



DEVELOPMENT POLICIES & PRACTICES

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Promoting local higher-quality products

A driver for family farming

NEW, MORE SOPHISTICATED PRODUCTS, QUALITY REQUIREMENTS FOR TASTE AND FOOD SAFETY, AND VALORISATION OF LOCAL PRODUCTION: CONSUMER DEMAND IN CITIES IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES IS CHANGING. FACED WITH COMPETITION FROM IMPORTED PRODUCTS, SMALL FAMILY FARMS AND AGRIFOOD BUSINESSES MUST DIFFERENTIATE THEIR PRODUCTS ON MARKETS BY GIVING THEM SPECIFIC CHARACTERISTICS IN ORDER TO BETTER PROMOTE THEM. TO DO THIS, THEY OFTEN USE A BRAND AND A VISUAL, BUT ONLY RARELY ARE THEY CAPABLE OF INVESTING IN MARKETING OR ENSURING THE EXPECTED LEVEL OF QUALITY AND REGULARITY. THESE DIFFICULTIES CAN BE OVERCOME TAKING A COLLECTIVE APPROACH, WHILE GIVING PRODUCERS THE POSSIBILITY TO COLLECTIVELY VALORISE THEIR PRODUCTS. FOR MORE THAN 20 YEARS, GRET HAS BEEN SUPPORTING THESE APPROACHES: WHAT ARE THE LESSONS LEARNED? WHICH PUBLIC POLICIES SHOULD BE IMPLEMENTED TO FAVOUR THESE APPROACHES?

Collaborative production of good practice guides

Before labelling or differentiating a product, its quality must be improved and standardised.

Guides to Good Manufacturing Practices (GMPs) make it possible to define good hygiene practices for each sector in order to ensure higher food quality and safety for consumers.

The guides are adapted to suit each production, processing and marketing structure. For small-scale producers and small agrifood businesses, they can be used to collectively improve the quality of products put on the market, to gain State recognition of the validity of their approach, and facilitate inclusion of their specific production conditions in national and international regulation. They often serve as a basis for labelling procedures.

For example, a concerted approach to the production of good practice guides was tested for dairy products in Senegal and Burkina Faso; for rice and red palm oil in Guinea; ground corn (cornmeal) in Haiti; and honey, soap and shea butter in Burkina Faso.

GRET

GRET is an international fair development NGO that has been working for more than 40 years from field level to political level to combat poverty and inequalities.

Collective brands and participative guarantee systems

Created by producers' organisations or professional groups, collective brands make it possible to differentiate types of products, promote them, increase sales and therefore the incomes of producers and other stakeholders in the value chain.

For collective brands to be considered credible by consumers, products sold under this name must have a level of quality that is consistent and superior to the same products being sold in markets and shops. Using a collective brand requires a certain number of stages: specifications or regulations governing use that are both stringent and realistic for the different stakeholders in the value chain; a system for self-monitoring; an improved packaging process; a marketing strategy; and training the members of the organisation to comply with specifications and monitor quality.

Collective brands, which are most often related to raw products, can also **concern a processed product**. In this case, the process is more complicated, because it involves consultation with all the stakeholders who contribute to the quality of the end product and the fair distribution of value-added between all the links in the chain. This is only possible when an inter-professional approach is taken, and is favoured by public authorities.

In Guinea, GRET supported the development of the first collective brand for a processed product in Africa: **Böra Maalé rice**. Structuring support to downstream stakeholders in the value chain (women parboilers' unions, huskers' and retailers' groups) as part of several projects was a prerequisite to consultation dynamics within the value chain, enabling the creation of a brand (see boxed text opposite).

Another collective initiative enables certification of the quality of local products and facilitates their access to national markets: **participative guarantee systems (PGS)**. These are used to certify the organic nature of products. They enable producers to manage a certification committee made up of consumers, technicians and producers. Within initiatives supported by GRET, these PGS now make it possible to certify agroecological products from various cooperatives in Cambodia, market-gardening products in Benin, and rice seeds in Myanmar. PGS also facilitate local marketing of high quality products thanks to reduced certification costs. In 2022, the [International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements](#) (IFOAM) listed 242 agricultural PGS in 78 countries, involving almost 1.2 million producers. Some countries such as Burkina Faso, Brazil and India even recognise PGS in their national organic agriculture regulations.



"BÖRA MAALÉ", THE FIRST COLLECTIVE BRAND FOR A PROCESSED PRODUCT IN AFRICA

Böra Maalé mangrove parboiled rice comes from rain-fed rice-growing in Maritime Guinea. Very popular among Guineans, its price is 25% higher than other local rice, and 40% higher than imported rice. It has numerous qualities: produced without fertilisers or pesticides; salt-resistant; taste characteristics related to varieties, and to production and processing methods. At marketplaces in Conakry, it can be tempting for traders to sell parboiled rice under this name that does not possess these qualities (rice from other regions or rice mixed with mangrove rice).

After five years of providing support for organisation of the value chain's downstream activities, GRET, together with the Maison Guinéenne de l'Entrepreneur (MGE), backed the creation of a collective brand in 2014: Böra Maalé Fanyi. An inter-professional organisation was created to promote the collective brand. This organisation is made up of four producers' unions, six women parboilers' unions, and a women traders' union (172 groups). It aims to ensure that income from sales of Böra Maalé rice is actually passed on to the stakeholders in the value chain. This initiative had an impact on the quality of all mangrove parboiled rice production, thanks to a change in practices. However, the high price for the consumer of this labelled rice, which costs 1.6 € for a 1 kg bag, positions it in a niche market (restaurants, small supermarkets, affluent households) which is stagnating at between 2.5 and 3.5 tons per year. A second brand, Senteya Maalé, aimed at a mass market, was launched in 2023 by the Lower Guinea Rice-growers' Federation (1,176 members) and the Lower Guinea Federation of Food-crop farmers' and Salt farmers' Organisations (19,566 members) to develop the sale of a higher-quality mangrove parboiled rice in bags of 50 kg, at 0.75 €/kg. 489 tons of sales were achieved between January and September 2023.

