



THE PROMOTION OF LOCAL FOOD PRODUCTS THROUGH THE INVOLVEMENT OF RURAL WOMEN IN THE WOMEN'S GROUPS OF AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT (GFDA) OUED SBIAHIA CASE FROM ZAGHOUAN GOVERNORATE, TUNISIA

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ABSTRACT

This study consists of an analysis of the contribution of local products to the coverage of local consumption through the analysis of the socio-economic situation of women in the rural area of Oued Sbiahia zone of Zaghouan governorate. The methodological approach adopted is based on field investigations using surveys nearby women members of GDA Oued Sbiahia. These surveys have addressed the importance and role of these groups in promoting local products of rural women

The Main results showed that women's agricultural development groups have a very important role in territorial development related to the promotion of local products, through the integration and orientation of rural women

KEYWORDS: *integration, rural woman, local products, Zaghouan governorate.*

1. INTRODUCTION

In Tunisia, women in rural areas represent 70% of the total workforce in the agricultural sector. They are present throughout the agricultural production chain: from working in the fields and driving livestock to the processing and conservation of products for self-consumption or the market (Manon, 2010). They take care of cultivating crops, picking olives, sowing legumes, harvesting vegetable crops and raising small ruminants (Baya, 2017).

The Government has repeatedly conducted programs and strategies for the development and promotion of local products to meet the food needs of local populations (Belhedi, 2016). The Oued Sbiahia region in the governorate of Zaghouan were the subject of research on its local products and its

valuations by women in this area. The support of GFDA to promote the ability of women to generate income and to meet their family food needs is important.

This study consists of an analysis of the contribution of local products to the coverage of local consumption through the analysis of the socioeconomic situation of these women.

The methodological approach adopted is based on field investigations using surveys with 44 women members of the Oued Sbiahia GDA. These surveys addressed the importance and role of GFDA in the local development in the zone study and the importance of women's products in this area.

The main results showed that women's agricultural development groups have a very important role in territorial development in



connection with the promotion of local products, through the integration and orientation of rural women. The participation of rural women adhering to the Oued Sbaihia GDA in socio-economic life is important on the one hand by the improvement of their know-how and by their participation in family expenses on the other hand.

2. OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this study are to evaluate in a participative and concerted manner the adherence of rural women to the GDA of Oued Sbaihia and to formulate the recommendations and the best mechanisms for improving this adherence and for better promotion of women's products.

3. MÉTHODOLOGY

The surveys were carried out on a representative sample of the target population made up mainly of women members of GDA Oued Sbaihia. The sample was constructed based on the structure of the mother population and the resources available. The sample size is fixed at 44 women members of this group. The questionnaire was structured along the following main lines:

1. Socio-demographic characterization of the interviewees
2. Sales destinations and commercial circuits for products
3. Sources of procurement
4. Relations with the GDA, and general assessments of the services rendered by the GDA
5. General assessments of the role of women in the development of their financial situation
6. Observations, general suggestions and perspectives of the group

Data processing and analysis (General analysis or flat sorting and development of specific analyzes using SPSS and EXCEL).

4. STUDY ZONE

The Oued Sbaihia area: agricultural context

Oued Sbaihia is located in the North of the governorate of Zaghuan. It has 2000 inhabitants and 500 families (CTV Oued Sbaihia, 2017). School dropout is a common social fact in this region, 70% among girls (13-19 years old) (CRDA Zaghuan, 2018)

This area is a part of the lower semi-arid bioclimatic floor. In this zone, the climate is variable, It is marked by hot and dry summer and soft to moderate winter. This zone receives an average annual rainfall between 400 and 600mm.

The Oued Sbaihia area is marked by three geomorphological units. A mountainous area on the north side represented by erosive soils. Hills with a limestone crust scattered throughout the region which may be suitable for arboriculture. And a lowland area occupying the southern part for field crops, vegetable crops and fruit trees (Koussani R, 2018).

