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oriGIn EU contribution to the Public Consultation on the review of policy on promotion inside and outside the EU

oriGIn EU is the European branch of the global alliance of GIs (<https://www.origin-gi.com>). Its mission is to ensure better protection of GIs before the EU institutions. oriGIn EU represents individual European GI groups as well as national GI organisations and aims at promoting and defending the interests of producers committed to promoting quality agri-food products.

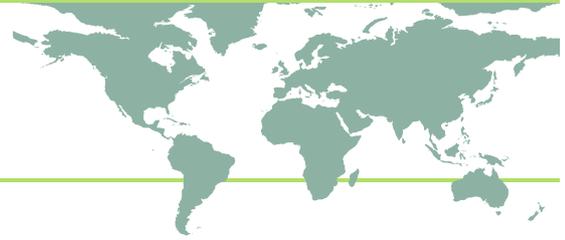
oriGIn EU welcomes the [public consultation on the European Union's Promotion Policy for agricultural and food products](#). This document aims to support and complement oriGIn EU response to the public consultation.

A study published by the European Commission on 20 April 2020, entitled « [Study on economic value of EU quality schemes, geographical indications \(GIs\) and traditional specialities guaranteed \(TSGs\)](#) », estimates the **sales value of GIs at €74.8 billion**. The value of whole exports of GI products accounted for €31.42 billion (42% of the sales). **GIs greatly contribute to the positive image and reputation of European products**. These positive results can be attributed to the fact that the European Union is the world leader in agricultural quality products and sustainable rural development and has long understood the benefits of GIs.

The EU agricultural promotion policy is an important tool at the disposal of EU operators to help them access and develop new markets and allow them to raise consumers' awareness on the quality of European agriculture. The focus on GIs has been greatly welcomed by the sector as operators have been able to give further visibility to this concept and the EU's leadership in the long-established production of quality products that are renowned worldwide. The increased budget has allowed a growing number of operators to take full advantage of these opportunities. Furthermore, the Annual Work programme has provided the European Commission with dynamic means to constantly adapt the objectives and the destination markets based on the evolution of the international situation.

The [EC report evaluating the EU agricultural promotion policy](#), published on 11 January 2021, highlighted how activities funded under the promotion **policy contribute to increasing the sales and consumption of the EU products promoted in target markets, as an example, the programme promoting pig meat in China registered an 18% increase in awareness of intrinsic values of EU agricultural products and a 36% increase in the level of recognition of EU quality scheme logos**. Moreover, it showed how the promotion of the GI concept had traction. **All of these elements are a clear signal that the EU's agricultural promotion policy has helped the GI sector thrive and boost its' recognition and competitiveness at the international level**.

oriGIn EU believe that GI promotion should remain a cornerstone of the policy as it can effectively contribute to the objectives of the Farm to Fork and more largely of the Green Deal: non-relocatable production, maintaining rural communities, unique vine varieties and landscapes, specific method of production, certification and controls, greater revenue for producers etc. Moreover, oriGIn EU members believe GIs - their management bodies and/or interbranch organisations - should continue to be prioritised in the EU agricultural promotion policy as behind this concept there is a group of operators, mostly SMEs. These operators need this aid and the promotion plans carried out by their representative GI organisation to access the Single market and third countries' markets, something that cannot do on their own. GI promotion hence opens and helps consolidate markets for all those

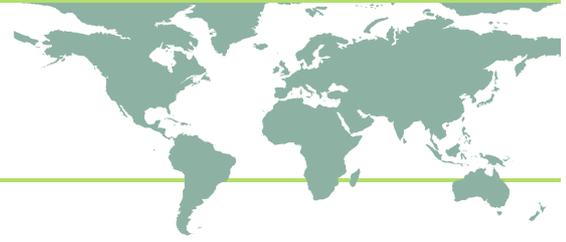


operators, especially for small ones.

Overall, oriGIn EU believes the EU agricultural promotion policy has been successful in implementing its ambitions. Particularly, we are pleased to recognize EC efforts towards promoting a better understanding and information concerning EU Quality Schemes, acknowledging the importance of the budgetary lines currently dedicated to these topics, both for single and multi-programmes. **Nevertheless, we consider some changes should be made to allow the Geographical Indication sector to make better use of the EU promotion tools.** Confronted with an ever-changing environment, this sector needs further support from the European Commission particularly towards its ongoing transition toward more sustainable practices.

oriGIn EU proposes the following adjustments to the EU agricultural policy:

- A. Most stakeholders involved in the production of products under EU quality schemes are small associations which cannot access complex instruments. Limited resources for self-financing and complexity of the calls, especially referring to the application preparation, as well as bureaucratic complexities and difficulties encountered in implementing the project often limit participation. Therefore, small GI producers need support and guidance all along the process of application and implementation. To improve the situation, it would be beneficial if the European Commission could:
- Simplify the participation to promotion programmes** as of the submission of the project proposals:
 - Looking at the immense amount of preparatory work, a two-step application would be preferable. Project engineering capacity often makes the difference hence this could provide more time to smaller producers to set up a competitive project;
 - Documents from the Commission are really clear and detailed when it comes to state how future activities and programmes must be explained during the application phase. It would be of great help to have such guidance on the information that needs to be provided in the first phase of the selection process (regarding the economic situation of the applicants for instance).
 - Simplify the bureaucratic process:** both referring to the phase of the submission of the application and the implementation of the project proposal, a streamlined bureaucratic process, easy to access and manage is needed.
- B. The EU should reinforce the promotion of the GI concept towards consumers, in particular in the internal market, where it is **to date not enough recognized by consumers** (Special Eurobarometer 473). Some EU countries still lack proper information to consumers about the EU quality schemes. The promotion policy represents an opportunity to fill this gap and improve the recognition of PDO and PGI labels and benefits in the EU. This could be done through an increase of funding for programmes targeting national and the internal markets, but also thanks to own-initiative programmes launched by the EC with increased funding to have a real impact. Moreover, considering the crisis derived from the COVID-19 pandemic, **we believe it is important to strongly prioritize the promotion of EU quality scheme in the internal market, in order to help GIs producers to recover from the losses incurred.**

