

THE CONTRIBUTION OF GEOGRAPHICAL INDICATIONS IN SUSTAINABLE RURAL DEVELOPMENT (EVIDENCE FROM NORTHERN ALBANIA)

Roland BARDHI^{1*} & Ilir KAPAJ²

¹Mountain Areas Development Agency (MADA), Tirana, ALBANIA

²Department of Agribusiness, Faculty of Economy&Agribusiness, Agricultural University of Tirana, Tirana
ALBANIA

ABSTRACT

Geographical indications (GIs) are a form of protective labeling used to indicate the origin of food and agricultural products. The role of protected geographical indicators as a promising sustainable rural development tool is the basis for this paper. The protection of geographical indications is a new practice and much research is still required for both sides of the debate. The focus of this debate is: Can a Geographical Indication (GI) which indicates that a certain product originates from a certain region with a given quality being attributable to its place of origin, become a tool to promote socio-economic livelihoods of rural communities? The research method employed for this study is a qualitative research approach. Two potential GI products are used to investigate the benefits brought to rural areas through the protection of GIs. The case studies include the GIs Chestnut and chestnut honey in two geographical Albanian areas, Tropoja and Reç of M. Madhe areas. Twenty-five in-depth interviews were conducted in 2016 for this study. The study identifies predominantly indirect links between GIs and sustainable rural development (SRD), through economic and social benefits brought to rural areas by the GIs investigated. This finding suggests that GIs are worthwhile for implementation in Albania as a rural development tool. The initiative for development of GI products was undertaken by BiodivBalkan Project, implemented in the North Albania, aiming to link biodiversity with development of quality signs (GIs) in order to support rural development and poverty reduction in the poorest areas of Albania.

Keywords: Geographical Indications, Agrobiodiversity, Rural development, BiodivBalkan Project.