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Mountain beef and wine: Italian consumers' definitions and opinions on the mountain labelling-scheme

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Abstract

Despite the importance of mountain areas and mountain farming, the literature on studies on consumers' opinion concerning mountain food products is not numerous. In order to contribute to filling this gap, this study aims at exploring Italian consumers' opinions regarding beef and wine produced in mountain areas as well as their opinions concerning the new European regulation on mountain food products. To do so, a qualitative approach with observations, focus groups and semi-structured interviews were applied. The results indicate that consumers living in mountain areas and those living in non-mountain areas, including rural areas, have different knowledge about the practices in mountain farming and different opinions concerning mountain food products. Nevertheless, both want mountain food products to be healthier and sustainably produced. Furthermore, they associate wine and beef mainly to credence attributes. As for European regulation, most criticisms are directed to the flexibility of the rules. The inclusion of wine in the mountain quality scheme is not a consensus among consumers. However, the analyses point to the existence of consumers who are interested in wines produced in mountain areas, indicating the emergence of a potential niche market for these wines.

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Introduction

Mountains and mountain farming have been in the focus of the European Union since the 1970s, with the implementation of the Less Favoured Areas approach (Bryden & Mantino, 2018; Commission, 2009). The concerns with mountains are not by chance. Mountain areas cover around 18.5% of the total European land surface (Santini *et al.*, 2013) – in Italy, they comprise 43.72% of the municipalities and 58.2% of the national territory (Losavio & Perniciaro, 2017). Roughly, two-thirds of the economic activities in European mountain areas rely on the primary sector, including mountain farming (Santini *et al.*, 2013).

Mountain farming is characterized mainly by family and small-scale agriculture, which plays an important role in supporting sustainability and promoting food security and economic development (European Parliament, 2014; FAO - Food And Agriculture Organization, 2013, 2014; Graeub *et al.*, 2016). These farms tend to be smaller and more diverse in terms of agricultural systems (when compared to large farms). At a larger scale, the combination of these two elements (small-scale and agricultural diversity) contributes to the landscape heterogeneity, thus, protecting biodiversity (Chappell *et al.*, 2013). Moreover, traditional low-intensity farming practices used by many smallholders in mountain areas creates semi-natural habitats such as species-rich grasslands, and grazed wetlands. These habitats contribute to support many species, enhancing biodiversity (Zisenis *et al.*, 2010). In addition, mountain farming is a source of many food products – such as dairy and meat products, wine, fruits, olive oil, among others (Santini *et al.*, 2013) which have a positive image among consumers who tend to associate these products to health and purity, authenticity and simplicity (Giraud & Petit, 2003; Schjøll *et al.*, 2010).

Nevertheless, European mountain areas also face many challenges. The hard living conditions and the regional/global economic dynamics – e.g. harsh climate, increasing production costs, competition with products from other regions – can induce farming exit, contributing to the ageing of farm population and agricultural abandonment (Hinojosa *et al.*, 2016; MacDonald *et al.*, 2000; NORDREGIO, 2004; Terres *et al.*, 2015). Moreover, due to the isolation, the topography, the climate and short growing seasons, mountain farming faces higher production costs compared to lowlands (Reuillon *et al.*, n.d.; Santini *et al.*, 2013).

In order to contribute to the development of rural communities through a “conservation by consumption approach” (Bergmann *et al.*, 2006; Grotelüschen & Requardt, 2006), the European Commission has recently promulgated the Regulation (EU) No 1151/2012 and Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) No 665/2014, creating the conditions for the implementation

of a labelling-scheme for food products intended to human consumption and produced in mountain areas.

However, by defining rules for the use of the quality term “mountain product”, the legislation generated both inclusions and exclusions. In other words, not all products from mountain areas are protected by the mountain labelling-scheme. This implies, for example, the exclusion of wines, even though it is an important agricultural product and a tourist attraction in several mountainous areas in Italy, Portugal, Greece, France and Slovenia (Santini *et al.*, 2013). This exclusion also seems to ignore a growing movement from the wine producers' side, who tries to use the mountainous origin to link their products to the positive aspects that mountain food products may evoke to consumers. For example, Figure 1 shows some examples of the association of wines and mountains used by producers across Europe, in an attempt to differentiate their products based on the mountain origin and all that it can represent for consumers”. Corroborating this idea, a study with German consumers and producers indicated potential in obtaining a price premium for wine produced in steep slope (Strub & M, 2017). Indeed, associating wines to nature and sustainability could represent an interesting strategy for quality differentiation of wines produced in mountain areas (Schäufele & Hamm, 2017).

Figure 1 - Wine labels from Greece (a), advertisement of a sparkling wine consortium from Italy (b) and announcement of a wine festival dedicated to wines produced in mountains (c)



Source: Samos Wines (n.d.); Trentino Marketing (n.d.); Federvini (n.d.).

On the other side of the European regulation, there are the products protected by the mountain labelling-scheme. One of these products is beef, which, like wine, is an important agricultural product for many mountain

areas in Europe – e.g. Tyrol (Austria), Massif Central (France). In fact, beef production accounts for 16% of the total turnover of European mountain areas (Santini *et al.*, 2013). So, adding value to the mountain beef production using the mountain label may generate a positive impact in the economy of rural areas. Moreover, the use of the mountain labelling-scheme to qualify beef may represent an interesting market opportunity for rural communities, since the market for qualified food products has increased 44% in the sale value between 2010 and 2017, in Europe (EC - European Commission, 2019; Tregear *et al.*, 2007).

However, albeit the rules of the mountain labelling scheme may ensure what consumers expect from beef produced in mountain areas, sometimes a label alone may not be powerful enough to become a consumption driver. For instance, in a discrete choice experiment with consumers from Spain and France, the results indicate that the mountain label might have a timid effect on consumers' willingness to pay (WTP) for beef (Sanjuán & Khliji, 2016). In such a situation, using other attributes as moderators may increase consumers' WTP and willingness to consume (Fernández-Ferrín *et al.*, 2017; Zanolli *et al.*, 2015). Then, identifying these attributes is essential for the development of successful marketing strategies – or even for the improvement of the labelling system.

In spite of such potentialities and considering the importance of wine and beef production for mountain farming, after the entry into force of the regulation on mountain products, few studies involved beef or wine produced on mountain areas. Even so, the vast majority focused on the production side – for instance, Pachoud & Schermer (2019), McMorran *et al.* (2015) and Baritau *et al.* (2011) – and none of the studies explored consumers' opinion concerning the new regulation on mountain food products.

Against this background, this study aims at exploring Italian consumers' opinions regarding beef and wine produced in mountain areas as well as their opinions concerning the new mountain labelling scheme. To do so, a qualitative approach will be employed in order to answer the following questions: (a) what do consumers expect from wines and beef produced in the mountain areas?; (b) what do consumers think about the rules applied to mountain beef?; and (c) what do consumers think about applying the mountain labelling scheme to wines produced in mountain areas?

1. Background

1.1. Labelling policies and the mountain labelling-scheme

Labelling-schemes have become an important policy tool over the last years (Teisl & Roe, 1998). States and supranational organizations develop

labelling-schemes for multiple reasons. According to Lusk (2013), such reasons can be both economic and non-economic. Asymmetric information, quality uncertainty and moral hazard are among the economic motivations for setting up a labelling-scheme. Among non-economic reasons, there are consumers' right for information, protection of specific groups of consumers and producers, paternalistic concerns, externalities and other behaviour-related concerns.

