

## POSSIBILITIES OF BREEDING SUB-MEDITERRANEAN GOATS FOR THE NEEDS OF AGRITOURISM - AN EXAMPLE OF INDIGENOUS CROATIAN GOAT BREEDS

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### Abstract

*The breeding of indigenous Croatian goat breeds is most often marked by extreme extensiveness and very low profitability and production efficiency. Possible additional income opportunity for breeders of indigenous goats is provided by the offer of their products through agritourism. Therefore, the aim of this study was to determine the awareness of consumers and their knowledge of the indigenous Croatian goat breeds and determine the perception of the potential of indigenous goats and/or their products as a part of agritourism offer. An online survey was conducted on a sample of 353 respondents. More than two thirds of the respondents would more often visit an agritourism where indigenous goats are kept and/or which offer their products. Almost half of the respondents believe that the products of the indigenous breeds are of better quality than the products of other goats, while one third of the respondents think that the products of the indigenous goats should be more expensive than the products of other goats. These results provide an informative basis for the development of innovative marketing strategies for agritourism owners who could enrich their offer with the introduction of autochthonous (local) products.*

**Key words:** agritourism, Croatian spotted goat, Croatian white goat, goat products.

### INTRODUCTION

Goat breeding has a long history and tradition in the Republic of Croatia, especially in the sparse and inaccessible areas of Dalmatian hinterland, where the environmental conditions for breeding larger species of domestic animals are unfavourable. Thus, for example, in 1808 there were about 750,000 goats in Dalmatia, which was the highest number in Europe at that time (Ožanić, 1955, cited by Mioč et al., 2012). However, the number of goats and their economic importance has changed greatly throughout history. Today, according to the Central Bureau of Statistics (2020), 81,540 goats are bred in Croatia, with almost half of the total recorded goat population being indigenous Croatian goat breeds, namely the Croatian spotted goat as the most numerous breed and the Croatian white goat. They are also the dominant goat breeds in the Dalmatian hinterland, where they originated. Some of the characteristics of goat production in Croatia, as well as in some other Mediterranean countries, especially in the case of indigenous goat

breeds, are its disorganization and pronounced extensiveness, then lack of plants for processing goat products (slaughterhouses, dairy plants, etc.), depopulation/urbanization of rural areas, lack of labour, and more (Caput et al., 2010).

However, with the uniqueness and value of the genome (a potential source of interesting genes for improving and maintaining a desirable resistance to some diseases and environmental conditions), indigenous Croatian goats are important for the production of meat (primarily goat kid's meat) and milk (cheese) of high quality, as well as through the possibility of organic food production (whose role in modern nutrition takes on first-class significance). Of course, the importance of indigenous breeds of goats also stems from their pronounced efficiency in the utilization of vegetation of karst pastures, cost-effective and sustainable maintenance of habitats (important for fire prevention). In addition, the development of agritourism and proximity to tourist destinations on the Adriatic coast offers significant revenue opportunities to present

(and future) goat breeders (Barać et al., 2011). Therefore, the assumption of this study is that indigenous goat breeds and their products (meat, milk and their products) can be an attractive part of the agritourism offer based on high quality, authentic and autochthonous products of a particular region.

Previous studies show that autochthonous food products are important in preserving the tradition, culture and identity of a particular area (Bessière, 1998; Licitra, 2010). In addition, they contribute to the development, sustainability and diversification of rural areas, protecting them from depopulation. This type of product helps tourists to learn more about the history and traditions of the local communities of their host (Almli, 2012), promoting the unique characteristics of the products that are associated with the place of origin and manufacturing process (Murdoch et al., 2000; Renting et al., 2003). The reasons for the increased demand for, in general, traditional agri-food products stem from consumer fears related to food safety, confidence in quality, nostalgia for domestic products, but also the desire to preserve the local economy and tradition (Mesic et al., 2018; Jordana, 2010; Belletti et al., 2007; Ilbery & Kneafsey, 1998). As no research has been conducted in Croatia so far on the potential of indigenous goat breeds and their products, as well as the possibility of their placement through agritourism offer, the aim of this paper was to determine consumer awareness of indigenous Croatian goat breeds and their perception of goat products as part of gastronomic offer in agritourism.

