
Technological innovations to foster foodstuffs GIs in India: An empirical study

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Résumé

Food is not only a part of gastronomic practices but also holds a remarkable connection with the ecological and traditional practices of the inhabitants. Foods work as identity markers. The essential attributes, qualities and reputation of the geo-climatic features of the place of origin and the skills of the community can be very well-appreciated through foodstuffs. The protection of agri-food products is based on the concept of *terroir*, which regulates the intention of majority of the evolved Geographical Indications (GI) laws. The main reason behind the connection is that foodstuffs contains our culture, history and holds a place of socio-economic interest. The protection of foodstuffs as GI is not only for the product; rather it extends to protect the relationship as well.

GI protection ensures premium quality of the product for the consumers that build the goodwill of the product, place and people. Quality is not a universal statutory standard that needs to be followed. The standardization of the quality is done on the basis of the common parameters set to justify various practices and their effects. The European Commission (EC) has framed various quality schemes regulations that deal with the labelling of the food and agricultural products. Various reports and articles have highlighted that the consumers in EU are more interested for the labelled products as they guarantees quality. However, in India GI protection revolves around the socio-economic development of the community and to protect their rights. Hence, it became a matter of urgent interest to protect the uniqueness of each foodstuff and the communities' interest including the traditional knowledge attached with each foodstuffs. GI registration provides legal recognition to the product and the community. Conservation of GI requires both preservation as well as fostering of GIs. Fostering of the registered GIs are dependent on other issues like quality maintenance, promotion and awareness of the product, market consumption of the product, an effective supply value chain and many other factors. Thus, one important step towards conservation of GI is to utilise technological innovations in the traditional production process. Innovations can be introduced in various parts of production as well as post production processes. An internal mechanism for quality control is needed in India, and technological innovations can assist for achieving quality. The proposition to include technical solutions should not lead to ousting the traditional methods but rather help in sustaining conventional practices.

With this background, the present study attempts to analyse the need for use of technological innovations to foster foodstuff GIs in India. To this end, eight registered foodstuff

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GIs (registered till 2022), from different states in India was studied and analysed. In view of various threats to GI due to various kinds of resource limitation, the objective of this work is to analyse the need of technological support to foster these selected foodstuff GIs that leads to the sustainable development. Through an extensive field study and questionnaire analysis this study highlights the need for incorporation of technological innovations for GI sustenance and factors associated with it.

Mots-Clés: KEY WORDS: Foodstuff GIs, Fostering GI, Technological innovations, GI sustenance, Quality maintenance