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Electronic version
URL: http://journals.openedition.org/aof/406
DOI: 10.4000/aof.406
ISSN: 1609-9168

Publisher.
Isabelle Téchoueyres, Matthieu Duboys de Labarre

Electronic reference
Hielke S. van der Meulen, « A normative definition method for origin food products », Anthropology of food [Online], S2 | March 2007, Online since 11 June 2007, connection on 04 February 2020. URL: http://journals.openedition.org/aof/406 ; DOI : 10.4000/aof.406

This text was automatically generated on 4 February 2020.

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A normative definition method for origin food products

Hielke S. van der Meulen

EDITOR’S NOTE

This article is based on a paper presented at the ESF-SCSS exploratory workshop ‘Local Food in Europe’, Bordeaux, June 13-17, 2006, and a report on Dutch origin food products (van der Meulen 1999).

Introduction

The number of commercial initiatives on origin food products (OPs), both new and traditional ones, and both artisanal and industrial, has gradually increased worldwide over the past 30 years, following the trend in the wine sector. Geographical indications have become an important issue in the WTO negotiations (Josling 2006; SINER-GI project - www.origin-food.org), and are the subject of a growing number of scientific publications, in particular articles that integrate formerly separated analyses of OPs in the fields of law, marketing, and rural sociology. The trend relates to increased commoditisation and globalisation in the agri-food sector, leaving room for niches products that are held to be special because of their geographic provenance.

This creates a need to evaluate and compare OPs, which calls for a normative definition tool.

Below, first some categories or stereotypes of origin food products are presented, showing the wide range of products at issue. Then the underlying factors measuring the degree of ‘originality’ are applied to those categories and to certification labels respectively.

Categories of origin food products

The term origin food in this article serves to define any foodstuff that people perceive to have some added value(s) because of its place of origin. This definition matches the broad use of the word streekproduct (‘area product’) in The Netherlands. The criteria
that people use to qualify streekproducten are often implicit, unclear, and contradictory. Some emphasize the local provenance of the raw materials, or the fact that the product can only be bought in the production area itself, or that it offers major benefits to the environment. Thus, the word streekproduct, first introduced in 1990, has become an all-purpose concept, to be used as required. This may reflect a lack of tradition in this field in our country, but also an omnipresent commercial opportunism on the part of producers, both large and small-scale, who claim cultural and natural identities of wider areas in order to ‘load’ their private brands.

5 Whatever the definitions, looking at the range of so called streekproducten, one can observe some stereotypes, based on reoccurring differences in history and the organisation of production. This allows for a broad categorisation, ranging from Farmhouse to Industrial OPs.

6 The descriptions below show that an OP may pass over time from one category to the other. A wine that starts as a Farmhouse OP, may trigger other farmers to step in and thus create a Farmers-group OP. In a third instance the Farmers-group OP may become a Region-label OP as soon as the label starts to dominate the single OP identity, etc

Farmhouse OPs

7 This is the largest category in terms of numbers of firms and products involved, at least in The Netherlands. Today, hundreds of such products are offered in farm shops, gift baskets, box schemes, and specialized food stores. The product label generally shows the name of the farm and sometimes also that of the area or village. Unprocessed products, like vegetables and frozen beef portions, often make no visible references to the farm or place of origin.

8 The most frequently sold farmhouse products are:
   • Dairy products: Cheese, yoghurt, milk, butter, butter-milk, ice-creams etc. In 2003 an estimated 200 out of 389 farmhouse cheese producers (out of a total of 85,000 farms) in The Netherlands sold (a minor part) part of their cheese directly to consumers, via weekly markets and to retailers.
   • Fruit-based products: Juice, marmalade, and wine (from berries or grapes). The number of fruit growers offering juices and marmalades under their own label are estimated at 40 (Internet search, July 16, 2006).
   • Meat products: Mostly fresh beef, but increasingly processed meat such as hamburgers, dried sausages, and stews. The number of farms currently selling meat directly to consumers is estimated at 150 (extrapolated from Kuit & van der Meulen 1997).

9 The number and range of farmhouse products is increasing, and the processing of fruits and meats is increasingly outsourced. Also the exchange of products between farm shops within the same area is growing, attracting more consumers by the broader range.

10 Primary produce, like potatoes and apples, which have a much longer history of direct selling, are (still) rarely referred to as streekproducten, except in the case of ‘local foods’ that restaurants and box scheme managers source from their surrounding areas.

