



CULTURE AND NATURE: THE EUROPEAN HERITAGE OF
SHEEP FARMING AND PASTORAL LIFE

RESEARCH THEME 8: TRADITIONAL FOOD TECHNOLOGY
REPORT OF BULGARIA

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TRADITIONAL BULGARIAN TECHNOLOGY FOR PROCESSING OVINE

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Introduction

The main products of sheep and goats raising – milk and meat for food, undergo a completely different technology of processing. For highlanders, who deal mainly with sheep-breeding and are much more limited in agriculture, animals are not just a means to meet their needs of food, but also a basic source of income. The majority of durable dairy products as well as male and barren animals is destined for the market. Sheep and goats are wealth, a steady source of income from the sale of wool, butter and cheese. In traditional farms, animals are slaughtered for meat only on certain holidays.

Sheep dairy products occupy an important place both in the traditional and contemporary diet of the population in the mountainous areas of Bulgaria. Conventionally, we can divide the processing of sheep milk products into two types: at home, in limited quantities and at the dairy – in greater or industrial amounts. Cheese, butter and *kashkaval* (kind of yellow cheese) – these are durable sheep dairy products typical for Bulgaria. Yoghurt and curd (*izvara*) are highly perishable. Preparation of milk products is organized in dairies during the milking period after the weaning of lambs, which for sheep and goats lasts from May to September. There is a traditional taboo on the consumption and processing of sheep milk before *Gergyovden* (St. George's Day, May 6) for the lambs still suckle, i.e. this taboo refers to the labour and productive rhythm.

The organoleptic properties of sheep milk meet the basic features of animal milks. It has relatively higher specific weight and higher natural acidity than cow's milk. Sheep milk is rich in valuable milk proteins, lactose, minerals and vitamins. Under the influence of food, i.e. grazing, animal health, high temperature, microbial growth and other factors, milk may alter its milk characteristics. Not surprisingly Rhodopean people think that the milk (*presnik*) of the local sheep breeds is very tasty and nutritious as it contains many nutrients. In Berkovitza region, locals claim the same about their sheep and goats, in the regions of Stara Planina and Pirin – the people have the same arguments.

Traditional processing of sheep milk

In traditional economic organization, sheep and goat milk is processed at the same place where sheep were milked, i.e. at home or at the dairies near grazing land and running water. Before milking, the shepherds washed their hands and faces and rinsed the milk containers. If the vessel was copper, it should be tin-plated before the milking, however the tin coat was checked once more. If the vessel was wooden, juniper was preferred for its antiseptic properties and nice fragrance. Another ancient method of purification the milk was dropping a silver coin into the vessel – people believed silver had antibacterial properties. However, this practice was more common at the beginning of the milk yield and was considered apotropaic and symbolic protection. Similar are the various rituals performed on the first day of milking (*predoy*) – milking through a small ring-shaped roll (*kolache*), hanging garlic on the pail/bucket, etc. After milking the sheep, milk must be filtered through a piece of cloth to remove adventitious impurities. Since sheep are animals of comparatively low yield of milk – about 250 grams per day and are milked at least twice a day – in the morning and in the evening, sheep-owners in the mountains prefer joint consumption of milk and common dairy production from flocks of at least 200 – 250 animals. A master dairyman called “*mandradzhiya*” or “*bach*” daily could manage the milk production from a flock of this size.

To destroy eventual microorganisms in milk and thereby provide greater durability in storage, but also to make milk safer for use in fresh, according to modern technological standards, Bulgarian sheep’s milk undergoes pasteurization. But considering even pasteurized milk not very durable, usually at home and in dairy industry sterilization is carried out. In the course of sterilization, milk is boiled up over 100° C, which results in changes in taste and reduces the nutritional properties.

In modern dairies pasteurization is done in three ways; all of them applied in Bulgarian milk-processing enterprises:

- Low (long) - milk is heated to 65⁰ and then immediately cooled to 8–12⁰. This method is applied in cheese making.
- Average (short) - milk is heated to 75⁰ for 5 min. This method is applied in the production of fresh milk for fresh consumption.