5. THE OUED SBAIHIA WOMEN'S AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT GROUP (GFDA)

Oued Sbaihia's GFDA is a non-governmental organization. It was created on May 24, 2002. It brings together small-scale farmers in the area. It has about 44 members and has a production workshop, a meeting room and an administration.

The main missions of the Oued sbaihia GFDA are, the integration of rural women into social life, the creation of income-generating activities, the creation of agricultural projects, the improvement of the development situation in this region. It is a part of the fight against poverty.

The Oued sbaihia GDA was created through cooperation with the Association (ASAD). It's a self-development support association and the Center of Arab Women for Training and Research (CAWTAR). The collaboration of agricultural technical services is very important such as the Regional Commissariat for Agricultural Development (CRDA Zaghuan) through the support unit for rural women. Services or supports for rural women:

- support of national and international marketing and marketing through opportunities to participate in national and international fairs and exhibitions and the opening of outlets for rural women's products
- technical support (offers training for capacity building for women members of the GFDA), enabling them to have training certificates.

- support and follow-up to facilitate their access to microcredits.

Discussion meetings with the GDA Oued Sbaihia board of director's team and with CRDA Zaghuan officials in direct contact with this group gave rise to a rich exchange, the main results of which are summarized by the SWOT analysis matrix in table 1.



Table 1. SWOT matrix of Oued Sbaihia GDA situation, Zaghouan

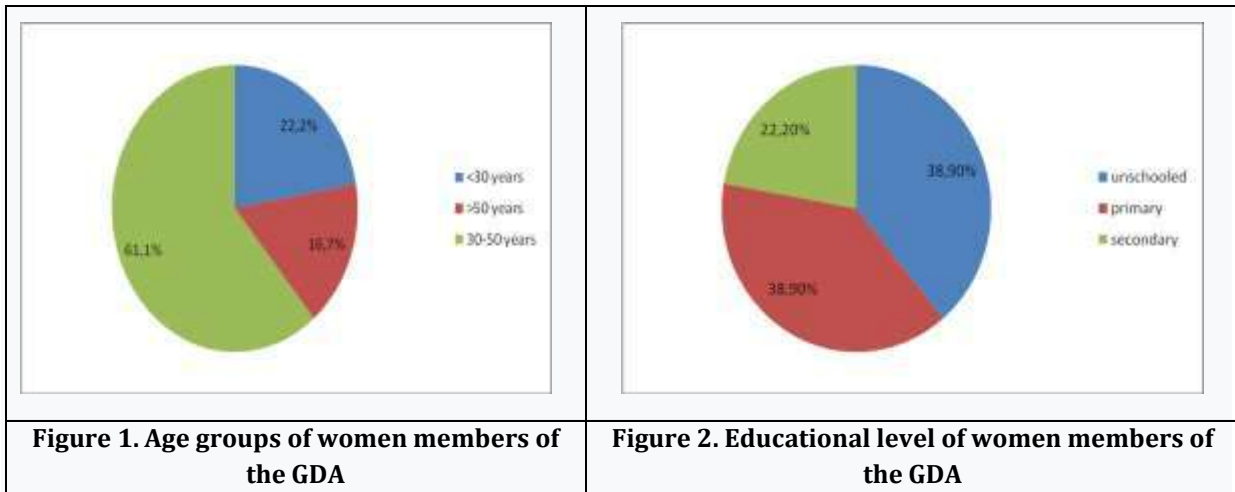
| | Positive | Negative |
|-----------------|--|---|
| | STRENGTHS | WEAKNESS |
| Interne | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⊕ Existence of a real need for women in rural areas ⊕ Motivation of the board of directors and women members; ⊕ Cooperation with CRDA, CTV, international NGOs, UTAP, Financial association (ENDA, ASSAD, Zaytouna tamkeen....) ⊕ Opportunities for technical assistance to the GDA by ENACTUS and by CRDA (women's cell) ⊕ Existence of local and natural potentials which can support the promotion of women's products | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⊕ Low membership rate of women in the group ⊕ The ignorance of the benefits of membership and the non conviction of the interest ⊕ Lack of funding and equipment ⊕ Difficulties and high costs of inputs and problems of marketing women's products ⊕ Reluctance of members because of the difficulties of the group. ⊕ Lack of staff qualification of the group |
| | OPPORTUNITIES | THREAT |
| External | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⊕ Improvement of the socio-political and administrative context which could support the development of the group ⊕ Improvement of the local socio-economic context with a revitalization of the roles of local actors and especially local NGOs such as development groups ⊕ Promotion of the role of rural women and development of the social and solidarity economy ⊕ Favorable context for international cooperation to support socio-professional organizations (WFP, FAO, IFAD, WB, AfDB, EU, ILO, etc.); | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⊕ Lack of State financial support for development groups ⊕ Competition of products on the international market with cheaper prices ⊕ Low selling prices for women's products, leading to reduced profit margins. ⊕ High input prices for women's products |

