



Evaluating GI registration effects by means of participatory methods. First insights from a Jamaican case

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Abstract – The paper aims at proposing a participatory methodology for evaluating the economic, social, and environmental effects of the registration of a Geographical Indication (GI), and presents some results on some GI products in Jamaica.

INTRODUCTION

The legal protection given to GIs is an issue of growing worldwide interest and concern. From a purely normative and regulatory point of view, this interest stems from the need of World Trade Organization (WTO) member States to implement the TRIPS agreement (1994), which mandated member States to provide legal means for protecting GIs. From an economic and social standpoint, interest is growing because of increasing international competition on the level of product quality differentiation, where quality means all attributes, including emotional ones, that help products to stand out and avoid competing purely on price.

As a consequence, many public and private stakeholders at both local and global levels have fostered this new turn to quality. GIs appear to be one of the more interesting and “locally manageable” tools for attaining this aim.

It is often assumed that the protection of GIs, according to some national or international rules, is a means for achieving success in the marketplace and generating economic benefits for local producers. However, little has been done to evaluate the many types of effects from the legal protection of GIs, and no comprehensive methodology for evaluating those effects has been developed.

AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

Normally, policy interventions and projects exert their effects over different stakeholder categories and with reference to different territorial scales. Therefore, there are many perspectives from which GI effects can be monitored and evaluated. Different stakeholders will be interested in different GI effects, and they will be inspired by different values when evaluating the same GI performance.

The paper aims at proposing a participatory methodology for evaluating the economic, social, and environmental effects of the registration of a

Geographical Indication (GI), and presents some first results from the implementation to some GI products in Jamaica.

The use of participatory approaches [Ezemanari et al, 1999] aims at stimulating the participation of all relevant stakeholders to all the steps of the evaluation process (definition of the aims, data and information collection, analysis and interpretation), as to guarantee good feed-backs from the evaluation and more in general for the whole “success” of the GIs registration, as it can prompt local actors’ involvement in the GI dynamics, allowing them to better use the GI scheme within individual and collective marketing strategies.

A full range of effects has been considered in the analytical framework, ranging from first order effects (outputs) to second (outcomes) and third order ones (effects). For each order, some both quantitative and qualitative indicators have been proposed in order to monitor the effects of the GI registration in time. Here follows the main categories of effects:

- 1) First order effects
 - Firms’ interest in the GI scheme*
 - RGI potentiality*
 - Quantities / turnover of RGI product*
 - Producer awareness and knowledge of the RGI*
- 2) Second order effects
 - 2.1) Effects on the structure of the RGI system
 - Number of firms and their dimensions*
 - Exclusion effects*
 - Organisation of the RGI system*
 - Coordination between firms in the RGI system*
 - Investments and innovation in the RGI system*
 - 2.2) Effects on the economic performance of the RGI system
 - Prices*
 - Costs*
 - Profitability*
 - Distribution of economic performance*
 - Other economic benefits*
 - 2.3) Effects on markets and consumers
 - Abuses / imitations*
 - Consumer awareness*
 - RGI product quality and identity*
- 3) Third order effects
 - 3.1) Effects on related markets
 - Effects on related markets*
 - 3.2) Effects on economic activities linked to RGI
 - Effects on economic activities linked to GI*
 - 3.3) Effects on other elements of the territorial capital
 - Biodiversity*
 - Environment*
 - Social capital*
 - Cultural capital*

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RESULTS

The methodology has been implemented to some GIs in Jamaica that were on the way of applying for the registration: Jamaica Rum, Blue Mountain Coffee, and Jamaica Jerk.

Although in Jamaica the GI legal framework is not yet fully developed, it was possible to analyse stakeholders' expectations from the protection of the GI and some expected effects on the basis of the draft Codes of Practice of the three GIs. The field research was conducted in 2010, as part of a broader technical assistance project of the Swiss Intellectual Property Institute.

Jamaica Rum

The initiative for registering the GI Jamaica Rum has mainly come from the big rum companies, and it has brought to the drawing of a quite loose draft of the Code of Practice. Consequently, no major change in the structure and organization of the supply-chain is expected. Stakeholders' expectations from the registration of the GI are focused on the prevention of abuses and misuses of the name "Jamaica Rum", with particular reference to the foreign markets. In this regard a key issue concerns the possibility the Jamaica GI rum system will have to prevent bottlers to blend Jamaica rum with other rums, that depends also on the registration of GI Jamaica Rum in foreign countries. The GI registration is also perceived as a marketing opportunity, having the advantage of benefiting from the reputation of being registered as a GI. A better traceability of the production process and the product is another expected effect of the GI registration.

Blue Mountain Coffee

The Jamaica BM coffee supply chain is well structured and strongly regulated by the law, and managed by the Coffee Industry Board (CIB). Writing the Code of practice was quite a simple matter, thanks to previous rules established by Jamaican law with regard to the boundaries of the BM production area, process specifications and quality characteristics of the product. The process was managed by the CIB, with a strong participation of first processing firms, traders and exporters; farmers and local institutions were not directly involved.

The registration of BM coffee in Jamaica is expected to allow a better protection against imitations and abuses, lower protection costs and grant a better enforcement, and give the opportunity for registering BM coffee on some relevant export markets. From a strategic point of view this could help to lower the dependence on the Japanese market. From the interviewed local actors' point of view, no major changes in the performance, structure and organization of the supply-chain are expected as a consequence of the GI registration, at least in the short term. This is mainly due to the pre-existence of production and product rules and of strong collective trademarks.

Jamaica Jerk

The Jerk supply chain involves both agriculture and processing sectors, and it is very fragmented. The initiative for registering the GI Jamaica Jerk is processing-sector driven, even though some farmers were involved in the process, too.

Stakeholders' expectations are focused on the prevention of abuses and misuses of the name "Jamaica Jerk", both in Jamaica and especially abroad. Processors expect to improve their traceability systems (especially for raw materials) and to access new markets abroad. In general, due to the average limited weight of jerk on the whole firm's business, no major effects of the GI registration on the whole firm's supply are expected. Farmers expect that GI registration will increase quantities and prices of the raw materials, eliminate competition from imported raw materials, support more stable relationships with processors (especially for the most specialized farms), and support community development.

CONCLUSIONS

The three cases analyzed showed a diversified situation as regards actors' expected benefits and costs from the GI registration.

Results show how actors' motivations for registering a GI may be highly different according to the specificity of both production systems and marketing channels used: for Jamaican Rum, the registration appears to be a qualification tool to insert the product into high-quality market segment; for Blue Mountain Coffee, the registration seems complementary to an already existing strong collective organization and as a leverage to open new marketing channels; for Jamaican Jerk, the registration is perceived as a way to foster collective organization of small producers.

In all the cases, some controversial aspects that actors have to solve on the way of the registration emerge, common to all the registration processes for GI registration: the definition of territorial boundaries, the quality characteristics of the final product, allowed production techniques.

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