



**MOVING**  
MOUNTAIN VALORISATION THROUGH  
INTERCONNECTEDNESS AND GREEN GROWTH

**Policy Brief**

# CORSICA | PDO chestnut flour and chestnut trees in the Renoso massif



Photo credit: Sorba, 2021



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# PDO chestnut flour and chestnut trees in the Renoso massif

## Summary

Chestnut orchards are an essential component of Corsican mountain villages, and they provide a pillar of the traditional Corsican diet. A revival started with chestnut flour, which obtained the Protected Designation of Origin (PDO) in 2010. All PDO production is from organic agriculture. Two other activities have joined the value chains linked to the chestnut grove: the PDO "Mele di Corsica" and the three PDOs from pig breeding: "Coppa di Corsica", "Lonzu" and "Prisuttu". The flour comes from the regeneration of a very small part of the existing orchards, which mostly suffer from fungal diseases (Phytophthora and Cryphonectria). The success of the valuation of chestnut flour PDO has led to a requalification of the chestnut orchards. This is based, in particular, on high prices (food gentrification), and the certification of charcuterie from pigs finished by allowing them to forage in chestnut groves, but this also tends to pose problems of coexistence between pig breeding and chestnut (multifunctionality). In addition, contemporary food issues (renewal of food crops, search for better food, and attractiveness of local productions) open new ways of valuing the fruit from new plantations.

**Know more about the Corsica Reference Region**, its selected value chain and the regional multi-actor platform (MAP), [here](#).

## Key policy messages

- Coexistence of activities
- Diversification
- Local food
- Food landscape

## 1. The Mountain Reference Region (MRR)

The insular nature of the mountains of Corsica helps preserve ecosystems (population, niche, endemism), but at the same time it induces strong environmental and socio-economic vulnerabilities (fires, health, low demography, access and mobility). Recently designated a "Mountain Island" (Mountain Law, 2016), Corsica is the subject of generally conservative public policies built according to the logic of site, protection and classification at national and regional level. The regulatory framework struggles to support productive activities in environments that are largely shaped by human activities. The chestnut orchards of the upper valley of Gravona and Fiumorbu-Castellu, backing respectively on the southwest and northeast slopes of the



Renosu massif, cover an area of more than 1 000 ha. Most of the trees in the village of Ghisoni have not been maintained for twenty years. Bocognano is the cradle of the revival of chestnut farming in the early 1980s. Almost all of the production of chestnuts is transformed into flour in local small-scale mills. The production is sold mainly on local market and during the regional fair, which is held in the village of Bucugnanu. The chestnut grove constitutes the landscape of the two communal territories; their vulnerability undermines the cultural and economic identity of the region.

## 2. From flour to new value chains

Chestnut orchards are an essential component of Corsican mountain villages. The products are a pillar of the traditional Corsican diet. A revival followed increased demand for chestnut flour, which obtained a PDO in 2010 . All PDO production is from organic agriculture. The flour comes from the regeneration of a very small part of the existing orchards, which mostly suffer from fungal diseases (*Phytophthora* and *Cryphonectria*). The success of the valuation of chestnut flour has led to a requalification of the chestnut orchards. Its popular character is less assertive due in particular to high prices (food gentrification). Likewise, the certification of charcuterie from pigs finished in chestnut groves tends to pose problems of coexistence between breeding and castaniculture. In addition, contemporary food issues (renewal of food crops, search for better food, and attractiveness of local productions) opens new ways of valuing the fruit from new plantations.

The management of production and the protection of the interests of the value chain are the responsibility of the PDO "Corsican chestnut flour - Farina castagnina corsa". Damage caused by the chestnut gall wasp (*cynips*) has highlighted the crucial role of the PDO organisation beyond the mere defence of the product. Recently, new initiatives have been taken by municipalities and private individuals to renovate, and also to plant new trees. Projects to create one or more specialised nurseries are the subject of public support. These projects open up new avenues of development and value chains such as fresh chestnuts. They also open up the chestnut grove to other food, recreational and landscaping functions.

The chestnut grove is an issue involving a plurality of actors, producers of PDO flour, other producers and private and public users, and first and foremost the inhabitants of the regions concerned. The value chain is reopened to other values likely to give a new complementary dynamism to the professional PDO organisation.

## 3. Value chain contribution to sustainability and resilience of the MRR: barriers and opportunities

In the isolated context of Corsica (mountain island and mosaic of valleys), the organisation of sector-type value chains is not always possible due to the small size of the activities (numbers



of breeders, diversity of species, varieties of production, plurality of actors and multifunctionality of environments). Participatory research on the chestnut orchards region is expected to integrate the components of value at the level of the production area. As such, INRAE are mobilising the concept of "milieu-ressources" to promote integrative management and the coexistence of pastoral pork breeding and chestnut production. In this perspective, the value chain for chestnuts is organised around the flour PDO. The construction of value is inclusive of the qualities of the encompassing ecosystems (territories of Bocognano and Ghisoni) and the characteristics of the actors. The research undertaken aims as much at drawing up the rules for use of the environment, with a view to coexistence, as the qualification of the characteristics of the flour *per se*. The organisation into a pastoral land association or any other legal solutions is likely to stabilise the lasting establishment of commons.

#### 4. Policy relevant considerations

The case of the Corsican chestnut grove sheds light on and tests a new concept for the value chain, which is more inclusive of ecosystem services. In this, it opens up new ways of public action taking into account several dimensions:

- The multifunctionality of the chestnut grove calls for an articulation between market, food and landscape functions in relation to local sociability.
- The coexistence of several value chains associated with PDO flour (fruit, charcuterie and wood) in order to prevent conflicts of use, in particular between chestnut farming and livestock activities (pork/charcuterie), a participation extended to others actors than only professionals (in particular to the inhabitants) taking into account business models which include the planting of new trees.
- A response to climate and health crises based on an organisation and governance on the basis of the territory (Bocognano and Ghisoni).

#### References

- Mountain law, 2016: "*LOI no 2016-1888 du 28 décembre 2016 de modernisation, de développement et de protection des territoires de montagne*".  
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- Chestnut flour PDO: <https://www.inao.gouv.fr/produit/7109>

#### Authors

Jean Michel Sorba, INRAE, jean-michel.sorba@inrae.fr

Jean Christophe Paoli, INRAE, jean-christophe.paoli@inrae.fr