Farmers-group OPs

11 These are the products that first occur to insiders in the field of streekproducten in The Netherlands, recalling the initial projects in the early 1990s. The best known are Veenweidekaas (Peat-meadow cheese) and Zeeuwse Vlegel-brood (Zeeland flail bread), later followed by Waddenzuivel (Wadden islands dairy), Hoogstamfruit Rivierenland
(standard tree fruit Riverland), and Waterlands rundvlees (beef from the polder area just above Amsterdam). These projects, although not all successful, have been setting the trend in The Netherlands since the start of this millennium.

12 All of these initiatives came from young farmers, who felt that the Dutch success story of agricultural intensification and export-orientation did not suit them anymore. Besides higher margins through value-adding, they wanted to come into closer contact with consumers and adopt less polluting farming methods. In a later stage, the groups drew up codes of practices and had their geographical names and logo’s registered as collective trademarks (see Region-lable OPs).

13 Remarkable is the lack of emphasis on terroir, tradition and high-end niche-quality in most of the projects, even though some were inspired by group visits to the Mediterranean. This may be attributed to their left-wing political and Calvinist backgrounds.

Region-label OPs

14 Most of the above farmers-group projects have launched region labels under which a range of new food products from that area are sold. Independent foundations have been set up to licence the labels to producers. Many products are now made by single processors; raw materials may still come from several farms. Some labels simply stick to provincial borders to delimitate the collection area.

Waddengoud (Wadden gold) is a recent label which covers the products of the former labels of Waddenzuivel (Wadden dairy) and Wadden-delicatessen (sea buckthorn syrup, sea vegetable mustard, cranberry vinegar, honey). Likewise, the Zeeuwsche Vleegel farmers introduced beer (discontinued), pre-cooked wheat, wafers, and mustard. The Veenweidekaas project launched Veenweide-ham (discontinued), and some products without a region-label, like Proosdijsap (standard tree apple and pear juice) and Wilde-weide kaas (organic version of Veenweide cheese). The latter, together with other dairy products, have recently come under the Groene Hart label (the meadow area between Amsterdam, Rotterdam and Utrecht). In the same way, Waterland has become a label that covers beef, lamb, veal, and sheep cheese. More recent labels are Amelands Produkt, for sheep cheese, honey, catfish, and potatoes, and Limburgs Land, for fruit products, meat products, beer, and rye bread. The labels mostly pool (new) products from single farmers (and small processors) who never started off as a Farmers-group OP. They pursue a combined strategy of ‘region-marketing’ and OP marketing (Soldaat 2005).

Regional-typical OPs

15 This category of food products reflects the concept appellation contrôlée pioneered by Latin-European countries. Due to a lack of both political interest and producers organizations hand, their existence in The Netherlands has been neglected and even denied for a long time, though roughly 100 of these OPs would qualify for PDO or PGI (van der Meulen 1998; Zanderink 2002). Boeren-Leidse cheese and Opperdoezer Ronde potatoes are exceptions to this rule, and became European PDO’s in the 1990s already.

16 Over the past five years Dutch volunteers of Slow Food have been favouring grass-roots project with producers of for example Boeren-Goudse Oplegkaas (aged farm-stead Gouda), Schiedamse jenever (gin), Drentse Heideschaap (lamb), Chaams Hoen (chicken).

17 Characteristic of this category of Regional-typical OPs are: the presence of multiple producers (usually organized horizontally), a product-related geographical delimitation, a generations-old tradition, and a distinctive production process and
distinctive final product. The raw materials do not always come from the traditional production area; Amsterdam butchers rarely know from which farm the beef in their smoked Osseworst originates.

Artisanal OPs

This category comprises pastry, beers, meat products etc. that are made and sold by individual small-scale non-agricultural food producers (bakers, butchers, brewers etc.) and named after the place (area or town) where the producers are located. Compared to Farmhouse OPs the emphasis is on processing techniques, not on the origin of the raw material. Tourists like to buy them as ‘typical’ reminders of the places they visited. The number of products is large and average life cycle is short.

