Recommends for Farming and Commercial Policies and Practices

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- consultation and dialogue within the value chain involving all the players concerned, sharing a common willingness to commit to an inevitably stringent quality process. The specifications are therefore drawn up collectively, the commercial procedure involves all parties and the spread of profits inside the value chain is fair;
- public policies which encourage this type of procedure to be set up, either by the creation of public quality labels such as the GIs or by the official recognition given to collective trademarks. That presupposes a willingness and mechanisms in place to fight fraud;
- the procedure can be chosen depending on the market: The GI system is suited to promoting product value for exports, selling to tourists or for supermarket shelves, cases in which consumers have greater purchasing power, whereas the collective trademark (which is cheaper to introduce) is better for promoting a typical product nationally or regionally. Procedures for either GIs or collective trademarks do not exclude the other. You can start with a collective trademark and later change it to a GI. This was exactly the choice made by the now famous Coffee of Colombia. 

Cécile Broutin (broutin@gret.org) and Martine François (francois@gret.org)

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International Year of Family Farming

Promoting typical or superior-quality products as a driver of family farming

New and more elaborate products, demands for taste and health quality... Consumers in the developing countries want better things too. Small-scale producers or agribusiness entrepreneurs, people with special know-how or expertise, give their product its special quality. Up against competition from imported products, they must make their products stand out on markets to attract consumers.

Small companies often use a mark or imagery, but cannot afford to invest in marketing procedures. Turning to a collective approach enables them to get round this obstacle while at the same time showing the full value of their specific productions. The collective trademark, a private initiative, and the official quality guarantees such as geographical indications (GIs) can be an effective aid for this. For 10 years GRET has been supporting this approach. What has experience taught? What public policies can encourage their use?

Prior to any certification process or product differentiating, their quality must be improved and standardised. The Good Manufacturing Practices (GMPs) enable – for each sector – a superior quality and consumer safety to be attained. The guides are tailored to the production structures. They are one of the aids designed for small-scale producers and small agribusiness companies to enable a collective improvement of the quality of those products sold on the market, to get government approval for the process, and to have the specific nature of their production conditions taken into account in national and international regulations. They often form the basis of a certification process. For example, a collaborative approach to drawing up good hygiene practices was tried for dairy products in Senegal and Burkina Faso with a view to creating a ‘LOCAL MILK’ quality label.

A collective trademark, the result of structuring and consultation

Created by producers’ organisations or professional groups for processed products, a collective trademark enables a type of product to be shown up as different, to be promoted, and its sales to be increased, bringing in more revenue for the producers and all those involved in the value chain.

For the collective mark to be credible in the eyes of the consumer, the products sold under it must be homogeneous in quality. Resorting to a collective mark requires a certain number of steps to be followed right up the value chain: specifications or regulations governing use for product differentiating, their quality must be improved and standardised. The Good Manufacturing Practices (GMPs) enable – for each sector – a superior quality and consumer safety to be attained. The guides are tailored to the production structures. They are one of the aids designed for small-scale producers and small agribusiness companies to enable a collective improvement of the quality of those products sold on the market, to get government approval for the process, and to have the specific nature of their production conditions taken into account in national and international regulations. They often form the basis of a certification process. For example, a collaborative approach to drawing up good hygiene practices was tried for dairy products in Senegal and Burkina Faso with a view to creating a ‘LOCAL MILK’ quality label.

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very least) as well as a need to spread equally the added value among all the links in the chain. This is only possible in the case of an inter-branch procedure, facilitated by the authorities.

Belle de Guinée

In Guinea GRET is pushing the emergence of a new product: a rice known as Bora Malé. The support given to structuring those involved at the downstream end of the value chain – rice steamer's unions, groupings of dehuskers and women merchants – as part of several projects between 2009 and 2013 (Acorh, Riz Basse Guinée) was a prerequisite to a dynamic and collaborative partnership throughout the value chain, ending successfully with the creation of the trademark this year (see boxed text).

Geographical indications (GIs), from a faded to demands on the ground

For quality labels the GI enables the specific nature of a product and the know-how of the producers to be showcased, and its name to be protected from misuse. Recognised by the World Trade Organisation (WTO), GIs enable protection outside the country of origin. Their implementation rests on five pillars: specifications describing the product and production method, demarcation of the production area, a proven link between the specific quality of the product and its origin based on natural factors and/or special know-how; a monitoring and traceability mechanism; and a management organisation for the GI. Any producer from the geographical area is allowed to use the GI provided he/she abides by the specifications.

