The Promise and Potentials of Origin Products for Rural Development

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Involvements

- Associate Professor, Community and Agribusiness Development
  Emerging and Small Farms Extension Programs
  Clemson University
- Chair, South Carolina Food Policy Council
- Chair, Midlands (SC Regional) Local Food Collaborative
- President, Community Development Society
- Vice President-American Origin Products Research Foundation
- North American Delegate to EU project focused on the teaching of sustainable development in the life sciences (ISLE)

Economic Development Strategies and Priorities for Rural Regions

- Attraction of "footloose" firms and people
- Retention of potentially "footloose" firms and people
- Substitution of locally-produced goods and services for what is typically imported
- Creation of entrepreneurial ecosystem to spur indigenous enterprise creation
- Development of exportable goods and services

High Priority Strategies for Rural Regions

- Attraction strategies are generally considered inappropriate, yet they persist.
- Retention strategies are considered more important, but firms unwilling to modernize are not likely long-term sustainable.
- Import substitution strategies can help, but consumer demands cannot always be satisfied locally.
- Entrepreneurial ecosystems development ultimately require cultural shifts.
- Development of exports requires a focus on regional variation and high quality. Natural endowments matter.

How Might Geographical Indications Impact Rural Development

- Creation of High Quality, Exportable Product
  - Tourism Spinoff Potential
  - Social Capital Enhancement Potential
- Supports local jobs, likely better jobs than those connected with generic "commodity" production
  - Human Capital Formation Potential
  - Encourage Youth to Take Education More Seriously?
  - Stem "Brain Drain", Retain Next Generation
- Brings "new dollars" into region – multiplier effect

More Economic Development Potentials

- Preservation of Heritage, Traditions, and Specialized Skills
- Enhancement Traceability Efforts
- Enhance Self-Governance of Product Quality
- Enterprises are Less “Footloose” --- Anchored in Regional Assets and Indigenous Knowledge

The Basic Requirement

Unique, Regional Products and Services Are Well-Protected Against Counterfeit.

Is this basic requirement being met with current systems in place?

Other Requirements

- Regional Producer Groups Must Desire That Their Product to Be Protected (Self-Interest)
- Regional Producer Groups Must Be Willing to Invest in a More Sophisticated Quality Management and IP Protection System (Self-Interest)
- Local, Regional, and State Government Need to Work on Behalf of Regional Producer Groups (Public Interest)
- Federal Government Agencies Must Encourage and Support Local/Regional/State Aligned Interests and Help to Support IP Rights in Global MarketPlace (U.S. Citizen Interests)

Necessary Investments

- National Registry of Potential/Actual GI Products
- System of Standards for Inclusion
- Well-defined Development Process to Reach Standards (Incentives)
- Research and Mapping of Boundaries
- Federal Policies that Provide Appropriate Protections
- Compliance and Enforcement Mechanisms
- Education and Outreach

American Origin Products Research Foundation

- Chartered in 2014
- Purpose – to support research on behalf of producer groups desiring to develop/refine geographical indications of quality activities in the United States
- Activities
  - Assembling a multi-disciplinary group of researchers, geographically-dispersed across the country.
  - Developing list of existing/potential GI products and producer groups.
  - Collaborating with global community of researchers

Some Final Questions

- In a rapidly-urbanizing global context, how important are rural regions and people?
- In a global economy where so many economic forces are creating homogenization of products and services, how can rural regions best position themselves as unique and noteworthy?
- Whose responsibility is it to assist rural regions in their own self-development? How is this working out?
- What roles can a robust GI system play in this process?

Thank You.

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