The phenomenon is not new. In the 19th century several bakers invented ‘historic’ local food products, such as Zwolle blauwvingers, literally ‘blue fingers’, which was a nick name of the inhabitants of the Hansa town of Zwolle. Today, blauwvingers, are generally taken as traditional cookies made by Zwolle pastry bakers. After WWII, families from the densely populated westerns parts of The Netherlands began to spend their Summer holidays in the forested areas in the centre of The Netherlands (Veluwe). This led local bakers to sell cookies in tins with names like Veluwse dennekoeken (‘Veluwe pine cookies’), whose only link with the area was that they happened to be made there.

Since the 1980s, mini-breweries have been set up in The Netherlands. The raw materials are the same as for large brewers, but processing differs. Mini-breweries are open to the public, reinforcing their local image. The names of the beers or the company refer to the town or village. Recently, some mini-distillers have started.

In some cases, food products that are presented as ‘local’ are actually made by factories elsewhere. Shops in popular holiday areas sell herbal liquors called Terschellings juttertje, Twents huppeltjeswater, and Bossche Pop supplied by the one distilling company and made in the same tank. Only the labels differ. This category of geographical indications is considered here as fake OP’s and are kept out of the analysis.

Appropriated Ops

Over time, a former regional-typical OP can become ‘appropriated’ (Tregear 2003) by a single company, in a long-term process of ‘natural’ selection and mergers.

An example of an appropriated Dutch OP is Deventer Koek, a gingerbread from the former Hanza town Deventer. It is famous since the 13th century, but gradual consolidation since 1800 has left only one medium-sized producer (Bussink). Product characteristics have become compromised by mechanization and adaptation to modern taste preferences. Still, tradition is heavily emphasized in promotion campaigns. Some single producers have managed to obtain PDOs, as for Kanterkaas and Noord-Hollandse Edam. In these cases the companies are cooperatives of dairy farmers, but production is concentrated in one plant. Moreover, these cooperatives act more and more like private corporations.

Some food products look like appropriated industrial OPs, but actually are recent inventions. Leerdammer cheese was launched by a private dairy company annex wholesaler (Baars Kaas) about twenty years ago. It has characteristics of both Emmental and Gouda. The name refers to old the town of Leerdam, at a few kilometers distance from the cheese plant. Old Amsterdam is a more recent invention. Intensive promotion campaigns in the national media tell that the cheese is intimately linked to Amsterdam, though both historic and physical links are lacking. It is a Gouda type of
cheese made with an Italian strain of Lactobacillus, reducing ripening time to half the normal (hence old). Because of their near to zero originality, the factory-invented ‘OPs’ are discarded in the analysis here.

Factors of originality

The above categorisation does not reveal which variables determine the analytical watersheds between the categories. Neither does the categorisation answer the question what exactly makes an OP more or less connected to the place of origin, and valued because of that. Some conceptually independent factors therefore have been distilled.

A leaflet about ‘streekproducten’ (area products) issued by the Dutch Ministry of Agriculture in 1997 provides a concise illustration of the many, and sometimes contradicting, qualities people tend to attribute to OPs, as well as the confusion in The Netherlands about definitions and categories, evidenced by the frequent use of the adverbs ‘often’, ‘sometimes’ and ‘also’.

‘Streekproducten are products with their own characters. They characterize a piece of regional culture [...]. Often, they are produced in a traditional way. Agricultural products often come from environment and animal friendly farms. Processed products are prepared according to the rules of craftsmanship. Often the products are not made in the area since a long time. Streekproducten can also be new products which comply with special quality standards. They can be organic products, or products that are very healthy. [...] More and more producers, responding to the demand for quality products with special characteristics, offer traditional products again.

Production is bound to a particular area and must comply with the specific demands of the consumers. [...] If you visit the area you can sometimes also order regional specialties in restaurants, for which streekproducten [locally sourced fresh produce, HvDM] have been used. [...] Streekproducten have certain names. Often these names refer to the area where they come from. Sometimes these names are also protected.’

Confusion about the definition was one of the reasons for the Ministry of Agriculture to order a national state-of-the-art study, part of which was an analytical effort to distil factors that could describe which food products can rightly be called streekproduct.


As to the logical considerations, the main question was: which aspects determine the character and credibility of a food product as an OP, as opposed to the generic or non-origin-based version of the product? Further, the factors had to be mutually exclusive in a conceptual sense. Finally, the factors had to be exhaustive to the extend that any variable that can make origin products special with respect to generic food products
because of their geographic origin, must fit under one of the factors. This led to the following five factors:

- Territoriality: degree of physical connection with the place of origin;
- Typicity: place-specific peculiarities of the production process and the final product;
- Traditionality: rootedness of an OP's history in its place of origin, including eating culture;
- Communality: shared experience and practices, reflected in the presence of multiple producers (farmers, processors) and their collaboration;
- 'Landscapeability' (Dutch: landschappelijkheid): the connectedness of the production process to the landscape, both rural and otherwise.

