



Food and Agriculture Organization
of the United Nations



European Bank
for Reconstruction and Development

DEVELOPMENT OF ORIGIN-BASED FOOD QUALITY LABELS IN THE BURSA REGION

Final report

Lessons learnt from the project

December 2018

1. Introduction

In 2016, the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nation (FAO) and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) launched a project for the development of origin-based food quality labels in the Bursa region, Turkey.

The project aimed at:

- supporting pilot GIs in the Bursa region, that could demonstrate good practices for other groups of producers in the region and nationwide;
- strengthening the GI system in the country, from an institutional point of view and, possibly, from a legal/regulatory point of view;
- questioning efficiency of the current control system in order to propose some improvement to the Turkish system;
- enhancing quality and value added in the Turkish agrifood sector and improve export market opportunities.

Under the FAO/EBRD cooperation, a review of the legal framework with key recommendations has been prepared and contributed to the new law on GI adopted in 2016, and two GI pilots were set up – the protected denomination of origin (PDO) Bursa Black Fig and the PDO Bursa Peach (specification, certification system and registration). The PDO Bursa Black Fig is officially registered in Turkey and will be submitted to the EU Commission for European recognition while the PDO Bursa Peach's registration is under process. The GI association for both PDO Bursa Black Fig and PDO Bursa Peach has been established, gathering a number of cooperatives of the two sectors (the president is a fig producer and vice-president a peach producer). Thanks to the project, the cooperatives has gained capacity and experience in promoting and selling directly their PDO products in retailer markets, establishing promising market relations with a number of retailers.

All these outputs result from appropriate approach and methodologies used during the project, thanks to efficient collaborations of the experts involved, the national expert prof. doc. Sertaç Dokuzlu from the University of Uludağ, and the international experts Jean-Claude Pons and Maud Roggia from Ecocert. The current report summarises the main lessons learnt from the project, and building on them, provides recommendations for the design of future projects with similar objectives.

2. Lessons learnt from the implementation of the project

Raising awareness and capacity building, the backbone for GI development

A theoretical approach combined with a practical approach guarantees the adhesion and involvement of the stakeholders. The theoretical approach is the common thread of the project by providing to the stakeholders the guiding principles for GI development. But it is not sufficient in itself. The practical approach, thanks to its diversity and flexibility, allows to translate in practical and common terms the theory.

Based on the project experience, it is clear that the impact of the development of the GI cannot be the same if only one approach is used. Indeed, it has been highlighted many times by the different stakeholders that at first sight they were participating and listening to the different workshops on the GI, but they finally understood the whole process after the study tour organised in the middle of the project as well as during and after the marketing test. Thus, without the study tour and the marketing

test, the project may not have been as successful as it is today. But without a first theoretical incentive on GI principles, the study tour would not have been as beneficial as it has been because the stakeholders would have missed many conceptual information on GI.

The development of a **GI is a long and complex process**. Although there are numerous GIs in Turkey, it is not very well known and understood by those who make the GI alive: the producers. In this context, we have noticed that it was necessary **to provide several times the same information, but we diversify the canal of information** (economical entry, technical entry, control entry, international entry...) **and the modalities** (theoretical vs practical). This should neither be considered as a waste of time nor a redundancy. We also consider that the time spend should not be underestimated. We had a good example of a producer who asked what a GI is during the marketing test (so the final phase of the project). We also experienced this situation during the first seminar on control and certification options. While the main topic of the seminar was to discuss the different option for GI control, most of the stakeholders were questioning the requirements of the Book of Specification although the latest were validated by the producers themselves during the study tour.

The methodology based on training, capacity building, etc. should be very wide and should involve all the stakeholders and especially the producers, retailers who are those who are making the GI. As a long and complex process, it is of paramount importance to **keep stakeholders' involvement and adhesion** in the long term. This was possible in the project thanks to the combination of seminars, study tour and marketing test, which were all determinant for producers and cooperatives' motivation.

