

Collective action is necessary all along the quality circle and should be considered from the onset of the identification phase. Indeed, setting up a value creation process for a GI product requires the active involvement of the local stakeholders who have the right to define the common rules for using the GI.

Inside and outside the production area, a GI product by definition involves many different stakeholders: producers, processors, traders and consumers share know-how about good practices regarding production, processing, preservation, trading and even use or consumption of the product.

Objectives

A participatory approach is required in order to develop a common vision and strategy for the product, identify its links with its geographical origin and establish a collective protection system. Moreover, local producers should be able to build and manage active and stable external relationships emanating from various perspectives – economic, political, social and scientific. It is therefore important to consider territorial links and external networks.

This participatory approach may need an external facilitator to initiate and coordinate activities, especially during the mobilization phase and before the creation of a legitimate, representative organization. This facilitator may, for example, come from a state support agency (extension services, universities etc.) or an NGO (active in the field of rural development, environment, consumers or food).

Process

Mobilization of the local actors concerned by the impact of the origin-linked quality circle on the territory or zone (value chain stakeholders and the local community) is a fundamental step.

This mobilization entails three important activities:

- organization of the local context, for example through producer meetings, studies and exchange visits with similar production systems in order to share views on the product and on what determines its characteristics;
- empowerment of disadvantaged stakeholders, who are often the real trustees of the “original product”, in order to allow for their participation in the process; the empowerment of local actors is a key issue in terms of social sustainability for the value creation process; local government, NGOs and other local associations should support these activities;
- mediation: each stakeholder has a specific vision of the product and its evolution, depending on his or her specific interests in the product; it is therefore important to consider the motivations of the actors involved, since they are potential sources of conflict when engaging in qualification.

Producers should not remain isolated in their efforts to identify and qualify origin-linked products, as such action often involves specific knowledge and capacities. The various stakeholders who should be mobilized to support the producers' efforts are:

- food operators, traders, sellers, restaurant owners and other actors in the supply chain: even if not involved directly in the qualification process, they can play an important role in enhancing the economic vibrancy of the GI product by supporting marketing and promotion activities and helping to create new marketing opportunities;
- consumers and consumer associations: consumer preferences and purchases allow for the reproduction and improvement of the resources used in the GI production process; consumers may also be a vehicle for transmitting information and spreading the popularity of the GI product; in particular, travelling consumers, emigrants or tourists can enhance the reputation of a local product;
- other local stakeholders: within the territory or zone, other private-sector actors outside the production chain can build very useful alliances with GI systems

Local government and other local authorities, together with NGOs, can act at many levels to support a GI product's development: research support, extension work, the provision of technical assistance or information and the organization of marketing campaigns focusing on consumers and traders. Public intervention may be justified, inasmuch as GI products create employment and generate a positive image of the region. This can be useful for tourism and boost the general attractiveness of the region.

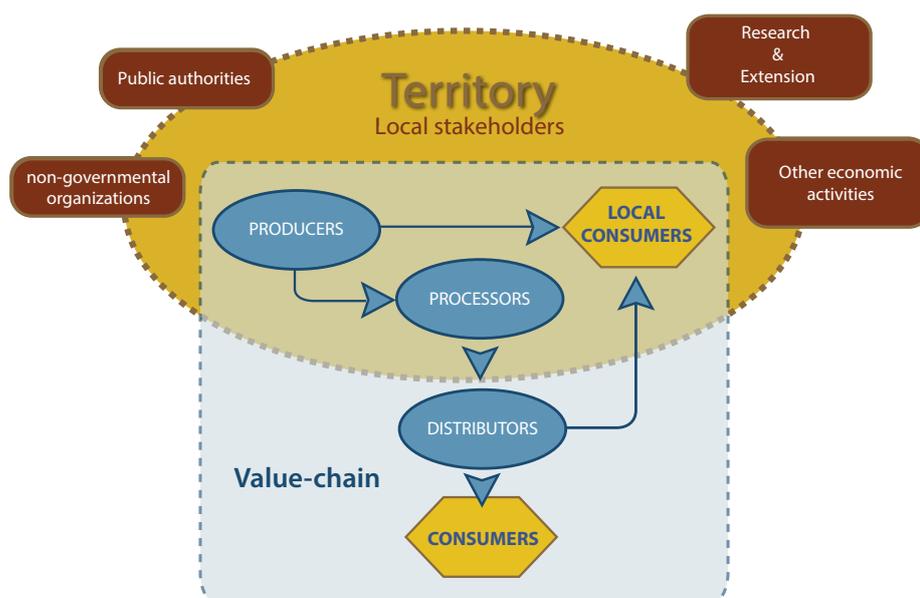
Public support can also come from national or international institutions. The role of public actors and policies are analysed in more detail in sheet 6.2 in the context of sustainable development and the need for balanced private-public coordination.

Scientific support may be useful during the process of rule-setting (for example by providing studies and research analysis on economic and social sustainability), in order to demonstrate the link between the product quality and its geographical origin and even to support the group of producers in marketing and promotion activities and collective organization management.

Summary

The stakeholders in the supply chain of the origin-linked product will benefit from developing a shared vision of the development of their product, projected into the medium- and long-term future. If this vision is shared with partners, it can garner significant support from local and external actors for the success of the process of activating the quality virtuous circle.

Different stakeholders who can be involved in the value creation process



Source: Linking People, Place and Products