



PROJECTS ADOPTED BY 4CITIES4DEV

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

Imraguen Women's Mullet Botargo, Mauritania



Slow Food Presidium adopted by the city of Tours



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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.



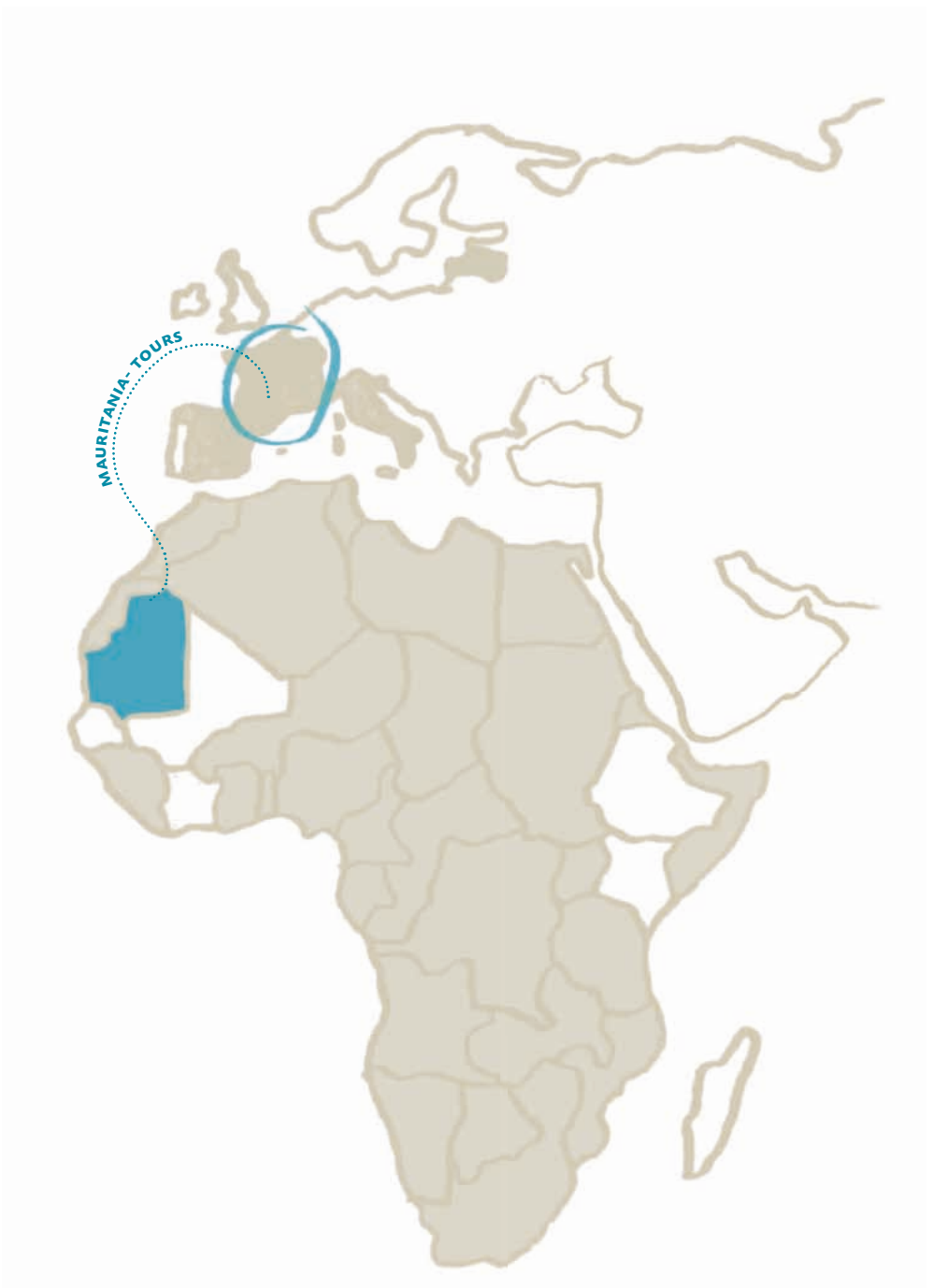
THE CONTEXT

NOUADHIBOU AND NOUAKCHOTT, MAURITANIA

The Islamic Republic of Mauritania's 700-km long coastline stretches along a primarily arid interior of more than a million square kilometers. With some of the richest fish stocks in the world, Mauritanian waters have supported the development of important fishing and fish processing activities, concentrated in the country's two major ports in Nouakchott and Nouadhibou.

