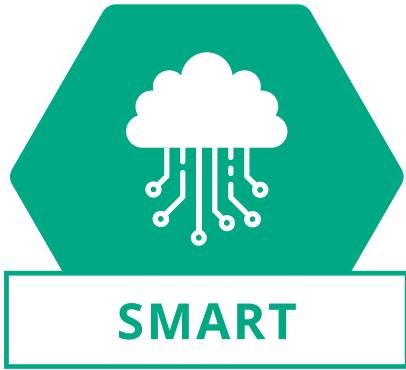




SMEOrigin



Good Practices

Digitalisation and Innovation of food SMEs

August 2024



THE ROAD TO SUCCESS: EXCHANGE OF EXPERIENCE

Project SMEOrigin aims to improve regional policies aiming at increasing the competitiveness of SMEs in the food sector. More specifically, the project has been designed to foster products with a geographical indication in the involved regions by improving the quality standards of SMEs, fostering their digital transformation, and promoting the authenticity of the products.

One of the main instruments of achieving our goal is the intensive exchange of experience via regional and interregional meetings, study visits and sharing good practices online and offline.

In this **Joint Paper on Good Practices** we present more than 15 Good Practices identified during the Phase 1 of the project (Semester 1 – 3, 2023-2024). This document aims to serve both as an inspiration source and a navigator to implementing working policy solutions that have already been tested across European regions.

<https://www.interregeurope.eu/smeorigin>

Interreg
Europe



Co-funded by
the European Union

SMEOrigin

SMEOrigin aims to improve regional development policies to increase the competitiveness of food SMEs specialised in geographical indication.



SMART



1.40 M
EU FUNDING



Mar 2023
May 2027

An interregional cooperation project for
improving **SME competitiveness** policies

Project Partners

Steirische Wirtschaftsförderungsges.m.b.H. (AT)
Stara Zagora Regional Economic Development Agency (BG)
Opolskie Centre for Economy Development/ Opolskie Voivodeship (PL)
Savonlinna Development Services (FI)
University of Patras (EL)
Municipality of Calasparra (ES)
INTERBIO Aquitaine/ Limousin/ Poitou-Charentes (FR)

EXCHANGE OF EXPERIENCE: HOW IT WORKS?

Step 1: Identification and analysis

More than 20 *Good practices* in the field of Digitalisation and Innovation of food SMEs were identified during the first phase of project **SMEOrigin**. Most of them were approved by Interreg Europe policy officers and published on the official [SMEOrigin website](#).

A number of **successful action categories** were identified, such as:

- Using **regional branding** as a means of promoting local and regional producers
- **Public relations initiatives and activities aimed at raising awareness** of local, organic, and geographically indicated goods.
- **Initiatives for cooperation**, such as operating groups and business clusters, to improve linkages and foster collaboration between producers, market participants, and authorities.

Step 2: Policy improvement and transfer

All the examples present in this Joint Paper on Good Practices have been tested in practice in their regions and proved their efficiency. However, their success in other regions depends on economic, social, cultural and natural factors and they must be adapted to each region's needs and peculiarities. For this reason, a Policy Transfer Working Group was established at project level to develop a methodology for successful Good Practice transfer. The updates are published regularly on the [SMEOrigin website](#).



Practical handbook on EU protection of origin

The handbook is a guide on the application process, required documentation, and involved stakeholders for obtaining and maintaining the EU quality seals: Protected Designation of Origin (PDO), Protected Geographical Indication (PGI), and Traditional Specialty Guaranteed (TSG).

It outlines labeling, control mechanisms, funding opportunities, and legal protections associated with these designations. The handbook highlights the roles of the Service Association for Protected Designations of Origin, established in 2016 to support traditional Austrian foods and promote their protection under EU regulations.

About this good practice

The practice outlines the application process, actors involved, supporting documents, evidence required, and procedures for obtaining and maintaining PDO, PGI, and TSG designations. It also covers labeling, control, funding opportunities, and legal protection options for these products.

The EU quality seals "Protected Designation of Origin", "Protected Geographical Indication" and "Traditional Specialty Guaranteed" give consumers the opportunity to consciously choose high-quality and unique products when buying food. The Service Association for Protected Designations of Origin for Food was established in 2016 to support traditional foods in Austria, to propose further products for EU protection and

to develop these special foods together with the producers. This practical handbook is a guide to the successful implementation of EU designation of origin protection.

The application process, the actors, the required documents and three different seals are described. In total, products can be protected by three different seals. The most restrictive and valuable designation of origin is the one with the PDO, which is aimed entirely at protecting regionality. The protected geographical indication with the PGI is essentially about preserving authenticity and is not quite as restrictive as the protected designation of origin. The third seal bears the abbreviation TSG, which aims to protect the traditional method of production without restricting the production area.



Resources needed

The specific resources are the staff of the association. It requires administrative effort and the co-operation of producers, public authorities and interest groups. In addition a origin product also has access to special subsidies. An active farmer can claim an inspection subsidy (ELER).

Evidence of success

The first Austrian products were registered with the Styrian pumpkin seed oil PGI, Gailtaler Almkäse PDO, Tiroler Graukäse PDO, Marchfeld asparagus PGI and Wachau apricot PGI protected since 1996. A total of 18 products are currently registered for Austria . Examples of protected origin products from Austria:

("Steirische Käferbohnen" PDO, "Tiroler Speck" PGI, "Marchfeldspargel" PGI, "Schaf-Heumilch" TSG)

Potential for learning or transfer

This practice offers a model for protecting traditional and regionally specific food products within the European Union and potentially in other countries. It provides valuable insights into the application process, legal basis, and practical steps for ensuring the quality and origin of food products. The application is an extensive process with various options. Depending on the type of protection, various criteria must be met, which are explained in detail in the book. The practical handbook serves as a guide through the labyrinth of requirements and application procedures. The guide is clearly structured, informative and practice-orientated. It goes through the entire process, starting with the application and ending with the defence of rights in the event of misuse and imitation. It also points out alternatives to EU origin protection and gives an insight into the control procedure and explains the legal options.

Learn more:

<https://www.svgh.at/geschuetzte-produkte-aus-oesterreich/>

Value-chain analysis: definition of a fair price

INTERBIO Nouvelle-Aquitaine has developed a balanced value chain scheme in response to France's National Food Conference (EGALIM), focusing on price transparency. They created two methodologies—*survey and working group*—to tailor their approach to different sectors. The stakeholders, who are also the beneficiaries, contribute data that is kept confidential and used anonymously for analysis.

As of September 2023, ten successful case studies have been conducted, with the results aiding in fair price negotiations and allowing stakeholders to update price models over time to reflect market conditions.

About this good practice

INTERBIO Nouvelle-Aquitaine propose a balanced scheme of the value chain and respond to the demand of the National Food Conference (EGALIM) in France, in relation to price indicators. One of the objectives is to add transparency on the marketed price, with a tool that can be reused and adaptable to each operator.

INTERBIO NA **developed two working methods**, according to the specificities of each sector:

- A Survey Methodology;
- A working group Methodology.

The main stakeholders are also the main beneficiaries of the practice: they are the actor of the designated value chain.