6. RÉSULTS

6.1. GDA Oued Sbaihia Membership Analysis

The socio-demographic characterization of the respondents reveals that they have an average age of 42.89 years with 22.2% of them being under 30 years old, and 61.1% are between 30 and 50 years old

(figure 1). Their level of education is generally medium with 22.2% of secondary education, 38.9% of primary education and 38.9% of Kotteb and unschooled (Figure 2).



Regarding the main activities, Agriculture represents a main activity for 61.1% of these women. There are 22.2% of housewives, and the private services are

occupied by 16.7% of this same population (Figure 3).

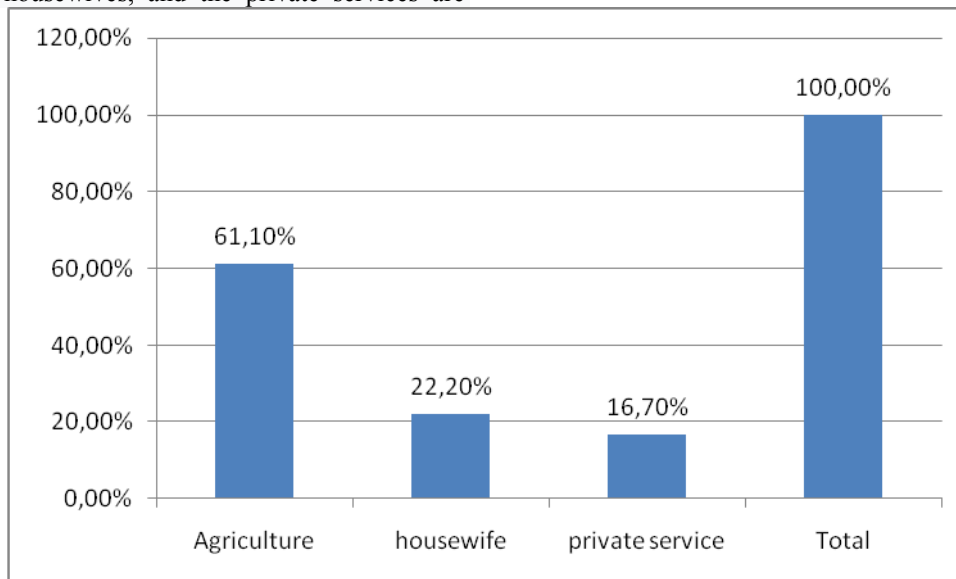


Figure 3. Main activities of the women surveyed

6.2 Analysis of the perception of the principles of solidarity and cooperation

The study of the perception of cooperation by the interviewees informs us about their level of knowledge and conviction in addition to their behavior towards membership in the group. The idea is to recall the main principles and ask whether the interviewee knows the principle or not and then ask his opinion. Survey results show that 75.8% of those interviewed are aware of the principles of collaboration and cooperation between women.

The women in the Oued Sbaihia area know each other and exchange ideas and experiences with each other. Indeed, some activities provide

opportunities for meeting and knowledge between women like that of "Oulla", and in seasons of picking olives and vegetable crops. Also, meetings at the GDA allow an exchange and knowledge between those who these women.

