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# Traditional food products and trade: exploring the linkages

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## ABSTRACT

The objective of this working paper is to explore the linkages between traditional food production, geographical indications protection and trade, with a special focus on the opportunities that it represents for small-scale farming. For this, the following topics were covered: (i) the definition of traditional food production and its links with related concepts as food heritage and local production, (ii) market opportunities for traditional food products, considering evidence on consumers' attitudes and preferences, (iii) the origins, evolution, and issues under debate related to the World Trade Organization framework on geographical indications, (iv) case studies on protection of geographical indications (European Union and Chile) and (v) potential consequences of traditional food production and trade development for small-scale farming and public support strategies.

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## **1. Introduction**

Food production has been present in our societies since ancient times, given the human need for nutrients. However, food does not only respond to a biological dimension but also is a much more complex phenomenon (Contreras & Gracia, 2005). According to Aguirre (2010), the decision about what to eat, which we can consider *a priori* essentially an individual choice, is strongly marked by social and cultural conditioning.

On the other hand, food production has been based on traditional knowledge that has endured over time. In some cases, this knowledge has been maintained until today, being part of the heritage of a territory or society to the extent that, following Llull (2005), constitutes a significant element of its identity. However, the heritage legacy that emerges from the agricultural activity is not limited to what is directly related to food production. Throughout history, agriculture has been a pillar of social, economic, and cultural relations.

The defense of food heritage requires the improvement of the resources and market strategies for producers who maintain the traditions. One of the policies that the public sector has used is the protection of Geographical Indications (GI). This legal figure is also a way to add value to the traditional productions (Sgarbi & Menasche, 2015). In the area of multilateral trade regulation, geographical indications issues are mainly under the Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights Agreement (TRIPS). However, TRIPS only establishes a common framework, which is then specified in the national regulations.

The objective of this working paper is to explore the linkages between traditional food production and geographical indications protection and trade, with a special focus on the opportunities that it represents for small-scale farming. For this, the following topics will be covered: (i) the definition of traditional food production and its links with related concepts as food heritage and local production, (ii) market opportunities for traditional food products, considering evidence of consumers' attitudes and preferences, (iii) the origins, evolution, and issues under debate related to the World Trade Organization framework on GI, (iv) case studies on protection of geographical indications (European Union and Chile)

and (v) potential implications of traditional food production and trade development for small-scale farming and related public support strategies.

## **2. Traditional food: conceptual framework and consumer behavior**

Traditional food constitutes a significant element of the culture and heritage of a country, since – as noted by DeSoucey (2010) – it is signified as a symbol of identity, regardless of geographical, social, and political differences separating the population. This food identity contributes to international identification and reputation (Takaki, 2012). However, not only does food have a role in terms of generation of local identity, but it also influences consumer behavior and helps the transfer of cultural heritage for future generations and the interaction with other territories (Albayrak & Gunes, 2012).

There are several ways to define the concept of “traditional food”. One of them refers to the food that has been produced within a defined territory, following the local knowledge, and is therefore linked to it. According to Jordana (2000), this is part of a set of traditions that have lasted over time. This food is principally vegetables, fruits, and animal products that are eaten in their original form or after processed by basic techniques (drying, cooking, or natural fermentation) (Prakash, 2016). For Bertozzi (1998), traditional food is part of a culture and implies the cooperation of the individuals belonging to the territory. In this same sense, Guerrero et al. (2009: 348) says that traditional food is “frequently consumed or associated with specific celebrations and/or seasons, normally transmitted from one generation to another”.

The link with a territory is then one of the characteristics of traditional food. In fact, the knowledge about the origin of food is more and more valued for consumers. One of the reasons is because traceability is positive for food safety (Espíñeira & Santaclara, 2016). Additionally, as told by Durante et al. (2016), consumers seem to associate food quality with a well-defined or recognizable origin and, as a consequence, consider it an attribute. In this context, “local food” is defined essentially by the proximity between producer and consumer (Chambers, Lobb, Butler, Harvey, & Bruce Traill, 2007). So, although they

might be related, the concept of traditional food is much broader than the concept of local food (Pieniak, Verbeke, Vanhonacker, Guerrero, & Hersleth, 2009).