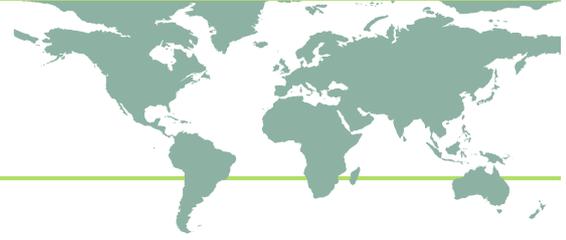


- C. The EU should create a special promotion envelope which may be activated to support sectors that are unduly hit by international retaliatory measures or hit by unexpected rule changes. Such an envelope should also be available to support organisations in their fight for legal protection in third countries where promotion activities are carried out.
- D. The co-financing rate by the EU should be increased to reach more than 70% of grant for GIs campaigns.
- E. Operators should have the possibility of benefiting from the EU promotion programmes more than twice, which is the current limit. It is essential to invest on a long-term basis on many markets in order to establish and reinforce sales in these countries.
- F. EU promotion programmes should support information and promotion campaigns targeting specifically agritourism activities. Agritourism can play a vital role in the promotion of GI products as it allows tourists to discover on-site the unique link that exists between a territory and the history, savoir-faire and quality of a product. This seems particularly relevant in the context of the crisis derived from the COVID-19 pandemic.
- G. The review should recognize - when it comes to the effects on climate, biodiversity or environment - that there are no sustainable or unsustainable sectors, but sustainable and unsustainable practices. Hence the review should focus on production methods, not on products/sectors. Likewise when it comes to healthy eating, it should focus on diets and not on single nutrients/ingredients or foods: a healthy, balanced diet means eating a wide variety of foods in the right proportions. Every food has a role in a balanced diet provided that it is consumed in the right amount and frequency, and that is accompanied by adequate physical activity.
- H. Increase funds available to allow producers to mitigate the damages of the COVID outbreak and increase funding available for programmes on EU quality scheme.

Coherence between promotion policy and the European Green Deal/Farm to Fork strategy:

As part of the Farm to Fork strategy, the EU plans to revise the EU promotion programme for agricultural and food products to enhance its contribution to **sustainable production and consumption**. oriGIn EU believes **EU quality schemes should remain a priority in the future promotion policy. GIs are an instrumental sustainability tool**, generating public goods in terms of conservation of biodiversity, protection of cultural heritage, socio-cultural and rural development while supporting the welfare of producers. Consequently, **oriGIn EU insists on the need for the EU to take into account all the dimensions of sustainability, these are the 3 pillars: economic, social and environmental**. Sustainability cannot be reduced to carbon efficiency (as proposed in the strategy) nor to GHG emissions. We also believe that the number of producers beneficiaries of an EU co-funded promotion programme should be taken into account as it is important that this support benefits more than just a few producers.

In addition, considering the Farm to Fork commitment **to seek opportunities to facilitate the shift to healthier diets and stimulate product reformulation (Action 15)**, including by setting up **nutrient profiles to restrict the promotion** of foods high in fat, sugars and salt (**Action 16**), oriGIn EU **would like to stress** that consumption of GI products can contribute to a healthier diet. However, the reformulation of a product and the setting up of nutrient profile could represent a serious threat for EU GIs. As a matter of fact, product reformulation and restrictions to promotion would penalise products resulting from traditional know-how and production techniques, **whose nutrient profiles and**



production techniques cannot be altered without changing the very nature of the product.

As a result, and instead of encouraging products reformulation that could lead to an ultra-transformation of food, oriGIn EU encourages the European Commission to look for actions aiming to increase, among final consumers, the awareness and understanding of quality and traditional EU products as a competitive factor for health and proper nutrition.

Coherence between promotion policy and Europe's Beating Cancer Plan

As part of Europe's Beating Cancer Plan, oriGIn EU believes that geographical indications and designations of origin play an important part in ensuring a diversified and balanced diet. Many GIs are associated with specific diets recognized for their interest in terms of nutrition, as proved by the renowned example of the Mediterranean diet. The traditional ways of cultivating plants and raising animals, the influence of local natural conditions, the human practices as well as the context-specific traditional methods of processing and conservation, are crucial in the nutritional quality of GI products. Moreover, GIs are a guarantee of dietary diversity, encompassing different categories of food, tastes, seasonality, freshness, culture and skills. They have been contributing to the economic, social and environmental sustainability of European regions benefiting producers, consumers and the society as a whole.

We therefore call on the European Commission to consider all sectors as eligible to benefit from the promotion policy program as they can all contribute to a healthy and balanced diet. We also encourage the European Commission to envisage promotion and information actions aiming to increase, among final consumers, the awareness and understanding of quality as a competitive factor for health and proper nutrition, including the importance of a proper intake of essential amino acids in diets. The nutritional characteristics of GIs linked to their geographical origins and largely attributed to their unique ingredients and production procedures, make them contribute to healthy diets and to curb non-communicable diseases⁷. As a result, agri-food PDOs and PGIs should also be promoted **considering their role in the wider frame of a diversified and balanced diet**¹.

¹ FAO, 2021. *The nutrition and health potential of geographical indication foods*, Rome