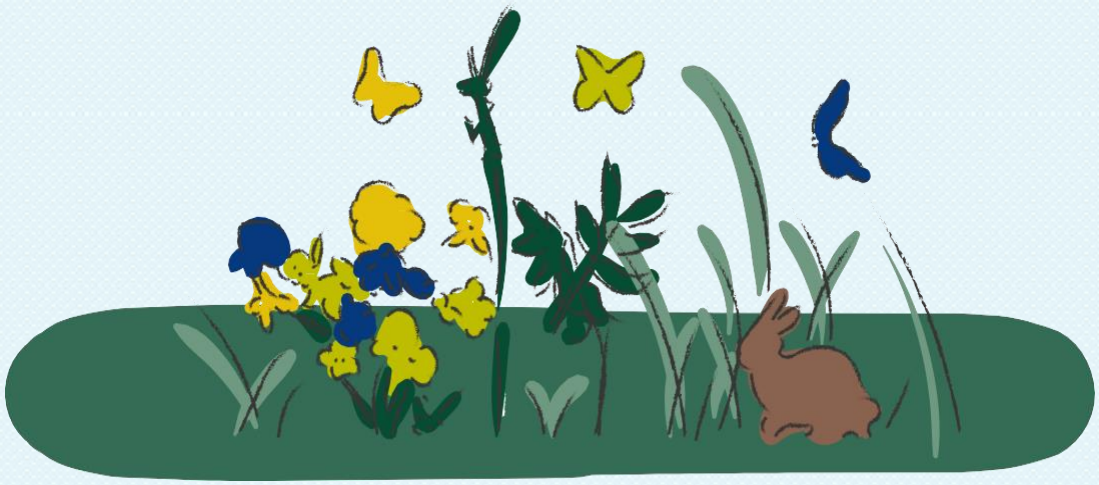
PREPARATORY ACTION

EU plant and animal genetic resources in agriculture

Compendium of projects

SPAIN

The Tomàtiga de Ramellet, a treasure of Mallorca's farmers Tomatoes



The publication is part of the study "Preparatory action on EU plant and animal genetic resources in agriculture". The Preparatory Action has been initiated by the European Parliament and financed by the European Commission.

The objectives of the Preparatory action are to better understand the stakes of European neglected genetic resources in agriculture and to tap onto their economic potential.

It aims to provide inspiring examples of how to make the conservation of neglected breeds and varieties economically viable and encourage farmers and other stakeholders to engage.

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1 Introduction



Hanging tomatoes are a well-known and much extended type of tomato in different regions of Spain, from the Mediterranean coast to inland and Atlantic areas.

Its main characteristic is that, once collected and stored in a dry, aired place with no temperature oscillations, it can be kept up to 9 months.

This is the case of the Tomàtiga de Ramellet[1], a population variety of hanging tomato, main character of the summer gardens in Mallorca, whose fruits, arranged in strings hanging from the ceiling, in olive tree sticks or over hurdles, are consumed all through the winter until, at least, the next planting season.

The project aims at developing cultivation of this specific landrace in Mallorca.

2 Description of the genetic resource

The Tomàtiga de Ramellet is a very rustic variety, adapted to drought, whose cultivation has traditionally been done strictly in dryland. There are documented evidences that show that in the villages of Banyalbufar and Estellencs this tomato was produced and commercialized in the beginning of the 20th century, where it also received the name of domatigó[2]. Other later documents[3] generalize its use in the rest of the island, where it is also known by a variety of other names as rastrera, de ferro, de penjar, blanca, autèntica, or d'estrella.

The cultivation of Tomàtiga de Ramellet is mainly carried out in family farms of diversified production, where it is a more or less important complement of the family economy. It appears in two traditional differentiated ecosystems in the open air: in terraces in the mountainous area of the Sierra de Tramuntana, where it is gravity irrigated with spring water; and in the centre of Mallorca, as part of the crop rotation with cereal, legumes and other vegetables, in dryland with support irrigation.



1 Name of the variety in Catalan, local language of Mallorca.
1Homar, H. (1929).The tomato and its cultivation in Bañalbufar and Estallenchs."Mallorca Agrícola" magazine, nº 7.
3 Socies, A.M. y Soriano, J.J. (2011). Preserve biodiversity, caring for our tomatoes. "Soberanía alimentaria, biodiversidad y culturas" magazine, nº 2. Madrid. Recovered from: https://revistasoberaniaalimentaria.wordpress.com/2010/08/23/preservar-la-biodiversidad-cuidar-nuestros-tomates/ [Search: 5thDecember 2017].

This variety is preserved thanks to the job of seed self-production and seed exchange performed by the farmers on the island. As in many other aspects of agriculture, women have had an essential role in the preservation of the traditional knowledge linked to the cultivation, the conservation and gastronomy of the Tomàtiga de Ramellet, and also in the cohesion of the social rural structures in which it is produced.

The different ways of the crop management and selection developed all through Mallorca have resulted in different population lines with specific morphological and ethno-agronomic characteristics.

It is a variety with very interesting organoleptic characteristics, of intense flavour, that has a very important cultural value and, therefore, it is very appreciated by the local community.

