

EAC GENEVA FORUM

Supporting EAC country missions
to the WTO

GENEVA UPDATE NOTE N°11



Geographical Indications

Establishing and applying an effective protection system
in the EAC

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July, 2013

¹Special thanks go to Ida Puzone and Massimo Vittori from oriGIn for their support.

Introduction²

Geographical Indications (GIs) are a specific IP category covered by the TRIPS agreement that are defined as signs/names, which identify a product originated in a specific geographical area.³ They require the product to have certain characteristics and reputation that are essentially linked to its geographical origin. The principal application of GIs is to agricultural products, foodstuffs and beverages as well as other cultural products like textiles and handicrafts. They could be of particular interest for many developing countries, since an effective protection of GIs may create significant economic, social and environmental benefits at the local level.

Under the TRIPS agreement two levels of protection are defined. Protection is allowed for all goods if their designation or presentation is misleading the public about their geographical origin or if there is an act of unfair competition within the meaning of Article 10*bis* of the Paris Convention (1967).⁴ Furthermore, wines and spirits can be protected regardless of whether the GI is misleading.⁵ However, this differentiation in the level of protection is far from being uncontested and is currently debated under the Doha Development Round, as there are many countries that do not produce wine or spirits and consider this differentiation as artificial.

²http://www.wto.org/english/tratop_e/trips_e/gi_background_e.htm#top, 26.06.2013

³ TRIPS Art. 22.1: "[...] indications which identify a good as originating in the territory of a Member, or a region or locality in that territory, where a given quality, reputation or other characteristic of the good is essentially attributable to its geographical origin."

⁴ TRIPS Art. 22.2

⁵ TRIPS Art. 23

Two key GI related issues are currently discussed and negotiated in the WTO, namely the establishment of a multilateral register for wines and spirits as well as the extension of the higher level of protection, provided under Article 23, to other products different than wines and spirits. Thus, protection through GIs would then be possible to all products even if the use of a particular sign/name is not misleading the public over the true origin of the product, or there is an act of unfair competition (e.g. Champagne from Australia). Main positions regarding both aspects include a group of the so-called "new world" countries, which consider that there is no need to change the TRIPS Agreement and that only a notification database is needed (e.g. the United States, Chile, Australia, and Canada). On the other hand, you have the European and East European countries, seeking a binding register with international effect (EU and Switzerland). There is also a middle ground position promoted by Hong Kong China on a register with legal presumption of national protection at the regional level. Many developed countries are also in favor of the extension of the protection to other products beyond wine and spirits (e.g. Colombia, India, Peru, Sri Lanka and Thailand).

More recently a broad coalition of countries including, amongst others, the European Communities, China, Brazil, India, Switzerland, the ACP Group and the African Group, is seeking to create links between the GI negotiations with the discussion on the TRIPS/CBD relationship. In this regard, these countries have proposed a draft set of modalities that would seek to address in parallel a multilateral GI register, the extension of GI protection to all other product and the need to introduce a disclosure of origin/source requirement of genetic resources or traditional

knowledge used in patent applications.⁶ These suggestions are opposed by a group of countries (the United States, Canada, Australia, Argentina and others), which argue that the only mandate to be negotiated is the creation of a multilateral register.

Aside from the multilateral negotiations, there are already legal means for the protection of GIs available in the EAC countries. Nevertheless, only very few GIs are registered either in the country of origin or in a third country. Hence, this note seeks to identify the potential of GIs in the EAC countries as well as to point out the necessary steps that have to be taken on a national, regional and multilateral level in order to ensure an adequate level of protection.

Rationale for GI Protection

The main interest in the enforcement of GI protection is to ensure that the characteristics of a product and its reputation are adequately priced in the market as well as to avoid fraud, consumer confusion and the misuse of GIs. Moreover, there is a defensive aspect, as GIs may allow promotion and protection of traditional knowledge and production methods.