In a second instance, the firth factor was held to be a sub-factor of typicity since it can be interpreted as the packaging of the production process.

The four 'originality' factors (O-factors) can be seen as a normative set of parameters which objectively describe the connectedness of an OP to its place of origin. On the other hand, the subjective aspects of the factors are apparent: 1) eventually they reflect the interpretation of what makes food products meaningful as OPs in the eyes of the people concerned; 2) each person will attribute different relative weights to the factors in assessing total originality, depending on personal and cultural preferences; 3) the scores of an OP on these factors are hard to quantify ad therefore permanently subject to controversy.

The disadvantage of using (mostly) continuous instead of discrete variables for the factors also happens to be an advantage. By emphasizing the degree to which people associate a food product with its place of origin (and how they make the association), a fruitless discussion over whether a food product is a real OP or not is avoided. On the other hand, the above categorisation suggests that underlying variables are discrete, and even dichotomous.

Each of these O-factors is specified below, with reference to different stages in the supply chain. This forms the basis for the assessment of an OP's degree of 'originality' (total O-score).

Territoriality

The degree of physical connection between a food product and its place of origin depends on the location of each subsequent stage in the supply chain, including distribution and final consumption. If all stages are confined to the place of origin, the O-score on territoriality is at a maximum.

As with every O-factor, the relative weight consumers (and others) attribute to the different sub-factors is debatable. For territoriality, provenance of the final OP (after processing) is expected to be more important to consumers than the provenance of the primary matter. This judgement is also related to expectations about typicity, but that factor is analytically distinct. For example, a Parma ham made from pigs raised within the prescribed Italian area but processed in the area around Parma (as the regulations prescribe), may be seen as more 'original' than in the reverse case. For a fruit juice, instead, primary production within a known area may be considered more important than for processing.

The sub-factor distribution translates into originality because buyers may need to be in or go to the place of origin. These physical encounters reinforce the association between product and place.
Region-label OPs are a special case with respect to delimitation: first the area is defined and then interesting food products are sourced from that area and sold under a common label. For a single product the delimitation may make little sense, or even be harmful. A similar delimitation problem occurs when a foodstuff is called an OP (‘local food’, in Anglo-Saxon countries) because it has been sourced by person X from her surrounding area. Thus, the same food product can be an OP for one person and not another (unless the name of the farm of origin is on the label).

Some foodstuffs are seen as OPs for the sole fact that the production area has been marked for a long time by a relatively high incidence of that crop or livestock species, not because of special product qualities. This repetition of physical provenance links to the traditionality factor. An example are the cabbages from the province of Noord-Holland, that are ‘rather topical than typical’ (Lo Verde 2001). But in a second instance, the provenance may become important for the credibility of an OP as experience may indeed enhance quality, like Zeeland potatoes and Limburg beer.

Territoriality has an exterior aspect besides the concrete provenance; if an area is easy to visually identify, this fact strengthens the perception of provenance. Also a good match between geographical indication in the name and delimitation is important in this respect.

Typicity

Typicity is defined here as the physical aspects that distinguish the production process and the final product in as far as they are unique or logically linked to the place of origin. Uniqueness can be undermined if producers in another, quite similar area start to use the same generic material and production methods, as has happened to the Ringerike potato in Norway.

The fact that production area characteristics co-determine the final quality of the product is most widely accepted in the wine sector. In assessing soil properties, enduring human efforts to create these soils must be taken into account, as for instance in the Dutch peaty meadow polders. Their slightly acidic soil gives a special taste to the local farmhouse Gouda cheese.

In this article, the ‘exterior’ aspects of production methods are also considered part of typicity, regardless of whether they actually contribute to the organoleptic properties of the final product. When the visible peculiarities of the production process and its artefacts relate in a convincing and rather unique way to the place of origin, they can feed the perception of typicity. Thus, the unique presses used for farmhouse Boeren-Leidse cheese, and the imprint of the Arms of Leiden on the rind, adds to the cheese’s typicity.

