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SMEOrigin

Strategic Toolkit

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29 MAY 2024 | Stara Zagora, Bulgaria

Strategic Toolkit– Objectives

Purpose of the Toolkit:

- To support resilience within the food value chain through strategic actions.

Contents of the Toolkit:

- A compilation of vital inputs and key takeaways from phases S1-S3 of the SMEOrigin project.
- Designed to offer guidance for the upcoming transfer phase.

Showcase Event:

- **Presentation Date:** May 29-30, 2024
- **Location:** Stara Zagora Meeting

Strategic Toolkit–Thematic areas

1. Market Analysis and Target Audience Identification
2. Legal and Regulatory Resources. 2.1. Information about geographical indications and how to protect intellectual property
3. Product Development and Improvement
4. Marketing and Sales including Distribution Channels
5. Financial Support and Resource Provision
6. Training and Qualification
7. Benchmarking and Best Practices
8. Monitoring and Evaluation
9. Networking, Clustering and Partnerships
10. Communication and Public Relations
11. Risk Management and Crisis Handling

Products of Geographical Indication

- «A GI is a place or country name that identifies a product to which quality, reputation or other characteristics are attributable. A GI signals to consumers that the goods have special characteristics as a result of their geographical origin. Therefore, a GI is more than an Indication of source or provenance; it is a reference to a quality. As opposed to a “Made in” label that does not refer to a certain quality».
- **There is a positive link between GI status and economic development in rural areas.** Rural municipalities with GIs experience population growth and economic reorganization towards non-farming sectors, which frequently involve higher value-added activities. ([Crescenzi et al. 2021](#))

GI Benefits to SMEs

How your business can benefit from GIs

GIs can enable your enterprise:

Enhance the reputation of your goods

GIs enhance the reputation and value of local products and support local businesses. All producers operating in a geographical area covered by a GI and that comply with the GI's standards of production (as established by producers within the region) can benefit from a registered GI. Since these goods enjoy an enhanced reputation of quality, producers, many of which are SMEs, can sell them for a higher price.

Build consumer confidence

Consumers look for hallmarks of origin and quality when deciding what to buy. Using a GI label links products to a local heritage and reputation by offering a guarantee of origin and specific characteristics. These assets link products to local heritage and reputation. Consumers are often willing to pay a higher price for GI-certified goods.

Communicate your commitment to social responsibility

The strong link between the products and their geographical origin focuses attention on the need to preserve local natural resources without which long-term production would be impossible. That's why producers of origin-based products are particularly motivated to adopt environmentally sustainable production methods. SMEs that decide to use the GI to promote sustainability are rewarded when informed and conscious consumers choose their sustainable GI-certified products over others in the market.

Support regional economic development

The marketing and promotion of GI-certified products creates a positive image of the product in the minds of the consumers and often boosts the economic development of the whole region of origin. Thanks to the collective action that the management and promotion of GIs requires, SMEs enjoy greater opportunities to market their local products abroad. This raises the region's international profile and boosts tourism. People who buy GI-certified products are often interested in visiting the places they come from.

Prevent fraudulent uses that indicate origin

Only local products that adhere to the standards required by the GI can use it. If a third party uses that GI without meeting its criteria, they can be stopped from using it, and in some cases even face criminal sanctions.

Source: [WIPO Why Geographical Indications Matter to SMEs](#)



1. Market Analysis and Target Audience Identification

Current Market Trends

GI products serve as regional "business cards", showcasing local heritage and linking to non-food sectors like tourism.

Consumers show preference for products with higher quality and price due to origin, authenticity, sustainability, and regional ties (Styria, Silesia).

GI products usually find high demand in regional markets, near abroad and select international markets:

- like Austria, Germany, Slovenia, and Switzerland for premium, regionally-distinct products e.g., Styrian pumpkin seed oil, horseradish products.
- in Spain, the domestic channel clearly predominates over export to other markets (2018 Study SMOA)
- Specific market channels e.g. restaurants (PDO dairy-feta, food shops-Greece), culinary events (Spain)
- High growth potential in overseas markets (France), but often high access barriers and placement costs (rest).

1. Market Analysis and Target Audience Identification

Challenges in market recognition

- Some GI labels are export leaders (e.g. rose oil; SZ) while others struggle with market share and consumer recognition
- Some partners reported limited export of GI wines, foods. Local wines cater primarily for the national market, facing export challenges (SZ), declining long-term sales of certain PDO wines and foods (Greece).
- Need to address mislabeling of products by companies using misleading or similar names and promote product certification (Opolskie and elsewhere).
- Need to improve consumer awareness and retailer support for GI products.
- Potential distribution channels include specialty food stores, gourmet supermarkets, and international chains recognizing the GI label's value.



1. Market Analysis and Target Audience Identification – Strategies for expanding market presence

Build on 'buying local' and cultural significance

- Focus on local markets. Cultural value enhances market potential with local consumers (e.g. Poland- Opolskie and Silesian Voivodeships).
- Consumers first seek low prices and then GI products (Bulgaria, France). They associate local with purchasing responsibly. In the past 2 years, buying local has become more important than buying organic (INTERBIO).

