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Module 5

Success factors for GI initiatives



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Swiss Federal Institute
of Intellectual Property



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Foreword

In the previous modules, we learned what GIs are and why they are beneficial. This module will explain how to set up a GI and how to ensure that it can be a success.



1 How to make GIs a success

1.1 Meaning of success for GIs

Underlying motivation

Whether a GI initiative can be considered successful or not depends, first of all, on the underlying motivation of the producers to register their product as a GI. The main reasons for protecting GIs are legal and economic.

– Legal reasons:

- To protect a product from other similar, but lower quality products from the same region that may undermine the product's or the region's reputation.
- To protect a product from similar high quality products from other geographical areas.
- To prevent a GI denomination from becoming a generic term, as that would mean that everyone could use the denomination for any product of the same general category and the same region of origin.

– Economic reasons:

- To regulate production and thus achieve price stability.
- To create consumer demand for a specific quality guaranteed by the GI.
- To access new market segments.
- To create added value.
- To be able to charge a price premium.
- To be compensated for the effort involved in setting up the GI and meeting its requirements

Once we understand producers' reasons for engaging in a GI initiative, we can better evaluate whether a GI initiative will be successful. Two short examples from Indonesia illustrate different levels of success:

– **Example 1:**

Unique aromatic salt

In Amed on the north-eastern coast of the island of Bali (Indonesia), sea salt has been produced in a unique, traditional way for centuries. The unique processing results in a very aromatic salt without bitterness but with distinctive flavours.

Local challenges

However, the traditional production method is very hard work. It also faced competition from tourism for land and employees. Furthermore, traders bought Amed salt at more or less the standard commodity price for regular salt. This did not compensate producers for their hard work and the high quality of their salt.

Need for a GI

The local people realised that, without the possibility to obtain higher prices, Amed salt would soon disappear. To safeguard their salt producing heritage, they started a GI initiative. As a result of their efforts, «Garam Amed Bali» was protected as a GI in 2018.

Success

Five years later, the number of salt producer households had increased, production had increased, a sales centre had been established, three new regular buyers had been found, and the reputation of the salt had significantly improved. As a consequence, demand for Amed salt had grown and prices had doubled. The GI initiative was thus a success.

Further information:

- **Success story – Garam Amed Bali:** https://www.ige.ch/fileadmin/user_upload/recht/entwicklungszusammenarbeit/GI-Schulungsunterlagen/01_GI_SuccessStory_BaliAmedSalt.pdf



Bali Amed Salt (Garam Amed Bali GI) is produced following a centuries-old recipe in only a few villages.



Tenun Ikat Sikka is a traditional textile handwoven by women.

– **Example 2:**

Traditional, handwoven textiles

Traditional, handwoven textiles called «ikat» are an inherent part of local cultural identity in eastern Indonesia.

Identity theft

The people of the Sikka region on the island of Flores (Indonesia) decided to protect the denomination «Tenun Ikat Sikka» as a GI. They mainly wished to protect their ikat because the textile industry outside Flores, on the island of Java, started copying traditional Flores patterns without agreement or compensation – an act which was considered by the people of Sikka as identity theft.

Focus on traditional patterns

As the people wanted to have legal tools to prevent other manufacturers from copying and misusing traditional patterns from Sikka, the focus of protection was mainly on the ethnic patterns typical for the Sikka region. Tenun Ikat Sikka received legal protection as a GI in 2018, and since then producers have had a legal tool to regulate the use of traditional patterns.

Success

Five years after registering the GI, there was no significant increase in price due to the GI, but this was never the motivation of the producers. Ikat is not considered a commodity, but rather as a culturally important piece of art with spiritual meaning that is used at several cultural events in Flores. In this sense, the GI initiative can be considered as successful: the main achievement for the producers was to prevent others from copying it.

Further information:

- Video on the GI Tenun Ikat Sikka: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wrMnlcSe1vo&t=101s>
- Short promotional video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rTNnyctelYs>

1.2 Crucial factors for GI success

Unfortunately, not all GI initiatives are successful. We will now look at some very crucial factors that are important for the success of a GI initiative:

1. The product needs to be sufficiently specific and unique (not directly substitutable)

The product should be traditional. It should be produced in a specific region and in a specific way, resulting in a specific quality different from that of other products. If it could be easily substituted by other products, consumers would not be ready to pay the extra price.

2. The product should have an existing reputation, at least in the local production area

There should already be an established market demand for that product prior to certification, at least in a specific segment of the market. As GI-certified products have a certain history or tradition, they usually also have an established reputation.

3. Producers must be highly motivated and have a sense of ownership

Producers must be convinced that the GI is a useful tool to create added value, and they must be ready to collectively take charge of its management. If the GI certification is imposed by others, it is less likely to be successful.

4. The value chain must have a certain degree of organisation

A certain level of organisation and a sufficient number of pre-existing structures in the value chain are necessary before starting a GI initiative. Such structures are essential for the producers to form an ad hoc GI working committee, the GI management organisation, and engage in a collective market strategy. Producers scattered over a wide area, without cooperatives, established organisations or business relations, are difficult to organise.



At the same time, it is best not to create completely new organisations or organisations with structures that do not correspond to local cultural habits. For international cooperation projects, it is particularly important to understand that merely copying methods from elsewhere does not work. Establishing a functional GI management organisation is thus often the most difficult and time-consuming part of a GI initiative, but it is of central importance.