Several economic benefits can result from an efficient protection. First of all, as mentioned above, the protection may create a premium price that takes the reputation and qualities of the product into account. This may lead to a better distribution of revenues throughout the income chain. Furthermore, as production is tied to the geographical area, delocalization can be prevented and hence there will be a creation of value added within the region. Thus, the producers will no longer export generic goods,

⁶ TN/C/W/52

but will rather seek to produce and export high-quality agriculture and handicraft products. This moving up in the value chain does not only increase market volume and access but it can also generate spill-over effects on employment, environmental protection and on the preservation of traditional knowledge and biodiversity. Furthermore, as GIs are based on a collective approach of producer organizations, economies of scale will result, which benefit mainly small farmers and producers.⁷

As already pointed out with the spill-over effects, there are not only economic benefits and advantages. GI protection also helps to transform traditional knowledge and geographic characteristics into marketable products and therefore creates incentives for the conservation of biodiversity, ecosystems and landscapes. Hence, among other things, tourism may benefit as well. Furthermore, the new and sustainable incomes generated are beneficial for rural development and can reduce migration into cities.⁸

However, GI protection requires a certain effort and incurs costs and challenges that have to be met. First of all, the process itself requires resources for identification and provision of evidence for a product's specific characteristics, for registration of the product, for monitoring the production in order to avoid fraud and misuse of the GI and for enforcement of legal protection. Moreover, costly promotion is necessary for the purpose of gaining market access and a premium price. Apart from these direct costs

⁷ Quaker United Nations Office, 2008. The Protection of Geographical Indications and the Doha Round: Strategic and Policy Considerations for Africa. QUNO IP Issue Paper No. 8, p.13

⁸ Quaker United Nations Office, 2008. The Protection of Geographical Indications and the Doha Round: Strategic and Policy Considerations for Africa. QUNO IP Issue Paper No. 8, p.13

there are also broader challenges that have to be addressed. For example it is unclear how the benefits will be distributed within the value chains, the increase in prices may harm access of poor locals to essential food and cultural products and other genetic resources as well as producers of goods not protected as GIs may be marginalized. It is thus important for governments, technical cooperation agencies and donors to keep these costs and challenges in mind and to provide support where necessary.⁹

The National Level

For a GI to be eligible for registration in another country under the TRIPS Agreement, it first has to be registered in the country of origin.¹⁰ Thus, it is crucial for EAC countries to provide an adequate legal framework for GI protection on the national level. Currently, only Burundi, Rwanda and Zanzibar have legislative frameworks for the registration and protection of GIs. In Kenya a GI Bill was prepared in 2007, but has not come into force yet. However, in Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda GI protection can be obtained through certification or collective trademarks (See Table 1 annexed to this document).

Under the existing legislations only very few EAC country products have been registered as GIs. Namely, Kenyan tea and coffee are registered as GIs in Kenya through the law on certification marks.¹¹ Rwanda coffee is registered by an individual mark (See US trademark number 3378503) for 'The land of a Thousand Hills Coffee

⁹ Quaker United Nations Office, 2008. The Protection of Geographical Indications and the Doha Round: Strategic and Policy Considerations for Africa. QUNO IP Issue Paper No. 8, p.15

¹⁰ TRIPS Art. 24.9

¹¹ Quaker United Nations Office, 2008. The Protection of Geographical Indications and the Doha Round: Strategic and Policy Considerations for Africa. QUNO IP Issue Paper No. 8, p.9

Handpicked in the Republic of Rwanda¹². Nevertheless, there are plenty of products that could potentially be registered for GI protection. (See Table 2 for a non-exhaustive list annexed to this document).

As indicated above, there are several possibilities to protect GIs on the national level. One can distinguish between defensive and positive protection.

Defensive protection of traditional knowledge and production methods can either be obtained through the application of unfair competition law or passing off. Unfair competition laws provide protection to consumers when information on the main characteristics, such as the geographical origin, of a product is misleading. A misleading with respect to the geographical origin of a product can also be adjudged by a court as a tort of passing off under common law. The burden of proof lies on the plaintiff, who has to provide evidence showing that consumers are misled and receive an injury. These two forms of protection can be used to provide protection on the domestic market. However, it might be difficult to obtain protection in a third country if the GI protection is based either on competition law or on the decision of a court. More details on the link between GIs and the protection of traditional knowledge and biodiversity is provided in the following box.