Privacy and Confidentiality

All the elements exchanged remain confidential outside the working groups / Interbio:

- Data transmitted to Interbio project managers by the operators are not used by name, they will be aggregated and therefore anonymous; the principle of confidentiality is respected.
- No publication is made without the validation of all contributors

Until September 2023, 10 successful case studies have been conducted. The analysis and its results are then used in price negotiations, as a basis for desired and fair price, coming from a consensual approach. After a few years, the stakeholders can reunite again and update the price information to have a relevant model linked to the market conjuncture.



Resources needed

INTERBIO Nouvelle-Aquitaine partly finance this good practice thanks to an annual call for project monitored by the Regional Council of Nouvelle-Aquitaine, the Ministry of Agriculture, and Adour-Garonne Water Agency. This call is dedicated to the animation of the organic sector in the region.

Evidence of success

The analysis of the value chain is a good practice because:

- Since 2017, at least one value chain per year is analyzed: there is now a total of 10 value chains;
- Beneficiaries of the result report to INTERBIO NA that they can use the economic data as an element of negotiation.
- For each working group, there are 4 to 5 contributors, so at least 40 companies have been involved;
- INTERBIO NA provides consulting to others regional organic interbranch on this methodology

Potential for learning or transfer

This practice is potentially interesting for other regions to learn because:

- It is a way to engage some of the stakeholders in group work;
 - It is a consensual approach that brings operators to agree on a fair price at each step of a value chain;
 - It enables operators to have more concrete elements to negotiate on the price, for instance a grain cooperative can justify the cost of production of its producers to their buyers (to a feed manufacturer for instance);
 - Within the scope of GI (geographical indication), transparency on the price is important at each step whether it is for producers or for processors. Indeed, when a food sector decides to apply to a GI, it potentially means premium price hence added value to share in a fair way;
- List of analyzed organic value chains: Wheat to baguette ; Soybean to egg; Lentils; Organic wine market; Corn to egg; Soybean to cheese; Ground steak; Fruits and Vegetables market; Barley to beer

Learn more:

https://interbionouvelleaquitaine.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/restitution_travaux_ega_BD.pdf

“Opolskie ze smakiem” regional brand

The “Opolskie ze smakiem” brand was established to encourage local food producers in the Opolskie region to meet legal food quality standards and become recognized as official local products. The label covers a wide range of products, including PGI-certified items, traditional products registered with the Polish Ministry of Agriculture, organic goods, and new regional products reflecting the area's multicultural heritage, including a revival of wine production. The beneficiaries include current and potential producers of GI products, local products, and the broader regional and local communities.

About this good practice

The brand „Opolskie ze smakiem” was created to give incentives to local food producers and potential local food producers to conform to actual food quality standards required by law in order to become part of the official local products from Opolskie.

The label addresses wide variety ranged local/regional products:

- PGI products (Kołacz/Kołacz Śląski, Krupnioki Śląskie)
- based on traditional products registered from the Polish Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development
- organic products
- new local/regional products related to multiculturalism of the region,
- revival of wine production in the region

The beneficiaries of „Opolskie ze smakiem” can be split into three target groups.

- GI products producers
- Potential GI products producers
- Local products producers
- Potential products producers
- Regional/local communities

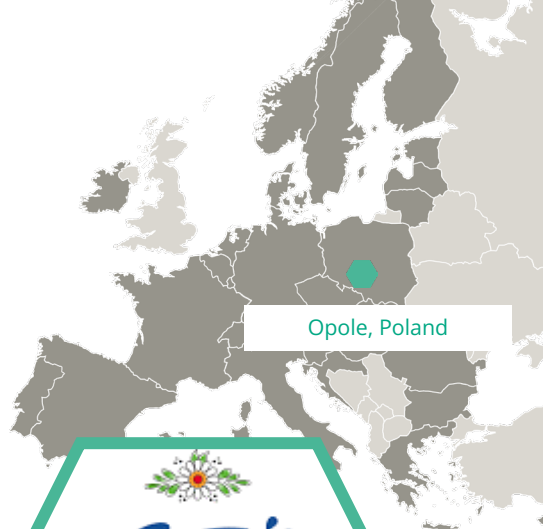
The practice is being funded by the Self-Government of the Opolskie Voivodeship dedicated to promotion and development of local products through financing study tours, trainings or products quality testing.

The regional government to support the initiative announced three calls for local initiatives transforming culinary traditions into local products:

- in 2021 16 beneficiaries received 2000 EUR from the regional funds (in total 33 300 EURO).

- in 2022 19 beneficiaries received 2300 EUR from the regional funds (in total 33 300 EURO).

- in 2023 23 beneficiaries received 2300 each EUR from the regional funds (in total 33 300 EURO).



Opole, Poland



Learn more:

<https://zesmakiem.opolskie.pl/>

<https://www.facebook.com/opolskiezesmakiem/>

Resources needed

The initiative “Opolskie ze smakiem” requires additional forms of support more funding for future development. The specific groups of producers like GI and potential GI products producers may also require different type of support in near future.

Evidence of success

It has been successful in increasing:

- nr of local products (100)
- nr of traditional products register as Traditional Products (78)
- nr of local producers (72)
- nr of events promoting local products (30)

It supported the rural policy by:

- identification and promotion of traditional and local culinary resources in villages
- revival and strengthening of social bonds, especially intergenerational ones in rural areas
- cultivating local culinary traditions and activating women in rural areas

Potential for learning or transfer

This practice is potentially interesting for other regions to learn because:

- It is engaging different stakeholders, especially from the rural areas;
- It efficiently transforms the existing culinary resources into products conforming to food quality standards
- It supports activation of women, youth and elderly people bringing them back to the social and economic life,
- It supports collaborative attitudes and building linkages for the value chains;

Short list of products with “Opolskie ze smakiem” label (i.e conforming to health quality standards):

- Kołacz/Kołacz Śląski (PGI)
- cold pressed oils from Głubczyce (rape, sunflowers, linen)
- krupnioki śląskie (PGI)
- aniseed cookies
- honey (lime, rapeseed, honeydew, goldenrod,)
- dairy products (butter, butter milk, cottage cheese)
- fried cottage cheese,
- wines,
- beers,
- handcrafted distillers as gin, liqueurs, spirits

BIO SUD OUEST FRANCE (BSOF): a regional trademark that guarantee to buy organic and local

Launched in 2013 and owned by the Nouvelle-Aquitaine Regional Council, BSOF emphasizes local production, supports agreements between regional operators and farmers, and ensures clear identification of local organic products. Since 2019, the brand has also incorporated fairtrade criteria into its operations.

About this good practice

The regional brand Bio Sud Ouest France (BSOF) is identified as one of the spearheads of the 3rd Regional Pact for Organic Agriculture, a roadmap whose objectives are the result of a consensus between the State (Ministry of Food and Agriculture), the Regional Council of Nouvelle-Aquitaine and the organic sector. The new pact declines all the actions and objectives to develop and promote organic at the regional level for the period 2023 to 2027.

The demand of consumers in food products tends towards local products. This demand has emerged as one of the major expectations of the food market. Consumers associate local with quality, but not necessarily with organic.