A powerful element in the perception and non-replicability of typicity is the mystical ‘marriage’ between, on the one hand, the properties of the raw material conferred by soil, microclimate and agricultural practices, and on the other hand the special processing techniques used. This is particularly relevant for OPs in the wine, cheese, and cured meats sector and has to do with the complexity of the raw materials and chemical reactions during processing and ripening, leaving ample room for place-based differentiation and manual refinements.

Traditionality

The most concrete aspect of traditionality is the time that elapsed since the OP first appeared in the place of origin. A complementary aspect is its historic ‘load’, reflected
in legends and written documents, links to nobility, and (former) ceremonies and feasts in relation to the OP.

Less tangible aspects are the degree to which the OP is still made in the traditional way, and the link with the local dietary culture. The first is not always easy to establish, because bakers and butchers seldom kept written records. By contrast, the Deventer gingerbread bakers guild drew up productions rules as early as the 13th Century.

Attention should also be paid to the fact that some traditions were once much more widespread. For instance, the production and consumption of farro (triticum dicoccum) in Central Italy has died out in many places and became a ‘typical tradition’ of a few mountainous areas where it remained, like in the plains of Garfagnana in Tuscany and Leonessa in Umbria (van der Meulen 1994). Such appropriation somewhat lowers the degree of traditionality.

A similar warning holds for our human tendency aspects to treat aspects of traditionality, like ceremonies and physical features, as century-old and unchanging even though many ‘traditions’ are neither old nor indigenous.

In general, tradition is a very strong marketing tool – it appeals to the human need for proven reference points, confidence, rest - and its importance for OPs can hardly be overestimated. People in other places may copy all the elements of a traditional OP to their own area but they cannot replicate history.

A local food with no tradition of its own may build on another, indirectly linked tradition so as to gain some traditionality still. The Zeeuwse Vlegel bread, for instance, is not processed in the traditional way, but the production of baking wheat and wheaten bread consumption has a unique tradition on that part of The Netherlands (Zeeland province).

Compared to their Latin-European counterparts, Dutch food producers, retailers, and consumers as well as public officials and scientists, are reluctant to show pride of their national or local culture and tradition (author’s observation). This reluctance is stronger in the central and northern parts than in the southern provinces, and may be due to our Calvinist and mercantilist backgrounds (Pleij 2004). Therefore, this factor may weigh less in the O-score.

Communality is defined as the sharing of experience (know-how as well as social) about an OP by the supply chain actors. A high degree of communality means that an OP is ‘handled’ by a substantial number of primary actors, preferably in several stages of the supply chain, and that there is a high degree of horizontal and vertical collaboration among these actors. An OP made by several farmers and/or processors is perceived by outsiders to the area as part of the culture that the local people share. This sharing can extend even to consumption (eating culture). Thus, communality is closely linked to culture and tradition, which per definition are features that are reproduced by groups, not individuals.

Communality can guarantee the relative conservation of established production practices. Conversely, when an OP is the asset of a single firm, as in the ‘farmhouse’, ‘artisanal’ and ‘industrial’ categories, this producer will tend to treat the OP as a private brand rather than an common origin product. Thus, an investment in originality (‘rooting’) get easily turned into investments in promotion. A producer may even tailor ‘tradition’ to his own situation, as happened with some Dutch PDOs.
Communality tends to be stronger in primary production than in the subsequent stages, because of the number of firms involved is usually higher. Farmers need to establish common practices and collectively bargain with buyers for compensation of their investments in OP-specific assets. If processors cannot be convinced of the need for vertical collaboration, farmers may start to organize processing, in cooperative plants.

Communality can, to some extent, result from internal rules for volume control, when low individual production quota lead to a large number of small producers who need to collaborate. Sometimes collaboration extends to the distribution stage, for instance when a strong OP consortium orchestrates a common sales strategy with retailers.

Interrelatedness of O-factors

The originality factors are to some extent interrelated (correlating); they are separated here only for analytical purposes. Exhibit 1 visualizes dyadic interrelations. Explanation of the dyads is limited to some main interrelations; there are many more. Typicity is placed at the centre, because it usually is the main source of controversy when alleged originality is challenged; witness demands for chemical analysis of PDO products to prove their distinct qualities (obscuring the relevance of the more contextual factors).