GIs and the protection of Traditional Knowledge (TK) and Biodiversity
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TK and biodiversity cannot be protected

¹² Quaker United Nations Office, 2008. The Protection of Geographical Indications and the Doha Round: Strategic and Policy Considerations for Africa. QUNO IP Issue Paper No. 8, p.11

directly through the use of GIs. However, the specific characteristics of products that can be protected as GIs, are often based on traditional production processes or the specific natural environment of a certain geographical area. Thus, biodiversity may be protected if genetic resources are used for the production of a GI product or through the incentive to cultivate land in a sustainable manner in order to ensure benefits in the long run (e.g. fish, honey, horticultural products). Furthermore, if the GI product is distinct from goods produced elsewhere due to the special processing, the value added though the GI will remunerate the TK used in the process (e.g. handicrafts, cloth, art). Thus, if GIs are designed in an adequate way and the characteristics are defined accordingly, GIs can be a good tool for the preservation of TK and biodiversity.

There are also synergies in GI protection and the conservation of TK and biodiversity within the suggested modalities regarding the TRIPS agreement. Namely, one issue of the negotiations is concerning the need to introduce a disclosure of origin/source requirement of genetic resources or TK used in patent applications.

However, there are also other means to protect TK. For example through the use and implementation of the Swakopmund Protocol on the Protection of Traditional Knowledge and Expressions of Folklore within the Framework of the African Regional Intellectual Property Organization (ARIPO)¹³, the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)¹⁴ and the Nagoya Protocol.

¹³ contracting party: Kenya

¹⁴ contracting parties: all EAC countries

In order to provide positive protection to GIs, which can eventually also be enforced in a third country, the products should be protected either under trademark law or with a sui generis GI system. However, there are some drawbacks to protection under trademark law, compared to protection under a sui generis system. First, a trademark does not necessarily certify the origin of the product. Second, a trademark may not be available to all producers of the specified area that meet the requirements set out, but rather the mark belongs to an individual or several persons (collective mark), which then have the option to allow others to use the mark. Since an individual or a group owns the trademark, it can also be sold or licensed, whereas a GI cannot. Third, a product protected under trademark law does not necessarily have to be produced in a specific region, the indication of origin should merely not mislead consumers. Finally, a trademark is not protected indefinitely, therefore the owner has to continue to assert his rights and the mark may no longer be protected once the name becomes generic.

To sum up, governments could promote either trademark and/or sui generis protection, but they have to be aware of the differences, pros and cons of the protection under each scheme.

Apart from ensuring an adequate legal framework for the protection of GIs, governments should also provide support to industries and producers with potential capacity of registering their products as GIs. Thus, it is essential to reduce the barriers imposed by the costs touched on before. Concretely, research/verification bodies have to be established to be able to demonstrate that “[...] a given quality, reputation or other characteristic of the good is essentially attributable to its

geographical origin.”¹⁵ Furthermore, since GIs can be used by all producers of a geographical area, provided they fulfill the criteria of the GI, supporting the formation of collective organizations is vital. Once a GI is registered, an independent control body is needed in order to ensure that the GI is only used for products that actually fulfill the criteria defined. Overall, governments should not only provide the legal framework, but also the institutional setting needed.¹⁶

➤ Recommendations

- Establish the necessary legal framework to protect GIs in the domestic market
 - No sui generis GI system in place:¹⁷
 1. short term: register GIs as trademarks
 2. long term: work on the implementation of a GI system
 - Legislation with a sui generis GI system:¹⁸ register products directly as GIs
- Provide support throughout the domestic registration process of products as GIs:¹⁹
 1. Identification of products that are linked to a certain geographical area
 2. Formation of collective and management bodies organizations (e.g. regulatory councils)
 3. Identification of product specifications
 4. Establishing of an external control mechanism to ensure that only products

¹⁵ TRIPS Art. 22.1

¹⁶ oriGI, 2011. Practical Manual on Geographical Indications for ACP Countries. ISBN 978-92-9081-477-1

¹⁷ Kenya, mainland Tanzania and Uganda

¹⁸ Burundi, Rwanda and Zanzibar

¹⁹ oriGI, 2011. Practical Manual on Geographical Indications for ACP Countries. ISBN 978-92-9081-477-1

which comply with the criteria set out actually use the GI

5. Extensive promotion of the GI in order to obtain the potential benefits

➤ The Regional Level

Once a GI has been registered in the country of origin, the protection can be expanded to other countries. This can be done on the regional level through bilateral or regional agreements. Within the framework of a bilateral or regional agreement, the parties declare to which GIs of the other parties they will provide protection.²⁰ This may be a good tool to approach the main export markets of the GIs protected domestically.