## **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

For the purpose of preparing this paper, a survey was conducted which included potential users of agritourism farms. The survey questionnaire contained questions about informing consumers about the indigenous Croatian goat breeds, as well as questions related to the perception of consumers about the potential of goat products as part of agritourism offer. The survey was created using Google forms tools, and the survey questionnaire was posted online, as well as sent to the e-mail addresses of potential

respondents. Also, the survey questionnaire was shared across various social networks such as Facebook, WhatsApp and Viber. The survey was conducted, i.e. it was available online in the period from 15 May to 15 June 2020, and a total of 353 adult respondents, of different gender and age groups, level of education and place of residence participated in the survey. In the survey questionnaire, the questions were of a closed type, and a five-point Likert scale was used to measure the attitudes of the respondents (1 = I completely disagree to 5 = I completely agree). The reliability of the measurement scale for measuring attitudes was  $\alpha = 0.894$ .

In a separate group of questions, data were collected on the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents, such as: gender, age, place of growing up, level of education, employment status, number of household members and monthly household income.

Statistical data analysis was performed by use of SPSS v. 21.0 software. The frequencies of responses were calculated by use of univariate analysis. Bivariate analysis (Chi-square test) was used to determine relationship between sociodemographic characteristics and awareness of the existence of indigenous Croatian goat breeds. Also, using ANOVA we determine relationship between sociodemographic characteristics and respondents' opinions towards products of indigenous Croatian goat breeds as part of the agritourism offer. The value of  $p < 0.05$  was considered significant in all tests.

As can be seen from the data shown in Table 1, a higher proportion of female respondents (67%) were represented in the study, while the majority of respondents were under the age of 45 years (83%). The most common level of education was a university degree (41%), while 38.5% of respondents had completed high school. As many as two thirds (66%) of respondents are employed. About 60% of respondents live in households with 4 or more respondents, while almost a quarter of respondents live in households with children under 10 years of age. The frequency of certain categories of household respondents considering monthly income was similar (21-26%, with the exception of the category up to 4,000 kuna per month which is only 4%).

Table 1. Socio-demographic characteristics of respondents

Characteristics of respondents		N	%
Gender	Male	114	32.3
	Female	239	67.7
Age	18-29	159	45
	30-45	134	38
	46-60	52	14.7
	60+	8	2.3
Place of growing up	Village	203	57.5
	Town	150	42.5
Level of education	Primary school	6	1,7
	Secondary school	136	38.5
	High school	65	18.4
	University degree	146	41.4
Employment status	Employed	235	66.6
	Unemployed	14	4
	Pupil/student	94	26.6
	Retired	10	2.8
Number of household members	1	11	3.1
	2	45	12.7
	3	82	23.2
	4	113	32
	5 and more	102	28.9
Households with children under 10 years of age	Yes	90	25.5
	No	263	74.5
Monthly household income (in HRK)	Up to 4,000	14	4
	4,001-8,000	91	25.8
	8,001-12,000	92	26.1
	12,001-16,000	82	23.2
	More than 16,000	74	21

Source: survey research

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

According to the results of the study presented in Figure 1, 58.6% of respondents knew about the existence of some of the indigenous Croatian goat breeds, with most of them (26.3% of respondents) for the indigenous Croatian goats found out through the media (radio shows, TV, internet), 13% by reading professional literature, 10.5% by attending professional lectures, 5.7% by visiting fairs and similar events, while 3.1% found out about the indigenous goat breeds by visiting the farm where they are kept.

However, even 41.4% of respondents did not know of the existence of any of indigenous Croatian goat breeds (Figure 1), which is comparable with the results given by Zrakić et al. (2018) by which even more than half of the respondents did not know about the existence of Busha - the indigenous Croatian breed of cattle. As can be seen from the results shown in

Figure 2, even 94.9% of respondents think that breeders of indigenous Croatian goat breeds should be additionally financially supported, with even 88.7% of all respondents believing that this would encourage the preservation of traditional production and national identity.

