Geographical indications for agricultural products and foodstuffs explained

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Summary of EU quality schemes providing legal protection for the use of geographical indications and GI application procedures

Regulation (EU) 2024/1143 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 April 2024 on geographical indications for wine, spirit drinks and agricultural products, as well as traditional specialities guaranteed and optional quality terms for agricultural products, amending Regulations (EU) No 1308/2013, (EU) 2019/787 and (EU) 2019/1753 and repealing Regulation (EU) No 1151/2012

Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) 2025/26 laying down rules for the application of Regulation (EU) 2024/1143 as regards registrations, amendments, cancellations, enforcement of the protection, labelling and communication in respect of geographical indications and traditional specialities guaranteed

Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) 2025/27 supplementing Regulation (EU) 2024/1143 with rules concerning the registration and the protection of geographical indications, traditional specialities guaranteed and optional quality terms

Update

Summary of the various quality schemes of the European Union (EU) aimed at protecting the use of geographical indications (GI) and other EU quality schemes such as traditional speciality guaranteed (TSG) and their application procedures.

Background

Geographical indications (GIs) identify food, wine, and spirit drinks that have qualities, characteristics, or reputation linked to their place of origin. GIs are a form of intellectual property right that protects producers against the bad faith or fraudulent use of these names by third parties.

The European Union (EU) allows registration of different types of product name for agricultural products according to the relationship between the product and place of origin, as well as traditional knowledge concerning production.

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Regulation 2024/1143 provides the main rules relating to quality schemes for agricultural products, wine, and spirit drinks. There are rules for quality schemes for wine, spirit drinks, mountain products, and products of outermost regions (see the EC's Geographical indications and quality schemes explained).

Provisions concerning GIs for wine (Regulation 1308/2013) and for spirit drinks (Regulation 2019/787) need to be amended to align them with the common rules on registration, amendment, opposition, cancellation, protection, and enforcement of the GIs and, for spirit drinks, on controls set out in this Regulation 2024/1143.

General rules for the labelling of spirit drinks and agricultural products are laid down in Regulation 1169/2011.

Labelling rules concerning protected designation of origin (PDO) and protected geographical indication (PGI) in the wine sector are set out in Regulation 1308/2013.

Registered names are protected against:

- direct or indirect commercial use of the registered name by products not covered by the registration
- misuse or imitation of the registered name (including through the use of expressions such as "style" or "type"), even if the true origin of the product is indicated
- any other false or misleading indication as to the provenance or nature of the product
- any other practice liable to mislead consumers as to the true origin of the product.

Protection of GIs in the EU initially covered wine in the 1970s, and was extended to agricultural products and foodstuffs in 1992. Today, the EU register of GIs contains almost 3,300 names of wines, spirit drinks, agricultural products, and foodstuffs. In 2017, the sales value of GIs was estimated at €77.15 billion: 51% of this value was for wines, 35% for agri-food products, and 13% for spirit drinks (ECORYS & COGEA 2020).

eAmbrosia is the official database of EU GI registers.

Legal framework

Registering a PDO or PGI

An application to register a name can be made by a producer group or – under some circumstances – a single producer. Where a geographical area crosses the border between two countries, a joint application may be made by several groups (Regulation 2024/1143, Art. 9).

An application for registration in the EU of a PDO or PGI for a product originating outside the EU must contain the following documentation (Regulation 2024/1143, Art. 13(2)), drafted in one of the EU official languages:

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- product specification with its national publication reference
- "single document" (the appropriate form in Annex I, Part I of Regulation 2025/26)
- accompanying documentation, such as information about proposed limitations on use or on protection of the GI, and the name and contact details of the applicant and of the national authorities verifying compliance with the product specification
- legal proof of protection of the GI in the country of origin.

The product specification (Regulation 2024/1143, Art. 49) includes the:

- name to be protected, as used in trade or common language
- description of the product and its principal physical, chemical, microbiological, or organoleptic characteristics
- definition of geographical area
- evidence that the product originates in the defined geographical area
- description of methods of obtaining the product and information about packaging
- for PDO, details of the link between the quality or characteristics of the product and the geographical environment
- for PGI, details of the link between the quality, reputation, or other characteristics of the product and the geographical origin.

The single document includes key information on product specification as listed in Annex I, Part I of Regulation 2025/26.

Registering a TSG

An application for registration in the EU of a traditional speciality guaranteed (TSG) can be made for a name that describes a product produced either according to traditional practice, or from traditionally used raw materials or ingredients. The documentary requirements are slightly different from those for a PGI/PDO: the product specification must follow the format set out in Annex X, Part I of Regulation 2025/26, including the points referred to in Regulations 2024/1143, Art. 54 and 2025/26, Art. 21.

