



UNITED NATIONS  
INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT ORGANIZATION

# IMPLEMENTATION OF A GEOGRAPHICAL INDICATION TO PROMOTE LOCAL DEVELOPMENT

The case of the GI Djebba Fig in Tunisia



## Guide



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INCLUSIVE AND SUSTAINABLE INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT



# IMPLEMENTATION OF A GEOGRAPHICAL INDICATION TO PROMOTE LOCAL DEVELOPMENT

The case of the GI Djebba Fig in Tunisia

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## GUIDE

Directorate of Digitalization, Technology and Agri-Business

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#### COMMENTS

Comments and suggestions on the issues raised in this guide are welcome and can be addressed to [dti@unido.org](mailto:dti@unido.org).

# Acknowledgment

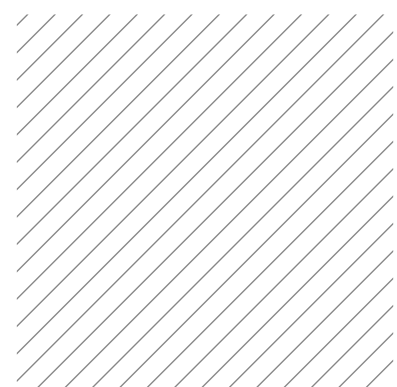
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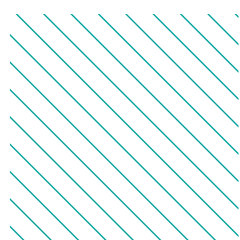
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## I. FOREWORD OF THE GENERAL DIRECTORATE OF AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION

In view of the new requirements on domestic and foreign markets, Tunisia has been working on approaches to strengthen the specific quality of agricultural products. Since 1999 the country has been rolling out an appropriate legal framework, which has led to the registration of 16 geographical indications “GIs” by 2020; 11 are controlled appellations of origin “AOCs” (French acronym) and 5 are indications of origin “IPs” (French acronym).

These quality labels linked to the place of origin have been developed over the years thanks to the support of national and international cooperation projects such as PAMPAT 1 (UNIDO-SECO), PA-IG (AFD-CIRAD), HILFTRAD (Tunisia-Italy), TCP-TUN (FAO) and above all, thanks to various producers’ organizations that are committed to the valorization of their regional products and that have voluntarily requested to be granted a geographical indication.

The General Directorate of Agricultural Production (French acronym DGPA) holds the permanent secretariat for AOCs and IPs within the technical advisory committee of the Ministry of Agriculture, Hydraulic Resources and Fisheries. It also provides the necessary assistance to all stakeholders involved in the development process of GIs and in particular to producers.

DGPA has supported the implementation process of the Djebba Fig AOC, which has been promulgated in May 2012. The latter has become a success story with the help of the PAMPAT 1 project and should be a source of inspiration for future AOCs.

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## II. FOREWORD OF GIFRUIT

In a global context characterized by free and extensive movement of goods, people and specially information, products and production systems have become increasingly standardized. However, this has not been accompanied by a standardization of demand. Concerning agricultural and food products, consumers more and more often demand quality guarantees and seek insurance regarding food safety and health. In the particular case of agri-food products, quality is a major key to market success, and origin-linked quality labels such as geographical indications are innovative tools based on a new relationship between producers and consumers. GIs allow to rethink agricultural production and provide answers to various issues such as rural development, the enhancement of socio-cultural diversity, new consumption patterns, and the preservation of regional heritage.

The new global context has also led to a highly competitive environment in which the competitiveness of small-scale producers has become vital for survival. Typical products from emerging countries cannot compete with mass production from multinational companies. Geographical indications are tools that allow small producers to break free from price competition by building a solid competitive base founded on differentiation. As such, origin-linked quality labels represent a way to secure or even increase market share. Several countries have had successful experiences in this area.

In order to valorize traditional products, Tunisia has enacted a framework law on Controlled Appellations of Origin “AOCs” (French acronym) and Indications of Origin “IPs” (French acronym) in 1999. Several labels have been published since, four of which for fresh fruit: three IPs and one AOC for the Djebba Fig published in June 2012.