- High (instant) pasteurization - milk is heated to 85–90⁰ for 1 minute. This method is used in the production of yoghurt.

The traditional Bulgarian technology approaches the highest “pasteurization” of sheep milk, which almost reaches the boiling point. Boiling itself is prevented by constant stirring. There are also ritual taboos to prevent boiling over and catching the milk. According to old shepherds that was believed a bad omen for the dairy production and from a modern perspective – it is a kind of recommendation not to destroy milk nutrients.

“Pasteurization” was applied in the production of specific dairy products late in summer, around the feast of Virgin Mary on August, 15. At that time milk thickens naturally. The product has got various local names: “*bráno mlyáko*” (the Rhodopes, Thrace), “*ascháak*” (Northeastern Bulgaria), “*katák*”, “*ashcháak*”, “*samokísh*” (Plovdiv), “*kutmách*” (Pirin). The milk is cooked on low fire/temperature to evaporate maximum water, by stirring constantly to prevail boiling and catching. The salted condensed milk is poured into clay jars or small wooden kegs – in both cases the vessel would draw additional water. One can put one or two lumps of cheese into the milk – in this case the product is called “*kurkmách*”. This milk is very durable and can last until spring. To make sure, one should pour melted butter on top to seal it and prevent spoiling because of contact with the air.

In old Bulgarian traditions and today milk is processed in *yoghurt*, sour milk or in **cheese**, **curds** and yellow cheese – *kashkavál* (Bulg.).

Sheep milk yoghurt, curdled, also was called “*lyúto mlyáko*” [i.e. ‘hot’, ‘pungent’] (Strandzha), “*chyóstu mléko*”, “*ugúrt*” (the Rhodopes), “*fáteno mléko*” or “*ayórt*” (Pirin region), “*ogúrt*” (Lovech region). The yoghurt made of whole unskimmed sheep milk is the best quality Bulgarian sour milk. It is a high perishable seasonal product. In the course of preparation boiled or subjected to pasteurization (to 85–90⁰) milk is used. It is produced by interaction of freshly boiled sheep milk with lactic-acid bacteria *Lactobacillus Bulgaricus*, which secretes lactic acid in the course of fermentation of milk sugar (lactose). When using racial ferments for industrial amounts in the current conditions, lactic acid bacteria combine with a second type bacteria - *Streptococcus thermophilus*. When homemade and in limited quantities, 2-3 tablespoons of starter from previously curdled milk, called “*podkvas*”, “*podkish*”, are added to 5 l boiled sheep milk at a temperature of about 40⁰. Then the container is covered for 3 – 4 hours to maintain the heat and to ensure fermentation. The result is rapid and complete curdle of casein in

the milk, as well as the dense structure characteristic for sheep yoghurt. Then the temperature is quickly lowered to 8–10° and the product can be stored for six to ten days at 6°.

A ritual method for obtaining sheep yoghurt was curdling the milk with morning dew, collected in the meadows before sunrise on St. George's Day. This rational-magical method actually facilitated micro-organism *Lb. Bulgaricus*, widespread in the environment, to get into the milk during the proper season, under the proper temperature conditions. Thus in Bulgarian lands, a hundred years ago, once a year on Gergyovden, curdle was changed. In Lovech region, the new curdle is "caught" with a silver coin. Another ancient method of curdling the milk is preserved in North-eastern Bulgaria among the Torlak ethnographic group – making use of dry beans. The milk, boiled and cooled to the required temperature, was poured into a jar or "dzhiban" – a tall, narrow wooden vessel, intended only for milk curdling. Several dry beans, wrapped in cloth, were dipped into the milk. When milk is curdled in a wooden container, new milk can be added to the old. According to the traditional yoghurt technology, milk was curdled in wooden or earthen vessels used solely for this purpose. This limited the penetration and development of bacteria and micro-organisms in the product. For bigger quantities curdling was made in copper buckets, cauldrons and barrels.