6.3 Perception of the level of development of products and agricultural potential

As for the perception of the level of products valorization and the specific agricultural and territorial potentialities of the region, 87% of the interviewed judges that it is little or not satisfactory. The current organization of the marketing circuit is considered bad by all of the women surveyed.



According to the results mentioned in Figure 4, the products of women members of the GDA of Oued Sbaihia present a great diversity. Indeed, 27.8% of GDA Oued Sbaihia members are specialized in the extraction of essential oils from aromatic and medicinal plants thanks to the availability of these

plants in the region. We note that 27.6% of women members manufacture various cereal-based products (couscous, mhamssa, chorba, etc.), while 16.8% of these interviewees specialize in other products such as of floral water and oil.

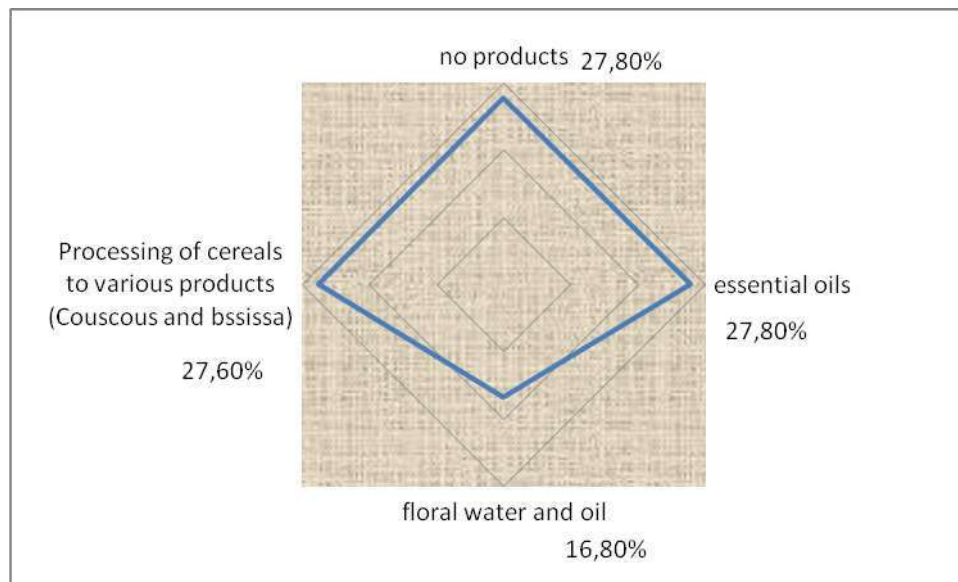


Figure 4 : Distribution of the sample according to the products of women members

Source: Own surveys, 2019

6.4 GDA Oued Sbaihia Membership Analysis

Analysis of membership in the GDA Oued Sbaihia shows that all of the women members of this group registered in 2002, the date of creation of the group. Seven members respondents are members of the administrative council. The group started with 44 members, thus reflecting an average level of membership in view of the participation of women in rural areas.

The survey also showed that the means of information about the existence of the GDA are in decreasing order of public announcement, direct contact, and contact from neighbors and through founding members with 5.8%, 25.7%, 61.3% and 7.2% of those interviewed, respectively (Figure5).