The interest of consumers for traditional and local food has increased in recent years in many countries, especially in Europe (Pieniak et al., 2009; Albayrak & Gunes, 2010; Kühne, Vanhonacker, Gellynk, & Verbeke, 2010; Balogh, Békési, Gorton, Popp, & Lengyel, 2016). The public sector has also had a relevant role in this sense. For instance, the UK government incentivizes consumers to buy local foods (Chambers et al., 2007). Also in the UK, a private foundation carried out the “Campaign to Protect Rural England”, where one of its strategies is promoting local food consumption, defined as “produced within 30 miles of where it is sold” (CPRE, 2016).

The positive attitude of consumers for traditional and local food increases when products have some kind of indication and/or are sold under collective trademarks (Guerrero et al., 2009; Pieniak et al., 2009; Verbeke & Roosen, 2009).

According to Chambers et al. (2007), consumers feel that local products are fresher, more nutritious, tastier, and more authentic. They also identified that consumers really think that local products have a higher quality than imported food and feel that, by buying from local producers, they support them and contribute to the national economy. On the other hand, the main barriers that prevent local food consumption were higher prices and lack of convenience, because frequently the access to this food is more difficult than buying national or imported products at the supermarket, considering the time that they have to spend for purchases.

Pieniak et al. (2009) also evidenced that traditional food is often perceived as high quality and more sustainable and that consumers value regional indication labels. However, they identified that consumers' attitudes differed, depending on the place of production, related to the level of development of traditional food. In this case, Scandinavian and Benelux countries have fewer collective trademarks than Italy, Spain, and France. As a consequence, Southern European consumers are more familiar with traditional foods. Similarly, Guerrero et al. (2010) found that Southern European consumers associate the concept of “traditional”

with heritage, culture, and history, whereas Central and North European consumers focus on such practical issues as convenience, health, or appropriateness. According to results in Pieniak et al. (2009), consumers of Northern European countries think that traditional food products are unhealthy, because most of them are recognized as rather fatty. In fact, for instance, in Norway, traditional food is associated with festive occasions, providing pleasure rather than nutrition or health benefits. In their research, authors also evidenced that European consumers are aware of higher prices for traditional food, and this is not a barrier to their consumption when they think they are also higher quality. In the same sense, Albayrak and Gunes (2010) showed that US consumers are willing to pay from 10 to 30 percent more for products grown in their home State, and they want to have more availability of local fruit and vegetables.

Therefore, the high value that consumers give to traditional food is due to an *integral valorization*, based on technical, economic, social, patrimonial, cultural, and environmental characteristics (Champredonde & González, 2016). Additionally, traditional food can be linked to a concept that has emerged in recent years, denominated as “heritage marketing”. According to Godoy (2014), it refers to a set of processes to generate, communicate, and add value to a product or service for consumers combining these objectives with heritage conservation, finally increasing the sales and profits of producers.

Studies on these issues for Latin America are scarcer. In the case of Chile, investigations carried out on local products concluded that consumers positively value the national origin of food in relation to its importation (Schnettler, Ruíz, & Sepúlveda, 2007; Schnettler, Miranda, Sepúlveda, & Denegri, 2011) as well as its regional roots (Schnettler, Zavala, & Pihan, 2009). On the other hand, an investigation by Padilla, Villalobos, Spiller, and Henry (2007) analyzed consumers' preferences and intention to pay for traditional jams, this circumstance being informed by a quality label and/or by the appearance of the product. It was shown that labeling was much more appreciated than appearance. The above may be related to the fact that the distinctive qualities mentioned so far belong to what Darby and Karni (1973) categorized as “trust attributes”, which can hardly be directly verified by the consumer at the time of purchase, or even later. That is why mechanisms are generated in order to provide reliable information that can guide the purchasing process.