5. There is a strong legal framework in the country

A product needs to be protected as a GI denomination at the national level first before it can be protected internationally. There should also be strong mechanisms for quality control and law enforcement in place. Otherwise, the GI will not be properly protected.

Benefits of meeting these conditions

In its [study of 2018](#), the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) found that if these conditions are met, it is likely that GI initiatives will be successful. According to the FAO, the economic benefit of the GI certification can then be observed, typically 20–50 % added value compared to similar products. In the case of Café de Colombia, for example, the premium amounts to 25 %. Furthermore, the GI certification usually results in better income distribution and thus in higher income at the producer level. The production of most GI products meeting the above pre-conditions increases significantly. Particularly impressive examples are a 300 % growth in production volume in the case of Tête de Moine cheese in Switzerland and a 250 % growth in production volume in the case of Kona Coffee in Hawaii. Additionally, market access is improved after registration (typically in speciality or niche markets), and the economic resilience of rural people improves through diversification and decommodification.

Challenges in meeting these conditions

Criteria difficult to fulfil

Many GI initiatives do not fulfil one or more of these criteria, in particular the need for producers to be highly motivated.

Benefits not immediate

«Why should I make an extra effort and pay fees if I don't get any results?»

One of the most **critical moments** during an GI initiative is when the GI is in place and producers have adopted the GI rules, but no economic benefit has yet been achieved. This can be demotivating. It is therefore important to analyse the chances of success before starting and not to have unrealistic expectations.



Producers of Rahoveci Wine (Verërat e Rahovecit) GI in Kosovo use rigid quality controls and precise labelling to guarantee the quality and origin of their product.

Infobox 1: GIs and product differentiation

In order to position themselves on the market, producers need both a differentiation strategy (or a unique selling proposition) and an IP strategy. There are different approaches and tools available for differentiation and IP protection.

Differentiation strategies

A product can be differentiated from other products in various ways, including price, quality, quantity, appearance, origin and sustainability, depending on the markets. GIs are high-quality products with a limited production volume and from a specific region. Some GIs are also produced sustainably, but not all of them and not per se. So, the typical markets for GI products are niche markets whose customers appreciate high-quality products. Therefore, a GI should not compete on the commodity market (large quantity, low quality, cheap substitutable goods) but rather sold in differentiated markets focusing on quality, origin and (as we would recommend) sustainable production.

Similar products

Even though the GI helps a lot to decommo-
dify a product and make it less substitutable, there are often products that come close to a GI-certified product. To a certain extent, a hard cheese from a specific region of the

Swiss mountains is similar (but not identical) to another hard cheese from another mountainous region of Switzerland. A high-altitude Arabica coffee from one region of Honduras is similar (but not identical) to the same type of coffee grown at altitude in a neighbouring region in Honduras, etc. Therefore, strong product differentiation and a clear justification of specificity is needed for GI products.

Marketing strategy

To help differentiate products, a marketing strategy is needed. Product marketers use story-telling to convey a message to their audience by combining facts and narrative. While the storytelling or narrative is intuitive, the facts need to be proven. One way in which this can be done is with labels and certifications indicating high quality, specific characteristics, a specific origin or compliance with sustainability standards. Some product sectors have specific, internationally agreed generic quality standards (such as the Specialty Coffee Association's «Green Arabica Coffee Classification System» for coffee) or sustainability standards (4C standards for sustainable coffee production). Other certification schemes offer general, non-sector-specific sustainability guarantees to consumers (e.g. Rainforest Alliance, EU Organic, USDA Organic, Fairtrade). A selection of such labels can be found in Section C.1.4.



Product-specific trade fairs, such as the World of Coffee (for speciality and single-origin coffee), are opportunities to present and promote GI products.



A coffee producer in El Salvador carefully sorts green coffee beans according to the quality standards set out in the GI's book of specifications.

Infobox II: Differentiation from commodities

Product differentiation with a GI is particularly challenging for specialty products in sectors that are traditionally traded as commodities. Commodities can be easily substituted by or blended with other, similar products. Typically, these are products that compete mainly in terms of price and quantity and not in terms of quality, specificity and origin. In the agri-food sector, some major commodities include coffee, cocoa, palm oil, soya beans, corn, rice, sugar and wheat. GIs aim to obtain protection and earn a price premium due to differentiation and decommodification, as far as possible. GI products need niche markets with consumers who value specific qualities, traditions and origins.

This does not mean, however, that a specific differentiated coffee, cocoa or type of rice cannot qualify as a GI. However, given the established «commodity character» of many traded goods, it might need more effort to differentiate specific origins and justify their specificity.

Example – coffee

In the coffee sector, most large roasters still blend different coffees from different origins to balance out different characteristics and to achieve large quantities in order to cover the increasing demand for coffee. Purchasing regular, commodity coffee from the largest two producers – Brazil and Vietnam – allows big traders to achieve high volumes at low prices and at a constant quality. Moreover, when roasted dark, flavours related to the origin of the coffee beans tend to disappear, which makes the origin of coffee even less important.

While the majority of traded coffee has some kind of sustainability label (e.g. Organic, Rainforest, Fairtrade or a company-owned label), such a label is just one means of differentiation, but it is not sufficient to fully differentiate coffee.

