

ROLE-PLAYING: NEGOTIATING THE CODE OF PRACTICE

Scenario

Current situation

In the provinces of Tilburn and Tulcum, producers have over the generations developed a specific product based on a rare variety of red banana (*Musa acuminata rutilus*), using special drying techniques.

These dried red bananas, traditionally called dranas by the small farmers, are widely present in the local market and are increasingly being exported to other parts of the country, particularly the capital.

Recently, however, it has been noticed that some dried bananas were being processed and then sold in the capital as Tilburn dried red bananas when they did not come from Tilburn, they were much thicker than the original pure variety and their red colour had been obtained artificially. These false dried red bananas were being sold at about half the price.

It has also been noticed that the quality of dried red bananas is falling, even in the local market, and that they vary considerably in terms of moisture, acidity and sugar levels, and also that some have suffered insect damage.

Description of the product

Dried red bananas have the form of slices of skinned bananas between 0.3 and 0.6 centimetres thick, 1.5 and 2.5 centimetres broad, and 7.5 and 15 centimetres long (they are becoming longer and longer). They are partially dried (20 to 25 percent moisture) and are red on the edges and cream-coloured in the centre.

They have a marked, slightly sweet taste and their texture is soft and elastic.

They are sold either by weight in the market, or in packets of six or twelve, or even more, pieces.

Description of the manufacturing process

The red bananas used are small, slightly curved bananas measuring between 8 and 12 centimetres in length, with a diameter of 2 to 3.5 centimetres. They belong to the *Musa acuminata rutilus* variety, resulting from the crossbreeding of the traditional plantain banana with the more popular sweet yellow banana. New hybrid varieties have recently been created, using the *Musa acuminata rutilus* as their base, and these can produce bananas of the same colour, but longer (up to 17 centimetres).

The skin is always dark red (see illustration), while the interior is red on the surface and white inside.

The banana trees are relatively small (2 metres at most) and may grow in small isolated groups among other trees or in plantations with a distance of at least 2 metres between each tree.

The bananas are picked when they are ripe and are prepared immediately afterwards. Their ripeness at the time of harvesting has a major influence on the quality of the final product.

The quality is determined by the time lapse between harvesting and drying, since the quality of the bananas deteriorates rapidly if they are not dried in the 48 hours following harvesting.

Once they have been picked, they are skinned, checked to see that they are not damaged, then cut and dried.

They were traditionally dried in the sun, but drying is increasingly being carried out with the aid of controlled heating systems.

They are dried until their moisture level is 20 to 25 percent.

Once they have been dried, they may be packaged or left loose.

Stakeholders in the value chain

- Small farmers who process their production by drying their own bananas. (Most of them have small or medium-sized mixed farms.)
- Large-scale farmers based in Tulcum, who specialize in banana growing (yellow and red varieties).
- Middlemen who purchase the dried bananas in bulk, then transport them and sell them in markets in the capital and other towns, to larger processor-packagers, or in the country's tourist areas.
- Processor-packagers in Tulcum and Tilburn, who purchase red bananas from growers for drying and packaging. They may also dry yellow bananas.
- A major agro-food company based outside the provinces of Tulcum and Tilburn, which purchases red bananas from growers in Tilburn and Tulcum, dries them and sells them under the trademark "Tilburn bananas", which it registered four years ago. These "Tilburn bananas" are a high-end product.
- Large-scale plantations and processing units outside Tilburn and Tulcum, which have recently planted a hybrid variety of red banana, and dries the bananas and sells them in the main towns and tourist regions of the country.

Production zone

The *Musa acuminata rutilus* variety is endemic to the provinces of Tilburn (about 30 percent of production) and Tulcum (70 percent).

Over the years, the inhabitants have developed special know-how for drying these local-variety bananas.

Names and reputation

Locally, they are simply called dranas (which means "dried bananas" in the local dialect) or "dried red bananas". In the capital and the rest of the country, however, a consumer survey has shown that they are generally called "Tilburn dried red bananas". Consumers also link the word "Tilburn" with dried red bananas.

It has also been observed that the word "Tilburn" associated with dried bananas is being used for

dried bananas that do not correspond to the traditional type and do not even come from the original production region. Moreover, the term dranas is linked to the town of Tilburn by certain better informed people.

Link to the terroir

The *Musa acuminata rutilus* banana tree, which is short and has a relatively flexible trunk, is particularly suited to the stormy climate conditions of the mountainous regions of Tilburn and Tulcum. It was bred about 150 years ago. These banana trees can withstand storms when they are planted in small groups and mixed with other trees and crops. After a tropical storm, they are normally the first trees to become productive again.

The volcanic soil provides the bananas with particular minerals and oligo-elements, although these vary from one region to another. Further study will be needed to learn about the effects of these elements on the taste and texture of the final product.

Drying bananas is a tradition that grew up to contribute to a varied and sufficient diet in the weeks following storms.