### **3. The protection of geographical indications at the World Trade Organization**

The recognition of geographical indications is the main strategy that the public sector has used to try to protect those products that have strong roots to a particular territory. In the context of multilateral trade, the issues related to geographical indications are approached in the Annex 1C, Part II, Section 3 of the Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights, signed in Marrakesh in 1994, ending the Uruguay Round. This sets the basic international regulatory framework for GI, since it not only defines them but also aligns the standards of protection and provides access to international dispute settlement mechanisms (ITC, 2009). In fact, various authors consider that TRIPS is the first multilateral document that explains the definition of a GI and related aspects (O'Connor, 2004; Rai, 2009; Gervais, 2010; Zografos, 2010; EFOW, 2016). The importance of TRIPS Agreement also relies on its broad membership, higher than any other agreement in this matter, so it has a wide representativeness and constitutes the basics of many countries' legislation (Errázuriz, 2010). The text of TRIPS referred to GI is composed of three articles: (i) article 22, which describes the basic definition and general standards of protection for GI, (ii) article 23, about additional protection for geographical indications for wines and spirits, and (iii) article 24, which establishes some important exceptions and details for international negotiations.

Before TRIPS, there were some approximations to GI in other international agreements, but they did not have the same scope, either by their generality (Paris Convention) or the reduced number of signatory parties (Madrid Agreement and Lisbon Agreement) (Zografos, 2010). However, it is relevant to refer to the concept of GI proposed in those agreements, basically: "indication of origin" and "appellation of origin". According to WIPO (2016), the first one is referred to as an indication of a country or a specific territory in that country from where the product proceeds, without the necessity of that product having a special quality, reputation, or singular characteristic. In fact, it is only necessary that the origin of the product is defined – for example, mentioning the name of the country on the product, like "made in...", "product of...", among others. Otherwise, "appellation of origin" is a more specific concept, since it is a type of GI – then, necessarily the product must be original of a specific country, region, or locality – with a quality or distinctive

characteristic that is strongly related to its origin, including, besides geographical environment, natural, and human factors.

As already mentioned, Article 22 of TRIPS Agreement proposes the WTO definition for GI, probably inspired in the previous international agreements but with some significant differences. It establishes that GIs are “indications which identify a good as originating in the territory of a (WTO) 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”. It is important to observe that, in its definition for geographical indications, the WTO refers to “goods” and not to “products”. Products are understood as goods and services; therefore, services were excluded (Rangnekar, 2003).

In Article 22, the Agreement also specifies that Members will decide about legal forms to prevent the misuse of their protected GI as well as to avoid “any use which constitutes an act of unfair competition within the meaning of Article 10bis of the Paris Convention (1967)”. Additionally, a WTO Member, if its legislation allows it or an interested party requires it, can refuse or invalidate the registration of a trademark when it has the same denomination of a GI, when the good that has such a mark is not originally from the same place of the GI, and this may induce consumers to confusion. This protection is also applicable in case of deceptive GI, namely: “geographical indication which, although literally true as to the territory, region or locality in which the goods originate, falsely represents to the public that the goods originate in another territory”. Therefore, TRIPS allows Members to choose the legal strategy to protect their GI; some of them are laws on business practices, trademark law, and owner systems specifically designed to protect GI, i.e., *sui generis* systems (WTO, 2016).

TRIPS Article 23 refers to the specific protection for geographical indications in wines and spirits. It establishes a considerably higher level of protection regarding the rest of the goods contemplated in Article 22. In fact, countries can protect GI for wines and spirits, even if there is no risk of misleading consumers or unfair competition. This differential treatment is not based on economics or any other justified reason but, rather, is the result of negotiations and specific circumstances that were particular to the wine sector. The

Agreement assures entire protection of Members' GI on wines and spirit from producers who use them, either in translation or accompanied by the expressions "kind", "type", "style", "imitation", or similar by the legal means established by each country. In this sense, if a new trademark for wines or spirits contains or consists of an existing GI that does not correspond to its origin, it shall be refused or invalidated if the legislation of the Member allows it (WTO, 2016).

