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Geographical Indications (GIs) in Côte d'Ivoire: Achievements and challenges

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Abstract

This study analyzes the achievements and challenges related to geographical indications (GIs) in Côte d'Ivoire based on an analytical and structured literature review. It shows that the country has high GI potential, based on the diversity of its territorial resources and specific know-how. More than a dozen products show strong potential, including three GIs registered in 2023: Lagoons' Attiéké, Baoulé loincloth of Tiébissou, and mountains coffee. Institutionally, Côte d'Ivoire benefits from a relatively robust legal framework, backed by the Bangui Agreement and AIPO mechanisms, with the existence of national support structures. However, structural limitations remain: weak organizational capacities among producers, inadequate control and traceability infrastructure, fragmented institutional coordination, and heavy dependence on external support programs. Furthermore, research on typicality remains poorly integrated into governance mechanisms. All this shows that the sustainability of GIs in Côte d'Ivoire depends less on legal recognition than on strengthening collective governance and endogenous ownership by local actors.

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Introduction

Geographical Indications (GIs) are defined as a tool for protecting the reputation and promoting typical and renowned products, or as a legal instrument for recognizing natural heritage (Sautier, 2018) that promotes rural development (Cei *et al.*, 2018; Nizam & Tatari, 2022). They have the merit of globalizing local products whose quality is linked to their origin (Adebola, 2022). GIs arose from the desire to add value to quality products linked to their origin, especially in a context of increased consumer demand for quality products (Mamine *et al.*, 2016; Oger *et al.*, 2010).

Beyond their legal dimension relating to intellectual property, GIs are understood as complex socio-economic mechanisms at the interface between product quality, collective action, and territorial development (Nirosha & Jeyabalasingh, 2025). Numerous studies have highlighted their potential for rural development, increasing farmers' incomes (Crespo *et al.*, 2024), structuring supply chains, differentiating markets, and strengthening localized agri-food systems (Nizam & Tatari, 2022; Regolo *et al.*, 2025).

In West and Central Africa, the legal framework of the Bangui Agreement on Intellectual Property, in force since 1977 and amended in 1999 and 2015, has enabled the registration of eight products: Oku honey, Penja pepper, Mount Ziama coffee, sugar loaf pineapple from the Allada plateau, Bandiagara-Mali shallots, Galmi-Niger purple onion, Niger Kilichi, and Saponé hat. Since July 2023, these products have been joined by Lagoons' Attiéké, Baoulé loincloth of Tiébissou, and mountains coffee, all from Côte d'Ivoire (<https://ig-oapi.org/indication-geographique-protegee-a-loapi/>).

Côte d'Ivoire has thus registered its first GIs, but has biophysical (Avenard, 1971), cultural, pedoclimatic (Eldin, 1971), and human (RGPH, 2021) assets that could have ensured the registration of several products long ago. In addition, it has significant biological diversity, estimated at 17,343 known species, spread across several terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems (MINEDD, 2021). Several initiatives specific to the GI approach have also been undertaken. However, knowledge of these initiatives is currently fragmentary and scattered, with no analytical synthesis having been carried out. Consequently, it is difficult to identify recent developments and emerging issues that could inform future research and initiatives.

In order to address this gap, this study adopts a multidisciplinary conceptual framework drawing on institutional economics, development geography, and social sciences applied to agri-food systems. GIs are viewed not only as legal tools for protecting intellectual property, but also as complex socio-economic and territorial mechanisms.

From a conceptual point of view, GIs are based primarily on the notion of quality linked to origin, which establishes a close link between the

characteristics of a product, its terroir, and the local expertise involved in its production (Barham & Sylvander, 2011; Vandecandelaere *et al.*, 2009). This specific quality, based on typicality and reputation, forms the basis for the differentiation of GI products on the market.

Secondly, GIs are analyzed as institutional and collective mechanisms, requiring coordination between public and private actors, as well as structured forms of collective action within the sectors concerned (Barjolle & Sylvander, 2002; Giovannucci *et al.*, 2009). The governance of GIs, the definition of common rules and the organizational capacity of producers thus appear to be determining factors in their success.

In terms of collective governance, recent studies show that value co-creation and stakeholder coordination are key determinants of GI performance, in line with the concept of territorial common goods (Zhao *et al.*, 2024). The effects of GIs on territorial development and rural sustainability are well documented in various contexts, even if their impact remains heterogeneous depending on institutional structures and forms of collective action (Nizam & Tatari, 2022).