The Project for Market Access of Typical Food Products “PAMPAT 1” has contributed from 2013 to 2019 to the development and valorization of the Djebba fig value chain. PAMPAT is funded by the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs of the Swiss Confederation (SECO) and implemented by the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) in close collaboration with various stakeholders and particularly the Interprofessional Grouping for Fruits “GIFruit”. Several activities have been undertaken to promote the fresh or processed Djebba fig, to facilitate market access, put the spotlight on the specificities of the AOC product and its origin, and improve the producers’ income. Today, the GI Djebba Fig has become a model to be followed and replicated for other origin-based products.

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### III. FOREWORD OF UNIDO

In agri-food markets, consumers are increasingly interested in traditional products that are strongly connected to their region of origin. This trend is a major opportunity for producers and small and medium enterprises in the agri-food sector, as they need not compete with the prices of generic and standardized products. On the contrary, this trend rewards them for excelling in what, in a way, they have always done: using artisan methods to produce traditional products which are deeply rooted in a region and which have special characteristics. But even in those interior regions that live on their traditions and authenticity, nothing can remain immutable. Only innovation and continuous improvement can guarantee sustainable socio-economic success and ensure the revival of ancestral products of regional origin in modern consumption habits. In this context, geographical indications for agri-food products in Tunisia represent relatively recent intellectual property tools that allow producers to valorize their regional heritage.

This guide is the outcome of several years of collaboration between UNIDO, the Ministry of Agriculture, Hydraulic Resources and Fisheries and GIFruits in the framework of the PAMPAT Project (Project for Market Access of Typical Food Products) funded by the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs of the Swiss Confederation (SECO). This partnership has allowed to support producers in the village of Djebba to implement and add value to the first Tunisian geographical indication for a fruit: the Djebba fig with a controlled appellation of origin (French acronym AOC). This collective initiative to promote the the Djebba Fig AOC helped encourage the economic, cultural, and touristic development of the region while enhancing traditions. The methodology and lessons learned that are presented in this guide are based on the experience of Djebba as well as on UNIDO's international experience in structuring agro-industrial value chains and promoting typical products. This document aims at guiding support institutions and producers wishing to implement a GI development process on the ground.

We are convinced that the collective valorization of origin-linked products by means of geographical indications can have a significant impact on rural economic development. Geographical indications are effective tools to position traditional flagship products on niche markets, promote the standardization of certified quality, encourage agri-entrepreneurship, and boost territorial marketing, while promoting gender-balanced inclusion and improving the income of local producers.

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## IV. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

More and more countries around the world are registering geographical indications (GIs) for their typical products. Collective valorization of origin-linked products by means of GIs can have a significant impact on rural economic development. However, it should be noted that the granting of a GI only serves to protect a traditional product with special characteristics. But the GI is not a means in itself, which can add the required quality to traditional products, or create a market demand for them. Indeed, the experience from several countries shows that GIs - once registered after a long legal process - are in many cases not used by producers.

Historically, GIs were introduced to protect traditional products with an undeniable nation-wide reputation from fraudulent copies sold on the markets. The GI label helped put an end to sales of counterfeits at lower prices that were detrimental for the authentic product. By eliminating unfair competition, the granting of a GI thus guaranteed better income to producers.

GIs are nowadays often registered for ancestral and unique products that nevertheless remain unknown to the general public. For these products, the misuse of the geographical designation is not an issue. When the product is unknown and market demand is limited, the GI label in itself will not necessarily impact on the product's sales prices. But there is no doubt that the GI as an origin-linked quality label can help build the prestige of a product, provided that an effective valorization and promotion strategy is set-up.

The first section of this document provides an overview of the different definitions and legal implications of GIs as intellectual property rights as well as of their development and implementation process. The second section of this best practices guide aims to show the way to valorize and implement a GI that has already been granted, but that has remained unexploited. This document presents the Tunisian experience of the GI "Djebba Fig" and shows the steps to be followed and the challenges to be met to transform a GI of a product unknown to the general public into a genuine source of local socio-economic development.