To grant the extra protection for wines and spirits, the Agreement establishes a multilateral system of notification and registration of related GI. Some developed and developing countries have proposed to extend that system to a higher number of products, such as crafts, agricultural products, and other drinks. That proposal has been largely discussed, and it was included in the working program for Doha Round. The debate continues regarding the inclusion of all or only a few products in the registration system; which is especially relevant for those Members who link the GI with the access to new market segments, as they can improve the differentiation, enhancing the competitiveness. In contrast, other groups of WTO Members – including Chile, Argentina, New Zealand, and the United States – disagree with the extension of the GI registration system for diverse reasons; the most important is the lack of demonstration that the existing protection for geographical indications under Article 22 of the TRIPS is insufficient, and the conviction that further protection would constitute a barrier that disrupts current, legitimate market practices (WTO, 2005; WTO 2016).

Finally, Article 24 specifies some relevant exceptions to previous articles and further details for international negotiations. It establishes that, in some cases, GI does not need protection, or it can be limited – for instance, when a denomination has become a common or generic term (e.g., cheddar now refers to a type of cheese, beyond which is made in Cheddar, UK), when the geographical indications have been used similarly and continuously for many years, or when a trademark has been obtained before the registration of the GI, with the exception that such trademark has not been used or had been registered in bad faith.

#### **4. Case studies on protection of geographical indications**

The TRIPS Agreement gives the multilateral framework for GI protection in which national regulations are based. As was exposed, there has not been an actual harmonization of GI legal approach, and there are still relevant aspects under debate between WTO Members. In fact, each country determines its own legal means to protect geographical indications (Marie-Vivien, Bérard, Boutonnet, & Casabianca, *in press*). From this premise, two specific case studies on regulation for GI will be reviewed: European Union and Chile.

At the European Union, since 1992 there has been regulation in force that defines the rules for a designation of a product under one of these collective trademarks: Protected Geographical Indication (PGI), Protected Designation of Origin (PDO), and Traditional Specialties Guaranteed (TSG) (Pieniak et al., 2009). The regulation mentioned is the Council Regulation (EEC) 2081/92 on the protection of geographical indications and designations of origin for agricultural products and foodstuffs and the Council Regulation (EEC) 2082/92 on certificates of specific character for agricultural products and foodstuffs.

The traditional products under recognized collective trademarks are concentrated in Southern Europe. Only Italy has seventy products protected with designation of origin. Other EU countries with an important presence are France, Portugal, Spain, and Greece. Cheese and wine are the products with a higher number of collective trademarks.

The high level of recognition of geographical indications in Europe has led to them being associated with gastronomic tourism. That is considered as a “tourist activity consisting of the tasting of the food of the place that is being visited, being a means to approach the culture, history and customs of a geographical area” (Millán & Agudo, 2010). Moreover, the “cultural landscape” surrounding the production of this food can also be an attractive resource for tourism, such as with vineyards (Elías, 2014). Additionally, the gastronomy can be associated with other cultural references, as it happens in Castilla La Mancha (Spain) with the Route of the Cheese Manchego and the Route of the Quixote.

In Latin America, the protection of traditional products is much more incipient than in Europe. In fact, the development of the regulatory framework in this respect begins in the

year 2000. In Chile, Geographical Indications and Designation of Origin are protected by the Law 19.039 on Industrial Property (art. 92), with the exception of wines and spirits, which are regulated by the Law 18.455 on production, processing, and commercialization of ethyl alcohols, alcoholic beverages, and vinegars.