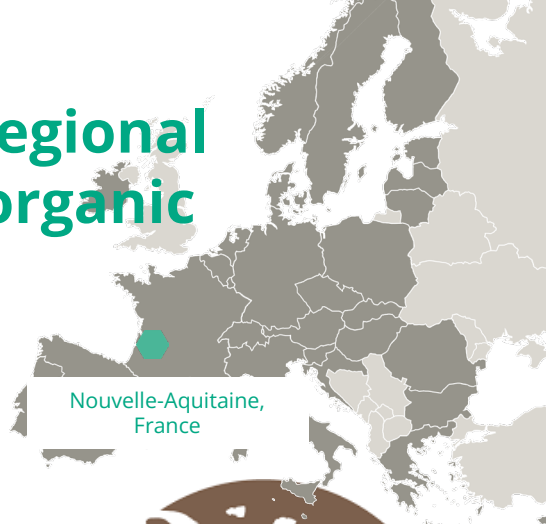
As a regional brand, BSOF's specifications are subject to indicate a geographical area in addition to European organic regulation to fulfill all the consumers expectations.

The brand was launched in 2013. It is a private trademark owned by Nouvelle-Aquitaine regional council, registered at national and EU level at INPI (National Institute of Industrial property).

The **objectives** are to:

- Promote a local production and supply
- Support agreements between regional operators and farmers
- Propose a clear identification of local organic products.

Main stakeholders are companies which process and sell organic products including 95% of agricultural ingredients weight producible in "Sud Ouest" geographical area. In 2019, the brand started to include fairtrade criteria, with multi-year contractualization for purchases.



Resources needed

INTERBIO NA has one employee working 30% of her time on BSOF. It is financed through joint funds from the regional council of Nouvelle-Aquitaine, the Ministry of Agriculture and the Water Agency Adour-Garonne, in the scheme of "Support to development action of organic sector in Nouvelle-Aquitaine".

Evidence of success

Today, there are 18 companies using the trademark, with around 300 products labelled BSOF. Every semester, the accreditation committee gathers to study and approve new comers.

Potential for learning or transfer

This type of trademark is a good practice because it promotes organic agriculture. It can help others regions of France or European Union on their road to achieve the objectives of European Green Deal in terms of organic surfaces (25% by 2030). As organic agriculture is an Official Sign of Quality, the brand is eligible to regional or/and European funds (EAFRD) through the call for projects "Information and promotion actions on the Official Signs Identifying Quality and Origin of Agricultural products". These funds allow regional and organic SMEs to participate in national and international fairs, under the same banner.

INTERBIO NA organises collectives of companies for 15 years, on 3 to 4 fairs per year under the banner "Bio Sud Ouest France". Besides, the fundings are also used to support BSOF promotional campaigns with retail and specialised organic detail operators, such as animation, dedicated publicity on site advertisement, special offer, game contest, etc.

Learn more:

<https://biosudouestfrance.com/en>

Communication campaign “They said yes!” to promote regional organic agriculture and food products

Launched in 2013 and owned by the Nouvelle-Aquitaine Regional Council, BSOF emphasizes local production, supports agreements between regional operators and farmers, and ensures clear identification of local organic products. Since 2019, the brand has also incorporated fairtrade criteria into its operations.

About this good practice

The campaign is available in 4 visuals (image & video) highlighting milk, meat, and organic fruits and vegetables and advocates a production method that respects the environment, animal welfare and biodiversity. **The objective is to encourage consumers to eat organic products while promoting regional origin.** The campaign is supported by the Regional council of Nouvelle-Aquitaine.

This promotion campaign is leaning on European EAFRD funds, through the intervention 77.03.01 of the French National Strategic Plan of Common Agriculture Policy. This measure has been declined regionally in Nouvelle-Aquitaine in the call for project "Cooperation to encourage the development of quality systems, promotion of SIQO : Official Signs of Quality and Origin".

3 key moments for communication:

- 1. Release of visuals** on our social networks during summer 2022. The campaign received a good reception from the public.
- 2. Digital advertising campaign 2022:**
 - Awareness campaign on social networks;
 - Mobile display on mobile apps, to people identified in the retail stores and specialized organic detail stores for a total of 1,202,000 impressions.
 - Desktop display: Diffusion in multi-formats on “food”, “feminine” affinity sites for a total of 1,159,526 impressions.
- 3. Awareness campaign on YouTube** in 2023: interviews/testimonies of actors of the regional organic sector (market gardener, beef breeder, dairy, young mother consumer focus, etc...) release with sponsorship on LinkedIn and Facebook.



Resources needed

Human resources: 1 employee at INTERBIO worked with communication agency.

Financial resources: part of the campaign funded with the association own funds. Other part with a regional call relying on European funds to promote the agricultural products Identifying official signs of quality and origin.

Evidence of success

Awareness campaign on Facebook/Instagram: 560,000 people saw an advertisement and/or a sponsored post at least once for a total of 2.7 million impressions.

Mobile display: More than 152,000 people were exposed to the ad and saw it on average 8 times (very good repetition volume).

Awareness campaign on YouTube: These generated 647,856 views for 677,946 impressions and a total view percentage of 96%.

Potential for learning or transfer

At the moment this campaign has not been transferred to any other region in France but we see a potential for others regions to learn from.

This good practice can be transferred to regional and organic food products of others regions of France and EU. To go further in the good practice, these products can be GI products (PDOs, PGIs).

A possible way to improve the good practice would be to engage even more the viewers, with a clear call to action when clicking (for instance: give them concrete ways on how to buy local and organic).

Learn more:

<https://interbionouvelleaquitaine.com/dites-oui-a-la-bio-de-nouvelle-aquitaine/>

Festival of Rose in Kazanlak, Bulgaria

The Festival of Rose, held annually in May-June in Kazanlak, Bulgaria, celebrates the region's rich tradition of rose oil production and attracts over 120,000 international visitors. With a history dating back to 1903, the festival has evolved into a large-scale 30-day event, featuring rose-picking at sunrise, cultural performances, exhibitions, and rose-based products.

Organized by the Kazanlak Municipality, the festival involves coordinated events across 20 towns and villages, with contributions from local businesses and institutions, ensuring a mix of core events and new attractions each year. The festival significantly boosts local businesses and promotes Bulgarian rose products internationally.

About this good practice

The Festival of Rose, held annually in May - June, pays homage to the region's abundant rose fields and the centuries-old tradition of **Bulgarian Rose Oil production**.

Visitors can immerse themselves **in various events, including the picking of roses at sunrise, cultural performances, exhibitions showcasing local crafts, and indulging in rose-based products**.

The festival has 120-year old history. It is organized by the Municipality of Kazanlak and is a large-scale event, lasting 30 consecutive days. It brings more than 120 000 international visitors to the region, boosting local businesses and industry and promoting Bulgarian Rose and products.

The festival was established in 1903 and has usually been as a weekend event. In the past 12 years, it was turned into a 30-day event during the active rose picking season, involving cultural institutions and businesses from 20 towns and villages.