In Europe, the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) includes labelling-schemes as part of the strategy to support the development of rural areas and the improvement of food quality and health of consumers (Arfini & Bellassen, 2019). The backbone of the European food quality schemes is the Regulation (EU) No 1151/2012 of the European Parliament, the so-called "quality package". This regulation encompasses different labelling-schemes – geographical indications, traditional speciality guaranteed and the optional quality terms for mountain food products and products of island farming – and it offers Member States and producers the general guidelines to apply the labels. With respect to the quality term "mountain product", the regulation aims at: (a) adding value to mountain products in order to compensate mountain producers for higher productions costs; (b) sustaining the farming sector, which is of great importance for the economy of mountain areas; and (c) giving clearer information to consumers concerning the mountain provenance of food products. To do so, the regulation defines the type of products that are suitable to use the quality term "mountain product" as well as the origin of the inputs used and the location of the processing plants (see Table 6 in the Appendix).

In line with Article 2(2) and the first paragraph of Article 31, the quality term is applied only to plant-based, animal and beekeeping products intended for human consumption. Therefore, other types of products, such as cosmetics or handicrafts, which may be common in some mountain areas, are not protected by the mountain labelling-scheme. Wines are also excluded from the list of products suitable of using the quality term, although they are an important agricultural product in many mountain areas in Europe such as South Tyrol (Italy), Douro (Portugal), Haute-Savoie (France) and despite the fact that some countries such as Switzerland apply a similar mountain label to wines. The exclusion of wine (as well as of beer and spirits), is no further explained. Along with the type of products in the first paragraph, there is a specification concerning the location of processing plants. In order to apply the mountain label, processed food products must be processed within the limits of the designated mountain area. The lawmaker's intention seems to be very clear: to preserve jobs in mountainous areas and to prevent these areas from being mere suppliers of raw materials for companies located in other areas by strengthening processing of raw materials and thereby strengthening economic value generation in mountain areas.

Article 31(2) brings the definition of “mountain area” for the purposes of applying the mountain labelling-scheme. For European products, mountain areas are those defined in accordance with Article 18 (1) of Regulation (EC) 1257/1999 - currently Article 32 (1) of Regulation (EU) No 1305/2013 of the European Parliament (see Table 7 in the Appendix). The Italian legislation classifies “mountain area” as such municipalities in which at least 80% of the surface is located higher than 600 meters above sea level or those in which the difference in height between the lower and upper elevations of the municipal area is more than 600 meters (Legge 25 luglio 1952, n. 991 Provvedimenti in Favore dei Territori Montani).

Since the Regulation (EU) No 1151/2012 defines the general guidelines, the paragraphs 3 and 4 of the Article 31 allow the European Commission to adopt delegated acts in order to supplement the article 31(1) of the Regulation (EC) 1151/2012. Based on this, the Commission published the Delegated Regulation (EU) No 665/2014 that defines specific rules on methods of production, raw materials, and feedstuffs.

1.2. Rules Applied to “Mountain Beef”

The delegated act specifies three rules applied to beef production in mountain areas. Firstly, animals must be reared for at least the last two-thirds of their lives in mountain areas. In the case of transhumance animals, the minimum time of rearing required is one-quarter of their lives in transhumance grazing on pastures in mountain areas. Secondly, up to 40% of feedstuff are allowed to be produced in other areas. This minimum requirement for feedstuff is again not applied to transhumance animals when reared outside mountain areas. Thirdly, the processing operations – which include slaughtering animals, cutting and boning carcasses – can take place up to 30 kilometres from the administrative border of the mountain area in question.

1.3. The Application of the European Regulation in Italy

In Italy, the mountain labelling-scheme is regulated by three decrees of the Ministry of Agricultural, Food and Forestry Policies. The Decree 26 July 2017 (Decreto 26 luglio 2017) – which replicates almost entirely the Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) No 665/2014 – regulates the conditions to use the optional quality term “mountain product”. It includes the licensing procedure as well as the ways to control and monitor its use by local and national governments. The Decree of 20 July 2018 (Decreto 20

luglio 2018) details the rules on the origin of feedstuff. Finally, the Decree of 2 August 2018 (Decreto 2 agosto 2018, Istituzione Del Logo Identificativo per l'indicazione Facoltativa Di Qualità “Prodotto Di Montagna”) institutes the identification logo for mountain food products (see Figure 2).

Figure 2 - Logo for Italian Mountain Food Products



Source: Italian Decree of August 2, 2018, Launching of the voluntary label “Mountain Product”.

1.4. Wine market regulations

In Europe, the Regulation (EU) No 1308/2013 of the European Parliament is the main policy prescribing both expenditure and regulatory measures to the markets of agricultural products. Also called Common Market Organization (CMO), the regulation defines many aspects related to labelling and presentation of European wines, giving especial attention to wines under a designation of origin or geographical indications (Pomarici & Sardone, 2020). For instance, the regulation defines the requirements for obtaining the designation of origin, such as the geographical area where the production takes place and the origin of the grapes (Article 93 of the Regulation (EU) No 1308/2013).

European Member States are entitled to implement and expand the rules of the CMO by creating ad hoc regulations. In Italy, the Wine Consolidated Law (Legge 12 dicembre 2016, n. 238, Disciplina Organica della Coltivazione della Vite e della Produzione e del Commercio del Vino, 2016) accomplishes this task concerning wine and viticulture. The Italian law defines rules for the production, marketing, designation and labelling of wines. In the text, there are at least six different designations: protected designation of origin (PDO), protected geographical indication (PGI), geographical indication (IG), controlled and guaranteed designation of origin (DOCG), controlled

designations of origin (DOC), typical geographical indication (IGT). Although both the European regulation and the Italian law weave detailed rules for wine production and labelling, there are no specific rules for viticulture or wines from mountain areas.

Recently, the Italian government published the Decree No 6899, of 30/06/2020 (Decreto No 6899 del 30/06/2020). The objective is to protect and promote the heroic and historic vineyards. According to Article 3 of the Decree, the heroic vineyards are those holding at least one of the following characteristics: land steepness of at least 30%, average altitude above 500 meters above sea level (excluding vineyards located on plateaus), production on terraces or steps, and production on small islands (islands of less than 250km²). Viticulture in mountain areas encompasses some of these features. For instance, vineyards in steep slopes, high altitudes and/or terraces (Santini *et al.*, 2013). However, the decree does not contemplate all the vineyards located in mountain areas - e.g., the vineyards located between 300 and 499 meters of altitude, which may face the same climatic conditions as the vineyards at 500 meters of altitude. Besides, the rules do not distinguish between vineyards located in mountain areas from those located in islands or at steep slopes in low altitudes.

1.5. *Quality Dimensions and Food Attributes*

Identifying the dimensions of quality and risk that are of importance for Italian consumers regarding wine and beef produced in mountain areas may contribute to the improvement of the mountain labelling-scheme and reinforce consumer protection – as in the case of Parmigiano Reggiano cheese from the mountain (Sidali & Scaramuzzi, 2014). Further, it might support the development of successful marketing strategies for mountain producers – for example, through the transformations of the identified dimensions into quality cues (Northen, 2000).

