



The Place and Role of Wild Collected Thyme in
“Thyme of Provence” PGI



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Thyme from Provence: Famously Hot

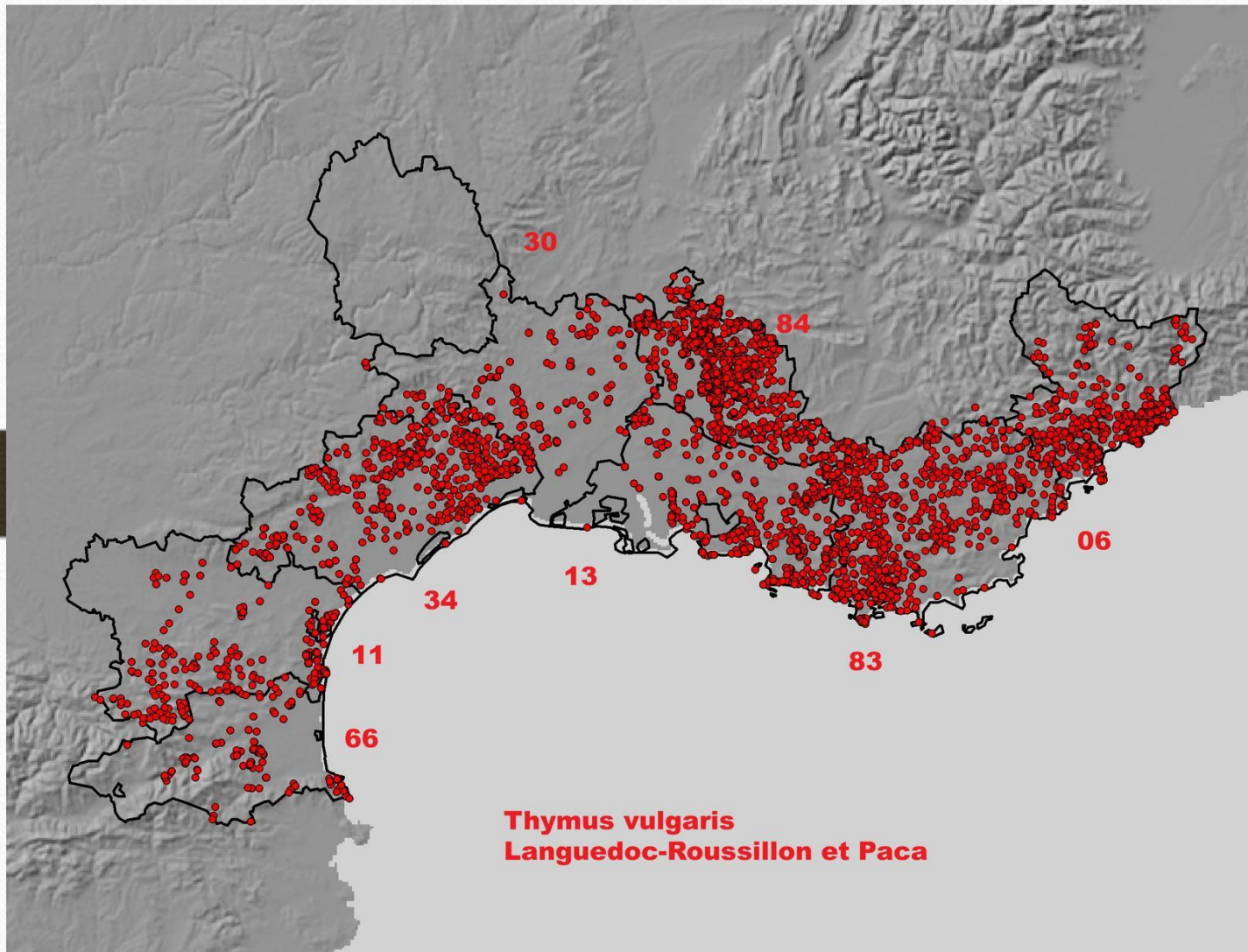


- Aromatic herbs with a high phenolic content are characteristic of Mediterranean landscape and traditional diets. Greek cuisine largely uses sage and rosemary, Italian dishes rarely spare oregano, and thyme is strongly associated with the cooking heritage of Provence.
- While growing in neighboring countries, thyme of Provence has a distinctive taste deriving from its unique carvacrol chemotype. This “hot” thyme strikingly reflects and evokes the most archetypal features of its region of origin and its climate.

