



PROJECTS ADOPTED BY 4CITIES4DEV

ACCESS TO GOOD, CLEAN AND FAIR FOOD: THE FOOD COMMUNITIES' EXPERIENCE

Pokot Ash Yoghurt, Kenya



Slow Food Presidium adopted by the city of Bilbao



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CITTA DI TORINO





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PROJECTS FOR THE SAFEGUARD OF BIODIVERSITY

Slow Food Presidia safeguard small-scale, endangered local productions, promote specific areas, and recover traditional trades and processing techniques. Currently, there are over 300 Presidia projects around the world, which involve more than 10,000 producers: farmers, shepherds, fishers, artisan processors... To safeguard these products also means to preserve high-mountain pastures and tropical forests, to ensure a sustainable future for small-scale producers - from the Andes to African coastlines -, to preserve hundreds of animal breeds, and to give future generation a clean planet with a rich biodiversity. Presidia are promoted and coordinated by Slow Food. The association is active all over the world, but has a specific focus on developing countries, where the safeguard of biodiversity is not only important to improve the quality of life, but to ensure the very survival of local people.



THE CONTEXT

WESTERN POKOT, KENYA

The plateaus are the most fertile area in Kenya and in the entire African continent. They extend from east to west in the southern part of the country. The most western region in the plateaus is called Western Pokot and is located at the border with Uganda, halfway between Lake Victoria (to the south) and Lake Turkana (to the north), two of the Great African Lakes along the Rift Valley.

Here live the Pokot, one of the 54 official Kenyan tribes, although they only represent 0.1% of the national population. The Pokot are traditionally shepherds: They were nomadic pastoralists in the past, while today they live in villages made by one-family settlements, in close contact with animals (mainly cattle, zebus, goats and poultry), which are the true wealth of each family.

The villages of Tartar and Soibee are located in a hilly area, at about 2,000 m above sea level, near Mount Elgon. Their inhabitants have gathered in the Tarsoi Group, whose name comes from the combination of the names of the two villages. The group has about 65 members, who are the core of the Presidium.



THE PROJECT

The communities who live in Tartar and Soibee, just like many other communities in the area, have traditionally produced a rather unusual food product: yoghurt made with milk from cows (a crossbreed between local breeds and zebus) or goats, mixed with the ashes of the native *cromwo* tree. Known in local dialect as *lolon chomi suton* (*mala ya kienyeji* or *kamabele kambou*, in Swahili), ash yoghurt was extremely important in the diet and culture of the Pokot community and was one of the staple food for herdsmen who were out looking for pastures. Today livestock farming is less common and, as a consequence, the availability of milk has decreased. This has caused a drastic reduction in the production of yoghurt. In addition, communities have rapidly lost pride in their food culture. Yoghurt is currently produced by only a few families for their own consumption, and any surplus is only occasionally sold at local markets.

Ash yoghurt, made with raw milk, has a smooth, thick but fluid texture. Cow and goat milks, which are processed separately, are used to produce two different varieties of yoghurt. The first is reserved to men, while the second - which has an intense flavor and is appreciated for its nutritional value - is especially made for women and children.



The taste of the yoghurt also varies depending on the duration of fermentation. Animals are grass-fed and milked manually twice a day. Milk is collected in the *calabash*, a traditional container made from gourds, and left to rest for at least three days. The gourds - which have a very tough skin - are hollowed out, dried and then worked for a long time with boiling water, cromwo wood (the same tree from which ashes are taken) and milk to completely eliminate their bitter aftertaste. When this aftertaste disappears, the process is finished. When the gourds are ready, they are filled with milk, ashes are added and then they are left to rest in a fresh and dry place - on a special rack on the inside wall of the hut - or partially buried. Once the whey is drained, the gourds are closed and shaken with regular movements. Ash has a disinfectant effect, improves the taste with an aromatic note, and gives yoghurt a typical light grey color.

OBJECTIVES

With this project, Slow Food aims at safeguarding a very peculiar product with which the Pokot community identifies.

By promoting ash yoghurt, the goal is to further strengthen this community, which is already almost entirely self-sufficient economically and in terms of food provision. The most important work needed is related to animal health and the gradual improvement of the various production steps to obtain a high quality product that is still traditional but provides more guarantees in terms of hygiene and safety. Once this preliminary work is completed, it will be possible to focus more on the marketing side. Sales are currently limited also because of the limited production of yoghurt, which is mainly consumed by the community itself. For the first time, by opening a point of sale in the nearby town of Makutano the members of the Tarsoi Group will be able to rely on a regular source of income.

Finally, thanks to the participation of producers in international events such as *Cheese, Agosto, Salone del Gusto e Terra Madre*, Slow Food wants to restore the deserved dignity of this product, which can then translate into pride and motivation for the livestock farmers who are its guardians.



SOCIAL IMPACT

Thanks to the Presidium, the family tradition of a minor tribe has become a symbol of African pastoral farming and the Pokot community now has a strong awareness of the value of its culture. Nearby villages have realized the impact of the project and have repeatedly asked the members of the Tarsoi Group to be included in the training activities. For Slow Food this is one of the most interesting examples of the approach it follows, where the promotion of a local product can become a driving force for economic, cultural and environmental development for a community and the area where it lives.

BENEFICIARIES

The project involves 65 producers gathered in the Tarsoi Self Help Group.

CURRENT PARTNERS

European Union

PROJECT STAGES

2008-2009

The Presidium is officially created in May 2009, after a visit by Slow Food to the community. Shortly after, livestock farmer Julius Lomatang participates in the Terra Madre Tanzania meeting, where Kenyans, Ugandans and Tanzanians have the opportunity to exchange knowledge on farming and animal husbandry.