Emphasize GI status to increase revenue and value

- Positioning as "top products" within higher quality and price segments.
- Competitive market drives need for responsible production and innovative market strategies, implementing quality control and communication strategies to enhance market competitiveness and consumer recognition. (Finland-SDS)

Expand market reach

- All markets are important: regional, national and international (France-INTERBIO).
- Greece and Spain focus on tourism and international exports for GI products like Feta, dairy, and rice. France reports significant growth in GI turnover, highlighting a dynamic market for both regional and international sales. (Greece-UPatras; Spain-Calasparra; France - INTERBIO)

1. Market Analysis and Target Audience Identification – Profiles of the main target audiences

	Producers	Processors processing service providers	Packaging services	Wholesalers	Exporters	Gross Retailers	Retailers	Supermarket Networks	Online stores and webshops	Hotels, restaurants, cafes, food chains	Consumers	Food labs and food experts	International food competitions festivals and contests
LP01 AT SWG	✓	✓ + Certification					✓				✓		
PP02 BG SZ REDA	✓						✓				✓		
PP03 PL - Opolskie CED	✓			c				✓ (small)			✓ L-R		
PP04 FI - SDS	✓		✓			✓			✓		✓		
PP05 GR UPatras				✓				✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
PP06 ES - Calasparra				✓	✓		✓				✓ L-R		
PP07 FR – INTERBIO	✓	✓					✓				✓		

Certification: in addition to origin-specific controls, specifications are required to develop and protect product quality profiles;
L-R: local-regional

Source: SMEOrigin questionnaire survey responses December 2023

2. Legal and Regulatory Resources –International law

«GIs are a name or sign that indicates a product has a certain quality or reputation due to its identified origin»

Laws and treaties covering geographical indications

Several international treaties deal partly or entirely with the protection of geographical indications or appellations of origin.

Below are links to relevant treaties administered by WIPO, as well as to the World Trade Organization's Agreement on Trade Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS).

Relevant treaties and international agreements

- [TRIPS Agreement \(WTO\)](#)
- [Paris Convention](#)
- [Madrid Agreement for the Repression of False or Deceptive Indications of Source on Goods](#)
- [Lisbon Agreement](#)
- [Madrid Agreement](#)
- [Protocol Relating to the Madrid Agreement](#)

2. Legal and Regulatory Resources –Europe

EU level:

[Geographical indications and quality schemes explained](#)

[Registration of the name of a GI product](#)

Regulation (EU) No 1151/2012 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 21 November 2012

[The EU geographical indications register eAmbrosia](#)

National (GR-UPatras):

Common Ministerial Decision 261611/22-03-2007 (Government Gazette 406B/22-03-2007) modification No 1 and modification No 2 Regulation on the Control and Certification of Protected Designation of Origin (PDO) and Protected Geographical Indication (PGI) products.

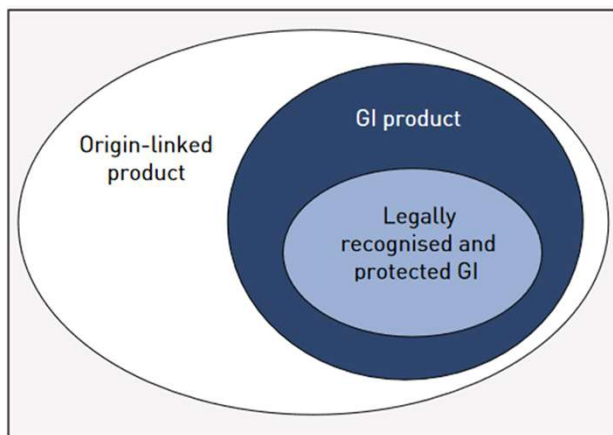
Official signs identifying quality and origin (FR-INTERBIO): PDO, PGI, TSG, Label Rouge

[Institut national de l'origine et de la qualité \(INAO\)](#)

The principles of compliance (FR-INTERBIO):

- A **joint and voluntary approach** coming from producers or group of producers
- **Strict production conditions** approved **by the State**
- **Regular checks by independent bodies** approved **by the State**

2. Information about geographical indications and protection of intellectual property– Definition of GI Schemes



Source: FAO (2010:35) [A guide for promoting quality linked to geographical origin and sustainable Geographical Indications](#)

The term “geographical indications”, in its broad sense, includes a variety of concepts used in international treaties and national/regional jurisdictions, such as: appellation of origin (AO), protected designation of origin (PDO) and protected geographical indication (PGI).

For instance,

- **“Geographical indication”** is defined in the Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) and in the Geneva Act of the Lisbon Agreement on Appellations of Origin and Geographical Indications.
- **“Appellation of origin”** is defined in the Lisbon Agreement for the Protection of Appellations of Origin and their International Registration and in the Geneva Act of the Lisbon Agreement on Appellations of Origin and Geographical Indications.
- **“Protected Designation of Origin (PDO)”** and **“Protected Geographical Indication (PGI)”** are terms used within the European Union.

2.1. Information about geographical indications and protection of intellectual property – EU GI Schemes



Protected Designation of Origin (PDO)

Product names registered as PDO are those that have the strongest links to the place in which they are made.

- **Products:** food, agricultural products and wines.
- **Specifications:** Every part of the production, processing and preparation process must take place in the specific region. For wines, this means that the grapes have to come exclusively from the geographical area where the wine is made.
- **Example:** Kalamata olive oil PDO is entirely produced in the region of Kalamata in Greece, using olive varieties from that area.
- **Label:** mandatory for food and agricultural products, optional for wine.

2.1. Information about geographical indications and protection of intellectual property– EU GI Schemes



Protected geographical indication (PGI)

PGI emphasises the relationship between the specific geographic region and the name of the product, where a particular quality, reputation or other characteristic is essentially attributable to its geographical origin.

Products: food, agricultural products and wines.

Specifications: For most products, at least one of the stages of production, processing or preparation takes place in the region. In the case of wine, this means that at least 85% of the grapes used have to come exclusively from the geographical area where the wine is actually made.

Example: Westfälischer Knochenschinken PGI ham is produced in Westphalia using age-old techniques, but the meat used does not exclusively come from animals born and reared in that specific region of Germany.