However, today western fishing fleets own a significant portion of the fishing rights and the many international boats freeze their catch and transport it elsewhere for processing, especially to North Africa and Europe. In 2006, Mauritania sold the European Union fishing rights in exchange for a reduction in their public debt, choosing a new kind of colonialism over the fight to stop overfishing.

The damage is enormous. Nearly 50% of the mullet stocks are now jeopardized and fish processing activities, including the processing of mullet botargo traditionally carried out by women, are endangered. To fight for their future, fishing communities are joining together with women's cooperatives involved in artisanal fish processing.



THE PROJECT

The survival of the Imraguen - an ethnic group that has lived along the Mauritanian coast since before the Arab migrations - depends on mullet fishing. Mullet is a staple food in their diet and they even follow the movements of the fish with their nomadic beach villages. Women purchase the fish from local fishermen and process them, with their main product being botargo: dried mullet eggs. However, their work is not fairly compensated and the botargo is bought at a ridiculously low price by an intermediary and sold overseas. The Presidium aims to safeguard the ancient fishing and processing methods now threatened by industrial fishing and global markets.

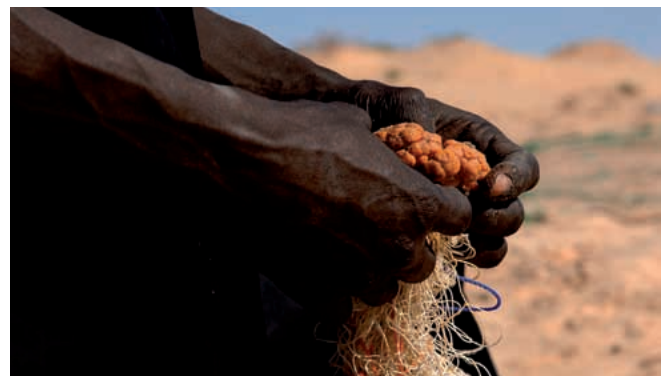


OBJECTIVES

The Presidium has been created to support the development of a quality mullet botargo production, focusing on the entire supply chain to ensure responsible fishing and guarantee a sustainable future to the Imraguen women. By working with the different actors involved in the supply chain – from the women fish processors, to the fishermen, and a local saltworks - the Presidium is promoting the development of an important local economy. Artisanal fishing and fish processing can provide the local communities with both a source of food and high-quality products to be sold on the national and international markets. The experience of the hundreds of women involved will also help the development of other fish processing activities in the region.

PROJECT COORDINATOR

Nedwa Moctar Nech, president of the NGO Mauritanie2000 and Presidium coordinator.



SOCIAL IMPACT

Thanks to the Presidium, 244 women have acquired new technical skills and hygiene training needed to produce high-quality botargo, while still maintaining significant autonomy over production and commercialization.

The botargo produced by Imraguen women is now known and appreciated abroad, especially thanks to the Presidium producers' participation in a number of international Slow Food events. The product has attracted wide media coverage, with many articles and in-depth stories published over the years.

The Presidium is continuing to grow, with more women participating in training activities and looking to join in the future.

CURRENT BENEFICIARIES

244 WOMEN

(directly involved in the production of botargo)

10 WOMEN

(currently attending training sessions)

10 FISHERMEN

(directly involved in the Presidium)

CURRENT PARTNERS

MAURITANIE2000:

non-government organization, active local partner of the Presidium.

ORBETTO PESCA LAGUNARE COOPERATIVE:

Italian Slow Food Presidium, technical partner.

PIEDMONT REGIONAL AUTHORITY:

