



GI Tagging in Indian Agriculture: Preserving Authenticity and Promoting Sustainable Growth

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INTRODUCTION

Considering the scenario when a certain food product gains worldwide recognition due to its place of origin. Now envision the validation of this worldwide recognition through obtaining of a certification granted by the TRIPS Agreement (Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights). That is the inherent power and significance of a Geographical Indication (GI) Tag. Exploring the realm of Geographical Indication (GI) tags and agriculture is quite captivating.

Geographical Indication (GI) tagging has emerged as a pivotal mechanism in safeguarding the identity, quality, and heritage of agricultural products in India. This abstract delves into the significance of GI tagging within the Indian agricultural landscape, exploring the legal framework, registration process, and the manifold benefits it affords to both producers and consumers. The Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration and Protection) Act, 1999, forms the backbone of GI tagging in India. This legislation enables producers and associations to secure recognition for their products originating from specific geographical regions, ensuring that the distinct attributes inherent to these areas are protected.

Key agricultural products, such as Basmati Rice, Darjeeling Tea, Alphonso Mango, and Kanchipuram Silk Sarees, have received GI tags, enhanced their market value and provided consumers with assurance regarding authenticity and quality. The registration process involves a meticulous examination by the Geographical Indications Registry, culminating in the grant of GI status to eligible products. Beyond legal protection, GI tagging fosters economic growth by promoting local industries and preserving traditional knowledge and skills. Producers benefit from increased market value, and consumers gain confidence in the authenticity of the products they purchase.

The ongoing efforts of the Indian government to encourage more registrations underscore the commitment to sustaining and celebrating the rich diversity of agricultural practices across the nation.

What is the meaning of GI Tag?

A geographical indicator (GI) is a certification that designates a product as originating from a certain geographic area. Furthermore, this product conveys the implication:

- Has been crafted using conventional methods
- Offers a commendable reputation and maintains excellent standards mostly due to its strategic position.
- Exhibits distinct characteristics that differentiate it from other comparable products.
- Products from several categories, including handicrafts, manufactured goods, foodstuff, natural products, and agricultural produce, are eligible to receive the GI designation.

Geographical Indication Tag in India

In 2022, India possessed a total of 417 officially registered Geographical Indication (GI) items, with 150 of them being under the agriculture sector. States such as West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Nagaland, and Karnataka (to mention a few) have gained recognition for their unique produce, hence establishing India's presence on the 'Geographical Indication map'. Some notable examples include:

- Seeraga Samba Rice
- Chikmagalur Arabica Coffee
- Vengurla Cashew
- Assam Karbi Anglong Ginger is a variety of ginger that is grown in the Karbi Anglong district of Assam.
- Banganapalle mangoes and
- Bhalia wheat

Although Basmati rice enjoys global recognition, other types of rice, such as Wayanad Jeerakasala and Wayanad

Gandhakasala from Kerala, have also been granted the Geographical Indication (GI) tag. Additionally, there are the Kalanamak rice originating from Uttar Pradesh, Joha rice from Assam, and the Katarni rice from Bihar.

What rights does a geographical indication provide?

A geographical indication right grants the authorised individuals the power to prohibit the use of the indication by any third party whose product does not meet the relevant standards. In jurisdictions where the Darjeeling geographical indication is safeguarded, Darjeeling tea producers have the authority to prohibit the use of the term "Darjeeling" for tea that is not cultivated in their tea gardens or does not adhere to the standards specified in the code of practise for the geographical indication.

Although a protected geographical indication does not grant the holder the authority to prohibit others from producing a product using the same methods outlined in the regulations for that indication. The acquisition of a right over the sign that forms the indication is often the means by which protection for a geographical indicator is secured.

For what type of products can geographical indications be used?

Geographical indications are commonly employed to designate agricultural products, foodstuffs, wine and spirit drinks, handicrafts, and industrial products.

What measures are taken to safeguard geographical indications?

There are four primary methods for safeguarding a geographical indication:

- so-called sui generis systems, which refer to specific regimes of protection;
- utilising collective or certification marks;
- Approaches that prioritize corporate procedures, such as administrative protocols for product endorsement,
- regulations against unfair competition.

Indian States and (GI) tags

- Karnataka tops the list with 47 Geographical Indication (GI) tags. Karnataka has been granted Geographical Indication (GI) tags for products like Mysore silk. Karnataka has obtained Geographical Indication (GI) tags for several agricultural products like Coorg Orange, Bangalore Blue Grapes, Sirsi Supari, and Gulbarga Tur Dal.
- Tamil Nadu ranks second with 39 Geographical Indication (GI) tags for various agricultural products, including Erode Turmeric, Kodaikanal Malai Poondru (Garlic), Virupakshi banana, and Eathomozhy Tall Coconut.
- Darjeeling Tea is renowned as one of the most well-known GI products. Curiously, this specific variety of tea has been assigned a GI (Gastrointestinal Index) for its name and logo. This tea's unique flavour has granted it the exclusive privilege to prohibit the improper use of the term 'Darjeeling' in relation to any other tea. This variety of tea has a unique logo and holds the distinction of being the first-ever Geographical Indication (GI) product in India, dating back to 2004.

