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**Geographical Indications'  
Global Forum**

11-12-13 APRIL 2017  
PARMA · ITALY



## Position Paper



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Toscana  
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# What is Origo

## A European and international event for the promotion of quality agro-food products worldwide.

The Italian Government and the Emilia Romagna Region intend to promote, in partnership with the European Commission, Parma Industrialists' Association and the Parma Exhibition Centre, **the first event dedicated to the global challenges and opportunities involved in the system of geographical indications (GIs) of the European Union.**

The event was created from the need to raise a new and stronger awareness of the strategic value of our quality products both within the European context and in the international markets.

We face many global challenges that need to be addressed properly by all producers and EU experts in order to combine efforts and create new ways to promote cultural and economic relations.

**Multi-Stakeholder vision, territorial identity, future of the CAP post 2020, global communication, local and global B2B market, international protection of GIs, sustainable agro-food system.**

Read the Origo Invitation letter written by Phil Hogan, Member of the European Commission, Agriculture and Rural Development.







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# Origo Global Forum

## Origo Global Forum 2017: a positive experience

The ORIGO Global Forum on Geographical Indications held in Parma on April 11-13, 2017 has been a success: over 350 participants from more than 20 countries have shown that the topic addressed was and still is very relevant, and that the open and highly interactive approach has been very appropriate.

The forum has brought together the results from recent scientific research done at the EU and world level, the approaches and needs of several European and international Networks like AREPO, AREFL, OriGIn and Qualivita, experts from the EU Commission and FAO, as well as many representatives of consortia of important GIs from different EU and world countries.

It is also worthwhile noting the participation of the Executive Director of American Origin Products Association (AOPA) and of the American Origin Products Research Foundation (AOPRF), as well as of a representative of China GIs Authority, and the representative for Europe of the Tequila regulatory Council. Therefore it can be easily concluded that ORIGO, from its very first edition, has really been a global forum.

The three main focuses of the conference, i.e. the issues addressed in the three sessions, were the following:

- the role of GIs in the European Policy
- GIs as a model of social, economic and environmental sustainability
- GIs around the world: is the European model becoming global?

All of the three sessions, including both presentations and panel discussions, turned out to be highly interesting and many issues have been addressed.



## Geographical Indications and EU policy

Starting from the data presented in the opening video message sent by the EU Commissioner Phil Hogan, about the economic, social, and environmental role played by GIs in the EU, it is clear that these products cannot be considered only a nice and curious residue of the European history: they are already a very strong and important reality for the EU agri-food system, both at the domestic and at the international level. These products represent very interesting and positive solutions not only for many farmers and small and medium food enterprises, both private ones and cooperatives, but also for consumers that are increasingly looking for agri-food products that are sustainable, full of taste, and quality. More importantly, these trends already are and even seem to be getting more and more important both in Europe and in other countries around the world. That is why about 15% of EU agri-food export is generated by these products.

Even if the EU has already made many improvements in its policies - mainly in the Common Agricultural Policy - in order to assure an efficient protection to GIs, the first session has shown that there are still many aspects requiring a further discussion, and perhaps improvements.



GIs are a very interesting tool for creating an added value in many food chains, thanks to the quality and reputation that has been built over time by local producers often on local markets. However, when production becomes more important and the market expands both geographically and in terms of quantity, the relationships among farmers, processors and traders tend to become more conflictual and less cooperative. Therefore the food chain must be organized in order to allow and promote a fair distribution of the added value along the chain, like in the case of non-GI food chains. The current EU regulation already takes into account this issue, but it deserves more attention, in particular for food chains that are more complex.

Legal protection of GIs within the EU has been improved by the ex-officio rule, but there is still a lot to do in order to obtain an effective implementation in all EU countries. The issue of training the officials in different EU countries, for example, seems to be still lacking, and this generates an inefficient implementation of the regulation, and therefore a reduction in the effective protection.

