
Sustainability analysis of Bavarian geographical indications

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Abstract

With the Green Deal, the European Union has set ambitious goals for the future organisation of the agriculture and food sector. The European Commission has also sent a clear signal of sustainability in the field of GI with the new Regulation (EU) 2024/1143. The regulation has not only strengthened the legal framework for geographical indications (GI). It also takes into account the objectives of the Green Deal by including specific sustainability criteria.

From now on, GIs will (also) be characterised using key sustainability parameters. They will have to compete with technologically advanced and highly processed products and have to deal with narrow focus of the public debate on single dimensions of sustainability (e.g. carbon footprint). There is a risk that GIs and their important contribution to the preservation of culinary and regional heritage will lose their importance. For a valid discussion, all dimensions of sustainability must be considered, in line with the United Nations (UN) agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDG).

This is the aim of a project carried out by the Bavarian State Research Center for Agriculture on behalf of the Bavarian State Ministry for Food, Agriculture, Forestry and Tourism. The object is to identify (potential) sustainability benefits of Bavarian GIs and to make them available to stakeholders.

One object of the project (conclusion in December 2024) is a comprehensive analysis carried out for Bavarian GIs. This will identify the strengths of GIs referring environmental, economic and social sustainability. In addition key factors for how specialities can contribute to achieving sustainability goals will be identified.

The first step was to analyse relevant national, international and EU policies on sustainability: The UN SDGs, the European Green Deal including the Farm-to-Fork Strategy and the Biodiversity Strategy, the German and Bavarian Sustainability Strategies. The results were

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used to develop indicators to measure sustainability and to define a framework for the analysis. The results are the basis for an analysis of product specifications and expert interviews.

The interviews show that the strengths of GIs lie mainly in the economic and social field. In addition to the fundamental aspects of EU quality schemes (e.g. protection against counterfeiting, economic advantages), these are especially short transport distances within the region of origin, keeping up consumer trust in local, traditional products and preserving traditional production methods and local food craftsmanship.

The results will be used to develop options for optimizing sustainability activities and anchoring more sustainability in the entire value chain. This includes the creation of 'GI Cards plus' containing specific information for each GI. The options for action will enable producer groups to focus on their strengths and promote sustainable practices.

At a final conference in early 2025 the highlight will be on mutual support and collaboration, particularly on sustainability activities. By sharing experiences, participants can learn from each other and work on solutions. In this way, sustainability becomes an integral part of the future of regional specialties and their appreciation in society without changing the essence of GIs: tipicity and specificity.

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