
Balancing Tradition and Innovation: Enhancing Sustainability in Geographical Indications through the Case of Cao Phong Oranges in Vietnam

Giang Hoang*¹

¹RMIT University Vietnam – 702 Nguyen Van Linh, District 7, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, Vietnam

Abstract

This study addresses the ongoing challenge of maintaining traditional geographical indications (GIs) while innovating to adapt to external pressures such as climate change, evolving social conditions, and shifting market demands. Traditionally, GI products have been associated with specific production methods and cultural practices. However, there is an increasing call for innovation in these products to ensure sustainability without compromising their traditional nature. Our study is developed based on the literature which suggests that a balanced synergy between the two can significantly impact the sustainability of GIs across economic, social, and environmental dimensions. Using the Cao Phong orange in Vietnam as a case study, this research offers important empirical evidence supporting the idea that the incorporation of tradition and innovation can enhance the overall sustainability of GIs. The Cao Phong orange, a renowned GI product in Vietnam, is celebrated for its unique flavor, quality, and cultural significance. However, in recent years, this GI has faced significant challenges, including a decrease in productivity due to the overuse of chemicals, declining soil quality, and the emergence of diseases. These issues have threatened the sustainability of the Cao Phong orange, highlighting the urgent need for innovative practices alongside traditional methods.

Methodologically, the research employs a qualitative approach, gathering data through in-depth interviews with 23 participants, including 9 government officials and 14 orange growers in the Cao Phong district, Hoa Binh province. This method allows for a comprehensive understanding of the stakeholders' perspectives on the challenges and opportunities in GI production. The empirical findings reveal that in recent years, orange growers have made significant progress in implementing innovations aimed at achieving sustainable production. These innovations include minimizing chemical use, improving land soil quality, enhancing logistic and supply chain management to boost product quality in the market, investing in a soybean soaking tank for fertilizing plants, and adopting an automatic sprinkler irrigation system. These achievements are attributed to the heightened awareness of farmers, as well as the local government's proactive role in organizing regular technical training programs focused on clean agricultural production models for citrus growers. Additionally, supportive policies have further facilitated these advancements. However, our findings also highlight the critical need to maintain traditional practices, such as organic farming techniques and local knowledge systems, to prevent adverse outcomes like soil depletion and loss of biodiversity. The important contributions of this research include its implications for policymakers and farmers. It underscores the government's role in supporting the integration of innovative

*Speaker

practices within traditional GI systems to promote sustainability in all its dimensions. Furthermore, the study provides valuable insights into how GI stakeholders can avoid adverse outcomes by recognizing the interplay between tradition and innovation. This research offers a model for enhancing the sustainability of GI production, potentially guiding future policy development and agricultural practices in other regions. By illustrating the successful blend of innovation and tradition, this study contributes to the broader discourse on sustainable agriculture and the preservation of cultural heritage in GI systems.

Keywords: Geographical indications, innovation, sustainability, Cao Phong orange, Vietnam