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Sustainable Commitments and Socio-Economic Challenges of Livestock Geographical Indications in Occitania

French livestock Geographical Indications (GIs) face significant challenges, despite their initial promise of strong ties to the terroir and superior quality (Barjolle et al., 1998; Bérard and Marchenay, 1995; Delfosse, 2012), as well as their past successes, such as product valorization and territorial development (Mollard et al., 2006). These GIs are now under strain from both situational challenges—such as the COVID crisis (Napoléone et al., 2021) and inflation—and structural issues, including a declining number of farmers, income struggles, value-sharing issues, and a long-standing crisis in the dairy cattle sector. Within this context, sustainability actions by these sectors are abundant. Research for a geography dissertation on livestock GIs in the Occitania region of France shows that these sectors actively engage in the three main dimensions of sustainability, though with varying impacts (Guibert, 2024).

The range of sustainability initiatives by livestock GIs is analyzed according to their degree of commitment (adapting to standards, proactivity, communication), their geographical scope (local, regional, national, international), and their nature (within the framework of GI specifications and collective actions, or outside this framework with added external standards, such as Corporate Social Responsibility). Many are integrating sustainability in various ways, often entering a process of environmental greening (Mormont, 2013). However, they struggle to address other issues, such as value-sharing, fair compensation, or retaining farmers, especially in livestock production.

The sustainability of some GIs appears threatened by several socio-economic challenges, as exemplified by these three sectors:

AOP Bleu des Causses: Facing a drastic decline in production volumes and an enduring crisis in the dairy cattle sector, marked by difficult working conditions for farmers, low compensation, a shrinking livestock base and number of farmers, significant inequalities between upstream and downstream actors, and increased concentration in downstream processing.

IGP Duck Foie Gras of Southwest France: Hit by a prolonged health crisis due to repeated avian flu outbreaks, which have had severe socio-economic consequences, and also struggling to meet societal expectations around animal welfare.

IGP Veal of Aveyron and Ségala: Historically supported by collective quality standards, which helped maintain significant bovine livestock activity on small and medium-sized family farms, but now faces challenges such as declining veal prices and value-sharing issues within the sector.



Underlying these issues is the question of the capacity for action among the most modest sectors and, more broadly, upstream actors, as well as the varied sustainability commitments among these highly diverse GIs. To better understand the drivers and barriers to increased sustainability in GI sectors, it is essential to grasp the heterogeneity of these sectors, their actions, and the difficulties they encounter.

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