Finally, this research takes an approach to GIs as levers for territorial development, capable of contributing to the promotion of local resources, the strengthening of territorialized agri-food systems, and the improvement of producers' incomes, while raising issues of equity and inclusion (Adebola, 2022; Belletti *et al.*, 2016; Cei *et al.*, 2018). It is at the intersection of these three dimensions (quality linked to origin, collective governance, and territorial development) that the analysis of the achievements and challenges of GIs in Côte d'Ivoire is conducted.

What are the achievements of geographical indications (GIs) in Côte d'Ivoire?

What challenges remain to be addressed?

These are the key questions that this paper seeks to answer. Drawing on a structured literature review, it provides an analytical synthesis aimed at shedding light on current dynamics and guiding future research and actions related to geographical indications in Côte d'Ivoire.

1. Materials and methods

This article is based on a structured and analytical literature review, combining a descriptive and comparative approach. The methodological approach was carried out in four stages: (i) identification of sources; (ii) selection and filtering of documents; (iii) qualitative analysis of content; (iv) thematic structuring of results.

The documentary research was conducted using international scientific databases recognized for their academic rigor (Web of Science, Scopus, JSTOR, AGORA-Research4Life, Google Scholar), supplemented by specialized institutional sources (World Intellectual Property Organization-WIPO, African Intellectual Property Organization (AIPO), Ivorian Intellectual Property Office (IIPO), Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), and the Centre for International Cooperation in Agricultural Research for Development (CIRAD).

The keywords used were defined iteratively in order to cover all the legal, institutional, economic, and territorial dimensions of GIs in Côte d'Ivoire. They include, in particular: *“geographical indication and Côte d'Ivoire”*, *“local products in Côte d'Ivoire”*, *“labeling and territorial development”*, and *“geographical indications and Africa”*.

The documents were selected according to explicit inclusion and exclusion criteria. The following were selected:

- Articles dealing with GIs published in peer-reviewed journals;
- Institutional and expert reports directly related to GIs or local products;
- Case studies relating to Côte d'Ivoire or comparable contexts (West Africa and developing countries).

The following were excluded:

- 44 papers lacking scientific basis or not peer-reviewed;
- 20 papers that were redundant or did not explicitly address GIs;
- 10 papers that did not align with the conceptual framework of this article and were therefore irrelevant to this study.

The selected corpus presents a diversity of territorial anchoring (table 1), consistent with the review's comparative objective. Côte d'Ivoire constitutes the main area of analysis, through works devoted to Attiéké of lagoons, Bondoukou's Kponan yam, and palm oil from Man. These references are supplemented by studies covering different contexts in West and Central Africa, as well as by works devoted to countries of the Global South that have experienced differentiated trajectories in the institutionalization of geographical indications, notably Morocco, India, Brazil, the Dominican Republic, Turkey, and Ecuador. Other references, of a conceptual, institutional, or international scope, were drawn upon to shed light on the economic, organizational, governance, and territorial valorization dimensions of GIs. These different contexts are not considered directly equivalent, but rather as comparative configurations enabling the identification of convergences and differences in the processes of building typicity, collective organization, governance, and the valorization of territorial resources.

Table 1 - Main geographical contexts of the corpus and the function of the references used

Territorial anchoring of the corpus	Main territories / contexts represented	Function in the review
Côte d'Ivoire: national scale	Côte d'Ivoire	Situate the national context of GIs, including territorial resources, socio-economic dynamics, and the institutional and regulatory framework.
Côte d'Ivoire: territorialized studies	Attiéké of lagoons; Bondoukou's Kponan yam; palm oil from Man; Baoulé loincloth from Tiébissou	Document the link between products, territories, and know-how, as well as issues of typicity, traceability, collective organization, and valorization.
West and Central Africa	Cameroon, Ghana, and other contexts covered by regional work on GIs	Place the Ivorian trajectory in perspective through comparable African experiences, particularly regarding collective action, governance, and product valorization.
Other countries of the Global South: case studies	Morocco, India, Brazil, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Turkey, China	Compare different trajectories of institutionalization and development of GIs and identify the conditions favoring their contribution to territorial and economic development.
International, conceptual, and institutional references	Europe and international context	Provide the conceptual and institutional frameworks relating to quality linked to origin, terroir, collective governance, certification, intellectual property, and the evaluation of GIs.