Another ancient way of curdling the milk, used by the shepherds from the same region, was with a "*kakalashka*" – a piece of corn-cob cleaned of the grain. The corn-cob was placed in 100 grams of milk for two days, and then the curdle was ready. According to the belief spread among hereditary shepherds from the central parts of the Rhodope Mountains, the dairy milk could be curdled with "*pandzhahir*" – rare horn formation on the sheep forehead, which old shepherds collected and used for years.

Butter. Butter was one of the main products derived from sheep milk. It was made mechanically by churning the milk in two different states: uncooked – fresh or stale, and cooked - from cream, whipped milk or curdled. Butter for domestic use was obtained by churning up the milk with a staff in a churn - tall and narrow wooden vessel, called "*butalka*", "*buchka*", "*burilka*" and "*churilo*". The cream, collected for several days in a special earthen or wooden vessel, was mixed with raw milk and cold water was added. The mixture was churned in a cold room, usually in the cellar. In the region of Plovdiv, the milk for butter, collected over several days, was called "*prokish*" as it was left to turn sour and thickened itself. The Thracians churned butter from "*kishka*", i.e. sour milk,

collected in large jars. The other technology was getting butter from curdled milk. In this case some hot water was added – and respectively churning in a cold place was not required. The butter was formed as small grains in the liquid, which gradually grew bigger and were periodically ladled out from the surface. In Pirin region, new freshly milked quantity was added to the whey left from the cheese and it was left for 24 hours until the milk turned sour. Then they said the mixture has “risen” and churned it for butter. In a vat with capacity of 100 l, the yield was 8 kg of butter after 3-4 hours churning.

In cases of joint milking of numerous flocks, butter was churned in large barrels, called “*barkalni katsi*”, with total capacity of 100 – 150 kg. Again in Pirin, those barrels once held ca 200 – 300 kg. They were called “*gerani*”. Beating was done with a special lever to drive the churn-staff – the lever was operated with legs, arms (the Rhodopes) or by water (Northern Bulgaria). In the past, the collection of butter lasted for 3 – 4 and even more hours. Now electric machinery is used, in the rare cases when butter is churned from sheep milk.

The mastership in obtaining high quality and durable butter consists in washing it over and over again to extract the whey and water surplus. This was particularly important in churning butter from curdled milk to get rid of the sour taste. When sheep butter was produced in large quantities, for greater durability melting was applied at the dairies to evaporate the water. After getting salted, sheep butter could be stored for a long time – all the year round, in wooden barrels. For the shepherds, butter was one of the best sold products.

The churned sheep yogurt after the extraction of butter, turned into the favorite traditional Bulgarian milk beverage – “*matenitsa*”, “*matan*”, “*barkanitsa*”, “*ayryan*”, “*ogurt*”. Buttermilk could be used for making cottage cheese after boiling, for sprinkling the cheese, for cheese ripening. 10 pails of milk (50 l) produced 5 buckets of “*samokish*” (25 kg) – and after churning it 3 kg of butter crumbs were obtained.

In the past Bulgarian highlanders involved in large-scale sheep and goats raising, the daily milk yield was placed in vats with capacity of ca 100 liters for processing into cheese. These containers in Pirin region held 150 kg but their capacity in some places reached up to 500 and 1000 kg.

Cheese from sheep milk was produced in the following ratio: from 100 kg of milk – 25 kg of cheese. Initially, the term “white brine cheese” stood for sheep or goat cheese, and later there appeared a variant of cow and buffalo milk or a mixture. Traditionally, cheese was made of raw milk, but it also could be churned (non-fat milk) and regular (“male” or unskimmed milk). Traditionally, according to the ritual calendar, cheese is prepared for the first time on Gergyovden. Until then there was a ritual taboo on the consumption of milk. The specific natural and climatic conditions and pastures, as well as to the type of pastoral economy, determined the start of dairy activities nearly one month later – on the day of Sts. Constantine and Helena (May 21/ June 3). Then the first milking of sheep (“*Predoy*”) was done – a labour celebration for the shepherds and their families at the beginning of the joint milking and making dairy products in the year. Milk products were the main course on that day. “Fresh cheese” i.e. non-matured was made on this occasion, called “*telemyo*” and “*yahliya*”, because it was fat. The milk from the last milking – “*doilo*” was curdled. These products were shared and consumed by all the society present at the feast. Some part of them was taken home and given out to neighbours and relatives as a symbolical blessing to get a lot of milk from their animals.