Exhibit 1. Dyadic relationships between the originality factors

Examples of the interrelations in Exhibit 1

- Delimitation of a production area can be based on soil and microclimate characteristics which, once chosen, co-determine typicity.
- Communality implies the exchange and reinforcement of typicity related know-how.
- Tradition may imply the use of a particular indigenous animal breed or plant variety.
- Tradition implies that multiple producers were and are involved in the repetition of practices over time.
- Delimitating a production area implies that each producer in the area may make the OP.
- Area delimitation may be based on the past location of producers.

Comparing O-scores

Single OPs can be rated on the sub-factors described above. Of course, the scores are always relative to the characteristics of their competing generic versions. Thus, the Comté AOC from the Jura can be compared to the industrialized French Gruyere cheese.
which has no geographic restriction and only a generally described production method (DuPont 2002). Conversely, the O-scores of an OP can be compared to those of an imaginary competitor with the highest possible score (in the given circumstances). The O-scores of two different OPs are harder to compare, because OPs tend to be unique in many respects.

58 The O-scores of the six OP categories specified below take are based on some average Dutch OPs for those category. The O-score of a specific OP can be lower or higher than the category average.

59 A complication when comparing total O-scores is that the scores on the sub-factors need to be weighed. The relative weights may vary per consumer and according to the culture of the region of origin. Moreover, weights depend on the characteristics of the generic (not place-related) competing versions present.

Table 1. Scores of origin food categories on originality factors (tentative)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Product category</th>
<th>Farmhouse</th>
<th>Farmers-group</th>
<th>Region-label</th>
<th>Regional-typical</th>
<th>Artisanal</th>
<th>Appropriated</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Territoriality</td>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Processing</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Distribution</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Delimitation</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Typicity</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>1</td>
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<td>0</td>
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<td>Processing</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
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</tr>
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<td>1</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Production</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Eating culture</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>Communalty</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>2</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Distribution</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>O-score (unweighted)</td>
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<td>17</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

0 = absent, or very low; 1 = not always; 2 = present, or quite high

60 At a different level of aggregation, entire GI certification labels can be compared on their O-scores. In the table below the labels are rated on their minimum and pursued requirements. Thus, the score of the label may be lower than that of a particular OP sold under this label. In fact, one Dutch PGI (Westland Grapes) displays the Erkend Streekproduct logo next to the EU logo.
Table 2. O-scores of some OP certification labels in The Netherlands

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Wadden- delicatessen (regional)</th>
<th>Erkend Streekproduct (national)</th>
<th>Slow Food Presidium (worldwide)</th>
<th>PDO (EU)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Processing</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distribution</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delimitation</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Typicity</strong></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Landscape</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Processing</td>
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<td>0</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Exterior</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Traditionality</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Historic load</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Production</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eating culture</td>
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<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Communality</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Distribution</td>
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<td>0</td>
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<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O-score (unweighted)</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

0 = not required; 1 = pursued; 2 = required

Explanation to the O-scores in table 2:

- Wadden-delicatessen (now under more stringent 'Waddengoud' label): Minimum of 50% raw material content comes from the Wadden area (6 northern islands + 25 km broad coastal strip); processing takes place within the area, in order to stimulate regional development; organic agriculture is strived for; landscape preservation is a general goal.
- Erkend Streekproduct ('recognized area product'): Under this private certification label, raw material content comes from the area delimited by a region-label organisation where one exists, otherwise the area is defined for a single producer (usually its municipality); processing takes place within the area; production methods are in some way more sustainable than usual; typicity is not required.
- Slow Food Presidium: This label provides producers with no legal protection, nor is it displayed on the product (just in folders); the criteria are area delimitation based on terroir, longstanding tradition, gastronomic value added, threat of extinction, small-scale production units, sustainable production methods, and communality. Use of local primary matter is not always required, but strived for.
- PDO: Area delimitation is well-motivated; typicity is required but is quite low in some cases; tradition is not officially required, but in practice it is; communality is required for at least the agriculture stage.

Conclusion and discussion

The elements defining the multiple connectedness of origin food products (OPs) to their places of origin (i.e. their unique selling points) can be comprised in four separate ‘originality’ factors: (1) territorially, or physical connectedness of supply chain activities to the place, (2) typicity, or place-specific details of supply chain practices and artefacts, (3) traditionality, or rootedness of supply chain practices in place-bound
history, (4) communality, or the sharing of experience and practices by the supply chain actors. The higher the degree of originality, the less vulnerable a product is to replication elsewhere.