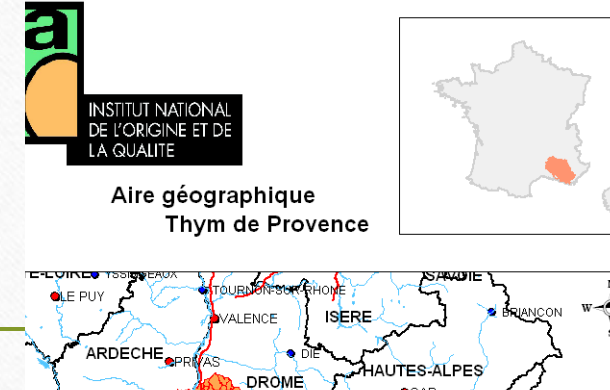
Preliminary Research Work: fundamental to build the specification for the future PGI



- The carvacrol chemotype: Spread throughout the thyme area.
- Light and heat factors influence the chemotype;
- In conditions of extreme drought, very dense populations of this carvacrol chemotype and exclusive of the other types. These dry areas are geographically limited and notably departments of Vaucluse and Var.



Presence of wild thymus vulgaris in South of France (Conservatoire Botanique National Méditerranéen de Porquerolles)



PGI geographical area,
Thymus vulgaris carvacrol chemotype
highest density

Thyme of Provence in its natural habitat



Around the French Mediterranean, thyme is particularly abundant on all old abandoned cultures and scrublands which have become rangelands, where ruminants(sheeps) participate in the maintenance of wild thymaia.

Factors affecting growth and availability of wild thyme in Provence

- Climate change: excessive drought during traditional more humid seasons (after summer or early spring)
- Progressive disappearance of sheep herds and transhumance
- **Exhaustion of plants when not cropped**/cut during or just after flowering.