Each farming family traditionally had its own solar dryer, and the extended family would regularly gather to prepare and dry the red bananas. This tradition dates back about 100 years.



© Thelmadatter

Group cards

Role 1: Tilburn producers who process their own banana production

You represent a group of about 300 growers, all with mixed family farms (on average 2 hectares of mountainous land).

You are all based in Tilburn. Most of your production is intended for your own consumption, but you have some commercial crops, especially red bananas.

The members of your group generally have between 30 and 60 banana trees of the pure (non-hybrid) variety of red banana, inter planted with other crops in the traditional manner. This very extensive style of cropping means that there is practically no need for protection against pests. However, you know that if there is an attack by flies, the final dried bananas will be damaged with stains and their taste may also suffer a little. Even so, this does not seem to disturb most consumers, who purchase them in the local market at a lower price. You can also consume them yourselves. In order to avoid attack by flies, you cover the bananas with bags or spray them with pesticide when you can afford this.

You have always dried the bananas in the open air. The best results are obtained by drying them in the shade for at least 72 hours, covering them at night or if it rains. However, it is sometimes hard to leave bananas drying for so long because of possible rain, in which case you can place them directly in the sun (which makes them lose their colour and elasticity) or use a wood fire to dry them faster (which gives them a slightly smokey taste).

So far as trade is concerned, you sell these dried bananas in weekly markets, either directly to consumers (by weight) or to middlemen who resell them in the capital and other large towns in the country. You account for about 15 percent of all the dried red bananas sold on the market and consider yourselves the sole producers of true traditional dranas.

You do not yet really know what advantages you will gain from the establishment of a GI, but you are proud of your dranas, which are a special, authentic regional product. Your group has always sold its bananas under the name dranas and you have heard that elsewhere in the country they are also known as "Tilburn dried red bananas".

You want to be sure that you can go on producing in the traditional manner in order to preserve this heritage and sell your dried bananas both in local markets and to middlemen, while still being able to call them dranas. You would like consumers to be aware of the difference between your authentic product and other types of dried banana.

Role 2 Producers of fresh bananas based in Tulcum province

You represent an assorted group of about 100 banana growers, all based in Tulcum. Your farms are on average between 5 and 10 hectares in size and some of them lie in the valley. Your members grow many types of banana, particularly the pure *Musa acuminata rutilus* variety and the hybrid variety of red banana. The growing methods adopted are usually modern and rational, with rows of trees planted every 2 metres.

You do not dry your bananas, but sell them fresh to processors. The price varies depending on the quality verified by the processor. You often feel that the processor talks down the quality of your bananas so as to pay less. However, your members have no choice but to sell the bananas to these processors.

The price of your bananas has recently fallen still further, because the processors tell you they can find red bananas cheaper in other provinces.

You guarantee the quality of your bananas by using bags or pesticide to protect them against flies. However, the use of bags is a labour-intensive activity and the use of pesticide is expensive; and sometimes neither of these protection measures is used.

The production of red bananas represents about 20 percent of your income.

According to your own research, your group produces about 50 percent of the red bananas that will be dried.

You know that for close on 20 years now, your bananas have been processed, dried and then sold as "Tilburn dried red bananas".

You want to go on selling your bananas to the processors and receive a better price for high-quality bananas. You hope to increase your bargaining power within the value chain so that you can negotiate better prices and selling conditions for your bananas.

Role 3 Large-scale processor-packagers based in Tulcum and Tilburn

You represent the four processors based in Tulcum and Tilburn who have been purchasing and drying red bananas for many years. You purchase at least 90 percent of your bananas from growers in the region, but you can also find red bananas outside the region if you need to purchase more.

You account for about 70 percent of the “authentic” Tilburn dried red bananas sold on the market.

You have modern, temperature-controlled drying facilities, combined with air-conditioned tunnels, so that you can produce high-quality dried red bananas at any time, so long as the bananas are carefully inspected on arrival at the factory (making sure that no bananas have been damaged for mechanical reasons or by flies) and are properly prepared. Some farmers sell you bananas that do not meet quality standards (too much insect damage), so that you have to destroy a number of deliveries.

Three of the processors employ staff to prepare and cut the bananas, and one of them has mechanized this process. This mechanization has not been smooth and does not always give the best results, but it is much faster and cheaper.

You process and package the dried bananas and sell them throughout the country in supermarkets.

Your market research shows that there are increasing numbers of processors based outside the region who imitate your product, calling theirs “dried red bananas” or even “Tilburn dried red bananas”, without any guarantee as to where the product has in fact come from. In some cases, yellow plantain bananas, dyed red, have even been sold under these names.

You have observed that some small farmers who dry their own red bananas sell them without any label, entailing a danger of undermining the reputation of the product for quality. However, you do know that these small farmers produce dried red bananas in an authentic, traditional way (dranas), which is important for the image of the product – and essential for your enterprise.

