Considerations for the strategic development of the winegrowing production chain in Calabria: the case study of typical IGT wine.
Francesco Saverio NESCI, Natalia SAPONE
DiSTAfA, Università Mediterranea di Reggio Calabria. francesco.nesci@unirc.it, natalia.sapone@unirc.it

Wine was first introduced to Calabria in the VII century BC along with the first Greek settlements in what was to become the home of the Magna Graecia. Despite its ancient and “noble” origins, official statistics tell us that today barely 4000 hectares are employed in the production of a quality product (out of a total of just under 15000 hectares) with 12 DOC and 13 IGT awards, whereas “traditional” wines are predominant. 75% of this surface area is concentrated around Cirò and Torre Melissa and another 20 “labels” are located over an area of less than 1000 hectares, a sign of extreme “hyperplasia” but also of vitality in those areas suffering from over-population. Considering the limited extent of the majority of the areas producing a quality “brand”, a qualitative analysis has been carried out in order to assess the potential for the improvement of wine as a vehicle for the development of its area of provenance in the context of a specific programme incorporating knowledge and flavour.

In particular, the analysis has focussed on IGT Palizzi, produced on the Ionian side of the Reggina province within a territory where the legacy of the Magna Graecia colonies is still clearly visible in Bovesia (or Bovesia) also known as the Area grecanica or ellenofoina which represents the secular birthplace of Calabria’s Hellenic linguistic minority. This area of approximately 460 km² is concentrated around the valley of the river Amendolea and the Siderone and San Pasquale torrents on the southern Ionian side of the Aspromonte. Here the traces of the natural crossroads provided by the Mediterranean basin because of the historic frailty of transport links and an unusually impervious inland structure remain intact. The value and intrinsic characteristics of the Area Greca add a modern currency to any study of the potential of the wine-growing sector which have already been clarified in the establishment of associations of young farmers to improve the value of the product both destined for the marketplace and eventually to be used as an incentive for wine and food-based tourism. After a brief description of the territory’s characteristics and history, the analysis focuses on the structure and activities of the chain of production for wine-growing and then on the analysis of the product’s strengths and weaknesses in the hope that a global “optimum” may eventually be reached. The analysis will refer to results obtained in a similar study carried out in the area of production for IGT Pellaro which has gradually been consumed by the urban extension of the city of Reggio Calabria, which demonstrate the limited benefits of maintaining land for wine cultivation compared to property development. In comparing the two areas, this study intends to highlight the strong variability of soil values with respect to the possibilities for their usage, which becomes increasingly evident beyond any “agrarian” logic wherever there is potential for property development.

In areas further from large urban centres, agriculture and tourism would instead appear to represent the only real possibilities for development in an idealised programme encompassing of historic know-how, flavours and emotions aimed at the valorisation and restoration of small rural centres. The creation of a “niche” product which can be identified with its place of origin and vice-versa and whose profitability can be guaranteed by a quality which lovers of fine wines are still prepared to seek and pay for could act as a pillar for the development and valorisation of the territory in the context of a larger circuit and a journey through the knowledge and flavours of the area.