In total, out of 125 documents initially identified, 51 sources (24 scientific articles, 15 books, and 12 reports) were selected for the final analysis. In addition, several methodological works were included.

The data analysis is based on a qualitative content analysis, inspired by the work of Bardin (2013) et Henry & Moscovici (1968) and adapted to the context of a literature review. The selected documents were manually coded by theme, allowing for the identification of recurrences, convergences, and

divergences in the discourse. The categories of analysis were constructed inductively and grouped around five analytical axes. A comparative cross-sectional analysis was then conducted to compare the Ivorian experiences with lessons learned from other African and international contexts, thereby strengthening the analytical scope of the results.

To distinguish findings directly documented in the source material from interpretations derived from the synthesis of the corpus, the analysis was conducted at two complementary levels. The first level consisted in identifying, for each document retained, the results explicitly reported regarding territorial resources, typicity, institutional arrangements, collective organization, governance mechanisms, and the conditions for the economic valorization of geographical indications. The second level consisted in comparing these results in order to identify convergences, recurrences, and divergences across sources. The cross-cutting conclusions presented in the results and discussion sections do not necessarily correspond to an observation made by a author, but rather emerge from this comparative reading of the corpus.

Particular attention was paid to statements concerning governance, producer appropriation, and the role of projects and public institutions. These dimensions were treated as emergent analytical categories when several sources converged on elements such as the central role of public institutions, the weakness of producer organizations, dependence on support mechanisms, or the limited articulation between research, producers, and public policy. Where the sources did not allow a causal relationship to be directly established, the wording was deliberately nuanced and presented as trends or interpretations arising from the analysis of the corpus.

2. Results

The main results are structured around the five analytical axes identified in the methodological approach: (i) territorial resources and GI potential in Côte d'Ivoire; (ii) construction of product typicity and research dynamics surrounding GIs; (iii) institutionalization of GIs; (iv) governance challenges and organizational constraints; and (v) conditions for sustainability and prospects for the development of GIs in Côte d'Ivoire.

2.1. Territorial resources and potential for geographical indications in Côte d'Ivoire

The first investigations into GIs in Côte d'Ivoire were conducted by the Ministry of Trade, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United

Nations (FAO), and AIPO through Phase 1 of the Program to Support the Establishment of Geographical Indications (PAMPIG1) (AFD, 2015). Analysis of the identified territorial resources and these initiatives highlights three main findings. First, Côte d'Ivoire has significant GI potential based on the diversity of its agro-ecosystems and local know-how. Second, this potential is largely dominated by agri-food products. This confirms the fact that GIs are historically linked to ancient agricultural know-how and traditions, often passed down through generations (Barham, 2003). Also, regulations and protections around GIs have often been put in place in response to the needs of agri-food producers (Josling, 2006). This is the case in France with the Protected Designation of Origin (PDO/ AOC in French) system, which was introduced in 1935 to protect its wines (Guy, 2007). Thirdly, despite the abundance of resources, the formal link between product, territory, and collective organization remains unevenly consolidated, which limits the transformation of potential into effectively recognized GIs.

The grouping of identified territorial resources also allows us to observe three main categories. The first concerns agri-food products (Kent mangoes from Korhogo, Kponan yams from Bondoukou, mountain rice, red oil from Man, Attiéké from the Lagoons (CSRS, 2016; FAO, 2012) that are strongly rooted in specific terroirs, where soil and climate conditions and local farming practices play a decisive role in the quality and typical characteristics of the product. These products constitute the core of the GI potential in Côte d'Ivoire and have been the focus of most characterization studies.

The second category includes agricultural export products (cashew nuts from the savannahs, cotton from the savannahs, Trinitario cocoa, rubber from Grand Bouboury, mountains coffee), whose reputation is often established nationally or internationally, but for which the precise link to their geographical origin remains partially documented, with the exception of mountains coffee. The third category concerns artisanal products such as Katiola pottery and Tiébissou Baoulé loincloth (Bagal & Vittori, 2010), which are based on localized cultural know-how.

