

International Conference

Climate change and new societal expectations Which Agroecological transition within geographical indications?

**Field visits on 11 and 13 October 2023, Conference on 12 October 2023
École supérieure d'agricultures, Angers, France**

The acceleration of climate disruption and new societal expectations are raising questions about Geographical Indications (GIs). The question is particularly crucial for those geographical indications in the sense that these productions and the know-how they convey are closely linked to the territories that bear them. These sectors, whether wine or food products, have been involved for several years in integrating agroecology into their respective productions, but new questions have emerged.

A one-day conference and one or two-day visit event will be co-organised by the association Origin-for-Sustainability, which runs the Origin, Diversity and Territories Forum, and the Ecole Supérieure d'Agricultures d'Angers (ESA), in partnership with the Pays de la Loire Region and the support of the French Ministry of Agriculture and Food Sovereignty.

The aim of the event is to address the issue of agro-ecological transition within territories where the geographical indication sectors play a structuring role for agriculture and local development.

Geographical indications have built their quality and their path to success on the respect of traditions and local know-how and an appreciable quality according to the respect of a specification. Today, GI products are faced with decisive challenges, between new trends in consumer demand, broader societal expectations in terms of practicality, environment, animal welfare, support for the economic actors involved (including farmers and SMEs), and CSR in general, but also the need to preserve the heritage that these products constitute, in a context of climate change.

The agroecological transition is a response to the pressures on agroecosystems and involves a strong dynamic of local actors. This agroecological transition places GI production systems in agroecosystems whose resilience is determined by the richness of interactions within the systems. These processes are based on numerous technical and commercial apprenticeships and the construction of collective responses. Furthermore, it has been observed that, sometimes paradoxically, geographical indications can tend to lead to a significant and perhaps excessive specialisation of systems, a reduction in diversity and an extreme specialisation of local resources. The agro-ecological transition as a societal expectation allows GIs to reveal their strengths and weaknesses through past revisions of specifications and to conceive the continuation of this transition in future revisions of specifications.

The current environmental challenges are leading producers and other stakeholders involved in these GIs to ask themselves new questions that require progressive changes while continuing to guarantee the specific intrinsic qualities of these products, which have built and maintain their reputation. However, the stakeholders involved in GIs have important assets since they develop a collective dynamic around their product based on the notion of shared collective know-how. This aspect is important, because it requires the establishment of a collective strategy that is well concerted and accepted and makes it easier to collectively question the necessary changes in practices in response to new societal expectations.

At the same time, these changes in practices codified in the certified specifications can have an impact on production costs and, consequently, on the selling prices of these products. Whether in traditional commercial channels or in mass catering, these price increases can constitute a barrier to access to these products for certain categories of population. It is therefore necessary to examine the levers of action to allow the widest possible inclusion of GI products in consumption. This is a major issue because these products constitute our collective agricultural and food heritage. As far as mass catering is concerned, certain solutions have been identified by the public and private players in these channels, but it is important to look further into them in order to better master them and develop others.

Whatever the commercial channels, buyers or consumers have their own criteria for appreciating the specific qualities of products (environmental, social, sensory, etc.), and their own willingness to pay for the different levels of quality. In addition to this subjective reality, there is the regulatory framework which can set political guidelines in favour of the purchase of these products under GI or from more environmentally friendly agro-ecological systems, as is the case in France, for example, with the EGALIM law which applies to collective catering.

Producers and other actors in these GI sectors who are committed to more environmentally friendly systems therefore potentially have several levers at their disposal in order to develop or strengthen the presence of their products in the various commercial channels, and in particular in mass catering.

The founding principles of agroecology are important and deserve to be discussed in the light of the international diversity of GIs and their respective productive, ecological, and institutional contexts. The international conference programme will address them in plenary in the morning, and in parallel workshops in the afternoon.

The Conference will address the theme from three levels: the agricultural practices implemented, the strategies induced by the collective logics carried by the defence and management organisations, including the skills and knowledge exchanges, and the logics and trends of consumption and what they induce.

The topics discussed in parallel workshops in the afternoon will focus on 3 themes:

1. Agroecology in agronomic practices, in the particular framework of geographical indications,

2. Agroecology in the logic of the sector within the Defence and Management Organisations (ODG) and producer groups,
3. Agroecology in the consumption of the territory (mass catering and leverage effects on GI consumption, role of short circuits in the territorial dynamics of PDOs/PGIs) and focus on innovative practices in food processing.