All support activities related to the implementation of the GI Djebba Fig in Tunisia have been developed as part of the PAMPAT 1 project, which was conducted between 2013 and 2019 by the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) in close collaboration with the General Directorate of Agricultural Production of the Tunisian Ministry of Agriculture and the Interprofessional Grouping for Fruits (GIFruits) with funding from the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs of the Swiss Confederation (SECO).

The scenic mountain village Djebba with its four thousand inhabitants is located in the North-West of Tunisia far from the main roads. Fig farming represents the main source of income for the village. In 2012, the Bouhouli fig variety was granted a GI, and more precisely a controlled appellation of origin "AOC" (French acronym: *Appellation d'Origine Contrôlée*).

When PAMPAT 1 started in 2013, the AOC was not yet implemented, and no farmers were selling figs with the AOC label. At that time, the small village of Djebba, the Bouhouli fig as well as the concept of AOC were unknown to Tunisian consumers.

The immediate objective of PAMPAT 1 was therefore to make the GI Djebba fig known and appreciated by consumers, while the ultimate goal of the project was to generate income for the local community. The intervention strategy of PAMPAT 1 took into consideration that profits could stem from sales of the flagship product itself as well as from the introduction of other related economic activities such as agri-tourism, cultural festivals, gastronomy, and the development of new products around the GI Djebba fig.

PAMPAT 1 focused on twelve main working areas to implement the AOC, add value to the Djebba fig and trigger a socioeconomic development process at local level.

01. **Identifying and labeling the Djebba Fig AOC :** To launch a promotional campaign around the Djebba fig, it was essential that consumers could identify the AOC product on the markets. PAMPAT 1 trained farmers to meet product specifications and to ensure sorting, packaging, and labeling of the figs with the AOC. Between 2013 and 2019 the quantity of Djebba figs labeled AOC increased from 0 to 25%.
02. **Marketing the Djebba fig AOC :** Residents of Djebba had a proven ancestral agricultural know-how. Nevertheless, the success of the AOC depended on their market access skills. PAMPAT 1 built the sales capacities of producers and promoted linkages with potential customers. The Djebba fig AOC has been marketed in several sales points in Tunisia and exported to countries such as France, Canada, and Qatar.
03. **Promoting the Djebba fig AOC :** Several promotional activities, such as tastings in supermarkets, yearly celebrations to launch the agricultural season in Djebba, gastronomic events etc., were organized by PAMPAT 1 in collaboration with local producers to introduce the Djebba fig AOC to consumers. Sales prices of figs in Djebba increased 142% between 2014 and 2019.
04. **Communicating on the Djebba fig AOC :** In addition to the classical promotional work, many efforts have been made to periodically broadcast news from Djebba in the Tunisian media. Moreover, international television channels carried out filming in Djebba, and foreign magazines and newspapers reported on the Bouhouli fig.
05. **Supporting collective actions :** The development of a collaborative spirit is an important prerequisite for the valorization of a flagship product given that the AOC represents an entire region and all the producers as well as their families. PAMPAT 1 supported the residents of Djebba in the setting up and management of producer networks aimed at processing, selling or promoting the Bouhouli fig. In 2019 these new organizations counted 148 members.





06.

**Diversifying the local product range :** The introduction of a wide range of processed products around the AOC concept is essential to increase the sources of producers' income and ensure that the flagship product can be promoted beyond the agricultural season. The project assisted the inhabitants of Djebba in developing local products that could meet market requirements. In 2019 the marketed product range encompassed over twenty items.



07.

**Adapting the AOC fig quality to market standards :** An ancestral product protected by an AOC is not always in line with the requirements of modern distribution. The project supported farmers to develop skills in post-harvest operations and to set up packaging units. Between 2014 and 2019, producers invested 500,000 Tunisian dinars to add value to the Djebba fig AOC.

08.

**Implementing the AOC management and control system :** The project supported Tunisian institutions in defining the AOC control plan, which ensures compliance with the requirements of the product specifications, and in developing the external certification system. The Djebba fig has become the first AOC in Tunisia to be audited annually by an external control body.