The factors have been distilled from criteria for OP certification labels and scientific and popular publications on the subject. Further, they are based on an intuitive assessment of the variables underlying the main OP categories found in The Netherlands. The factors are held to be analytically independent (although they correlate), and to be exhaustive in their coverage of possible originality aspects.

The definition of originality is normative in the sense that the distinguishing qualities of OPs are considered to be unique selling points (not shared by non-origin food products) that can be evaluated on their presence and relative weight. For this reason, area delimitation, the peculiarities of the production process, the history, and the degree of sharing, are assessed on their geographic uniqueness and on the appeal of that uniqueness. For instance, the traditionality of an OP is higher if it used to be eaten at a royal court instead of by ordinary people etc.

Each O-factor can be specified into sub-factors, related to the subsequent stages in the supply chain. By rating an OP on all sub-factors, a total ‘originality score’ (O-score) can be calculated. However, meaningful calculations are difficult to make because factors like tradition and typicity are hard to quantify. Moreover, the relative weight attributed to each sub-factor is subject to the personal and cultural preferences of consumers, and remains an issue for debate. Finally, correlation between the factors needs to be accounted for.

Bearing in mind the subjective nature of O-scores, they can best be used to compare a particular OP to its competing generic version, or to assess how its own originality can be increased. A special use of O-scores is the comparison of OP certification labels on their minimum requirements on the sub-factors. Comparing labels across national borders would reveal cultural differences. In some countries people put more emphasis on communality, or on the scientific prove of typicity, etc. In The Netherlands, people tend to emphasize environment friendliness of OPs, at the expense of typicity and traditionality. This is particularly true for Farmhouse, Farmers-group and Region-label OPs. Research is needed to measure and explain the ‘culture sensitivity’ of the sub-factors.

Further research should, more in general, address the relative weights supply chain actors and consumers attach to the various sub-factors.

This article has not considered the way in which the market potential embodied in a food product’s degree of originality can best be exploited. In fact, high originality may lay idle and be lost if not properly organized; production volumes should be controlled, aspects of originality should be safeguarded and communicated, intellectual property embodied in the geographical indication be protected etc. Neither has the analysis considered the sustainability of OPs with respect to the supply chain context, i.e. beyond direct market performance. Producers of a region-typical food product may find it necessary, for example, to pay more attention to the environment in order to ensure public support for continued access to a vulnerable biosphere. In studying the interplay of O-scores and organizational issues, it must be kept in mind that the present O-scores are the result of past efforts.
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ZANDERINK R., 2001, Van Stal Gehaald; Ons Levend Erfgoed in Woord en Beeld (Our living Cultural Heritage in Words and Pictures; 70 breeds), Tirion, Baarn
The aim of this article is to define a methodological tool to evaluate the contribution of various factors to the connectedness of food products to their places of origin, i.e. to the specific market potential that arises from that link. Most of the examples given here are drawn from the Dutch context, but the definition method may be equally useful to the analysis of origin food products in other countries. The method can be used to assess a single food product, compare two different origin food products, or compare origin food labels. This type of normative and instrumental approach seems to contradict a more socio-cultural evaluation of the value and role of origin food products in the agri-food chain and in society at large. However, the proposed definition framework can actually help to highlight culturally defined differences between regions and countries in the way people assess the 'originality' of food products.

L’objectif de cet article est de définir un outil méthodologique mettant en valeur les contributions de différents facteurs au degré de connectivité des produits alimentaires à leurs lieux d’origine, c’est-à-dire au potentiel commercial lié à cette connectivité. Cette méthode peut être utilisée pour examiner le potentiel d’un seul produit, comparer différents produits d’origine, ou bien différents labels d’origine. Une telle approche normative et instrumentale semble a priori opposée à une évaluation socioculturelle de la valeur et du rôle des produits typiques dans la filière agroalimentaire, et dans la société en général. Pourtant, je pense que le cadre de définition ici proposé peut aider à éclairer les différences culturelles entre régions et pays dans l’évaluation de l’« originalité » de leurs produits typiques. La plupart des exemples sont tirés du contexte néerlandais, mais les facteurs qui en découlent s’avèrent pertinents pour l’analyse de produits alimentaires dans des contextes très divers.

INDEX

Mots-clés: produits locaux, produits d’origine, labels
Keywords: local food, origin food products, food labels

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