

The Case Of Paprika From The Calchaquí Valley, Salta (Argentina) The Path Towards A Designation Of Origin

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Abstract

This article analyzes the process leading to the recognition of the Designation of Origin (DO) for paprika from the Calchaquí Valley, Salta, Argentina. It examines the role of governance, public policies, and international cooperation in strengthening this initiative, highlighting its impact on sustainable territorial development. Through a participatory and multi-stakeholder approach, significant progress was made in organizing the sector, drafting technical documentation, and building collective governance. The article outlines an institutional journey from the creation of the Provincial Paprika Roundtable to the official recognition of the DO in early 2025, with the strategic support of the State, the Territorial Development Program, and international cooperation. It also discusses the development of a sustainability plan based on FAO indicators and the creation of a digital traceability system.

Keywords: Agricultural identity, Rural development, Protected designation

Introduction

Geographical Indications (GIs) have emerged globally as powerful tools to valorize traditional agri-food products, while simultaneously promoting rural development, cultural identity, and sustainability [1, 2]. In Latin America, GIs have been increasingly incorporated into territorial development strategies. This article explores the process undertaken in the Calchaquí Valley, in northwestern Argentina, to obtain the DO for paprika, analyzing the role of public policies, institutional coordination, and international cooperation.

Territorial Context

The Calchaquí Valley, located in the province of Salta, is characterized by its dry high-altitude climate (over 2,500 meters above sea level), ancestral agricultural traditions, and rich cultural heritage. Paprika production has been practiced here for over a century, currently involving around 600 families, with a predominance of manual labor and female participation. Although the cultivated area has decreased (from 1,500 ha in the

1970s to around 450 ha), the number of producers has remained stable, reflecting the crop's deep cultural roots [3].

Methodology

This study follows a participatory and territorial approach, with strong institutional coordination and ongoing presence in the field through the Territorial Development Program of the Secretariat of Agricultural Development of Salta [4]. Key actions included the creation of the Provincial Paprika Roundtable (2010, formalized in 2016), the formation of agricultural cooperatives, implementation of productive projects, training sessions, and improvement of agricultural practices [5]. International cooperation with Espelette (France) and participation in PROCAL, AmLat IG, and AL INVEST Verde (component 3) programs were instrumental in advancing the documentation process and designing the sustainability plan based on FAO indicators [6].

Results

Key achievements include the organizational strengthening of

producers, institutional coordination, participatory drafting of the DO documentation (background, territorial link, technical specifications, critical points, and sensory profile), and the creation of the DO Council with legal status in October 2024. In March 2025, the Designation of Origin was officially recognized [7]. Additionally, a digital traceability system was developed, covering the entire chain from cultivation to final packaging, which is currently being implemented.

Digital Traceability System

As part of the product valorization process, a digital traceability system was designed to cover the entire paprika production chain, from cultivation to final packaging under the DO label. This system, currently under implementation, is based on a web platform and a user-friendly mobile application for small producers, enabling them to record batches, agricultural practices, processing, and storage. Each product batch will be linked to a QR code connected to a database containing key information on origin, production conditions, and paprika characteristics.

The digital traceability system aligns with the FAO-OriGIn sustainability model and aims to strengthen consumer trust, facilitate quality audits, and provide evidence to support market positioning. In a second phase, the system's interoperability will allow the integration of simple sensors (e.g., temperature and humidity) at critical drying and storage points to improve quality control across the value chain.

This tool represents an important step toward the modernization of the paprika value chain in the Calchaquí Valley, combining traditional practices with accessible technologies adapted to rural contexts.

Discussion

The Calchaquí Valley case demonstrates how a GI can serve as a driver of territorial development, integrating economic, cultural, and environmental dimensions. Key factors included participatory governance, state coordination, and international cooperation [8, 9]. Remaining challenges include infrastructure, quality control, and commercial positioning. Comparisons with European models indicate that long-term commitment and local ownership are essential.

Conclusions

The process leading to the DO recognition for Calchaquí paprika illustrates how a GI can strengthen local identity, improve livelihoods, and foster sustainable practices. The official recognition achieved in March 2025 provides a platform for new

collective strategies. The implementation of the sustainability plan, installation of processing facilities, and development of the digital traceability system are key steps underway. This case underscores that without State support, active participation, and institutional coordination, achieving this milestone would not have been possible.

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