For consumers, mountain food products hold different attributes (Matscher & Schermer, 2009), that is, distinct dimensions of quality and risk. Quality refers to a perception of certainty about positive expectations, while risk consists of the perception of uncertainty, anticipation about possible negative consequences that may arise from a choice (Volle, 1995).

There is no consensus in the literature as to the number and dimensions in which quality can be broken down (Fandos & Flavián, 2006). For Aurier & Sirieix (2016), food quality can be split into five dimensions: taste and pleasure, health, convenience, social and symbolic, and ethical. On the other side of the coin, these authors name seven dimensions of risk (Aurier & Sirieix, 2016): functional or performance, physical, financial, waste of time, social, psychological, and ethical.

All dimensions of quality and risk that are present in food products are what Lancaster (1966) called good characteristics, meaning something that gives utility to the consumer. Steenkamp (1990), in turn, calls these characteristics “quality attributes” and defines them as the functional and psychological benefits the product provides – or that the consumer perceives as being provided by the product. Generally, these quality attributes can be classified into three categories (Nelson, 1970; Darby & Karni, 1973): search attributes, experience attributes, and credence attributes. *Search attributes* are food characteristics that consumers can verify before purchasing. Examples are price, color, labels, and packaging. *Experience attributes* are those characteristics that can be verified only after the consumption of the product. Flavor, juiciness, texture, convenience in preparation and consumption are some examples of experience attributes. *Credence attributes* are the type of quality attributes that are very hard for consumers to verify, even after consuming the product or using it for a long time. Usually, this type of attributes can only be ascertained by experts or not at all. Most ethical dimensions of quality belong to this category, such as animal welfare, ecological sustainability, social and economic equity but also the origin.

The way consumers perceive these quality attributes is the result of a value judgement in relation to the fitness for consumption (Steenkamp, 1990). In this judgment, consumers assimilate the quality cues in a conscious and/or unconscious way that is influenced by the context and personal traits. The referred cues are, in Steenkamp's definition, informational stimuli related to the quality of the product and can be verified by the consumer prior to consumption. In short, consumers observe quality cues (the information), but actually they want the quality attributes (the functional and psychological benefits). In that respect, quality cues are very similar to the definition of search attributes (Nelson, 1970). With regard to the mountain food products, the production in mountain areas is a credence attribute, because it is not possible to verify for a consumer.

Quality cues can be intrinsic or extrinsic. *Intrinsic quality cues* are intrinsic to the product, which means they cannot be changed without also changing the product itself, its physical characteristics (Olson & Jacoby, 1972). In the case of beef, examples of intrinsic quality cues are taste, color and visible fat. *Extrinsic quality cues*, in turn, are not part of the product although they are connected to it (Olson & Jacoby, 1972). Label, price, brand name, country of origin are examples of wine extrinsic quality cues.

1.6. Consumer interest in mountain food products

As stated by Schjøll and colleagues (2010), until 2007, there were only four researches providing pieces of evidence about consumers' interest

in mountain food products. In fact, most of the studies in the literature are related to other aspects of mountain food products – sustainable rural development (Santos, 2017), market potential (Martins & Ferreira, 2017), innovation and tradition in the production process (Pachoud & Schermer, 2019), comparison of the mountain label with other labelling schemes (McMorran *et al.*, 2015), application of the mountain label to a supply chain (Bonadonna *et al.*, 2015), mountain farming and mountain labelling scheme (Santini *et al.*, 2013), producers and retailers opinions about mountain product and the mountain label (Baritoux *et al.*, 2011; Bonadonna & Duglio, 2016; Finco *et al.*, 2017), production rules and food authenticity (Bentivoglio *et al.*, 2019) just to cite a few.

Between 2007 and 2010, the association Euromontana carried out the EUROMarc project, whose objective was to study the market of mountain food products in Europe (Euromontana, 2014). This project analysed consumer interest in mountain products in six countries (Austria, France, Norway, Romania, Scotland, and Slovenia). The research included consumer expectations on food products from mountain areas. Only one study included beef, and none considered wines (Amilien *et al.*, 2009).

According to Amilien *et al.* (2009), the results show that consumers expect mountain products to be produced in mountain areas, by small producers, using local raw materials and traditional methods – but observing industrial hygiene standards. Consumers also expect mountain products to contribute to the economy of mountain areas and be associated with the culture and identity of these areas. The authors warn that these expectations vary according to the country and the type of product.

In addition to the EuroMARC project studies, other recent researches have also analysed mountain products from a consumer perspective. In the already mentioned study of Sanjuán and Khliji (2016), the experiment showed that mountain as a place of origin for beef had a low influence on Spanish and French consumer behaviour. In Italy, Zuliani *et al.* (2018), found out that consumers expect mountain dairy products to be healthier than lowland products and produced by small-scale farmers. In Spain, the findings of Resano and Sanjuán (2018) indicated that using the mountain origin for beef positively affected consumer hedonic valuations. In the most recent study (Bentivoglio *et al.*, 2020), the results pointed out that consumers' beliefs about the production process and quality attributes of mountain food affected the willingness to pay for milk. The authors also affirmed that health-conscious and local economy-conscious individuals have a higher interest in mountain products.

In summary, the literature shows that we still know very little about what Italian consumers think about mountain food products. To the best we know, there are no researches on Italian consumer opinion regarding beef and wine produced in mountain areas, corroborating the importance of our study.

2. Methods

To answer the outlined research questions, this study used the inductive approach. With this approach, researchers seek to identify frequent patterns in raw data and develop theories from these patterns (Strauss & Corbin, 1998; Thomas, 2006). In this study, this involved triangulating the data collected with different methods to identify emerging categories. We compared the initial results with (a) the European regulation on the mountain labelling scheme, (b) the findings from previous studies on consumers and mountain products, and (c) the concepts on food quality dimensions (Aurier & Sirieix, 2016) and food attributes (Darby & Karni, 1973; Nelson, 1970; Steenkamp, 1990). This process generated the interpretations presented in the results section.

The data collection was carried out using three different methods: observations of the interactions in different occasions between consumers on the one hand and beef and wine producers on the other hand, as well as focus group discussions and semi-structured interviews with beef and wine consumers – Figure 3, in the appendix, summarizes the methodological approach of this study. All three approaches are qualitative. This means that they do not aim at producing quantitative data for statistical comparisons but qualitative data in order to analyse underlying structures of thinking in fields where there is no information available. This means that sample sizes are much smaller compared to quantitative approaches. The three approaches used in this study are closely linked to each other and are explained in more detail in the following.

Observations are generally used in the attempt “to record in a relatively systematic fashion some aspect of the behaviour of people in their ordinary environment” (Banister *et al.*, 1997). In this technique, no interaction between the researcher and the observed individuals takes place. The researcher observes situations and persons to get insights into how people behave (Pope & Mays, 2006). We applied this technique to get first impressions on how consumers react in contact with beef producing farmers and winegrowers and -makers. The objective was to identify words and expressions consumers and producers use to describe wine and beef produced in mountain areas in order to use them for designing the scripts underpinning the subsequent focus group discussions. The observations took place at three different events: an agricultural fair in Bolzano in 2018, where there was a stand of an organic beef producers association from South Tyrol; a festival dedicated to “mountain wine” produced in Trentino and South Tyrol in Trento 2018; and a practitioners’ oriented meeting of South Tyrol Wines in Bolzano in 2019. In total, the observation time at the three events was approximately 12 hours. The data collected include a description of the interactions between producers

and consumers and the terms and expressions they used to refer to the product, production process, and the mountain territory.

