

# PROJECTS ADOPTED BY 4CITIES4DEV

ACCESS TO GOOD, CLEAN AND FAIR FOOD: THE FOOD COMMUNITIES' EXPERIENCE

## Fadiouth Island Salted Millet Couscous



© Paola Viesi

Slow Food Presidium adopted by the city of Torino



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## PROJECTS FOR THE SAFEGUARD OF BIODIVERSITY

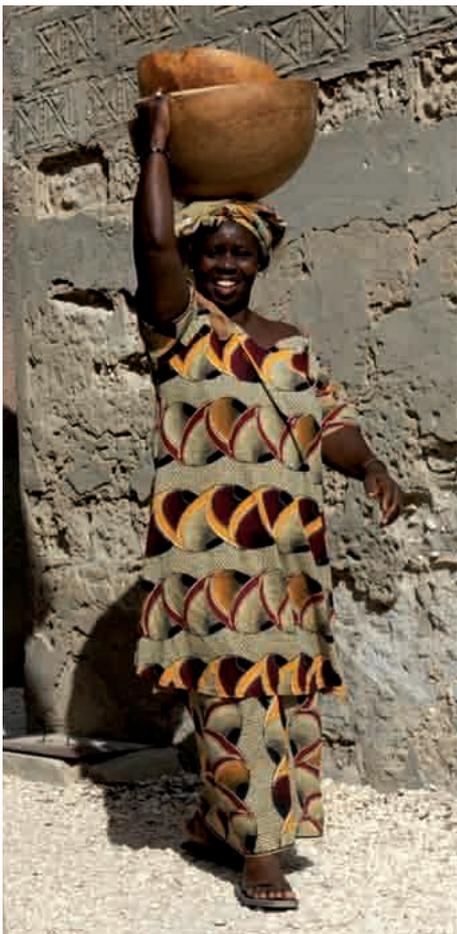
Slow Food Presidia safeguard small-scale, endangered local productions, promote specific areas, and recover traditional trades and processing techniques. Currently, there are over 300 Presidia projects around the world, which involve more than 10,000 producers: farmers, shepherds, fishers, artisan processors... To safeguard these products also means to preserve high-mountain pastures and tropical forests, to ensure a sustainable future for small-scale producers - from the Andes to African coastlines -, to preserve hundreds of animal breeds, and to give future generation a clean planet with a rich biodiversity. Presidia are promoted and coordinated by Slow Food. The association is active all over the world, but has a specific focus on developing countries, where the safeguard of biodiversity is not only important to improve the quality of life, but to ensure the very survival of local people.



## THE CONTEXT

### JOAL-FADIOUTH, SENEGAL

The small island of Fadiouth is situated in an estuary on the Petite Côte in Senegal, about 150 kilometers southeast of the capital city, Dakar. It is an island of clam shells linked by a wooden bridge with the nearby mainland town of Joal, and surrounded by mangroves which protect it from frequent flooding. Its community belongs to the ancient Serer ethnic group, one of the first to settle in Senegambia, on Africa's westernmost tip, today occupied by the modern states of Senegal and Gambia. Traditionally the Serer people have always been great millet growers. Their economy is based on agriculture, but they also practice sea and lagoon fishing for family consumption. Traditional cereals, cultivated since time immemorial in island's interior, and the sea come together in the Presidium's salted millet couscous.



## THE PROJECT

The Presidium was launched as a result of research carried in a mapping project developed in collaboration with FAO. Its aim is to preserve a special type of couscous which is washed in brackish water. The product conveys a sense of the place, at once using cereals that have always been grown on Fadiouth and revealing an evident bond with its marine habitat.

This seems to be the only case anywhere of couscous being washed in seawater, a technique which accounts for product's unique fragrance.

The salted couscous of Fadiouth is made of granules of the local *sunnà* millet flour. Its preparation is long and laborious and it takes at least two days to achieve a good quality product. Their household chores over, women meet at the end of the day to prepare the millet to make the flour. First they husk it in wooden mortars, sift it and wash it in the sea. Then they grind it – with electric mills or by hand – dampen the resulting flour in the seawater and shape into



granules it by hand. The process continues until all the flour has been used up. At this point, the couscous is transferred into traditional gourds, covered with a cloth and left to ferment overnight. The morning after, the women add powdered dried baobab leaves to bind the couscous, which they then proceed to cook.

The granules are medium-sized and greenish beige in color. The sourish flavor they acquire as a result of fermentation is much loved by the locals.