Law 19.039 defines that products with DO must fulfill the following conditions: (i) having originated from a specific place, (ii) quality, reputation, or other characteristic attributable to their origin, and (iii) must present natural- and human-identifying factors (Belmar, 2016). In the case of GI, only the first two points are required. Generally, the products that can obtain the certification are agricultural products, foods, wines, and spirits, since some of their characteristics are given by geographic factors, such as weather and soil, i.e., the *terroir* of a determined place. However, there have been some handcrafted products with DO, such as the pottery from Pomaire and Quinchimalí. In Chile, the responsible agency for controlling the DO-GI is the National Institute of Industrial Property (INAPI, for its acronym in Spanish).

The first GI officially recognized by the INAPI of a Chilean product was Pica lemon in 2010, although Law 19.039 was in force since 2005. Nowadays, there are thirteen Chilean food products registered with geographical indications. They are specified and briefly described in the table on the page below.

The European Union-Chile Association Agreement, in force since 2003, establishes some relevant advances in geographical indications' common issues. Essentially, it commits mutual protection of collective trademarks for wines and spirits. The Agreement recognizes some Chilean spirits that are not even internally protected, such as Aguardiente chileno, Brandy chileno, Whiskey chileno, Gin chileno, Vodka chileno, Ron chileno, Guindado chileno, Anís chileno, and Nermouth chileno. However, Chile also had to renounce to some designations in favor of their exclusive use at the EU (Errázuriz, 2010).

Indication	Description
Orégano de la Cordillera de Putre <i>(Oregano from the Cordillera of Putre)</i>	Aromatic spice obtained from the dehydration and grinding of the edible aerial parts of <i>Origanum vulgare</i> , cultivated in the Precordillera of Putre.
Limón de Pica <i>(Lemon from Pica)</i>	Lemon ( <i>Citrus aurantifolia</i> ) produced in Pica, Tarapacá Region, which is distinctly aromatic and juicy.
Aceitunas de Azapa <i>(Olives from Azapa)</i>	Olives grown and processed in the Azapa Valley that are characterized by their taste, size, color, and consistency.
Maíz Lluteño <i>(Corn from Lluta Valley)</i>	Corn that grows in stress conditions. It has a high level of tolerance to salt and boron excess, typical characteristics of the soils of Northern Chile.
Atún de Isla de Pascua <i>(Tuna from Easter Island)</i>	Yellowfin tuna ( <i>Thunnus albacares</i> ) from Easter Island has a unique taste and consistency because of the quality and temperature of the water of this Island and a diet based on endemic wildlife.
Langosta de Juan Fernández <i>(Lobster from Juan Fernández)</i>	This lobster is exclusive from Juan Fernández Islands. It is the main source of occupation for the artisanal fishermen of the archipelago, and it is considered a valuable and expensive food.
Cangrejo Dorado de Juan Fernández <i>(Golden Crab from Juan Fernández)</i>	Golden crab ( <i>Chaceon chilensis</i> ) is an endemic crustacean from the archipelago Juan Fernández. Its meat has a delicate taste and low lipid content.
Dulces de La Ligua <i>(Pastry from La Ligua)</i>	Individual cakes made with flour, milk, caramel spread, and meringue; usually sold by women in the route in Central Chile.
Sandía de Paine <i>(Watermelon from Paine)</i>	Watermelon that has great sweetness, high nutritive quality, and a big size. Grown in Central Chile.
Cordero Chilote <i>(Lamb from Chiloé)</i>	Free-range Lamb raised on the Island of Chiloé, fed mainly of natural prairies.
Sal de Cáhuil <i>(Cáhuil salt)</i>	Salt produced since pre-Hispanic times with a soft taste. It dissolves with some ease by seasoning various foods.
Prosciutto de Capitan Pastene	Ham produced in the South of Chile under a recipe

<i>(Ham from Capitan Pastene)</i>	from center and northern Italy immigrants in Chile, who founded the town of Capitan Pastene half a century ago.
Sidra de Punucapa <i>(Punucapa Cider)</i>	Cider produced in the South of Chile, in Los Rios Region. It is characterized by an alcoholic strength of 4.8% vol., a pH between 3.0 and 4.0, an acidity of 1.38 gr/l of acetic acid, and 50 g/l of reducing sugars.