09.

**Managing the AOC at local level :** In addition to external certification, the project helped the local community to manage the AOC themselves through an association. This local association is entrusted with the internal controls, distributing AOC stickers to producers, who signed the product specifications and supporting them with the traceability system.

10.

**Establishing a tourist region around the Djebba fig AOC :** At the start of the project, very few hikers were visiting the mountainous region of Djebba. To increase the touristic interest of the locality, PAMPAT 1 supported the inhabitants of Djebba in promoting the fig. A few years later, everything in Djebba revolved around the flagship product: advertising signs, colors of houses, cultural events, processed products and local gastronomy.

11.

**Promoting Djebba as a tourist destination:** To promote the destination, PAMPAT 1 set up a collaboration with the Tunisian National Tourism Board (ONTT). Sites of interest to tourists were identified in the village and guided tours for travel agencies organized around the theme of the AOC fig. The annual number of visitors rose from 6,000 in 2015 to 15,000 in 2019.



12.

**Creating synergies with other initiatives promoting local products :** Different valorization activities of Tunisian local products at national level had a positive impact on the development in Djebba. The medals obtained by the producers from Djebba at the Tunisian Contest of Typical Food Products and the recognition of the mountain area of Djebba as "Globally Important Agricultural Heritage System" (GIAHS) by FAO have improved the promotion of the AOC.

Promoting the Djebba fig AOC as a flagship product has made the village known, improved its visibility and encouraged the economic, cultural, and touristic development of the region. The inhabitants of Djebba are convinced of the added value of the AOC label and continue putting the flagship product into the spotlight, but at this stage without the support of PAMPAT 1, closed in late 2019.

When PAMPAT 1 initiated its support activities to implement the Djebba fig AOC, much remained to be done to enforce the regulations so that the promises behind the GI could turn into a tangible reality. Today, the situation in Tunisia has begun to change and should make the path for future Tunisian GIs easier. Based on this, chapter 5 of this guide proposes a GI development methodology adjusted to the new Tunisian context.

In the framework of PAMPAT 2 (2020-2024), which is the successor of PAMPAT 1, Tunisian local food products will be kept in the spotlight. This new project provides support for the development and implementation of AOCs and IPs in Tunisia. Moreover, PAMPAT 2 focuses on the preparation of a national strategy for the valorization and promotion of typical agro-food products that is expected to give a new impetus to Tunisia's labeled flagship products.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Typical agrofood products have existed a long time as historical, cultural, economic, and social realities. However, it was not until the early twentieth century that these products appeared in legal form. At that time in the Mediterranean countries, more and more groups of rural producers emerged with the primary aim of coordinating the production of traditional products and certifying their origin to promote their marketing. Meanwhile, producers struggled to obtain legal support from the state to defend the authenticity of their products against imitations and counterfeits. Gradually, more and more countries modified their legal frameworks to grant a special protection to traditional products by means of “Geographical Indications” (GI). This is also the case of Tunisia, which has registered several geographical indications.

Experience shows that the collective valorization of typical products can have a significant impact on rural economic development and thus contribute to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals approved by the United Nations General Assembly (see box 1). In this context, GIs play an important role as value addition tools for ancestral products rooted in their regions of origin. However, it is to be stressed that the registration of a GI serves only to identify and protect a differentiated origin-linked product and thereby promote its marketing. Yet, GIs are not a miracle means that can alone provide local products with the quality required on the markets or create a demand for them. In fact, what has enabled some typical local products to conquer the markets has primarily been a well-developed value-adding strategy. Collaboration between producers, standardization of the quality of the flagship product, control of compliance with the GI specifications, collective marketing, media communication and diversification of economic activities around the flagship product are all key factors for success (UNIDO 2010).

Today, there are more and more initiatives and international cooperation projects in developing countries that aim at initiating GI registration processes. The legal procedures are long and undoubtedly require a lot of resources and efforts at local level. But experience shows that once the GI is finally registered, the label is not necessarily used by producers.

