

oriGIn's support to Mongolia's agriculture associations in the sustainable development of Geographical Indications

by Ms. Anne Lubell, Sustainable Development Association.

Background:

oriGIn has been successfully supporting Mongolian producers in their efforts to develop local GIs. This was achieved within the framework of the Asia Invest ALLIANCE project, where oriGIn cooperated with several international partners, such as the Campden Chorleywood Food and Research Association (CCFRA), the Sustainable Development Association (SDA) and the Mongolian National Chamber of Commerce and Industry (MNCCI).

At the outset of the project, local producers associations and local chambers lacked basic knowledge on good practices along the agriculture and food supply chain, as well as expertise on how to market a GI product to add value.

Currently the level of knowledge of the GI stakeholders has been scaled up; knowledge has been increased of relevant issues and factors to the development of GIs and project beneficiaries have got a deeper understanding of GI best practices. Additionally, the project activities have enhanced export capabilities of Mongolian producers through improved knowledge of European Good Hygiene Practices, Good Agricultural Practices and Good Manufacturing Practices.



Main achievements:

A bilingual project website serves as an active window providing project accessibility to both European and Mongolian parties. The project website provides information to both the direct participants and the agricultural and business associations who seek project updates.

A complete needs assessment phase was conducted in order to design the most appropriate training and most meaningful exchanges adapted to the context of local Mongolian agricultural and commercial organisations. The overall findings of the needs assessment was the foundation for the project's subsequent activities.

A European study tour was conducted for 10 Mongolian producers to visit a wide range of institutions and producer organisations from the oriGIn's network in Spain and France, maximising the number of models and examples that could potentially be adopted by Mongolian producers' organisations.

A number of sites and institutions were visited during the study tour including: oriGIn Secretariat, the Regulatory Council of PGI Jijona and Turrón de Alicante, INAO and the "Bief du Fourg Orchards Cooperative".

The study tour provided wide participants from a range of sectors in Mongolia, with examples of European best practice and institutional models operating in the field of GIs. In particular, Mongolian participants were exposed to key GI elements: European certification models, EU legal framework, quality assurance, good hygienic practices and manufacturing processes.

An EU Workshop on Best Practices for the Development of GIs in Mongolia took place in Ulaan Bataar (Mongolia) in May 2008, with the participation of several experts from the oriGIn's network. Participants came from a range of Mongolian GI stakeholders: representatives from regional MNCCI offices, producer associations (i.e. camel milk cooperative, meat processing, wool and cashmere), the Intellectual Property Office of Mongolia and local producers. Topics covered by the discussions included: GI development, certification, food safety and labelling and marketing activities.

An online database of EU and Mongolian producers associations was developed in order to serve as an online information contact centre for both EU and Mongolian GI producers and/or potential GI stakeholders. The database has the potential to serve as a hub for opportunities between EU and Mongolian GI organisations.

Finally, a Best Practices handbook for the sustainable development of GIs was finalised and is available in English and Mongolian. The handbook's content covers the thematic areas of certification, food safety standards, registration and enforcement.