

ROLE-PLAYING: STRUCTURING A GI ORGANIZATION

Scenario

In the provinces of Tilburn and Tulcum, producers have created a specific dried banana by using a rare variety of red banana (*Musa acuminata rutilus*) and following specific drying methods.

A local market has grown up for these dried bananas, but increasing quantities are now being exported to other regions of the country, including the capital.

Recently, however, it has been observed that certain dried bananas that do not come from Tilburn are being processed and sold in the capital as Tilburn dried red bananas. These bananas are in fact much larger than the original *Musa acuminata rutilus* variety and their red colour is obtained artificially. These false dried red bananas are sold at about half the price.

It has also been observed that the quality of Tilburn dried red bananas is falling, even in the local market, and that the characteristics of the dried bananas placed on the market tend to vary, with differences in the moisture, acidity and sugar levels, and that some of the products sold have obviously suffered insect damage.

Dranas, as they are called by the families in Tilburn and Tulcum who have been producing these traditionally dried bananas for more than 150 years, are part of the cultural identity of the region and an important element in local cuisine.

The municipal authorities became aware of the advantages to be gained from optimizing and protecting dranas with a geographical indication in order to improve both the marketing of dranas and local income. They thus launched an awareness campaign on this possibility of developing a GI and actively called on the stakeholders in the value chain in order to mobilize them in this undertaking through a number of meetings with their various representatives.

The development of a GI for dranas on the whole enjoys considerable support from the stakeholders, but there are still issues that need resolving. One of these consists of deciding what type of organization should be established in order to finalize the code of practice and submit the application for recognition.

The municipality has called a meeting of all the stakeholders in order to lay the groundwork for this organization.

You are one of the stakeholders invited to this meeting.

Group Cards

Daniel

You are a traditional farmer from the small village of Bidem, near the region's main tourist site. You and your family have been producing dried red bananas, dranas, on your farm for many years.

You sell a good portion of these bananas in the market and often to tourists.

In your view, an organization should:

- promote dranas better and obtain a better market price for your product (a forum to discuss prices);
- provide better support to your production (advice and perhaps soft loans).

However, you are afraid:

- of being inspected and having to declare all your sales;
- that those with power (large-scale grower-processor-packagers) will impose their points of view, or indeed that they will prevent you from selling your traditional *dranas*.

Doris

You are a traditional farmer from the village of Geno, which is a long way from the main town and the tourist site. Your farm is very mixed and you produce some red bananas that you sell to local middlemen and also to James, your neighbour. You also dry some of these bananas, which are used mainly for your own household consumption.

The price paid for your red bananas varies enormously from one week to the next, and the middleman sometimes even refuses to buy them on the pretext that they are of poor quality.

In your view, an organization should:

- promote dranas better so that they obtain better prices;
- provide a forum to discuss the prices of raw bananas and obtain higher, stabler prices for your bananas;
- allow you to understand why your bananas are sometimes rejected;
- provide technical advice.

However, you are afraid that your voice and that of other farmers would not be heard in an organization including large-scale grower-processor-packagers.

James

You are a farmer and a middleman with a small truck. You live in the village of Geno, which is a fairly long way from the main town. You grow your own red bananas and also purchase some from your neighbours to sell them to agro-food companies in Tilburn. You earn a little money thanks to the margin between the purchase and selling prices of your bananas.

Since the price you receive for your bananas varies widely, you have to adapt the price you pay your neighbours for their bananas. However, the most difficult thing in the job of middleman is to return whole batches to farming neighbours because agro-food companies have refused to accept them.

In your view, an organization should:

- allow you to obtain higher, stabler prices for your bananas and those of your community;
- enable you to understand why your bananas are sometimes rejected;
- allow you to discuss quality, quantity and prices with purchasers.

You are afraid that with the creation of an organization you would lose your role as transporter and supplier to agro-food companies, i.e. as middleman, since the purchasers will negotiate prices and make contracts directly with the producers.

Robin

You are a producer of both yellow and red bananas. You sell your fresh red bananas directly to the agro-food company in Tilburn belonging to Mr MacDave, with whom you have a long-standing tacit agreement. However, you have no control over prices. There are other buyers who sometimes offer higher prices, but you are not sure that they can be trusted.

You are a member of the agricultural cooperative for the supply of inputs.

You hope that the organization will help to:

- obtain better prices for dranas, thanks to better promotion;
- unite banana producers so that they can negotiate prices and volumes.

You are afraid:

- of losing your special relationship with Mr MacDave;
- of having to meet stricter conditions for banana production (you have learned that a code of practice will be “imposed”) and of being monitored by an inspector;
- that the “buyers” will control the organization.

Rebecca

You are a producer of red bananas and are one of the 50 members of the cooperative that is directed by Mrs Day and processes red bananas into dranas. You sell all your bananas through this cooperative, and the price you receive is generally satisfactory. The cooperative sells part of its bananas on the fair trade market.

You hope that the organization:

- will improve the marketing of dranas;
- will provide a certain amount of technical support for both the production and the processing of bananas.

You are afraid that:

- the organization will provide the same services as the cooperative;
- the cooperative will lose some of its autonomy.

