
BRIEF DOCUMENT

Case Study on the Participatory Guarantee System Pilot Initiative in Slow Food Indigenous Presidia



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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development	MM	Mujeres Milenarias
IFOAM	International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements	PGS	Participatory Guarantee System
IP	Indigenous people	SF	Slow Food
ITM	Indigenous Terra Madre	TPC	Third Party Certification
MACODEV	Marioshoni Community Development Cooperative		

Introduction

SLOW FOOD AND INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

Indigenous peoples are the custodians of large natural areas, which are biodiversity hotspots.

The rights of indigenous peoples to control their land according to their own needs and decisions is fundamental to protect their livelihoods and defend the biodiversity of native animal

breeds and plant varieties. It is clear then that supporting indigenous communities and their traditional food systems means preserving the world's biodiversity. The Indigenous Terra Madre (ITM) network was born to bring indigenous peoples' voices to the forefront of the debate on food and culture, as an integral part of the

larger Terra Madre network, supported by the Slow Food movement. At present, ITM involves thousands of individuals in over **370 communities in 86 countries** around the world. More than **830 indigenous products** are already on the Ark of Taste and **65 Slow Food Presidia** are run by indigenous communities to promote and defend their food heritage.



To protect their livelihoods and defend the biodiversity

IFAD AND SLOW FOOD

In 2017, after several years of partnership between IFAD and Slow Food on themes related to food security, indigenous peoples and youth, IFAD approved a grant,

with title **“Empowering Indigenous Youth and their Communities to Defend and Promote their Food Heritage”**, to be implemented by Slow Food over three years.



THE CASE-STUDY

The overall goal of the project was to empower indigenous youth and their communities, improve the livelihoods of beneficiaries by protecting and promoting their food heritage and uphold the sustainability and resilience of their practice.

A case study was conducted to learn about the enabling factors and the challenges that affected the implementation process and

the achievement of results and impacts. It studied significant changes (impacts), positive or negative, in the producers' lives and in their communities, as well as the prospects of these changes being sustained over time and several cross-cutting issues. It is worth mentioning that the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic meant the project's effectiveness at a community level was undoubtedly affected by the resulting global health and economic crisis.

The first component of the project consisted of providing support to five

existing Presidia and five new Presidia (eight in Latin America and the Caribbean and two in East Africa). One of the outputs was the implementation of two pilot cases to test participatory certification for indigenous products. The two selected Presidia were Ogiek Honey in Kenya and Oaxaca Mixteca Agave in Mexico, the first operational for four years, the latter more recently established. The case study also drew on Slow Food's experience and the lessons learned from the establishment of a PGS for the Lucca Red Bean Presidium in Italy.

PARTICIPATORY GUARANTEE SYSTEMS

Participatory Guarantee Systems (PGS) are low-cost, local systems for quality assurance for products or value chains. They are based on diffused technical knowledge, inclusion and collective accountability. **The main difference from Third Party Certification (TPC) is that they include in the process stakeholders other than producers and inspectors and are based on a foundation of trust, social networks and knowledge exchange.**



They are specifically suited to small-scale farming and combine the three dimensions of sustainability: social, environmental and economic. Due to these reasons and the great flexibility of their model, they are ideal for adoption by the Slow Food Presidia project, which includes a wide range of actors and different geographic

areas and takes a holistic approach to sustainability. Slow Food and indigenous leaders were interested in adopting a bottom-up system to ensure that products are good, clean and fair, but with minimal intervention by Slow Food headquarters. Such a grassroots initiative would give local areas almost complete independence,

be resilient over time and add international credibility and value to the Slow Food system, in particular to the Presidia project. As a result of this pilot, the Slow Food PGS was created. It is worth mentioning that it is a living tool, part of an on-going process that may require changes to adapt to different needs as they emerge.

Key activities

THE OGIEK AND HONEY PRODUCTION

The Ogiek are an indigenous people who live in and around the Mau Forest on the southwestern side of the Kenyan Rift Valley and in the forests around Mt. Elgon along Kenya's northwestern border with Uganda.

