



UNCTAD - Slow Food Workshop on Voices from Rural Communities in LDCs

Challenges and Opportunities

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Introduction

- Development Account project to support rural communities in LDCs to promote their traditional products
- Several activities: advisory services, national/regional workshops, UNCTAD's national consultants and international experts
- Collaboration with Slow Food and FAO
- Workshop during the *Terra Madre Fair (Salone del Gusto)* in Turin Italy, on 23-24 October 2014
 - 2014: 220'000 visitors, 400 journalists from 63 countries.
 - Nomination of hundreds of new products for the Ark of Taste project (*collecting small-scale quality productions that belong to the cultures, history and traditions of the entire planet*)
- Public Conference at the *Terra Madre Fair*, 25 October, to report the results and share experience with a broader audience



Workshop "Voices from rural communities in least developed countries: Promoting traditional food products and the territory through "made in" initiatives and geographical indications"

- Workshop witnessed participation from Rural communities producing traditional products from Bhutan, Cambodia, Ethiopia, Italy, Laos, Mauritania, Senegal, Mozambique, Madagascar, and some international experts and governmental representatives
- Underscored the significant role that GIs and other trade laws for the protection and promotion of products of rural communities can play in income generation, as well as poverty reduction, and uplifting vulnerable groups in LDCs
- LDCs shared the state of play, their experiences, and lessons learned in the area of GIs, and protection and promotion of traditional products of these communities



GIs as a development and protection tool

- UNCTAD highlighted the role of trade as an engine of growth, especially for rural communities which produce these traditional products.
- For most LDCs, agriculture is the backbone of the economy supporting the majority of the population.
- Rural communities are the most vulnerable of all economic groups
- With little access to international markets, information, and credit/finance, the only way these rural communities can be competitive is through 'niche' products, with characteristics unique to the region of production
- LDCs have the necessary culture, tradition, and biodiversity, which, if adequately protected and promoted, could add value to their products and allow to move along the value chains of these economies.
- Geographical indications (GIs), widely used in Europe, offer a critical route of promotion and protection.



The benefits of GIs

- GIs: *“a sign used on goods that have a specific geographical origin and possess qualities, a reputation or characteristics that are essentially attributable to that place of origin.” (WIPO)*
- How GIs can be used in LDCs to promote traditional products and protect them from counterfeiting?
- Benefits:
 - Belongs to the rural community as a whole
 - GIs afford a unique branding position to the products, which gain visibility along with reputation and recognition. Consumers are willing to pay a much higher price for products with a link to a specific region or environment in LDCs also taking into account of their pristine environment.
 - Higher prices for traditional products of rural communities
 - Expansion and diversification of markets for these products.
 - Growth of production, incentives for better quality of output, and to uplifting the communities producing these products

Process to Register a GI

- Conditions and requirements
- Identification of the product and the area
- Linking the product to the specific region through the unique characteristics
- Support from the rural community
- Drafting the specifications
- Need for a regulatory framework

Selected shared experiences

- Success story of the Cambodian Kampot Pepper
 - Need to understand the region, the climate, the soil conditions and delimit them from neighbouring areas
 - Ensure that neighbouring communities, who may have historically sold similar products, were not alienated in the process
 - Setting up impartial control systems, to help build consumer confidence, and to meet quality regulations
 - Assessment system introduced by the administration in order to improve the resuscitation of natural resources
- FARO cooperative (Tomatoes of Pachino):
 - Government should invest in local products and agriculture
 - Rural communities have to understand the international customs
 - Consortium to fight counterfeiting



Selected shared experiences

- Imraguen Woman of Mauritania producing the *Mullet Botargo*
 - High stake in rural and traditional production
 - High need for protection to preserve the local know-how
- Fruit Juices of Casamance, Senegal
 - Promoting the product transformation
 - Absence of adequate infrastructure



Selected shared experiences

- Rice community in Madagascar and in Bhutan
 - Early stage of the GI process
 - Need to raise the awareness of the local community and government
- Coffee from a remote area in Ethiopia and from Laos
- White prawns of Mozambique
 - Establishing the necessary regulation for GIs is challenging
 - Weak internal governance, slow administrative process, the lack of adequate quality testing facilities
 - Absence of an association of producers



Conclusion

- Differences in the state of play on GIs in the different Asian and African countries
- Differences on the routes taken by different rural communities in these countries in promoting their products
- Even though each community had its own story, and its own products, they all had similar challenges, and similar experiences
- Valuable experience: rural communities of LDCs are not alone, they can learn from each other



Thank you for your attention

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