The GI system is expanding in developing countries, above all for products intended either for export or the supermarket shelves, because of the cost of implementing the system and of product certification requirements. Three GIs were created in Africa in 2013: Penja pepper and Oku honey in Cameroon, and Zarma Macenta coffee in Guinea. Until we have sufficient perspective to assess the effects on African producers, the longer-established practice in Cambodia is encouraging for the future. Cambodia gave itself a regulatory framework as early as 2009, and the first two GIs – Kampot pepper and Kampong Speu palm sugar – set up with support from GRET, were officially registered in 2010 (see boxed text).

If the example of Cambodia shows that GIs have a positive impact for the producers, the situation is a lot more lukewarm in Vietnam, which set up a regulatory framework much earlier (in 2001). The Vietnamese authorities adopted a heritage approach: several GIs were defined and given official recognition, but the producers and the players in the value chain were never consulted. The purpose was to avoid companies or other economic players taking the GI names for themselves and registering them as trademarks. Recognition as a GI authorises the producers to preserve the potential to be gained from using the name of the specialty product. But subsequently the producers receive no backing in order to use the full value of the GI for their own profit. Unlike Cambodia, the Vietnamese producers do not benefit from the GIs due to a lack of organisation and a verification system.

Kampot pepper, a flagship GI in Cambodia

Pepper production in the Kampot region is a very old tradition. Its quality is renowned both locally and abroad through exports. In 2011 GRET helped set up the Kampot Pepper GI in Cambodia. Since it was launched the price paid to the producer has increased significantly owing to its better-established renown, the improved quality of the certified grains and sales promotions. In 2009 the price per kilo was $4.5 for black pepper, $8 for red and $10 for white. The 2013 price had almost trebled for black pepper ($11), and doubled for the red ($15) and white ($18).

The number of producers has increased (from 113 to 152), and the total surface area grown on has gone from 10 to 32, thereby trebling. Together in the producers’ cooperative (Kampaco) and backed by the Kampot Pepper Promotion Association (KPPA), the growers have improved the quality of their production and been able to increase production of certified Kampot pepper, from half a tonne per producer annually to 2.3 tonnes in 2013. In addition to the direct impact on revenue for the families, the GI is boosting the rest of the value chain. With access to very diversified markets (supermarkets, exporting, tourism), the producers can easily sell their produce at a higher price.

Bora Malé, first African collective trademark for a processed product

Steamed mangrove rice, Bora Malé in the local soussou language, results from flooded pluvial rice cultivation in the coastal regions of Guinea. Much appreciated by the Guineans, it is sold for a price 25% higher than other local rices and 40% higher than imported rice. It has a number of qualities: fertilizer- and pesticide-free production, resistance to salt, processing techniques, special taste qualities due to the varieties as well as the production and processing methods. On the markets of the capital Conakry the merchants are tempted to sell steamed rice which does not have these qualities under this name, rice coming from other regions or mixed with mangrove rice.

The collective trademark is supposed to guarantee that the revenue from the selling of Bora Malé rice goes into the pockets of those involved in the value chain. After nearly five years of helping the Maison guinéenne de l’entrepreneur to structure the downstream end of the value chain, and backed by its FIND (Innovation for Development Fund) endowment fund, GRET has turned dialogue between these players and with producers into a reality, and with it the creation of the collective trademark this year. Producers (unions belonging to the Fop-RB federation), women rice steamer’s unions and groupings of dehuskers (together in the federation of rice growers from Lower Guinea, known by its French name Fédération des riziers de Basse Guinée-Fedéri-BG) and women merchants – all those involved in the value chain – have adopted specifications, a management, checking and collective trademark promotion mechanism enabling costs and financial incentives to be covered and marketing tests to be conducted. An inter-branch organisation during the collective trademark is to be set up, and the first products will appear on the market in September 2014.
Belle de Guinée, a collective trademark out to conquer regional markets

To grow exports in the subregion and regulate the home market when there are large quantities of potatoes on offer, the Fouta Djallon Farmers’ Federation (FPFD) has created a trademark – Belle de Guinée – registered with the African Intellectual Property Organisation (AIPO). GRET lent its support to the FPFD in promoting this trademark: study of the national market and those of the neighbouring countries, collaboration in drawing up specifications for the small-scale producers and in designing a logo, improving packaging, sales promotion, training for the Federation’s officials, producers’ union leaders and government departments.

Implementation of this quality procedure has enabled production to continue to grow (from 200 tonnes annually in 1990 to 20,000 tonnes currently), 40% of which is exported to the neighbouring countries. Its quality is acknowledged and appreciated by consumers in Guinea and wherever it is sold. However, the trademark Belle de Guinée is still little used and its real value little highlighted, owing to the extra cost this would induce and the more complicated logistics, while the sales price would not increase.

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Development Policies & Practice

Recommendations for Farming and Commercial Policies and Practices

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Collective trademarks can also be designed for processed products. The procedure in this case is trickier since it implies consultation between all those who contribute to the quality of the end product (producers and processors at the