

Chapter 19

GEOfood Products, Tourism, and Ecocultural Sustainability for Vulnerable Territories: Projects and Strategies in Portuguese Geoparks

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ABSTRACT

This chapter aims to explore the importance of geofood products in safeguarding the ecocultural integrity of UNESCO geopark territories and suggests strategies for their ongoing promotion and conservation. It starts from the concept of geofood and explores the strategies and actions developed in UNESCO World Geoparks in Portugal, seeking to systematise the logic of action, the processes of product involvement and their commercial valorisation. It takes a descriptive approach, based on the 5 UNESCO World Geoparks existing in 2023 (Naturtejo Geopark, Arouca Geopark, Açores Geopark, Terras de Cavaleiros Geopark and Estrela Geopark), seeking to identify their geofood products and their connection with geology, the stimulus they promote for geotourism and their articulation in geoeducation processes.

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1. INTRODUCTION

GEOfood is a project that was conceived and developed by the Magma Geopark (Norway) as a proposal to valorise aspects of geological heritage through local gastronomy. The idea of GEOfood arises from the link between geological heritage and the raw materials that grow in special types of soil and specific geological identities. Geoparks are territories with an exceptional geological heritage on which to develop the link between food and geological heritage, embodying the concept and identity of Geofood. The GEOfood criteria define this link (GEOfood, 2020b), advocating a concept and a brand that connects local food products and culinary traditions to the unique geological characteristics of a region. Thus, the GEOFood brand and criteria are only authorised in Geoparks officially recognised by UNESCO and presuppose sustainable local food in areas of unique geological importance.

Geofood products play a key role in strengthening the ecocultural sustainability of UNESCO territories (Morais & Gentilini, 2019; Doucek & Zelenka, 2018). These food products are deeply rooted in the local geography, culture and heritage of their respective regions. By promoting the production and consumption of geofood products, UNESCO territories not only preserve their natural landscapes and culinary traditions, but also foster sustainable economic development and cultural Exchange (UNWTO, 2017). As a relatively recent process of valorisation of agro-products and culinary identities, it is based on the valorisation of local resources and the creative generation of products with an identity, which generate traction and promote visits. In this context, there is an articulation between the territory-community-tourism, in a logic of valorising local productions, stimulating traditions as guarantors of cultural authenticity and the use of local resources and generating attractions that complement visits to these territories.

This chapter aims to explore the importance of geofood products in safeguarding the ecocultural integrity of UNESCO geopark territories and suggests strategies for their ongoing promotion and conservation. It starts from the concept of geofood and explores the strategies and actions developed in UNESCO World Geoparks in Portugal, seeking to systematise the logic of action, the processes of product involvement and their commercial valorisation. It takes a descriptive approach, based on the 5 UNESCO World Geoparks existing in 2023 (Naturtejo Geopark, Arouca Geopark, Açores Geopark, Terras de Cavaleiros Geopark and Estrela Geopark), seeking to identify their geofood products and their connection with geology, the stimulus they promote for geotourism and their articulation in geoeducation processes.

It should be emphasised that the creation of gastronomic products, menus and itineraries, based on the geofood concept and criteria, contributes to the affirmation and gastronomic identity of the territories and induces commercial expansion of the products, for which the management structures of the Geoparks, together with the

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