



# Quality Policy – Schemes of Geographical Indication and Traditional Specialties in Western Balkans

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**8-10.10.2019 Ohrid**

# *The Project aim:*

- To provide policy and technical support to SEE countries (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo\*, North Macedonia, Montenegro, and Serbia) on food quality schemes during the alignment to the EU requirements and implementation process.

**Analysis of the state of the art and existing gaps in the legislative, strategic, policy and institutional framework**

Therefore the project objectives was to :

- Evaluate of the official systems in place for the implementation of EU legislation
- Raising awareness about the importance of the implementation of quality schemes
- Inventory of Origin - linked products in Western Balkans countries
- To prepare Guideline for protection PDO, PGI and TSG at National and EU level

# European Food Quality System

**The EU's quality policy for agricultural products and foods aims to:**

- **Encourage diverse agricultural production**
- **to provide producers with the right tools to better identify their products**
- **to promote their unique characteristics, as well as traditional know-how.**
- **to protect those producers against unfair practices.**
- **to help consumers to understand the specific character of the products**

**In this way**

- **Quality schemes are able to contribute and complement rural development policy**
- **Quality schemes may contribute to areas in which the farming sector is of greater economic importance, especially to disadvantaged areas.**



# What is European food quality system

*In order to highlight the qualities and tradition of registered products, three different logos are used to inform consumers about the origins and characteristics of the products*

**Geographical Indications (GI)** - specific link to the place where they are made.

## **PDO (Protected Designation of Origin),**

- *quality or characteristics are essentially or exclusively due to its origin,*
- *all the steps of the production of the agricultural food or foodstuff have to take place in the region (specified territory)*

## **PGI (Protected Geographical Indication) -**

- *quality or characteristics are essentially attributable to its geographical origin*
- *At least one of the steps of production of the product needs to take place in specified territory,*

**TSG (Traditional Speciality Guaranteed)** highlights the traditional character of products, either in their composition or means of production, does not strictly refer to geographical origin.



**Optional quality terms ('mountain product')**



# Benefits from GIs and TSG

Geographical Indications (GIs) represents an important opportunity for many regions to add value to their economies and societies, not only in terms of trade and income, but in the form of cultural and environmental benefits.

- ✓ **useful tool for rural development - economic, social and environmental dimensions.**
- ✓ **Created added value - support the agricultural profitability;**
- ✓ **Increase production, create local jobs and prevent rural exodus**
- ✓ **Improve market access**
- ✓ **Protect national resources- protection of the environment**
- ✓ support to rural economic diversification
- ✓ GI impacts on tourism through the preservation of a regional cultural heritage



# Agricultural sector in SEE countries

- Non-intensive agriculture,
- lower productivity,
- low use of technology
- predominant small family farms
- lack of organization of in cooperatives or other forms of associations,

vulnerable and uncompetitive compared to EU agriculture



Competitiveness can be achieved with providing of “added value products” such as foodstuff with geographical indication.

For many rural areas traditional food - production and sales products with PDO, PGI or TSG label **can be an important economic driver.**

**According to each single country reports (Albania, Bosnia Herzegovina, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia and Kosovo\*) there are many products already protected, but only few products have been certified.**

Why???

# *Evaluation of the official systems in place for the implementation quality schemes*

- the legislation of the most WB countries aligned with the European one, the implementation is weak and this is mainly due to several reasons
- Insufficiently defined provisions (lack of implementing procedures)
- lack of appropriate bodies - functional control bodies, Certification bodies,
- Lack of institutional framework and fragmentation of the relevant institutional structure.
- The lack of a cross-institutional cooperation
- The lack of strategic documents, programs and action plans to fully address the issue of traditional production and use of GIs
- lack of information, knowledge and poor awareness of traditional farmers



# *The role of producers: gaps and key issues for challenges*

- Small traditional farmers have problems with the introduction of food safety requirements, most of the small food facilities in the SEE countries are not registered or approved by the competent authorities, which is the main condition for starting the process of protection with GI labels.
- lack of land or inadequate food establishments, lack of capital, not well organized and weak marginal bargaining position in the food chain, low incomes, poor infrastructure and other factors.
- Lack of funds or conditions for raising loans to improve production, often accompanied by complex documentation they need to submit.
- small farmers are poorly informed on benefit and principles of GI system
- cooperatives are not developed at satisfactory level