Differentiated coffee also needs to fulfil high quality standards. Currently, depending on the statistics consulted, only 5–10% of traded coffee fulfils the generic quality standards needed to count as «specialty coffee», as defined by the Specialty Coffee Association.

To truly decommodify a coffee, the notion of «specific quality» also needs to be considered. This is the unique taste profile linked to the natural and/or human factors of a specific region.

With these three aspects – sustainability, generic quality and specific quality – a coffee can be differentiated. Typically, such coffees belong to high-end niche markets that have high price premiums but are much less important in terms of volume. Market demand for single-origin light or medium roast coffee is increasing, but it is still not above around 10% of the total market share, while 90% of coffee remains blended or regular.

2 How to establish a functioning GI

Based on the experience of the IPI and its partners in assisting numerous GI initiatives in several countries around the world, we recommend following the steps below when establishing a GI certification district:

2.1 Check the product's suitability

We would recommend using the following checklist, which contains the necessary conditions:

- ✓ The product has **specific characteristics** and a good **reputation**. It is of a high **quality** and is closely **linked** to a specific geographical region
- ✓ There is a **specific geographical area** where the product is historically produced (exact geographical area needs to be agreed by consensus later)
- ✓ There are **common quality standards**, ingredients and methods for the production of the product (exact rules to be agreed by consensus later)
- ✓ The **value chain is organised** with cooperatives, companies, producers, processors and exporters or has similar existing structures (composition of the GI management organisation to be agreed by consensus later)
- ✓ There is a **legal system** in which a GI can be registered and the law enforced, including a control and certification system
- ✓ Producers and processors in that region have a **common interest** in certifying their product as a GI (a clear majority of them should agree to engage in this collective market strategy)

If all these prerequisites are met, we would recommend setting up a GI initiative.



Only a specific, high-quality variety of cinnamon from a specific region in Vietnam can be classified as Van Yen cinnamon (GI).

2.2 Boost understanding of GIs

It is important to make sure that all the members of the value chain as well as local authorities and other actors related to the value chain have a sufficient understanding of GIs, in particular their implications, possible benefits and risks. The value chain actors must be able to collectively take an informed decision on whether to pursue the GI initiative or not.

Understanding of GIs can be boosted in workshops, consultation meetings or training sessions with national or international experts, authorities and representatives of existing GI management organisations (producer to producer exchange). Sharing experiences with already established GI management organisations from the same country or from other countries is crucial as it enables producers to build their own GI strategy.



Peruvian cocoa producers discuss the implications and advantages of protecting Cacao Amazonas Peru as a GI (DO).

2.3 Form a GI working committee

If most value chain actors show a clear interest, we recommend forming an informal or ad hoc GI working committee that acts as the focal point on behalf of the value chain members to move the GI initiative forward. This committee should consist of people particularly committed to the GI initiative. It is not necessarily the same as the GI management organisation that is formed later (see next point).

2.4 Draft the GI book of specifications

The first task for the GI working committee to produce the book of specifications (it can have different names, depending on the country). This is the document needed for the registration of a product as a GI at a national IP office or at the relevant ministry in charge of registering GIs. It usually contains the following information:

– A justification for GI protection

This section explains the context and the history of the product and its links to the local natural and cultural environment. The claim of specificity and authenticity needs to be concisely explained and proven. The focus should be on explaining the links between the geographical and cultural environment and the quality and taste of the product.

Example 1 – coffee

If the taste of a coffee to be protected as a GI is specific, it should be explained that this specificity is due to the altitude where the coffee grows, its variety, the soil composition (minerals, clay structure, etc.), rainfall patterns, temperature differences, the topography or the processing factors (fermentation, drying, etc.).



Café Villa Rica (GI/DO) from Peru has a unique taste profile that is due to local climatic conditions, the soil composition and processing methods.



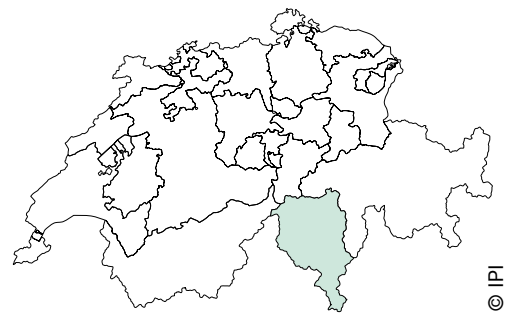
Cows that produce the milk for Formaggio delle Alpe Ticinese cheese.

Example 2 – cheese

If a cheese to be protected as a GI has a specific taste, there must be an explanation of why this is the case. This might include the composition of the pastures where the cows graze and the way the milk is transformed into cheese (bacteria, ingredients, temperatures, humidity, ripening, etc.). Usually, some studies are required to prove the claimed specificity and links between natural and cultural factors and the specific taste of the end product. These can be soil data, climate statistics, sensory evaluations, chemical analysis or historical evidence.

– An exact definition of the geographical boundaries (the «GI area»)

An exact line needs to be drawn between «inside» and «outside» of the GI's protected area. The line cannot be vague or undefined as it needs to be clear which producers are part of the GI and which are not. The GI area needs to be drawn based on objective criteria (quality of the ingredients, historical production borders, etc), not arbitrary ones (monopolies and protectionism must be avoided).