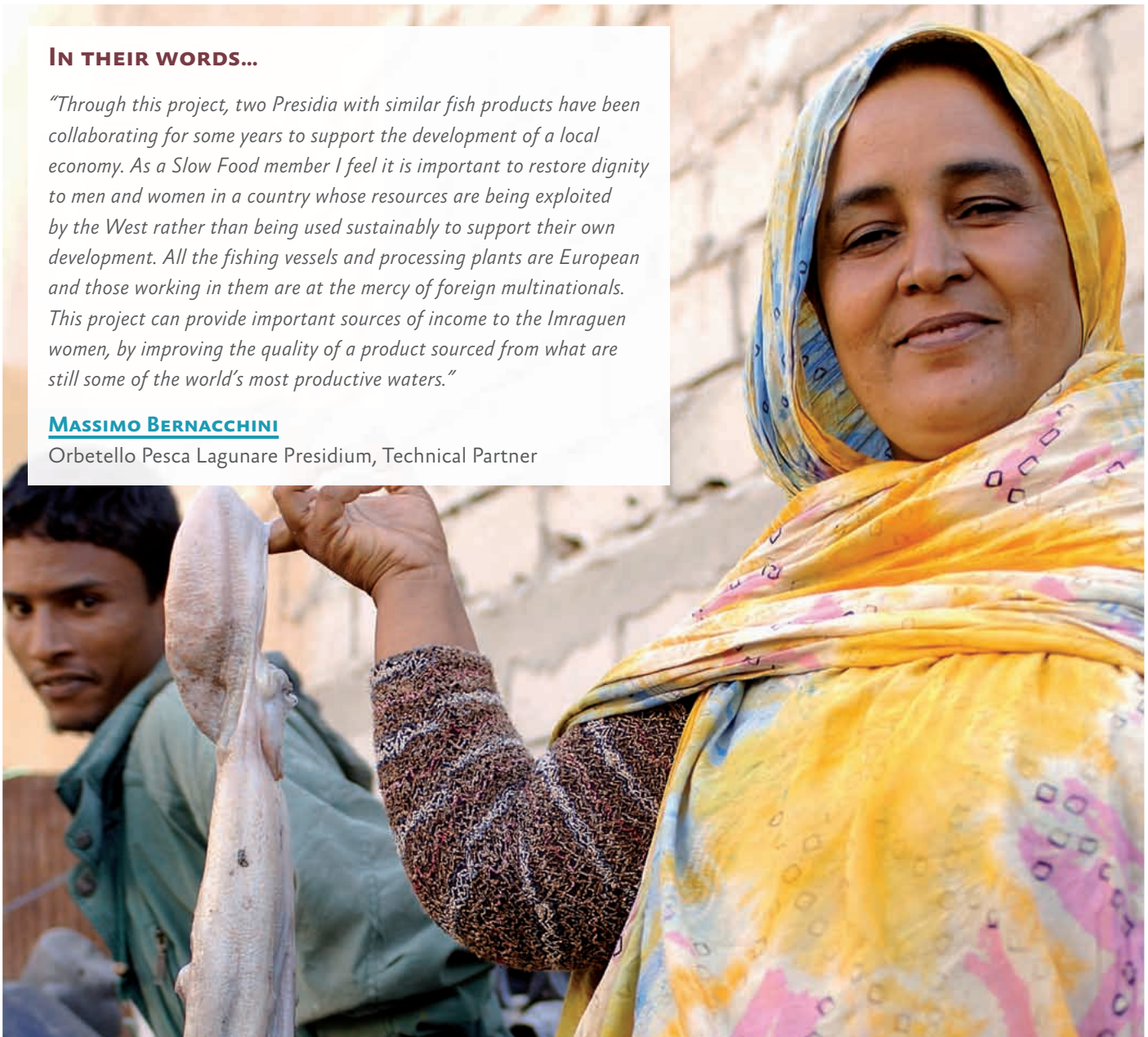
Italian state authority, project patron since its launch.

IN THEIR WORDS...

"Through this project, two Presidia with similar fish products have been collaborating for some years to support the development of a local economy. As a Slow Food member I feel it is important to restore dignity to men and women in a country whose resources are being exploited by the West rather than being used sustainably to support their own development. All the fishing vessels and processing plants are European and those working in them are at the mercy of foreign multinationals. This project can provide important sources of income to the Imraguen women, by improving the quality of a product sourced from what are still some of the world's most productive waters."

MASSIMO BERNACCHINI

Orbetello Pesca Lagunare Presidium, Technical Partner





IN THEIR WORDS...

The Presidium project is enormously valuable for us. Thanks to Slow Food we are developing and improving a product that was disappearing. We have had the opportunity to meet botargo producers from other areas, in particular fishermen from Orbetello, Italy, to discuss production issues and learn how we can improve the quality of our product. We have also participated in international events where we promote our product and explain the current situation in Mauritania concerning the fisheries and related small-scale industries. Following the Salone del Gusto and Slow Fish events, we were contacted by individuals in the US and Europe. Many local women are interested in joining the project and are keen to receive training, so we need to keep supporting the project's development. It is very important for us and every time we attend a Slow Food event or training course we feel encouraged in what we are doing.

NEDWA MOCHTAR NECH

coordinator of the Imraguen Women's Mullet Botargo Presidium



PROJECT STAGES

When Slow Food first met a group of women processing mullet on the Mauritanian coast, they discovered that the traditional production of botargo is carried out in fairly precarious hygienic conditions. Botargo processing is typically done directly on the beach, while the final sun-drying is done on metal sheets and wooden planks. The salt used is of very poor quality and is applied in varying quantities. This results in a poor quality product and presents clear consumer health risks.