Label: mandatory for food, agricultural products, optional for wines.

2. Information about geographical indications and protection of intellectual property – EU GI Schemes



Traditional speciality guaranteed (TSG)

Traditional speciality guaranteed (TSG) highlights the traditional aspects, such as the way the product is made or its composition, without being linked to a specific geographical area. The name of a product being registered as a TSG protects it against falsification and misuse.

• **Products:** food and agricultural products.

• **Example:** Gueuze TSG is a traditional beer obtained by spontaneous fermentation. It is generally produced in and around Brussels, Belgium. Nonetheless, being a TSG, its production method is protected but it could be produced somewhere else.

• **Label:** mandatory for all products.

To qualify for a TSG a food must be of “specific character” and either its raw materials, production method or processing must be “traditional.”

- “Specific character” is defined (Art. 3 of Reg.1151/12) as “the characteristic production attributes which distinguish a product clearly from other similar products of the same category.”
- “Traditional” is defined as “proven usage on the domestic market for a period that allows transmission between generations; this period is to be at least 30 years.”
- For a food name to be registrable under the TSG scheme it must (a) have been traditionally used to refer to the specific product; or (b) identify the traditional character or specific character of the product.

2.1. Information about geographical indications and protection of intellectual property – EU GI Schemes

In order to benefit from PDO/PGI protection, EU producers can apply to register a name with their national authorities. The application for review and publication of a GI by the EU commission is free of charge. All applications must refer to a Code of Practice that must include at least the following:

1. The **name of the product** comprising the designation of origin or geographical indication.
2. A **product description**, including raw materials, if appropriate, and principal physical, chemical, microbiological or sensory properties of a product (involving taste, colour, odour and feel).
3. The **geographical region of production** (and any details relating to the origin of raw materials used in production of the product).
4. A **description of the method of production**, including local know-how and packaging of the product, where appropriate.
5. Details of the **relationship between the quality or characteristics of the product and the geographical environment** in the case of a PDO or, as the case may be, the link between the specific quality, reputation or other characteristic of the product and the geographical origin in the case of a PGI
6. The **name, address and specific tasks of the authorities or bodies verifying compliance** with the provisions of the specification.
7. Any **specific labelling rules** for the agricultural product in question.
8. **Evidence** that some quality, reputation or other characteristic associated with the product is linked to the region of production.

If the application is successful and the name is registered, then any producer from within the region complying with the product specifications and controlled by a control body or national authorities can use the registered name.

Source: FAO (2010:151) [A guide for promoting quality linked to geographical origin and sustainable Geographical Indications](#)

2.1. Information about geographical indications and protection of intellectual property– IP Management

- Intellectual property (IP) management is a key element in improving the competitiveness of any company.
- Unfortunately, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) often lack the time, resources, or knowledge to address IP matters.
- The table lists general information on protection of intellectual property

Specifically on GI:
THE EUROPEAN IPR Helpdesk (p.50 to 55)

IP rights in a nutshell

IPR	What for?	Duration of protection	Priority	Routes to registration
Trade marks	Distinctive signs	Renewable indefinitely for periods of 10 years	6 months	National EU trade mark (EU) Madrid System
Industrial designs	Appearance of products	RCD: renewable every 5 years up to 25 years UCD: 3 years, not renewable	6 months	National Community design (EU) Hague System
Patents	Inventions	20 years	12 months	National European Patent (EPC) PCT
Utility models	Inventions	7-10 years	12 months	National
Trade secrets	Confidential business information	Unlimited	No	None
Copyright	Literary, scientific and artistic works Neighbouring rights (media or related rights)	Moral rights: no time limit Economic rights: at least the author's lifetime + 50 years (in the EU, 70 years from the author's death) Neighbouring rights: at least 20 years from the end of the year in which the fixation was made or the performance / broadcast took place (in the EU, 50 years instead of 20 for phonograms and performances)	No	None
Databases	Collection of independent works, data or other materials arranged in a systematic or methodical way and individually accessible	Copyrighted databases: within the EU: life of the author + 70 years Sui generis databases: 15 years from the end of the year in which the making of the database was completed or in which the database was first made available to the public	No	Copyrighted databases: automatic Sui generis databases: EU right only
Domain names	Internet addresses	Renewable indefinitely for periods of a maximum of 10 years	No	Worldwide protection when registered at any accredited registrar
Geographical indications	Products having a specific geographical origin and whose qualities and/or reputation are attributable to that origin	Unlimited	No	National EU Lisbon System



2.1. Information about geographical indications and protection of intellectual property– Applications to register new GI products

Agricultural products: The form for the single document for registration of an agricultural product as a protected designation of origin (PDO) and protected geographical indication (PGI), as well as the form for the product specification for a traditional specialty guaranteed (TSG), are available in Annexes to Regulation (EU) 668/2014

- [Regulation 668/2014](#) to be downloaded in your language
- [Single document](#) for agricultural products
- [Guide to apply to the Single document](#)
- [List of national competent authorities](#)

Wine products: The forms for the single document to register a wine product as a protected designation of origin (PDO) or protected geographical indication (GI) are available in the Annex to Regulation (EU) 2019/34

- [Regulation 2019/34](#) to be downloaded in your language
- [Single document](#) for wine products



2.1. Information about geographical indications and protection of intellectual property– Applications to register new GI products

Application: the documents and information required shall be communicated to the European Commission as follows:

- for the competent authorities of **EU countries**, through the digital systems made available
- by the Commission: [e-Ambrosia](#) ;
- for the competent authorities and producers of **non-EU countries**, via AGRI-GEOGRAPHICAL-INDICATIONS@ec.europa.eu using the required forms.