Its culinary use is linked to numerous dishes of the Mallorcan gastronomy, like pa amb oli (bread with tomato). This dish consists in a slice of bread with half ripe tomato spread on it with olive oil and salt. It is also used to make sauté and stews.

3 Objectives of the project

The Mallorca's agro systems are facing a delicate situation at the moment. A fundamental reason for this is the pressure exerted by the mass touristic model of sun and beach, that, firstly, has deeply changed the structure of the use of the land and the social geography of the island and, secondly, squanders local resources like water, generates strong dependences from imported goods and not necessarily supports the local agri-food culture.

The recognition and appreciation of Mallorca's population of the Tomàtiga de Ramellet has been used by the big scale producers and large retailers to create intentional confusion amongst consumers and offer hybrid tomatoes with the name of the well-known local variety.

In this context, organic producers, joint in the Association for the Local Varieties in the Balearic Islands (Associació de Varietats Locals de les Illes Balears, AVL-IB) have as an objective to strengthen the systems of appreciation and commercialisation of this local variety and to support the farmers that produce it in diversified systems in Mallorca.

4 Actors involved and roles

Different actors participate directly or indirectly in the dynamic management of the Tomàtiga de Ramellet. The AVL-IB stands out as the main promoter of its enhancement. Born in 2002 with the objective of promoting and encouraging the use of local varieties in Mallorca, this association is made up of more than 100 associates, of which 70% are farmers. The AVL-IB coordinates, together with the Association of Organic Farmers of Mallorca (Associació de Productors d'Agricultura Ecològica de Mallorca, APAEM) the productive and commercial strategies of the organic farmers of local varieties and collaborates with nurseries that produce seedlings for

farmers from their own seeds or, like Planters i Ornamentals Nicolau, offer directly in their catalogues vegetative material of the Tomàtiga de Ramellet and other local varieties.

The University of the Balearic Islands (Universitat de les Illes Balears, UIB) has created a permanent genebank of Tomàtiga de Ramellet with the diversity sampled in the Balearic Islands that is composed by 200 entries. In 2008 it carried out the characterization of the variety[4] and nowadays participates in the project TomRes[5], in which they intend to investigate the elements that allow the conservation of the fruits of this tomato.

5 Steps and activities undertaken

One of the main challenges Tomàtiga de Ramellet faces is to resist the attempt of certain entities that try to inappropriately take its varietal denomination. These actions try to take advantage of its social recognition to improve the positioning in the market of products that are completely unrelated to it.



The first attempt happened in 2009 when the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries of the regional Government proposed to promote the local variety through a quality label of Protected Geographical Indication (PGI). The proposal came from a very important fruit and vegetable company that produces a hybrid developed by the companies Hortseed Mediterrani and Fitó, and pretended to include the hybrid in the PGI. This variety lacks the conservation capacity and the organoleptic characteristics of the traditional one, but can be found in local markets and in selling points of large retailers, stringed and labelled as “ramillete” (in Spanish language).

Once the AVL-IB heard about this, they demanded that the hybrid tomato wasn’t sold as Tomàtiga de Ramellet and started to work to register this cultivar as a conservation variety. Finally, it became registered in 2012[6], being the Institute of Agricultural and Fishing Research of the Balearic Islands and the UIB the conservation entities.

Seeking the promotion of the use of Mallorca’s local varieties as well as the articulation of the sale of seeds from its associates, in 2013 the AVL-IB registered as a seed producer. Since then they

4 Bota, J., Cifre, J.; Rosselló, J.; Medrano, H.; Robbins, M.; Sim, S. and Francis, D. (2008). Morphological and DNA sequence variation in local varieties of tomato from the Balearic Archipelago. Plant and Animal Genomes XVI Conference, p.429. January 12-16, 2008. Town & Country Convention Center. San Diego, CA. USA.

5 The TomRed project receives funding from the Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Programme of the European Union under the grant agreement nº 727929.

6 Nº register 20100178. Online: http://www.magrama.gob.es/app/regVar/DetalleVariedad.aspx?id=es&TipoV=C&IDVariedad=20100178 [Search: 10th December 2017].

produce, in 6 organic farms, seeds from 54 local varieties of 17 different vegetable species (amongst which two types of Tomàtiga de Ramellet can be found) and cereal seeds. They are all collected in a catalogue that is published annually[7]. The commercialization of seeds is done through their website, farmers' markets, shops and agricultural cooperatives in Mallorca.

6 Results to date

Nowadays the production and commercialization of the Tomàtiga de Ramellet is mainly carried out by small agricultural family companies. The crop is distributed entirely in the Balearic and Catalonian market, being the latter a region with an important cultural bond with these types of tomatoes and where they have big commercial success.