Key points for success:

- Program is made centrally by Kazanlak Municipality with the contribution of all institutions
- All events are supervised by Kazanlak Municipality to ensure consistency
- Core events, but also something new and different every year
- Partnership with local, regional and national businesses
- International guest delegations from sister towns
- Coordinated events in multiple towns and villages within the same period



Resources needed

Staff: All divisions of Kazanlak Municipality, community centers, museums and tourism sites in the area are fully engaged with the festival preparations from January to May. No additional staff is hired. Budget: comes mainly from business sponsors and a small part from ticket sales

Evidence of success

More than 120 000 visitors attend the festival events within one month. This provides income for various businesses in the whole region: hotels are full in 40-50 km radius. Restaurants and other businesses in the food sector benefit from the tourist flow. SMEs have the chance to showcase and sell their products to a large and diverse audience during the multiple marketplaces and events. The whole region's popularity is increased thanks to the tourism flow.

Potential for learning or transfer

Similar festivals could be organized in various regions, focusing on their particular regional products and traditions. The current format of the festival (30 days, tens of various events), established 12 years ago, is a good opportunity to engage regional communities and businesses even in remote places with less industry.

Learn more:

<https://www.kazanlak.bg/page-11872.html>

Festival of Wine and Cultural Heritage “Avgustiada”

Avgustiada is a prominent festival in Stara Zagora, Bulgaria, organized through a public-private partnership led by the Stara Zagora Chamber of Commerce and Industry, a wine consultancy, and the Municipality. Held at the historic 8000-year-old Roman Forum, the event brings together winemakers from across Bulgaria, local food producers, and international guests, featuring musical and cultural performances, craft exhibitions, and master classes.

About this good practice

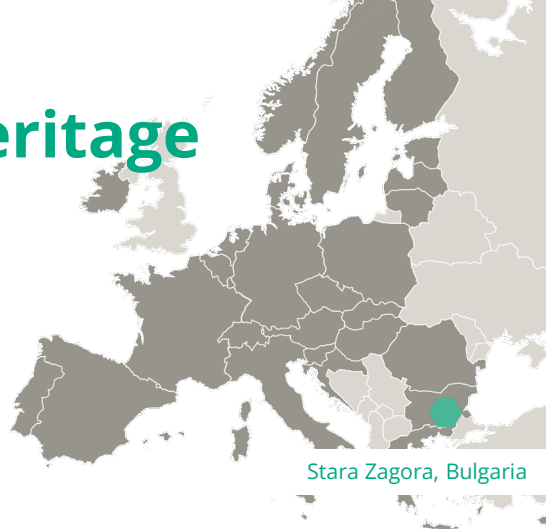
Avgustiada is a renowned event for the region, organized by a broad public-private partnership. The main organizer is Stara Zagora Chamber of Commerce and Industry, partnering with a wine consultancy business and the Municipality of Stara Zagora.

The festival takes place at the unique environment of a 8000-year old heritage site – the ancient Roman Forum, just next to the Stara Zagora Opera and History Museum. The event gathers winemakers from all across Bulgaria, as well as local food producers and other local businesses.

The festival features a strong international accent with guests from other Balkan and European countries. The program includes varied musical and cultural performances and a craft exhibition with demonstrations and master classes. A public vote selects awarded wines of the festival.

Stara Zagora Municipality is a major partner. It provides the venue and builds the stage on which the main events take place. Ensures the partnership of municipal and state institutions such as the Regional History Museum and the Stara Zagora State Opera. Both host festival events and support with staff and expertise the cultural side of the festival. Provides the cultural program with participation of musical and folklore troupes.

Avgustiada is a very good example of a public-private partnership between the Chamber of Commerce and Industry - Stara Zagora, the municipality of Stara Zagora, cultural institutions, local businesses, NGOs and broad public support of volunteers.



Resources needed

The total budget of the festival is about 25 000 EUR. Stara Zagora Municipality provides the venue and main stage and organizes the cultural program. Municipal and state institutions (History Museum and State Opera) contribute with venues, staff and expertise.

Evidence of success

The festival is a unique opportunity to promote the 8000-year old heritage of Stara Zagora in an unconventional way. It also contributes to:

- the promotion of wine culture and industry in Bulgaria
- promotion of the cultural and historical heritage of the region
- promoting the tourist and cultural potential of Stara Zagora region

Potential for learning or transfer

Avgustiada wine and cultural heritage festival is easily transferrable good practice to various regions with cultural heritage, even if they are not traditional winemaking regions. The mix of wine and culture can contribute to improving both wine culture and cultural heritage awareness in the region and beyond, opening new markets for regional SMEs and stimulating partnerships and good practice exchange.

Avgustiada is also an example of a working broad public-private partnership between municipality, NGOs, cultural institutions, business and local community. Only in this way could this festival be a leading event in the tourist calendar of Stara Zagora, with national and international attendance. Such broad partnership model could work not only for wine and culture festivals. It can be adapted to other large-scale public events and initiatives in any region that require many and various resources and expertise in different fields.



Learn more:

<https://www.avgustiada.com/en>

School for Regionality

The "Glamur - Genuss am Fluss" project, under the motto "School for Regionality," promotes regional sustainability, health, and awareness in Styria by engaging children in the concept of regional consumption through hands-on science lessons.

The project, in collaboration organizes workshops in primary schools where children learn to taste, smell, and see the value of regional food. By fostering a connection with geographically protected products, such as Styrian pumpkin and horseradish, the initiative encourages young people to develop a conscious, critical approach to consumption, promoting climate protection and supporting the regional economy.

About this good practice

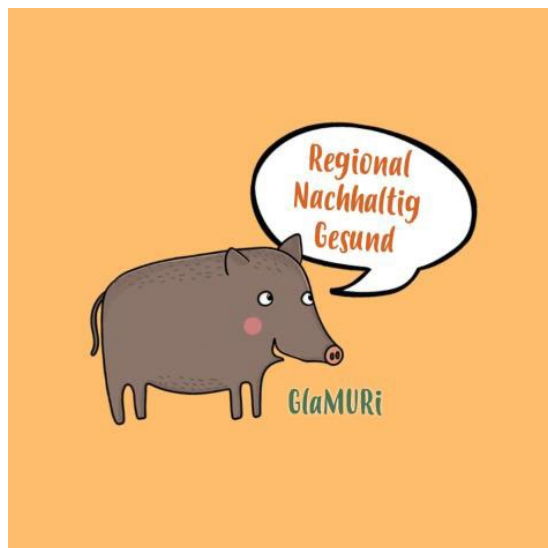
The "Glamur - Genuss am Fluss" project under the motto "School for Regionality" is a step towards regional sustainability, health and awareness-raising. The aim is to make the topic of regionality and regional consumption tangible with all the senses, and of course, the children should also taste, smell and see what regional food means.

The association organizes hands-on science lessons and spread the idea of regionality in Styria and focuses on geographically protected products. It is very important to make children and young people realize that our actions and consumption are globally interconnected. This relationship with the product and this knowledge makes consumption much more conscious, which also increases the value of the food.

This enables children to take a critical look at our consumer world. In this way, we protect the climate and promote the regional economy.