Based on the results of the observations, the focus group discussions were designed. Focus groups are a method that stimulates interaction between participants (Kitzinger, 2006) and allows researchers to get detailed insights into participants thoughts and arguments about the topic under discussion. Two focus groups were carried out. Thereby, one focused on beef and the other on wine produced in mountain areas. We looked for people over 18 years old and for a varied group of people living in- or outside mountain areas. As an incentive for participation, a 5 Euro voucher from a grocery store specialized in local food products from South Tyrol was offered. The discussions were held in December 2018 in two cities of South Tyrol and a total of 16 people participated. The script of the focus groups included a self-presentation of the participants and an ice-breaker question on their habits concerning beef/wine choices and purchases. These questions were followed by a transition question on the differences between beef/wine produced in mountain and in non-mountain areas. Afterwards, the main questions about attributes and words that participants relate to beef/wine produced in mountain areas were discussed. To close the group discussions, participants were invited to evaluate the activity and to give feedback. During the discussions, further topics popped up such as sustainability in wine and beef production in mountain areas, willingness to pay a price premium for wine and beef produced in mountain areas, the impact of an official mountain label on willingness to consume, and finally opinions regarding the same product type but from geographically different mountain areas. The focus groups were video-recorded and transcribed verbatim, coded and analysed.

Using the preliminary results from the focus groups and observations, two questionnaires for semi-structured interviews – one for each product – were designed. Mixing “closed- and open-ended questions, often accompanied by follow-up why or how questions” (Adams, 2015) the semi-structured interview adds semi-structured interviews more flexibility and makes it possible to investigate topics and ask questions that the researcher could not foresee in advance. The questionnaires were divided into four main parts: 1) consumption habits, 2) beliefs concerning mountain areas and beef/wine produced in mountain areas (including the attributes linked to these products) 3) opinions about the mountain labelling-scheme and 4) participants’ demographics. To recruit interviewees, we asked neutral parties – people who were not directly interested in the results of the research, such as researchers from other fields, journalists – to nominate Italian consumers over 18 years old from Lombardy, Tuscany, Trentino and South Tyrol that live in rural or urban areas and are consumers of wine and/or beef. In total, 34 interviews were carried out between February and May 2019. 30 interviews were recorded

and transcribed verbatim, coded and analysed. The notes from the four non-recorded interviews were also used to compare with the results of the other recorded interviews. To determine the number of interviews in this study, we used the theoretical saturation approach. Accordingly, the saturation occurs when no category or new information emerges from data, regardless of the increase in the number of observations (Bowen, 2008). In order to confirm it, Guest and colleagues (2006) suggest the existence of two conditions: (a) a minimum number of observations, ranging from six to twelve; (b) a minimum number of additional observations, that confirm the categories and information found initially, numerically equivalent to at least one-third of the initial observations. All these conditions were observed in this study. Table 1 shows the demographics of the participants of the focus groups and interviews.

Table 1 - Distribution of Participants of the Focus Groups and Interviews*

Gender	Focus Group	Interviews	FG + Interviews
Male	81%	37%	51%
Female	19%	63%	49%
Age			
18-29	44%	3%	16%
30-44	44%	60%	55%
45-59	0%	34%	24%
60+	13%	3%	6%
Place of Origin			
Mountain Area	56%	49%	52%
Non-Mountain Area	44%	51%	48%
Urban Area	81%	54%	61%
Rural Area	19%	46%	39%
Education			
Elementary/High School	44%	23%	30%
University Degree	56%	77%	70%

* Five participants were interviewed for both products and another one participated in both focus groups. Focus group participants were not interviewed and interviewees didn't participate in the focus groups.

** This includes consumers that demonstrated deeper knowledge about the topic of the interview or focus group.

*** Consumers with basic knowledge about beef or wine production.

Although we collected the data using different approaches, we sought to integrate them during the analyses (Halcomb & Andrew, 2005; Lambert & Loiselle, 2008). Following Lambert and Loiselle (2008), we compared the

data in a non-hierarchical way to identify convergences, divergences, and to look for data completeness. This procedure gave us a better understanding of consumer opinions and perceptions about mountain food products and mountain areas.

3. Results

The results are presented in order to highlight the most important findings and answer the questions of the present study. For this reason, no distinction was made between responses obtained in the focus group and those obtained in the interviews because similar topics were discussed.

From the observations, it was possible to extract some terms and narratives used by producers and sellers to present the product to the audience during the events. In the case of wine produced in mountain areas, producers and sommeliers used to mention some aspects such as the more expressive aromas and flavours, the greater need of manual labour, the production in limited quantities, the types of terrain (terraces and steep slopes). Often, these factors were associated with the idea of authenticity: a wine from the mountains would be a product that expresses the terroir of Trento and South Tyrol. In the case of beef, the observation took place with organic farmers from South Tyrol. The producers emphasized the intense contact of the animals with nature. Aspects such as purer mountain air and water, access to pastures or feedstuff produced on the farm. In short, the idea of a more “natural” production was presented as a factor that gave higher quality to meat produced in mountain areas (South Tyrol). This quality was mainly linked to the health dimension: a healthier animal, better nourished and cared for provides healthier meat from the nutritional point of view and with less risk to human health.

Table 2 - Terms and expressions associated to beef and wine produced in mountain areas

Wine	Beef
Delicate aromas and flavours	Animals in intense contact with nature
Higher need of manual labour	The purer mountain nature
Terraces and steep slopes	Animals that can graze
Mountain terroir	Animals that eat locally produced feedstuff
	Healthier animals

The results of the observations were used both in the preparation of the interview questionnaires and in the scripts of the focus groups and in the triangulation of the results. Without mentioning the elements in Table 2, the questions were asked in order to verify whether the consumers of the focus group and the interviews expressed themselves in a similar way. Although with some variation, the expressions and terms used by consumers were very similar.

3.1. Italian Consumers' perceptions of mountain areas and mountain food products

For Italian consumers, mountains are not all the same. Mountains can evoke different sensations. Thereby, the type of sensation and its intensity may vary according to the consumer who is issuing the opinion and the mountain to which he or she is referring to. The mountain area might have a certain reputation, and this may influence consumers' perceptions regarding the mountain food products coming from this area. For instance, European mountain products are regarded e.g. as more secure and trustworthy compared to other mountain areas, as mentioned by a focus group participant:

I trust more the European mountains than in the Pakistanis ones because I know that in Europe there are quality protocols and rules to be respected, and that is a security for me. (Focus group participant P44 about beef produced in a European mountain or from a mountain elsewhere)

Further, perspectives vary depending on the background of a person. Some consumers were better informed about current farming practices in mountain areas than others. For example, they knew about the co-existence of extensive and intensive breeding in South Tyrol, or the negative effects of monoculture vineyards on biodiversity. These better-informed people currently live in either mountain or non-mountain areas, but they had one thing in common: they have all lived in mountain areas for at least three years in their lives. For this group that we call the 'mountain dwellers' (31 participants, 15 from interviews and 16 from focus groups), mountain areas have problems related to environmental pollution, meaning that nature is not fully preserved. Moreover, they feel that artisanal production has been replaced by industrial models of food production also in mountain areas.

