



Food and Agriculture Organization  
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# Geographical Indications for sustainable food systems

Preserving and promoting  
agricultural and food heritage

## What are Geographical Indications?

A Geographical Indication (GI) is a sign used on goods that have a specific geographical origin and possess qualities or a reputation that are due to that origin. Most commonly, a GI consists of the name of the place of origin.

The specific qualities are the result of the local natural or human factors. GIs represent then a collective asset linked to local heritage and reputation.

GIs are protected by intellectual property rights (IPR) according to the World Trade Organization's agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPs) and to the Geneva Act.



Tailored approaches to the development of rural areas are crucial to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030. In particular, territorial approaches have proven to be effective in driving collective efforts towards sustainable food

production and consumption patterns to eliminate hunger and improve nutrition, thus contributing to SDGs 2 and 12.

Family farmers supply around 80 percent of the overall food produced in developing countries. They can play a key role in strengthening the sustainability of local and global food systems if they are empowered to preserve and promote their local resources and granted better market access for quality food products that are linked to their place of origin.

One way to improve market access for origin-linked products produced and processed by family farmers and Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) is to develop Geographical Indications (GIs). As a marketing tool, GIs involve a system of certification and label that is applied to products to differentiate them from others and to highlight the added value of their unique local features, history or distinctive characteristics. Often, these are related to natural factors (such as soil, climate and water) and human factors (such as local culture, expertise and tradition).

A successful GI can prevent the delocalization of production, create jobs, boost local development and contribute to safe, diversified and healthy diets, thanks to the preservation of traditional food products, environment and biodiversity.

### **Public authorities can play an important role in supporting GI value chains and their sustainability at various levels.**

Public authorities at national and local levels can provide an appropriate legal and institutional framework to protect intellectual property rights. Through supportive policies, extension services and guidelines, they can also enhance the contribution of GIs to inclusiveness and employment generation, as well as to the preservation of the local environment, biodiversity, traditional practices and culture.



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## NUTRITIOUS FOREST PRODUCT: MADD FROM CASAMANCE, SENEGAL

Madd (*Saba senegalensis*) is a forest fruit from the Casamance region in Senegal, sold fresh or as a processed product such as jam, juice, fudge or syrup. The leaves are used in the preparation of sauces and condiments. Madd is rich in energy, vitamin C, fibre, calcium, magnesium and phosphorous.

In 2017, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) supported a survey to assess the eligibility of Madd for GI registration. Since then, FAO and other partners are promoting stakeholder coordination at local and national levels towards the GI process. The objective is to preserve the traditional use of Madd in combination with sustainable practices.



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### WHAT THEY SAY ABOUT IT

*There is a market for Madd throughout Senegal and outside the country, and it is the main product of small producers. During Madd season, from May to September, men, women, young people – everybody works for Madd. Young people, for example, can earn a significant amount of money and fund their studies.*

*My main worry is that Madd is a species threatened by extinction. It is a forest fruit that grows on trees, but there are more and more forest fires in Casamance. Everybody in Casamance must be very vigilant to prevent these fires. We need to raise awareness among all the communities involved, about the need to prevent forest fires, which destroy Madd and therefore destroy a source of income for a large part of the local and national population. Research must also play its part, to prevent the disappearance of the species and also to better preserve the fruit so processors can produce throughout the year.*

Ms Maimouna Sambou, President of Groupement d'Intérêt Economique (GIE) Casa Ecologie, Senegal



## KHAO KAI NOI, THE “LITTLE CHICKEN RICE” OF HOUAPHAN, THE LAO PEOPLE’S DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC

Khao Kai Noi is a glutinous rice variety grown at high altitude in the Lao People’s Democratic Republic, in the country’s northeastern province of Houaphan, which is characterized by rugged terrain and dense mountainous forests. The rice is typically rainfed and late-maturing, and the grains are strikingly different from most other varieties: they are short and rounded, almost globular in shape. The grain is also shatterproof and difficult to thresh, but the rice is highly prized for its aromatic character and excellent quality.

Through a project implemented by FAO funded by the French Development Agency (AFD) from 2013 to 2017, family farmers producing Khao Kai Noi, together with rice processors and retailers, successfully founded two associations for the management and promotion of the Khao Kai Noi GI. The GI concept is still very new to the country, then the new associations will need further support and capacity development to continue to benefit from the collective valorization of the Khao Kai Noi GI.