Advantages of registering Geographical Indications:

It provides legal safeguards for Geographical Indications in India.

Safeguards against unlawful utilisation of a Registered Geographical Indication by individuals or entities.

It offers legal safeguards for Indian Geographical Indications, hence enhancing export opportunities.

It fosters the economic well-being of producers of items manufactured inside a specific geographic region.

What distinguishes a geographical indication from a trade mark?

A trade mark is a distinctive symbol or sign that is utilised in commercial activities to differentiate the products or services of one company from those of other companies.

A geographical indicator is a designation used to identify products with unique qualities that come from a certain geographic region.

Global significance

A product that has been granted the GI (Geographical Indication) tag is endowed with a distinct and prestigious status. The GI product is renowned for its distinctive features and has gained worldwide recognition. Basmati and Darjeeling tea have traditionally dominated this market, but now items like King Chilli from Nagaland, Black rice and lemon from Assam, and Shahi Litchi from Bihar are gaining popularity among consumers in many international locations such as London, South Korea, Bahrain, Italy, and Qatar.

Creating value through the use of the GI logo

In 2018, the Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion (DIPP) designed a logo accompanied by the tagline "Invaluable Treasures of Incredible India". This has introduced a novel level of excellence to the products. The GI logo possesses the ability to establish an independent identity and worth, instilling trust among individuals. India is a culturally diversified nation with a rich historical legacy spanning several centuries. Every state and area possess distinct attributes that are exclusive to their respective locations.



GI Logo

Problems Associated with GI laws

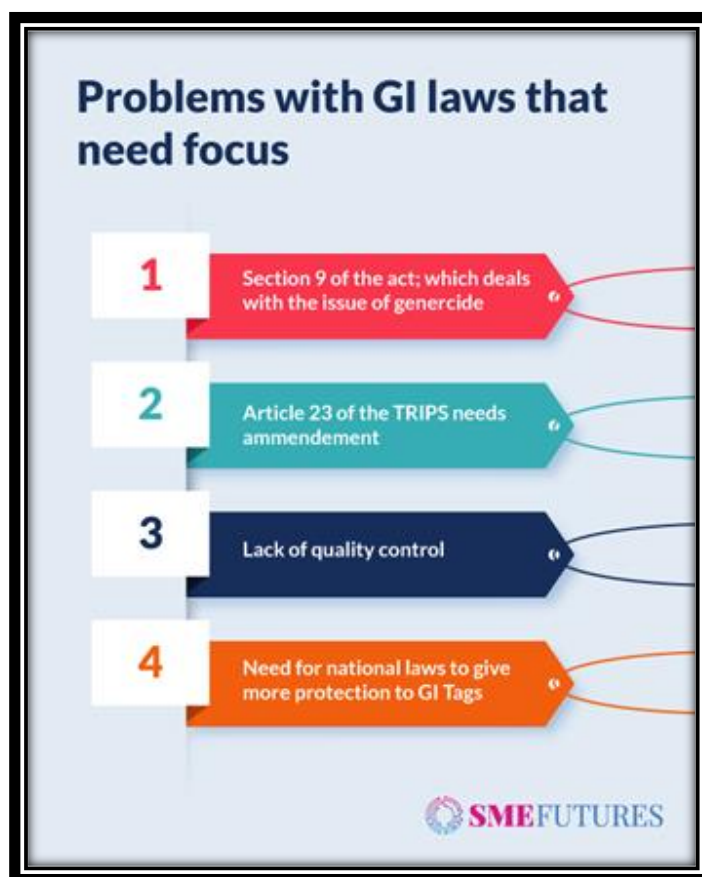


Fig: 2 GI tag Laws need to be focused

CONCLUSION

Geographical Indication (GI) tagging stands as a cornerstone in the realm of Indian agriculture, playing a pivotal role in preserving the authenticity of products and fostering sustainable growth. The robust legal framework, exemplified by the Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration and Protection) Act, 1999, has provided a systematic and effective means for producers

to safeguard the unique qualities and characteristics of their offerings tied to specific geographical regions. The success stories of GI-tagged products like Basmati Rice, Darjeeling Tea, Alphonso Mango, and Kanchipuram Silk Sarees underscore the tangible benefits derived from this recognition. Producers, often representing local communities with deep-rooted agricultural traditions, witness enhanced market value and

increased consumer trust, ultimately contributing to the economic prosperity of their regions. Beyond the economic implications, GI tagging serves as a guardian of cultural heritage, preserving traditional knowledge and skills that have been passed down through generations. The symbiotic relationship between GI tagging and sustainable growth is evident, as it encourages environmentally conscious agricultural practices and promotes the viability of local industries.

As the Indian government continues to advocate for and support the registration of more products under the GI system, it reinforces a commitment to nurturing the diverse tapestry of agricultural practices across the nation. The journey towards preserving authenticity and promoting sustainable growth through GI tagging in Indian agriculture is not just a legal or economic endeavor; it is a testament to the rich tapestry of India's agricultural heritage and a step towards ensuring its continuity for future generations.