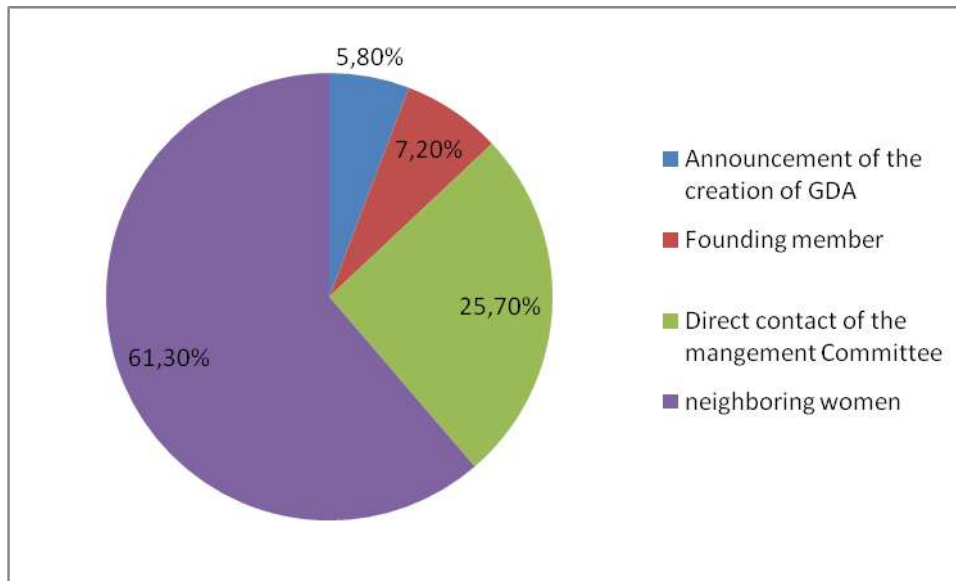


Figure 5: Means of information for the existence of the GDA

The investigation revealed an irregularity in the attendance of women members of GDA meetings and activities. According to the interviewees, the reasons for not joining the GDA are the ignorance of the benefits of membership and the non conviction of the interest. Some interviewees explain their withdrawal from membership because of the dissatisfaction of their needs by these groups.

Hence the importance of implementing a marketing and advertising strategy aimed at informing, convincing and encouraging women to join the GDA. The implementation of a GDA development and upgrading plan to better meet the real and priority needs of rural women could also increase the competitiveness of women's local products opposite to other imported products.

6.5 Perception of the GDA and appreciation of its functions and services

The results of the survey show that a good proportion of the interviewees perceived the GDA as the cooperative of the 1960s, while the rest perceive it respectively as a private enterprise from which individuals draw profit. This situation would largely explain the more or less hostile attitudes of women towards the GDA. Hence the interest, to clarify the concept of a GDA and to rehabilitate its image by means of information and communication campaigns with the main actors and in particular rural populations.

In addition, the surveys carried out with the identified sample made it possible to assess the various functions of the GDA. These same results reveal that the most appreciated functions of the GDA are the provision of services (74.3%), the strengthening of exchange and solidarity (72%), the

promotion of local products and the promotion of production, and for local consumption (85%).

The refinement of the appreciation of GDA Oued Sbailia services, the degree of satisfaction "satisfied" mainly concerns training services (71%) and coaching / advice (24.3% moderately satisfied).

6.6 Sales destination, supply and main services of Oued Sbailia GDA

Sales of women's products are made through the GDA in view of its role as facilitator and intermediary on certain occasions such as that of fairs or through point of sale. Thus, through social networks, and personal knowledge, this group has contributed. Sales are mainly made through an intermediary (72%), or directly to consumers (28%).

As for sources of supply, the group has not been able to succeed in its role of intermediary to facilitate the supply of raw materials, which are considered very expensive by all the women surveyed.

6.7 General appreciation of the role of women in non-governmental organizations

The general assessments relating to the role of women revealed that the general tendency considers that women are not sufficiently involved in the economic activities of the household (93%) because of the socio cultural heritage which favors activities in the home and the low integration of women into social life and its marginalization.

As for the opinion of the respondents concerning the roles of women to play in the future for the development of the local products promotion and the creation of an economic dynamic in the



region. 97% of the women surveyed are for a real role to be played by women in these perspectives. Moreover, these women are usually active in their households in the manufacture and processing of

products based on local raw materials such as cereals, vegetable products, and aromatic and medicinal plants (Figure 6).