Source: Compilation based on information supplied by INAPI, 2016.

## 5. Traditional food production and small-scale farming development

The maintenance of food heritage is closely linked to small-scale farming, as a depository of traditional productive uses, as well as the customs associated. Therefore, the survival of food heritage over time is related to the development of small-scale farming itself. Although it is estimated that 98% of the world's farms are small scale (Graeub et al., 2016), they have been affected by land abandonment, due to a search for better economic opportunities (Van Vliet et al., 2015). In fact, especially in developing countries, small-scale farming is strongly linked to poverty (FAO, 2015). It derives mainly from low property yields associated with limitations on access to productive resources, scarce management, and marketing capacities.

The promotion of traditional food might be part of a strategy for the public sector in order to protect rural areas from depopulation. As pointed out by Guerrero et al. (2009), traditional food products contribute to the development and sustainability of rural areas and give consumers a broader variety of choice, considering the product diversity. Additionally, local food can provide several benefits to origin territories, in terms of the improvement of their economy, contributing to their social and environmental development (Chambers et al., 2007). In this sense, according to Pieniak et al. (2009), traditional food products are made mostly with local raw ingredients, which also contribute to the employment of local people in rural areas, especially for women (Albayrak & Gunes, 2010).

The increasing interest for traditional food products worldwide opens a market opportunity for small-scale farmers. This food is very frequently obtained following artisanal procedures; therefore, its production and commercialization on an industrial scale is unlikely, even more when “traditional food” concept implies the preservation of original features and the use of labor-intensive methods (Albayrak & Gunes, 2010). As already mentioned, GI can contribute to the promotion of traditional food, especially when consumers value this identification and are willing to pay more for it (Dogan & Gokovali, 2012). As a consequence, according to Albayrak and Gunes (2010), it is necessary to inform producers about the economic benefits of obtaining geographical identifications.

An additional opportunity derived from collective trademarks is associativity. The atomization of small-scale producers makes them price takers, given their low power of negotiation. As the geographic indications and other origin certifications imply a group of producers in a territory, they might impact increasing prices. Nonetheless, sometimes this collaborative work could be difficult for weakly organized producers, especially when small farmers are isolated and vulnerable. Moreover, in order to achieve an origin certification, producers need to evidence that their products' characteristics are attributable to their geographical origin, which can lead a high expenditure of resources. The support of the State or of private organizations can be very useful. For instance, the Chile's Foundation for Agricultural Innovation (FIA) and the Institute of Agricultural Development (INDAP), along with local, regional, and supranational institutions, supported the Pica Cooperative to achieve the recognition of Pica lemons' geographical indication.

FIA has developed other initiatives in recent years to support the production of traditional food in Chile. This institution carries out the Program of Strategic Innovation in Food Heritage, which aims to promote traditional food in Chile, strengthening the country's cultural identity and image. In this context, in 2014, FIA launched for the first time a national call for Projects for the Valorization of Agricultural, Food, and Forestry Heritage. Between 2014 and 2015, 35 initiatives were put into operation, with another 12 being approved in 2016. They cover very different types of products and areas of the country but have in common the purpose of rescuing, protecting, and promoting the commercialization of products (or production processes) that are characterized by having a social and

symbolic relevance, as well as being linked to a community associated with a specific territory.

On the other hand, as previously mentioned, the labeling of products is of great relevance in order to convey to consumers those attributes that cannot be checked by them. In this context, in 2012, the Ministry of Economy of Chile launched the "Seal of Origin" program. In its first phase, a catalog of typical products was carried out throughout the country, subsequently collaborating with the authority to establish the background for recognition as a collective trademark (Belmar, 2016). At present, 25 products are registered within the program in the first two categories, being able to bear the identification stamp.