In cooperation with Landentwicklung Steiermark and Kinderfreunde Steiermark, workshops have been organised in all primary schools in the GlaMUR member municipalities since 2019. These are "hands-on" science lessons.

With this method, we want to teach the children the importance of this topic in a playful way. The documents are designed in such a way that regional consumption is seen as the main topic. In addition to the main topic, 12 other topics with strong regional roots were discussed – geographically protected products like the Styrian pumpkin and horseradish.



Learn more:

<https://www.glamur.at/>

Resources needed

GlaMUR launched and more than 200 AT and SLO SMEs have joined forces. 12 regional products have been educationally prepared and designed to familiarise primary school pupils in a playful way. In close co-operation with 35 SMEs, pupils will be introduced to key regional products.

Evidence of success

"The children of today - are the adults of tomorrow" In cooperation with "Landentwicklung Styria" and "Kinderfreunde Styria", 80 workshops have been offered in primary schools in member municipalities since 2019. The program inspires more than 5,000 primary school children every year. Under the motto "Hands-on agriculture", children in more than 300 classes at various schools learn about regional products in science lessons. Several successful workshops have been organised so far.

Potential for learning or transfer

This folder provides you with an excellent basis for integrating the topic of regionality and geographically protected products into school lessons in a way that is appropriate for the target group. The topic of regionality and regional consumption should be brought to life with all the senses.

Globalisation has made it possible in today's society for all products - be it food, clothing or toys - to be available anywhere and at any time.

Through our purchasing decisions, we as consumers can consciously influence which products are sold in our stores. This means that we as consumers have an influence on the environment. The challenge is to make our children aware of the meaningfulness of this process and our decisions when chosen regional food products.

ArrozInnova Calasparra – Operational Group

The ArrozInnova Calasparra Operational Group was formed to enhance the profitability of Calasparra PDO rice farming through agro-ecological innovations. The group's coordination involves a mixed approach, with public administration relations handled by an Innovation agent and overall project coordination. The primary beneficiaries are current and potential Calasparra PDO rice producers, as well as regional and local authorities.

About this good practice

An Operational Group is a group created to solve a problem in the sector or to take advantage of a specific opportunity through the implementation of an innovative project, and which will be made up of at least one beneficiary group, with or without legal personality, and other public or private agents necessary for the development of the project.

The ArrozInnova Calasparra O.G. submitted a project to the 3rd call in 2020 of the Murcia Office for Agricultural Innovation for innovative projects at regional level. The O.G. implemented a project called “agro-ecological innovations on the cultivation of bomba rice in the PDO Calasparra to improve the profitability of the farmer”. It is made up of 100% of the Calasparra PDO rice sector. The Consejo Regulador de la DOP Calasparra which represents 100% of the farmers, and the two rice mill operators the Cooperativa del Campo

Virgen de la Esperanza and Arroces Flor de Calasparra.

The coordination of the O.P. is mixed, since the part of documentation and relations with public administrations is carried out by the Group's Innovation agent. The O.G. as such is coordinated from the Control Board by its president and technical director.

The beneficiaries of the creation of the O.P.:

- PDO Rice of Calasparra producers
- Potential PDO Rice of Calasparra producers
- Regional and Local Authority



Resources needed

ArrozInnova O.G. operates financially thanks to partners contributions. For implementation of the project, 165.565,36€, receiving EU grant of 104.306,18€. EU co-financing % (EAFRD):63%. Region of Murcia co-financing: 37% (through Regional Ministry of Agriculture), plus partners contributions.

Evidence of success

Thanks to ArrozInnova O.G. a long-lasting collaboration have been established that can make new possible experiences, continuing the path of innovation. The ArrozInnova O.G., after the project that have implemented, is still active with the idea of reapplying for aid and being able to undertake a new project related to Calasparra PDO rice.

There is an internal coordinating board that will ensure its sustainability.

Potential for learning or transfer

This practice is potentially interesting for other regions to learn because:

- Operational Groups are a way to bring together interesting stakeholders to put into motion a common innovative project on innovation, PDO and SME's capacity building on IT and marketing.
- By engaging in a Operational Groups, partners/members have the opportunity to collaborate, share ideas and solve problems together. This fosters creativity and innovation, as different perspectives can lead to more complete and effective solutions.
- To engage in such projects can promote labelling tools that give commercial visibility to sustainably produced product (in this case, PDO rice), creating added value for the product and favouring the competitiveness of production: PDO + Sustainability

Learn more:

<https://arrozinnova.com/>

Open your eyes, enjoy!: PDO and PGI promotion campaign for Spanish agrifood products

The "Open your eyes, enjoy!" campaign, launched by the association "Origen España" in March 2020 and ending in February 2023, aimed to raise awareness and appreciation of PDO and PGI products among Spanish consumers. The campaign sought to educate consumers about these European certifications and the quality of products produced under the European production model. It featured advertising actions primarily on TV and online, as well as PR activities, informative videos, a website, and outdoor ads in airports and train stations.

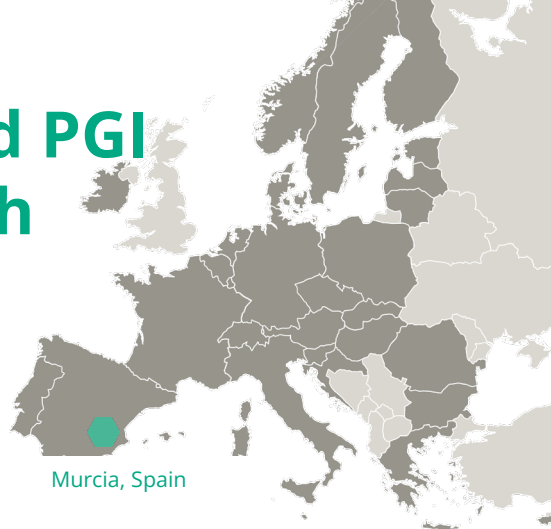
About this good practice

The campaign was born in 2016, when the association "Origen España" applied to the European Commission for a grant to launch a promotional programme on PDO and PGI certificates, given the general lack of knowledge about them.

The main objective is to **increase awareness, value and appreciation of PDO and PGI products** among Spanish consumers. This campaign wants to inform consumers about these European certifications but also how are produced according to the European production model. The 'Open your eyes, enjoy!' campaign started in March 2020, and ended in February 2023. In it, the PDO and PGI

seals have been shown with advertising actions, mainly on TV and online, so that consumers can see the identifying elements of PDO and PGI products and recognise them in the market when they go to buy.

The **main activities** carried out were: PR actions, edition of informative videos, website, advertisements and information campaigns on Internet, outside advertisement campaign (in airports and train stations). All the activities will have a continuation for three years. Actions that provide coverage and frequency, emphasising on creating awareness of the PDO and PGI schemes.



The target audience of this project are consumers, mainly those who are responsible for doing the shopping for the household. The focus was more on the population with medium and medium-high socioeconomic level, and on the age range of 35 to 55 years. Other target audiences: opinion leaders and mass media.