The entire belief and livelihood system of the Ogiek revolves around the forest and its resources, with honey being the most important product and a staple food for Ogiek families. Its significance goes to the roots of their identity; a saying goes: "We are not Ogiek without honey." Abundant honey production depends on a healthy forest



and the Ogiek protect the forest as their home and the source of their livelihood. The Ogiek people face many challenges as they try to secure their livelihoods from their ancestral forests. Logging followed by reforestation with exotic non-flowering species is a direct threat to bees' foraging and therefore to honey production. In 2012, a group of Ogiek honey producers joined forces and established MACODEV, a community-based organization responsible for marketing honey on the producers' behalf. Then, in 2015, the Ogiek Honey Presidium was launched to help protect the Mau Forest ecosystem and promote the value of the ancestral culture of the Ogiek people through their flagship product: honey. Youth and women Ogiek youth actively participate in the whole value chain of honey extraction and production. Young women are largely involved in honey processing, packaging, labeling and marketing; they also process the wax and ensure the refinery is clean.

HONEY CHARACTERISTICS



YOUTH AND WOMEN ACTIVELY PARTICIPATE IN THE WHOLE VALUE CHAIN OF HONEY EXTRACTION AND PRODUCTION



100% NATURAL, COLLECTED USING ANCESTRAL TECHNIQUES AND ARTISANALLY PROCESSED



GATHERED FROM HOLLOW LOGS (LOG HIVES) THAT THE BEES USE AS HIVES

Within the Slow Food Presidium, young people now occupy leadership roles in the local organization and are closely involved in the decision-making processes; some are leaders of various groups, many serve as their group's secretary due to their skills, and a few groups only comprise youth members.

THE OAXACA MIXTECA PEOPLE AND AGAVE (MAGUEY)

The Mixteca people represent the fourth largest indigenous group in Mexico. They have lived since time immemorial in the southwestern Mixteca region, which straddles the states of Guerrero, Oaxaca and Puebla.

Within the Mixteca people, youth migration to urban areas in search of employment opportunities is very common and a problem for the resilience of the indigenous peoples. The agave, maguey in Spanish and yaavi in Mixteco, is an endemic species and typical feature of the

THE MIXTEC PEOPLE



THEY CALL THEMSELVES "ÑUU SAVI," OR RAIN PEOPLE



THE MIXTECA OAXAQUEÑA REGION



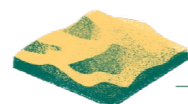
THEIR DIET IS BASED ON CORN AND PULQUE



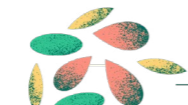
FARMERS AND PULQUE PRODUCERS

Mexican landscape. For the Oaxaca Mixteca people, the maguey has been part of the traditional cropping system for millennia, and both maguey and its by-products are fundamental pillars of their traditional livelihood and belief systems. Maguey plants are resistant to drought and

help to retain water and soil on slopes. Cutting marks the end of the plant's life, and is followed by extraction from the central part of the main product, a sap called aguamiel ("honey water"). Aguamiel can be consumed fresh, but is more commonly processed. Fermentation produces a mildly alcoholic drink called pulque.



IT PREVENTS DESERTIFICATION



IT PROTECTS LOCAL BIODIVERSITY



ITS BYPRODUCTS ARE OF HIGH NUTRITIONAL VALUE

> WOMEN SAFEGUARDING MAGUEY PRODUCTION

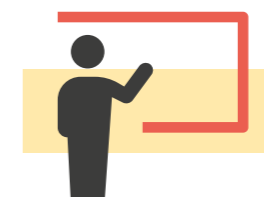
In the Nochixtlán area (northwest of Oaxaca), pulque has typically been produced and consumed in most households and at traditional events. The drop in pulque consumption due to the import of industrially produced beverages like beer led to farmers turning attention away from the pulque-producing varieties of maguey. A group of women came together to revive cultivation of the pulque-producing agave varieties and in 2016, 35 of them established a working group called Mujeres Milenarias. In 2018, this group of women created the Slow Food Oaxaca Mixteca Agave Presidium so they could be part of an international movement and protect and promote endemic varieties of Oaxaca Mixteca pulquero agave for the production of aguamiel and pulque.

> ACTIVITIES FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE PGS IN THE PRESIDIA

This case study focused on the work related to the establishment of the PGS with the specific objectives of increasing the economic value of the products, applying best practices for harvesting and cultivation and boosting recognition of the cultural and environmental importance of the products. Between August and December 2019, the following activities were carried out to support the establishment of PGS in the two Presidia:



A study to assess the viability of PGS versus a standard third-party certification mechanism.



Capacity development workshops on the PGS to explain its functioning with the help of Slow Food staff and external experts on PGS.