### WHAT THEY SAY ABOUT IT

*The rice family farmers of Houaphan are proud that their Khao Kai Noi (little chicken rice) has been registered as a geographical indication; now they are asking what they can do to better promote it.*

M. Khamxay, President of the Khao Kai Noi GI Promotion Association of Houaphan



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## PRESERVING TRADITION AND BIODIVERSITY IN THE HIGH MOUNTAINS OF GEORGIA

Tushetian Guda cheese is made from cow or sheep milk, yielded from native breeds that graze on the mountain grass of the Tusheti region of Georgia. In a centuries-old traditional practice, the cheese is ripened in a Guda, a sack made from sheep or veal skin, which is turned inside out so that the trimmed wool or fur is in direct contact with the ripening cheese, giving it a distinctive flavour. The Tusheti region is located in northeast Georgia, at an altitude of 1650–4493 m. To the north, it is bordered by the high mountains of the Greater Caucasus, which greatly influence the microclimate and determine the diversity, wealth and fertility of the territory's flora and herbage.

From 2017 to 2019, FAO and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) have supported the project “Georgia: Support to Sustainable Value Chains through the Development of Geographical Indications in the Dairy Sector”, including a pilot initiative for Tushetian Guda, focused on preserving cultural heritage and providing new job opportunities for young people.



© Kakha Abulidze

### WHAT THEY SAY ABOUT IT

*Our families are proud of our Tushetian Guda cheese and our way of life. The GI represents the official recognition of our knowledge, built over generations of interaction with our mountains and native breeds. It gives young people, like me and my partners involved in the Tushetian Guda association, better perspectives*

*on markets, helping us to maintain our traditions and lifestyle in the high mountains of Tusheti. The GI process is for us a great experience to build collective action, discuss and agree on common rules to preserve the authenticity of our cheese through the specifications, and coordinate with public authorities to improve practices.*

Kakha Abulidze, Tushuri Guda maker and representative of the Alaznistavi cooperative and of the Tushetian Guda Cheese GI Association, accepting the Dairy Resistance Award for the Tushetian Guda cheese on behalf of the Alaznistavi cooperative, at the Slow Food Cheese festival in 2017.



## THE FIRST PROTECTED DESIGNATION OF ORIGIN FOR COFFEE IN MARCALA, HONDURAS

In 2005, the municipality of Marcala, located in the western highlands of Honduras and home to the indigenous Lenca people, was granted the world's first protected designation of origin (PDO) for coffee, at the request of the Association of Coffee Producers of Marcala (ADOPCAM). Café Marcala is a highland coffee with a distinctive aromatic flavour, produced mainly by smallholder farmers (92 percent of the coffee producers have less than five hectares). It is also the first designation of origin to be legally recognized in Honduras and Central America.

ADOPCAM is involved in various initiatives in the area to address local economic, social and environmental sustainability issues, through alliances with the public and private sectors. FAO supported ADOPCAM and other local stakeholders in identifying potential issues for the sustainable production of coffee in the Marcala area, using the FAO framework for Sustainability Assessment of Food and Agriculture systems (SAFA), together with a specific approach adapted to the GI context.



### WHAT THEY SAY ABOUT IT

*The interviews and discussions on sustainability helped us to clearly diagnose our GI system, we can now better identify the challenges and critical points when it comes to GI impacts. Our participatory process in making decisions together is now stronger, and that is a key characteristic of good governance and important to our success. We collectively agreed on priority issues*

*to address, i.e. the conservation of the ecosystem for the production of coffee and the need for better use and proper regulation of the GI. We also established a strategic plan with indicators, and our board of directors is working on the development of specific communications about GI concepts that can support our members according to their needs... whether it be production, roasting, exports and even commercial intermediation. This work has really supported our long-term vision- our members are engaged in our sustainability strategy and it has also provided the basis for cooperation with sustainability practitioners, donors, governments and other institutions.*

Zoyla Moreno, Marcala coffee GI association manager

## DEVELOPING A CONTINENTAL STRATEGY FOR GIs IN AFRICA

The African Union (AU) with FAO support prepared a Continental Strategy for GIs, with three main objectives: (1) enhancing GI stakeholders' networking at the national level; (2) preserving and promoting traditional products in local markets and (3) positioning them in international markets. This Strategy was endorsed by the AU in October 2017. An action plan has since been elaborated to implement the Strategy. The organizations involved include AU, African Intellectual Property Organization (OAPI), African Regional Intellectual Property Organization (ARIPO), European Commission (EC), World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), French Development Agency (AFD) and FAO.



*The endorsement of a shared, overarching vision at the continental level is now needed to give political legitimacy to GI projects and policy development. The Continental Strategy process relies on the involvement of key African players at continental and regional levels. The outcomes of the Strategy form the basis for an action plan which has been elaborated with all concerned partners and should be implemented for a period of five years, starting from 2019.*

Diana Akullo, Policy Officer in the AU Commission Department of Rural Economy and Agriculture, holding a copy of the Continental Strategy for GIs in Africa

## GIs AS A DRIVER FOR INCLUSIVE VALUE CHAINS

As part of FAO's cooperation with the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), a number of technical assistance projects have been implemented in countries including Croatia, Georgia, Montenegro, Serbia and Turkey, focusing on GIs as a driver for developing sustainable value chains and support enabling environment to boost private investment. These projects supported the development of a sound institutional and legal framework to establish policies and regulations for sustainable GIs, and raised awareness of the benefits of GIs at the national level. In addition, campaigns were carried out to promote the local benefits of pilot GI value chains and products, such as higher incomes, the preservation of local resources and know-how, and potential new market linkages with the tourism sector.