There are few meadows, too many cows. Too much manure. They used to spread [manure on the meadows] in autumn and spring. But now, they do it every day. (Interviewee P11 from South Tyrol commenting on the negative impacts of the livestock farming in Tyrol)

It's an over-fertilization [.] It becomes a problem for the environment, for the water, for everything, for all the insects. There are no more insects. There are few, few insects and for that, there are fewer birds. (Interviewee P3 from South Tyrol commenting on the negative impacts of the livestock farming in Tyrol)

For the 'mountain dwellers', different realities co-exist in mountain areas and they have differentiated pictures in mind. According to them, there are places with preserved nature as well as sites that are contaminated by tailings from agricultural activity. They also see "good" producers and "good" food products as well as "bad" producers and "bad" food products. This means that according to their perception, mountain food products do not guarantee healthier, purer or ethically produced food. Rather, when they want to buy a high-quality mountain food, they go to a farmer or seller they know and trust.

I know a few [farmers]. They all want to do the best [.] They have few animals compared to intensive farming. This changes the way I evaluate [their quality] because I know these facts, right? I'm from this area. (Focus group participant P36 from South Tyrol associating a higher quality to specific farmers she knows and trust)

I often see the trucks with the feedstuff. I see them in the plains and I see them here [in the mountains]. I wonder what the difference is. There's no difference at all. (Interviewee P11 from South Tyrol on the quality of beef produced in mountain area compared to other areas)

In contrast, another group of consumers that are not from and do not live in mountain areas show less critical perceptions. In this group, consumers from Lombardy and Tuscany are included as well as people living in both urban or rural areas. These consumers are less aware of the mountain farming practices or of the environmental conditions in mountain areas. We call this group the 'mountain enthusiasts' (17 participants, all from the interviews). Probably because of the lack of a more intensive experience in mountain areas, the 'mountain enthusiasts' tend to have a positive and idyllic image of mountain areas and mountain food products. They tend to see these areas as places where the environment is still preserved, including the air and water, and animals live in a more natural way. They believe these conditions contribute to produce food products that are healthier and ethically produced.

I connect the mountain to the old days, to the extensive farming, and then I think of free animals to graze. (Interviewee P7 from Lombardy on the type of breeding in mountain areas)

[The animal] is freer, it eats healthier, right?! There's more grazing. It gives me that idea. (Interviewee P17 from the countryside of Tuscany on breeding in mountain areas)

In both groups, 'mountain dwellers' and 'mountain enthusiasts', there are connoisseurs-type and regular-type consumers. The connoisseur is the type of consumer who has demonstrated a deeper knowledge on the topic of the interview or focus group. Usually, he/she is someone who had contact with the subject at the university, took a professional course on the topic or whose profession entails greater contact with the subject (e.g., gastronomic journalist). Or even someone who actively participates in organizations working in the field of agriculture and food production such as Slow Food. 65% of the 'mountain enthusiasts' and 42% of the 'mountain dwellers' can be classified as connoisseurs. In turn, the regular-type is the consumer with basic knowledge of beef and/or wine production. They are unaware of some basic concepts and common terms used in the field of food production. For instance, they barely know one cattle breed. They have very shallow ideas about how the products are made. Respectively, 35% and 48% of 'mountain enthusiasts' and 'mountain dwellers' are regular-type consumers. Although each type of consumer (regular or connoisseur) has a different level of knowledge about meat and wine production, it seemed that the more intense their experience in mountain areas, the less they have an idealized image of such areas. That is to say, regular-type consumers belonging to the 'mountain dwellers' group may have more knowledge on the production of wine and beef in mountain areas than a connoisseurs-type consumer from the 'mountain enthusiast' group.

3.2. What attributes do consumers relate to wine and beef produced in mountain areas?

Although having different perceptions about mountain food products, whether consumers are "mountain dwellers" or "mountain enthusiasts", both seem to have similar leaning when it comes to mountain wine and beef. They associate these products, although in different ways, to health and ethical dimensions. The "mountain dwellers" want these products to be healthier and to be ethically produced. The "mountain enthusiasts", in turn, believe these products are already healthy and ethically produced. Health and ethics were not the only dimensions of food quality mentioned. Consumers also referred to sensory and symbolic attributes.

The following tables (Table 3 and 4) summarize the attributes mentioned by consumers and their classification as follows. The first column lists the

attributes that consumers associated with each product. In the second and third columns are, respectively, the overall dimension of quality that the attribute represents and the category to which the attribute is linked derived by Nelson's (1970) and Darby & Karni's (1973) framework.

Table 3 - Attributes related to beef produced in mountain area

Attribute	Quality Dimension	Type of Attribute
Animals grass/hay fed only ^{a, b, c}	Health	Credence
Antibiotic-free/less-medicine ^{a, b, c}	Health	Credence
Local/Autochthonous breed only ^{b, c}	Symbolic (traditional) and Ethical (agrobiodiversity)	Credence
Animals free-range raised	Health and Ethical	Credence
Animals raised ^{a, b, c} in small farms ^{b, c}	Ethical	Credence
Animals born and raised in mountain areas ^{b, c}	Symbolic (identity)	Credence
Animals that live longer ^c	Ethical	Credence
Production supports the local economy ^{b, c}	Ethical	Credence
Production contributes to preserve the mountain environment ^{a, b, c}	Ethical	Credence

^a Results from the observations.

^b Results from the focus groups.

^c Results from the interviews.

It is interestingly to note that when referring to the mountain setting all but one attributes are credence characteristics. Specifically, only in the case of wine one experience attribute was mentioned by few connoisseur-type consumers, namely the delicate aromas and flavours of wines produced in mountain areas. These findings confirm the previous study of Steenkamp who found out that most attributes related to wine and beef produced in mountain areas are credence attributes due to their linkage to the ethical and health dimension of food quality (Steenkamp, 1990).

Table 4 - Attributes related to wine produced in mountain area

Attribute	Quality Dimension	Type of Attribute
Delicate aromas and flavours ^{a, b, c}	Taste and Pleasure	Experience
Grapes from small farms ^{b, c}	Ethical	Credence
Vineyards located in high altitudes or terraces ^{a, b, c}	Symbolic (traditional) and Ethical (support mountain communities)	Credence
Wine with less additives ^{b, c}	Health and Ethical	Credence
Local/Autochthonous grapes only ^{b, c}	Symbolic (traditional) and Ethical (agrobiodiversity)	Credence
Less mechanization/more manual labour ^{a, b, c}	Symbolic (identity)	Credence
Limited production ^{b, c}	Symbolic	Credence
Production contributes to preserve the mountain environment ^{b, c}	Ethical	Credence

^a Results from the observations.

^b Results from the focus groups.

^c Results from the interviews.

3.3. Consumers' opinions on the mountain labelling-scheme

Consumers' opinions on the mountain labelling-scheme are restricted to (a) the definition of mountain areas, (b) the three specific rules applied to beef produced in mountain areas, and (c) the exclusion of wine from the list of products suitable to use the mountain label.

The first outcome of the analysis is that the consumers in our study are unaware of the mountain labelling scheme. Only two consumers knew about the existence of a label for mountain food products. Nevertheless, they were not capable to provide more details on the label nor on the European regulation. In most cases, consumers expressed surprise when they learned about the existence of a specific regulation for mountain products during the discussions and interviews.