Although with significant differences with respect to the "Seal of Origin", another initiative by the public sector in Chile related to the value of products linked to its origin is the case of the "Manos Campesinas" label. The products that bear this distinction must, among other things, have been obtained by small producers and in a mostly handmade way. According to the technical standards of the seal, the latter is related to: (i) the active participation of the producer throughout the process, (ii) a significant part of the production process done by hand, and (iii) most of the inputs being self-made. This program, led by INDAP, started in 2015, with a pilot experience that included some products and areas of the country.

Another recent initiative of INDAP to promote the commercialization of products of small-scale farming is the generation of a network of stores under the name "Mundo Rural" (Rural World). The first was opened in Santiago in July 2016, with an offer of more than 400 products. All stores operating within the network will use a common trademark (Mundo Rural) as well as a corporate image. Suppliers of the stores must comply with the requirements in the Organic Law of INDAP for its users, as well as with the technical and legal specifications pertinent to each type of product to be offered.

Very closely linked to the marketing, we have the promotion of products. In Chile, different initiatives supported by the public sector bring the national food heritage handier to the general public. The Ñam Festival is the major example. Its first edition was celebrated in 2011 in Santiago, and since then it has been consolidated, extending even in 2015 to other regions, specifically to the city of Valdivia. Another important meeting is the Expo Mundo

Rural, which, led by INDAP, brings together small farmers and artisans for several days, exposing and selling their products. During this activity, which is held annually nationally and also in some regions, thematic conferences and gastronomic exhibitions are held.

As noted above, tourism is an option of interest when it comes to generating development opportunities linked to food heritage. In the Chilean case, an example in this sense is the growth that in recent years has been wine tourism. The association between different vineyards to generate the so-called "Wine Routes" has been a key initiative in that sense. Tourists can visit three or four associated vineyards on a single tour, making better use of the cost of transfers and the guide service (Inalaf, Ogalde, & Verdugo, 2012).

INDAP, through the open television program issued since 2006, "Recomiendo Chile", has also helped the general public to know the attractions of different areas of the country, associating them with their gastronomic traditions. In addition, the institution has a Rural Tourism Program, through which it tries to facilitate the diversification of income for small-scale producers.

## **6. Concluding remarks**

Food production is not just an economic activity that meets human nutritional needs. It has relevant social and cultural implications. For many territories, a significant part of their identity is reflected in their traditional food, which is mainly produced by small-scale and family farming. Consumers, increasingly interested in the origin of the products they eat, have, in general terms, a positive attitude toward traditional food and other related categories, such as local food. This is an opportunity for small-scale farming.

However, research evidenced that consumers need reliable information to make their purchasing decisions. For unobservable attributes, such as the origin or mode of production, there must be an external institution that certifies them. In the case of traditional food, the most common schemes are geographical indications, which designate the link between a product and a territory from which its particular characteristics are derived.

With the objective of ordering the use of geographical indications in the sphere of international relations, the WTO established a general regulatory framework in that sense. The most remarkable aspects are the definition of geographical indications, the distinction of the case of wine and spirits, and the incorporation of a register. However, beyond the above, the specific application of the protection of geographical indications remains in the hands of each member. For some of them, such as the European Union, this is an especially sensitive issue, as food heritage is strongly linked to agricultural production in Southern countries (e.g., Italy, France, Portugal, and Spain), especially for wines and cheese.

In Latin American countries, the development of geographical indications' protection has been more recent. However, in cases such as Chile, the public sector has carried out in the last few years some initiatives that, beyond the regulation on GI, aim to facilitate the technical and commercial development of small-scale farmers that produce traditional and local food. In this sense, it is important to emphasize that, especially in countries where geographical indications are still emerging, protection of GIs and support to producers must be united. This is because small-scale farmers in many cases lack the resources to access a geographical indication, or even do not understand its usefulness.

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