

DRAFT

European action plan for agricultural GIs

In May 2024, the new Regulation on Agricultural Geographical Indications entered into force. This reform has improved and strengthened the European Geographical Indication (GI) system, ensuring the continued success of the European Union's quality policy. While this reform marks a significant step forward, it is crucial to maintain ongoing support and guidance to sustain the system's success.

The EU Quality Policy, which governs Protected Designation of Origin (PDO), Protected Geographical Indication (PGI), Traditional Speciality Guaranteed (TSG), and Optional Quality Terms (OQT) such as "mountain product," is a cornerstone of the EU's rural development strategy. This policy embodies a holistic approach that balances economic growth with cultural preservation and environmental stewardship, making it a key tool for fostering sustainable development in rural areas.

Geographical Indications (GIs) are deeply rooted in specific regions, where they are intrinsically connected to the land, local communities, and traditional knowledge. Unlike other production systems, GIs cannot be delocalized. This territorial anchoring ensures that GI products meet consumers demand for high-quality and traceable food, while simultaneously keeping the economic benefits generated within the regions of origin, directly fostering local development and strengthening rural economies.

By providing stable and higher incomes to producers, GIs contribute to the economic resilience of rural areas, helping to mitigate depopulation and encouraging younger generations to remain in or return to agricultural activities, thus facilitating generational renewal in the agricultural sector.

Each GI product embodies a unique blend of local knowledge, traditional practices, and natural resources refined over generations. By protecting these products, the EU ensures the preservation of traditional agricultural systems and artisanal methods, which are integral to the cultural identity of many rural regions. GIs, therefore, serve as living representations of Europe's rich cultural and gastronomic heritage, linking past traditions with future opportunities.

In addition to their cultural significance, GIs play a critical role in environmental stewardship. Many GI production systems adopt agroecological practices that maintain soil health, protect water resources, and promote the sustainable use of local biodiversity. This environmental commitment not only supports local ecosystems but also provides public goods that benefit European society at large, contributing to the EU's broader sustainability goals.

GIs are also essential to the competitiveness of the EU agricultural sector. These products represent a significant share of the EU's positive trade balance in agricultural goods, reflecting their high demand in both domestic and international markets. Consumers worldwide recognize and trust the quality, authenticity, and origin of EU GI products, making them premium choices that command higher prices.

By ensuring fair competition and offering legal protection against imitations, GIs provide a distinct competitive advantage to European producers. This protection not only safeguards the economic interests of individual producers but also creates robust value chains that benefit entire regions, supporting local businesses involved in farming, processing, tourism, and retail.

Hence, the economic impact of GIs extends beyond agriculture, fostering an integrated economic ecosystem that amplifies their contribution to rural development. This ecosystem stimulates job creation, enhances regional branding, and promotes sustainable tourism, turning GIs into powerful engines of economic growth aligned with the EU's goals of sustainability and resilience.

If their potential to deliver public goods is fully realized, GIs can play a pivotal role in revitalizing rural communities by helping building resilient, vibrant, and thriving rural areas across Europe.

Despite their many benefits, when we examine the distribution of GIs in the EU, it remains uneven, with a concentration in a limited number of countries that have a long-standing tradition, understanding and interest in geographical indications.

Therefore, to unlock the full potential of GIs and ensure a more balanced geographical spread, it is essential to encourage and support their development across all Member States, particularly in Central, Eastern, and Northern Europe, where interest in GIs is growing but remains underutilized.

In light of these challenges and opportunities, a comprehensive set of non-legislative initiatives should be launched to promote the benefits of the GI system towards producers, consumers and regional authorities.

For this reason, we **call for the launch of a European GI action plan to promote Geographical Indications across the Union**. This would help strengthen and expand the GI system, benefiting both producers and consumers.

In particular, it should aim to:

1. **Promote the benefits of the GI system** to producers, consumers, and regional authorities, highlighting its role in fostering rural development, cultural preservation, and environmental sustainability;
2. **Facilitate the exchange of best practices among producer groups**, focusing on the structure and governance of GI organizations, strategies for positive protection and promotion, and the implementation of sustainable production methods.
3. **Enhance public awareness of the GI concept** to incentivize producers to seek GI registration and to educate consumers about the unique diversity of the EU local quality products.

All EU institutions, Member States and stakeholders need to be engaged fully in developing the measures necessary to achieve the Action Plan's aims.

1. Promotion of the concept and logo

- Allocate an enhanced budget for the promotion of GIs and ensure that all GI products can benefit from this promotion policy
- Launch promotion campaigns of the GI concept and GI logo in the EU and third countries
- Encourage retailers of GIs to promote the concept and logo of GIs
- Create a European GI Day

- Introduce an annual awards ceremony to celebrate the European GI Day and recognize excellence in Geographical Indications (GIs) within the EU to enhance the sector's visibility. The awards could honour achievements in the following categories: best exports performance, best communication campaign, best effort to support generation renewal, best diversification activities, best sustainability measures, best initiative of commitment to the territory and its inhabitants, best GI route
- Identify main events to inform about GIs and EU Quality Schemes, in particular in Member States where the uptake is below the average EU level, in cooperation with the European Parliament and other bodies such as the European Economic and Social Committee, the Committee of the Regions, and Commission Representations in Member States.