All applications have to be submitted to the European Commission electronically, through a digital system. Applications from outside the EU must be submitted either directly by a producer group or a single producer, or via the authorities of the non-EU country concerned.

Use of EU symbols

Products from a non-EU country with a registered PDO, PGI, or TSG can be marked with the relevant EU symbol, but – unlike for EU products – use of the symbol is not compulsory (Regulation 2024/1143, Arts. 37(2) and Art.70 (1)). These symbols are shown in Annex VII of Regulation 2025/26.

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Attestation of compliance

Non-EU countries that have obtained a protected name (GI or TSG) in the EU still need to demonstrate compliance with the relevant product specification every time they place their product on the EU market (Regulation 2025/26, Art. 17). Compliance can be verified by competent authorities or a product certification body in the non-EU-country (Regulation 2024/1143, Arts. 39 and 77). The attestation of compliance can be provided in paper or electronic form.

What are the major implications for exporting countries?

What are the benefits of EU GIs?

A GI protects against misuse or fraudulent use of a protected name by third parties. A GI can establish certain conditions for the use of a name, ensuring the quality of the product is secured. For example, the certification scheme for Darjeeling tea ensures that this name can only be used for 100% Darjeeling tea that is sold by a registered Darjeeling seller. Prior to the registration, some sellers in the EU were marketing as Darjeeling tea containing only 51% Darjeeling, potentially jeopardising the quality and reputation of the tea (ECORYS & COGEA 2020).

Does securing an EU PGI mean greater sales or higher economic value?

There is no evidence that securing a GI has an impact on sales or the value of exports from third countries. Many products with a registered GI – 55% of third country GIs in 2020 – were not actually exported to the EU (ECORYS & COGEA 2020). But many exporters consider EU GIs to be valuable due to the worldwide recognition they provide. Protection of GIs in Free Trade Agreements has also been shown to have a limited impact on exports (Curzi & Huysmans 2022). The sales value of third country GIs was estimated at around €6.8 billion in 2019, equivalent to about 0.6% of the total sales value of products with GIs on the EU market (€58 billion) (ECORYS & COGEA 2020). A recent study concluded that there was a “massive lack of relevant economic data to support GI policy” (Török & Moir 2018).

Do many EU trading partners register GIs?

As of 2020, 145 third-country (excluding the UK) GIs had been registered, 110 of which have been registered recently following a bilateral agreement with China (European Commission 2019). These include GIs from several AGRINFO partner countries: Cambodia, Cameroon, China, Colombia, Dominican Republic, Mongolia, Thailand and Vietnam. In addition, the UK has 79 registered GIs that continue to be recognised by the EU following Brexit.

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Can a non-EU GI be enforced in the EU?

Some sectors with non-EU GIs have indicated problems with their enforcement. Darjeeling producers have suggested that some misuses of the name continue in the EU, in spite of the improvements that accompanied GI protection. Producers of the protected Café de Colombia also point to problems of compliance, in particular controls of use of the PGI when coffee is an ingredient in a composite product (ECORYS & COGEA 2020).

Resources

Online resources from the European Commission:

- Applications to register new GI products
- Guide to applicants: How to compile the single document
- Regulations on geographical indications and quality schemes
- Registration of the name of a GI product

Curzi, D. & Huysmans, M. (2022) The impact of protecting EU geographical indications in trade agreements. American Journal of Agricultural Economics, 104: 364–384.

ECORYS & COGEA (2020) Evaluation support study on geographical indications and traditional specialities guaranteed protected in the EU.

European Commission (2019) Landmark agreement will protect 100 European Geographical Indications in China. Press release, 6 November.

European IP Helpdesk (2025) Geographical indications in the European Union – Factsheet. European Innovation Council and SMEs Executive Agency.

European Union (2010) Geographical indications and designations of origin.

Török, A. & Moir, H.V.J. (2018) The market size for GI food products – Evidence from the empirical economic literature. Studies in Agricultural Economics, 120: 134–142.

Regulation (EU) No 1308/2013 establishing a common organisation of the markets in agricultural products

Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) No 668/2014 laying down rules for the application of Regulation (EU) No 1151/2012 of the European Parliament and of the Council on quality schemes for agricultural products and foodstuffs

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Sources

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Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) 2025/27 supplementing Regulation (EU) 2024/1143 of the European Parliament and of the Council with rules concerning the registration and the protection of geographical indications, traditional specialities guaranteed and optional quality terms and repealing Delegated Regulation (EU) No 664/2014

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