Resources needed

This is a three-year promotion initiative, co-financed by the European Union (70%)
Total budget: 982.480 €
EU Contribution: 687.736 €
It was submitted under the following EU Call: AGRI-SIMPLE-2019

Evidence of success

During the 3 years of the campaign, interviews have been conducted in different stages with 2,000 people aged 25-65 who are responsible for household shopping, with results that prove the positive impact of this type of advertising. Over three years, from 2020 to 2023, 'Open Your Eyes Enjoy!' has led to an increase in the number of consumers buying products with PDO and PGI on a weekly basis (63%), as well as regular (19%), daily (10%) and special occasion (71%) buyers.

Potential for learning or transfer

It was the first time that a campaign of this kind has been carried out, thanks also to the participation of 30 partner GI's that have joined together with a common objective. The overall assessment of this campaign, according to the report, is very positive. 86% gave it an overall rating of between 7 and 10, while 83% of respondents gave the same rating to the slogan ('Open your eyes, enjoy!'). 88% believe that this advertising strategy is useful to raise awareness of the labels and 85% describe it as 'understandable', while 80% think it is original and explains the values of PDO and PGI products well. Main results of the campaign show that it is necessary to continue working, both individually by the management bodies of each of the different products, to increase awareness and to extend it to all food products recognized and certified as PDOs and PGIs.

Learn more:

<https://abrelosojosydisfruta.es/>

Nouvelle-Aquitaine Funders' club for organic operators

Established in 2018 by INTERBIO Nouvelle-Aquitaine, the Nouvelle-Aquitaine Funders Club of Organic Businesses is the regional counterpart to the national Funders Club of Agence Bio. It brings together 26 public and private financiers to support and optimize investments in the organic sector within Nouvelle-Aquitaine.

The club aims to streamline financing for organic agriculture, attract investors, and support project development, innovation, and revitalization in the region. It provides a unified entry point for organic operators and project leaders looking to develop or relocate to the Nouvelle-Aquitaine area.

About this good practice

In order to **meet consumer demand**, operators in the organic sector must structure themselves, plan their development and secure their growth. For this, partnerships must be put in place and investments are necessary.

The Nouvelle-Aquitaine Funders Club of Organic Businesses (including SMEs) is the 1st regional variation of the Funders Club of Agence Bio, at a national level. It was created in 2018 by INTERBIO Nouvelle-Aquitaine and brings together 26 public and private financiers.

The objectives of the Funders Club are:

- To bring together stakeholders in the financing of organic agriculture in Nouvelle-Aquitaine
- To support and optimize regional

organic agri-food investors

To identify a single, harmonized entry point for INTERBIO NA members (SMEs, organic operators, etc...)

To attract investors and project leaders in Nouvelle-Aquitaine region.

Nouvelle-Aquitaine funders' Club contributes in:

- Structuring and revitalizing the regional organic sector;
- Supporting the creation of tools to promote organic production of the territory;
- Financing various organic projects: development, investment, innovation.

All operators operators and project leaders located in Nouvelle-Aquitaine, or wishing to come and settle on the territory, can benefit from this service.



Resources needed

One project officer is in charge of the animation of the Funders' club.

On project leaders/ SMEs' side, a dedicated project leader space is available online to submit a project. On the funders' side, a meeting with all the members takes place once a year and projects are sent to them along the way.

Evidence of success

To this date:

- 63 projects have been submitted to the Funders of INTERBIO NA Funders' Club;
- representing 46 millions € of eligible expenses;
- for a total subsidized amount of 15 millions €.

Potential for learning or transfer

How can food SMEs can access capital and financial resources to increase their production or enter new markets (e.g. through equity, bank loans, subsidies, state aid, regional/local grants, other type of finance) is a capital aspect.

To be able to gather different type of funders, private (general banks, specialized banks, crowdfunding organisms, private investors) and public (Regional council, State, Water agencies, etc...) enables to centralize the procedures for the SMEs, and get a quick access to different proposals.

Learn more:

<https://interbionouvelleaquitaine.com/le-club-des-financiers/presentation/>

South Savo Food Cluster

Established in 2022, the South Savo Food Cluster is part of the European Cluster Collaboration Platform. It supports its members and stakeholders through collaboration facilitation, information dissemination, and promotion at national and EU levels. The cluster develops and monitors the regional Food Sector Development Programme (2021-2027), creating a systematic model that connects SMEs, research and educational institutions, development organizations, and financiers.

About this good practice

South Savo Food Cluster was established in 2022 with the encouragement of the regions of South Savo and Eastern and Northern Finland. The cluster is a member of the European Cluster Collaboration Platform.

South Savo Food cluster provides **services to cluster members and other stakeholders:**

- facilitation of collaboration between members
 - periodic information dissemination
 - promoting visibility at national level and in EU Partnership Networks
 - Future opportunities
 - Support of knowledge transfer
- The South Savo food cluster, in cooperation with the actors, produces a regional Food Sector Development Programme (2021-2027) and monitors its implementation.

The cluster creates a systematic operating model that connects companies, research and education organizations, development organizations, cities and municipalities, private and public financiers, and business support services at the national and international levels.

The region served by the cluster is rich with **food sector SMEs focused on small scale high-quality production.** Food is one of the focus areas of the regional development strategy and smart specialization strategy. Enterprises benefit from systematic and coordinated transfer of knowledge. It is easier for the SMEs to identify relevant proposal and knowledge when it is provided by a trusted partner i.e. the cluster. The cluster focuses on innovation-oriented enterprises and is fostering innovation culture in the region..



Resources needed

South Savo Food Cluster is a permanent organisation. Estimated budget for cluster coordination in 2024 80 000 € p.a. The project portfolio (ESIF, innovation funding, EU programmes) is estimated to be 320 000 € in 2024.

Evidence of success

14 companies in the region and 7 RDI organizations are committed to the cluster as members. The cluster has facilitated food sector SME cooperation, expanded the international horizons and provided support for product development for the SMEs. The cluster has facilitated actions, events and promotions to be organized during Lake Saimaa European Region of gastronomy year 2024. Cluster organizations have been able to initiate a number of new projects with food sector SMEs as beneficiaries.

Potential for learning or transfer

Potential for learning or transfer Food sector cluster development is a policy supported and encouraged by the EU as a part of regional smart specialization strategy. The EU-wide policy framework for the transfer of the good practice exists and it is further supported by the European Cluster Collaboration Platform (ECCP) and financial instruments associated with it.

Learn more:

<http://ekoneum.com/etela-savon-ruokaklusteri/>

Kerimäki Fish House

The Fish House, a local initiative funded primarily by the EU. It began operations in 2014 as a primary production facility for fish processing. It addresses the issue of insufficient capacity from previous wholesalers by processing 400-500 tons of Puruvesi vendace annually, with a turnover of around 2 million euros.

About this good practice

The Fish House is the initiative of local fishermen who were assisted by the municipality for securing funding for the investment. The investment was financed by the EU as primary production facility for processing fish.

The initiative was raised when the previous wholesales could not accommodate all the catch. The main product of the Fish House is gutted Puruvesi vendace. The annual catch processed is c. 400-500 tons and the turnover in the range of 2,0 million euros.