3. Product Development and Improvement –

Resources and guides for developing and improving products, based on best practices

LP01 SFG: Styrian pumpkin seed oil, Styrian Krenn, Styrian scarlet runner beans, Ennstal cheese. Detailed information [here](#).

PP02 SZ REDA: Dairy: Bulgarian White Cheese PDO and Bulgarsko Kiselo Mlyako PDO; Honey: Strandzhanski Manov Med; Wine: Thracian Valley PGI, Nova Zagora PDO. PDOs are very uncommonly used although they exist.

PP03 OCDS: Pastry „Kołocz Śląski”/”Kołacz Śląski” PGI and blood sausages “Krupnioki Śląskie” PGI.

PP04 SDS: headless Puruvesi vendace. Product categories for fresh fish further processing include smoked and preserved products.

PP05 UP: PDO Feta, Mavrodaphne of Patras PDO, Slopes of Aegialeia PGI, [Oinoxeneia](#) wine quality network of Aigialeia, [Agricultural dairy cooperative of Kalavryta](#) (PDO Feta), [Messolonghi by Locals](#): a lived culinary and tourism experience.

PP06 Callaspara: The wineries of the Jumilla PDO are nationally prominent. PDO Yecla, Bullas. PDO Pimentón de Murcia. Calasparra Rice PDO. PDO Jumilla Pear, Murcia Cheese PDO.

PP07 INTERBIO: PDO: 80 / PGI: 40 / Label Rouge: 179 / TSG:1 → Total of 300 GI products

[Bio Sud Ouest France](#) (organic and regional trademark): 18 SMEs for 300 products

3. Product Development and Improvement – Recommendations for quality assurance and enhancement

Products with protected geographical indications usually have their origins either in traditional historical varieties and cultivars or in recipes handed down from generation to generation.

- **Scaling up** of traditional processing and production processes requires adaptation of production processes and conditions as well as quality and hygiene standards, for example: HACCP, European regulations, retail specifications and requirements. (SWG) Also meeting **residue analysis and the sensory parameters**.
- **Compliance with national quality standards for foods.** e.g. “Stara Planina” for meat – widely recognizable, no requirements for the origin of meat but regulating the production technology. BDS for dairy – widely recognizable but after the registration of PDOs for Bulgarian Yoghurt and Bulgarian white cheese, should be replaced or renamed.
- **Improve labeling packaging and transportation.** e.g. Pastry „Kołocz Śląski”/”Kołacz Śląski” PGI (OCED)
- **Optimise and revise recipes.** e.g. Blood sausages “Krupnioki Śląskie” PGI (OCED)
- **Improve process automation.** The process automatization is also limited. (OCED).
- **Research and develop blockchain certification tools** (UP).
- **Communicate sustainability component of GI product.** Puruvesi is caught using traditional fishing methods keeping fish stocks healthy and carrying a cultural heritage. (SDS)
- **Research about certifications.** e.g. MSC certificate (SDS)
- **Benchmark** with partners and **seek feedback from outlets and logistics/distributions channels.** (SDS)
- **Reinforce communication on organic and regional products.** Provide clear call to actions for end consumers (INTERBIO).

4. Marketing and Sales including Distribution Channels –strategies for introducing local GI products to the market

Market realization of products is a key indicator of the success of every company. In the segment of food products with Geographical Indication (GI), the market situation in different regions across the EU may vary. In some countries, it could be particularly challenging for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to achieve a competitive market position and sufficient sales. At the same time, the GI certification provides multiple market advantages that can be exploited more efficiently to improve competitiveness of SMEs on the free EU market.

Generally, the main challenges before the GI products are their higher price related to similar non-GI competitors, as well as the low awareness of the GI labelling in some regions. These can be addressed by various marketing and communication strategies.

Strategies for introducing local products with protected geographical indications to the market. Several types of strategies have been commonly used and proved successful for marketing GI products:

- **Regional branding and marketing.** GI foods are endemic to their regions and already have the necessary recognition to generate market demand. In the context of the increasing demand for farm-to-table food, organic foods and 0-km foods, establishing regional brands and labels and promoting them on the regional market is a good opportunity to drive initial interest and sales of GI products.
- **Regional/local communities. - Trade fairs and festivals – regional, national and international. - Cooperation and trade agreements with major retailers. - Direct sales through owned channels - Online markets.**
- **Sales through restaurants and specialized shops**

4. Marketing and Sales including Distribution Channels – Suggestions for developing distribution channels and expanding into new markets

Suggestions for developing distribution channels and expanding into new markets

Diversification of distribution channels generally works well for reaching new customers or expanding existing markets. Examples:

Digital markets: *Online stores for regional foods* can drive a lot of interest from expats living across the EU (and even across the world). Dreaming of the tastes of their homeland, they can be ready to pay the high delivery costs. *Online sales platforms:* Working with SMEs to create a central online sales platform for GI products. This will facilitate sales and increase product visibility.

Producing under a retail brand instead of developing own brand. Switching to this option can be out of question in the beginning, but the expenses for successful development of own brand, advertising and distributing in neither easy nor cheap. This is why many producers are ready to follow this strategy which ensures stable workflow, market and cashflows.

Tourism and regional culture can be a great driver of interest and sales.

Opening own shop/restaurant/tasting room. This is an opportunity to sell not only own products, but also matching products from other companies in the region.

