

origin

Organisation for an International
Geographical Indications Network

Two days to work out a common strategy

In Alicante, ORIGIN created a solid base for future action

ORIGIN met for the second time at the end of November under a shining sun in Alicante, Spain. After launching ORIGIN – the Organisation for an International Geographical Indications Network – in Geneva in June 2003, it was essential for the GIs family to create a solid base from which to continue its work.



Sunset on the castle in Alicante

2003 was rich in events for ORIGIN. During the months preceding the Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organization (WTO), which took place in September in Cancun (Mexico), ORIGIN was very active

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President's Message

Dear members, dear GIs friends,

2003 will remain an exceptional year for the proponents of geographical indications (GIs)! In June, ORIGIN, the first international network of producers of Geographical Indications, was launched in Geneva. In November, in Alicante (Spain), producers from more than 30 countries adopted the statutes of ORIGIN, thus giving it an official existence.

On the basis of an ambitious action plan set by its members in Spain, ORIGIN will now begin working on the promotion and defence of GIs throughout the world. ORIGIN's roadmap is clear:

- rapid development of the ORIGIN network;
- achievement of total and absolute protection of GIs at the international level;
- protection of GIs in each country's territory;
- protection of GI names against abusive uses on the Internet.

In order to reach these objectives, the members of ORIGIN have committed themselves to regularly promoting the concept of Geographical Indications, in particular by sensitizing other producers to the value of GIs; to lobby our countries to adopt or to improve legislation on GIs; to put constant pressure on decision-makers so that GIs remain a priority issue in international negotiations; and last but not least, to commit ourselves to denouncing each and every abuse of a GI and to fight usurpations. This is a lot of work to do but it is the price to pay to succeed!

I am convinced that together we will achieve great things. I have already realised that, for ORIGIN members, good intentions are not just a few words on a piece of paper.

In Alicante, some producers have begun forming partnerships in order to exchange know-how and knowledge, or simply to work together on promoting GIs. These pioneer «marriages» join Argane oil and Comté cheese, Antigua coffee and pruneaux d'Agen, L'Étivaz cheese and pineapples from Guinea. I am convinced that other members will soon join forces and ORIGIN will grow as a network of producers in the service of producers.

I thank all ORIGIN members for their enthusiasm and determination! I would also like to warmly thank our friends from Turrón de Alicante and Jijona who marvellously organised our meeting in Alicante!

Happy 2004 under the sign of the GIs!



Pedro Echeverria, President of ORIGIN

⇒ presenting and defending the interests of GIs producers to WTO Members, international decision-makers and the public, in particular through the use of the media. In order to present the point of view of ORIGIN throughout the world, producers participated in various meetings, particularly in the world symposium organised in July by the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) in San Francisco. Given the lack of a more global agreement on the extent of negotiations, further discussion and decisions concerning GIs were deferred sine die in Cancun.

Truly motivated, and aware that it is crucial for ORIGIN to exist and to act, about a hundred ORIGIN members gathered in Alicante at the end of November. The founding members were delighted to note new faces: proof that the movement is growing and that the GI cause is interesting new producers. The members of the Consejo Regulador of Turrón de Alicante y Jijona, with President Enrique Garrigos at its head, warmly welcomed representatives of about thirty countries from Africa, Asia, Europe and Latin and North America. Among the newcomers were Colombian, Mexican and Peruvian producers.

What strategy for post-Cancun?

The first part of the Alicante meeting was dedicated to post-Cancun. The presence of three negotiators for GIs – Paul Vandoren (European Union), Chumpichai Svasti-Xuto (Thailand) and Felix Addor (Switzerland) – enabled the producers to take stock of the situation after the collapse of the WTO Minister Conference in Cancun, and to discuss the future of GIs within the WTO. The negotiators underlined that real negotiations on GIs had not been possible in Cancun because of the break-down of negotiations on agriculture and the Singapore issues. According to Chumpichai Svasti-Xutos, there are still too many misunderstandings surrounding GIs and too many unjustified fears of negative



Felix Addor, Swiss negotiator

repercussions. In his opinion, it is necessary to further explain the concept of GIs. Felix Addor reminded the audience that GIs are not a North-South issue in the discussions of the WTO, and, quite to the contrary, that extension is a major issue for raising the value of agricultural products and handicrafts in developing countries. Paul Vandoren underlined that abandoning its objective to get better



Pedro Echeverria identifies five challenges to be met by ORIGIN

protection for GIs was not an option for the European Union. He invited producers to speak a single language in order to better coordinate their approaches. The three negotiators demonstrated their determination to obtain results. They called for a mobilization of GIs producers and encouraged ORIGIN members to carry on promoting the use and protection of GIs.

On the producers' side, Pedro Echeverria, President of ORIGIN, showed the way by identifying five challenges to be met by ORIGIN:

- encourage the adoption of legislation on GIs in every country;
- increase the number of GIs friends;
- continue to lobby decision-makers so that GIs remain a priority issue in international negotiations;
- enforce GIs protection against usurpations via legal cases;
- continue to promote the GI concept.