Therefore, this guide of best practices aims at showing the way to valorize and implement on the ground an already registered GI, which has remained unexploited. This document showcases the Tunisian experience of the “Djebba Fig” GI and shows the steps to be followed and the challenges to be met to turn a GI, which is basically a legal concept, into a real source of local socio-economic development.

All support activities needed to implement the GI Djebba Fig in Tunisia were developed as part of the “Project for Market Access of Typical Food Products - phase 1” (PAMPAT 1), which has been carried out between 2013 and 2019 by the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) with funding from the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs of the Swiss Confederation (SECO). PAMPAT 1 aimed at improving the socio-economic conditions of producers of Tunisian local products and focused on the development of agro-industrial value chains, including through the introduction of quality labels and the biennial organization of the Tunisian Contest of Typical Food Products ([www.pampat.tn](http://www.pampat.tn)).

In Djebba, UNIDO worked closely with the General Directorate of Agricultural Production of the Tunisian Ministry of Agriculture and the Interprofessional Grouping for Fruits (GIFruits). In the following pages the term “PAMPAT 1 project” is used to refer to this tripartite collaboration.

BOX 1 | SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS AND ORIGIN-LINKED PRODUCTS



The 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for 2030 have been approved by the United Nations General Assembly. Several SDGs have a direct link with ancestral products. GIs are powerful tools for the valorization of traditional local products.

***SDG 1: No Poverty + SDG 5: Gender Equality + SDG 10: Reduce Inequality***

Local products are considered to be assets rooted in each region of the country and are often produced by populations with modest incomes. Traditional recipes are generally passed on from mothers to daughters, making women the guardians of traditional know-how (e.g., Zaghouan’s rosehip water).

***SDG 14/SDG 15: Protection of Aquatic and Land Life + SDG 13: Combating Climate Change***

Traditional agri-food products are synonymous with the protection of biodiversity and the environment. They can often be found in areas where intensive and mechanized agriculture is difficult (e.g., prickly pear plantations, which prevent desertification, are mainly found in Kasserine, where the arid climate and sandy soils make agriculture difficult).

***SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth + SDG 9: Inclusive and Sustainable Industrialization***

Adding value to ancestral products provides an opportunity to upgrade traditional production, increase productivity, create jobs, connect people to their locality, strengthen the feeling of belonging to the region and to position traditional products beyond national borders. (Example: Olive Oil, Deglet Nour dates and Tunisian Harissa are exported worldwide).



## 2. INTRODUCTION TO THE CONCEPT OF GEOGRAPHICAL INDICATIONS

Producers are accustomed to using trademarks to differentiate their products from those of other competing companies. Trademarks often consist of a combination of words, symbols, and designs; once the trademark is registered, the producer obtains the exclusive right to use this distinctive sign. Of course, no producer can register and have the exclusive right to use words that describe characteristics of the product, such as "decaffeinated", "light" or "fruity".

This also applies to geographical denominations. No producer can obtain the exclusive right to use the word "Tunisian", "Sfaxian" etc. Yet there are some exceptions in the regulatory system of the European Union and other countries such as Tunisia. When a traditional food product has earned a good reputation linked to its place of origin such as the Gabes pomegranate or the Mornag wine, exceptional measures can be taken, and geographical indications (GI) can be granted by the State. Historically, the first product that got a similar protection to the one granted nowadays to GIs was the French cheese "Roquefort" from the village of the same name. In the 17th century the parliament of Toulouse decreed that only those cheeses that shared the very specific characteristics and lived up to the renown of the "Roquefort" cheese were allowed to use this geographical name (UNIDO 2010).

Unlike a standard trademark, which can be registered by a single company, a GI should ideally be used by all producers of the region. Producers of an ancestral and special product such as Roquefort can apply for a GI. To do so, they need to define together the criteria, which ensure that the product truly lives up to its origin-related reputation. A GI granted by the state ensures that only producers operating in the region of origin and applying traditional know-how can use the protected geographical word and label their local products with the GI logo.