Wild thyme sustainability: a whole ecosystem

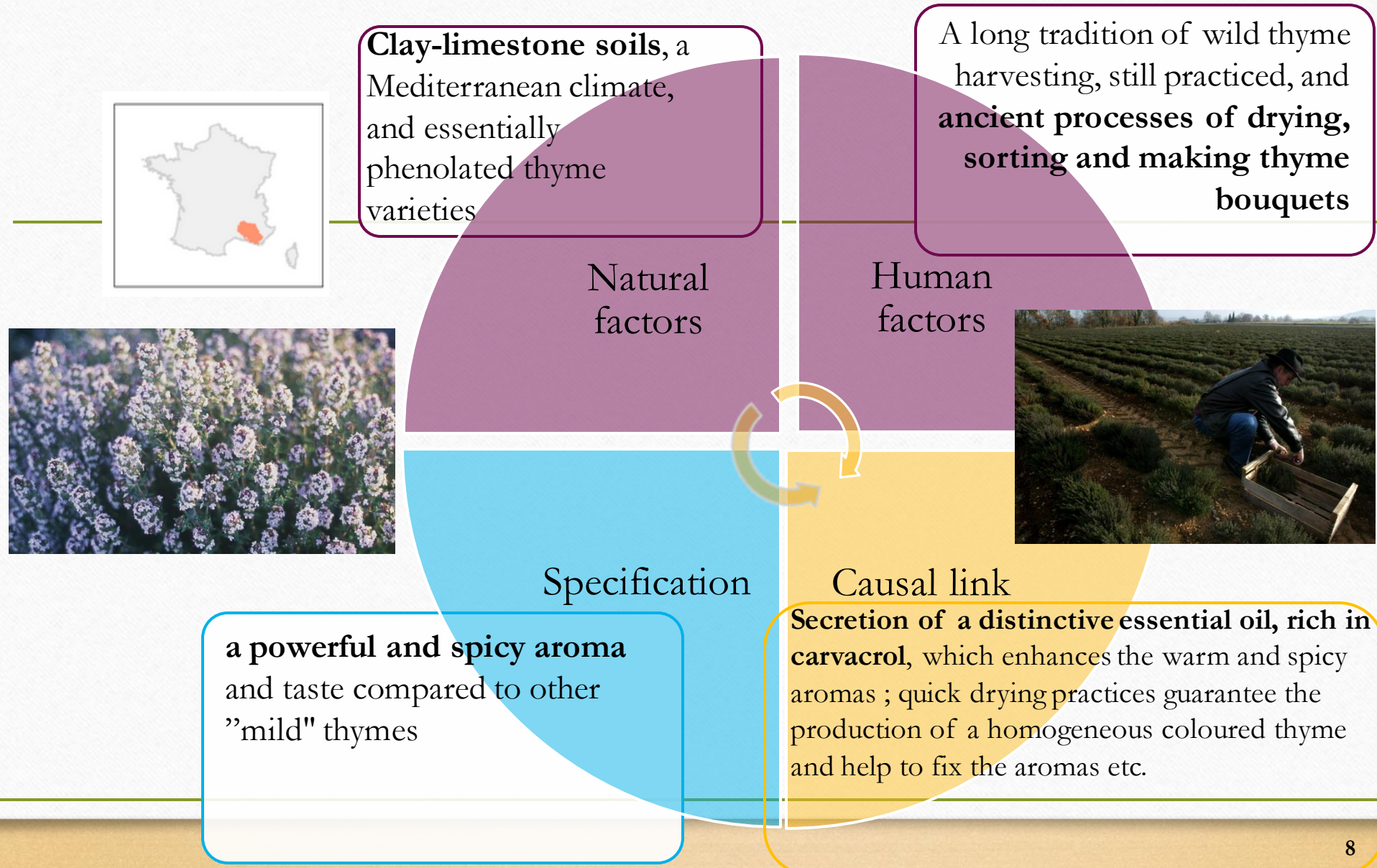


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Thymaia maintained by the passage of a herd

PGI specification built from knowledge of the wild thyme



Specification extracts, concerning both wild AND cultivated thyme

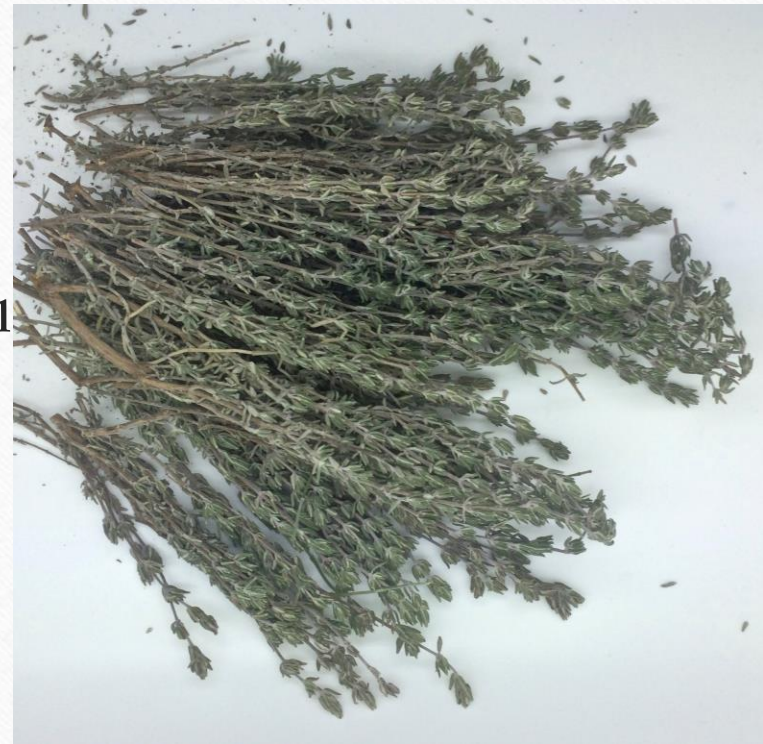
Culture	Plantation de plants dont la variété est conforme Entretien de la culture	Plants conformes Pratiques culturales : intrants, opérations, doses, dates	Compte-rendu conformité variété, liste positive des variétés à disposition des producteurs mise à jour par le groupement, procédure de choix des nouvelles variétés (cf. annexe 1)
Cueillette de thym sauvage	Cueillette de plants en zone d'IGP	Justification zone conforme et parcelle agréée Volumes cueillis, dates de cueillette, lieu de cueillette avec point GPS	Fiche d'autorisation de cueillette, compte-rendu conformité parcelle, compte-rendu conformité cueillette, fiche de cueillette

Specification extracts, concerning both wild AND cultivated thyme in order to ensure sustainability

- **The harvesting authorization form is established by the owner of the field.** This sheet is used to list : the surface, the location, the name of the owner, and a signed convention by both owner and operator harvesting the field.
- **The collection of wild thyme is carried out in plots which mainly contain phenol thyme plants,** the essential oil of which consists of at least 15% carvacrol. The phenolic profile and this minimum carvacrol content are checked by taking samples from the plot. The number of samples is calculated according to the GPS points. There is at least one GPS point for three hectares. The approval of the plot in this way takes place the year it is introduced and must be renewed every five years.
- The producers of "Thyme de Provence" have ensured that the population thyme growing spontaneously in the natural state in the area, is reproduced by means of a varietal selection of phenolic thyme, the essential oil of which contains more than 15% carvacrol. In addition, for cultivated plots, producers limit water inputs, thus ensuring a production method that approaches natural conditions.