For more information
on the meeting in
Alicante:
www.origin-gi.com

The Vice-president of ORIGIN for Asia, Brigadier Anil Adlakha, spoke about the need for countries such as his, India, to have stronger protection for GIs. He mentioned in particular the case of Basmati rice, traditionally produced at the foot of the Himalayas, whose name is often abusively used. Today it can be found designating rice from the United States and as a trademark for baby milk in Argentina!

The Vice-president of ORIGIN for Africa, Agnes Nyaga, acknowledged that African countries were not sufficiently prepared for Cancun. She underlined the efforts needed to promote the GI concept on the African continent. There are some improvements, however. Her country, Kenya, is currently completing legislation on GIs. Seventeen local products fulfil the requirements for a GI. The government also intends to organise

introductory seminars to promote the GI concept. Agnes Nyaga hopes such meetings will increase in Africa, encouraging intensified exchange between producers.

Some other first steps have been carried out elsewhere on the continent. Maurice Kamano, a Guinean producer, mentioned that 16 African countries of the OAPI – in particular Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Ivory Coast and Guinea – are mobilizing themselves to organise supply chains of traditional GI products.

Tomislav Galovic, Vice-president of ORIGIN for Eastern Europe reported that the GI cause is progressing in Croatia as well. He indicated that four products are currently protected by a GI in his country.

Progress has also been made in North America. Quebec's legislation is developing stronger GI protection. According to Marie Anne Rainville, however, Vice-president of ORIGIN for the region: «It doesn't yet have a following in Canada and the United States». She is convinced that GIs need consumer support in order to progress.

The host of the day and Vice-president of ORIGIN for Western Europe, Enrique Garrigos, spoke about the disastrous consequences usurpations of GIs can have on producers. He invited «all the owners of GIs to join together in demanding zero tolerance for this kind of thing».

More technical assistance for GI producers

A second round table discussion reached the conclusion that technical assistance had to be a priority for ORIGIN. It is essential for the development of GIs in developing countries as well as in others countries where the concept of GIs and the value they carry is unknown. Zoubida Charrouf, the representative of producers of Argane oil in Morocco, underlined the importance of institutional supports to countries like hers, and specifically asked for technical cooperation for producers in order to accelerate registration procedures. Three million people live



Buntoon Wongseelashote and the producers of Thai silk are thinking whether they should protect the traditional drawings decorating their cloth.

from the production and sale of Argane oil in Morocco. A GI would allow the price of the oil to come up to its fair value, thereby benefiting the market sellers while, at the same time, offering a tool for fighting the abusive use of the name «Argane». It would also help prevent overproduction and its accompanying disadvantages. The production of Argane oil is also at risk because of its popularity in the west. In fact, a European company registered Argane as a trademark in Europe and now uses the name



Zoubida Charrouf (Morocco)

without implementing actions for sustainable development (such as alphabetisation, reforestation, etc.), as do the cooperatives by Moroccan women.

Thai silk is another example: The manual handling of the fruits of the cocoons occupies approximately one million farmers in the country. Thai

silk, (which differs from Chinese silk in terms of texture and colour), is highly valued by consumers, and consequently suffers from many imitations and counterfeits. Producers are even asking whether they should now protect the designs and drawings decorating the traditionally-made cloth as well. A law is being passed on this in Thailand but, according to Buntoon Wongseelashote, the producers need technical assistance to create an official instrument for listing the products potentially concerned. The main concern of the silk producers is to establish a harmonised specification.

To respond to such concrete needs, specialists in the area of GIs pointed out the need to precisely define the type of protection required: e.g., registration, passive protection, controls, protection of symbols, a private or public organisation, means to defend products, etc? These issues, said Bernard O'Connor, a lawyer, are a first and necessary step.

Technical assistance initiatives are already available. As shown by Philippe Mauguin, Director of the INAO, they can originate from Western governmental institutions. For instance, France and its National Institute of Controlled Appellations of Origin (INAO) are pioneers in the matter. They have been active in more than ten countries, from Latin America to Asia, over Eastern Europe

to Western Africa. Legislative assistance can also be found at international organisations, such as WIPO (World Intellectual Property Organization). Denis Croze, Head of the International Law Development Section for Trademarks, Industrial Designs and Geographical Indications at WIPO, explained the constitutive elements of the definition of Geographical Indications according to Article 22.1 of the TRIPS Agreement and the essential elements of specifications (see the ORIGIN website for more information).

Assistance may also come from other channels or from GI producers sharing experience directly. For example, the French producers of



Marie-Anne Rainville (Canada) discussing with the EU negotiator Paul Vandoren (on the left) and the representative of the Bureau national interprofessionnel du Cognac, Ambroise Augé.



Brig. Anil Adlakha (India), Ester Olivas (Spain).

Cognac went to Vietnam and, as a counter gesture for the recognition and protection of their product in Vietnam, helped elaborate the specification for the Vietnamese sauce Nuoc Nam, from Phu Qoc.