Throughout Bulgaria are well known and applied both methods of **cheese**-making – of churned milk and of whole milk. In Pirin, the Rhodopes, Kyustendilsko kraishite, the churned non-fat cheese was called “*imansaz peynir*” and the whole fat cheese – “*yahliya*”.

In Bulgaria, cheese was made in a rather primitive way from uncooked milk immediately after milking in order to retain the necessary temperature. Another process was also applied that today would be called “pasteurization” – slow and prolonged heating to avoid boiling. Substances were added to the milk to provoke the enzyme interaction of specific lactic-acid organisms. In old times, the farmers made the typical Bulgarian “white cheese” by adding rennet (“*sirishte*”) in the milk. The rennet was obtained of dried curdle (“kernels”) from the first milk in the stomach of an unweaned lamb which had only suckled and not grazed grass yet. In other areas, the rennet was prepared from the stomach of the ritual lamb – the offering slaughtered on Gergyovden. At the dairies in the Rhodopes where in the past (up to the 30-ies of 20-th c.) the milk of thousands sheep was processed, “the rennet” – a ball of dried stomachs of several young lambs, hanged suspended from the ceiling of the room where milk products were made. A small piece of the rennet was placed in water, diluted to pulp and that was enough to curdle 10 – 15

liters of milk. Another method was mixing rennet with water and using it as a liquid. In this case the rennet was stored in a pot, closed with a leather stopper and stored in the dairy.

From the first decades of the 20-th century, Bulgarian cheese-makers started to use manufactured rennet. Today they use only purchased rennet for cheese, which contains the same substances, known from the tradition. Cheese-makers experience some difference in the “power” of rennet made by different producers – to turn milk into cheese faster, to obtain high quality products, etc. The daily milk yield (from morning and evening milking) intended for cheese-making, must be cooked in the evening. In the morning, the cream is gathered and churned for butter. Then it is curdled in a special wooden vessel. In some areas, the container is cylindrical like a bucket, but in others, where large amounts of milk are processed, wooden troughs of large capacity, with a bottom hole for drainage of whey are used. An old way of making cheese in Pirin is to drop the rennet in the barrel of uncooked milk together with a glowing stone, around which cheese accumulates like a clot – called “*zhezhenno sirene*”.

Anyway, to start the process of coagulation it is required optimum temperature of the milk. If natural temperature is low, they pour hot water and with a stick or hand start to stir the milk in one direction until a ball is shaped, which gradually enlarges. Milk turns into cheese within an hour. A few hours later, the curdled mixture is poured into a strainer “*tsedilka*”, “*sirenarska torba*” – a rectangular cloth bag, which in different areas is made of woven wool, hemp or cotton, but in all cases, of natural materials, in natural colors. After draining, the cheese mass is poured on a special wooden device, weights are put on it to press and flatten it – i.e. to make a “cake” and squeeze more water from it. Then it is cut into lumps and arranged in another wooden vessel – small barrel or trough. Then it is soaked in brine made of salt and water and it is left to mature. Ripening lasts for 2 – 3 months.