Election of the two PGS governing bodies, the Ethical Committee and the Guarantee Group.



Preparation of the checklist for the verification process and its testing (and translation into Kiswahili in Kenya).



Organization and realization of verification field visits by the Guarantee Groups.



Subsequent discussion of findings, feedback and challenges.

Across all meetings in Kenya, young people always represented at least 50% of participants. In Mexico, young men aged 24 to 34 showed higher attendance of PGS meetings compared to Presidium meetings.

Key findings and outcomes



The available evidence indicated that in both the Ogiek Honey and Oaxaca Maguey Presidia the PGS had been solidly established by August 2020 and were operational through the following activities:

- Information, awareness-raising and capacity development events were being carried out with high levels of member participation throughout the entire process.
- Governing bodies had been elected and were operating according to their respective mandates.
- The first round of verification of production practices of a small number of members had been carried out in each Presidium in the last quarter of 2019.
- Marketing labels had been developed and used together with appropriate packaging to communicate the origin and quality assurance of the product through the PGS, although this step was only in the early stages in the Oaxaca Maguey Presidium.

Overall, the opinion of the stakeholders interviewed was that the Slow Food approach to the PGS was appropriate and contributed to achieving the goals of the Presidia being analyzed.



The PGS has proved to be a valuable additional component of the Presidia, contributing to strengthening a sense of belonging to the group and generating further empowerment of members, who have full control and ownership over the quality of the production process and its final output.

The PGS also enhanced the contribution of the Slow Food Presidia to the implicit broader goal of raising returns and incomes through better and guaranteed product quality and consequent expansion of the marketing potential for the respective products.



The available information shows an increase in both quantities sold and prices for both Ogiek honey and Oaxaca maguey, clearly generated by the establishment of the Presidia. The PGS in the two Presidia appeared to have a high degree of social and cultural acceptability, thanks to their intrinsic flexibility to adjust to the local context. In addition, the PGS also contributed to the sustainable management of the natural resources sustaining the production processes by verifying that environmentally sustainable practices were fully adopted throughout and by all members.



The project experience showed that a PGS is attractive and empowering for youth, who are likely to have technical and managerial skills and competences, as well as a better understanding of consumer preferences, which are of great use to improving product quality and marketing efforts.

Overall, the project showed that a PGS is a highly appropriate tool for strengthening the Slow Food Presidium model in terms of enhanced knowledge among members, strengthened cohesion and empowerment of both groups and individual participants, increased transparency and technical quality of the production and marketing process, higher returns from market sales and expansion of the marketing potential thanks to enhanced consumer trust and increased dialog across stakeholders.

Challenges

Specific challenges concerned the cost of the process, in particular the field visits, which should be resolved through the higher incomes generated by the increased sales of the certified products.

At the time of finalizing the report (October 2020) the world is still in the throes of the Covid-19 pandemic. This means that estimating the economic sustainability of the PGS model is particularly complex considering that the impacts of the pandemic on the Presidia's survival and performance—from the disease itself, mobility constraints and reduced economic activity at local, regional and national levels—are still unclear. Another challenge was reaching a gender balance in the whole process, which could be due to traditional patterns of women being excluded from decision-making roles.



Conclusions

The project experience showed that a PGS is attractive and empowering for youth, who are likely to have technical and managerial skills and competences, as well as a better understanding of consumer preferences, which are of great use to improving product quality and marketing efforts.

Furthermore, the PGS contributes to triggering and developing additional elements:



Stronger ties among Presidia members and a sense of belonging to the group.



Sense of pride coming from systematic interaction with external partners.



Stronger sense of ownership over the process and product.



Capacity development and enhanced knowledge about the process and product.



Economic empowerment, by enabling higher revenue from the product and incomes.



Increased transparency and technical quality of the production.

The outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic and related measures restricting mobility taken by governments in Kenya and Mexico, as in most other countries of the world, have significantly affected all marketing activities in both Presidia and limited the potential for registering improvements in this regard.

However, it is important to note that the concept of solidarity, implicit in the PGS, strengthens the resilience of local food networks in situations such as the Covid-19 pandemic, because members must develop the habit of trust and collaboration for the PGS to function. The structure of any

Slow Food Presidium automatically builds on an existing spirit of collaboration and mutual learning among members. The PGS clarifies and makes more visible and tangible how the contribution of each and every member is a necessary condition for the success of the group as a whole.