Regional cooperation on the implementation of a sui generis GI system can also reduce the costs of initiation for each country. Furthermore, once a regional agreement is in place the countries can implement a common register for GIs and thus improve access to the regional market.

➤ Recommendations

- Approach the main export markets directly, e.g. there are two options for the EU market:
 1. short term: register products directly in the open GI system of the EU for foodstuffs and agricultural products²¹
 2. long term: promote negotiations on GIs within the interim Economic Partnership Agreement of the EAC community with the EU and ask for support to implement a GI system

²⁰ oriGI, 2011. Practical Manual on Geographical Indications for ACP Countries. ISBN 978-92-9081-477-1

²¹ oriGI, 2011. Practical Manual on Geographical Indications for ACP Countries. ISBN 978-92-9081-477-1

- Take advantage of the EAC Common Market Agreement which provides the mandate to develop a common sui generis GI system.²² Within this system the EAC countries can automatically provide protection to all GIs registered in another EAC country. Moreover, with such an EAC sui generis GI system in place, the countries can act jointly to obtain registration of EAC GIs in third countries.
- Approach ARIPO²³, since the Banjul Protocol²⁴ provides a starting point for regional cooperation on GI protection. The Protocol allows the registration of trademarks either directly with the ARIPO Office or in one of the nine contracting states. Even more importantly, the EAC community should promote the implementation of a common sui generis GI system among all contracting parties of ARIPO. Such a system is currently being developed with the support of the European Communities.²⁵

The Multilateral Level

The first agreement providing the means for international GI protection was the Paris Convention of 1883, of which all EAC countries are contracting parties. It was followed by the Madrid Agreement on Indications of Source, of which only Kenya is a contracting party and the Lisbon Agreement, of which none of the EAC countries are contracting parties. Most recent is the TRIPS agreement, which contains a specific

²² Protocol on the Establishment of the East African Community Common Market, Article 43

²³ Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda are Contracting Parties

²⁴ signed by Tanzania and Uganda

²⁵ Administrative Memorandum of Understanding on co-operation between the African Regional Intellectual Property Organization and the Directorate General for Agriculture and Rural Development of the European Commission

definition of GIs, cited above, and provides the most comprehensive framework for multilateral GI protection.

As Members of the WTO, the EAC countries are responsible for providing protection to GIs of other Member States, but can also expect other Member States to ensure protection to their registered GIs. However, as pointed out before, protection only has to be offered if a) the use of the geographical name which is registered as a GI in a Member State is misleading the public or b) constitutes an act of unfair competition.²⁶ This may form a serious obstacle, as the burden of proof lies on the producer of the GI. Yet this does not apply to wines and spirits, which are offered protection even if there is no misleading of the public.²⁷ Article 24 provides exceptions from protection if a GI is in conflict with an existing trademark²⁸, or if a GI is identical with the term customary in common language as the common name for the respective product²⁹.

Recommendations

- Promote the suggested extension of the scope of GI protection to other products under the TRIPS Agreement as mentioned in the introduction, since they would facilitate the protection of GIs in other Member States and the burden of proof would cease to apply. Furthermore, the draft modalities may assist in addressing bio-piracy and misappropriation concerns and would no longer give preference to wine and spirits producing countries.

