

Certain agricultural and food products can be distinguished by characteristics linked to the territory or zone where they are produced, providing them with a certain reputation, linked to their origin. Their specific quality, perceived by consumers, is based on the typicity of the product, meaning that the quality of the product is not only specific, but also unique, resulting from the unique combination of human and natural production factors linked to the territory or zone. These products can therefore not be produced elsewhere.

Typicity is a measure of the amount of specific qualities and the anchorage in local resources. Consumers' perception is linked to the reputation of the origin-linked product and its recognition by the market.

Objectives

Recognizing the links between local actors, their territories or zones, agricultural products and foodstuffs is an important step towards sustainable rural development. These relations are based on local capacities to create value in a global market, while remaining rooted in a given zone. Local products have specific quality attributes inseparable from the places where they are produced and these ultimately build a reputation associated with a geographical indication (GI), which identifies the products. These differentiated products can thus respond to a specific demand.

Key concepts

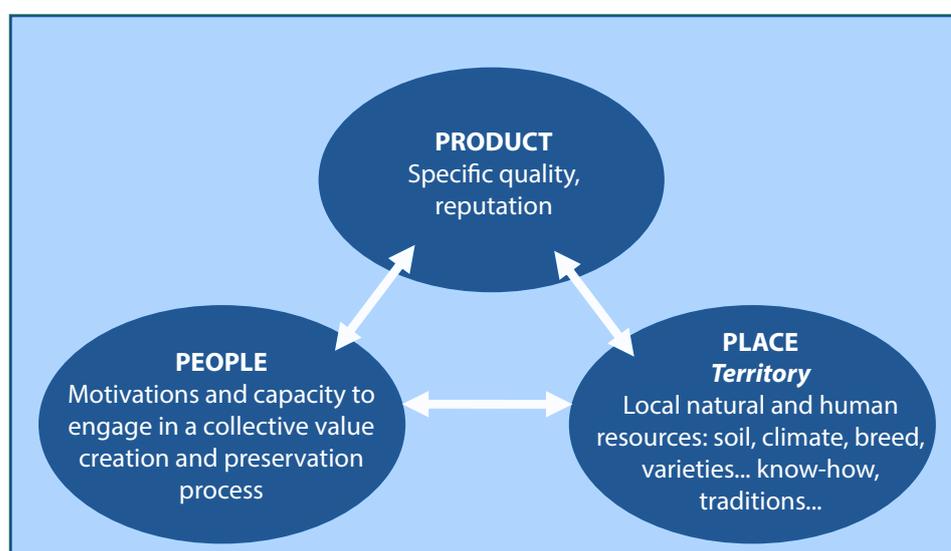
The **place** represents the geographical area that bears both the natural resources (physical and biological environment, including biological resources) and human or cultural resources linked to generations of inhabitants and producers. This territory is delimited in space.

A **terroir** is a delimited geographical area where, over the course of history, a human community has developed a collective production method and know-how based on a system of interactions between the physical and biological environment and a set of human factors that convey an originality, confer typicity and engender a reputation for a product.

The concept of terroir can be represented graphically through the figure below.

A **terroir product** (with quality linked to its origin) has a specific quality mainly attributable to its terroir (the interaction between the natural environment and human factors).

Interaction between people, product and place



Source: Linking People, Place and Products

Process

A collective approach is required to engage in the quality virtuous circle in order to promote and preserve the origin-linked product and local resources. The potential for engaging in the value creation process depends on the will, motivation and capacity of the local community, and especially of those involved in the local production system, to coordinate their actions and promote the product collectively. Many stakeholders are involved in the production and value creation process of a product of origin-linked specific quality and may influence the development of the product in different ways, conveying their own vision of the product and their own interests. This is why an efficient coordination and the search for a shared vision are necessary.

The first step in activating the quality virtuous circle is the precise identification of the local product and the local resources needed for production. For this, it is important that local producers realize the potential associated with specific local resources, as this constitutes the basis for collective action to promote the value of the product.

The possibility of activating the origin-linked quality virtuous circle depends on the presence of three main prerequisites:

- the product: it presents some specific characteristics linked to geographical origin that give it a special quality and reputation in the market, resulting in specific consumer demand;
- the place: the special quality characteristics are the result of the natural and human resources of the local area in which it is produced;
- the people: the local producers, having inherited traditions and know-how, together with other local stakeholders, must be motivated to engage in a value creation and preservation process.

Summary

Establishing the nature and intensity of the link between a product and its origin must be the basis for any activation of the origin-linked quality virtuous circle. The process is the responsibility of the producers and must be relayed by the competent public authorities.

The justification for specific protection of a geographical (or traditional) name depends on the existence of a link to the terroir and/or a reputation established by the product. The identification phase is therefore fundamental not only to establish these links (or their absence), but also to identify the potential at the supply chain level (stakeholder motivation and market potential) for development of a valorization process (see the web-tool “GI product identification”).