Specific methodologies at each stage, a key for successful GI development

Thanks to the support of the University of Uludağ, it has been possible to fine-tune the project methodologies specifically adapted to the local context, at each stage of the GI development: characterization of the product for the justification of the link to origin, delimitation of the area, certification and marketing test. Actually, the development of a GI requires a **transdisciplinary approach** including **rural sociology, agronomic and economic technics**. It is important to have within the project team, experts able to discuss technical issues with producers but also able to identify social challenges including decision-making mechanisms. This approach underlines the importance of **developing a flexible and adaptable methodology** as it will vary depending on the country, the project, the producers etc.

One of the most susceptible phase of the GI development is the **delimitation of the area**. For the development of the two GIs, the project has used an approach based on the characterisation of a small area where the figs and peaches were produced. **The soil, climate, topography etc. have been precisely defined and mapped according to their capacity to provide the features of the products**. Thus, we looked for areas with similar characteristics. This approach is scientifically interesting and is quite easy to implement. Indeed, it is based on the overlap of different layers of maps based on a set of features (soils characteristics, topographic characteristics etc.). These cartographic criteria/data are usually managed at the territory level and can be obtained quickly. Based on this approach, we consider that there is a perspective for further development based on satellite data.

The marketing test has been a key for the success of the project. It participates to raise awareness among producers and cooperatives and allows them to measure the potential economic benefit. Based on our experience, it is **recommended to organise the marketing test earlier in the project** – just after the finalisation of the book of specification and the characterisation of the product - to challenge as

soon as possible the economic paths. The marketing test should both **test the market and consumers' expectations**:

- Test the market and the supply chain: the objective is to **define the place of the product on the market** (who is willing to buy the product), to **verify** the ability of the cooperatives to assure the **logistic aspects** of the supply including the capacity of delivering on time, the solidity of the packaging during transports, transports etc. and to assess the interest of the market for the products. Regarding the market channels, we faced challenges to convince the retailers to sell the GI. The main issue was that the retailers were worried about the ability of the cooperatives to deliver a good quality product on time. After several discussions, a compromise was found: a commercial agreement was signed as well as a specific agreement for the marketing test. The marketing test was a real success for the retailers and they are now very happy to be part of the journey and they want to maintain their purchase. But this was not the case for the bazar which was not adapted to GIs; the marketing test has been interrupted before the end because the market channel was not adapted and there was no interest from the retailers and consumers' sides.
- Test consumers' expectations: assessing consumers' expectations was a challenging part of the marketing test as the retailers refused the distribution of a questionnaires to its customers. Therefore, it was not easy to get quantitative information to get consumers' expectations. Nevertheless, the students had the opportunity to discuss with consumers while they were buying the GI products. Thus, **the price, the packaging aspects, the logo** could be discussed with consumers.

Students (master and PhD) from Uludağ University have been greatly involved during the whole project, especially during the field phase including the social survey, data collection, marketing tests, events organisation. Their participation was very fruitful as it allows us to have **a good presence on the ground** and to keep the producers and all the stakeholders of the GI project involved. In parallel, students gain in **autonomy and professionalisation** as they are involved in practical operation with producers and processors. It is an interesting training for their professional life. A project group composed of local and international experts and students seems to be a very good and efficient combination for the development of GI.

Understand the local context and legislation to implement a suitable and credible GI

It is of paramount importance **to understand the legal framework of the country** to develop a suitable GI which fit into this framework. It is important to ensure the availability of this legal framework **in a language understood by the experts**. Depending on the country we can face many challenges in first identifying the regulatory corpus which could support the development of a GI and then precisely understand the legal framework. It has been therefore very useful to make the legal review at the beginning of the project, as it has been also to organize a mission prior to the project launch to identify the GI potentialities in Bursa and to define the possible pilots.

Ensure the sustainability of the project in the long term

The success of the project is also **based on the ability of the stakeholders to maintain and improve the quality of the GI system set up**. Therefore, before finalising a project it is necessary to assess and verify that the collective organisations (cooperatives) will have the capacity to manage the GI properly.