The main products are rounded and gutted vendace, vendace roe and to lesser degree other lake fish like perch. Product is delivered fresh or frozen to wholesalers, restaurants around the country and to supermarkets in the region.

Superior quality is guaranteed with a delivery chain where fish is kept in ice

from the moment it is lifted from the lake. A proof of quality is that several top restaurants in the capital city Helsinki rely on Fish House to deliver the high-quality vendace to their kitchen.

The facility was built and started operation in 2014. 700 m² of total area consist of 240 m²- processing facilities, cold storage for incoming and outgoing fish and gutting residues. In addition there are staff and office facilities, storage and a loading dock. The investment was financed 90% from EU fisheries fund.



Resources needed

Onetime investment of 2,8 M euros in 2014, co-financing of 90% covered. Possible investments in expansion.

Evidence of success

- Sustained since 2014 the fishing tradition on Puruvesi and the livelihood of seven fishermen.
- Implemented successful investment in the town of Kerimäki utilizing EU funds in an appropriate way to generate impact
- Processing significant volume of local lake fish annually
- Steady annual turnover of 1,5-2,0 million euros
- Has created 10-12 regular and 25-40 seasonal jobs in Savonlinna

Potential for learning or transfer

- Experience of financing through EU fisheries fund
- Cooperation model and experience of fishermen working together toward a common goal
- Utilizing the story of the PGI product for differentiation and strengthening competitiveness on the market

Learn more:

<https://www.kerimaenkalatalo.fi>

Festival of the Pöllauer Pear

The traditional **ORF Radio Styria Hiking Day** took place in the Pöllauer Tal Nature Park at the end of October. In good spirits and with lots of laughter, numerous hikers followed in the footsteps of the deer pear in the Pöllau Valley Nature Park and enjoyed their time in Eastern Styria.

About 5000 hikers participated and the event was a great success. Many people were brought to the region and a small program created a good atmosphere. The event also has a positive economic impact.

About this good practice

The traditional ORF Radio Styria Hiking Day took place in the Pöllauer Tal Nature Park at the end of October.

In good spirits and with lots of laughter, numerous hikers followed in the footsteps of the deer pear in the Pöllau Valley Nature Park and enjoyed their time in Eastern Styria. Once again, fitness, culinary delights, fun and tradition were combined to create a harmonious event for young and old. Delicious specialities based around the Pöllauer Hirschbirne pear were on the programme as well as musical entertainment and a successful presentation by ORF Radio Steiermark.

Two hiking routes were specially chosen to enable all visitors to experience the Pöllau Valley Nature Park in the Garden of Austria from its most beautiful side.



Resources needed

Funding by Styria, members of Werbekreis Pöllautal including staff and co-hosts for culinary tasting. Leader funding is provide for some side events. The budget comes from various sponsors, but admission remains free. The raffle tickets for the "Hirschbirnen Raffle" generate additional income.

Evidence of success

About 5000 hikers came together to participate in the Hiking Day. The event reached many people and was a great success. Many people were brought to the region and a small program created a good atmosphere. The event also has a positive economic impact. The increased revenue for local shops, restaurants and hotels makes the event economically attractive. The fact that the event has been organized for many years and has grown in size is a proof to its success.

Potential for learning or transfer

The organised hiking day and festival was used perfectly to reach many people. The event was therefore a great marketing opportunity and reached many people as well as creating a great atmosphere. Getting tourism, food, SME, media and the civil society together to celebrate this unique produced product is unique in Austria. Hikes often promote a sense of community. Participants may meet new people, experience teamwork and share common interests. A hike not only provides a positive effect on the body and serves as a mental recovery, but also gives us a great opportunity for environmental bonding and sensitisation to conservation issues. The Pöllau Hiking Day also brings us closer to the historical aspects of the region. Participants can learn more about local traditions, customs and the history of the place. The integration of regional specialities such as the Hirschbirne pear offers everyone the opportunity to gain an insight into local agriculture and culinary traditions.



Learn more:

<https://www.marktgemeinde-poellau.at/die-hirschbirn-laedt-zum-wandertag-2023/#:~:text=Veranstaltet%20vom%20Werbekreis%20P%C3%B6llauer%20Tal,alles%20rund%20um%20die%20Hirschbirne.&text=Eintritt%20frei>

Assosiation

Styrian pumpkin seed oil PGI

Styrian pumpkin seed oil, protected by the European geographical indication since 1996, is renowned for its quality and regional authenticity. This PGI status ensures that only oil meeting specific criteria can be labeled as "Styrian pumpkin seed oil," including the use of seeds from the Cucurbita pepo var. styriaca variety, production in designated oil mills in Styria, Burgenland, and Lower Austria, and adherence to traditional methods.

The protection helps prevent misuse and imitation, giving consumers confidence in the origin and quality of the product. This makes "Styrian pumpkin seed oil PGI" one of the best controlled and most exclusive specialities with European origin protection.

About this good practice

Pumpkin seed oil is one of the best-known protected foods with European origin protection. The protection of origin provides important guidance for everyday shopping. The various control systems not only make it difficult for free riders to deceive consumers through misuse and imitation. Consumers who value local products can therefore be assured of the origin and quality of the products. Styrian pumpkin seed oil is closely linked to Styria and has its origins and development there. In order to protect the regionality and the typical speciality, the EU Commission approved the protected geographical indication "Styrian pumpkin seed oil" back in 1996. This recognition makes "Styrian pumpkin seed oil PGI" one of the best controlled and most

exclusive specialities with European origin protection.

According to the current Regulation (EC) No. 1151/2012 on quality schemes for agricultural products and foodstuffs, the designation "Styrian pumpkin seed oil" may only be used for oil that fulfils certain criteria. These include that the seeds used come from the pumpkin genus Cucurbita pepo var. styriaca, that the pressing takes place exclusively in oil mills in certain areas of Styria and Burgenland, that the traditional production process is adhered to and that it is 100% pure pumpkin seed oil from first pressing. The authorised areas for pressing the oil include Styria, Burgenland and Lower Austria.



Resources needed

The Austrian Patent Office is responsible for registration, while the Federal Ministry of Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection is responsible for controls. The provincial governor is responsible for compliance with the specifications.

Evidence of success

900 pumpkin seed producers and around 20 oil mills joined forces in 1998 to form the "Styrian Pumpkin Seed Oil PGI" producers' ring in order to safeguard and protect this regionality and the high quality of this top product. The producer ring is now called the "Gemeinschaft Steirisches Kürbiskernöl g.g.A." and has grown to over 3,600 members (including 40 oil mills).

In total, there are already around 1210 protected foodstuffs with a geographical reference, 17 of which are in Austria.

Potential for learning or transfer

For the manufacturers themselves, origin protection brings added value to the product and consequently also an increase in sales. Protection means that more customers can be reached and the product becomes more visible. Various advertising materials are made available to all members of the associations. Testing and breeding activities are being intensified in cooperation with the Styrian Chamber of Agriculture in order to make the crops fit for the future. Pumpkin seed oil farms also have the opportunity to take part in quality assurance measures such as the Styrian regional award. Award-winning farms are allowed to advertise their award, which further increases the value of the product for customers. Ultimately, the aim is to work together to preserve the authenticity and speciality of traditional products for future generations. The decisive factor for success is the pride and conviction of the business itself to be part of the sustainable whole.