Production area of Formaggio delle Alpe Ticinese AOP

Drawing lines always excludes some producers. This can be a very sensitive matter. Therefore, it is crucial to set the boundaries in a consultation process, ideally by consensus between all producers. Often a political border, such as the border of a province, is chosen to simplify this process and make it more «objective» and less disputable. It would be more logical to draw borders based on historical and actual production as well as product quality and specificity, but cultural or value chain borders do not automatically correspond to political borders.

The idea is to include as many producers as possible, but without compromising the quality and specificity of the product by extending the border too much to areas not suitable for the product.

– A code of practice / a set of rules on how a product must be produced

The code of practice (similar to standard operating procedures) and the rules of production are just as important as the boundaries. Different producers may have slightly different production methods or use different ingredients, which may result in different qualities or specific features. The idea of the GI is to **standardise production** to a certain extent so that consumers can rely on a certain quality and taste or appearance of the GI-certified product.

A code of practice should only list production steps (in the sense of rules) that have a **direct impact on the quality and specificity** of the final product. Production steps that have no impact on the final quality as well as requirements set in general legislation (e.g. for hygiene and food safety) should not be included. Indeed, every rule that is included in the code of practice needs to be controlled and verified. If there are too many rules, compliance will be costly and time-consuming to check.

Again, the idea is to include as many producers as possible within the given GI area, but without compromising on quality and specificity by allowing excessively low standards. Rule-setting should follow the principle «**as little as possible but as much as necessary**». It is a balance that the value chain actors need to discuss and agree on.



Marketing (e.g. sponsorship agreements, as in this example) is one of the main tasks of a GI management organisation.

– **A description of the GI management organisation and its responsibilities**

The GI management organisation is the entity that will manage the GI once registered. It needs to be formed in parallel with the book of specifications.

Depending on the legal system, the book of specifications itself may contain a section about the functions and responsibilities of the GI management organisation. NB: in the EU and Swiss systems, the function and responsibilities of this organisation are set out in GI law or even in general legislation.

It is recommended that the GI management organisation carries out the following tasks:

Member management:

In general, the GI is an inclusive tool, and the GI management organisation cannot exclude value chain actors that live in the GI area, respect the code of practice and want to become a member of the GI management organisation. Actors can only be excluded if the producer is outside the GI area or if the producer does not respect the code of practice.

Controlling and certification:

The book of specifications often contains a clear control plan that mentions who controls what step of production, how, and when. Usually there is an internal control (by the GI management organisation) and an external one (by the government or a third party).

Marketing and promotion:

The GI management organisation should have an overview of the number of producers, the amount of produced GI products, markets and prices. It should represent the GI product (as well as GI producers) and engage in marketing and promotion. It should not buy or sell the GI product itself, and it should not favour specific producers over others. The GI is a pre-competitive tool: the producers will still have their own private trademarks and compete against each other.

Resources on how to draft a book of specifications:

Instructions for applications to register new GI products in the EU: https://agriculture.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2023-07/guide-to-applicants-of-single-document_en.pdf

Single document (template to register a product as a GI in the EU, latest version):

https://www.ige.ch/fileadmin/user_upload/recht/entwicklungszusammenarbeit/GI-Schulungsunterlagen/02_DG_AGR Application.pdf

Example: Book of Specifications, Gruyère cheese (Switzerland):

https://www.ige.ch/fileadmin/user_upload/recht/entwicklungszusammenarbeit/GI-Schulungsunterlagen/03_BookOfSpecifications_Gruyere.pdf

2.5 Submit the GI application to the authorities

National application

A product needs to be protected as a GI at the national level first. If all the documents that are required by the relevant national authority have been submitted and any questions have been answered, the request for protection is usually published by the authorities. If there are no objections within a certain time period, the GI is granted and the product protected.

International protection

In a further step, the GI can be protected in important export markets if the product is actually exported or if there are plans to export it. If the country where the GI was protected has bilateral trade agreements with other countries, the GI can also be protected through such bilateral agreements, provided that they include specific sections on GIs, for example free trade agreements. Alternatively, if the country is party to a multilateral agreement such as the Lisbon system or the Geneva Act, the GI can be protected on a multilateral level in all member states (refer to module 3). Bilateral and multilateral protection can only be arranged by governments and not by GI management organisations.

Once established, a GI needs to be consistently promoted in order to be successful. There are several actors that can play an important role.



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Swiss Cheese stand at an international trade fair

3 How to strengthen GI initiatives

3.1 Private sector

3.1.1 Promotion by GI management organisations

The main responsibility for the collective promotion of a specific GI product lies with the GI management organisation. The organisation can create promotional tools, such as websites, social media posts, brochures and videos, as well as attending trade fairs and joining direct trade platforms.

Examples of promotional videos from Indonesia and Peru (from GI management organisations):

- Lada Putih Muntok GI (pepper from Muntok, Indonesia)
Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ElaBDEa7XFM>
- Garam Amed Bali GI (artisanal salt from Bali, Indonesia)
Video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y6_nXfSG784
- Kopi Bali Kintamani GI (coffee from Bali, Indonesia)
Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=srhpCclz-gw>
- Kopi Arabika Flores Bajawa GI (coffee from Flores, Indonesia)
Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OrkuaCzozHI&t=240s>
- Tenun Ikat Sikka GI (hand-woven textiles from Flores, Indonesia)
Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wrMnlcSe1vo&t=101s>
- Café Villa Rica GI (coffee from Villa Rica, Peru)
Video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DuG_OsmqpP8
- Cacao Amazonas Perú (cocoa from the Amazonas region, Peru)
Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7FNeGT02fGg>



The producers of Cacao Amazonas Perú (GI/DO) presented their cocoa and the guarantees the GI provides to buyers at the Salón del Cacao y Chocolate in Lima, 2024.