5. Financial Support and Resource Provision – funding options and support programs available to SMEs

- **EU cofinanced programs.** EAFRD programs. ERDF programs. **The CAP Strategic Plan 2023 – 2027.** (Bulgaria, Finland)
- **Bank loans to businesses and startups.**
- **Regional grants**
- **Private funders club.** INTERBIO NA leads the “funders’ club of Nouvelle-Aquitaine”, a group of 30 private and public funders. When a member of INTERBIO NA needs capital of financial resources, they can apply to the club and their project will reach all the potential funders of the club.
- **Subsidies.** In times of far-reaching change and upheaval (inflation, changing consumer behaviour, climate- and energy crisis, high interest rates), it is becoming increasingly difficult for food companies in the SME sector to remain liquid. Subsidies for transformation (future cultivars, climate-adapted in the future, crop failures, plant-based forms of nutrition) are essential for this sector in particular in order to create a turnaround and investment security. (SWG)
- **State aid for the organic sector:** “Fonds Avenir Bio” is a specific call for food companies, including SMEs for the development of the organic sector.
- **Export promotion support.** (Murcia wines)
- **State export promotion assistance to SMEs.** e.g. Bulgarian Ministry of Agriculture gives priority to GI producers. (SZ REDA)
- **Sector specific.** support program for PDO Strandzhanski Manov Med (honey) producers covering the annual PDO certification expenses. (OCED)
- **More Resources and examples** available in the shared folder [here](#).

6. Training and Qualification – Training materials and course offerings to enhance production processes and export capabilities

- **Standardised training materials and programmes** for defined products. (qualification and quality management) In the area of the food industry, an improvement in the training material would be desirable. (SFG)
- **Regular meetings and seminars for producers** several times a year in different regions (Ministry of Agriculture and Foods BG).
- **Regional funding calls to SMEs.** Economic promotion of SMEs, including participation in national and international events, including missions/fairs.
- **Through an advisory and development organization in the agricultural sector.** ProAgria is a Finnish national advisory services to agricultural and rural entrepreneurs all over Finland and cooperates with various actors in the food chain.
- **Specific training opportunities in buyer-supplier links,** as in training from wineries to farmers in part of purchase agreements for winegrapes. (UPatras)
- Organizations such as the Spanish Institute for Foreign Trade (ICEX)
- **Chambers of Commerce.** often provide training programs and resources for businesses looking to enhance their export capabilities.
- **Regional collaborative schemes for export capabilities.** Region Nouvelle-Aquitaine offers training programs Region Nouvelle-Aquitaine, Chamber of Commerce of Nouvelle-Aquitaine and Business France form together the “Team France Export”. They provide services (consulting, training) for companies, including SMEs, to enhance export capabilities.

7. Benchmarking and Best Practices

- **Usually, few official programs are known.** Different private schemes fill this need, e.g. B&C: Wagner, Inact, AMA Marketing, ICS (SFG).
- **Regional funded programs.** PPHU Godyla implemented RPOP.02.01.02 project for adapting ICT technologies for the optimization of processes related to sales, production, warehouse and goods management, as well as human resources management. (OCED).
- **Export promotion campaign program. e.g.** Region of Western Greece for wines in the far East.
- **Regional Support facility to SMEs.**
- **Studies.** e.g. Ecozept, a French-German consulting and research agency - focusing on sustainable agri-food markets - observes in one of its latest study that the regional origin of organic food products is one of the most important lever to use to develop international sales.

8. Monitoring and Evaluation –Evaluation methods and tools

Frequently used evaluation methods and tools include the following (SFG):

- Demand & Supply Chain Planning methods,
- Collaborative Forecasting & Replenishment Processes,
- Scorecarding,
- OnShelf Availability,
- Vendor Managed Inventory.

Small and medium-sized companies face disadvantages. It seems that only a few SMEs implement M&E tools; these are better known and used in the corporate, international environment. Opportunities of artificial intelligence.

More development is needed in methods used to monitor and evaluate the progress and results of relevant projects.

9. Networking, Clustering and Partnerships

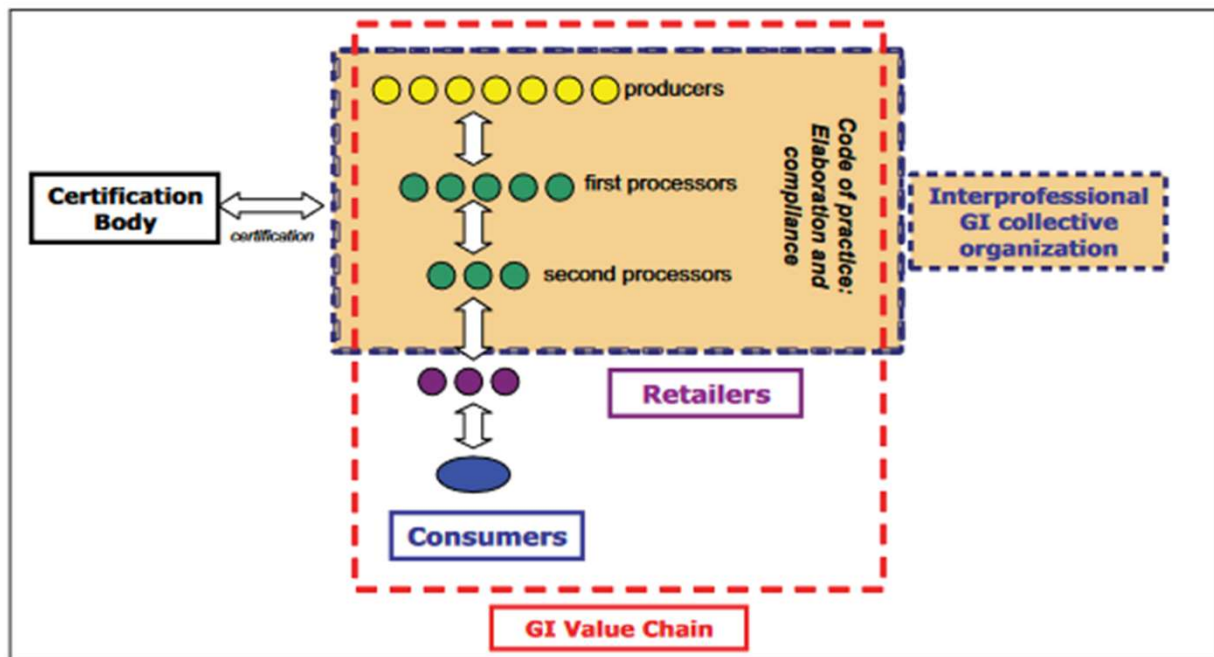
- **Partnerships and potential networks** are an important component of product quality and GI status protection.
- **New networks and partnerships** can be established via similar national and international product groups or via cross-over concepts for different products. Learning from each other takes place via "best practice examples".
- **Added value lies in collaboration and co-creation**, but this is often not recognised/lived in regionally.
- **Cooperation between businesses** is a challenge in many region and we are willing to look for solutions to stimulate networking and partnerships.