This is in accordance with Stupnišek et al. (2019), who determined that the vast majority of respondents believe that it is important to preserve the indigenous Turopolje pig breed, due to the preservation of biodiversity and domestic heritage.

According to the results presented in Figure 2, only 5.1% of respondents believe that breeders of indigenous breeds should not be additionally financially supported (either because they think they are already sufficiently encouraged, or because they think that this will not significantly affect the interest in goat farming, or because they believe that the existing system of financial support should also be abolished).

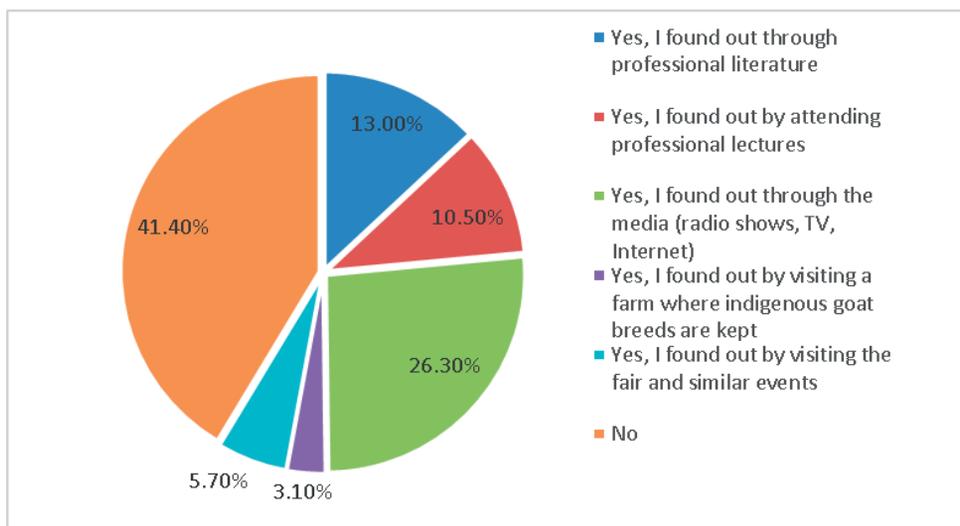


Figure 1. Awareness of the existence of indigenous Croatian goat breeds and information channels

These results are in line with the results of a survey of the attitudes of EU residents on the Common Agricultural Policy (European Commission, 2020) according to which more than half of respondents think that in general EU financial support to farmers should increase in the next 10 years. Scown et al. (2020) point

out, however, that the prevailing opinion among EU residents is that subsidies in agriculture should be increased in order to prevent the loss of biodiversity. Of course, the preservation of indigenous breeds of domestic animals is an important part of the preservation of overall biodiversity (Caput et al., 2010).

