



Seminar: INNOVATING AND ORGANISING RESEARCH, EDUCATION AND TRAINING
FOR SUSTAINABLE GEOGRAPHICAL INDICATIONS
Expo Milano 2015- EU Pavilion - September 11th, 2015

SUMMARY

On September 11th, AREPO hold the seminar: **“Innovating and Organising Research, Education and Training for Sustainable GIs”**, in the framework of the Week of DG AGRI Stakeholders at Expo Milano 2015. This event gathered together stakeholders from the research, education and training sectors in order to exchange experiences and practices and to define future priorities for the development of sustainable Geographical Indications (GIs). **The seminar underlined the need for support and funding at the European level on research, education and training on GIs.**

RESEARCH

Past research has been fundamental to define and describe the multidimensional character of GIs. A GI is not only a product, it's a **multifunctional and complex agri-food system** that mobilise several **actors and resources** around a product. Furthermore, it's a **social construction**, shaped by the interaction of different actors and presenting a collective dimension as **common good**.

The process of **valorisation of products of origin** has been analysed, drawing attention on the reproduction of local resources, **fundamental** to determine the territorial identity but also the **social and environmental impact of the product**. **Local governance and collective organisation** of GI systems have been object of several studies too. Past research has also identified a number of tensions, among other, the sustainable management of resources, the trade-off between inclusiveness and quality, and the need of support of public authorities and public policies.

Nevertheless, GIs are very complex research objects and **many aspects and level of fragility have yet to be investigated** in order to face problems and challenges connected with the development of sustainable GIs. Some of the issues uncovered by research are the **economic performance** of GIs as well as the impact at social and environmental level; the **consequences of de-valorisation** of excluded producers; and the relations between GIs and alternative agri-food networks or other qualification schemes. Furthermore, to **support the producers' skills and expertise, research on the technical aspects** should be developed. Finally, **several questions need to be answered** on the **legal nature of GIs**.

In order to tackle these issues, research on GIs should adopt a **multidisciplinary and multilevel approach**, integrating specific knowledge and skills from different stakeholders.

EDUCATION

The presentations drawn attention on the fundamental role of higher education in forming reliable experts able to develop the right policies and to implement differentiation and protection strategies to support GIs. Thus, the formative offer should be redefined to train **not only experts in a specific disciplinary field** but also **generalists trained on local and traditional products**. A more transversal and comprehensive formative offer is indispensable to train GIs experts able to understand the whole complexity, characterisation, construction and development of a GI in all its dimensions.

Several examples of this transversal formative offer were presented (the [Master Food Identity](#), the Master on [Territories Development, Origin and Quality Products](#) and the [Masters on Rural Territorial Development with Cultural Identity](#)). The seminar highlighted that these masters or high-level trainings are **more uncommon and fragile** and need stable means of support to strengthen the **link with research** and the **connection with economic actors**.

TRAININGS

The recent popularity of GIs rises hope but also a number of risks and dangers due to the **lack of harmonisation** among GIs and due to the presence of different strategies at local and global level. GIs are registered too quickly, often with a **top-down approach**. Therefore, the supply chains are inadequately prepared, the specifications are not consensual and the control systems are non-operational.

Vocational trainings are fundamental to address these problems. In particular, we should develop training aiming at addressing the need to **support and assist producers choice**; to increase the **knowledge of the supply chain**; to clarify the **mission of the producer association**; to increase the **awareness on the importance of quality, tasting and sensory analysis**; to assist the **development and writing of specifications**; to raise awareness on **control methods**; and to develop **mechanisms of transmission and sharing of knowledge and experiences**.

During the seminar several experiences of training were presented: the international training [InterGI](#), designed for **professionals in position of responsibility** (organised by Cirad and REDD); the training and participatory workshop of the [ODT Forum](#); and the experiences of the Consortium of the Tuscan olive oil.

CONCLUSIONS

The European Union is a big stakeholder in this context since it provides financial support and funds research projects on GIs. However **this sector still needs the support of the EU to develop multidisciplinary research, education and trainings**. The existing research should be completed, exploring new issues and mobilising new disciplines to address the problems and challenges determined by the complexity of these products.

AREPO will continue to work with its partners from the research, education and training sectors in order to present to the European Commission a **vision for a white book on these issues**. AREPO role would be to assist stakeholders in research, training and education sectors in order to disseminate knowledge, cooperate and create adequate tools to implement research results in regional policies.

The **European Commission** is facing several big **trends** that have an impact on our work in the GIs sector. In the last two years, the Commission gave **big emphasis on food and nutrition security discussion**. AREPO should assure that this **discussion includes also the GI perspective**. In particular, we should:

1. Target **DG Research & Innovation** to demonstrate how GIs can contribute to the **bioeconomy strategy**, thanks to their potential of innovation in the **governance of the food system** at local/regional level and in the **sustainable use of resources**. To achieve this objective, the **sustainability question regarding the GIs should be broadened**; we have to consider the GIs sector as a pillar inside the local/regional level.
2. Target **DG AGRI** to assure that research need and issues related to GIs that will be included in its **long term research strategy**. Furthermore, AREPO should lobby to put GIs and origin products in the agenda of EIP AGRI, whose findings directly influence Commission's agenda.
3. AREPO should request the Commission to strengthen the **governance between different policies related to food production and GIs**: quality policy, CAP, research and innovation policy, health policy, etc.

Finally, the development of **research on GIs would benefit all the stakeholders involved in GI system** in Europe, but also in third countries.

[Click here for more information on the seminar.](#)

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