9. Networking, Clustering and Partnerships

- **Regional brand and producers' networks and communities.** 'Opolskie ze smakiem' is a regional brand and producers' network and community that is supported within the rural development policy. Opolski Bifjy a regional culinary network with well-known brand created by OROT (regional tourism organisation) that is also a generic distribution channel.
- **Support the diversification of local business life.** From Saimaa to Your Plate project. The area has a lot of potential related to food and food tourism, such as wild food, Puruvesi vendace, clean and healthy raw materials and foodstuffs from local producers. By utilizing them it is possible to create new kind of ecologically and socially sustainable business. Project starting in January 2024.
- **European Region of Gastronomy.** Saimaa European Region of Gastronomy 2024 - the Saimaa region has become a member of the International Institute of Gastronomy, Culture, Arts and Tourism network, which promotes the diversity and sustainability of food culture. The ERG management. **D.O. Saimaa - Designation of Origin Saimaa.** Finland's first regional origin and quality label. D.O. Saimaa labelled products or ingredients tell consumers, restaurants and retailers that they are making a good, ethical and responsible choice.
- **Academic Institutes.** University of Helsinki – Ruralia Institute
- **The Quality Network Oinoxeneia.** Focusing on wine, culture and culinary experiences in Western Greece.
- **Association of European Regions for Products of Origin.** the network of regions and producer associations that deals with products of quality and origin. AREPO aims at promoting and defending the interests of producers and consumers of European regions involved in the valorization of quality food products.
- **AANA:** Nouvelle-Aquitaine Food and Beverage Agency's calling is to develop the reputation of Nouvelle-Aquitaine products and highlight their quality and diversity.
- **Association of Designations of Origin** – National: ORIGEN ESPAÑA. Regional: **ORIGEN MURCIA**
- **Regulatory Councils** are entities that are responsible for ensuring quality, monitoring compliance with regulations and guaranteeing the origin of the wines produced in the wineries that belong to a specific Designation of Origin. **CECRV** (Spanish Conference of Wine Regulatory Councils) **CECRIGBE** (Spanish Confederation of Regulatory Councils and Geographical Indications for Spirit Drinks)

9. Networking, Clustering and Partnerships

Figure 1: Example of a GI inter professional organization.



Case Study

Case study 3: The organization structure PDO GRUYERE (Switzerland)

Supply chain	Interprofesional body of Gruyère			
2600 milk producers	Delegated assembly	Committee		
Dairies 190 (+ 60 farm dairies on alpine pastures)			20 producers	4 producers
20 ripeners-traders			20 dairies	4 dairies
Retailers			10 ripeners	4 ripeners
			President	President

29000 tons

Gruyère is one of the most important PDO cheeses in Switzerland. In 1997, three years before obtaining the PDO protection, Gruyère cheese created the inter-professional organization. It groups all firms active in the production of Gruyère cheese, all of whom pay contributions to the structure according to the volumes of milk or cheese they process. The different categories (or sections) have their assemblies consisting of elected delegates. All changes in the CoP and all other important decisions need the approval of each assembly. Each assembly also appoints four representatives to the committee. Wide responsibilities are attributed to the inter-professional organization, covering quality assurance (CoP, internal controls, including organoleptic tests, certification, etc.), image, promotion (including foreign markets), price negotiation and volumes, etc.

Source: SINER-GI. 2006

10. Communication and Public Relations -

The communication approach must cater to different regional characteristics

- Awareness of geographical indications varies across the different regions in the EU.
- Some countries, like France, have strong traditions and culture in this field with thousands of registered geographical indications.
- Others are currently developing their database and markets for such products.
- Another group of regions are still in the initial stages of development, their EU-level geographical indications, the relevant awareness, and markets.
- Depending on the stage of awareness and market development, different communication approaches can be applicable.



10. Communication and Public Relations - Guides on developing communication strategies and plans

Regions with strong awareness of GIs and developed market

- The main challenges for SMEs on these markets are related to the higher prices of GI products and the long list of competitors both in the GI and non-GI sector. Although GI products are seen of a higher quality, purely economic reasons can damage their competitiveness.
- Targeted marketing campaigns that highlight the regional values and stories behind GI products, as well as campaigns promoting the added value of these products (organic, local, 0-km, sustainable, ecological) have proved successful in improving SME competitiveness.
- Regions with strong GI production could also target export markets, even outside the EU.