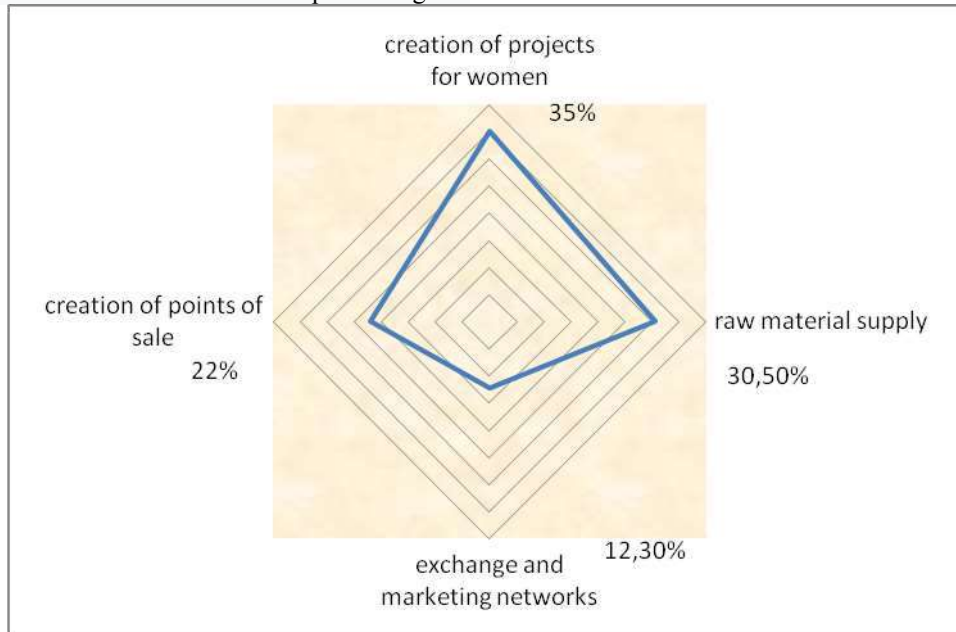


Figure 6: Activities to be developed that can be carried out by women

Concerning activities to be developed by these women. They indicated the creation of projects for women for the creation of a stable income for women and their families (35%), the promotion of the role of the GDA by their involvement in local and international marketing circuits to guarantee a respectable income for these women (22%), the supply of raw materials and training in marketing, labeling and packaging of women's products (30.5%), the creation of exchange and marketing networks with others groups in other regions of the country and in other countries (12.3%).

group and the confusion caused by the perception of a group as a cooperative like the collectivist experience of the 60s. This experience would explain largely the more or less hostile attitudes of some women towards the group. Hence the interest, to clarify the concept of development groups and to rehabilitate its image through the implementation of a real communication information strategy for rural women and their families. The aim sought through this strategy is to better inform the socio-economic environment of these women of the principles of cooperation and the social economy, of the mission of these groups, its activities, its strategies, its functioning, its impact, its benefits in favor of its members.

7. CONCLUSION, GENERAL SUGGESTIONS AND PERSPECTIVES OF THE OUED SBAlHIA GROUP

Analysis of the results of this study confirmed the hypothesis of low membership of rural women in professional structures, despite the advantages and strengths. Indeed, compared to the potential number of rural women in the Zaghouan delegation, the number of members at the group creation in 2002 was set at 99 and became members. The reasons are multiple and can be described into three main factors:

- Thea lack of information among women in rural areas;
- Reluctance of women to join the GDA for several reasons including ignorance of the benefits of this

This information and communication strategy could also be combined with a capacity development and training operation for board members and members. Concerning the local products of Oued Sbaihia, this area is marked by various agricultural products such as that based on cereals, aromatic and medicinal plants and based on market garden products. A know-how has been inherited by the women of the rural area, they have the knowledge of the techniques of transformation and manufacture of the local products like; couscous, Harissa, jams, oils and waters made from aromatic and medicinal plants. But a problem of funding as well as support was announced by women members of the Oued Sbaihia women's agricultural development group. Hence, the



recommendation for the sustainability of funding through the creation of projects for women to guarantee for them a stable and sustainable income and to encourage them to value the products of the region.

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