Attending product-specific trade fairs is a popular (but costly) option. Governments can usually support producers with the promotion of local and national products, including participation in such fairs.

- GI market place in Jakarta, Indonesia (2016), which promotes national GI-certified products
- Cupping session of Ywangan coffee (in the process of being registered as a GI) from Myanmar at the World of Coffee speciality coffee fair in Milan, Italy (2022)
- Presentation of Cacao Amazonas Perú (GI) at the Salón del Cacao y Chocolate in Lima (2024)

3.1.2 Promotion by a national GI association

In some countries, the GI management organisations of the different national GIs form together a national GI association dedicated to promoting GI products in general, raising the awareness of consumers, and engaging in lobbying activities.

One example is the Swiss PDO-PGI Association (www.aop-igp.ch/en). The association has the following aims:

«Through specific communication and publicity measures the Swiss PDO-PGI Association wants to inform the Swiss consumers about the protected designations of origin (PDO) and protected geographical indications (PGI). On demand, the interested organisations, schools and institutions will be supplied with promotion and information material. Moreover, the association arranges joint trade show attendance and carries out further marketing activities in the PR field. Media people are, in addition, informed about current events through press releases. Furthermore, the Association represents the joint interests of the associations in the PDO and PGI context.»

The association is fully financed by its members.

In some countries, the national GI associations are government-owned, financed or controlled. In our opinion, private sector-controlled associations work more efficiently, as producers and processors have a business incentive that drives such initiatives.

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General Meeting of the Swiss PDO-PGI Association

3.1.3 Promotion in the context of tourism destination management

Destination management organisations (DMOs – public or private) can make use of famous GI products to promote the whole region as a tourism destination in general (“flagship product” of a specific region) and/or develop specific tourist offers around the GI. Here are some examples of how GI initiatives can be aligned with tourism offers:

- Gruyère cheese is one of the most popular Swiss cheeses and a protected GI. The region of Gruyère, with its medieval town, is a famous tourist attraction. Cheese plays an important role in the marketing of this region, and practically all the tourists that visit the Gruyère region sample its cheese, either during a visit to the Maison du Gruyère (a show cheese dairy, information point for the GI and museum) or as a fondue (local cheese-based dish) in one of the restaurants in town.
- Similarly, the region of Villa Rica (Peru) is famous for its high-quality coffee, and Villa Rica coffee is a protected GI. The local tourism board makes use of this reputation and the fact that people associate Villa Rica with good coffee. It has developed tourist offers around coffee, e.g. in the form of a «coffee route» (ruta del café) and a visitor’s centre about coffee and the GI. A huge moka pot has been placed in the centre of Villa Rica town, indicating the importance coffee has for rural economic development, including tourism. As in Gruyère, tourists cannot fail to notice the importance of coffee for Villa Rica.

In 2023, the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) published a paper called «Boosting Tourism Development through Intellectual Property» (https://www.wipo.int/edocs/pubdocs/en/wipo_pub_1054.pdf). While it does not mainly focus on GIs but rather on IP tools in general, it contains case studies highlighting the role of GIs in developing tourism:

- Case study on «Geographical indications as a tool for developing tourism and reviving the local economy in Cambodia» (p.50 ff.), which describes how the registration of the Kampot Pepper GI helped boost tourism and create jobs in the region, even beyond the pepper value chain.
- Case study on «Georgia’s Chacha grape vodka: how a protected GI can boost exports and tourism development».



At the Maison du Gruyère, visitors can gain an insight into cheese production.



The Centro Interpretativo del Café has been established to inform tourists about the quality of Café Villa Rica (GI/DO) and the importance of the GI.



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3.1.4 Enhancement of the GI with a sustainability strategy

A GI does not automatically contribute to sustainable development. However, consumers in differentiated niche markets increasingly require goods to be produced in a way that is not harmful to the environment or the society in which the products are produced. Thus, there is a need to consider sustainability criteria from the beginning when starting a GI initiative. This can be achieved mainly in four different ways:

1. At government level

The GI initiative can be linked to other rural development and tourism strategies. See the sections on Gruyère and Villa Rica.

2. At the level of individual producers

The GI can obtain well-known certifications (EU Organic, Fairtrade, Rainforest Alliance, etc).

This can only be undertaken by individual producers and not by the GI management organisation. However, this option implies complying with strict standards set by international bodies and paying high annual certification costs. In return, these labels are well known on the market. The following may be options in addition to sector-specific labels:

- [EU Organic](#) (European market): a set of organic production rules that are «designed based on general and specific principles to promote environmental protection, maintain the biodiversity of Europe and build consumer trust in organic products».



- [Bio Suisse](#) (Swiss market): sustainability standards focusing on soil health, plant and animal health and welfare, organic farming, biodiversity conservation, traceability, social responsibility, fair producer prices and careful water management.