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Regions with weak awareness of GIs and developing market

The main challenges for SMEs in these markets are related to the weak awareness of the added value of GI products and therefore lack of sufficient market demand for these products. Both end consumers and businesses are underinformed about the benefits GI products could bring to them. Customers do not recognize GI labels and cannot distinguish GI products from similar foods.

Communication campaigns should be targeted at:

- Raising awareness about the GI quality schemes and making the PDO and PGI signs recognizable among end customers
- Explaining the added value of GIs to the end customer to make it more considerable to pay more for such products
- Informing SMEs on the benefits of GI production (higher-value products with better market price, opportunities for export to more developed markets)
- Communicating the benefits of GIs across the whole value chain – agriculture, food producers, distribution channels, media, educational institutions, etc.

Success story: [Open your eyes, enjoy!: PDO and PGI promotion campaign for Spanish agrifood products | Interreg Europe - Sharing solutions for better policy](#)

10. Communication and Public Relations - Communication means and channels

Digital marketing and PR

Digital communication channels are still underestimated by many SMEs (especially small producers) in remote areas but have proved successful and cost-effective. Key channels that every single business should use:

- **Digital "home"** - either own *website* or at least *social media account*. It should present the business and act as a platform for presentation and own promotion, communication with potential customers or/and online shop.
- **Digital identity and presence** – younger and more educated consumers are extremely sensitive about the businesses they shop from and could do a lot of research before buying a particular product, especially when it comes to food. This research is generally happening online. This auditory is one of the targets for GI products due to its increased sensitivity to high-quality and authentic products. Digital identity and presence may include not only having an online website and social media accounts that are regularly updated, but also appearance on partner's channels, digital media, etc. SEO optimization can be a key element in achieving popularity of the product or businesses.
- **Digital advertising** (social media, Google search, etc.). Advertising in social media (Facebook and Instagram) and paid SEO (Google) are still among the most cost-efficient channels, particularly for businesses with online shops. They also work well for achieving brand awareness and product awareness and drive leads to the company's channels.

10. Communication and Public Relations - Communication means and channels

Multi-channel communication campaigns

Suitable for regions with weak awareness for GI schemes and labelling. The aim is to inform the maximum number of people of the GI quality schemes so many channels may be used simultaneously – TV, outdoor, transport, online, traditional media. Such campaigns require a lot of resources and strategic planning and should be initiated by authorities, producer associations, trade organizations, etc.

- **Success story:** [Open your eyes, enjoy!: PDO and PGI promotion campaign for Spanish agrifood products | Interreg Europe - Sharing solutions for better policy.](#) With the "Open your eyes - Enjoy!" campaign with which seeks to bring consumers closer to the differentiated quality seals - Protected Designation of Origin (PDO) and Protected Geographical Indication (PGI) - on European agri-food products, not only so that they can enjoy them, but also so that they can be more easily identified by the consumers.
- The European Commission can provide funding for such campaigns: [Promotion of agricultural products - European Commission \(europa.eu\)](#)

10. Communication and Public Relations - Guides on developing communication strategies and plans

Fairs and trade shows

Besides the presentation of core products on the official stand, additional communication and PR activities can be organized during thematic fairs and trade shows to improve the visibility of the brand and put an emphasis on products. These can include dedicated thematic presentations for invited guests or media, thematic food and wine tastings, games, giveaways, and others.

- **Example:** the Calasparra Town Council currently presents the PDO Rice of Calasparra at the International Tourism Fair Fitur of Spain. In 2023, the new International Forum of gastronomic culture and cultural landscapes "Gastropaisajes Calasparra 2023" was presented. "Gastropaisajes Calasparra 2023" aims to highlight the value of Calasparra rice, its culture and its unique landscapes in an event for debate, reflection, cooperation, impulse, development and promotion of gastronomic culture and cultural landscapes.

Offering experiences, not product

Experiences have seen a major interest in all markets after the Covid-19 pandemic. The communication strategies and messages could be adapted to offer a full experience, rather than a particular product. Experience packages can be developed together with other businesses to provide a high-value service.

10. Communication and Public Relations - Guides on developing communication strategies and plans

Examples of successful communication campaigns

- [Communication campaign “They said yes!” to promote regional organic agriculture and food products | Interreg Europe - Sharing solutions for better policy](#)
- [Open your eyes, enjoy!: PDO and PGI promotion campaign for Spanish agrifood products | Interreg Europe - Sharing solutions for better policy](#)
- [Festival of Rose in Kazanlak, Bulgaria | Interreg Europe - Sharing solutions for better policy](#)

Other examples:

Innovative Methodologies to enhance regional image and identity. OCED participated in the ‘InduCult2.0’ Project in which the “Appreciative inquiry” and 5D workshop was used for the inner circle and increasing the stakeholder group involvement.

Seasonal food pyramid – KISMET project updated the traditional food pyramid to favor for local products, four different pyramids based on the seasonal variation of different products (SDS)

Registered Labels

- **Avainlippu – Avainlippu (“Key flag)** is a registered trademark. It says that at least 50 percent of the product has been manufactured or produced in Finland.
- **Hyvää Suomesta - Hyvää Suomesta (“Good from Finland”)** label is the mark of origin for Finnish packaged foods. The mark is voluntary and can be used by food manufacturers who manufacture their products in Finland, using Finnish raw materials.



