

CONCEPT NOTE

The “Geographical Indications (GI) Week” in Lao PDR

24-28 October 2016

Vientiane, Lao PDR

Background:

A Geographical Indication (GI) is an intellectual property rights protecting certain products which specifications are closely linked their geographical location or origin (e.g. a town, region) and therefore are often identified with their geographical names, such as “Champagne” from France, “Kampot Pepper” from Cambodia, “Darjeeling Tea” from India, “Shan Tuyet Moc Chau Tea” from Vietnam, Lamphun Brocade Thai silk from Thailand or “Scotch Whisky” from the United Kingdom to name a few.

The strong and often complex links between the local environment and human know-know from which GI results, provides a quality guarantee for consumers seeking high quality, traceable and traditional products. GIs are also important for local producers, helping them to make the switch from quantitative to qualitative strategies and increase opportunities in existing and new markets.

GI encourages diverse agricultural, food and handicraft production, and is being anchored to the particular regions from which it comes from. It contributes to the socio-economic dynamism in these regions, enables producers and operators to dedicate themselves to the commercialization of traditional products in response to the demands of quality-conscious consumers as well as promoting these regions development. Therefore, the GI, as an intellectual property right, offers for a legal protection protecting both GI producers against unfair competition and misappropriation, and consumers against misleading information.

In view of the above, during the past decade, the interest for Geographical Indications (GIs) has grown worldwide, and particularly in Asia, making of this region one of the most dynamic with Europe for GI registration. Over 150 GI are already registered in ASEAN countries alone. A growing number of countries are enacting GI legislations putting in place National GI registration systems allowing for the protection of national and foreign GI products. In 2016, the LAO PDR is joining this trend in launching its GI registration system and in preparing to welcome both national and international GI applications in the coming months.

By nature, a GI is collectively owned and managed. Both the structure and efficiency of the “GI management group” (which is often organized as an association or an interprofessional organization), are a key element for the GI existence and success starting from the drafting of the GI specifications/Book of requirements as its allows a transparent dialogue and concertation on the key

elements to be inserted in the GI specifications. GI Managements group/organizations also have key roles to play during the life of the GI such as through the organization of traceability and control procedures for the GI stake-holders and also considering collective training and marketing strategy for the GI development.

There are clear opportunities for large groups of stakeholders to gain from better GI protection in the region (including agri-food, tourism industries), but understanding and awareness of what is IP/GI and how it could be used for business need to increase. Better GI understanding from both public (e.g trade promotion agencies, provincial and tourism authorities, financial institutions) and targeted publics (trade associations, food processors, distributors, banks, etc.) could increase interest on GI asset valuation and generate more financial opportunities/partnership for GI producers/stake-holders.

Promotion strategies (i.e. development of national GI label, promotion campaigns), communication tools and distribution partnerships are key steps to connect GI products with local, regional and international markets. GI groups should develop specific and strategic promotional and marketing strategy campaigns to help GI value chains to benefit from their specificities and know-how and their identity as “traditional and quality products”. However, the first step for success is for GI stake-holders to be able to develop tailor made promotional and marketing strategies adapted for their GI products. For example local public and private sectors have to be partners to maximize opportunities for GI visibility and promotion. GIs also present important benefits for rural development, tourism, biodiversity and the preservation of cultural heritage.

Objectives:

Within this framework, several important events will be hosted during a “GI week “ In Lao PDR by the Department of Intellectual Property of the Ministry of Science and Technology of Lao PDR from 24 to 28 October 2016 in Vientiane, Laos in cooperation with International and local partners of GI development such as the FAO-AFD Regional Project on the promotion of Rural Development through the development of Geographical Indications at Regional level in Asia, the French Embassy in Lao PDR, oriGIn, the Ministry of Industry and Trade of the Lao PDR, the Lao National Chamber of Commerce, the European Chamber of Commerce in Lao PDR, the Asian Development Bank and the Lao Business Women Association.