Adding value and ensuring sustainability of the wild PGI « thyme of provence »

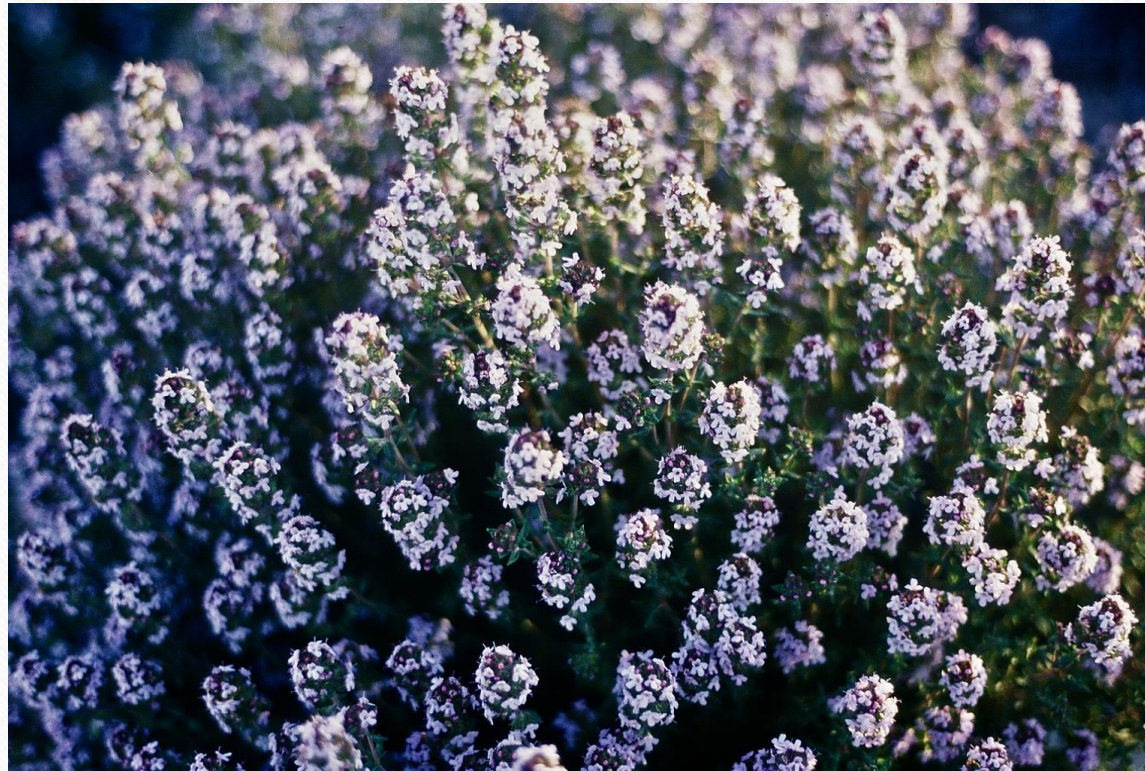
- The Provence thyme mostly wild (before 1990)
- More complicated because affecting factors (as described)
- **Cropping wild thyme in selected areas preserved it – preserving the plants from exhaustion.**
- Then added value thanks to PGI but mainly for special bouquets or special areas of the area which could be further valorized (eg Verdon regional Park).
- **Best added value : double certification organic and Geographical Indication to optimize the wild product** (no phytosanitary product, emphasis on the added ‘naturalness’ of the product)



CONCLUSION

- Success from including both production methods : wild harvest and cultivation
- The cultivated thyme varieties were obtained mostly from the original population variety
- **The wild Provence Thyme represents an added segmentation (PGI + wild crop –for Verdon park- or PGI + organic) and as thus allows better added value.**
- **Wild crops can be an opportunity for both PGI and organic as they are utterly adapted to a terroir -give generally the best in terms of flavors, aromas, or even nutrition as population variety, and resistance to climate change and predators.**

THANK YOU



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