**Small farms play a key role in traditional food production.**

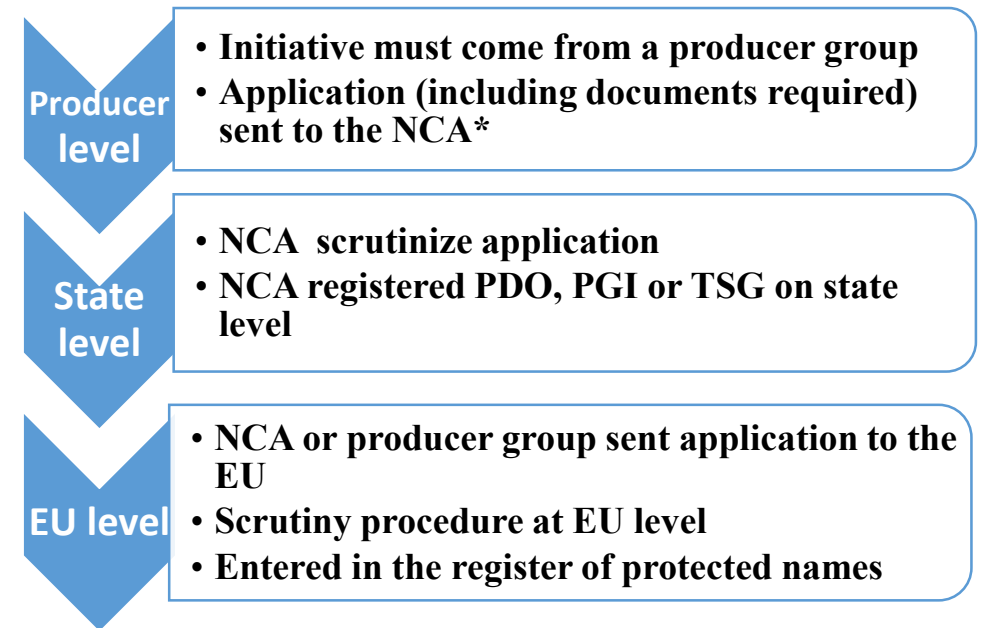
*Therefore, by integrating them into rural development programs, including support for better use and marketing of traditional agricultural products and cooperation among farmers, can fully improve the farmers' standard, as well as protection with quality schemes.*



# *The role of the state in protecting traditional products is essential*

- **Product protection with PDO, PGI or TSG designation should first be carried out in the country of origin by the authorized institutions and then at the EU level.**
- **This means that each state needs to harmonize laws and provide the appropriate institutional structure and human resources to enable the proper implementation of legal procedures in the process of protection and the subsequent regular control of registered products.**

*Main procedures and steps for registration of quality products with Geographical Indications and Traditional Specialities*

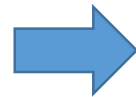


\*NCA -National Competent Authority

*Recommendation: To establish national institutional framework (infrastructure) and efficient system for the enforcement of GIs in practice.*

**Designate National Competent Authority**

- with appropriate *structure*
- qualified staff and
- resources



*Capable to take all responsibilities in accordance with procedures determined in the REG. 1151/2012 to protect the products in the state and follow up activities (protection on EU level).*

# *Recommendation: to harmonize regulations*

Gaps in the Food Quality Laws should be amended:

- specific provisions for product specification;
- rules for origin and quality of feed;
- specific measures on traceability the product, raw materials, feed and other items coming from the defined geographical area;
- specific obligations regarding official controls, control plans, monitoring, report;
- specific obligations regarding official communication and transparency.
- provide provisions for optional quality terms (mountain ....) and trans-border GIs products registration.

***It is very important that each country make its own assessment of the implementation and functioning of the adopted quality laws (more information can be find in National Country Reports)***

# *Recommendation: To establish an adequate certification system and clear rules and competencies for official controls*

**Further efforts are needed in implementing the relevant rules for efficient control system and to establish a functional control bodies, which is the main key to gain consumer confidence and survive on the market.**

**Verification of compliance** with the product specification, before placing the product on the market, can be carried out by:

- one or more of the competent authorities
- one or more of the control bodies operating as a product certification body.

Quality schemes should be subject of **official controls** - monitoring of the use of registered names placed on the market

*States should designate:*

- *the competent authority or authorities responsible for official controls carried out to verify compliance with the legal requirements related to the quality schemes*
- *The control body/bodies for verification of compliance with the product specifications*

**Competent authorities should ensure the quality, consistency and effectiveness of official controls.**

# *Recommendation: Improve food policy*

- to improve the RDPs in order to strengthen the implementation of food policy through well-analyzed and adopted measures.
- to introduce the so-called combined measures (with a strategic combination of food measures with other measures such as advisory services, knowledge transfer, investment, innovation, and diversification).
- to continue the support for covering costs and obligations arising from participation in the food quality schemes
- To strengthen the investment abilities of small holder farmers to undertake reconstruction, modernisation and new investment to meet the necessary requirements for product safety
- Regional and local public stakeholders should also play a very important role in the design and management of these policies, promoting GI initiatives, and supporting them in the field.

