
GI schemes in Japan and Canada: Analysis with trade-negotiations to the US

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Résumé

The relationships of Geographical Indications to sustainability and embeddedness in individual national contexts are contested. Geographical Indication systems *per se* do not guarantee sustainability standards but they register the tradition of the products and their socio-ecological origins. Potentially, their embeddedness to their production areas, may contribute to rural development and its sustainability by adding values. This paper introduces GI schemes in Japan and Canada are analyzed in their relationships to trade-negotiations, primarily to the EU but also with the US.

Japan has speedily implemented its GI system for agricultural and food products in time for the mutual protection of GIs in the Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) with the EU. The first GI registration was in December 2015. Since then, 148 products have been registered as of August 27, 2024. However, few products are conducive to protection of designation of origin (PDO) due to free trade agreements forcing Japan to import surplus U.S. crops, such as wheat, corn, soybeans, dairy products, beef, and other agricultural products as raw materials resulting in significant implications for GIs and the Japanese diet.

The Canada-European Union Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) was established in 2017 but awaits ratification by all EU member states. CETA compels Canada to establish a national GI system. In contrast to Japan, Canadian progress in developing its GI system has been slow. Government policies and subsidies have targeted commodity production and export markets since the founding of the country. Modern free trade agreements and tight integration with the US economy has only served to sharpen the focus on export-driven commodities, frustrating the development of GIs and embedded products.

This paper examines how embeddedness as a core attribute of GIs challenges Japan and Canada in establishing GI systems that maintain and develop their own sustainable agricultural and food products under an environment of free trade pressure from the United States. The research methodology is historical analysis and case studies. From these analyses, we conclude that 1) unlike EU GIs, Japanese and Canadian GIs are more difficult to link to rural development and rural sustainability through multi-sectoral collaborative activities, 2)

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more practical effects such as elimination of counterfeit products and premium prices are expected by governments, and 3) for GIs to successfully contribute to rural sustainability aligning government agriculture policies and consumer awareness must be priorities.

Mots-Clés: embeddedness, FTA, CETA, EPA, Japa, Canada