You obviously want to protect the name and good reputation of Tilburn dried red bananas by setting quality standards. You think that red bananas should be produced solely in the geographical area of Tilburn and Tulcum and you would like to put an end to imitations produced outside the region. You also want to go on taking advantage of the image of dried red bananas as authentic and traditional.

Role 4 Processor based outside the region

You represent a large-scale banana processor who purchases bananas all over the country in order to process them into chips, flakes and dried bananas. You also produce dried bananas dyed with natural colouring (blue, red, green and purple), marketed for children.

You are based in the province of Protac on the opposite coast of the island, near the capital.

Recently (three years ago) you developed a new product that you call “Tilburn dried red bananas”, for which you use, so far as possible, high-quality bananas from Tilburn and Tulcum. For this purpose, you make contracts with farmers in the region and help them to guarantee the quality of the bananas they produce for you. For this high-end product, you have set up a quality assurance system throughout the supply chain. You have mechanized preparation of the bananas, guaranteeing that all the slices are cut very precisely and regularly. You have the most modern drying technology available, thus guaranteeing a perfect hygiene for your product and also a regular and very appetizing colour. Your packaging is also produced using cutting-edge technology and guaranteeing the traceability of the product.

This production line accounts for 3 percent of your company’s income. The idea was developed by one of your engineers from Tilburn. You have even produced a picture logo with the words “Tilburn dried red bananas”.

According to your research, your production represents approximately 15 percent of the market in Tilburn dried red bananas. You have started to develop a small export chain for this product (with other banana-based products).

Your market research has shown that other processors, also based outside the region, are increasingly imitating your product and calling it “Tilburn dried red bananas”. You have asked your lawyers to examine ways of protecting your trademark and stopping such imitation.

You know that small farmers sell their dried red bananas in local markets in the region, but you are doubtful about the quality of the drying and hygiene of such products.

You obviously want to protect the name and good reputation of high-quality Tilburn dried red bananas and go on marketing this high-end product.

Role 5 Extension worker/Facilitator

You represent the extension worker employed by regional authorities. You are familiar with the main concepts regarding GIs and know that the protection of dranas or Tilburn dried red bananas will play a major role in development of the region. You also know how important it is to assemble all the stakeholders concerned and enable them to contribute to this meeting.

You have already presented the GI project throughout the region, and the moment has come to start drawing up a code of practice. You have therefore invited participants representing the stakeholders to start discussions on drawing up the code of practice.

From the viewpoint of the regional authorities, it is essential to produce as much added value as possible in the region. You will therefore be in favour of having all the growing, processing and packaging processes take place in the region, but you also know about the existence of a large-scale processor outside the region. If discussions on the production area become stalled, you could suggest the adoption of a five-year transition period, at the end of which all production must take place in the region, as was the case for many years.

Your objective is to gather people around the table so that they can discuss and suggest answers to the questions that have been agreed. You must make sure that all points of view are heard. If it is impossible to reach an agreement, you could suggest that the two positions be described.

Role 6 Reporter

You work for the local newspaper and have been invited to the meeting by the extension worker. Your role is to take note of the discussion and the elements on which the participants have agreed and then to present these in five minutes at the plenary session at the end of the morning. (You can use a paperboard or a PowerPoint presentation for this purpose.)

Points to be discussed

You must not show your cards to the others, but when the animator asks you, you must introduce yourself, provide information on your character and interests. You can try to form alliances with other stakeholders and you must state your agreement or disagreement with the proposals put forward. You are also encouraged to suggest alternatives, propose compromises and seek a consensus.

Define the first elements of the code of practice:

- **The name(s) of the product:** choose the name or names of the products for which you are requesting GI protection

Suggestion: there are at least four possibilities: (1) dranas; (2) dried red bananas; (3) Tilburn dried red bananas; or (4) Tilburn and Tulcum dried red bananas. Select the option (or combined options?) that you consider the most appropriate and explain the reasons for your choice.

- **Raw material:** agree on the raw material that must be used and its quality, and define it. Specify what raw materials cannot be used.

Suggestion: you could discuss the type of banana that must be used (solely pure varieties or also hybrids) and elements linked to quality, such as the minimum quality required, what must be avoided and whether or not additives such as colorants should be permitted.

- **Definition of the process:** describe the manufacturing method of the product with the GI for all the phases in the production process. If need be, introduce an explicit ban on the use of certain methods.

Suggestion: focus on the process adopted, for example, in cutting and drying the bananas.

- **Definition of the geographical area:** define the region where the bananas must be grown and processed, and justify your arguments.

Suggestion: carefully examine whether the production area and the processing area must be the same or can be different, and consider the implications of this choice.

Optional question (if the difference between PGI and PDO has already been discussed): agree on the type of protection (for example PGI or PDO) and justify this choice.