- USDA Organic (US market): organic standards that apply to «operation[s], including, but not limited to, seed sources, soil conditions, crop health, weed and pest management, water systems, inputs, contamination and commingling risks and prevention, and record-keeping».



- Japan Agricultural Standards (JAS, Japanese market): the JAS is «the compulsory certification for export and marketing of organic products in Japan. It certifies agricultural and zootechnical products, processed products for human and animal consumption (except for wine, spirits and aquaculture products)».



- Rainforest Alliance (global): Farm requirements that are «designed to support certificate holders to maximize the positive social, environmental, and economic impact of agriculture, while offering farmers an enhanced framework to improve their livelihoods and protect the landscapes where they live and work».



- Fairtrade (global): The label has a focus on fair prices (above commodity prices) for farmers, and it guarantees that farmers and workers are supported «as they improve their lives and their communities. Products bearing these marks meet the internationally agreed social, environmental and economic Fairtrade Standards. They are also fully traceable from farm to shelf».



3. At the level of the GI management organisation – book of specifications

Concrete sustainability criteria can be added to the product specification document as additional rules or a code of practice. This is only feasible if all the producers agree and can fulfil the requirements, and if compliance with the standards is consistently controlled.

Benefits

- Producers can identify with these rules and are more likely to comply with them since they are not imposed in a top-down manner by third-party certification schemes. Buyers and traders can make use of this aspect when promoting the product in question.

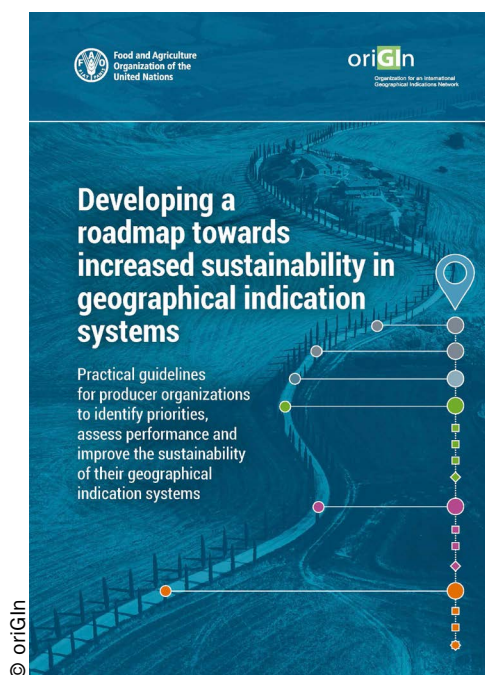
Challenges

- Every GI is different and involves a different set of sustainability criteria, if any. Different GI products are not directly comparable. This might be more challenging to communicate to buyers and consumers than just referring to a known label.
- For small producers, certification with a label such as EU Organic is sometimes impossible due to both the applicable rules and the annual costs of certification.
- Experts may need to be involved: a scientist to carry out analyses and provided scientific data, such as soil analyses; a lawyer to bring the book of specifications into a suitable legal form suitable for submission to the authorities; a facilitator to drive the initiative forward. This can be expensive.

4. At the level of the GI management organisation – additional strategy

Some GI producers prefer not to include sustainability criteria in the book of specifications, but rather to develop a separate sustainability strategy in addition to the GI.

To provide some guidelines on this, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) together with the Organisation for an International Geographical Indications Network (oriGIn) developed a [«roadmap towards increased sustainability in geographical indication systems»](#) in 2024. It is:



«a guide to help GI organizations and any other producer groups for collective action to develop tailored, context-specific sustainability roadmaps in collaboration with current and potential partners in the area. Building on the global Sustainability Strategy for GIs (SSGI), the guide and its toolkit provide GI organizations with practical step-by-step guidance to develop and implement their own sustainability roadmap based on participatory processes (both within the organization and with external stakeholders and allies)».

The guide contains a set of proposed sustainability indicators of four sustainability components: environmental, social, economic and management-related factors. Having such a strategy allows GI producers to communicate their sustainable production efforts to buyers and consumers without including sustainability criteria in the book of specifications.

3.2 Governments

A GI product represents the culinary, artisanal or cultural identity of a specific region and is therefore suitable to represent the region towards the outside world. Thus, by supporting a GI initiative, governments can contribute to local and rural development.

National and regional authorities should create a system in which GIs can be registered without excessive costs. For example, authorities should specify which studies really need to be submitted along with the GI application documents. Authorities should inform the producers about whether there are rural development funds or subsidies that could finance the studies or the lawyer's work or whether there is any other support available for producers or producer cooperatives. Requesting assistance from international cooperation agencies is also an option. However, a GI system should not rely entirely on international cooperation to finance GI product registration.

Authorities should provide assistance to producers with an interest and a promising product, but with a lack of funding. However, producers and local companies should also invest in this collective market strategy (the GI). Investment by producers is an indicator that they have a sense of ownership and see the GI as a promising tool that enhances market access and allows them to charge higher prices. On the contrary, if producers are not willing to invest any resources (time, money, etc.), it is unlikely that the GI initiative will be successful, even with government support. Therefore, at least a co-financing option between producers and the authorities should be envisaged.