These events are briefly described below and will be held to deepen the public understanding of the Geographical Indications (GI) protection system and to promote GI as an important value-added instrument for the food and agriculture sectors. The events will also celebrate the validation by Laos of its new GI regulation and the launching of its GI Registration system for national and foreign GI. During this events a local and international gathering of experts and participants will also be able to exchange ideas and perspectives on the benefits and challenges faced by GI stake-holders, including producers, consumers and policy makers and generates opportunities of partnerships and business matching opportunities during a regional GI fair and exhibition

Main Partners:

The Department of Intellectual Property of the Ministry of Science and Technology of the Lao PDR is hosting the event which is organized in partnership and cooperation with local and international organizations, in particular, the FAO-AFD Regional Project on the Promotion of Rural Development through Development of Geographical Indications at Regional Level in Asia, the Ministry of Industry and Commerce of the Lao PDR, the French Ministry of Agriculture, the French Embassy in Lao PDR, oriGIn, the Lao National Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the European Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Lao PDR, the ADB, the EU Delegation in Lao PDR and the Lao Business Women Association.

Key events/activities

-Tuesday 25 October 2016 :

Lao PDR National Workshop on GI for the launching of the Lao PDR Geographical Indication registration system

The Department of Intellectual Property of the Ministry of Science and Technology of the LAO PDR has now finalized its Implementing Regulation on GI allowing for the registration of both national and international GI in Lao PDR. This National Workshop will be dedicated to familiarize future GI applicants in introducing the key elements to consider for a GI application and presenting the different steps for the preparation of a GI application in Lao PDR (creation of collective group/association, drafting of the GI specifications, control plan, packaging, etc.)

Language: Lao

Participants : about 100. pre- registration needed . no registrations fees

-Wednesday 26 and Thursday 27 October 2016:

“Regional Seminar on the Promotion of Geographical Indications: promoting the origin, quality and local wisdom”

This Seminar will gather GI stake-holders from public and private sectors from numerous countries (Asia, Europe, etc.) to exchange on their experiences and best practices on the promotion of Geographical Indications. This event, will present the key elements of a GI to be considered previous to promotional strategy such as organization of the value-chains, control and traceability, enforcement issues, covering elements GI public policies, Public-private cooperation and experiences of GI value-chains stake-holders from various countries and promote dialogue and exchange of information and strategies through panels discussions to successfully increase public awareness on GI products, structuration of the values chains and successful promotion an protection of GI product locally and internationally.

Language: English

Participants : 100-150. pre- registration needed . no registrations fees

-Wednesday 26 to Friday 28 October 2016:

International GI exhibition/fair and business matching

This event which is showcasing GI national products from numerous countries from Asia and Europe in particular, will be organized in parallel to the “Regional Seminar on the Promotion of Geographical Indications” and will be the opportunity for GI stake-holders (producers, traders, NGOs, etc) to exhibit/ sale GI products/products of origin and will give the opportunity to exhibitors and participants (GI producers, traders, import-export companies, hotels-restaurants, tourism companies, NGO,etc.) to gather and interact to discover GI products/products of specific origin from Lao PDR, Thailand, Cambodia, Vietnam, Indonesia, EU, etc. and identify business opportunities in promoting GI products and partnership activities, including tourism.

This event will be organized in cooperation with Chambers of Commerce (LNCCI and ECCIL)

Pre –registration for GI exhibitor needed. Pre-screening of exhibitor profiles based on GI links

-Friday 28 October 2016:

FAO-AFD Regional Project on the Promotion of Rural Development through Development of Geographical Indications at Regional Level in Asia Steering Committee meeting

Closed doors meeting reserved to members of the Project Steering Committee.

-From 24 to 28 October 2016 :

GI Public Awareness - Promotional activities with GI partners of development

During the all week and in partnership with local and international partners from public and private sectors willing to increase local awareness on GI products and concept as well as to propose activities to promote GI products as an instrument of sustainable rural development and protection of local wisdom and bio diversity , GI public awareness initiatives will take place such as interviews, press articles to promote GI understanding and awareness , partnership with hotels/restaurants to promote the use of GI products, etc.

Within this framework and in partnership with the French Embassy in Lao PDR, a GI dinner/cocktail will be organized on 26 October 2016 at the French Embassy in Lao PDR during which VIP Chefs will demonstrates their expertise and creativeness in using local, Asian and other foreign GI in unique recipes. GI Ambassador Awards will also be awarded to key individuals/stake-holders for their initiative/commitment in supporting the development and promotion of GIs from and in the region.

Other activities will be also advertised during this weeks based on public and private partners proposals.