In the past, the most durable preservation of cheese was obtained, when it was packed in skins, called “*myah*”, “*meh*”, “*mishka*”, “*tulum*”. These primitive packs were actually lambskin bags, well washed and cropped, hair turned inside. The “ripened” cheese was put into the skins. It was previously chopped and left for one night or for 24 hours on a counter to drain the brine. Then it was stuffed tightly into the lambskins. The aim was to remove the air and to suppress the process of subsequent fermentation. A variant of “skin-packed cheese” is prepared in the Rhodopes. The product is made of chopped

pieces of yellow fat cheese, mixed with curds and salt. The cheese is called “*branza*”. One lambskin contains ca 15 – 20 kg of cheese. Shepherds’ families prepared 2 – 3 to 5 skins for the winter and up to the next milking season. The amount of the winter supply is determined by the number of household members and on the wealth of the family. The surplus is for sale. The tradition to sell cheese in *tulum*s gradually declined in the 30-ies and 40-ies of the twentieth century. This cheese had a very specific taste and smell and only people familiar to it from childhood, liked it. Today, in some localities in the Rhodopes a quite similar homemade cheese, stored in jars of 1 kg or in other modern containers – glass, plastic and metal is offered.

The remainder from butter churning (*ayran*, *barkanitsa*) and from cheese- making (whey - *survatka*, *prokisha*) was further processed into **curds** – the most widespread and consumed product of sheep milk in the past. It was also called “*odvara*”, “*urda*”, “*vrda*”, “*ulashik*”, “*ishumik*”, “*ishmik*”. The liquid was put to boil until curdled and balls formed. Then it was poured into a bag, used only for this purpose and called “*urdenik*”, “*urdova torba*”. After draining, it was salted and consumed quickly, because it was quite perishable. Curds obtained from curdled milk proved more durable than that from curdled cheese. Highlanders made “*myahovo*” or “*branza*” cheese precisely from curdled milk.

The white brine cheese – a specific Bulgarian product made according to traditional technology, is generally produced from sheep milk. It must be of high quality, pure and from healthy animals. After its delivery at the dairy, the milk is laboratory tested, categorized, filtered and subjected to pasteurization. This requires adding lactic acid bacteria involved in the ripening process. Then milk is poured into vessels for coagulation. The temperature should be approximately 30⁰. Special rennet is used in a specified amount. Coagulation takes from 70 to 100 minutes depending on the temperature and acidity of milk. The cheese should be average firm, to come off the walls of the vessel without leaking whey. The following operation is taking the cheese out from the vessel and pressing it. Upon reaching the desired consistency, the cheese is placed on a special sloping table for the whey to drain away. These tables are flanked by a square wooden frame, covered with a cloth strainer. The cheese is carefully placed on the strainer and cut for easier drainage of the whey. In a while, the four corners of the strainer are tied, the wooden frame removed and a wooden cover placed upon the cheese to drain faster. Gradually the pressure is increased by increasing the weight. In the course of

pressing the excess whey is squeezed away till the curd is compact and obtains the required shape. This is one of the most important moments in the general process of cheese making. Slicing the cheese is the next. It is done with wooden knives. The still soft large pieces about 10 – 15 cm wide, are carefully placed in salt brine and a little dry sea salt is spread atop. Salt adds some hardness to the product. Salting is considered completed upon reaching 4-5% salt contents of the cheese. Ripening and storage are the next steps. In the process of ripening, the cheese acquires its individual taste. Ripening takes 45 to 60 days. In pure brine, which must cover the lumps, the cheese is placed in special wooden barrels or tins. For proper operation, the maturing process is done in a cool place, at 12–15^o and relative humidity of 95%. Successful process of maturing is to moderate lactic fermentation of milk sugar left in the cheese. Ripening is ascertained with organoleptic tests, until the required taste of the product is achieved. Then the containers are moved to a refrigerator for storage at 4–6^o. According to IES, cheese is liable to categorization according to its taste, odour, texture, appearance, colour, cut surface of the white brine cheese, type of package, and marking. If necessary, a laboratory method is employed to investigate some physical and chemical parameters of the cheese. Some defects of the cheese might be possible due to poor milk quality, errors in technology, packing problems. Sour taste comes from sour milk, pressing and salting at higher temperature, ripening in a warm place. Bitter taste is due to development of microorganisms in the product. But it may also be due to the quality of the salt if it contains more magnesium salts. Identified at an early stage of the ripening process, this problem can be eliminated by changing the brine. Cheese rising also indicates something wrong and most often it is due to technological errors, while softening of the cheese may be result of wrong pressing, insufficient maturation, changing the brine, etc.

