

Submitted Abstract

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Abstract

Based on endogenous and multifunctional approaches, food Geographical Indications (GIs) are widely considered as means for sustainable development in mountain areas. Their justifications include enabling farmers a higher income, contributing to the maintaining the landscape and even foster social cohesion and innovation in the territories in which they are embedded. However, these outcomes are not always achieved, but are highly dependent on a series of factors (regulations, consumers...) and on the ways GIs are constructed and managed. In this sense, most mountain areas pose specific factors associated to them such as depopulation, a peripheral situation and smaller scales of production in comparison with other agricultural areas. In this communication, we address whether size is a major factor that influences the sustainability of a GI. To explore this issue, two tiny mountain cheese productions holding a GI label have been selected: O Cebreiro, located in the Eastern Galician Mountains – Spain –, with four producers inscribed on it; and Tolminc, situated in the Julian Alps – Slovenia –, with only two registered enterprises. A qualitative methodology has been developed to deepen the perceptions and strategies of stakeholders when asked about the performance of both GIs. The fieldwork conducted has been partially funded by the EU H2020-MSCA-RISE HIGHLANDS.3 project. Although both GIs benefit directly few actors in the two selected case studies, different situations are found. In O Cebreiro, the GI has been a turning point. It has contributed to the revalorization of the traditional product, strengthening the image of the area in association with tourism and even with more farms and cheese enterprises beyond the GI taking advantage from it. Meanwhile, the label has been anecdotal for Tolminc cheese production. In this case, it failed to include traditional producers, which are the ones who preserve the mountain landscape with their cattle, being the GI practically monopolized by one company as a trademark. If for the former the sustainability of the production clearly depends on the GI, that's not the case for the latter. Given that, the size of a GI is not a critical conditioning factor in achieving it. The sustainability and value of tiny GIs should be assessed by considering the extent to which they are able to extend their impact to the broader community of the area where they are embedded.