2006

Slow Food enlists the assistance of producers from the Orbetello Botargo Presidium (Tuscany, Italy) to help the Mauritanian women improve their production through passing on their own experience and skills.

The Imraguen women are photographed carrying out the different stages of the botargo processing by Italian photographer Alberto Peroli.

In the lead-up to *Salone del Gusto e Terra Madre*, a group of women are hosted by the Orbetello Cooperative for two weeks in October. They are able to visit the processing facilities, learn new techniques for processing botargo and produce botargo using their own Mauritanian fish during training sessions. This product is subsequently sold at the international event in Turin (October 26 to 30), where they participate for the first time. In Turin, the Imraguen women run a stall and sell the entire stock (40 kg) packaged and labeled properly and accompanied by information brochures.



2007

Following their experience at the *Salone del Gusto e Terra Madre*, the Presidium women form a cooperative. Quickly growing to more than 30 members, the women find a suitable processing premises to rent in the port of Nouadhibou. The large, clean workshop has electric power, running water, refrigeration, climate control and aluminum and teflon work benches. The women improve their processing hygiene and start wearing aprons, gloves and caps, and adopt more rigorous production methods: thoroughly washing the ovarian sacs, covering with the right quantity of salt, drying properly and vacuum packing the final product. The workshop is given EU sanitary approval. The Presidium botargo is presented and sold during the *Slow Fish* event (Genoa, Italy, May 4-7).





2008

A project funded by the Piedmont Regional Authority enables the Slow Food Foundation to significantly boost Presidium activities: Professional equipment is purchased (a new vacuum packing machine and a refrigerated chamber), a manual of good practices is produced (an illustrated manual with texts in French and Hassanya) and the Presidium women are provided with further training.

A group of producers host a stall at the international *Salone del Gusto e Terra Madre* event (Turin, October 23-27).

2009-2010

The Presidium grows to include both the Nouadhibou cooperative, now counting more than 60 members, together with the 184 members of the Nouakchott cooperative.

The Piedmont Region renews its collaboration, enabling the organization of five Taste Workshops with hotels and restaurants in Nouadhibou and Nouakchott to promote the botargo on the local market; a training workshop for fishermen on improving fishing management; and a feasibility study for the creation of a saltworks.

In February 2009, the Mauritania Presidium coordinators discuss and draft the first project guidelines for the production of mullet botargo with representatives from Slow Food and the Orbetello Botargo Presidium (Tuscany).

In September 2009 photographer Paola Viesi shoots a series of photographs dedicated to the women of the Presidium. During the same month, Olivier Pereon, the representative of *Univers Sel* (French association of salt producers from Guérande) visits the Presidium and carries out a feasibility study for the creation of a saltworks in the Nouadhibou area. The Presidium participates in two international Slow Food events: *Slow Fish* (Genoa, April 17-20, 2009) and *Salone del Gusto e Terra Madre* (Turin, October 21-25, 2010).

2011

The Presidium participates in *Slow Fish* (Genoa, May 27-30), where they are able to display and sell their product. While in Italy, the project coordinator Nedwa Moctar Nech, holds two lectures on the situation of traditional fishing in her home country: one at *Slow Fish* and the other at the University of Gastronomic Sciences in Pollenzo.

A donation allows the Nouadhibou women to acquire some land next to the port, where they wish to build a processing workshop in the future.

In Nouakchott, where the women cooperative already owns a workshop, the Presidium assists the purchase of a refrigerated chamber and a vacuum packager.

PLANS FOR THE FUTURE

Building a workshop complying with EU standards for the women of Nouakchott, who currently work in rented premises, is a major priority.

The project to create a saltworks will continue, with the aim of the producers being able to source their salt (which is currently imported from Spain) locally. Training will be provided for fishermen - on handling the fish so they arrive for processing in perfect conditions - and for the botargo producers on improving quality. Some of these activities will be organized in Italy with the Orbetello Pesca Lagunare (Orbetello botargo Presidium).

Finally, a number of promotional events will be organized on both a national and international level.

4CITIES4DEV FOR THE PRESIDIUM

The *4Cities4Dev* project includes several activities to support the Imraguen Women's Mullet Botargo Presidium, carried out by Slow Food in collaboration with the city of Tours.

1

Start up of saltworks in the Nouadhibou area and creation of the group who will be in charge of its management;

2

Purchase of a vacuum packager for the Nouadhibou workshop;

3

Participation of the Presidium at three international events: *Euro Gusto* (Tours, November 18-20, 2011), Riga (spring 2012) and *Salone del Gusto e Terra Madre* (Turin, October 25-29, 2012).



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



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