The two traditional dishes made with the island's salted couscous, which also convey a sense of the local area, are *mambo-hane* (with a sauce of mangrove leaves, peanut paté and sea snails) and *neveday* (with a sauce of mangrove leaves and meat).

## OBJECTIVES

Like other Presidia, this one uses a single traditional product to protect the community which identifies with it: in this case, the Serer community of Fadiouth, which has always produced the salted couscous. By working on the product, the Presidium thus seeks to protect the women of the community, who have handed down the traditional preparation technique from generation to generation, the local economy and the incredible island environment. The aim of the Presidium is to revive the cultivation and consumption of *sunna* millet, which have dropped sharply in the last few years, and raise awareness among locals, encouraging them to keep the seawater and beaches clean and unpolluted.

## SOCIAL IMPACT

The Presidium's first move was to organize the women into a cooperative so that they could work together. There was nothing preordained about this - it was an achievement in itself. A team of 20 women have now given rise to the Mbél Saac local economic interest group (EIC). The Joal-Fadiouth town authorities have identified and brought up to standard premises on the island where the women can work together. Thanks to improvements in the hygienic and health conditions in which they make and conserve the couscous and refurbishment of the premises, the Presidium producers have been authorized by the Ministry of Commerce to sell the product on the national market.

## CURRENT BENEFICIARIES

### THE 20 WOMEN OF THE MBEL SAAC GIE

(economic interest group) directly involved in couscous production;

100 WOMEN involved in training activity;

15 SUNNÀ MILLET GROWERS.

## CURRENT PARTNERS

FAO





## PROJECT STAGES

### 2010-2011

In March 2010, the Presidium is launched during a Slow Food exploratory mission. In October 2010, three members of the Serer community take part in the Salone del Gusto and Terra Madre events in Turin, where they have the opportunity to talk with farmers, fishers and breeders from all over the world. In May and July 2011, the producers attend two technical training courses conducted by Aziz El Yamalahi, an expert on cereals and couscous production, to draw up production regulations and improve product packaging and labeling. At the end of October 2011, a Presidium representative attends a training course on agroecology and the promotion of traditional products as part of the

“Thousand Gardens in Africa” project, held in Dakar. Senegal, Mali, Burkina Faso, Morocco, Mauritania, Benin, Guinea Bissau, Ivory Coast, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Madagascar are also represented. A couscous tasting is organized during the event. In December 2011, a delegation from Turin (a city which has adopted the Presidium in the ambit of the *4Cities4Dev* project) visits the island of Fadiouth and meets producers. Also in December, on Terra Madre Day, the couscous is presented at an event attended by local restaurateurs and FAO and Slow Food representatives. The event proves a minor success.





## PLANS FOR THE FUTURE

At present the couscous is produced mainly for family consumption and is not served at local restaurants. It is thus important to use events like the one organized on Terra Madre Day 2011 to get the dish onto menus in local hotels and restaurants (Fadiouth is situated in an important tourist area).

Slow Food also intends to organize training courses on community work and good hygiene practices with the women of the Presidium.

Finally, it is necessary to conclude packaging and labeling work to ensure that the product is recognizable, hence more easily marketable, not only on the local market, but also in Dakar.





#### **4CITIES4DEV FOR THE PRESIDIUM**

The *4Cities4Dev* project includes several activities to support the Fadiouth Island Salted Millet Couscous Presidium, carried out by Slow Food in collaboration with the city of Torino.

**1.** Training courses conducted by Aziz El Yamalahi (an expert in cereals and couscous production) for the launching of the Presidium, the creation and strengthening of the cooperative and the drawing up of production regulations. El Yamalahi also provides technical assistance and advice on the equipment that needs to be bought to produce quality couscous respectful of the tradition.

**2.** Purchase of materials for packaging and label printing *in loco*.

**3.** Training on the production and processing process conducted by ITA (Food Technology Institute).

**4.** Production of a short film on the couscous and the Serer community, the last in a series of three dedicated, respectively, to Kenya, Ethiopia and Senegal. The couscous film will be premiered at the Salone del Gusto and Terra Madre in October 2012 in Turin, together with a full-length documentary - a montage of the three shorts - which will subsequently be presented at various international festivals.

**5.** The Salted Couscous Presidium's participation in Slow Food's major international event: the Salone del Gusto and Terra Madre in Turin from October 25-29.

Slow Food Presidium adopted by the city of Torino as part of the *4Cities4Dev* project



[www.4cities4dev.eu](http://www.4cities4dev.eu)