In Tunisia, there are two types of official origin-linked quality labels that protect geographical indications: the indication of origin (French acronym IP) and the controlled appellation of origin (French acronym AOC). The AOC is more difficult to obtain as it is necessary to prove that there is a close link between the product and the region of origin. Moreover, all production and transformation stages must be developed in the area of origin. In the case of IPs, only one step of the whole production process must be carried out in the region of origin. Box 2 provides more information on GIs and the legal framework.



Tunisian logos  
for AOC and IP

## BOX 2 | DEFINITION AND LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR GEOGRAPHICAL INDICATIONS

The concept of “geographical indication” (GI) refers to an intellectual property right recognized by the legal bodies of various countries and international organizations. Product names registered as geographical indications are usually toponyms or designations for generic products combined with the name of a country, a region, or a specific place, such as Roquefort, Mint El Ferch or Sbiba apple.

It is however difficult to precisely define the term “geographical indication” since there is no universally accepted definition. According to the TRIPS agreement, which is applicable in the 149 signatory countries of the World Trade Organization (WTO) and which is the most important multilateral document to date in this field, “Geographical indications are indications which identify a good as originating in the territory of a 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.” (Art. 22).

In practice, each member state decides whether the characteristics or reputation of a product are essentially attributable to its origin and whether the product qualifies for special protection. The TRIPS Agreement sets out the obligation of member countries to establish the necessary legal means to prevent unfair competition and passing off of geographical indications, but it does not specify the protection systems to be implemented. Actually, there are significant differences between the legal systems of the major export destinations. While countries such as the United States and Canada regulate GIs through trademark law (e.g., certification marks), the European Union and Tunisia have established a special legal system for this type of intellectual property right.

The terminology used in the various international treaties and in national legislations on geographical indications often distinguishes between the concept of “**geographical indication**” as such and the “**appellation of origin**”, which is a more restrictive sub-category.

The EU, which has a well-developed regulatory framework in this area, has established the following differentiation (Council Regulation (EC) No. 510/2006):

### Protected Geographical Indication (PGI)

The name of a region, a specific place or, in exceptional cases, a country, which serves to designate an agricultural or food product: (a) that originates from that region, that specific place or that country; (b) that has a specific quality, reputation or other characteristic that can be attributed to its geographical origin; (c) whose production or processing or preparation is carried out in the defined geographical area.

### Protected Designation of Origin (PDO)

The name of a region, a specific place or, in exceptional cases, a country, which serves to designate an agricultural or food product: (a) that originates from that region, that specific place or that country; (b) whose quality or characteristics are essentially or exclusively due to the geographic environment with its natural and human factors; (c) whose production and processing and preparation is carried out in the defined geographical area.

Tunisia has adopted similar definitions in Law No. 99-57 of June 28, 1999, but without using the designation "Geographical Indication". Tunisian regulations make the following distinction :

### Indication of Origin (French acronym IP)

The name of the country, of a natural region or parts of regions from where the product draws its specificity and reputation and where it is produced, processed, or manufactured.

### Controlled Appellation of Origin (French acronym AOC)

The name of the country, of a natural region or parts of regions where the product comes from and from which it draws its value and specificities linked to a geographical environment made up of natural and human elements.

In short, the Tunisian IPs and AOCs are respectively similar to the legal forms of the European Union: PGI and PDO. Obtaining a PGI/IP is relatively easier as only one part of the production and processing process must be carried out in the specific region.

Obtaining an IP or AOC in Tunisia does not mean that the geographical name is automatically protected at international level with all the guarantees. The level of protection under the TRIPS agreement is not very high for foodstuffs and it is usually necessary to use different legal means to protect a GI in each target export market. Moreover, there is an international agreement, to which Tunisia is a party, that offers a good level of protection.

The Lisbon Agreement for the Protection of Appellations of Origin and their International Registration (1958) allows contracting parties to register their geographical denominations with the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO). A registered appellation will be protected against usurpation or imitation in the territory of the thirty contracting parties of the Agreement. Tunisia already registered the Teboursouk olive oil with WIPO; the registration of the AOC Djebba fig with the support of PAMPAT is underway. In the future, Tunisia may assess the opportunity to become a contracting party to the Geneva Act of the Lisbon Agreement, which entered into force in 2020 and which allows both the protection of appellations of origin and geographical indications. The European Union, a target export market, already is a party to the Geneva Act.

