

## **Iconic food production – branding of local communities** By Laurids Siig Christensen, Taste of Denmark

Iconic food production is a production that in market perception is linked to a location.

European Mediterranean countries have a very strong tradition for linking food production to branding of regions and communities. Wine is one category of production where a large variety of districts are defined as the producer of wine with defined qualities, reflecting not only the natural conditions of the soil and land but also culture and traditions in the district. This is the essence of *terroir*. Cheese and other dairy products are another category of products with a large variety of terroir-brands, and meat products such as ham is yet another category. Based on these traditions, an EU regulation has been defined on protection of geographical indications and designations of origin <sup>i</sup>.

Countries in the North Sea Region do not have the same tradition for terroir-based branding as our southern neighbours, although attempts have been made. Among other examples could be mentioned beef from the marsh of the Wadden Sea as well as lambs from the same area that both have acquired a Protected Designation of Origin (PDO). Yet, in smaller scale, iconic production was suggested as a strategy of supporting emerging food producers and profiling island communities in Denmark <sup>ii</sup>, and the terroir-brand Island Specialties® was developed <sup>iii</sup> in appreciation of a number of food producing companies already following this strategy. A considerable number of high-profiled, innovative food SME's, often with a focus also on culinary tourism, have popped up during the past 15 years. No solitary actors like these food enterprises can attract visitors to the islands where they are located. The significance of impact for these relatively small communities is evident, and a large number of islands in Denmark have become associated with specific food production. As a strategy of strengthening innovation in the food landscape, iconic production deserves to be expanded beyond island borders in the North Sea Region.

Iconic food production has an exceptional potential in developing coherence in local communities as well as providing the basis for upscaling of a production with defined criteria of quality and/or method of production. Among principles of action can be mentioned:

- Upscaling of production of a product with defined criteria of quality and method of production by co-operation between producers

- Building synergy and value gain by collaboration with enterprises of other branches such as tourism. Happy tourists in local food SME's are ambassadors in the rest of the world for products of the location.
- Co-developing local market demand and local supply.
- Focus is developed on locally solving logistic challenges of processing and distribution.
- Combining iconic production with development of quality and sustainability in production is developing local pride in being part of something greater (compliance with UN Agenda 2030 and the Paris Agreement on Climate action).

In appreciation of iconic food production as a driver in developing local infrastructures of farming and food production, processing and marketing as well as branding of local communities, we should develop focus on these transformers in the food landscape. Linking food production to a location is essential not only for the local community but indeed also for the development in the market on a national scale of the interest in knowing the origin of food.

We will present on the REFRAME Open Resource Center a number of 'Best Practice Iconic Food Enterprises' to demonstrate principles of action and the development driven by these innovative enterprises. Criteria of selection of these examples should include.

- Visions of the founding entrepreneurs
- Ideas of production in compliance with UN Agenda 2030 and the Paris Agreement on Climate Action
- Initiatives and progress on integration of food production and local community
- Parameters of success

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<sup>i</sup> EU Council (2006a). Council Regulation (EC) No 510/2006 of 20 March 2006 on the protection of geographical indications and designations of origin for agricultural products and foodstuffs (Oj L 93, 23.12.2006 p. 12) (<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32006R0510>)

<sup>ii</sup> [http://www.smagenafdanmark.dk/media/2696007/seuc\\_rapport.pdf](http://www.smagenafdanmark.dk/media/2696007/seuc_rapport.pdf)

<sup>iii</sup> <https://northsearegion.eu/reframe/news/island-specialties-a-terroir-in-danish/>