDP 2014–2020 Submeasure 6.4 “Support for investments in the creation and development of non-agricultural activities”; exemptions from the provisions of art. 69 para. (2) from Law no. 227/2015, with subsequent amendments and additions for the level of annual income norms, by category of localities, depending on the location of the Local Gastronomic Point, as well as their correction coefficients;
- the way in which LGP is promoted by ANSVSA, MARD and their subordinate units;
- the existence of knowledge-based networks (“Ivan Patzaichin – Mila 23” Tulcea Association, “Gastro Local” Vama Buzăului Association, Braşov county);
- the existence of complementary projects at local/regional, national or international level: Via Transilvanica, Taste of Transylvania, Canotca, Flavors of Romania, FOODSHIFT2030 – The Laboratory in Braşov, etc. (<https://www.viatransilvanica.com/>; <https://tasteoftransylvania.eu/>; <https://rowmania.ro/canotca/>; <https://www.facebook.com/flavoursofromania.official/>, <https://highclere-consulting.com/ce-facem/interactive-food-lab-brasov/?fbclid=IwAR325cdye60C25QfCFX2Bsp3JhnxZaEYB1iP5M-YUEurzeRZ9c9N0soRudI#toggle-id-3> etc.);
- the integrated promotion of LGPs through large-scale events attended by interested entities from the area/region/country (e.g. the first National Conference of Gastronomic Points in Romania, October 21–22, 2023, Buzăului Customs – <https://gastrolocal.ro/events>);

- institutional collaboration at the level of ministries, agencies, etc. that have activities aimed at the development of LGPs (MARD, MAT, ANSVSA, etc.);
- direct marketing (in order to know the market segment through direct communication with consumers) and indirect (for mass communication).



Source: Facebook.
Photos 1–3. Gastro Local.



Source: Internet.
Photos 4–5. Via Transilvanica.

5. CONCLUSIONS

Born from a real necessity identified by the civil society, namely the desire to formalise some traditional practices of serving meals to tourists, in areas with abundant natural resources, in the form of culinary products or gastronomic specialties with local specificity, the Local Gastronomic Points represent a real opportunity for the revitalisation of rural communities in Romania. Traditional hospitality, the diversity of local food resources and culinary recipes, combined with the need to develop the short food chains and a higher valorisation of local products, constitute the necessary premises for the place of meal service in the rural

area, through LGPs, to constitute a place of communion and authenticity transmitted through food and contributing to the transition towards a more sustainable agri-food system.

Gastronomy represents one of the elements incorporated in cultural tourism, and the growth trend has made it become a healthy, authentic, environmentally friendly lifestyle, at the same time representing a unique and high-quality experience. Gastronomy, viewed as a tourism resource, is valued above all for its ability to generate sustainable rural development.

Romania has natural and human resources, a rich material and immaterial cultural heritage, a rural life rich in traditions, crafts, traditional music and local food, an authentic rural heritage represented by traditional buildings, churches, stables, mills and others, traditional rural activities that have all the ingredients for the development of a successful rural tourism; the Local Gastronomic Points can represent an important mobilising factor for this purpose.

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