The Conference is intended for an international audience of professionals, experts in the field of geographical indications and agro ecology, as well as institutional and professional stakeholders in the field of quality signs. Between 80 and 120 participants are expected.

The evening of 12 October will be dedicated to the alumni of the Master Food Identity, who specialise in the enhancement and promotion of local and traditional products. Videos of the journeys of the Master Food Identity students, coming from all over the world in the framework of the "ERASMUS MUNDUS" recognition of this Master, will be produced and published on the websites of the Master Food Identity and the ODT Forum.

The budget (estimated at 60,000 euros based on previous events) will be covered by participation in kind and the direct payment of certain expenses by ESA, paid participation in the event (managed by the Origin-for-Sustainability association), and subsidies. Applications for subsidies are being made to the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Sovereignty, the Pays de la Loire Region, the City of Angers, and partners in the PDO and PGI sectors in the region.

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Parallel Workshops

1. Agroecology in agronomic practices, in the context of geographical indications,

Agroecology is an agricultural production system that uses ecological, social and economic principles to design more sustainable and environmentally friendly agronomic practices. In the context of geographical indications (GIs), agroecology can contribute to the preservation of natural resources and local biodiversity, which is particularly crucial for non relocatable production.

Agroecological practices include soil fertility management, crop diversification, biological pest control, water and energy conservation, and the promotion of biodiversity. These practices can be adapted to the geographical specificities of the different territories covered by GIs.

Strengthening the integration of agroecology into GI agronomic practices would contribute to the preservation of local ecosystems, improve the resilience of production systems and promote product quality. This agroecological transition would require investments in training, research and development and technical support for producers.

This workshop will explore agroecological practices in the specific context of geographical indications (GIs). Participants will examine how these sustainable practices, including conversion to organic agriculture, can help maintain the quality and authenticity of GIs while adapting to various environmental pressures. Participants will also discuss the challenges and obstacles related to the adoption and mainstreaming of these practices, such as training farmers, updating know-how, access to appropriate technologies, and the need to maintain local, fair and consistent practices within GIs.

2. Agroecology in the supply chain logic among the Organismes de défense et de gestion (ODG) and producer groups,

Agroecology in the supply chain logic among the Producer Organizations (ODG) and producer groups,

The Producer Groups (in France: *Organismes de défense et de gestion* or ODG) are spaces for consultation on the content of the specifications. Agroecology can be integrated into the chain logic of producer groups, whether it is expressed in the content of the specifications or in a certification that complements the GI.

The integration of agroecology into the supply chain logic of ODGs and producer groups requires coordination between the different actors in the supply chain (producers, processors, distributors, consumers), as well as a two-way relationship with the clientele on the stakes of the agroecological transition: from producers to consumers in order to assert commitments, as well as from consumers to producers in order to incite changes.

This workshop will allow participants to discuss the challenges of integrating standards and requirements related to agroecology at all stages of the chain by engaging in reflections on the circular economy. Participants will be able to share their experiences and best practices to discuss how to integrate these standards into their practices throughout the value chain and/or their specifications, while maintaining product authenticity.

3. Agroecology in local consumption in the territory (collective catering and leverage effects on GI consumption, role of short circuits in the territorial dynamics of PDO/PGI) with particular focus on innovative practices in food processing.

The agro-ecological transition of the geographical indication sectors entails adaptation costs that must be taken into account in a global dynamic of local actors. Consumption is an essential lever for promoting the agroecological transition. Collective catering and short circuits can contribute to the consumption and development of local and quality products resulting from agroecological practices.

Innovative food processing practices can also contribute to the agroecological transition by using more environmentally friendly processing techniques and by valorizing local and seasonal raw materials. It is important to make consumers aware of the importance of product quality and origin, seasonality, and the impact of their consumption on the environment and on the territorial dynamics of agri-food chains.

This workshop will examine the role of collective catering and local consumption in the development and sustainability of GIs. Participants will be able to discuss the importance of territory and markets, including local markets, for GIs and explore initiatives that promote the consumption of products from agroecological practices. Discussions will also focus on initiatives to raise public awareness of local consumption and GIs and on specific actions that actors in the sector can take to promote more sustainable and local consumption.