



QUALITY CERTIFICATION SCHEMES FOR AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS AND FOODSTUFFS, BY THE ACP EU TBT PROGRAMME

In the recent years the number of voluntary certification schemes focusing on quality agricultural products and foodstuffs in the EU and worldwide has increased significantly. Worth noting that most of them have been established during the past decade, marking particular interest of consumers for quality in relation to food and agriculture in general. Similar interest has been apparent in the ACP counties too.

Therefore, it is agreed that quality in agricultural production is not only an issue for every farmer but also for every consumer. It concerns commodities produced according to basic standards and specific quality products. Research conducted in several European countries showed that consumers are demanding higher quality products.¹

Nowadays, the quality concept includes not only traditional ideas of quality such as taste, appearance and origin but also the use of processes that are “friendly” to people (producers), animals, and the environment. In addition research reveals that more and more consumers are appreciating results from sustainable agricultural production. Two thousand years and people still agree with Seneca, who said, “It is the quality rather than the quantity that matters.”

One of the ways in promoting agriculture and encouraging farmers to produce higher quality products is to support voluntary quality standards and schemes for agricultural products and foodstuffs. The development and popularity of the certification schemes is driven by social demands for particular characteristics of the product or production method going along with operators’ desire to ensure that their suppliers meet specific requirements. Clearly, private certification is not needed to confirm compliance with legal requirements (such as food safety). Any certification scheme for agriculture or food sector must remain voluntary, however, once producers join the scheme participation becomes subject to particular established conditions and procedures.

The purpose of certification schemes for agricultural products and foodstuffs is to provide assurance using certification mechanism that certain elements of production method or attributes of the product itself as described by the technical specifications are observed. The large variety of schemes can be explained by different stages of the food supply chain (such as at the primary production level, covering the entire supply chain, affecting all sectors or just market segment, etc.), and multiple elements of quality dimension (such as geographical origin, including climatic and human factors, tradition and know-how innovative skills, processing techniques, nutritional properties, etc.). It should be underlined that of all economic sectors, agriculture and food production is one of the most divers and heterogeneous. For this reason, any generalisation can be made only with certain assumptions and care.

¹ *In the EU over 440 different schemes in accordance with the Study made by the EU Commission (DG AGRI) - Research projects*

Therefore, a number of categories or types of agricultural schemes can be outlined depending on the scope of coverage, specific objectives, structural framework, operational methods and, more specifically, way of attestation. This is, perhaps, the most important distinctions that should be made describing and understanding an agricultural or food production scheme – who does the attestation of compliance? In that respect all schemes can be divided into two groups – self-declaration schemes and certification schemes where there is an element of a third-party attestation procedure. Certification schemes can be further distinguished based on operation business-to-business or wider targeting in providing information to the final consumer (using in that respect appropriate labels). In terms of special requirements, schemes can attest compliance with already existing normative requirements laid down by the public authorities or may enlarge the scope, going above the baseline criteria. Another classification criteria pertains to whether the scheme assesses the final products and processes of their production or management systems.

Scheme owners are equally varied, covering the whole range from farmers and producers, through NGOs, interest groups and retailers, to public authorities.

An example of a successful voluntary EU-wide agricultural scheme is protection of geographical indications (hereinafter, referred as GIs) provided by EU Regulation 1151/2012 on Quality Schemes for Agricultural Products and Foodstuffs. GIs are names associated with quality products coming from specific places when the geographical origin of the products gives them distinct characteristics, quality and reputation.



The idea of GIs is to highlight special qualities of the products through indication of their origin. They also preserve cultural traditions and, therefore, are rightly associated with protection of traditional knowledge and community rights. Since the consumers appreciate quality goods, the use of GIs allows producers to obtain market recognition and a premium price for their goods. This is why adequate protection of this intellectual property type is required.

In a number of ACP countries products with geographical names are known for their specific qualities and reputation but the geographical names are not registered or protected.



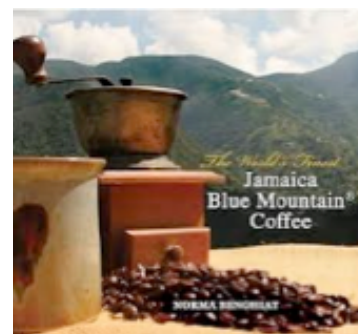
An excellent example of such countries is Kenya. The Kenyan GI agricultural products include Mt. Kenya coffee, Gathuthi tea, Kisii tea, Kericho tea, Kangeta, Miraa, Meru potato, Kikuyu grass, Mombasa mango, Machakos Honey, Naivasha wine, Machakos mango, Asembo mango, Kakamega papaya, Muranga bananas and Kisii bananas. Livestock products with GIs that could benefit from GI protection include Molo lamb, Kitengela ostrich meat, Omena fish, and Mursik milk. Other GI products are Keringeti mineral water and Victoria mineral water, Kakamega omukombera, Tilapia



fish from Lake Victoria, Tilapia fish from Lake Turkana, minerals such as Tsavonite and Magadi soda as well as industrial products such as the Kenyan kiondo, handicrafts would include Kisii soapstone, Akamba carvings, Maasai attire and beads.

Examples of other African countries products having unique geographical attributes are: Shea butter and Bobo for plank masks from Burkina Faso; high-grade cotton from Chad; kivu and Ituri for coffee from Congo; Zimbabwe tobacco and chipinga coffee; Uganda Waragi; Tanzania Konyagi and Kilimanjaro coffee; M'Bigoiu for sculptures and Gabon sweet potato which is five times sweeter than the normal potato and has one of the highest sucrose content from Gabon, white honey from Cameroon; Korhogo fabrics from Cote D'Ivoire; pineapples from Guinea; the Mananara vanilla from Madagascar; while chilies and pickles from Rodrique Island of Mauritius.

Geographical Indications are protected in at least 87 countries of the world as trademarks. Among those countries are the United States, Canada, Australia, Japan, a lot of African, Caribbean and Pacific countries. It is not possible to identify the exact number of registered geographical indications in those countries, since geographical names are protected as ordinary, individual or collective, certification of guarantee trademarks (for example, Jamaica Blue Mountain Coffee²). It is also common that multiple trademarks are registered for singular geographical indication, as each producer would have his own trademark with geographical indication.



Contact details :

Irina Kireeva

Technical Expert

ACP-EU TBT Programme

E-mail: I.KIREEVA@acp-eu-tbt.org

ACP EU TBT Programme

Avenue de Tervuren 32 box 31

1040 Brussels Belgium

www.acp-eu-tbt.org

² *Jamaica Blue Mountain Coffee is protected as a certification mark in Jamaica and as either a certification mark or trade mark in over 50 other countries.*