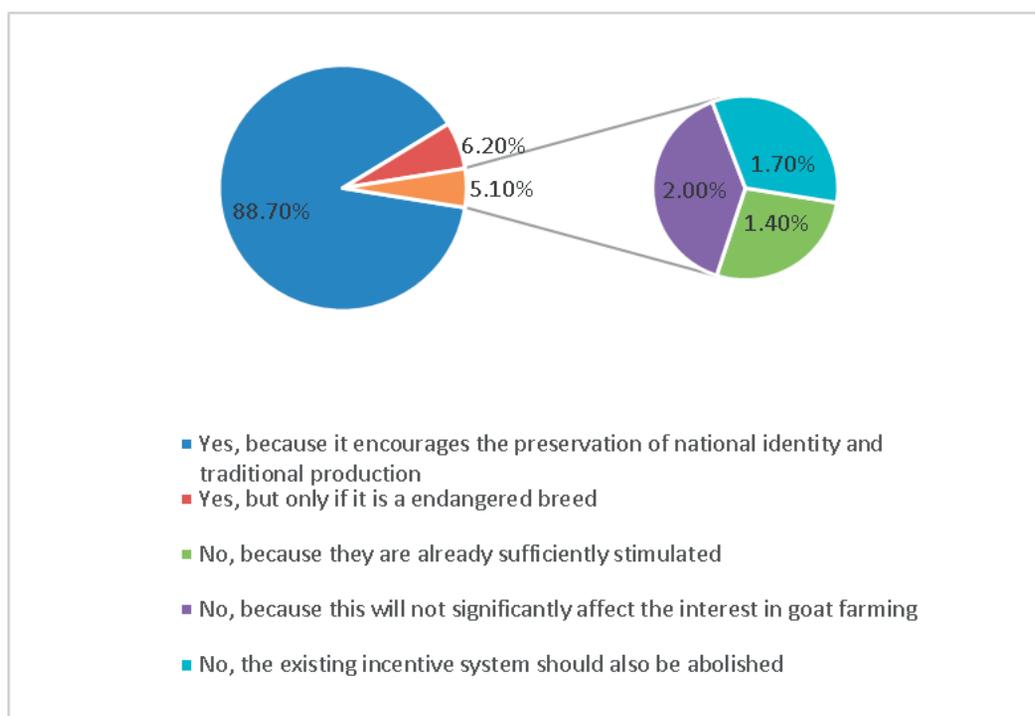


Figure 2. Should breeders of indigenous Croatian goat breeds be additionally financially supported?

The vast majority of respondents (91.2%) believe that the indigenous Croatian goat breeds and/or their products should be additionally promoted (Figure 3), in which almost half of all respondents (45.3%) believe

that they should be promoted by protecting their products with some of the designations of origin at the EU level, 35.1% of respondents think that the indigenous goat breeds should be promoted by branding their products, while

10.8% think that the promotion should be carried out through the media.

These results are largely in line with previous researches suggesting an increase in demand for value-added products that carry a strong identification with a particular geographical area (Cerjak & Mesić, 2007; Mesić & Cerjak, 2012). Commercialization and development of production of these products, especially if they are protected with geographical indications and designations of origin, leads to higher demand and sales, higher employment, and thus an

increase in income of the local population (Almli, 2012; Mesić, 2014).

Previous studies have found that protecting products with geographical indications helps manufacturers achieve a premium price for their products (Bowen, 2008; Grote, 2009), protects a traditional product against name abuse (Suh & MacPherson, 2007), increases its visibility in the global market (van Ittersum et al., 2007) and contributes to a positive image of the production area - region (Babcock & Clemens, 2004; Suh & Macpherson, 2007).

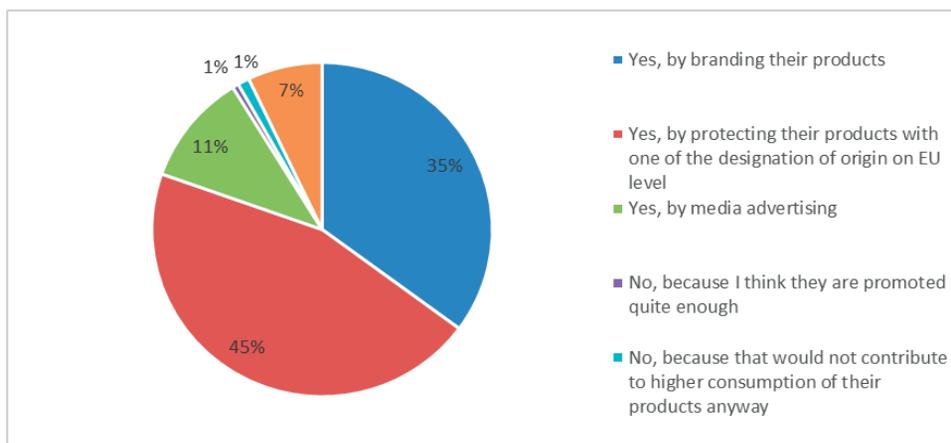


Figure 3. Do you think that indigenous Croatian goat breeds and/or their products should be additionally promoted?

From the distribution of respondents' answers shown in Figure 4 it is noticeable that the majority (53.5%) of respondents do not visit agritourism farms at all, but most of them (39.1% of the total respondents) intend to visit them. Grgić et al. (2011) point out the lack of interest, lack of information, lack of opportunity and financial impossibility as the main reasons for not using agritourism services. According to data presented in Figure 4, agritourism farms are visited once a year or less frequently by 27.8% of respondents, and several times a year by 18.7% of respondents.

