
Use and conceptions of GI- and organic labels among citizens in seven European countries

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Résumé

In recent years, there has been a global push to transform food systems for sustainability, aligning with initiatives and strategies like the European Green Deal. Central to these discussions is the evolving role of Geographical Indications (GIs) in the agrifood sector, which traditionally emphasize place-based specificity but are now under pressure to incorporate sustainability measures.

In the marketing of GI products, the food labels on the packaging have been central. They are the visible symbol that distinguishes the product from similar products in the store, guaranteeing a specific geographical and/or artisanal origin. By including sustainability indicators in GIs, this will add an additional, environmental dimension to the product. On the one hand, this product innovation can help to strengthen consumers' interest – and trust in – GI products, but on the other hand, it can help create uncertainty related to the differences between GI products and other quality food schemes, such as organic labels.

Based on a nationally representative survey in 7 European countries (France, Italy, Norway, Poland, Spain, Germany and the UK), we will discuss to what extent European citizens look for PDO labelled products when shopping and whether they confuse these with other labels, specifically organic labelling schemes.

This discussion first relates to recent research showing that consumers do not use food labels to orient themselves when shopping (Amilien et al., 2022). Secondly, different labelling schemes are often confused. In the long term, this may have an impact on the credibility of various food quality labelling schemes. Since these certifications often overlap, it may lead to "label cannibalization," where the success of one scheme may undermine another (Hegnes, 2023). This dynamic has raised questions about how GIs, can adapt to growing demands for sustainability in both local and global contexts.

At the local level, there are many small-scale producers who to a greater extent market their products directly to consumers at farmers' markets, festivals, etc., and to a lesser extent make use of the GI label itself. There is therefore a need to further develop and strengthen the marketing of GI products and look more closely at how to exploit synergies between the label as a marketing tool and other forms of marketing of GIs, such as direct sales. Different strategies and ways of marketing GI products can help meet consumers' need for more knowledge about GI products.

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Finally, the paper points to a need for authorities and labelling organisations to discuss the role of sustainability in the various labelling schemes so that unfortunate cannibalisation can be avoided.

Literature

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Mots-Clés: GI products, European survey, sustainability, citizens conceptions, organic