It appears that the potential for GI in Côte d'Ivoire relies more on the abundance and diversity of territorial resources than on the maturity of the organizational mechanisms needed to promote them. Beyond these territorial considerations, the collective structuring of sectors is also a major economic challenge. Indeed, the absence or weakness of producer organizations limits the ability of local actors to access differentiated and potentially more lucrative markets. In geographical indication systems, the economic development of products relies largely on the collective building of reputation, the establishment of control mechanisms, and the coordination of marketing strategies. This fact remains evident and is supported by several studies, notably that of (Cui *et al.*, 2025). When these organizational dimensions

remain fragile, producers struggle to capture the added value associated with the territorial differentiation of products.

In international experiences with GI, this territorial differentiation often enables producers to access more lucrative markets, particularly through the promotion of reputation, quality segmentation, and the securing of specific (Belletti *et al.*, 2016; Cei *et al.*, 2018). However, these economic effects remain heavily dependent on the sectors' ability to collectively organize marketing, control quality, and ensure an equitable distribution of value within value chains (Vecchio *et al.*, 2020; Cui *et al.*, 2025). In Côte d'Ivoire, current organizational weaknesses continue to limit producers' ability to fully capitalize on these economic opportunities.

This situation can lead to limited redistribution of profits within producing territories and reduce the potential impact of GIs on improving rural incomes and local economic development. Collective structuring thus appears to be a determining factor in transforming the territorial potential of products into real economic opportunities, particularly in terms of value creation, market access, and the sustainable promotion of local sectors.

2.2. Building typicality and research dynamics around GIs

Analysis of research and characterization initiatives relating to GIs in Côte d'Ivoire reveals three main trends. First, the development of product typicality is largely driven by cooperative research projects rather than by endogenous dynamics initiated by producers. Second, this work focuses mainly on the biophysical and technical dimensions of quality, while the social and organizational dimensions of typicality remain less explored. This is the case for work carried out on Attiéké of lagoons (Kouakou *et al.*, 2023), Pagne Baoulé de Tiébissou, Man red oil (Kouassi *et al.*, 2017; Sautier, 2018), Mountains coffee from Man, Kponan yam from Bondoukou (Kouakou & Anoh, 2019), etc. This work has made it possible to identify and characterize the links between certain product qualities and their agroecological conditions, thus helping to document their territorial specificity. However, there is a dominant focus on the agronomic, geographical, technological, and physicochemical aspects of quality, to the detriment of the social, cultural, and organizational dimensions that are central to the definition of GI typicality.

The contribution of local expertise, collective practices, and institutional arrangements to quality development remains only partially documented. Furthermore, research findings are rarely systematically incorporated into the process of drawing up specifications or into GI governance mechanisms. This weak link between research, public policy and producer organizations

limits the transformation of scientific knowledge into operational tools for the recognition and sustainable management of GIs. Finally, the production of scientific knowledge remains poorly linked to institutional mechanisms for the recognition and management of GIs, limiting its uptake by local actors. While research has helped to reveal the potential of certain products, its impact remains limited by the absence of sustainable mechanisms for the transfer and uptake of knowledge by local stakeholders.

In terms of ongoing initiatives, Kent mango from the savannahs, cocoa from Soubré, and pottery from Katiola are included in the Program to Support the Strengthening of Industrial Sector Competitiveness (PARSI in French) and are being closely monitored by the Ivorian Ministry of Trade. Supported by the Danané Town Hall with the backing of the IIPO, the Rice Development Agency, and the GRAINOTHEQUE Foundation, Danané rice is also part of the CIRAD (France) and AFD's "IG Facility" project, which means its certification is imminent.

It can therefore be concluded that research efforts and initiatives in the field of GIs in Côte d'Ivoire are still in their infancy and need to be consolidated. The development of typicality is still based on fragmented scientific evidence that is insufficiently integrated into the institutional and organizational dynamics of GIs. Research suffers in particular from a lack of funding and structured scientific supervision. The study by Cerdan *et al.* (2018) emphasizes the need to strengthen local capacities in participatory agricultural research in order to better identify territorial specificities. Although not dealing with the specific case of Côte d'Ivoire, Galtier *et al.* (2013) reveal that the lack of in-depth studies on the typical characteristics of agricultural products is a barrier to the advancement of GIs. Biénabe et Marie-Vivien (2017) suggest a multidisciplinary approach to study the typical characteristics of products and their territorial roots.