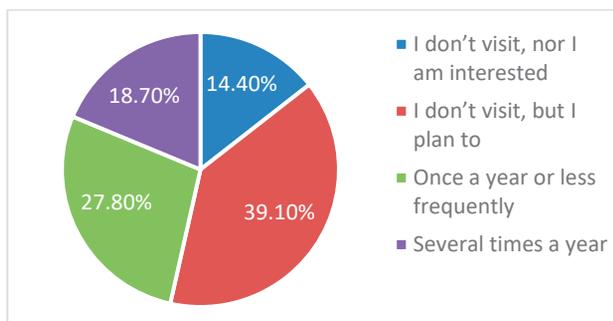


Figure 4. How often do you visit agritourism farms?

According to the conducted statistical analysis by crossing the variables of the level of education of respondents and the frequency of visits to agritourism farms, a statistically significant difference ( $\chi^2 = 26.2958$ ;  $P = 0.0350$ ) was observed in the distribution of respondents' answers with regard to their level of education.

Namely, as can be seen from the data shown in Table 2, only 7.53% of respondents with a university degree stated that they do not visit agritourism farms nor are interested in it, while in the group of respondents with a high school diploma or higher education 19.12% and 21.54% of respondents said so. However, according to the calculation of the  $\chi^2$  test, there was no statistically significant ( $P > 0.05$ ) difference in the frequency of visits to agritourism farms with regard to the amount of monthly household income of the respondents ( $\chi^2 = 8.553$ ).

Table 2. Frequency of visits to agritourism farms with regard to the level of education of the respondents

Level of education	Primary school	Secondary school	High school	University degree	Total
I don't visit, nor am I interested	0 <sup>a</sup> (0.0%) <sup>b</sup>	26 (7.37%)	14 (3.97%)	11 (3.12%)	<b>51</b> <b>(14.45%)</b>
I don't visit, but I plan to	1 (0.28%)	53 (15.01%)	19 (5.38%)	65 (18.41%)	<b>138</b> <b>(39.09%)</b>
Once a year or less frequently	2 (0.57%)	36 (10.2%)	21 (5.95%)	39 (11.05%)	<b>98</b> <b>(27.76%)</b>
Several times a year	3 (0.85%)	21 (6.79%)	11 (3.12%)	31 (8.78%)	<b>66</b> <b>(18.70%)</b>
Total	<b>6</b> <b>(1.70%)</b>	<b>136</b> <b>(38.53%)</b>	<b>65</b> <b>(18.41%)</b>	<b>146</b> <b>(41.36%)</b>	<b>353</b> <b>(100%)</b>

<sup>a</sup>Number of respondents.

<sup>b</sup>The value in parentheses represents the frequency of respondents expressed as a share of the total number of respondents.

More than two thirds of the respondents (67.4%) would more often visit agritourism where indigenous breeds of goats are bred and/or which offer their products (Figure 5). Most of them or 39.1% of total respondents would visit such agritourism because they think it is "important to preserve something domestic and indigenous", 18.7% of respondents because goats are, in general, interesting and endearing animals, while 9.6% would visit it because they think that the products of indigenous breeds are

of better quality than the products of other breeds of goats. For 25.8% of respondents, indigenous goat breeds are not an important factor when visiting an agritourism farm, either because other animals are more interesting to them (8.5% of respondents) or because they do not consume goat products (17.3% of respondents). In 6.8% of respondents, financial possibilities, unfortunately, do not allow visiting agritourism.

