

Worldwide perspectives on Geographical Indications

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From Guidelines to Obligations: Sustainable Practices in the Production of PDO and PGI Products

Regulation (EU) No. 2024/1143, concerning geographical indications for wines, spirits, and agricultural products, has granted a central role to producer groups in the protection of PDO (Protected Designation of Origin) and PGI (Protected Geographical Indication) products. These groups are not only responsible for the traditional tasks of promoting and enhancing protected products but are now also entrusted with advancing environmental, social, and economic sustainability in production. Specifically, Article 7 of the regulation allows producer groups to agree on sustainable practices to be followed in the production of PDO or PGI goods, or in carrying out other activities that are subject to specific obligations under the product specification. These practices may focus on various aspects such as mitigating climate change, sustainable land use, transitioning to a circular economy, and ensuring fair income for producers. Should the group decide that such sustainability measures are mandatory for all producers, they must be incorporated into the product specification.

This provision raises important questions regarding its practical implementation, particularly with respect to the binding nature of these new sustainability requirements. For the first time, sustainability rules have the potential to become compulsory in the production of PDO and PGI products at the European level. Traditionally, producer groups have developed sustainability guidelines on a voluntary basis (for instance, the "Vademecum viticolo" by the Prosecco DOC Consortium), while Member States have allowed groups to adopt voluntary sustainability obligations into product specifications (such as agro-environmental provisions in France). Now, it is essential to determine how these rules will be integrated into the specifications, assuming the status of technical standards, and whether the amendments will require approval at the Union level or if a standard modification process will suffice. Additionally, it is necessary to understand how these new sustainability criteria will interact with the natural, human, or reputational elements associated with PDOs and PGIs.

Further challenges may arise in communicating these sustainable practices to consumers, as the regulation does not provide for new labeling requirements or changes to existing symbols. In this case, it is likely

that reliance will be placed on private certification schemes (e.g., *Equalitas* for sustainable wine production in Italy), certifications under national legislation (e.g., the French *certification environnementale*), or certifications developed by producer groups for specific products (such as *Viticulture Durable en Champagne*, VDC).

This evolving framework provides valuable insights into the regulation's broader objectives, suggesting that the system is no longer solely focused on protecting territorial distinctiveness but also on making PDO and PGI products attractive in the global marketplace.