

Geographical Indications in Africa: Challenges, Opportunities, and Strategies in Tailoring the Legal Framework in Ethiopia

The topic of geographical indications (GIs) in Africa holds significant importance as it has the potential to shape the future of intellectual property law on the continent. The GI system, successfully applied in Europe for the past century, has proven effective in protecting and enhancing the value of local products, know-how, and biological diversity—qualities that Africa is abundantly endowed with. Africa's unique origin-linked products could benefit from a system that emphasizes their distinct characters and quality linked to local production factors, particularly in a global market where consumers increasingly value sustainability and pristine production conditions. However, as GIs are deeply entrenched in European historical, cultural, and legal traditions, their design and implementation in the African context require careful adaptation to fit the circumstances of the countries on the continent.

This presentation outlines the challenges and opportunities experienced in tailoring a GI legal framework to the Ethiopian context. With a view to providing experience sharing opportunities to other countries in similar trajectory of introducing a legal framework for GIs, it provides a firsthand account of strategies adopted to overcome some features of a GIs system that do not align with the realities of a developing country.