Learn more:

<https://www.svgh.at/>

Place branding and Development of Aigialeia Wine Region through The Quality Network Oinoxeneia

The Oinoxeneia initiative in Western Greece aims to enhance regional identity and development by integrating quality agriculture, dining, hospitality, and tourism, centered around the renowned Aigialeia wine zone. The project seeks to blend local products with wine, gastronomy, and cultural heritage to stimulate both agricultural and touristic growth.

Key activities include events, hosting discussions and exhibitions, promoting culinary and wine experiences, and providing professional training in hospitality.

About this good practice

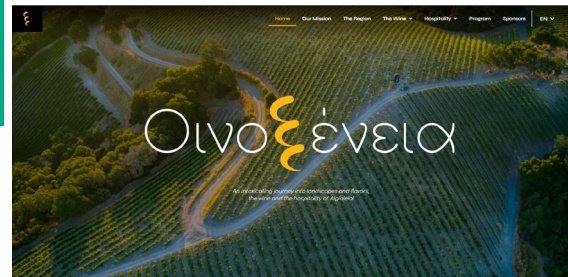
The Oinoxeneia initiative stands as a model for regional development in Aigialeia and Kalavryta, in Western Greece, aimed at enhancing regional identity through quality agriculture, dining, hospitality, and tourism, with a focus on the unique vineyard zone and cultural heritage of the famous wine zone of Aigialeia in Achaia.

The project's goal is **to create a synergistic blend of local products, wine, gastronomy, culture, and tourism, fostering both agricultural and touristic growth.**

Key activities include forming a governance structure the 'Oinoxeneia Committee to organize events', hosting discussions, screenings, and exhibitions, and promoting culinary and wine experiences.

The initiative also emphasizes professional training in dining and hospitality, community engagement to nurture hospitality culture, collaboration with local stakeholders to revive traditions, and leveraging digital platforms for broader promotion.

Targeting local producers, entrepreneurs, and the community, including students, Oinoxeneia aims to not only boost the economy but also instill a culture of quality and hospitality, benefiting residents and tourists alike. This comprehensive approach offers a valuable framework for other regions in Europe, showcasing how integrated efforts in agriculture, tourism, and cultural promotion can enhance regional identity and development.



Resources needed

Funding for Oinoxeneia comes from volunteer contributions and public support, with human resources involving local government, regional bodies, and institutions in a collaborative effort with winemakers and experts to ensure the initiative's success.

Evidence of success

The Oinoxeneia festival highlights Aigialeia's cultural and culinary wealth, spotlighting renowned vineyards and unique flavors like olive oil and citrus. Led by local wineries to promote Aigialeia as a wine tourism spot, its August festivities draw crowds, demonstrating enduring appeal. It revitalizes historic maritime ties across the Corinthian Gulf, merges urban and rural experiences, and fosters wine tourism through educational documentaries and expert talks, enhancing the region's profile.

Potential for learning or transfer

The Oinoxeneia festival serves as a model for regions keen on leveraging their cultural and gastronomic heritage to boost tourism and local development. Its collaborative nature, involving local businesses, authorities, and the community, demonstrates the power of synergies in cultural initiatives. The festival's success in highlighting local delicacies and traditions offers an example for regions with similar assets. Moreover, its focus on sustainable, experience-driven tourism presents a viable path for areas looking to develop tourism responsibly. While transferability may vary based on local uniqueness and resources, Oinoxeneia's approach offers insights for comparable ventures.

Learn more:

<https://oinoxeneia.gr/>

Feasibility study for the implementation of a territory trademark in Bordeaux Metropolis

In 2022, Bordeaux Metropolis initiated a feasibility study for creating a territorial trademark as part of their Territorial Food Plan. Four strategies were evaluated: supporting an existing trademark, creating a local variation of an existing trademark, adapting an existing adaptable trademark, or developing a new trademark from scratch. The final report recommended using an existing trademark due to its lower cost and quicker implementation, while emphasizing the need for transparency regarding product origin.

About this good practice

In 2022, Bordeaux Metropolis began reflecting on the creation of a territory trademark, as part of the implementation of their Territorial Food Plan. From October 2023 to January 2024, Bordeaux Metropolis hired an intern to carry out a feasibility study on this topic. The chosen methodology was to carry out a benchmark on already existing territorial brands (at national, regional and local level at the scale of the France), coupled with a SWOT analysis of Bordeaux Metropolis territory.

4 possible strategies emerged, each with their strengths and weaknesses, threats and opportunities:

- Using a trademark that already exists and supporting it

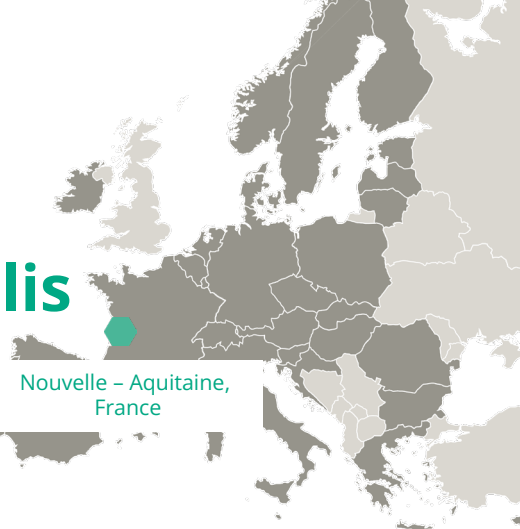
(communication/deployment assistance/etc.);

- Using a trademark that already exists and making a local variation;
- Using an adaptable trademark and adapting it to the territory;
- Creating a new territory trademark from scratch.

During this study, the intern conducted:

- Interviews with managers of various existing brands;
- A quantitative survey on the perception of territorial labels and brands among the population of the territory;
- Interviews with points of sale (markets, stores, restaurants).

In January 2024, the intern produced a report on the study with her recommendations. Her conclusion



was that the quickest and least expensive to set up is the use of an existing trademark, while urgently addressing transparency of origin for the consumer

- NB: Bio Sud-Ouest France trademark was one of the brands questioned during this study



Resources needed

1 full-time intern

Evidence of success

The results achieved are:

- A map of existing territory trademark at a national and regional level;
- A SWOT analysis of Bordeaux Metropolis territory regarding the implementation of a territory trademark;
- A roadmap for the implementation of an existing territory trademark, with a possible local variation;
- More than 200 participants present at the restitution of the feasibility, showing a great interest of private and public actors.
- A general public consultation to gather residents' opinions

Potential for learning or transfer

This feasibility study is seen as a good practice because of the replicable methodology. Any city, urban community, council, etc... reflecting on economic development through the promotion of local and quality food products could conduct such study.

The financial means to achieve it are reasonable: hiring a bachelor or plus student during 4 months.

Learn more:

https://www.interregeurope.eu/sites/default/files/good_practices/Conclusions%20g%C3%A9n%C3%A9rales%20concertation.docx



#SMEOrigin

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