# *Recommendation: Implement flexibilities and derogations of the food safety requirements*

- National legislation should provide flexibility and derogations, allowing small-holders and traditional products to comply with food-safety regulation.
- For example, EU enables for each Member State to grant derogation for food with traditional characteristics from:
  - general hygiene requirements on premises where such products are exposed to an environment necessary for the development of their characteristics
  - the cleaning and disinfecting measures for such premises in order to take into account a specific ambient flora;
  - requirements on materials of which the instruments and the equipment used specifically for the preparation, packaging and wrapping of these products are made.
- In some WB countries (Montenegro , N. Macedonia, Serbia) there is legislation – but implementation is still weak

# *Recommendation: to increase state support in the promotion and marketing of traditional foods:*

- **strong promotional campaign for traditional foods for raising awareness among producers, consumers and communities**
- ***support and promotes national logos for PDO - PGI and TSG products.* Establish continuous transfer of knowledge and information campaign for the agricultural producers/processors**
- **Advertising and promoting targeted traditional products, highlighting efforts made to provide quality products in order to help small-scale producers enter the markets.**
- **State or local support of consulting bodies should be introduced, that will deal with specific advertising of certain protected products, which in the future can be developed in the certification control bodies.**
- **Publish National Guidelines for implementation PDO, PGI and TSG.**
- **Promote the economic sustainable development - the authorities should adopt policies to support the value added for the rural area thanks to the image and reputation of GI products - synergies among the GI system, local industries and other GI products should be created.**





# *Recommendation: Supporting the "bottom-up" approach and increasing awareness of producers*

Groups play an essential role in the application process for the registration:

- To define “product specification” - essential element of the application and of the system of protection
- to promote and preserve the origin-linked product.
- In a future - can develop activities related to the surveillance of the protection of the registered names,

*The role of producers and the creation of groups/organizations should be recognized and highlighted!*



# *Recommendation: Supporting products already registered as GIs (or potential candidates)*

- **cooperation with farmers and local authorities and research centers in order to motivate farmers to enter the process of certification, because in this way it could be achieved all the advantages of the schemes quality.**
- **It is of utmost importance to clearly explain to producers what cooperation really means.**
- **It is important to introduce a supportive and encouraging programme for producers to associate and cooperate in groups.**

**Could be effective, for example, to subsidize the activities of associating producers of quality products using founding available from RDPs.**



# *Recommendation: To improve the skills and qualifications of traditional food producers*

Producers are not familiar enough with the concepts and may not immediately have the capacity and resources to lead or make decisions on the process.

- Training sessions on Geographical Indications – to improve the skills and qualifications of traditional food producers and adapt the production toward market demands
- Introducing education programmes for the specialized small-scale processing facilities for implementation and basic quality standard and food safety requirements.
- Additional training on labeling, packaging and traceability of traditional products are needed.

Engaging key stakeholders, with a sound reputation and influence in the field or organize targeted and focused consultations.

# *Recommendation: Increasing the visibility of GIs on the market and awareness of the consumers*

- Launch the well-planned and long-term public campaign in order to raise public awareness on GI products (related to general consumer's benefits of the use of GI products).
- Consumers' perception is linked to the reputation of the origin-linked product and its recognition in the market. Market studies are necessary to identify this reputation and perception by answering different questions: is there a specific demand and a willingness to pay for it?

Do consumers differentiate that particular product from others of the same category? Is there a specific group of consumers who can be targeted for this specific product?

# *Recommendation: Improving strong synergies with local tourism and local food operators*

- **Origin-linked products could help the development of tourist routes around the countries.**
- **WB countries should start, or expanding or modernizing the economic activities of rural tourism development.**
- **Traditional crafts and other activities should be supported, along with development of services and recreational activities, renewable energy, traditional food processing and marketing of traditional agricultural products.**
- **Traders, sellers, restaurant owners and other actors belonging to the supply chain, even if not involved directly in the qualification process, can play an important role in enhancing the economic vibrancy of the GI product by supporting marketing and promotion activities and helping to create new marketing opportunities.**



# INVENTORY OF ORIGIN-LINKED PRODUCTS



***WBs countries are rich in traditional food products*** - but traditional foods are threatened - there is a danger of losing local knowledge and skills.



In the context of globalised markets, consumers are increasingly looking for unique quality products with a specific origin

We should know .....

- Informing buyers and consumers about product characteristics and farming attributes is very important
- Only with accurate, useful and reliable information, may buyers and consumers be expected to pay a fair price
- Only with clear rules and instruments may farmers produce the added valued products that consumers want (accurate control system).







**Thank you!**

**If we want to preserve our traditional food, our culinary habits, identity and tradition, and in same time provide equal market competition we should put a lot of additional efforts on protection of our agricultural products.**

**Follow up activities**