A sceptical reaction to the scheme appeared for the first time when consumers were asked to give their opinion on the definition of the mountain area that has been chosen by the legislators in the Regulation (EU) No 1151/2012. The definition, originally from the European regulation on

Less Favoured Areas, is based on the concept of region. This implied the inclusion of both high and low altitudes, the mountain peaks and the bottom of the valleys, within the limits of the mountain areas. However, consumers associate mountains with high altitudes and slope steepness. For them, areas in low altitudes – close to those in high altitudes – should not be considered as mountain areas.

Mountains is where it gets steep. That's kind of the idea people have, isn't it? (Interviewee P30 from Lombardy mentioning the steepness to define mountain areas)

It doesn't even make sense for [the city of] Bolzano to be called a mountain area. (Interviewee P31 of South Tyrol saying that Bolzano, the capital of South Tyrol, located 300 meters above sea level, should not be part of a mountainous area, despite the presence of steep slopes in the city)

With regard to the rule on feedstuff for animals used for beef production, described in the mountain labelling-scheme, opinions vary regardless of the type or origin of the consumer. The mentioned rule requires that at least 60% of feedstuff provided to animals are from the mountain area. The consumers who approved this specification believe that it would be hard to produce all the feedstuff needed because of the climatic and environmental conditions in mountain areas – reduced arable land surface and shorter growing seasons. Some of them think that an increase in feedstuff crops would generate negative effects on plant biodiversity in mountain areas. For other respondents, who rejected the flexibility of the feed rule, the negative impact on the environment could come from importing feedstuff from other areas. According to them, this would generate heavy vehicle traffic and greenhouse gas emissions. In addition, they said that the quality control of imported feed would be complex. For instance, it would be hard to ensure healthy feedstuff for animals. For the consumers who reproached the feedstuff rule, an increase in the percentage of locally produced feed is seen as an improvement. But some of them also suggested a beef production based only on animals fed exclusively on grass or hay.

The specifications concerning the location of the slaughterhouse, the origin and the minimum rearing time of animals in mountain areas did not generate conflicting opinions among consumers. On the one hand, the location of the slaughterhouse does not seem to be an issue. The rule establishing that processing plants must be located within 30 km from the administrative limits of the mountain area has not generated controversy or disagreement.

Even when it was shown to the participants that processing plants for dairy products must be closer (10 km from the limits of the mountain zone) than slaughterhouses, no contrary reaction was outlined by the interviewees. Actually, the only strong response came from an interviewee who mentioned that the processing plants could be located even in another region, away from the mountain area.

I don't see any difference if [the slaughterhouse] is in another area. For me [the location of the slaughterhouse] is not a certificate of the mountain origin. But the place where the animal lives is. (Interviewee P18 from Lombardy on the rule about the location of the slaughterhouse)

On the other hand, consumers reacted negatively in relation to the rule on the origin and time spent by the animals in mountain areas. For them, an authentic mountain beef should only be produced from animals born and raised entirely in mountain areas. The only exception would be for transhumance animals who are already treated differently in the mountain labelling-scheme. Consumers accept the fact that these animals could live some time outside mountain areas according to the tradition of this type of farming.

I don't expect the calf to be bought in France, in Marseille, and taken to South Tyrol. I expect its whole life to be in the mountains. (Interviewee P19 from Lombardy commenting the rule on the origin and time animals spend in mountain areas)

The exclusion of wine from products suitable to use the mountain label divided the interviewees. The arguments in favour of the exclusion included the excess of labels and terminologies used by the wine sector and the perception that wine is not a typical mountain product. The comments in favour highlighted the importance of protecting all kinds of food products from mountain areas and the consumers' right for information regarding the origin of the product. Some participants of the focus group affirmed that they would be more interested in knowing the altitude of the vineyard rather than its location in a mountain area. Table 5 sums up the consumers' opinions on the mountain labelling-scheme.

Table 5 - Consumers' opinion on the mountain labelling-scheme

Criteria/Rule	Consumers' Opinions
Definition of mountain area	Consumers find the rule inappropriate. The definition is based on the concept of region, including low and high altitudes. Consumers tend to associate mountain areas to high altitudes.
Livestock feedstuff for beef production – minimum of 60% produced in mountain areas	<p>Opinions of consumers who agreed: it is hard to produce all the feedstuff needed in mountain areas; increasing crops for animal nutrition would affect plant biodiversity.</p> <p>Opinions of consumers who disagreed: importing feedstuff would increase the environmental footprint; it is hard to check the quality of imported feedstuff.</p> <p>Suggestions from consumers who disagree: increase the minimum percentage of locally produced feedstuff; produce beef exclusively from animals grass/hay-fed only.</p>
Origin of animals and Minimum rearing time of animals in mountain area – non-transhumant animal: at least 2/3 of their lives; transhumant animals: at least 1/4 of their lives in mountain areas	<p>Consumers disagree with the specification for non-transhumant animals.</p> <p>Suggestion: non-transhumant animals should be born and raised in mountain areas.</p> <p>The exception for transhumance animals is acceptable.</p>
Exclusion of wine from the list of products suitable to use the mountain label	<p>Opinions of consumers in favour of the exclusion: there are already too many labels and terminologies for wines; wine is not seen as mountain product.</p> <p>Opinions of consumers in favour of the exclusion: all mountain food products should be protected by the mountain labelling-scheme; the more information, the better for consumers.</p>

4. Discussion

Overall, the results show that consumers don't necessarily have a positive representation of mountain food products and mountain areas. As showed in the previous section, participants who live in mountain areas seemed to be aware of the current mountain farming practices and the negative impacts it may cause in mountain areas. These results are different from the literature (Amilien *et al.*, 2009; Santini *et al.*, 2013; Schjøll *et al.*, 2010), according to which consumers tend to associate mountains and mountains areas with positive aspects. In our study, people not living in mountain areas, whether from urban or rural areas, had such positive representation.

Albeit these different representations of mountain areas and its food products, consumer expectations about mountain products indicate a higher interest for healthier and ethical products and a strong association of these products with credence attributes. The only exception was one sensory attribute associated with wine. Overall, the results of our study are in line with previous research (Amilien *et al.*, 2009; Schjøll *et al.*, 2010; Zuliani *et al.*, 2018).

Our results also indicate some divergences between consumer interest in mountain products and the quality standards of the European and Italian rules. These gaps occur in two ways. On the one hand, the attributes pointed out by consumers are not protected by the standards. None of the attributes associated with beef is included in the European regulation on mountain products. As for wines, the Italian legislation on historic and heroic wines addresses two of the attributes that respondents of our samples associated with mountain wines (production on terraces and at high altitudes).

On the other hand, consumers criticized some of the rules of the mountain labelling scheme. Firstly, the definition of mountain areas seems inappropriate for some consumers. The inclusion of the surrounding lowlands inside the administrative limits of mountains areas differs from the view of consumers for whom mountains are associated with high altitudes. This situation may cause a feeling of fraud for consumers and affect their trust in the label because the information displayed seem inaccurate or false in relation to the origin of the product (Connelly *et al.*, 2011). Consumers' distrust of the mountain labelling-scheme may have major implications such as negatively influencing purchase intentions (Teng & Wang, 2015). One possible solution could be the adoption of two definitions, the mountain area and the mountain region – as it is the case in the Swiss legislation (*Conséil Fédéral Suisse*, 2020). The mountain region is defined broader and includes the mountain areas/zones although they are located in the lowlands. This would imply a transformation of the quality term from “mountain product” into “product of mountain region”, highlighting that the product came from a region with mountains. Additionally, it would be interesting to “territorialize” the mountain area. In other words, linking a product from the mountain with the name of the region or of the mountain range to which it belongs would be a sound strategy in terms of consumer protection. This would also help consumers to better identify products since mountains are not all the same and the place of origin is perceived differently by individuals. Also, from a marketing point of view, giving the product more of a personalized image and attach it to an existing image of a mountain area may strengthen its emotional value for consumers. This might add value and increase the interaction with the product (Thomson *et al.*, 2005; van Ittersum *et al.*, 2003).