Kashkaval is the second most important product of Bulgarian cheese-making. While it is hard digestible because of its pungent taste and high nutritional value due to high durability, when properly stored, kashkaval exceeds the white cheese according to the rating of Bulgarians. Kashkaval making is a complex process. Unlike cheese, which can be homemade, it is quite difficult to make kashkaval at home. First, because of the very low yield – 10 litres of milk give 2 kg kashkaval. It also requires mixing sheep and 10 % goat's milk; nowadays, however, it is mixed with the same amount of cow milk. A higher percentage is not allowed because it will adversely affect the taste of the product. And third, the technology for kashkaval making is much more complex, precise and time consuming.

The first technological step is coagulation. The process is similar to that of the white brine cheese, but here the curd is left to harden well. Primary treatment of the curd involves removal from the vessel, cutting, crushing into pieces of pea size, sintering (heating up to 30⁰). Then it is pressed at 15 – 20⁰, to drain away the excess whey, which lasts up to 2 hours. Rising of the curd is called “*chedarizatsiya*” – i.e. pre-maturation, on which the quality of the finished yellow cheese largely depends. Next step is sintering of the curd at temperature of about 70⁰, to stop the microbiological processes that would lead to spoilage of the product. Immediately after that, the curd is kneaded and until it acquires even elastic texture and gets ready to placement in special moulds of certain size, where the kashkaval cakes are pressed. The still soft kashkaval cakes are turned every 15 – 20 minutes to harden.

The duration of cake shaping depends on the size of the cakes, the temperature in the room, and lasts for 12 – 24 hours. Salting comes next – it improves the taste and texture of the product. It has an important role in the further course of maturation and affects durability. Salting is carried out several times within 24 hours, this lasts for 20 days. In salting, a specific practice is applied –the number (two, three to eight, etc) of the cakes that are stuck and placed atop increases each day, as salt is spread between them.

* * *

If we talk about **meat** – we should first note that in the traditional peasant family very rarely an animal is slaughtered purposefully for food. Sheep and goats tenders rely mainly on the milk and wool of the sheep – but not on the meat. An animal is slaughtered and its meat consumed only on feasts, family celebrations, birth and wedding celebrations, funerals, ritual offering and name days. Lamb is slaughtered only on Gergyovden and Easter. Rams and rarely sheep, but by all means barren, are cut for sacrifice offerings (*kurban*). In autumn, one of the aged animals (male or female) is slaughtered and processed into meat products durable to meet the needs of the family in the long winter months. Up to mid-twentieth century, shepherds in Southern Bulgaria usually slaughtered 1-2 animals for “*pastarma*” and “*sazdarma*”. Biltong (*pastarma*) is prepared by salting the meat of feeble animals. They are cut into two or four parts with the bones, sprinkled with plenty of coarse salt and let in a wooden container for about two weeks. The meat juice and the salt form brine, which conserves the product. It is then hung to dry in an airy place. In Lovech, biltong is made from lean meat. It is soaked in

cold water for a night and then left in a wooden trough of brine for about a month. The bones are smoked in the fireplace and cooked with dry beans in winter.

The technology of making “*sazdarma*”, “*sazmo*”, in some southern areas also called “*kavarma*”, “*kaurma*”, is different. This product is boiled. The meat, chopped in small pieces, is cooked in salt and little water to boil soft and easily remove the bones. After boning, it is put to boil again until water entirely evaporates. The experienced masters-cooks process the fat separately – they fry it to melt and remove the meat bits. This fat is added to the meat when cooked. Slightly cooled, the ready *sazdarma* is poured into a sheep stomach “*tarbuh*”, “*tarbuf*” or into “*meshina*”. They sew the hole and press under weight and keep in a cold place. In the Rhodope Mountains, they make *sazdarma* called “*pitarche*” – the *sazdarma* is poured into plates to harden and then suspended from the ceiling to dry in a well-ventilated place. In the past such “*pitarcheta*” were prepared not only as family food, but also for the migrating workers, called “*gurbetchii*”, who used to consume it with bread or polenta.

