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RURAL INFRASTRUCTURE AND  
AGRO-INDUSTRIES DIVISION

and

FAO INVESTMENT CENTER

# Geographical indications as a tool for more sustainable food systems



# Outline

- 1. Why Geographical Indications considered as a tool for sustainable food system?**
- 2. Problems and perspectives**
- 3. Conclusion**





# Why Geographical Indications considered as a tool for sustainable food system?



# Background

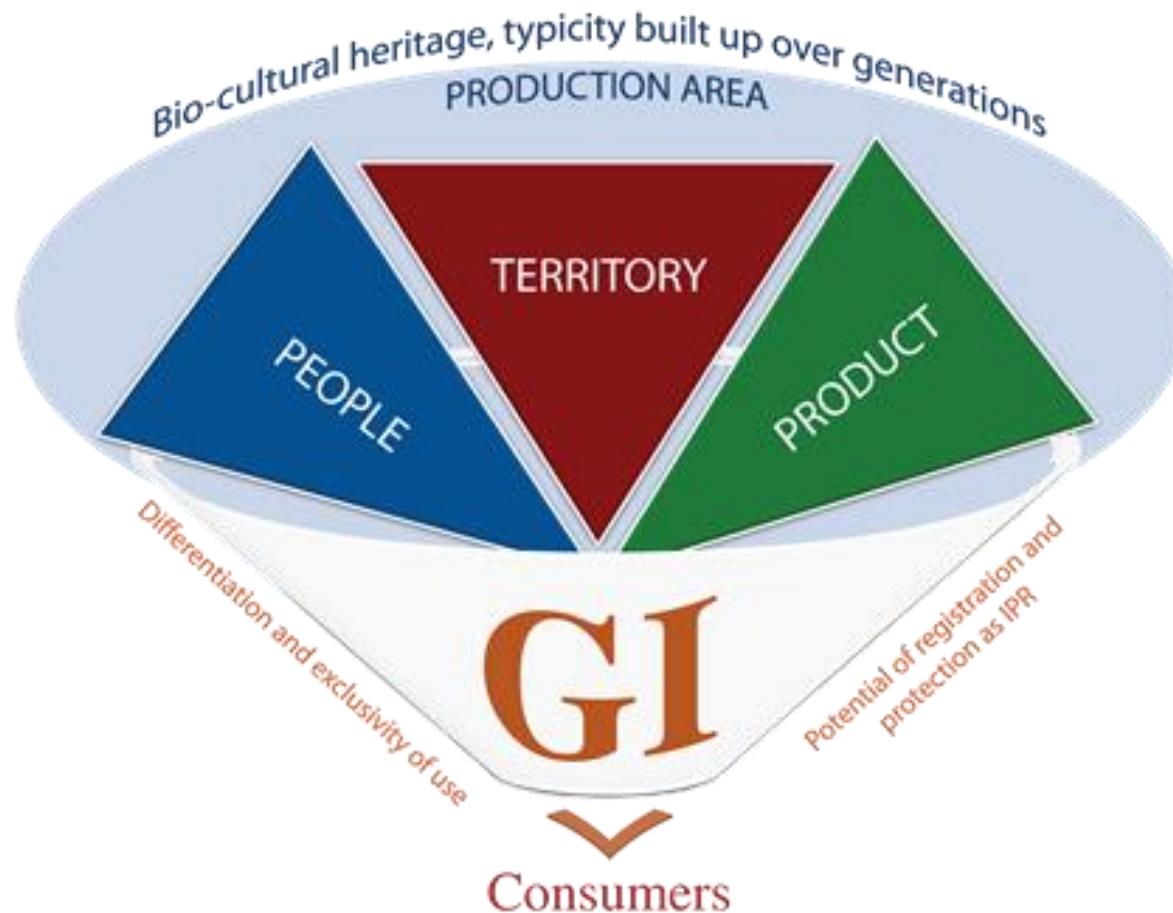
“**Food security** exists when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life” (*World Food Summit, 1996*)