In September a few Presidium producers participate in *Cheese* (an international event devoted to dairy products held in Bra, Italy). They have their own stand, present their yoghurt for the first time, and take part in a useful exchange and training meeting with livestock farmers and dairy producers from Piedmont. On this occasion, they follow a short training course on some key issues for the improvement of production - such as animal feeding, reproduction methods, the hygiene of animals and products, and the sustainable use of animal waste.









2010

Slow Food covers the costs for the purchase of fodder and for the organization of training activities on animal health and sustainable mixed farming (plants and livestock). The objective is to improve the health of animals and the production of milk.

In April 2010 Mauro Cravero, an Italian veterinary, visits the Presidium and spends two weeks in Kenya, where he organizes training activities on animal health.

In October, two producers participate in *Salone del Gusto e Terra Madre* in Torino, Italy. The Presidium coordinator (Peter Namianya, former student of the University of Gastronomic Sciences) writes the first draft of a set of rules for the production of ash yoghurt. Also, together with Mauro Cravero, he introduces a register of livestock in the community. This tool is essential not only to monitor the health of animals - taking note of any diseases and treatments undertaken - but also to identify and select the most productive zebus. Of course, in order for this tool to be understood and shared by all members of the group, various training events will be needed, as well as an appropriate amount of time.

2011

The lack of veterinary assistance is the main problem. This is why Slow Food involves Ronald Juma Wakwabubi, a local veterinary, so that he can follow the producers' community. Ronald Juma regularly visits the community to monitor the health and hygiene of animals. Also, he starts a training activity on medical needs, reproduction, feeding and milking. In the spring, photographer Oliver Migliore spends one week in the village and produces a photographic reportage. In July, directors Francesco Amato and Stefano Scarafia shoot a video on yoghurt production and the Pokot community. In September 2011 two community members, with the local veterinary and Peter Namianya (Presidium coordinator) come back to *Cheese* in Bra. Before the beginning of the event, they visit several cheese and yoghurt producers in Piedmont and share information on animal husbandry and milk processing. Finally, during one day of training, the two producers discuss and integrate the set of rules with the help of the Kenyan and Italian (Mauro Cravero) veterinaries. In October, Slow Food purchases tools and disinfectants to control the presence of ticks, which are very widespread in the area.





CURRENT PLANS

It is essential to continue to work to improve the quality of pastures (by introducing more nutritious grass, such as napier grass) and properly manage the livestock registers, key tools to monitor the activity (the books have been translated in Swahili).

The set of rules will be translated in Swahili and Pokot and distributed to all the Presidium livestock farmers. It will be discussed, amended and integrated by everyone, point by point, during two general meetings. It will then become a detailed and clear instrument, which provides clear indications to livestock farmers to ensure a proper management of animals and the right processing of milk, and certifies the uniqueness and value of their yoghurt. In December 2011, veterinary Mauro Cravero will go back to the communities to evaluate the situation and identify - with the help of the local coordinators - an adequate location and the right equipment to set up a small point of sale for the Presidium yoghurt. On that occasion, all livestock farmers will sign the final version of the production set of rules.

PLANS FOR THE FUTURE

The Presidium has ambitious future plans. Once the most urgent problems of animal health and quality of pastures and fodder are solved, it intends to open a special shop to sell animal medication and feed - managed by the producers themselves - as well as a point of sale for the yoghurt in the nearby town of Makutano. For this purpose, it is necessary to find the appropriate premises, obtain the necessary authorizations, find the right containers to sell the yoghurt and design an appropriate packaging (packs and labels). If sales prove promising, the following step will be the creation of a laboratory where families will be able to produce yoghurt. It will be necessary to strengthen the awareness and responsibility of the livestock farmers' community, organize more training activities, and promote forms of farm tourism to foster sales and make the Pokot culture known. Other possible activities are the following: organization of local events related to food and visits/exchanges with other Presidia and food communities; launch of a plan for the safeguard of *cromwo* (the tree whose ashes are used to produce the yoghurt). Some representatives of the Presidium participated in *Algusto*, an event held in Bilbao in December 2011, and will attend the most important international Slow Food event: *Salone del Gusto e Terra Madre 2012*, in Torino, Italy.

4CITIES4DEV FOR THE PRESIDIUM

The *4Cities4Dev* project includes several activities to support the Pokot Ash Yoghurt Presidium, carried out by Slow Food in collaboration with the city of Bilbao.

- 1** Continuous veterinary assistance to all livestock farmers, thanks to the work of Ronald Juma Wakwabubi (in Kenya) and the advice of Mauro Cravero, an Italian veterinary who has already been working with the Pokot for two years.
- 2** Sale of part of the production, with the opening of a shop for the sale of yoghurt in the nearby town of Makutano. This point of sale will be complemented by a small shop for the sale of animal drugs and feed.
- 3** Design of the packaging for the yoghurt and promotion of the product and the Pokot culture, at local and international level.
- 4** Shooting of a short film on ash yoghurt and the Pokot community - the first of a series of three videos on Kenya, Ethiopia and Senegal. A preview of the short on the Pokot will be presented at *Euro Gusto*, one of the Slow Food international events (organised in cooperation with the city of Tours, France). The three shorts will then be edited into a full-feature movie which will be presented at various international festivals.
- 5** Participation of the Ash Yoghurt Presidium in two international events: *Algusto* in Bilbao, Spain on December 16-19, 2011 and *Salone del Gusto e Terra Madre* in Turin, on October 25-29, 2012.



Slow Food Presidium adopted by the city of Bilbao as part of the 4Cities4Dev project



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