While characterizing products and formalizing their typicality are essential steps in the GI recognition process, their effectiveness also depends on the existence of organizational mechanisms capable of supporting their economic development. In the absence of sufficiently consolidated collective structures, producers have limited scope to develop coordinated market strategies, negotiate marketing conditions with intermediaries, or collectively organize product promotion. This organizational weakness can also affect the ability of sectors to establish transparent governance and value distribution mechanisms, limiting the potential economic benefits for producers and territories. In this context, the integration of organizational dimensions appears to be a determining factor in transforming the recognition of product typicality into real opportunities for economic development and territorial development.

2.3. Institutionalization of GIs: legal and regulatory framework

In Côte d'Ivoire, GIs are considered a separate type of intellectual property and enjoy *sui generis* protection (Giovannucci *et al.*, 2009).

As a member state of the Bangui Agreement, implemented by the African Intellectual Property Organization (AIPO), the country is party to several international conventions promoting GIs (OAPI, 2015). Significant regulatory provisions also exist at the subregional and local levels. At the international level, in May 2018, the Ivorian government agreed to implement the process of accession to the Geneva Act of the Lisbon Agreement on Appellations of Origin and Geographical Indications (<https://autriche.diplomatie.gouv.ci/>).

To facilitate the coordination of GIs, AIPO has established the principle of a national GI committee in each member state (Giovannucci *et al.*, 2009) with a specific operational mission (Bridier & Chabrol, 2009). This led to the creation of the National Committee for Geographical Indications and Collective Marks (CMC in French) by Decree No. 2012-699 of August 1, 2012. The CMC is therefore the executive body of the IIPO in matters relating to GIs (Official Journal RCI, 2012).

Analysis of the legal framework for GIs in Côte d'Ivoire reveals that the process is part of a regional system defined by the Bangui Agreement and implemented by AIPO. This framework provides a clear legal basis for the recognition and protection of GIs, while assigning the State a central role in supporting the registration process.

However, analysis of implementation methods reveals a marked dependence of GI initiatives on public institutions and support projects, both in terms of preparing recognition applications and structuring control and management mechanisms. This configuration limits producers' ability to fully embrace the rules and exercise effective control over their GI.

Moreover, the multiplicity of institutional actors involved leads to overlapping responsibilities, which can hinder the smooth running of processes and the consistency of GI governance. It therefore appears that the institutionalization of GIs in Côte d'Ivoire is based on a formally robust legal framework, but one that is still insufficiently operationalized from the point of view of collective governance. The main challenge lies not so much in the existence of rules as in their effective appropriation by producers and their coherent articulation between the various institutions involved. Therefore, existing regulations must prioritize support for stakeholders, especially associations, in their enforcement methods (Miranda *et al.*, 2020).

2.4. Governance challenges and organizational limitations of GIs

One of the main challenges specific to the entire AIPO region is the lack of solid infrastructure and operational frameworks. This includes quality control laboratories, traceability systems, and support services and technical assistance for producers and other actors in the value chain. The establishment and effective management of GIs require robust support structures, which are often lacking in many countries in the region (Calboli, 2021). Limited resources and fragmented regulatory efforts complicate the enforcement and monitoring of GIs.

Additionally, the analysis of the corpus highlights a predominant role played by public institutions, particularly IIPO and CMC, in initiating and supporting GI initiatives. This configuration contrasts with the principle of collective and sustainable ownership of GI processes by producer organizations. Indeed, one of the keys to the success of a GI is that the producers who are its direct beneficiaries are able to use it (Bridier & Chabrol, 2009).

Also, initiatives are still not coordinated within research institutions or government technical structures, which undermines their success by affecting the speed of the process. For example, Attiéké of Lagoons, Baoulé loincloth of Tiébissou, and Muntains coffee of Man, which could have been registered more than a decade ago, were only registered in July 2023. It is also worrying to note that some new initiatives do not always capitalize on the achievements of previous initiatives, with the result that studies tend to repeat actions already capitalized on by other previous projects. All this points to a lack of coordination between stakeholders (Debbag, 2024).

Created on August 1, 2012 (Journal officiel RCI, 2012), the CMC has been operational for less than five years. Therefore, the composition of its Steering Committee needs to be updated to take into account sectoral changes and to include the main umbrella organizations concerned by the GI, their various management boards, and, above all, the decentralized authorities that are supposed to ensure the continuity of government initiatives. Moreover, there is no law mentioning the financing of the GI approach, which does not guarantee support for potential sectors to be promoted, or the sustainability of those currently being promoted.