## 2.1 The lengthy process of bringing GI products to the market

Geographical indications are collective intellectual property rights to better position ancestral local products on the markets. But to achieve this, a lengthy legal, regulatory, and procedural process needs to be completed first. Regarding agricultural products, Tunisia has promulgated law No. 99-57 on Registered Appellations of Origin and Indications of Origin of Agricultural Products (June 28, 1999). Within this legal framework various geographical indications were registered one by one in the following years.

Producers from a region wishing to register a geographical indication for a typical product must prove the existence of a historical link between the product and the geographical area and determine together the criteria to ensure that the product truly lives up to its reputation. Subsequently, producers are required to draft a set of specifications in which they specify the delimitation of the region of origin and define the good ancestral production practices that all GI producers will have to follow.

The Tunisian state grants a GI by publishing the specifications by order of the Minister of Agriculture. But the publication of the GI does not automatically give the region's producers the right to use the GI in the markets. To gain a better understanding, we can give as an example the functioning of the organic label. The fact that there is legislation for the organic label in Tunisia and that there are producers, who produce in a natural way, does not mean that these producers have the right to market organic products. A producer, who wants to use the organic label, is required to follow administrative procedures, produce in accordance with applicable organic specifications, ensure traceability, and undergo certification audits according to the applicable control system.

The same reasoning applies to GIs. Before producers in a region can use the GI label on their products, the state has to set up specific administrative procedures and a control system for each GI. Once this system is implemented, only producers operating in the region of origin, complying with the specifications, and undergoing the controls, can label their local products with the GI logo. The state is responsible for verifying that only authorized producers use the GI in the marketplace. In a given region there will be producers choosing to use the GI and others who choose not to join the labeling process. Nevertheless, the objective behind any GI initiative is to gradually ensure the use of the GI and the marketing of products with the label by the vast majority of local producers.

Over the years, the General Directorate of Agricultural Production of the Tunisian Ministry of Agriculture has sought the support of several institutions and donors to develop the regulations that govern the management of GIs and to promote specific quality labels. Since 2012, thanks to the PA-IG technical cooperation project funded by AFD, pilot initiatives have been launched for the olive oil from TébourSouk, dates from Nefzaoua and pomegranates from Gabes.

When the project PAMPAT 1 started in 2013, Tunisia had already gained valuable experience in developing specifications and granting GIs. Eight AOCs and five IPs had been published by ministerial order. But apart from a few experiences at labeling wines, no GIs for agri-food products were operational.

Box 3 presents a list of relevant publications related to the topic of GIs.

## BOX 3 | PUBLICATIONS

### Working documents specific to Tunisia available from the General Directorate of Agricultural Production :

- Guide pour le contrôle officiel des produits alimentaires AOC/IP en Tunisie, prepared by UNIDO in 2019
- Manuel de procédures pour la Commission Technique Consultative des Signes de Qualité liée à l'Origine, prepared by CIRAD in 2018
- Guide du demandeur des signes de qualité liée à l'origine AOC/IP, prepared by CIRAD in 2018
- Guide pour le demandeur d'une Indication de provenance ou d'une appellation d'origine contrôlée, prepared by FAO

### Guides of United Nations agencies related to GIs :

- WIPO (2017); Geographical indications - an introduction;  
<https://www.wipo.int/publications/en/details.jsp?id=272>
- UNIDO (2010); Adding value to traditional products of regional origin A guide to creating an origin consortium;  
[https://www.unido.org/sites/default/files/2011-07/ENG\\_Publication%20ORIGIN\\_0.pdf](https://www.unido.org/sites/default/files/2011-07/ENG_Publication%20ORIGIN_0.pdf)
- FAO (2009); Linking people, places and products: a guide for promoting quality linked to geographical origin and sustainable Geographical Indications;  
<http://www.fao.org/publications/card/fr/c/32d53917-1298-525f-baeb-29ccf93664dd/>
- ITC (2009); Guide to Geographical Indications - Linking Products and their Origins;  
<https://www.intracen.org/Guide-to-Geographical-Indications-Linking-Products-and-their-Origins/>