²⁶ TRIPS Art. 22.2

²⁷ TRIPS Art. 23

²⁸ TRIPS Art. 24.5

²⁹ TRIPS Art. 24.6

- However, the establishment of a multilateral register should not be burdensome to the EAC countries. Thus, the EAC community should insist on the attachment of technological cooperation for the implementation of a register system and the protection of local GIs.
- The LDC countries of the group³⁰ should make use of their status and request technical and financial assistance from the TRIPS Council. So far, only Uganda³¹ and Tanzania³² have mentioned GIs in their assessments. Rwanda did not mention them and Burundi has not submitted an assessment so far. Thus, the countries that do not yet have a sui generis GI system³³ should insist on their request for technical cooperation for the implementation of a GI regulatory framework and for the domestic registration and protection of local GIs. Further, the countries with a sui generis system in place³⁴ should seek support for the registration of specific products. Kenya, on the other hand, should finally go about the enactment of its Draft GI Bill.
- Request specific support measures for the improvement of GI protection within the Aid for Trade programme.

registration of their products as GIs domestically, be it under trademark or GI law. Secondly, the countries that do not yet have a sui generis GI system in place, should work on the implementation of such a system, at best in cooperation with other EAC or ARIPO countries.

After all, the EAC countries do already have a fair legal basis for the protection of GIs. Thus, in addition to the suggested amendments on the national, regional and multilateral level, it is most important to make use of the existing legal framework and to focus on the registration of GIs domestically and in third countries.

Conclusion

This note illustrates how the protection of GIs can be established on three different levels. It is important to note that national protection is building the basis for any regional or multilateral protection. Therefore, as a first step the EAC countries should focus on supporting the

³⁰ Burundi, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda

³¹ IP/C/W/500

³² IP/C/W/552

³³ Tanzania and Uganda

³⁴ Burundi and Rwanda

Table 1

Country	Unfair Competition Law	Trademark Protection Law	GI Protection Law	Relevant articles for positive protection of GIs	Scope and type of protection
Burundi	Law No. 1/13 of July 28, 2009 relating to Industrial Property in Burundi (Art.360-382)	Law No. 1/13 of July 28, 2009 relating to Industrial Property in Burundi	Law No. 1/13 of July 28, 2009 relating to Industrial Property in Burundi (Art. 339-359)	<p>Art. 347: The protection granted by this Law shall be:</p> <p>1. applicable whether or not a geographical indication has been registered. [...]</p> <p>2. enforceable against any geographical indication which, even though it is literally exact as for the territory, region or locality from which the goods come, wrongly leads the public to think that the goods are from another territory.</p> <p>Art. 348: In the case of homonymous geographical indications for wines, protection shall be granted for each indication[...]</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Protection is provided to registered and not registered GIs ● Protection against misleading of public ● Protection for wines and spirits, even without misleading of public
Kenya	The Competition Act No. 12 of 2010	The Trade Marks Act, 2002	<i>Draft Geographical Indications Bill 2007</i>	<p>A mark adapted in relation to any goods to distinguish in the course of trade goods certified by any person in respect of origin, material, mode of manufacture, quality, accuracy or other characteristic from goods not so certified shall be registrable as a certification trade mark [...] (Part VII Art. 40.1)</p> <p>Geographical names or other indications of geographical origin may be registered as collective trade marks or service marks (Part VIIA 40A.5)</p>	Registration as certification trade mark, collective trade mark or service trade mark
Rwanda	Law No.	Law No.	Law No.	Art. 165.1: The protection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Protection is provided to

	31/2009 of 26 October 2009 on Protection of Intellectual Property (Art. 177 to 185)	31/2009 of 26 October 2009 on Protection of Intellectual Property	31/2009 of 26 October 2009 on Protection of Intellectual Property (Art. 165 to 176)	<p>granted by this Law shall be applicable, irrespective of whether a geographical indication has been registered [...].</p> <p>Art. 165.2: This protection may be opposed to any geographical indication which, although it is accurate in literal terms as regards the territory, region or area from which the goods originate, misleads the public in that it makes them think that the goods originate from a different territory.</p> <p>Art. 166: In the case of homonyms of geographical indications for wines, protection shall be granted for each indication, subject to the provisions of paragraph 2 of article 165 of this Law.</p>	<p>registered and not registered GIs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Protection against misleading of public ● Protection for wines and spirits, even without misleading of public
Tanzania	The Fair Competition Act, 2003	<p>The Trade and Service Marks Act, 1986;</p> <p>The Trade and Service Marks Regulation, 2000;</p> <p>Banjul Protocol on Marks, 2004*</p>	The Zanzibar Industrial Property Act No. 4 of 2008 (Art. 56 to 66)	<p>Zanzibar:</p> <p>Art. 57: same as TRIPS Art. 22.2 and 23.1</p> <p>Mainland Tanzania:</p> <p>Art. 19: It is hereby declared that the following cannot be validly registered for the purpose of this Act –</p> <p>a) trade or service marks the use of which would be contrary to law or morality or which would be likely to deceive or cause confusion as to the nature, geographical or other origin, manufacturing process, characteristics or suitability for their purpose, of the goods or services concerned</p>	<p>Zanzibar:</p> <p>Protection as in TRIPS</p> <p>Mainland Tanzania:</p> <p>Prohibits registration of trade and service marks which would be likely to deceive or cause confusion as to the geographical origin</p>
Uganda	<i>Draft: The Competition</i>	The Trademarks		Registration as trademark	Registration as certification