- **Loss of biodiversity:** only 150 plant species are grown commercially, world crop production are concentrated on 12 species (on 5000 domesticated), 75% of genetic diversity has been lost already ; 8% animal breeds extinct and 22% at risk; 30% of oceans stocks overfished
- **Traditional food systems threatened:** deforestation, environmental degradation, climate change, economic and cultural changes: erosion of traditional resources and knowledge
- **Urbanization :** by 2050 70% of the 9 billion is expected to live in cities : food accessibility, demand for specific quality products, especially from specific place
- **Voluntary standards and labels:** increasing number of private- and public VS, risk of exclusion of small holders, but potentialities to contribute to more sustainable production system





# QLO and Geographical indication





# GI for more sustainable food systems?

- From the consumer point of view:
  - Food diversity : cultural aspects, impact on nutrition
  - Guarantees on quality and origin for consumers, even far from the place
- A territorial approach...
  - **Link with origin** – anchorage, can address the specific issues related to sustainability and their interactions
  - **Local producers at the centre** – bottom up approach – redistribution of benefits locally and more balanced power distribution along the VC
  - **Collective and participatory approach** to build a common vision for the future of a territory
- Public-private coordination:
  - Combination of economic approach and preservation/promotion of public goods
  - Combination of “local”, national and international rules....



**Only standard/label with tailored rules for a territory and local governance with key role of producers**



# Numerous GI products in developing countries (and developed ones!):

- “marginalized areas”
  - = *terroir* for traditional GI products
- Small holders, family farming:
  - holders of typicality and traditional know how
- Potentialities for rural and sustainable development
  - based on the promotion of a product reflecting a **origin-linked quality system** (see sustainable virtuous circle on origin-linked quality )
- Often traditional system at risk of extinction...
  - “Commoditization”, genericity, loss of specific quality and specific name : need for recognition (inventory) and supportive actions
- Or important export product with reputation on international market: need to protect the GI (coffee, tea, cocoa...)





# Side positive effects:



- GIs strengthening social recognition: the example of Indigenous communities
  - Chivito criollo dle Norte Neuquino
  - Waraná de Sateré Mawé
  
- GI as a driver for improving food safety and entering the formal economy: the ex. of Eastern European countries
  - Defined rules and clear (hygiene) practices
  - Food safety: flexibility





## • Economic Pillar

- protection against fraud (legal protection);
- access to niche markets;
- adding value;
- reducing market price fluctuations;
- redistribution along value chain;
- benefits from collective action;
- maintain added value in the production areas
- Etc.



- social expectations
- food diversity
- guaranties about quality, origin and production process
- Etc.

## • Consumers' side

## • Social Pillar

- self esteem and its indirect effects (power of negotiation/rights defense);
- preservation of cultural heritage;
- job opportunities;
- positive effects on tourism.
- Etc.

- sustainable use of natural resources
- preservation of biodiversity,
- “landscape” approach

## • Environmental Pillar

**!!! But not a magic tool...**



- For FAO, GI is a tool - and a motivation - for stakeholders to collectively develop a strategy for promoting and preserving their product and territory
- GI process relies on a comprehensive approach to address many issues and that combines important drivers for more sustainable food systems:
  - *Quality and food safety, value chain coordination, standard development, territorial approach, public-private coordination, etc...*



## ...Project supporting GI development means:



- **Empowering small producers** - the holders of the typicality - through the specifications and capacity building → awareness, self esteem; and linking small holders to market
- **Upgrading quality** – preserving the traditional and unique quality while ensuring food safety (including traceability and guarantees) → better market access and price
- **Strengthening (or creating) value chain organization and horizontal organization** (producers association) → more efficiency, economy of scales, coordination and power
- **Supporting registration of GI by public authority** → recognition and promotion as a national food heritage, differentiation and protection
- **Facilitating extended territorial approach and monitoring** → ensuring the long term sustainable reproduction of local resources and positive impacts



# Difficulties... and perspectives



# GI often perceived as a strict IP tool:

- Lack of technical ground :
  - Missing quality link to origin, market linkages and value chain approach,
  - Producers not involved or not leading the process
  - = no economic viability
- Lack of coordination
  - between sectors in charge of food/agriculture/development and IP (ministries level in particular)
- Registration procedure but lack of protection system

- ➔ Link with agriculture, food and rural development policies
- ➔ Guidelines and methodologies