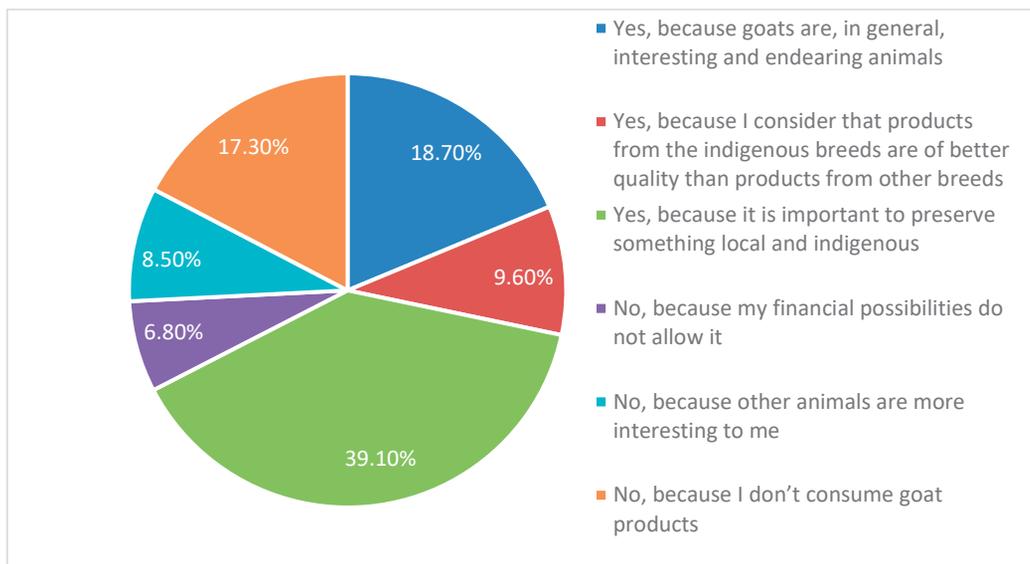


Figure 5. Would you visit agritourism more often where indigenous breeds of goats are bred and/or their products are offered?

However, respondents of the youngest age group (18 to 29 years) in a significantly higher proportion than respondents of older age groups said that, because goats are generally interesting and cuddly animals, more often visit agritourism that keeps the indigenous breeds of goats / offers their products. Namely, as shown in Table 3, considerably higher share of

respondents in older age groups (> 45 years) stated that, due to the importance of preserving something domestic and indigenous, they would more often visit agritourism that keeps indigenous goat breeds and/or in offer has their products, than found in respondents of younger age groups (groups 18-29 and 30-45 years). However, respondents of the youngest age

group (18 to 29 years) said in a significantly higher proportion than respondents of older age groups that, because goats are generally interesting and endearing animals, would more

often visit agritourism that keeps the indigenous breeds of goats/offers their products.

Table 3. Frequency of answers to the question "If you knew that an agritourism keeps indigenous breeds of goats/offers their products, would you visit that farm more often?" considering the age of the respondents

Age group	18-29	30-45	46-60	> 60	Total
Yes, because it is important to preserve something local and indigenous	56 <sup>a</sup> (15.86%) <sup>b</sup>	47 (13.31%)	28 (7.93%)	7 (1.98%)	<b>138</b> <b>(39.09%)</b>
Yes, because I think that products from indigenous breeds are of better quality than products from other breeds	14 (3.97%)	14 (3.97%)	6 (1.70%)	0 (0.0%)	<b>34</b> <b>(9.63%)</b>
Yes, because goats are, in general, interesting and endearing animals	39 (11.05%)	23 (6.52%)	4 (1.13%)	0 (0.0%)	<b>66</b> <b>(18.70%)</b>
No, because my financial possibilities do not allow it	8 (2.27%)	10 (2.83%)	6 (1.70%)	0 (0.0%)	<b>24</b> <b>(6.80%)</b>
No, because I don't consume goat products	27 (7.65%)	29 (8.22%)	5 (1.42%)	0 (0.0%)	<b>61</b> <b>(17.28%)</b>
No, because other animals are more interesting to me	15 (4.25%)	11 (3.12%)	3 (0.85%)	1 (0.28%)	<b>30</b> <b>(8.50%)</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>159</b> <b>(45.04%)</b>	<b>134</b> <b>(37.96%)</b>	<b>52</b> <b>(14.73%)</b>	<b>8</b> <b>(2.27%)</b>	<b>353</b> <b>(100%)</b>

<sup>a</sup>Number of respondents.

<sup>b</sup>The value in parentheses represents the frequency of respondents expressed as a share of the total number of respondents.