As mentioned before, the government should not intervene in the core transactions of GI products and should not be part of the value chain, but rather provide an enabling environment for GI initiatives to develop. The role of the government includes:

1. providing a national GI registration, control and enforcement system
2. supporting the international protection of national GIs via bilateral or multilateral agreements
3. advising producers on how to register a GI and enforce protection
4. aligning GI initiatives with larger rural development or tourism development plans
5. providing financial, legal, organisational or market access support to GI management organisations, but without «taking over» the initiative

3.3 International cooperation agencies

Supporting GI initiatives can be a promising way for international cooperation agencies to enhance rural development in partner countries. Cooperation agencies can support producer associations or GI management organisations directly (e.g. by providing training) and/or assist the authorities in providing an enabling environment for GI initiatives to develop. This can also include educating the authorities themselves on GI registration, law enforcement and ways to support producers.

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A sales centre has been established near the salt mines of Maras to promote Sal de Maras (GI), a Peruvian speciality salt from the Andes. The mines can be visited by tourists.

Like governments and public authorities, international cooperation agencies should not intervene in core transactions involving GI products and should not be part of the value chain.

There are several international cooperation agencies and organisations that provide technical cooperation and training in the field of GIs, such as:

- World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO): <https://www.wipo.int/cooperation/en/>
- Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO): <https://www.fao.org/technical-cooperation-programme/en>
- The Swiss PartnershIP – Intellectual Property Programme (financed by the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO) and implemented by the Swiss Federal Institute of Intellectual Property (IPI): <https://www.ige.ch/en/law-and-policy/development-cooperation>)
- European Union Intellectual Property Office (EUIPO): <https://www.euipo.europa.eu/en/about-us/governance/cooperation/international-cooperation> (EUIPO GI hub <https://www.euipo.europa.eu/en/gi-hub>)
- French Agricultural Research Centre for International Development (CIRAD): support programme for GIs <https://www.facilite-ig.fr/en>
- Inter GI training programme, offered by CIRAD and the Swiss organisation REDD (takes place annually in Switzerland or France, and additionally in Latin America, Asia, the Arab Region, and Africa): <https://www.intergi.org/>

International cooperation at the IPI

At the international level, Switzerland is committed to technical cooperation with developing countries in the field of intellectual property. The Swiss State Secretariat of Economic Affairs (SECO) finances the [Swiss PartnershIP Programme](#), which is implemented by the IPI. The programme consists of several bilateral technical cooperation projects with partner countries of Switzerland, each of which lasts three to five years. A list of current and past projects can be found here: <https://www.ige.ch/en/law-and-policy/development-cooperation/current-projects>

Almost all the projects implemented by the IPI have a GI component, as partner countries usually request support in the area of GIs. The IPI works directly with the relevant authority of the partner country as well as GI management organisations, national GI associations and other relevant actors in the field of GIs. The IPI mainly provides technical assistance and training, relying on national and international expertise.

More specifically, the IPI can provide the following assistance:

- Identifying GI potential: inventory of products, GI impact and suitability assessments, value chain studies and mapping, baseline studies
- Assisting with the establishment of a functional legal and institutional framework: reviewing and providing input on laws and regulations regarding GIs, providing advice on the registration process, legal protection, enforcement, etc.
- Supporting producers' GI management organisations and GI associations with IP capacity building: collective strategies, drafting of product specifications, management capacity, business plans, market studies, communication strategies, access to high-value markets, etc.



The IPI supports governments and producers in different ways. Here it helped organise an event to promote GI registration in the Moldovan handicraft sector (InfolInvent in Chisinau, 2025)

Concrete examples of GI project activities implemented by the IPI:

Project support for the Indonesian GI system



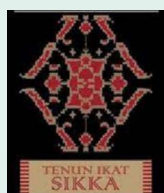
- ✓ Analysis of the Indonesian GI policy and recommendations
- ✓ Training for the authorities on the GI registration process
- ✓ GI strategy and dissemination seminar for local authorities
- ✓ GI seminar and market place (trade fair) in Jakarta
- ✓ Strengthening of the national GI association AIGI

Project support for the GI Garam Amed Bali (salt)



- ✓ Book of specifications / code of practice, including exchanges with experts from Guérande (French PGI salt) and Indonesian producers, both in Amed / Bali and Guérande / France
- ✓ Creation of business plans and a quality control system
- ✓ Training on packaging and labelling
- ✓ Bali Amed Salt Festival and the opening of a sales centre
- ✓ Assistance in registering Bali Amed Salt as a GI (PDO) in the EU
- ✓ Market study and market access strategy in Europe; facilitation of market access opportunities

Project support for the GI Tenun Ikat Sikka (textiles)



- ✓ Facilitation of meetings between weaver cooperatives
- ✓ Registration of the GI Tenun Ikat Sikka
- ✓ Creation of a website and an electronic traceability system and registration of weavers
- ✓ Market access opportunities (ikat auction in Jakarta and network with Indonesian and Swiss high-end ethnic fashion designers)
- ✓ Training for the GI management organisation (business plan, member certification, marketing, e-commerce, use of the app)

Project support for the GI Kopi Arabika Flores Bajawa (coffee)



- ✓ Creation of a website and marketing material
- ✓ Training for the GI management organisation (business plan, member certification, marketing strategies)
- ✓ Traceability system
- ✓ Market access opportunities (coffee auction)

Project support for the Peruvian GI system



- ✓ Analysis of the Peruvian GI system and legal recommendations
- ✓ Training for the authorities on the GI registration process
- ✓ Training for the Peruvian coffee sector on the use of GIs
- ✓ Training for Peruvian local authorities on how they can support GI initiatives