# Quality Virtuous Circle at territory level

## 1. Identification :

1. Product: specific quality?
2. Place: what resources involved?
3. People: mapping of actors, awareness and collective action

## 2. Qualification :

1. Elaboration of the code of practice and control plan
2. Recognition by public authorities- registration

## 3. Remuneration;

1. Roles of the GI association
2. Marketing and certification

## 4. Reproduction of local resources

1. Strengthening the system sustainability according to feedback – assessment of impacts
2. Territorial strategy – tourism

## 5. Roles of **public actors**





# Lack of monitoring on GI sustainability:

On a territory: need for monitoring to ensure reproduction of local resources

For advocacy:

- individual case studies : difficult to generalize
- wide diversity of systems studied: no clear-cut conclusions
- relatively recent development of GIs : not time for empirical demonstration of net benefits
- difficulty of distinguishing the impacts of GIs process and protection from other factors
- On the contrary, some case can show problems:
  - Biodiversity can be reduced
  - Producers can be excluded
  - No access to remunerative markets



➔ Importance of **research** (assessment of economic impacts in progress on 10 cases) and **forum for discussion** (ex. *Forum Origine, Diversité Territoires*)

➔ **Methodology for evaluation** *ex ante* and *in itinere* of GI process



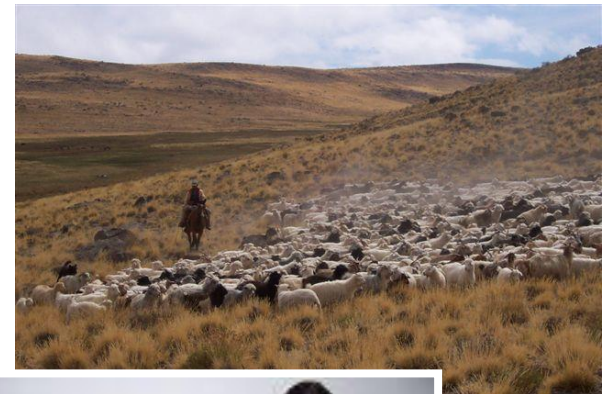


# Time and resources...

- “GI is a social construction”
  - Time for mobilization, identification, conflict resolution,...
  - Time for registration, time for consumer awareness
  - Time for reproduction
- Human and financial resources

→ Consider GI process as a road more than a goal...

→ and provide the map, tools and network





# Perspectives:



- **Improve an international common vision and some basic rules:**

- Especially for GI products exported but for all GI process to ensure sustainability
  - Primary producers and processors at the center of the process
  - Sound specifications to acknowledge role of local actors and resources
  - Collective and participatory process to ensure a shared and territorial approach
  - The involvement of public authorities to support and evaluate the request

➔ International platform to share information (and improve coordination among projects...)

- **Raise awareness and build capacity :**

- producers: their capacity as holders of origin-linked quality (see training material)
- consumers: their power to choose origin-linked quality products
- Public authorities : their role in supporting and protecting a food heritage



# Conclusion

## GI:

- Not for all products and producers...
- Not a panacea...

## But:

- Only **standard/label** with tailored rules for a territory and local governance with key role of producers
- And a **process** (an itinerary) for more sustainable food system...

## To take into account:

- Complex to develop locally and at legal/institutional point of view
- Need support and capacity building



# Thank you !

Website:

[www.fao.org/food-quality-origin](http://www.fao.org/food-quality-origin)  
[www.fao.org/food-quality-origin/webtool](http://www.fao.org/food-quality-origin/webtool)

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- **“Food security** exists when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life” (*World Food Summit, 1996*)
- **Food systems:** “encompass the entire range of activities involved in the production, processing, marketing, consumption and disposal of goods that originate from agriculture, forestry or fisheries, including the inputs needed and the outputs generated at each of these steps. Food systems also involve the people and institutions that initiate or inhibit change in the system as well as the socio-political, economic and technological environment in which these activities take place.” (FAO, 2013, p.3)
- **“a sustainable food system (SFS)** is a food system that delivers food security and nutrition for all in such a way that the economic, social and environmental bases to generate food security and nutrition for future generations are not compromised” (*report of the High Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition of the Committee on World Food Security, “Food losses and waste in the context of sustainable food systems”, Rome 2014*)