Even 93.2% of respondents thinks that the indigenous breeds of goats and their products would enrich the offer of agritourism, where 61% of respondents thinks that their (goat) products would enrich the gastronomic offer of agritourism farms, and 32.1% of respondents thinks that the keeping of indigenous breeds would enrich the offer of agritourism because goats are, in general, interesting and cuddly animals (Figure 6). Only 6.8% of respondents

do not think that indigenous breeds of goats or their products would enrich the offer of agritourism. Results of this study are in line with research conducted at EU level, with about 80% of respondents saying that the traditional value of products that have a strong identification with a particular geographical area is important in their decision to buy food products (European Commission, 2020).

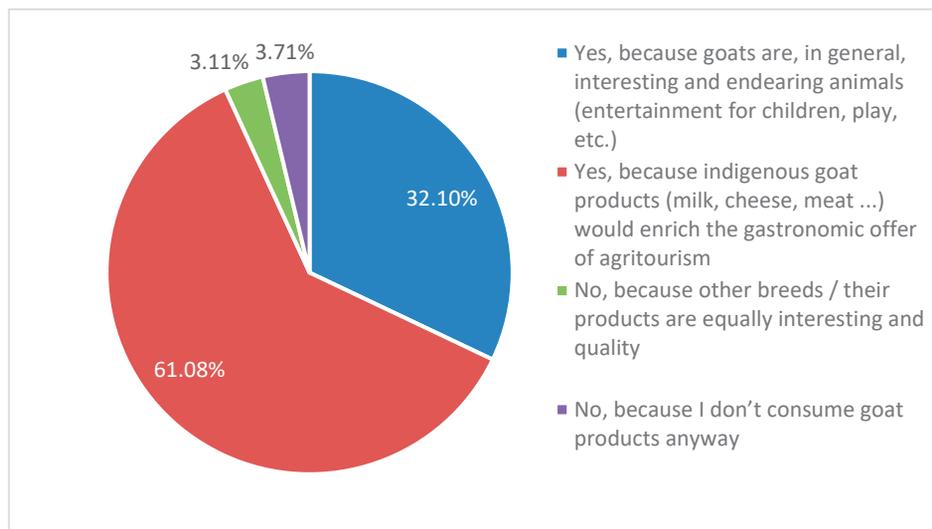


Figure 6. Do you think that indigenous breeds of goats and their products would enrich the offer of agritourism?

The successful development of agritourism largely depends on the application of marketing

and promotion, which are among the most important links in the business of the rural

tourism farms (Baćac, 2011; Mihailović & Morić, 2012, cited by Cerjak & Mesić, 2015). From the distribution of respondents' answers shown in Figure 7, it is evident that even 75.6% of respondents think that agritourism farms in Croatia are not well promoted, which is in line with the results of the previous studies (Krajnović et al., 2011; Cerjak & Mesić, 2015) which point to the weak promotion of agritourism farms and the need for further education of agritourism owners related to marketing and promotion.

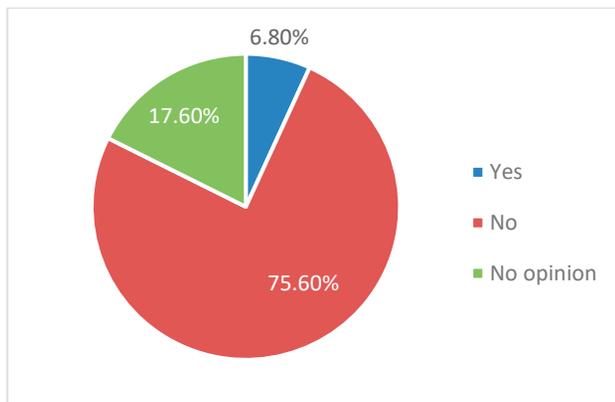


Figure 7. Do you think that agritourism farms in Croatia, in general, are well promoted?

As can be seen from Figure 8, the majority of respondents (51.3%) agree (mostly or completely) with the statement that the breeding of indigenous Croatian goat breeds for agritourism would contribute to the stay of young people in the countryside, or to contribute to the revitalization of rural areas.