In Mallorca, this local cultivar isn't found in large retailers channels, where we can find 'hanging' hybrids. The Tomàtiga de Ramellet is commercialized through 3 main ways. Firstly we can highlight the direct sale, like the one that Antoni Feliu, the president of AVL-IB does. This Mallorcan organic grower manages a highly diversified family farm, and he sells his production directly to the consumer through local weekly farmers' markets. He cultivates annually half a hectare of Tomàtiga de Ramellet, of which he has three different ecotypes. The selling prices in this channel oscillate between 3 and 5 €/kg depending on the time of the year. Secondly we have producers, most of them with a high degree of diversification, that distribute their fresh product individually or collectively to the retail sector of the island, to exclusive fruit and Mallorcan products shops and bars and restaurants. Lastly, there are very specialized productions that are sold in the wholesale trade market fundamentally, aimed to be exported to Barcelona.

The commercialisation can be done in different formats: stringed, in bulk or in a box. Stringed tomatoes are very well accepted amongst the final consumer in the local markets and by the exports to Catalonia, since it is very practical to be able to hang the string in the kitchen, where the consumer can pick the tomatoes when desired, without the need of keeping them in the fridge.

7 AVL-IB (2016). AVL Catalogue. Recovered from: http://www.varietatslocals.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/CATALEG-VARIETATS-LOCALS_2016.reduit.pdf [Search: 10th December 2017].

During the last few years and mainly thanks to some sensitive town halls, a few local fairs have been created aimed at the recognition and appreciation of this variety, like the Fira nocturna i mostra de Tomàtiga de Ramellet[8] in the Mallorcan village of Maria de la Salut.

7 Next steps

The next actions that the AVL-IB wants to take intend to:

- Maintain an adequate offer both in volume and in seasonality in the local and export market of Tomàtiga de Ramellet; especially in the sector of certified organic agriculture. In order to do this, and with the collaboration of APAEM, collective planning together with the producers of the crops is needed.

- Distinguish clearly the original traditional variety from the "hanging" hybrids that have been introduced in the market in the last years, so that the consumer can recognize and differentiate it. The association wants, firstly, to explore different options of branding, like quality labels, Protected Designation of Origin (PDO) or PGI; provided that it comes with an improvement for the farmers that cultivate the traditional variety and it is economically viable. Secondly the association is going to continue with the information and awareness campaign for the consumers about the characteristics and benefits of the Tomàtiga de Ramellet.

8 Lesson learned and good practices

One of the most important lessons learned by the AVL-IB in the last years has been to become aware of the fact that there are cases of misappropriation in Europe and that these are complex. The attempt to create a PGI to promote the Tomàtiga de Ramellet admitting hybrids and some other subsequent cases is a clear example of this. With the objective of detecting if there is a dishonest use of the genetic material of the local varieties or their denominations, the association recommends that the groups of farmers and seed networks monitor the catalogues of commercial and protected varieties and the quality labels that are established locally (brands, PDO, PGI, Traditional Speciality Guaranteed, etc.).

The catalogue of conservation varieties is a very useful tool to avoid misappropriation. The expansion of the use of these varieties amongst amateur and professional farmers through the creation of microenterprises of seeds of local varieties like the one linked to the AVL-IB is also helpful. These initiatives also develop actions to raise awareness that contribute to stop the process of erosion of the agri-food culture, so deep in the touristic island context, in which historically their inhabitants have generated a very high level of alimentary autonomy.

8 "Diario de Mallorca" (11th August 2017). Tomátiga de RamelletFair2017. Recovered from: http://ocio.diariodemallorca.es/agenda/illes-balears-mallorca/ferias-congresos/maria-salut/eve-1059732-fira-tomatiga-ramellet-2017.html [Search: 10th December 2017].

9 Participation to other projects and to networks/funding.

In the Balearic Islands, just like in the 2000-2007 frame, the protection of native varieties at risk of genetic erosion is funded (the cultivation of a given area and local varieties) for private individuals and legal entities through the Rural Development Programme in the 2014-2020 frame. The varieties susceptible of funding must be contained in a proposed list[9], in whose elaboration AVL-IB has taken part, and in which there are 87 varieties of arable crops, fruit and vegetable crops. In this list there is only one type of Tomàtiga de Ramellet, the denominated Tomàtiga de Banyalbufar, preserved only by a small group of amateur farmers that don't apply for the funding.

In the Balearic Island, 140 farmers and agricultural companies have benefited from this funding, but none has requested the support for the conservation of the Tomàtiga de Banyalbufar.

The entities that work from a perspective for the dynamic management of the genetic resources like the AVL-IB have been, from the start, conscious of the need for building solid alliances with farmers and other organizations. Because of this, this association is an active member of the National Seed Network (Red de Semillas "Resembrando e Intercambiando", RdS). This group was created at the end of the 1990s and nowadays brings together 20 local networks and groups from different regions that share the development of a community management of local varieties in sustainable systems of production and consumption. The RdS is a unique platform in Spain for the coordination of technical works, political lobbying, as well as exchange of information and methodologies.

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9 BOIB (2014). Resolution of the President of the Agricultural and Fisheries Guarantee Fund of the Balearic Islands (FOGAIBA) approving the call, for the year 2014, for the extension of the financial assistance of the commitments assumed in the line of the protection of native varieties at risk of genetic erosion (BOIB nº 23, 15February 2014). Recovered from: http://www.caib.es/eboibfront/ca/2014/8273/533494/resolucio-del-president-del-fons-de-garantia-agrar [Search: 10th December 2017].