This is also the way chosen by ORIGIN, which considers technical cooperation as one of its priorities. In Alicante, several partnerships among producers have been initiated. The objective of a partnership is to exchange know-

how and expertise as well as wisdom and experience. Producers of Argane oil of Morocco and the French cheese producers of Comté were the first to announce such a venture. This means that 600 producers of about 40 tons of oil worth 300,000 Euros will benefit from the experience of the most important, French PDO cheese producers (that's about 3,300 producers of 50,000 tons of cheese valued at 250 mio Euros). Another partnership formed between the

An ambitious action plan for 2004

In Alicante, the members of ORIGIN adopted an ambitious action plan for 2004.

In order to convince the public that GIs are an asset as an instrument of development, ORIGIN has committed itself to:

- develop the exchange of experience and know-how among GIs producers, in particular by supporting projects of partnership among its members, in seeking to increase its network or in offering assistance and technical expertise;
- promote the GI concept among producers, decision-makers and the press by collecting and diffusing information on the added value of GIs.

In order to protect their intellectual property rights, members of ORIGIN have committed themselves to:

- drawing attention to the impact of usurpations and abuses on producers throughout the world;
- lobbying heavily for the implementation of national laws on GIs;
- demanding absolute protection of GIs at the international level.

With these goals, they will adopt joint positions in currently on-going negotiations and will ensure that GIs remain a priority issue at the international level, in particular by being in close contact with international organisations involved in GIs.

In order to achieve these goals, the members of ORIGIN have been asked to:

- maintain regular contact with decision-makers at the national level in order to promote GIs and their protection in their country;
- establish contact with new producers interested in joining the GI movement (including in countries opposing GIs);
- diffuse information about GIs at the national level;
- continue to fight against usurpations.



Discussion among representatives of pruneaux d'Agen and Argane oil.



Maurice Kamano and Cécé Kpohomou (Guinea)

producers of Antigua coffee and those of pruneaux d'Agen (prune plums) in France. The Guatemalan coffee producers, from a region bordered by three volcanoes where three different kinds of coffee trees grow, will be able to share experience with producers of the «black gold of Aquitaine» (plums dried according to an ancestral process). Another partnership between producers of the Swiss alpine cheese L'Étivaz and the producers of pineapples in Guinea brought out the surprising fact that the taste of their fruit can be found in the organoleptic description of L'Étivaz.



Helena Lejtnarova (Tcheck Republic) and Julius Ethangatha (Kenya)

Birth of an organisation

The second day of the conference was devoted to the adoption of the statutes and the action plan for 2004. The statutes are important as a base for future efforts, and were adopted after a fruitful discussion on the various categories of members and on the role of ORIGIN. The association is headquartered close to the international organisations in Geneva, Switzerland and is governed under Swiss civil law. And Alicante is the headquarter of the Executive Committee. Its objectives are to promote the recognition of the essential role of Geographical Indications in sustainable development and to obtain stronger protection for GIs at the international level. It is constituted by members, associated members and GIs friends.

How to become a member?

For more information about ORIGIN, in particular about membership, go to: www.origin-gi.com.



Representatives of Parma ham came in strength to support ORIGIN network

For the record...

Article 22.1 TRIPS Agreement (Agreement on Trade-related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights) of the WTO (1994) defines Geographical Indications as «indications which identify a good as originating in the territory of a member (of the WTO), or a region or locality in that territory, where a quality, reputation or other characteristic of the good is essentially attributable to its geographical origin.»

ORIGIN in action

A few dates concerning events on GIs where ORIGIN will be present in 2004...

- **4-5 February:** Sainte Adèle (Canada), seminar on the economical development of territories.
- **12 February:** Bruxelles (Belgium), presentation of the GI Coffee Jamao from the Dominican Republic.
- **10-12 March:** Tokyo-Osaka (Japan), three seminars on GIs.
- **18-19 March:** Reims (France), Conference on the conflicts between GIs and trademarks
- **5-7 April:** Cartagena de Indias (Colombia), 3rd Congress of the AAAML, Intellectual Property Day in Latin America.
- **30 April:** London (United Kingdom), Seminar on GIs at the London School of Economics.
- **1st May:** Cambremer (France), symposium on GIs.
- **13-14 May:** Bordeaux (France), Les Assises de l'Origine.
- **18 May:** Eggiswil (CH), presentation in Switzerland of the results of the DOLPHINS study.
- **19-21 May:** Guadalajara (Mexico), International Congress of GIs on «Sustainable Development of Productive Chains and Satisfaction of Consumers», 10th anniversary of the Consejo Regulador of the Tequila.
- **Autumn:** Portugal, Spain and France, seminars on GIs.
- **26 November:** Chambéry (France), symposium Montanea.



Mustafa Babayit (Turkey), Grace Wanjiku Ranji and Agnes Nyaga (Kenya)



Pedro Echeverria (Guatemala) and Herbert Kohlberg (Bolivia)

And at last but not least, warm thanks to the President of the Consejo Regulador of Turron de Alicante y Jijona, Enrique Garrigos

