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**RECOGNITION OF LOCAL QUALITY AS A STRATEGY TO STRENGTHEN
THE PRODUCTION AND CONSUMPTION OF TRADITIONAL DAIRY
PRODUCTS AND THEIR CONTRIBUTION TO FOOD SOVEREIGNTY**

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In Mexico, since the 1990s, neoliberal policies have been implemented that favored large transnational and some national dairy agro-industries. This led to the massification of industrialized production processes and ultra-processed products, as in the case of imitation cheeses. In this sector, in addition to the socioeconomic impact on small and medium-sized traditional cheese producers, it has also influenced the perception of food quality, the loss of cultural identity related to food and the land, and has predisposed people to an increase in chronic degenerative diseases. Therefore, it is essential to promote food sovereignty to ensure permanent access to safe, nutritious, culturally

appropriate food in sufficient quantity to lead a sustainable, healthy, and dignified life. This paper presents findings on promoting food sovereignty through the qualities of traditional dairy products. It examines the nutritional characteristics of cheeses produced both traditionally by small-scale producers and ultra-processed products marketed in two regions of west-central Mexico, comparing their qualities. It also explores the tensions, discussions, and reflections that local and research stakeholders have developed regarding the concept of dairy quality promoted by neoliberal food regimes and the concept that persists locally in these regions. These data and reflections are the result of the methodological process based on Participatory Action Research that has been carried out to strengthen the production and consumption networks of traditional dairy products, which contribute to food sovereignty in Mexico. Work funded by CONAHCYT project 321289.

Palavras-chave: agro-industry; subjective quality; natural cheeses; imitation cheeses; ultra-processed foods.