<i>Bill, 2004</i>	Act, 2010;	other than certification mark:	mark
	Banjul Protocol on Marks, 2004*	Art. 9.1: [...] trademark shall contain or consist of at least one of the following essential particulars [...]	
		(d) a word or words having no direct reference to the character or quality of the goods or services, and not being according to its ordinary signification, a geographical name or a surname	
		Art. 13.1: A mark adapted in relation to any goods to distinguish, in the course of trade, goods certified by a person in respect of origin, material, mode of manufacture, quality, accuracy or other characteristic, from goods not certified shall be registrable as a certification mark [...]	
		Art. 13.6: The fact that a mark consists of signs or indications which may serve, in trade, to designate the geographical origin of goods or services shall not preclude it from being registered as a certification trademark [...]	

*The provisions of the Banjul Protocol have not yet been incorporated into the national legislation.

Source: WIPO Lex, <http://www.wipo.int/wipolex/en/>, 01/07/2013

Table 2

Country	Specific geographical area (if any)	Product
Burundi	Kivu	Coffee
		Cotton
		Rice
	Lake Tanganyika	Indagala Fish
Kenya		Horticultural products
		Cut flowers
	Ngoro Ngoro Mountain	Coffee
	Nyambene, Meru, Embu, Kirinyaga/Nyeri, Aberdare, Mau Escarpment, Kisii Highlands and Nandi Hills/Cheryanganyi/Lake Region	Tea
	Kikuyu	Grass
	Meru	Potatoes
	Mombassa and Asembo	Mangoes
	Muranga and Kisii	Bananas
	Molo	Lamb
	Kitengela	Ostrich meat
	Omena	Fish
	Mursik	Milk
	Keringet	Mineral water
	Tsavonite and Magadi	Soda
	Naivasha	Wine
	Kakamega	Papaya
	Lake Victoria and Lake Turkana	Tilapia fish
	Lake Victoria	Nile Perch
	Lamu (doors and chests), Kisii (soapstone), Akamba (carvings), Wamunyu (handicrafts) and Maasai (attire and beads)	Handicrafts
Mount Kenya	Roses	
Rwanda	Kivu, Maraba, Rulindo, Gatientye, Niamagabe and Huye	Coffee
	Mountains of the Moon, Nyabihu, Rubaya and Kitabi	Tea
Tanzania		Cut flowers
		High value vegetables and sisal
	Zanzibar	Cloves
		Black Pepper
		Cinnamon
		Ginger
		Turmeric
		Vanilla
		Kichaa Chilli
		Cash crops (mango, bungo,

		papaya, spices, sea weed and other marine products)
		Doors
		Cotton
	Kyela	Rice
	Kikoi and Mbolole	Cloth
	Tingatinga	Art
	Rift Valley	Coffee
Uganda		Cloves
		Tea
	Buganda	Bark cloth
	West Nile	Cotton
		Honey
	Bugisu	Coffee
Kampala	Tobacco	
	Kakira, Lugazi and Kinyala	Sugar

Sources:

Blakeney, L. Michael and Coulet, Thierry, 2011. The protection of Geographical Indications (GI): Generating Empirical Evidence at Country and Product Level to Support African ACP Country Engagement in the Doha Round Negotiations. 9 ACP RPR 140 - 011-10; <http://countrystudies.us/uganda/>, 02.07.2013;

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