



ESTABLISHING A GEOGRAPHICAL INDICATION SYSTEM IN LAO PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC

In recent years, the member countries of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) have developed Geographical Indication (GI) schemes. GIs are intellectual property (IP) rights that indicate food products or handicrafts as originating in a territory where a given quality and reputation or other unique characteristic of the goods, including raw materials or the methods of production used, is linked to provenance. Products that are GI certified can increase commercialization and promote trade at the international level. They can also have a significant impact at local level by enhancing rural livelihoods through income generation, investment promotion, the creation of local employment opportunities in the food, agriculture, and tourism sectors, and the prevention of rural exodus.

This project was formulated to bring about these benefits for the small-scale farmers and small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) that make up the majority of the food and agriculture sector in Lao People's Democratic Republic. By focusing on the establishment of an internationally compliant GI system in the country and developing four GI pilot value chains in the agriculture sector, the project was designed to increase the competitiveness of the country at local and global level.



WHAT DID THE PROJECT DO?

Under Output 1, the national legal framework for the GI system was updated and completed through the drafting and approval of a decision that falls under the law on IP in Lao People's Democratic Republic, guidelines were developed for a national GI control scheme, and a national GI logo was created. In parallel, under Output 2, four pilot GI products were identified (Paksong Tea, Komaen Tea, Houaphanh Silk, and Luang Prabang Silk) and successfully registered as GIs. This served as on-the-job training for the GI division of the Department of Intellectual Property (DIP) of the Ministry of Industry and Commerce (MOIC), which is the national counterpart responsible for GI registration. In order to do this, Interprofessional Associations (IPAs) were formed with value chain actors for managing these products and books of specifications were developed for each GI product, detailing their unique characteristics, inputs, geographical scope and production methods. A fifth GI product, Bolaven Coffee, was also registered in coordination with the project. Output 3 focused on building the capacities of stakeholders in the IPAs along the value chains of each of the targeted GI products. In addition, control plans and manuals, business plans and legal statutes were prepared for each association. The activities of the final Output raised awareness on GIs and promoted them through a series of events and media campaigns. A final workshop on GI development was held, which allowed for representatives from all involved parties to discuss the lessons learned during the project, as well as the way forward for the future of GI development in the country. Links with the tourism sector were also explored. Finally, the submission of a request for the accession of Lao People's Democratic Republic to the Geneva Act of the Lisbon International Agreement on Appellations of Origin and Geographical Indications was presented to the Director-General of the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO).

KEY FACTS

Contribution

USD 371 963

Duration

May 2018 – December 2020

Resource Partners

Lao People's Democratic Republic

Partners

Ministry of Industry and Commerce;
Ministry of Science and Technology

Beneficiaries

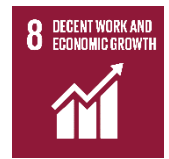
Value chain stakeholders involved or interested in Geographical Indication (GI) products; Institutional stakeholders at central and provincial level involved in the preparation, evaluation, protection and promotion of GIs; and Public and private sector entities, including small-scale farmers and small and medium-sized enterprises

IMPACT

The project facilitated the establishment of an internationally compliant GI system in Lao People’s Democratic Republic. This is expected to enhance value chains in the country through an increase in exports and the local sale of products certified under the new GI system. The establishment of the system and the success of the pilot value chains have opened the door for more products to be registered.

ACTIVITIES

- A review of existing regulations, procedures and guidelines was carried out to ensure compliance with national laws regarding IP and GIs, and gaps were filled, including the development of control systems.
- A workshop was held with national and local authorities to raise awareness about the steps needed and ensure support for the legal structure and development of the GI IPAs.
- Capacity-building activities were carried out and technical and legal support were provided on the GI application process for the GI division of the DIP of the MOIC.
- Provincial task forces were created for each priority GI, and kick-off events were held in each GI site.
- Regular meetings of the taskforces were held, and statutes and specifications were developed for each GI IPA.
- Internal control plans and training sessions on the GI priority products were held for the GI IPAs.
- Support was provided for the registration of GI certification bodies and for the external control of GI products.
- Awareness-raising materials on the concept of GIs and on the priority GI products were developed and disseminated.
- Training sessions on marketing, promotions and labelling were held.
- Awareness-raising events and strategies were developed for the promotion of GI products and related ecotourism activities.
- The GI-certified products were promoted at national events.



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Project Title
Consultant Service for Geographic Indication (GI) System

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