Finally, producer groups exist in almost all sectors covered by GI (Sautier, 2018). However, shortcomings have been identified in terms of their stability, autonomy, and the training of members in community life (Youan Bi, 2019), and therefore in terms of their forward-looking vision. Indeed, GIs are above all a collective endeavor and require a strong collective commitment from public and private (Giovannucci *et al.*, 2009; Pedelahore *et al.*, 2022). Equity within the sector, which is one of the conditions for the success of the

approach, also implies the pooling of actions across the entire value chain (Giovannucci *et al.*, 2009; WIPO, 2013). There is also limited knowledge, linked to a lack of awareness among actors in the various value chains, of how GIs can be a real tool for adding value to the products they cover (Calboli, 2021). This limits initiatives or prevents them from becoming sustainable. It is therefore clear that it is impossible to achieve sustainable success with GIs without establishing a solid collective organization (Barjolle & Sylvander, 2002) or without ensuring creative capacity building and training (Adebola, 2022) for existing organizations.

In summary, analysis of GI experiences in Côte d'Ivoire highlights three major challenges in terms of governance and collective organization. First, GI systems face significant organizational and technical capacity constraints, particularly in terms of traceability, control, and collective management. The producer organizations involved often have limited human and financial resources, making it difficult to implement traceability systems, internal control, and monitoring of compliance with specifications. This situation affects the credibility and sustainability of GIs, particularly in the post-registration phases. Secondly, coordination gaps persist between the various actors in the sectors, limiting the effectiveness of governance mechanisms. These gaps can be observed within the sectors, but also between public institutions and other support structures.

It should be noted that, the dominance of public institutions and support projects in the management of GI initiatives tends to restrict the autonomy and ownership of these mechanisms by producer organizations. While this support is essential during the start-up phase, it creates a high degree of dependence on external support mechanisms, limiting the emergence of endogenous governance mechanisms and the ability of producers to exercise effective control over their GI. The current limitations of GIs in Côte d'Ivoire are therefore less a result of a lack of productive potential than of structural weaknesses in collective governance mechanisms. Strengthening organizational capacities, improving coordination between actors, and gradually reducing dependence on external support appear to be essential conditions for the sustainability of GIs in Côte d'Ivoire. Without these developments, GIs risk remaining formal legal instruments whose economic benefits for producers and territories remain limited.

2.5. Sustainability conditions and prospects for GI development

Ensuring the sustainability of GIs and strengthening their contribution to territorial development relies on four key actions.

At the organizational level, strengthening producers' organizational and technical capacities appears to be a key lever for the sustainability of

GIs. This concerns collective management, the implementation of control and traceability systems, and the ability to negotiate with other actors in the sectors and markets. Without this strengthening, GIs risk remaining dependent on institutional support or external projects, compromising their long-term viability. CMC will therefore need to step up its efforts to inform and train key stakeholders on the concept of GIs. A better understanding of GIs can motivate producers to actively participate in the process, thereby strengthening adherence and product quality (Calboli, 2021).

Investing in support infrastructure to ensure the quality and traceability of GI products is also crucial. This involves setting up quality control laboratories and robust traceability systems. WIPO emphasizes the importance of adequate infrastructure for GI development (WIPO, 2021), while Rangnekar (2002) notes that strong infrastructure can help maintain high standards and enhance the reputation of labeled products.

The sustainability of GIs requires better coordination between the institutional framework, research, and industry stakeholders in order to transform available knowledge into operational tools. Indeed, scientific knowledge about product typicality and local practices can only fully contribute to the development of GIs if it is systematically integrated into governance processes, particularly the development and updating of specifications.

This involves revising and improving existing laws, as well as establishing clear mechanisms for their implementation. Marecotti et Belletti (2021) rightly emphasize the importance of a robust regulatory framework to protect GIs and ensure their integrity, while Marie-Vivien (2010) highlights the crucial role of the state in this process. Above all, it is essential to strengthen monitoring and control mechanisms (Crespi & Marette, 2020), which are key to maintaining consumer trust and preserving the reputation of GI products (Menapace & Moschini, 2012), while also defining an endogenous policy to provide financial support for initiatives. Studies by Vecchio *et al.* (2020) and Quiñones-Ruiz *et al.* (2017) show that reducing certification costs can encourage more producers to obtain GI certification, thereby improving the diversity and quality of available products.