M. McQueen

You are the owner of the largest agro-food company, which is located outside the provinces of Tilburn and Tulcum. You purchase your red bananas from local growers, then dry them with efficient, modern techniques, package them and sell them in the capital and other regions of the country. You have your own trademark, "Tilburn dried bananas". You have established long-term relations of trust with many growers, but you are not always happy with the quality, nor with the regularity of the quantities supplied by these growers. However, you consider your contribution to local development to be important.

You hope that the organization:

- will improve the marketing of dranas or Tilburn dried red bananas, which are the jewel of the region;
- will provide technical support to banana growers, enabling them to improve the quality and regularity of their products;
- will improve and ensure the quality of the dried red bananas of other processors;
- will seek to prevent imitations and the usurpation of the name "Tilburn dried bananas" for products that have no relation to real dried red bananas.

You are afraid:

- of having to share the reputation of Tilburn dried red bananas, or dranas, with those of other processors whose quality is not always very satisfactory;
- that you and other processors, who know the market and handle much larger volumes, will be placed in a minority by all the small farmers when decisions are made.

Mrs Day

You manage the cooperative that processes red bananas into dranas, composed of 50 members, including Rebecca. You process your members' bananas and market them. The cooperative of course has the objective of maximizing its members' income. Although you normally manage to obtain good prices for your members, cash flows are always a problem.

You hope that the organization:

- will improve the marketing of dranas, which are the pride of the region;
- will provide technical support for both banana growing and processing;
- will allow access to government support for flexible loans that will facilitate cash flows.

You are afraid that:

- the organization will offer the same services as the cooperative;
- the large agro-food companies will obtain information on your marketing strategy;
- some of the government funding intended to support collective action will be diverted from the cooperative.

Mr Bond

You head an agro-food company based in Tulcum, which produces dranas. You purchase any red bananas that are put on the market at a reasonable price. You dry, package and sell the bananas on the national market, calling them "dried red bananas". The quality of the bananas causes you some problems, which you counteract through their processing.

You think that no good can come from the GI or the organization. However, if it must be created, you certainly do not want the majority of ignorant peasants to impose their decisions on you.

Mrs Hood – extension worker

You are an extension worker employed by the regional authorities. You are familiar with the principles of GIs and know that 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 that all the stakeholders concerned should be united and enabled to contribute to the project.

Your objective is that of making sure that all those around the negotiating table agree on the objectives of the organization and the way in which decisions will be taken. In order to help you in this task, we have prepared some additional information.

More information for the extension worker

It is recommended that all the participants should be gathered around the table and be asked to introduce themselves and describe what they expect from the GI (and not from the organization).

You can then discuss the objectives that they consider the organization should achieve. You can suggest elements from the box below concerning examples of activities and services that the organization could offer (taken from Box 1, p. 98 of the guide “Linking People, Place and Products”).

Examples of activities and services the GI organization can provide

RULES AND CONTROLS

- Set up the local rules (code of practice or specifications) and adapt them over time.
- Manage an internal control system and reduce the cost of certification through economies of scale and management of relations with the external certifier, as the case may be.
- Facilitate conflict resolution and arbitrate in cases of disputes over the code of practice: an objective representative commission can decide if practices are compatible or not with the code of practice.

PRODUCTION

- Increase the quality of the GI product by providing technical assistance and information, facilitating the introduction of innovations.
- Directly manage some production activities, such as final processing, grading or packaging of the product.
- Reduce the individual costs of services that are usually unaffordable for most individual small-scale companies; for example, product research and development, technical advice, and information on the quality and production volume of the GI product, and on competitors.

MARKETING

- Increase the bargaining power of local producers in the supply chain. The GI organization can host structured negotiations on quality and added value on prices among the various professional categories.
- Develop collective marketing strategies, although many responsibilities, such as customer relations, the sales force, price fixing and distribution, remain the responsibility of each producer.
- Develop collective actions to reduce costs (for example market research and information and promotion initiatives in order to gain visibility in the market).

COORDINATION, REPRESENTATIVITY AND SUSTAINABILITY

- Represent the GI system in the dialogue with external actors, particularly public authorities in charge of GI policies.
- Facilitate access to companies wanting to benefit from the GI protection scheme.
- Develop internal trust among producers and processors who share use of the GI.
- Provide a forum for the discussion of problems and opportunities connected with use of the GI.
- Improve coordination among producers and among the various stages in the supply chain, in order to make the chain more efficient and improve the stakeholders' competitive position.
- Make suggestions to guide evolution of the GI system in order to ensure its economic, social and environmental sustainability.

Once the majority of the participants have agreed on the role of the organization, you must present a governance framework that takes account of the participants' concerns and thanks to which they will feel they are represented and it will not be contrary to their interests. You could take the various elements in the supply chain into consideration.

Points to be discussed

You must not show your card 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.

1. Reach agreement on the roles of the organization:

- What should the roles and objectives of your organization be?
- What should the first tasks of the organization be?

2. Reach agreement on the structure of the organization:

- Who are those you can join as members?
- What should the decision-making bodies and structures of the organization be?
- Who has voting rights?
- Who should be represented in the decision-making bodies?
- What professional structure should be adopted?
- How will the organization be financed so that the members can fulfil the roles allocated to them?
- What will the rights of participation be and how will they be distributed among the members?