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Working Paper



Inventory of well known local food products in Vietnam: a rich potential for geographical indication

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INVENTORY OF WELL KNOWN LOCAL FOOD PRODUCTS IN VIETNAM: *a rich potential for geographical indication*

Food consumption in Vietnam goes through important changes, especially in urban areas. Because of increasing income, consumers' demand shifts towards diversified products in terms of quality and species. In the meantime, globalization of economic and cultural exchanges results in changes in consumption models. In this context, what is the place of local products, and in particular specialty products of specific origin, in the present food consumption of the Vietnamese?

An inventory based on consumer surveys in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City generated a list of 265 products of specific origin, including many non-processed products, especially fruits. The local specificity is linked to natural conditions from consumers' points of view (e.g., for the mountainous areas). Tradition is another important dimension: local products have established reputation, with a specific history, sometimes a prestigious one (e.g., products for the Emperor). More than the skills of farmers, the small scale of production is a proxy for its quality according to consumers.

The study shows us three kinds of local food specialty products as perceived by consumers:

- The first type relates to products with superior taste and safety, which function is to improve the usual consumption.
- The second category gathers products with a high potential of cultural value. They are purchased on the occasion of tourist trips, as a souvenir. In this case, taste is not the most important factor.
- The last category is products consumed for special occasions, they are dedicated to festive meal.

Many consumers express their disappointment relative to the decrease in organoleptic quality of local products and serious doubts on the actual origin of these products. The in-depth study of Thanh Ha litchi which benefits from a high reputation shows that consumers are unable to identify this product through blind tests, although they praise its superior quality. To decrease their uncertainty related to product origin, consumers rely on regular traders, direct purchase to farmers or supermarkets. In this context, the system of certification of specific geographical indication (GI) of food launched by the Vietnamese Government seems to be a good orientation. Nevertheless, it is important to consider difficulties (such as high cost, producers' organizing ability) of this system applied to a developing country like Vietnam.

Source: Tran Thi Tham: La référence au terroir comme signe de qualité: le cas des produits agroalimentaires vietnamiens, 117 p.


Mémoire de recherche présenté par Tran Thi Tham - Pour l'obtention du Diplôme de Master Recherche 2
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The maps have been drawn with the technical support of Maximilien Cugnet and have been presented at the Seminar by ECAP on "Geographical Indications: A land of Opportunities", 15-16 November 2005, Hanoi, Vietnam.


Speciality Food Products in Vietnam

(Known by Vietnamese consumers)



Đặc sản nổi tiếng của các vùng miền Việt Nam

(Theo ý kiến người tiêu dùng)



MALICA (markets and agriculture linkages for cities in Asia)

Le consortium MALICA associe des instituts de recherche français et vietnamiens : le CIRAD (le centre de coopération internationale en recherche agronomique pour le développement), l'IOS (l'institut de sociologie de l'académie vietnamienne de sciences sociales), le RIFAV (l'institut de recherche sur les fruits et légumes), le VASI (l'institut des sciences agronomiques du Vietnam), l'université agricole de Hanoi, et l'université agricole et forestière de Ho Chi Minh Ville. L'objectif principal est de renforcer la capacité d'analyse des marchés alimentaires et des relations entre villes et campagnes des chercheurs, étudiants, cadres de l'administration, responsables de groupes privés. MALICA met au point des méthodes qui sont appliquées à des projets visant à adapter la production alimentaire locale et la demande du marché intérieur, en quantité et qualité (ex : projet régional sur l'agriculture périurbaine, SUSPER ; projet sur les comportements alimentaires et la perception des risques). Les mécanismes d'information et de concertation des acteurs de l'offre et de la demande sont considérés, en complément aux analyses classiques de l'efficacité technique et économique des filières à leurs différents stades.

Les méthodes d'analyse de la consommation et des filières sont appliquées à deux domaines de recherche prioritaires : l'élaboration de la qualité dans le secteur alimentaire ; la régulation des flux d'origine périurbaine, rurale et extérieure. Les principales activités réalisées concernent l'application de ces thématiques aux filières légumes, porc et maïs ainsi que l'analyse des marchés de gros.

The MALICA consortium brings French and Vietnamese research institutes together. These include the CIRAD – centre de coopération internationale en recherche agronomique pour le développement, the IOS – the Institute of Sociology of the Vietnamese Academy of Social Sciences, the RIFAV – the Research Institute on Fruits and Vegetables, the VASI – the Vietnam Agricultural Science Institute, as well as the Hanoi Agricultural and Forestry University of Ho Chi Minh City. Its main objective is to reinforce the capacity of researchers, students, administrations as well as private groups in analysing food markets and city/country relations. These methods are applied to projects which aim at a correlation between local production and local market demand, in terms of both quantity and quality, such as the regional periurban agricultural project, SUSPER, or the project about food behaviour and risk perception. Stakeholders' information and cooperation mechanisms are taken into consideration as a complement to classical technical and economic efficiency analysis for different stages in the commodity chains. Methods of consumption and commodity chain analysis are applied to two priority research fields: increasing quality in the food sector; and the comparative advantages of periurban and rural flows. The main activities over the past year have focused on the application of these methods to the vegetable, pork and maize commodity chains and the analysis of the wholesale markets.

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