Finally, the prospects for the development of geographical indications (GIs) in Côte d'Ivoire depend on their ability to be embedded in broader economic and territorial dynamics, including market access, the enhancement of product reputation, and the consideration of social and environmental sustainability issues. Such integration determines the capacity of GIs to generate tangible benefits for producers and the territories concerned. Rural communities, organized along the value chains of products identified as potential GIs, must therefore develop producer organizations, which are one of the key success factors for GIs (Bagal *et al.*, 2023). These organizations

should be supported by a national policy for the promotion and valorization of terroir products, aimed at fostering their creation, capacity building, and long-term sustainability.

Overall, these findings suggest that the sustainability of geographical indications in Côte d'Ivoire does not depend solely on their legal recognition, but on the gradual consolidation of endogenous mechanisms of governance, coordination, and economic valorization. This is in line with the recommendations made to the Ecuadorian Protected Designation of Origin (PDO) for cocoa (Miranda *et al.*, 2020). The development prospects of GIs thus lie in their ability to evolve from mere protection tools into genuine instruments of territorial development.

3. Discussion

An analysis of the achievements and challenges associated with the development of GIs in Côte d'Ivoire highlights a unique institutional and organizational trajectory that enriches current discourse on the role of GIs in developing countries. While the literature largely emphasizes the potential of GIs in terms of promoting local resources, structuring value chains, and regional development (Belletti *et al.*, 2016; Cei *et al.*, 2018; Nizam & Tatari, 2022), the Ivorian case reveals that legal and institutional recognition is a necessary but not sufficient condition for ensuring their collective ownership and sustainability.

Côte d'Ivoire has a remarkable potential of products eligible for geographical indications (GIs), based on the diversity of its agrosystems, its agricultural and artisanal know-how, and the long-standing nature of certain production practices. However, despite the early identification of these resources as early as the 2000s, the first formal GI registrations were only obtained in 2023.

Contrary to the implicit assumption that an abundance of territorial resources would mechanically lead to the emergence of GIs, the Ivorian experience shows that transforming potential into operational schemes depends heavily on inter-institutional coordination, producers' organizational capacity, and the collective appropriation of rules. This observation echoes the work of Galtier *et al.* (2013) and Biénabe & Marie-Vivien (2017), while also providing new empirical insights into West African contexts that remain insufficiently documented.

A comparison with Morocco allows us to go beyond simply noting the different levels of maturity of the geographical indications systems and to shed light on the governance trajectories underlying their development. In both countries, government action plays an important role in the emergence

and structuring of GI initiatives. However, the ways in which public intervention, producer organizations, and regional research and development are coordinated appear to differ. In Morocco, GIs and, more broadly, the promotion of local products have gradually been integrated into agricultural and rural development policies, particularly through mechanisms combining certification, support for producer groups, commercial promotion, and the development of value chains (Amsallem *et al.*, 2010; Debbag, 2024). This trajectory does not, however, mean that Moroccan governance is free of challenges: recent studies continue to highlight problems related to coordination, resources, marketing, and local stakeholders' ownership of the system (Debbag, 2024; Ratib & Ouahi, 2025).

The value of this comparison thus lies less in contrasting a supposedly mature Moroccan model with a still-emerging Ivorian model than in highlighting two distinct institutional trajectories. In Morocco, public intervention appears to have gradually evolved toward a framework in which certification policies are integrated with mechanisms for collective organization, economic development, and market access. The Moroccan strategy specifically calls for strengthening producer groups, developing aggregation partnerships, and improving market access, thereby expanding the governance of local products beyond mere legal recognition. In Côte d'Ivoire, the analyzed data set reveals a pattern in which institutional impetus and program support still precede the consolidation of producers' organizational capacities. The comparison therefore suggests that the central issue is not merely the existence of a legal framework, but rather the capacity of public mechanisms to foster, over the long term, a transition from primarily institutional governance to a governance model that is more evenly shared among public institutions, producer organizations, and other actors in the value chain.