Secondly, some issues emerged regarding mountain beef. For instance, the possibility of using feedstuff from other regions and the rules on the origin and time the animals stay in the mountain areas have succumbed to criticism related to ecological sustainability, (human) health and the perceived authenticity of beef from mountain areas. The study of McMorran and colleagues (2015) corroborate such criticisms, in particular, those associated with the absence of sustainability-related rules in the mountain labelling system.

In short, the central problem in both cases is the mismatch between the rules “exchange of rules” (Fligstein, 2008) – the quality standards determined by the European and the Italian legislation – and the characteristics (quality dimensions) desired by consumers. In such a scenario, the market may become unstable or even disappear (Akerlof, 1970).

Interestingly, the rule on the location of the processing plants did not cause controversies. However, considering that the mountain labelling scheme is part of a rural development policy strategy for mountain areas, keeping the location of processing plants close or within mountain areas would trigger work opportunities for mountain dwellers and add value to their food products. In a nutshell, this would contribute to the achievement of the policy goals.

Although our goal in this qualitative study is not to produce a statistically significant sample, the low number of people who knew of the label is of note. A similar problem occurs with geographical indications in Europe (London Economics, 2008). The lack of public awareness campaigns may explain part of the low awareness. However, we also have to consider that the legislation is recent – the European regulation is from 2012 and the Italian legislation from 2018.

Finally, the wine world, already very segmented and complex, is probably witnessing what could be considered the birth of a new niche market (Kemp *et al.*, 1998): the mountain wine market. As in the market of specialty coffees in Brazil (Souza, 2006), the construction of institutions for the recognition of this new market, with its inclusion in the list of products suitable to use the mountain label, and the consequent definition of the characteristics of this product, may contribute to consolidation of this new market in Europe.

5. Conclusions

In this study, we sought to explore Italian consumer opinions regarding (a) beef and wine produced in mountain areas, and (b) their opinions concerning the new European mountain labelling scheme.

Undoubtedly, the European labelling scheme for mountain food products represents a major breakthrough supporting the development of mountain communities. Defining products and conditions under which producers can use the quality indication “mountain product” potentially contributes to make information available for consumers and to develop a successful niche market. It can contribute to avoiding free-riders – that is, producers who associate non-mountainous products with mountainous areas, using images and expressions that refer back to the mountain to market their products –, preventing consumers from being misled and producers from being harmed by unfair competition. In addition, it may help mountain producers to add value to their products through the association of the food product to a territorial origin scheme – the “mountain area”.

Nevertheless, like any innovation – in this case, an institutional innovation – some improvements may be necessary to ensure the long-term success of the mountain labelling-scheme. First, policymakers should evaluate the adoption of two different definitions for mountain areas: one wider and one more restrictive. The latter would only include the territory located above a minimum altitude – for example, above 400 or 500 metres above sea level, depending on latitude. For the other strategies and objectives of rural development policies, the current broader definition of mountain areas would remain valid. Second, the authors recommended the adoption of existing control mechanisms – such as a criteria for livestock densities, pasture management and fertiliser usage in eligibility measures for Less Favoured Areas payments – as a way to increase sustainability while trying to reduce the exclusion of producers due to costs, stringency and lack of applicability that may arise from the application of sustainability-related rules. Third, policymakers should include the quality term “mountain product” among the possible designations for wines in the CMO rules and in the Italian Wine Consolidated Law to support winemakers from mountain areas and add value to their products.

6. Limitations and Future Research

Considering that this study collected data only from Italian consumers regarding beef and wine, the results and conclusions must be applied with caution to other countries and/or products. Future research including consumers from different Italian regions, from different countries and/or other representatives of the food supply chain would contribute to enriching the studies on mountain products. In addition, quantitative research should be carried out to confirm some of the findings of this study.

Moreover, since we collected the data months before the publication of the Italian legislation on heroic viticulture, future research could also analysis consumer opinions regarding this. Hence, further research is needed to highlight the potential of mountain food products as a mountain development strategy.

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Appendix

Table 6 - Regulation (EC) 1151/2012 – Articles 2 and 31

Article 2

Scope

1. This Regulation covers agricultural products intended for human consumption listed in Annex I to the Treaty and other agricultural products and foodstuffs listed in Annex I to this Regulation.

In order to take into account international commitments or new production methods or material, the Commission shall be empowered to adopt delegated acts, in accordance with Article 56, supplementing the list of products set out in Annex I to this Regulation. Such products shall be closely linked to agricultural products or to the rural economy.

2. This Regulation shall not apply to spirit drinks, aromatized wines or grapevine products as defined in Annex XIb to Regulation (EC) No 1234/2007, with the exception of wine-vinegars.

3. This Regulation shall apply without prejudice to other specific Union provisions relating to the placing of products on the market and, in particular, to the single common organization of the markets, and to food labelling.

4. Directive 98/34/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 22 June 1998 laying down a procedure for the provision of information in the field of technical standards and regulations and of rules on Information Society services (21) shall not apply to the quality schemes established by this Regulation.

Article 31

Mountain product

1. The term 'mountain product' is established as an optional quality term.

This term shall only be used to describe products intended for human consumption listed in Annex I to the Treaty in respect of which:

(a) both the raw materials and the feedstuffs for farm animals come essentially from mountain areas;

(b) in the case of processed products, the processing also takes place in mountain areas.

2. For the purposes of this Article, mountain areas within the Union are those delimited pursuant to Article 18(1) of Regulation (EC) No 1257/1999. For third-country products, mountain areas include areas officially designated as mountain areas by the third country or that meet criteria equivalent to those set out in Article 18(1) of Regulation (EC) No 1257/1999.

3. In duly justified cases and in order to take into account natural constraints affecting agricultural production in mountain areas, the Commission shall be empowered to adopt delegated acts, in accordance with Article 56, laying down

derogations from the conditions of use referred to in paragraph 1 of this Article. In particular, the Commission shall be empowered to adopt a delegated act laying down the conditions under which raw materials or feedstuffs are permitted to come from outside the mountain areas, the conditions under which the processing of products is permitted to take place outside of the mountain areas in a geographical area to be defined, and the definition of that geographical area.

4. In order to take into account natural constraints affecting agricultural production in mountain areas, the Commission shall be empowered to adopt delegated acts, in accordance with Article 56, concerning the establishment of the methods of production, and other criteria relevant for the application of the optional quality term established in paragraph 1 of this Article.

