

Geographical Indications and their evolving role in sustainable diets: A comparative analysis with Fairtrade and Slow Food Presidia

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This presentation examines the transformative role of Geographical Indications (GIs) in promoting healthy and sustainable diets, particularly in light of shifting societal expectations. Traditionally focused on the protection of consumers' and producers' interests against fraud and unfair competition practices while safeguarding local and traditional production methods, GIs are increasingly recognized as catalysts for innovation and sustainability within food systems (Mancini et al. 2005, Belletti et al. 2016).

GIs serve as instruments for signaling origin, quality, authenticity, and cultural heritage in food products, thereby empowering consumers to make informed choices. By fostering a sense of a place and a community, GIs help redefine the relationship between producers and consumers while addressing the growing demand for transparency and sustainability in food sourcing. This presentation argues that GIs should not be viewed merely as protective labels and legal mechanisms, but as dynamic social innovations that respond to contemporary challenges within food systems in a unique way. To do so, it explores how GIs, along with two other food labels, i.e. Fairtrade and Slow Food Presidia, contribute to collective progress toward healthy and sustainable eating. By relying on differentiation based on newly integrated health and sustainability criteria, all three labels enable the formulation of standards tailored to the specific challenges faced in their respective production areas. Each label defines its own ambitions, rules, and adjustments in a pragmatic manner, representing their "promise of difference" (Le Velly, 2017). This evolution reflects the capacity of stakeholders to envision and implement new forms of collective organization, although the outcomes are sometimes controversial.

The first part of the presentation analyzes how GIs, Fairtrade and Slow Food Presidia have evolved to incorporate health and sustainability standards and criteria, illustrating their potential to respond to and influence broader dietary patterns. The second part examines the opportunities and challenges encountered by these labels in advancing a sustainable food system while ensuring that local stakeholders reap economic and social benefits arising out of their use.

By highlighting the distinct contributions, strengths and limitations of GIs alongside Fairtrade and Presidia, this presentation emphasizes the necessity for food labels to adapt to the demands of a changing world. It posits that GIs, through their deep-rooted connections to local contexts and collaborative governance, can effectively contribute to a more sustainable and equitable food system that meets the diverse needs of both consumers and producers.

References

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