

CASE STUDY IT - 2

Bergamot, niche and organic product in Calabria (Italy)

BRIEF PROFILE OF THE CASE STUDY

Bergamot is a highly specific species of citrus cultivation, diffused mainly in the Reggio Calabria Province, in the most coastal part of the area. The ecological context is extremely fragile, devastated by the **disordered urbanization** and **hydro-geological erosion of land**, both in the more internal areas and in the coastal area. In this context the bergamot cultivation is a way to maintain environmental and social benefits such as **landscape** (bergamot is part of the image and identity of the area), **biodiversity** and **rural vitality**. The relations between the bergamot cultivation, the economic profitability and the conservation of landscape and biodiversity are direct. This means that **the decline of the bergamot surface directly affects losses of biodiversity and landscape character and cultural heritage**.



KEY FACTORS IMPACTING THE PROVISION OF ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIAL BENEFITS

The provision of environmental and social benefits in this area is linked to: a) the permanence of the bergamot cultivation and consequently the evolution of the bergamot surface over time; b) the profitability of growing bergamot for the primary producers, in a value chain characterised by oligopolistic demand of essential oil. Since the 1990s onwards, new equilibria were introduced by some actors with innovative orientations, trying to set up **direct relations with bergamot oil industries**. They showed that something different from the past rent-seeking behaviour could be done. And this paved the way to an **institutional change at the local level**: the creation of two **producers' consortia** (Bioassoberg and Unionberg). These institutional changes caused relevant **improvements in small farms' incomes**. Moreover, increasing consumer preferences towards biodiversity and landscape, due to the preference towards **more sustainable modes of touristic recreation**, and new applications of the bergamot oil and juice in pharmaceutical preparations and food products were all economic and social external factors that contributed to change previous equilibria in the action arena.

EMERGING FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS



In the most recent decade the impact of the bergamot farming on the provision of environmental and social benefits can be resumed as follows:

- New investment in additional bergamot plantations;
- Reconversion of old varieties/species and abandoned land with new and more profitable plantations;
- Introduction of more sustainable farm practices (organic production) in the bergamot cultivation;
- Positive image of bergamot in the international markets and appreciation by consumers via better prices and via new applications of the bergamot derivatives in pharmaceutical preparation for diverse uses
- In connection with other factors of biodiversity and cultural heritage, strengthened local attractiveness for naturalistic/green tourism.