2. Support the sale of GIs

- Stimulate a greater uptake of GIs also through the integration of GI products in the minimum mandatory criteria for sustainable food public procurement, and encouraging their use in public canteens

3. Protection: preventing food fraud and strengthening consumer trust

- Ensure a robust control systems in Member States and third countries through training of control officers
- Assist Member States in developing and implementing a GI fraud prevention policy, through targeted workshops to share lessons learnt and best practices.
- Ensure the implementation and respect of the free trade agreements and continue the dialogue with third countries to increase protection and reduce fraud
 - Strengthen the financial capacity of recognized producer groups to take legal action to protect and safeguard the GI

4. Data collection/market monitoring

- Update regularly the study on economic value of EU quality schemes, geographical indications (GIs) and traditional specialities guaranteed (TSGs) at the local, regional and national level.
- Continue conducting Eurobarometer surveys to measure the effectiveness of the Commission's actions to promote the GI logo and to measure consumer awareness of the EU GI logo and GI concept.
- Publish regularly reports on GI production in the EU based on Eurostat data, containing, in particular, information on economic performance, exports, sustainability, renewal of generation, protection...

5. Economic developments

- Encourage and stimulate the development of the GI system and knowledge of the GI products through actions aimed at promoting tourist initiatives linked to GI producers and "experience marketing" actions
- Develop projects linked to the valorisation of the OOH - out of home channel (catering) to promote both the valorisation of GI products and to reduce the problems of devaluing practices present in this sales and consumption channel
- Ensure the recognition of the cultural heritage of GIs, for example through the inscription of GIs to the UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity

6. Climate change and promoting biodiversity

- Set up cooperation with stakeholders to help them adapt to climate change and reduce environmental footprint

7. Cooperation

- Promote the exchange of best practices at the EU and national level to help farmers in developing GIs and GI groups. This must be accompanied with the necessary technical and financial support.
- Boost the partnership between GI producer groups at the EU level to allow for exchange of best practices
- Promote the dissemination of best practices and synergies through the EU CAP network;
- Help producer groups to better identify the EU funds available to them: CAP funds, EAFRD funds, promotion funds.
- Provide support to ensure the renewal of generation
- Assist Member States in designing measure for GI in rural areas to promote the renewal of generation, employment, attractivity which could include the sharing of best practices
- Assist competent national administrations by developing and maintaining comprehensive Commission guidelines on the interpretation and implementation of the EU Regulation on GIs, also providing detailed criteria for scrutiny of GIs registration at national level and standard amendments.
- Implement a continuous training program for professionals involved in the GIs registration process at the national level, ensuring consistent understanding and application of these guidelines across different regions

- Organise an international conference on geographical indications at a regular interval (annually, biennially, etc.), which serves two main purposes: first, to provide a platform for implementing the previously mentioned objectives, and second, to facilitate the exchange of experiences, information, knowledge, and proposals regarding issues, needs, concerns, strengths, and/or shared ambitions related to geographical indications (both European and international).

8. Research & education

- Strengthen farm advisory services, notably as part of Agricultural Knowledge and Innovation System (AKIS), to promote knowledge exchange.
- Include EU GIs in European Commission strategic approach to EU agricultural R&I, defining specific priorities to strengthen their contribution to public goods creation;
- Implement the above-mentioned priorities with an increase in funding and in specific project calls dedicated to GIs and other EU quality schemes.
- Promote the ongoing Horizon Europe project: Investigating the contribution of geographical indications (GIs) to sustainable development and optimising support for newly established schemes – GI SMART project
- Encourage and support the launch of new research studies on GIs
- Financially support through Erasmus programme the creation of new formative offers in order to assure the existence of GIs experts with a generalist background, trained on local and traditional products, with a transversal multidisciplinary approach
- Promote the exchange of best practices (education and training curricula, courses, materials, etc.) at EU and national level allowing education providers (e.g. technical schools, universities) to develop courses on Geographical Indications and Quality schemes as part of the general curriculum

9. Common Agricultural Policy

- Rural development measures should allow for support for producers' groups in carrying out ex-ante evaluations of the impact of registering a new GIs, as well as strategic diagnostics concerning the application process and GI products characterisation
- Also, they should support Ex-post evaluation of the impact of a registered GI to update product specifications addressing eventual sustainability issues and considering consumers expectations, developments in scientific and technical knowledge, evolution in market and marketing standards, as well as climate change adaptation and risk management.

10. Regulatory Environment

- Identify and analyse the impact of European regulations that may have hindered the development of geographical indications or do not align with their intended purpose, in order to propose improvements. Key areas of focus include: individual producers applying for geographical indications, the use of the GI label by producers who meet the requirements without being registered in the recognized producers' association, and the use of geographical terms strongly associated with GIs by unregistered operators.
- Strengthen legislative dialogue between European Union institutions and organisations representing geographical indication products on quality policy. This includes further developing Article 34 of EU Regulation 2024/1143 (European Parliament and Council, April 11, 2024) on geographical indications for wines, spirits, agricultural products, as well as traditional specialties and optional quality terms for agricultural products.

[AREPO](#) – The Association of European Regions for Products of Origin

[EFOW](#) – European Federation of Origin Wines

[oriGIn EU](#) - European branch of oriGIn, the global alliance of Geographical Indications (GIs)