Project support for the GI Café Villa Rica (coffee)



- ✓ GI training for producers and the GI management organisation
- ✓ Updates to the book of specifications to facilitate market access
- ✓ Electronic traceability system
- ✓ Market access (participation in trade fairs)
- ✓ Sustainability strategy, business plan and organisational development training for the GI management organisation

Project support for the GI Cacao Amazonas Perú (cocoa)



- ✓ GI training for producers and the GI management organisation
- ✓ Organisational development: foundation, registration and activation of the GI management organisation
- ✓ Book of specifications, studies and registration
- ✓ Market access (participation in trade fairs)

Project support for the GI Sal de Maras (salt)

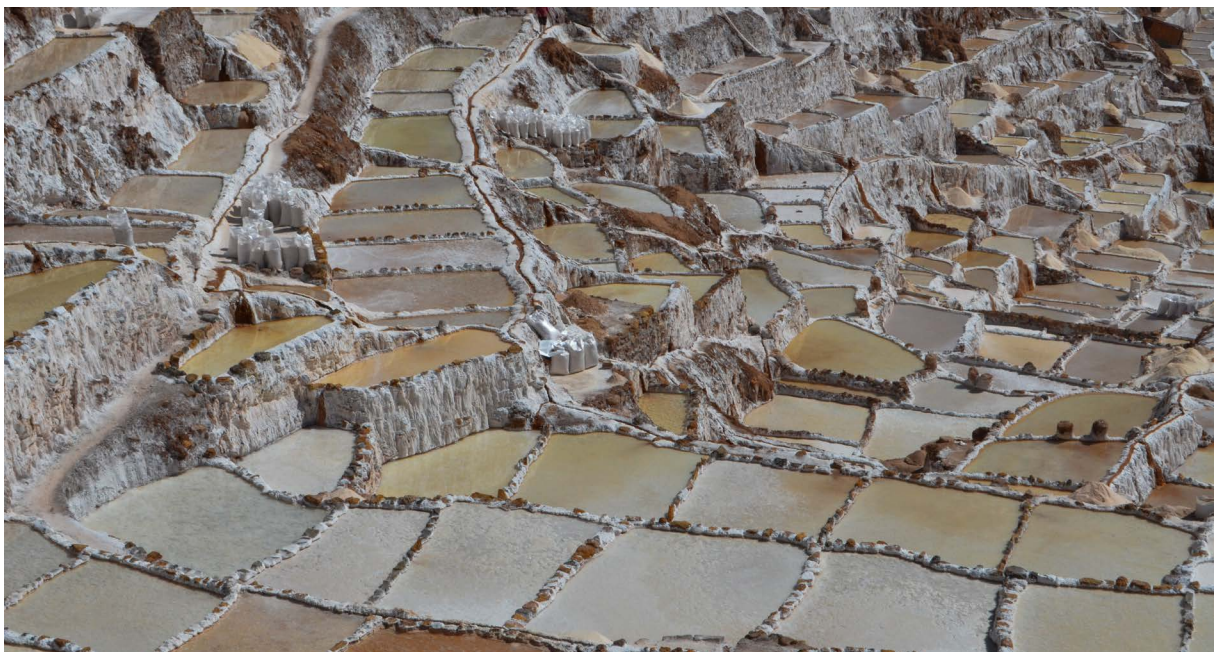


- ✓ GI training for producers and the GI management organisation
- ✓ Facilitation of meetings between producers, processors and the salt industry
- ✓ Book of specifications, studies and registration

Further reading:

- Guide to assessing conditions and impacts of GIs, developed within the framework of the Colombian–Swiss Intellectual Property Project (financed by SECO, implemented by the IPI. Available in English, French and Spanish) https://www.ige.ch/fileadmin/user_upload/recht/entwicklungszusammenarbeit/GI_Impact_Guide_ENG.pdf
- Success Guide for GIs, developed within the framework of the Indonesian–Swiss Intellectual Property Project (ISIP, available in English) https://www.ige.ch/fileadmin/user_upload/recht/entwicklungszusammenarbeit/GI-Schulungsunterlagen/IPI_2017_-_GI_Impact_Guide_ENG.pdf and adapted for the Peruvian–Swiss Intellectual Property Project (PESIPRO, available in Spanish) https://www.ige.ch/fileadmin/user_upload/recht/entwicklungszusammenarbeit/GI-Schulungsunterlagen/Guia_de_exito_para_DO_e_IG_Espanol_ejemplo_de_Peru_.pdf
- Guía de asociatividad para la gestión de Denominaciones de Origen (in Spanish, developed within the framework of the Colombian–Swiss Intellectual Property Project COLIPRI Phase 2). https://www.ige.ch/fileadmin/user_upload/recht/entwicklungszusammenarbeit/2025_Guia_Asociatividad_DO.pdf
- Paper entitled «Using GIs to improve sustainability», published by the FAO <https://openknowledge.fao.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/dafcf329-0d88-4184-8249-54d411d25307/content>
- Linking people, places and products (FAO 2009) <https://www.fao.org/4/i1760e/i1760e.pdf>

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The production of salt in Maras (Peru) has remained the same for centuries. Dating back to the Inca empire or even earlier, the Sal de Maras GI guarantees a high quality and clear origin.

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