10. Communication and Public Relations

- **Information campaigns.** The "Open your eyes - Enjoy!" campaign with which ORIGEN ESPAÑA seeks to bring consumers closer to the differentiated quality seals - Protected Designation of Origin (PDO) and Protected Geographical Indication (PGI) - on European agri-food products, not only so that they can enjoy them, but also so that they can be more easily identified by the consumers. ORIGEN ESPAÑA currently represents 64 national PDOs and IGP, representing more than 78% of the economic value of the Quality Denominations in Spain. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UzuB2Bh_cC4 – (Funded by the European Commission).
- **Communication strategies.** 'Say YES to organic' / "They said yes", to promote organic agriculture and its benefits for the environment, biodiversity, quality of the water, etc. in Nouvelle-Aquitaine. <https://interbionouvelleaquitaine.com/dites-oui-a-la-bio-de-nouvelle-aquitaine/>
- **Participation in international fairs.** The Calasparra Town Council currently presents the PDO Rice of Calasparra at the International Tourism Fair Fitur of Spain. In 2023, the new International Forum of gastronomic culture and cultural landscapes "Gastropaisajes Calasparra 2023" was presented. "Gastropaisajes Calasparra 2023" aims to highlight the value of Calasparra rice, its culture and its unique landscapes in an event for debate, reflection, cooperation, impulse, development and promotion of gastronomic culture and cultural landscapes.



11. Risk Management and Crisis Handling

Protect the food quality or safety related to original recipes. The certification process and conditions are the source of some risks for product sales, safety, quality and potential for development.

The secondary risks can be related are mostly related to macro trends like digital sales or Covid-19 (value chains disruption) or war in Ukraine (high prices of energy). Further risks include:

- Risk of loss of market share due to **increasing domestic and international competition.**
- **Increasing cost of production**, input costs, supply shortages and disruptions (milk, grapes).
- In the context of **inflation**, GI products can be perceived by the consumers as more expensive because of higher quality than average.
- **Shortage of staff necessary for production.**
- **Ageing farmers and old age dependency in the farm value chains.**

Table 6: Example of problems and solutions

PROBLEMS	RISKS	POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS
Too many rules in the code of practice	- Rules not applicable - Rules not controllable - Dilute the identity of GI into a lot of irrelevant characteristics	- Focus on a limited number of enforceable rules which are key to the identity of the GI product
Rules defined only by a limited number of actors	- Rules not well adapted - Rules not accepted/applied - High level of exclusion	- Establish the rules through a widespread consultation and deliberation process among producers and processors - Give responsibility to local stakeholders (Ex. GI group) - Define formal deliberation and decision-making rules within the GI group
Rules that are too strict	- Lack of flexibility and of adaptation - Lack of capacity to face challenges (global warming, evolution of demand, etc.) - High level of exclusion - High costs of compliance	- Establish a mechanism to discuss and decide on adaptations of rules and on geographical delimitation
Confusion between generic rules and specific rules	- Rules are too general to maintain specificity/unicity	- Focus GI rules on operations that are key to the identity of the GI product
Difficulty for some traditional GI products to comply with generic requirements (food safety in particular)	- GI products may be jeopardized by generic rules if enacted regardless of traditional processes	- Well defined processes should ensure food meets food safety requirements while allowing for preservation of traditional processes
Difficulty to explain the link between the product characteristics and the geographical and human environment	- Over-valuation of analytical measurements - Checking only what is measurable - Difficulty to define and measure criteria	- Reach the right balance between technical, cultural, historical and organoleptic criteria - Combine several types of assessment methods: some measurements and documentary evidence, visual assessments
Internal heterogeneity	- Risk eliminating some variants of the product when codifying the practices	- Choose one or several variants of the product (the most frequent? the most controllable? the most authentic according to local actors?) - Let the producers decide - Expertise reports can be added
Unbalanced power distribution along the value chain	- Risk that strategic decisions are taken only by preeminent actor	- Take into account the power relations in the production area - Include more than one trader in the GI group - Adopt democratic decision rules inside GI group (secret votes, majority decision, etc.)
Exclusion of local operators	- A rule can be interpreted as favouring some players and excluding others	- Avoid excessively strict rules - Ensure democratic decision-making about the GI rules definition and enforcement - Lower the costs of control
Conflicts in setting up the GI rules or delimiting the production area	- Risk 1: High standards + small volumes + scaling up in value but with increased costs OR - Risk 2: Low standards + small differentiation + scaling up in volume but with risk of loss of price premium and product identity	- Set up a representative GI body and provide enough support to take balanced decisions - Carefully analyse the market to strike the right balance (price, volume) and avoid extremes
Conflicts in organizing controls and verification capacity to implement	- Internal control can be unpopular - In some countries, the state has low (human/ technical/ financial) capacity	- Third party verification with government supervision - Organize controls through farmer groups, not individually - External controls can be carried out by buyers

Source: FAO (2010:92) [A guide for promoting quality linked to geographical origin and sustainable Geographical Indications](#)



11. Risk Management and Crisis Handling – Examples of crisis management plans

- **Education, demonstrating cultivation and market potential**, internationalisation programmes and support are increasingly necessary, especially for "established" companies (think out of the box).
- **Cooperation**. For some operators, cooperation may be seen as a challenging solution, limiting their options for development. The limited use of the protected geographical indication may hinder the development of a strong brand identity.
- **Investing in process quality improvement and innovation**. e.g. with the cultivar and ageing, also dry vinification,
- **Modernize and improve legal framework and rule compliance** for lower-end producers.
- **Small company size**. Insufficient size in most PDOs/PGIs, at a level far from what can be considered as sufficiently competitive in the sectoral context in which they operate. Lack of sufficient funds. For many companies, regionality also implies self-restriction and a restriction in marketing. This is primarily about the mind-set and the value of regionality, assessing it accordingly and distributing it across borders. Limited "production" often also restricts growth.

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Thank you!

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