*A GI is a powerful tool to maintain rural traditions and specialized regional knowledge, while simultaneously generating business. We're thrilled to be part of a process that also does so much to build synergies between smallholders and larger agribusiness companies.*

Natalya Zhukova, Head of Agribusiness at the EBRD

## A GLOBAL SUSTAINABILITY STRATEGY FOR GIs

OriGIn, a non-governmental organization based in Geneva and representing some 500 associations of producers and other GI-related institutions from 40 countries, is collaborating with FAO to provide concrete support and tools to help GI producers in addressing sustainability issues, in line with the FAO framework for Sustainability Assessment of Food and Agriculture systems (SAFA) and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).



*GIs are in a strategic position to respond to the sustainability challenges of our time, and even represent a model for other economic sectors embarking on such a process. This does not mean that GIs are by definition sustainable, but that the way producers coordinate among themselves in their territory to preserve and promote their product and their local resources, is the ground for a sustainability pathway. The aim of the GI Sustainability Strategy is to increase awareness and capacities of producers to define sustainability priorities and to develop strategies for continuous improvement.*

Massimo Vittori, Managing Director of oriGIn

## REFERENCE MATERIALS



### Linking people, places and products

Guidelines on practical approaches and tools to establish and manage sustainable GI, from the identification of potential products to their registration.

**Available at:**

[www.fao.org/docrep/013/i1760e/i1760e.pdf](http://www.fao.org/docrep/013/i1760e/i1760e.pdf)

**Also available in:**

French, Spanish, Croatian, Polish, Russian.



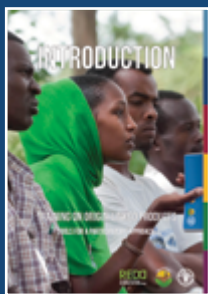
### Strengthening sustainable food systems through geographical indications. An analysis of economic impacts

A study on the economic impact of nine GI processes around the world and their economic and social benefits for rural areas and sustainable development.

**Available at:**

[www.fao.org/3/I8737EN/i8737en.pdf](http://www.fao.org/3/I8737EN/i8737en.pdf)

## GUIDANCE MATERIALS



### Training on origin-linked products: Tools for a participatory approach

A set of four guides on how to organize and implement participatory training for local stakeholders on the promotion of origin-linked quality and sustainable geographical indications.

**Available at:**

Book 1: Introduction [www.fao.org/3/a-au693e.pdf](http://www.fao.org/3/a-au693e.pdf)

Book 2: Sheets for trainers [www.fao.org/3/a-bp125e.pdf](http://www.fao.org/3/a-bp125e.pdf)

Book 3: Content [www.fao.org/3/a-bp124e.pdf](http://www.fao.org/3/a-bp124e.pdf)

Book 4: Exercise sheets [www.fao.org/3/a-bp126e.pdf](http://www.fao.org/3/a-bp126e.pdf)



### Identification of origin-linked products and their potential for development: A methodology for participatory inventories

A methodological participatory approach to involve local actors in the identification of products of origin-linked quality.

**Available at:**

[www.fao.org/3/a-au686e.pdf](http://www.fao.org/3/a-au686e.pdf)

**Also available in:**

French and Spanish



### Linking people for quality products: Sustainable interprofessional bodies for geographical indications and origin-linked products

A series of five guides on how to develop procedures for preserving and promoting quality products. With concepts, recommendations and practical examples from all over the world, as well as self-evaluation exercises.

**Available at:**

Book 1: Introduction. [www.fao.org/3/a-i7060e.pdf](http://www.fao.org/3/a-i7060e.pdf)

Book 2: Content and theory. [www.fao.org/3/a-i7061e.pdf](http://www.fao.org/3/a-i7061e.pdf)

Book 3: Trainers' notes. [www.fao.org/3/a-i7062e.pdf](http://www.fao.org/3/a-i7062e.pdf)

Book 4: Exercise sheets. [www.fao.org/3/a-i7063e.pdf](http://www.fao.org/3/a-i7063e.pdf)

Book 5: Case studies. [www.fao.org/3/a-i7064e.pdf](http://www.fao.org/3/a-i7064e.pdf)

## For further information:

**Visit:** [www.fao.org/in-action/quality-and-origin-program](http://www.fao.org/in-action/quality-and-origin-program)

**Contact:** [GI@fao.org](mailto:GI@fao.org)



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