The product of *sazdarma* is on the market as a delicacy of mutton, cooked in the traditional technology, but wrapped in polyethylene casing instead of in the traditional for that clean intestine or stomach. Plenty of spices are used in its making; it is eaten cold or warmed as spicy appetizer for wine, sometimes fried with eggs.

Local products, local brands, food quality

In the mountainous areas of Bulgaria, actively revived is the production of basic and famous in the past sheep products. Many dairies produce white sheep cheese, kashkaval and yoghurt. Famous modern brands in the country are “Bor-Chvor” (Sofia) for the production of white brine sheep cheese, “Parshevitza” (Montana), “Zemeneya” (Zemen) – for natural sheep yoghurt, cheese and kashkaval, “Rodopean” (Montana) – sheep yoghurt with European quality certificate, “Rodopeya” (Smolyan) – sheep yoghurt and cheese, “Zabardo” (Zabardo village, Smolyan region) – sheep cheese and kashkaval, “Trigrad” (Trigrad village, Smolyan region) – sheep kashkaval etc. Quality sheep cheese and kashkaval brands are “Dyado Liben” (Koprivshtitza), “Destan” (Iskra vil., Silistra region), “Rosa” (Dobrich region, Balchik), “Dimitar Madzharov” (Plovdiv), “Kostov” (Saedinenie), “Elena” (Sliven). The “Harmonika” dairy (Trojan) produces two special brands of bio-cheese - “Bio-sheep cheese” and “Bee”. Sheep and goat organic cheese is made at the Base of the Institute in Trojan. “Kondov” dairy in Staro selo, Trojan region,

invariably adheres to the IES since 1991 and produces high quality white cow, sheep and goat cheese for export, as well as Dutch cheese in the Dutch technology, with high-tech equipment.

For several years in Bulgaria develops and finds supporters the movement “Slow Food”. After the suggestion of its members the “Rhodopean beaten cheese” was included in the international list of foods distinguished by purity and quality of product, authenticity of technology, and the respective producers’ price. Bulgarian cheese is presented in the list along with 177 cheeses and dairy products from all over the world. Bulgarian yoghurt technology is also applied Japan and China, and the logo of the product is based on the village coat-of-arms of Momchilovtsi, Smolyan region.

Final words

In Bulgaria, in many places, traditionally associated with sheep-farming, local festivals are held, expressing reverence for pastoralism, flocks, milk. It is impossible to list all. In the past decade, several cultural events were recognized that seek to protect the prestige of the sheep milk in national framework, to preserve the traditions, to attract interest in Bulgaria and abroad. Such are the festival “In the Path of Goat’s Milk” – Gorna Bela Rechka village, Varshetz municipality, Montana; “Yoghurt fair and Festival of the Folk Traditions and Crafts” – Razgrad, “Uzana Polyana Fest”, organized in the Uzana locality over Gabrovo, launched in 2011. In the springtime of the last three years, the World Wildlife Fund Conservation Organization organized tasting of foods from “farm lands with high natural value”. Bulgarian sheep and goat yoghurt and dairy products are on the list. The event took place in Sofia, in front of the National Theatre House. Similar events show once again that as a consistent element of traditional pastoral culture, contemporary dishes prepared from sheep products spontaneously express the relation with the time of climax of sheep-breeding, which is probably not gone forever, if the interest in organic products is growing every year. Thus, along with dairy delicacies offered on holidays high in the mountains – “*bel mazh*”, “*sindirmyo*”, “*katak*”, pots of “*brano mlyako*”, commercially available are sheep and goat yoghurt, sheep and goat white and yellow (*kashkaval*) cheese, and *katak*. It is reasonable to hope that the development of new consumers culture, focused on organic foods, the increasing demand on the market for these products will naturally stimulate the production of sheep and goat milk, and will respectively, direct tail wind in the sails of sheep and goat farming as an important sector of Bulgarian agricultural economy.

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