Within this project, the role and responsibilities of the cooperatives have extended tremendously, and it will be important to support them in “the first year of life” of the GIs. Four main challenges have been identified that advocate for ensuring some future quick missions/coaching to provide some follow-up recommendations to the GI association and their members:

- The support of the national expert during the marketing test was to ensure the logistic and good delivery of their products to their clients. It is the first time that the cooperatives are dealing with this kind of client and services and they could learn from this test.
- Today, the cooperatives have a small financial capacity while it is clear that the management of a GI requires human and financial resources to ensure the quality and credibility of the products and which go beyond the control and certification aspects. The cooperatives will have to reinvest a part of the added value from selling the GI products and the GI association will have to collect some fees to their members so to finance the GI system (internal control, technical advice to producers, promotion...).
- Finally on the management capacity, the administrative organisation related to the implementation of the GI in terms of traceability, registration, record keeping and the implementation of an internal control system including the training of internal inspector, issuance of questionnaires remains important challenges for the cooperatives as they were not implemented yet.
- Regarding the packaging developed for the cooperatives products, we identified another challenge. Cooperatives and producers understood the importance of having a good quality and well marketed product. With the success of the GI packaging, they are also willing to use a similar packaging as the GI one for other products like pears to get a more attractive product to consumers. This approach is really risky as consumers may be confused and won't see the difference between a GI product and non-GI product. It also raises the question of producers' and cooperatives' understanding of a GI: we should make sure that they understood that GI go far beyond the packaging.

The development of a GI is not solely a question of rural and economic development. GIs are a very **interesting tool for stakeholders' professionalisation**. Indeed, most of the time, producers and cooperatives are not familiar with the concepts of **traceability, quality, hygiene and security** which are inherent to a GI. Thus, GIs provide to the stakeholders the capacity to respond to those requirements which are also required on the international market.

Preserve local resources and specificities through sustainable production practices

The development of the GIs allowed to rehabilitate traditional practices which were abandoned in the Turkish landscape: for instance, the Hale variety for the peaches used to be widely used in Turkey and it represents today solely 5% of the orchards. So the GIs allowed the rehabilitation of traditional know-how.

In consumers' mind, a GI is not only a product produced locally. Consumers are expected that **GI products create positive impacts on natural and human resources**. Therefore, when developing the Books of Specification, **stakeholders should take into account sustainable criteria**. Nonetheless, it may not be so easy for highly technical production as the peaches. This production is based on several crop management techniques and the challenge lies in finding techniques more rational, adapted to the local context while providing a standardised quality to the product. For the time being, we did not find

a balance yet between sustainable practices and standardised quality. There are rooms for improvement especially regarding the organic matter rate and the limitation of the evapotranspiration. Then when we have highly technical production as peach, it is relevant to have a kind of technical screening to question the suitability of the treatments and fertilisation protocols; more especially when it is only in hands of advisors selling the phytosanitary products to producers.

3. Recommendations for the design of future projects on GI

Building on the previous lesson learned, the following elements could be taken into consideration when designing a project on GI to ensure its success and sustainability:

1. Start with a review of the institutional framework and for the pilots, provide a further identification of potentialities and gaps to be addressed
2. Capacity building should represent an important component and combine theoretical approach for the stakeholders to provide the guidelines and methodologies adapted to their context, to a practical approach with regular activities that motivate and allow stakeholders to experiment the concepts and therefore integrate them (i.e. study tour, certification simulation exercise, marketing test);
3. Design the project around key “activities/moments” (such as study tour and marketing test) to re-centralised and ensure constant mobilization of all the actors.
4. When possible, consider partnership with local university in order to provide a ground for possible academic work (methodologies) and synergies with students in their education;
5. Consider the organisation of marketing test with partnerships with retailers in the middle of the project so the GI concepts can be integrated earlier and with possibility to scale up marketing and promotion before the end of the project;
6. Consider sensitizing producers and other stakeholders on GI sustainability with provision of tools to identify and prioritize issues.
7. During project implementation, planning for marketing tests / consumers’ surveys (or other marketing-related activities), as well as raising awareness events, is key to ensure public understanding of quality labels and their value added.
8. Following the development of a GI label, producers and consumers could benefit from further capacity building activities, especially in regards to raising awareness about quality labels and best practices in marketing and linking with retail and tourism sectors.