Geographical indications, from a trend to requirements in the field

Among the various labels, geographical indications (GIs) highlight the typicality of a local product and protect its name from being misused. Recognised by the World Trade Organization, GIs enable protection, particularly outside of a national territory. Their implementation is based on five pillars: specifications describing the product and method of production; clear demarcation of the zone of production; a proven link between the quality, notoriety or specific characters due essentially to this place of origin; a monitoring and traceability system; and an organisation to manage the GIs. All producers in the geographical zone can then use the GI, provided they comply with the specifications.

The geographical indications system is growing in developing countries. It mainly covers products

intended for exportation or supermarkets, due to the cost of implementing the system and the need to certify products via a State-led process, particularly for the internal market, or by an approved third-party body for export markets.

Various projects, including some supported by GRET, are supporting producers' groups and States with recognition of GIs – mainly agricultural – that are certified or in the process of being recognised in Africa (Ziama Macenta coffee, red cacao from Cameroon, Wagashi Gassirè cheese from the north of Benin, etc.), and in Asia (Kampot pepper, Komaen tea, Kompong Speu sugar, etc.).

The effects of GIs and their impact on marketing of products and, ultimately, on producers' incomes are quite heterogeneous. Although some value chains, such as **Kampot pepper**, are very successful (see boxed text opposite), others are struggling to find markets, and therefore to organise value chains and ensure their sustainability. The success of a new GI can only be ensured if producers' groups themselves choose the GI as a quality label based on promising market studies. A GI can only work if there is an established market for this quality sign.

Fair and organic markets are growing stronger

Other labels and certifications also guarantee the environmental and social quality of products. **“Organic” and “Fair” certifications work in the same way via the drawing up of specifications guaranteeing virtuous environmental and social practices, in compliance with international standards that are audited by third-party certifying bodies.**

For several years now, these labels have been experiencing a significant increase in notoriety, with numerous investments for organic products during the Covid-19 crisis. The products certified in this way generally find outlets on markets in the Northern hemisphere, facilitating the organisation of groups. For example, the **Meung tea cooperative in Laos** is becoming organised and implementing specifications and a traceability system, because it has a reliable market with a fair trade actor in France.

Although these labels guarantee access to remunerative western markets, the cost of certification remains a significant obstacle for penetration of local markets, because consumers are not necessarily able to pay this extra cost.

In addition, as the certification process (organic or GI) requires particular stringency, some producers may be excluded from certified cooperatives due to their location, which means they cannot benefit from the collective organisation being implemented.

→ RECOMMENDATIONS FOR AGRICULTURAL AND TRADE POLICIES AND PRACTICES

Public policies and donors should provide greater support for the implementation of initiatives aimed at highlighting the quality of products grown by family farming, the development of which is crucial to feed cities. A collective approach to differentiate typical food products can have positive effects for small farms and stakeholders in the value chain, provided several conditions are met.

- **Ensure consultation within the value chain**, bringing together the stakeholders concerned, sharing a common will to become involved in a demanding quality approach. This means specifications are developed jointly, the marketing approach is collective, and margin sharing



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“KAMPOT PEPPER”, A FLAGSHIP GEOGRAPHICAL INDICATION IN CAMBODIA

The Kampot region has a long history of pepper production, and the quality of its pepper is recognised on both local and export markets. In 2007, GRET began supporting the implementation of the “Kampot pepper” GI in Cambodia. Since it was launched, the price paid to producers has significantly increased, thanks in particular to its growing notoriety, improvement of the quality of certified peppercorns, and trade promotion. The price per kilo of black pepper paid to producers increased from 3 US\$ in 2008 to 25 \$ in 2023. In addition, the number of producers tripled over the period, and the surface area planted and volumes increased from 9 to 110 tons.

This GI and the Kampong Speu sugar GI continue to be strengthened in Cambodia. In Laos, the “Khao Kai Noi” (“little chick rice”) and “Komaen” tea GIs are being supported, as is the Shwe Bo Paw San rice value chain in Myanmar.



within the value chain is fairer and more transparent. The choice of quality labels to be developed must be made by informed stakeholders, and never by experts, donors or accessible financing lines.

- **Develop public policies that favour** the implementation of this type of initiative, either by creating public labels such as the Organic label or GIs, or through encouragement and recognition of collective brands, or initiatives such as PGS. This requires determination and a system to fight against fraud.
- **Adapt the initiative to suit the market:** the “Organic” and “Fair” labels – and to a lesser extent GIs – are suitable for highlighting products for export, tourism, and supermarkets, with consumers who have a higher level of purchasing power. Collective brands or PGS, which are less costly to implement, are intended to highlight a typical product on the national or regional market. Market research must inform value chain members of the advantages and limits of these various marketing approaches. The latter are not mutually exclusive. It is possible, and sometimes preferable, to develop several labels in order to access different markets. Labels can also be implemented as part of a learning initiative: a collective brand can be turned into a GI if there is a market for it. This is the option taken by the widely renowned “Café de Colombia”.

Because of environmental impacts and the need to reduce food importations, the promotion of products for local and sub-regional markets is a priority for GRET. For the international market, GRET focuses primarily on processed products shipped by boat for environmental and energy reasons (reduction in volume, weight, and therefore in shipping costs, which are less expensive because of the raw materials’ lower moisture content).

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