

COLLECTIVE PROCESS AND TERROIR PRODUCTS IN A SUSTAINABLE PERSPECTIVE

C2.2

Adding value to a product of origin-linked quality while preserving its characteristics allows for remuneration and the reproduction of specific local resources, not only benefiting the production system, but also rural development dynamics, local society and natural resources (which are often fragile).

Objectives

Promotion of an origin-linked product has the potential to maintain and promote non-standardized food products in new and existing markets, preserve the associated socio-ecological system and maintain economic activity in rural areas. In this regard, origin-linked products are important tools for a global territorial approach to sustainable development, in particular for marginalized regions. For this, synergies must be created between economic activities and the two other pillars of sustainable development: the environmental and social pillars.

Key concepts

The economic pillar: adding value and benefits from organization

Origin-linked products have the potential to create added value through market recognition, provide access to new niche markets for differentiated products and prevent products from disappearing because of competition. This can help to ensure a decent income for local producers if the higher added value is fairly redistributed among producers.

Value creation is also a driving force in ensuring consumer confidence in the origin of products and maintaining generic quality requirements, through the use of quality insurance schemes and traceability systems throughout the process. Accessibility to and maintenance of profitable marketing channels is of key importance in order to maintain local resources. Through the effective marketing of these products, rural activities can be maintained and even diversified, thus promoting related industries such as tourism and also preventing outward migration. Indeed, specific local resources involved in the production system – unique plant varieties or animal breeds, traditional landscapes, food traditions and culture – are also valuable for tourism and gastronomy.

The environmental pillar: sustainable use of resources and biodiversity

The promotion of origin-linked products can generate two kinds of positive impact:

- Sustainable use of natural resources. Identification of the link between the product and the terroir raises awareness of the importance of a sustainable use of local resources. Moreover, origin-linked products are often connected to traditional production systems and extensive practices with lower environmental impacts compared to modern techniques and inputs.
- Biodiversity. Origin-linked products often use traditional, endemic or specific locally-adapted species, varieties, breeds and micro-organisms. The promotion of such products can help counter pressure towards increased specialization and standardization, thus preventing the disappearance of habitat, typical landscapes and genetic resources.

The social pillar

Since origin-linked products have generally been produced for a long period in the same social and cultural environment, they incorporate strong empirical and locally validated experience and know-how by producers regarding the management of a sound production process and the achievement of high specific quality within a particular local environment. Moreover, the link between product, people and place often makes the GI product a cultural marker.

Process

From this perspective, people on the production side can contribute to an integrated territorial approach to sustainable development in particularly fragile areas. The modalities of the local process will determine the real

contribution to sustainable rural development. Positive effects in economic, environmental and social fields are not automatic. As with any tool, it is important to use it correctly to obtain the expected results. In any case, the process and its effects have to be assessed by stakeholders in order to improve an origin-linked product over time and allow the reproduction of resources.

This will be addressed with key questions and factors for the evaluation of effects in module 5 (Reproduction).

Summary

Origin-linked products can be powerful levers for sustainable rural development. Indeed, activation of the quality virtuous circle will affect the three dimensions of sustainable development: in economic terms, the consumer, paying for quality, will contribute to creating value localized in rural zones; in environmental terms, local products are often derived from extensive use of natural resources and make use of rare and endemic breeds or varieties; and in social terms, origin-linked products preserve traditional know-how and local cultural elements.