Table 7 - Definition of Mountain Areas - Regulation (EU) 1305/2013

Article 32

Designation of areas facing natural and other specific constraints

1. Member States shall, on the basis of paragraphs 2, 3 and 4, designate areas eligible for payments provided for in Article 31 under the following categories:

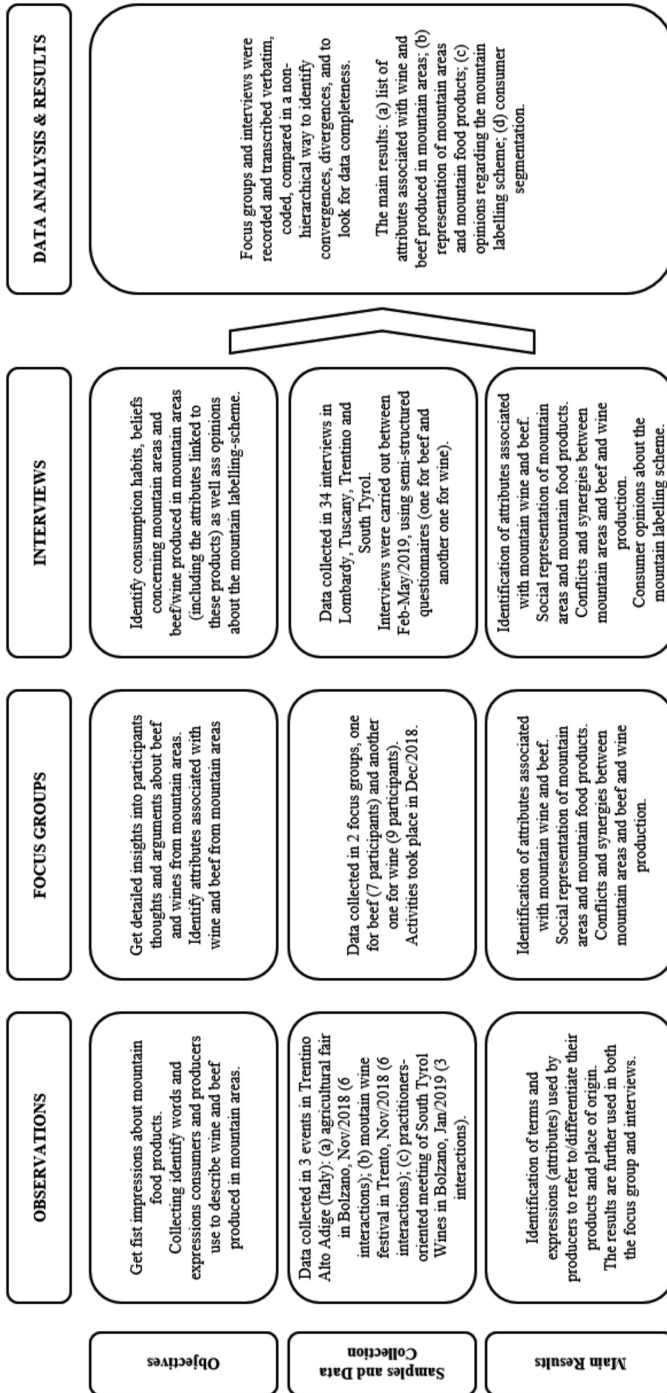
- (a) mountain areas;
- (b) areas, other than mountain areas, facing significant natural constraints; and
- (c) other areas affected by specific constraints.

2. In order to be eligible for payments under Article 31, mountain areas shall be characterized by a considerable limitation of the possibilities for using the land and by an appreciable increase in production costs due to:

- (a) the existence, because of altitude, of very difficult climatic conditions, the effect of which is to substantially shorten the growing season;
- (b) at a lower altitude, the presence over the greater part of the area in question of slopes too steep for the use of machinery or requiring the use of very expensive special equipment, or a combination of these two factors, where the constraints resulting from each taken separately are less acute but the combination of the two gives rise to an equivalent constraints.

Areas north of the 62nd parallel and certain adjacent areas shall be considered to be mountain areas.

Figure 3 - Description of methods, results and data analysis



Focus Group – Script

1. Introduction: 10 min

Self-presentation of the participants and of the chairperson. Explanation of the rules of the focus group.

2. Icebreaker: 15 min

How do you choose your beef/wine?

Which are the most important characteristics when you are choosing beef/wine?

Where do you get information about the beef/wine you chose?

3. Transition question: 15 min

Is there any difference between the beef/wine produced in the mountains and the other beefs/wines?

4. Main discussion: 30 min

Which are the most important characteristics of mountain beef/wine?

How would you describe a mountain beef?

Which attributes cannot be changed in order to preserve your opinion about the mountain beef/wine?

5. Closing and Evaluation: 10 min

How was the activity?

What did you like the most?

What would you change?

Semi-Structured Interview – Questionnaire – Beef

1. How many times did you eat beef last week?

2. How important is beef, compared to other meat, in your diet?

3. Over the last year, what happened to your consumption of beef?

4. Where do you usually buy beef?

5. In which situations do you usually eat beef? (e.g., on the weekend, special meals, daily)

6. How do you choose your beef? Do you choose the type of beef before going shopping or while shopping?

7. Do you think the beef you buy is locally produced? How do you know?

8. Which are the most important characteristics when you are choosing beef?

9. How do you identify these characteristics?

10. Where do you get information about the beef you chose?

11. Do you think that there is any difference between the beef produced in the mountains and other beefs?

12. How would you describe a beef produced in a mountain area? Which are the most important characteristics of beef produced in mountain areas (including the product itself and production system)?
13. Do you think beef produced in South Tyrol meets this description? Why?
14. For a beef to be considered an authentic product of mountains, how should it be? How should it be produced?
15. Recently, the European Commission established rules for labelling products of mountain areas in order to differentiate them from other products. It created a label to certify beef that can be considered an authentic mountain product. The rules for an authentic mountain beef are the following:
 - a) Animals must live at least the last 2/3 of their lives in mountain areas.
 - b) In case of transhumant animals, they must be reared for at least 1/4 of their life in transhumance grazing on pastures in mountain areas.
 - c) If it is not possible to produce locally all the animal feedstuff, farmers are allowed to buy feedstuff from other areas. In this case, the proportion of feedstuff not produced in mountain areas must not exceed 40% of the total amount of feedstuff.
 - d) The slaughtering of animals, sectioning and boning of carcasses must be done in processing plants located no more than 30 km from the administrative border of the mountain area.Do you think these rules are enough to certify a beef as a mountain product? Why? What would you add/change?

Semi-Structured Interview – Questionnaire – Wine

1. How many times did you drink wine last week?
2. In which situations do you usually drink wine
3. In which situation did you drink wine for the last two times?
4. Over the last year, what happened to your consumption of wine?
5. Where do you usually buy wine?
6. How do you choose your wine? Could you describe the situation when you are buying wine, the questions you make to the salesperson, what you look for at first place, etc.?
7. In average, how much do you spend on a bottle of wine?
8. Do you usually choose the same wine or wine region, or do you like to try different wines?
9. Which are the most important characteristics when you are choosing wine?
10. How do you identify these characteristics?

11. Where do you get information about the wine you choose?
12. Is there any difference between the wine produced in the mountains and wines produced in lowlands?
13. How would you describe a wine produced in a mountain area? Which are the most important characteristics of wines produced in mountain areas (including the product itself and production system)?
14. Do you think a wine from South Tyrol (or other mountain region) meets that description? Why?
15. For a wine to be considered a real product of the mountains, how should it be? How should it be produced?
16. Recently, the European Commission established rules for labelling products of mountain areas in order to differentiate them from other products. The European commission excluded wines (and other beverages) from the list of mountain products. Do you agree with this? Why?

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