Another key issue has emerged from this session, i.e. the relationship between tradition and innovation in the case of GIs; this is also connected, to some extent, to the idea that the definition and protection of a GI must (or should) be static or dynamic. In other words, what can be changed over time in order to adapt these products to new market needs and new technologies that can become available, and

what cannot or must not be changed, if we want to preserve the traditional “content” of those GI products? It seems that a general and shared vision about these topics is still lacking. Moreover, should we consider the possibility to cancel a GI when some conditions apply?

Of course the protection of GIs outside the EU is still a hot topic even within the EU, and it does not involve Agricultural Policy but also Trade policy, for instance. How should we behave, as EU, when discussing new possible trade agreements with other partners? There are already few experiences - the latest one being the CETA agreement - but the various stakeholders have still different views, and they do not fully agree on the approach that we should follow. Representatives of few Consortia participating in the debate were also looking for a clear, unbiased and effective way to identify the short list of products that can be protected in a bilateral trade agreement. Without a common clear and transparent approach, a major discussion could arise when participating in these negotiations with the risk of reducing the bargaining power of the EU also with respect to the protection of GIs around the world.

Another issue relates to what has been considered the latest need to improve the institutional communication about GIs in all EU countries to promote a better knowledge of the meaning of PDO and PGI, for instance, since it seems that many consumers are still not aware of the meaning of these labels - at least in many countries.

The role of the European Network in supporting GI products has emerged from the session; it is important to stress that these networks are convinced that GIs may represent a very important response to new consumption trends as well as to new needs in term of support to the agricultural sector and sustainability from all different points of view. The need to promote and intensify all sorts of collaboration - at the consortium level as well as at the regional or firm level - has been emphasized by many participants. New forms of collaboration and partnership have been also used in a number of promotion projects, thus promoting not only the particular products taken into account, but also the GI system itself.





## GIs as a model of social, economic and environmental sustainability

The topic of sustainability has become over time one of the most important subjects also for the agri-food sector. Many regulations have been addressing several different aspects especially related to the environmental sustainability. Participants have underlined that the support given to GIs very often represents a very effective tool for obtaining a sustainable form of local development, not only in regard to environmental aspects, but also social and economic ones.

However, if traditional food chains of GI products may be “historically” sustainable, when a food chain increases its economic dimension it is not so sure anymore that it remains sustainable from an environmental, social and economic point of view.

Therefore, on the one hand there are good reasons for supporting GI food chains also because of their sustainability, but on the other hand it must be understood that new research studies and perhaps new tools and new regulations are needed in order to ensure that they remain sustainable over time.

Participants in the round table have stressed, in particular, the unique role of GIs in supporting social sustainability, as long as they are also able to maintain the economic sustainability. And since GIs quite often allow farmers and SME in the food industry to remain competitive thanks to an effective and efficient strategy of differentiation, these goals are quite often achieved.

However, since the definition and measurement of sustainability is very difficult, the findings of the new research study will be particularly useful in order to better analyze and improve it over time also in the case of GI products.

Moreover, GIs are used and promoted as a model to support economic development starting from the agricultural sector because of their environmental, economic and social sustainability. They are used in that way also by international agencies and institutions like the FAO. In this regard more examples can be found exploring the experience of other UN institutions like UNIDO, for instance.

A wider diffusion and knowledge of good practices in this field appears to be particularly beneficial since farmers are quite attracted by practical cases and positive outcomes





## Towards a really global GI model?

It is quite clear all over the world that GIs represent the symbol of identity of the European agriculture and one of the most peculiar aspects of the Common Agricultural Policy. Over time other non-EU countries have started to develop a very similar approach in their own country and/or have started to apply for PDO or PGI in Europe, according to the EU regulation.