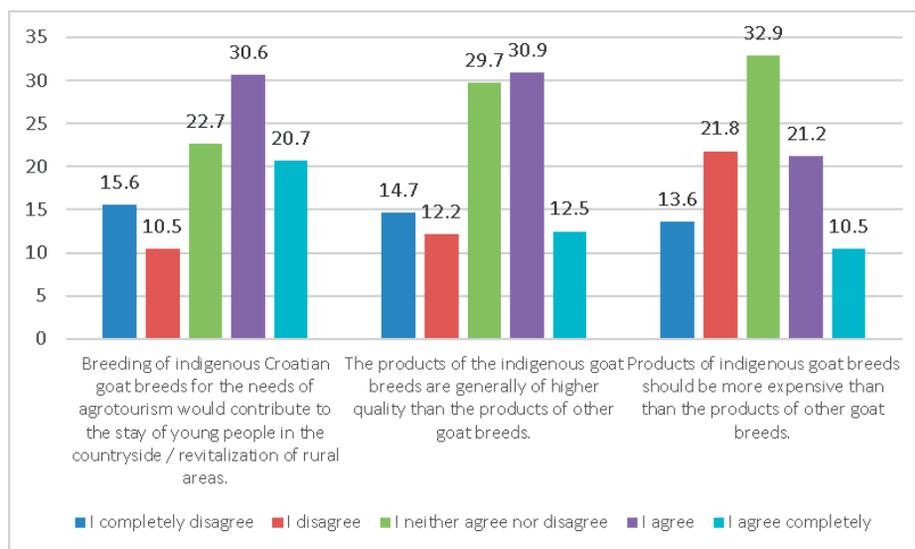


Figure 8. Respondents opinions towards products of the indigenous Croatian goat breeds as part of the agritourism offer (in %)

The 26.1% of respondents do not agree with this statement (completely or mostly), while 22.7% of respondents do not have a clearly expressed attitude. Comparable to the results of this study, Zrakić et al. (2018) found that almost three-quarters of respondents agree with the statement that the development of agritourism would contribute to the development of rural areas and the stay of young people in the countryside.

The 43.4% of respondents completely or mostly agree that the indigenous goat breeds products are of higher quality than the products of other breeds, while 26.9% of the respondents do not agree (mostly or completely) with this statement (Figure 8). Almost one third of respondents (29.7%) do not have a strong opinion on this issue.

The 31.7% of respondents believe that products of indigenous goat breeds should be more expensive than other products (mostly or completely), while 35.4% of respondents mostly or completely disagree with this statement (Figure 8).

Approximately every third respondent (32.9%) has no opinion on this. According to the calculation of the  $\chi^2$  test ( $\chi^2 = 7.116$ ), it was found that there is no significant ( $P > 0.05$ ) difference in the frequency of respondents' attitudes about whether products of indigenous breeds should be more expensive than other products due to the amount of monthly household income of the respondents.

## CONCLUSIONS

Results of this study indicate good prospects of breeding of indigenous goat breeds for the purposes of agritourism, arising from a good perception that among domestic consumers (respondents) have indigenous breeds of domestic animals and their products, generally. Although just over half of the respondents knew about the existence of indigenous Croatian goat breeds, almost 90% of them think that breeders of indigenous goat breeds should be additionally financially supported because it encourages the preservation of national identity and traditional production. Approximately the same share of respondents is of the opinion that indigenous goat breeds and their products would enrich the offer of agritourism. In light of this, it can be concluded that, despite the good consumer perception of breeding indigenous goat breeds for agritourism confirmed by this study, indigenous Croatian goat breeds (and their products) should be additionally promoted, which was, after all, confirmed by the vast majority of respondents. Recommendation of future research: conducting research that would include the owners of agritourism farms in order to determine the potential of the offer of indigenous breeds of goats, or their products, as part of the agritourism offer of their farms. The results of the study provide an informative basis for the development of innovative marketing strategies for agritourism owners who could enrich their offer with the introduction of new autochthonous (local) products and become more recognizable and competitive in the market.

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