



A study tour supported by FAO and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) brought mandarin producers from the Neretva Valley of Croatia to Italia, especially to the Amalfi Coast, Foggia, Gargano and Taranto to understand the role of Geographical Indications (GIs) in the Italian citrus industry and to provide participants with an overview of the process.



The study tour began with a morning session at FAO Headquarters with the objectives of the tour were presented. A representative from the Italian Ministry of Agriculture explained the European system of registration and protection for different types of GIs, namely Protected Geographical Indication (PGI) and the slightly stricter Protected Designation of Origin (PDO).



The Southern Italian Coast was selected for the study tour because of the region's famed citrus and its experience with GIs. PGIs have been established by orange, lemon and clementine producers in the area. This range of examples plus the clear link between the citrus industry and tourism provided a lot of information and ideas for the Croatian producers.



The first stop on the tour was the Amalfi Coast. All lemons certified under the Amalfi Coast Lemon PGI are grown in this territory.



In Amalfi, the Lemon Tour was created by the PGI Association as a way to increase awareness and tourism in the thirteen towns in the region. The tour took the group to see different lemon groves, the famed lemon terraces and to meet producers.



The group met with the Consortium president and a lemon expert who explained the structure of the terraces and the lemon groves to the Neretva Valley producers. They also explained the history of the region: lemons have grown on the Amalfi Coast since the 12th century. There are currently approximately 600 producers in the area, of which 300 are GI-certified. The other producers are small-scale.



The lemon terraces are supported with rock walls to facilitate drainage and warmth retention. They are planted in wooded structures and covered with plastic nets to protect against hail and wind damage. When the lemons are picked, the leaves are kept on as a show of health and quality so it is important to protect them during the growing season.



Tour participants learned about the specific characteristics of the *sfusato*, or Amalfi Lemon. These characteristics and traditional growing techniques are what allow the PGI to exist: in order to register a PGI or PDO, the first step is to establish that the product is unique because of its region.





Amalfi lemons are particularly sweet and can be eaten, peel and all, on their own or with a bit of sugar or salt. Here, tour participants hear more about the flavor profile of the Amalfi lemon and learn first-hand why the name is such a prized and protected designation.



The tour continued at a family-run producer of limoncello and other fruit liqueurs. Derivative products like liqueurs, marmalade and cakes are a good way to add value to the lemon and expand its significance in regional tourism.



The group continued on to a packaging facility where they witnessed the process of sorting, packaging and branding the certified lemons.



Not all lemons are certified with the PGI: at the moment, the Code of Practice limits certified lemons to a specified volume maximum.



The facility also includes a lemon peeling division where machines remove peels that are then macerated to make limoncello .



The Croatian producers met representatives from the PGI Association and the certification organization. The conversation covered the role of the association in managing the GI, the process of certification and controls, and the marketing strength an organized GI can have to coordinate tourist activities like the Lemon Tour.



Derivative products for sale outside of a tourist shop in Amalfi. The use of the PGI label is prominent even on the limoncello.



Near Amalfi, the group visited the Ente Ceramica Vietrese, a collective association for local ceramics. There, they had a seminar and conversation with the brand association members who emphasized the power of working together to promote the regional identity of a product.





Similar to the lemon industry, the ceramics are part of the local heritage and culture and are an asset for tourism.



In Gargano, the tour participants visited orange groves and learned about the intricacies of Gargano's GI Association, which covers a PGI for oranges, *Arancia del Gargano IGP*, and one for lemons, *Limone Femminello del Gargano IGP* within the same region.



The area covers two municipalities comprising approximately 400 hectares, mostly in smaller orchards up to 2.5 hectares which are irrigated. Nearly all production is exported out of the region.



On the final day of the tour, the group visited Taranto to see how the Association of the *Clementine del Golfo di Taranto IGP* audits and manages its clementine growers and groves. The region is naturally flat, fertile, well-drained, and has ideal exposure and protection for citrus. Taranto has grown clementines since the 18th century but only became an economically significant crop in the 20th century. The clementine PGI association was created in 2003.



The Clementine PGI association is part of a larger Cooperative that was established in 1987. In addition to clementines, the Cooperative oversees lemon and orange producers that are not certified under a PGI. Representatives of the umbrella organization feel that the PGI has created little added value for its sales. This was an important opportunity for the Croatian producers to see how a PGI could have limited impact if the stakeholders do not work together and the association is not strong.



The tour of Southern Italian citrus producers was a helpful learning experience for the Croatian mandarin producers who now have a wealth of information on GIs, the certification process, and marketing opportunities that they will be able to explore and implement in the Neretva Valley.