This interpretation can be linked to the governance framework proposed by Barjolle and Sylvander (2002), according to which the success of geographical indications depends on the ability of the relevant stakeholders to collectively establish and enforce common rules. From this perspective, the Moroccan experience shows that strong initial state involvement can serve as a foundation for the institutionalization of GIs, but that its impact on territorial development depends on its coordination with professional organizations and mechanisms for economic development. The Ivorian case, in light of the body of research examined, appears to be a trajectory still in the process of consolidation: the institutional framework and product recognition have progressed more rapidly than the collective capacities necessary for their management, oversight, and promotion. A comparison with Morocco thus allows us to formulate a more general analytical proposition: in contexts where GIs are in an emerging phase, the challenge

of governance consists not only in creating institutions for recognition, but also in gradually organizing the transfer of capacity for action to the territorial actors responsible for sustaining the mechanisms after their institutionalization.

The example of countries such as India and Brazil, often cited as benchmarks in the literature on GIs in the Global South, further highlights the specificities of the Ivorian case. In India, GI initiatives have been characterized by more direct involvement of local organizations in defining product specifications and in post-registration management, fostering faster appropriation and better articulation between legal protection and territorial development (Marie-Vivien, 2010; Rangnekar, 2009). Similarly, in Brazil, several studies show that the territorial anchoring of GIs relies on research-action processes and on relatively well-established collective governance arrangements (Cerdan *et al.*, 2018).

By contrast, the Ivorian case illustrates an emerging model of highly centralized GIs, in which legal recognition precedes the consolidation of local organizational capacities. This reversal of the classical sequence may raise uncertainties regarding the sustainability of GIs and their ability to generate equitable benefits for producers. The case of Côte d'Ivoire thus provides an analytical point of contrast with certain trajectories documented in India and Brazil, particularly about the degree of involvement of producer organizations in the development and governance of GI systems.

From a scientific perspective, this synthesis contributes to existing knowledge on GIs by documenting the specific challenges of emerging institutional contexts, characterized by high centralization, fragmentation of initiatives, and weak coordination between research, public action, and producer organizations. The case of Côte d'Ivoire shows that legal recognition of GIs does not guarantee their social acceptance or their effective contribution to territorial development, thus confirming the critical analyses of Belletti *et al.* (2016) on the risk of a "quality-exclusion trap".

Dependence on support projects, the absence of endogenous financing mechanisms, and weaknesses in control and traceability systems raise questions about the long-term viability of GIs, particularly in the post-registration phases. These limitations call for in-depth reflection on GI governance models in countries where institutional capacities are still under development.

From an operational perspective, the lessons learned from the Ivorian case can be transferred to other countries engaged in similar initiatives, particularly within the AIPO region. They suggest that public policies on GIs should go beyond the sole logic of legal protection to invest more in organizational capacity building, stakeholder training, inter-institutional coordination, and the effective integration of research into governance

mechanisms. Under these conditions, GIs can evolve from simple labeling tools to real levers for sustainable territorial development.

4. Conclusions

This paper shows that the development of geographical indications (GIs) in Côte d'Ivoire is part of a contrasting dynamic, marked by strong territorial potential and recent institutional advances, but also by persistent structural limitations. The diversity of agrosystems, local know-how, and products with high cultural value gives the country multiple and varied territorial resources. However, there is a significant gap between the early identification of this potential and the effective recognition of GIs, which only occurred in 2023. The main achievements relate to the establishment of a relatively robust legal and institutional framework, backed by the regional AIPO system.

Nevertheless, the case of Côte d'Ivoire reveals the limitations of a highly institutionalized GI development model that is largely dependent on support projects, in which collective ownership by producer organizations remains fragile. Beyond the Ivorian context, this study shows that the success of GIs depends less on the abundance of territorial resources than on the quality of collective governance, coordination between actors, and the articulation between research, public action, and productive sectors. These lessons are transferable to other countries engaged in similar approaches, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa. In this context, strategies to promote GIs should go beyond a labeling-centered approach to include long-term actions, such as strengthening producer organizations, developing control and traceability infrastructure, and establishing endogenous financing mechanisms. Finally, post-registration empirical research appears necessary to assess the real effects of GIs on sector governance, value distribution, and social inclusion. From this perspective, the sustainable development of GIs in Côte d'Ivoire could be based on a phased approach centered on three complementary priorities: (i) strengthening producer organizations and collective governance mechanisms; (ii) the gradual establishment of systems for monitoring, traceability, and inter-institutional coordination; (iii) the development of strategies for economic promotion and access to differentiated markets. Such an approach would make it possible to gradually consolidate the endogenous capacities necessary for the long-term viability of GIs beyond mere external support projects.

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