This possibility has played a positive role in spreading the European GI approach, together with the position that the EU has taken in many trade negotiations with other countries or regions. Another interesting tool has emerged from the round table: an International Master degree (Food Identity) financed by the Erasmus mundus programme has prepared already more than 140 professionals of 53 countries on the this topic with a specific emphasis on the GI approach. This has been considered a very interesting and effective way for promoting - even if indirectly - the diffusion of the model towards other countries, especially in the developing countries. Many African countries, as well as Central and South-American countries are showing a growing interest on GIs, for the very same reasons that pushed the EU to develop these tools: to protect local products, to support farmers income through market tools and without direct market intervention (and expenditure), to protect consumers from imitations, to diversify income sources for farmers and small producers, to promote a sustainable agri-food model. Those professionals who have studied in the EU for two years, learning the economic, technological, environmental and social effects of GI products, are quite often effective ambassadors of GIs in their countries.

Recently the interest for GIs is increasing even in the Asian countries: Japan has just introduced a national legislation on GIs, and China attended the Conference with its own representative working in the Authority for GIs. Even if in recent weeks there have been problems between China and the EU about GIs, it is clear that this model is spreading also in that part of the world.

The USA is still the most important country clearly against the GI model; however, the Forum has shown, thanks to the participation of one of the most important professionals in this area - Elizabeth Mary Barham, sociologist at the University of Arkansas - that even in that country the GI approach is present, and it is increasing its role especially in the wine sector. It is worth noting also the answer that she has given during her speech: "To the main question of the session, i.e. if the European GI model is becoming global, one can answer yes. And the case of Japan, Mexico and China proves it." This statement, together with the clarification provided about the differences between the official position of the USA and the "establishment" of the agri-food sector on one side, and the one of many other producers and the wine sector on the other, has been very interesting.

In this session there has been also a discussion about CETA - the "Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement" between the EU and Canada - with reference to GIs. The positions expressed in this context have been generally positive, underlying more the benefits for GI products on the Canadian Market than the costs of the agreement.



## Open issues and next steps

From a methodological point of view, the multi-stakeholder approach has been a success: bringing together European networks (like AREPO, AREFLH, OriGIn, AIGIC, AfIDOP and Qualivita), EU officials, representatives of many important consortia of GI products (e.g. Grana Padano, Parmigiano-Reggiano, Bavarian Beer, Quezo Idiazabal), academic and researcher, FAO experts, politicians, has been very successful, interesting and promising. With respect to this issue, we only need to make the relationships among these groups of professionals even more effective with an interest in the GI world.

An even stronger and formal involvement of COPA-COGECA, as well as other EU groups with an interest in GIs like Euromontana, for instance, will make the collaboration and the discussion within the Forum just more effective.

The somehow unexpected success in terms of participation in the Forum also shows that there is a strong need to implement tools in order to foster a discussion:

- among representatives of EU GI products;
- between representatives of companies and Consortia and policy-makers;
- between the research and academic sector and consortia;
- between representatives of EU and regional/local institutions;
- among researchers and policy makers;
- among people involved in the GI sector worldwide.

The First ORIGO Global Forum has been able to prove that this is possible and of great interest for many people, and since there are still many issues to be addressed and solved, there is still room and need for further developments.

In particular, the next edition of the Forum could try to answer the following questions, among others:

- I. how can we make the EU policy on GIs more effective and efficient, with particular reference to issues like protection at the EU level (ex-officio), relationship between tradition and innovation, institutional information to consumers, etc.?
- II. How can we continuously promote the improvement of sustainability of GI food chains, even when they become very big?
- III. What are the relationships among GIs, sustainability, resilience, job creation in agriculture and in the related food industry?
- IV. What Is the role of GIs in the new CAP after 2020?
- V. How can we promote the diffusion of the GI approach outside the EU: new programs of high level education for non-EU professionals, promotional campaigns, meetings, seminars, other academic activities?
- VI. How can we address some of the many legal issues related to GIs in different global scenarios?
- VII. How can we maintain and promote competition and protection at the same time? What are the conditions?
- VIII. How can and should we deal with the issue of innovation in the case of GIs?

These are only few of the main issues that have emerged from the first edition of Origo. The next edition will provide the opportunity to focus on at least a few of them, considering the Global approach and vision which has been thoroughly developed in the first edition.





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