To learn more about AOCs and IPs in Tunisia, please visit the website of the Ministry of Agriculture: [www.aoc-ip.tn](http://www.aoc-ip.tn)

## 2.2 The usefulness of a geographical indication

Once implemented, GIs can be powerful tools for adding value to local products. But even if they are used by producers, their usefulness depends on several factors.

A GI is an intellectual property right that protects the name of a region. The notion of "protection" implies that there is a real danger or potential threat to that name. Indeed, historically, GIs were put in place to protect traditional products with an undeniable national reputation from fraudulent copies marketed under the same geographical name. The GI label prevented inferior counterfeit products, which were sold at a lower price, from undermining the authentic product by using its name and reputation. By eliminating unfair competition, the GI registration ensured a better income for producers.

One example is the well-known case of the Italian cheese GI Parmigiano Reggiano. Thanks to legislation - at least in the European Union (EU) - foreign cheeses fraudulently called "Parmesan" are no longer available; parmesan is actually an abbreviation used outside Italy to refer to this flagship product. Another interesting case is that of Indian GI Darjeeling tea. In the Indian market there was relatively little fraud and relatively few sales. Therefore, the granting of the GI at the national level had very little impact on prices. On the other hand, unfair competition was a major problem in the European export market. Once the name Darjeeling was protected in the EU, prices rose significantly<sup>1</sup>.

But nowadays GIs are often granted for unique ancestral products that have acquired a certain local notoriety but remain unknown to the general public. Here, the problem of usurpation of the geographical name is not an issue. When the product is unknown and when there is no unfair competition on the markets, the implementation of GIs does not necessarily have an impact on the sales prices in the short term. Consumers do not pay more for products with a GI if they never heard of them.

So, the granting or implementation of a GI do not automatically guarantee short-term outcomes. But there is no doubt that the GI contributes to building up the product's reputation over time, provided that the region's producers adhere to the GI labeling process, put in place an effective collective valorization and promotion strategy, and always keep up with consumer expectations.

It should also be stressed that GIs are official quality labels. While all agri-food products can be protected by trademarks, very few ancestral products have the privilege of being granted a GI by the State. In terms of communication and marketing, this distinguishness of GIs is easy to leverage, possibly leading to improved market access.

<sup>1</sup> FAO (2018) ; «Strengthening sustainable food systems through geographical indications »; p.14;  
<http://www.fao.org/3/I8737EN/i8737en.pdf>; Datta (2010); "Darjeeling Tea Tangible Impacts of Geographical Indications on Trade"; seminar presentation  
[http://www.fao.org/fileadmin/templates/est/COMM\\_MARKETS\\_MONITORING/Tea/Documents/Tb\\_of\\_india\\_tkd-igg\\_seminar.pdf](http://www.fao.org/fileadmin/templates/est/COMM_MARKETS_MONITORING/Tea/Documents/Tb_of_india_tkd-igg_seminar.pdf)



### 3. THE PROCESS OF IMPLEMENTING AND VALORIZING A GI

As presented in the previous chapter, the process of developing a GI is complex and lengthy. The United Nations agency FAO has identified four main stages to implement the GI approach for a specific ancestral product (*see box 3*):

- **IDENTIFICATION** : First stage dedicated to checking the eligibility of the origin-linked product for GI protection
- **QUALIFICATION** : Second stage dedicated to preparing the documents necessary for the granting of a GI, including the drafting of the specifications
- **REMUNERATION** : Third stage dedicated to implementing the GI on the ground with the goal of obtaining socio-economic benefits
- **REPRODUCTION** : Fourth stage referring to the sustainability of the GI initiative and the development of additional income-generating activities

At the beginning of the PAMPAT 1 project, Tunisian authorities had already completed the identification and qualification process for various ancestral products and several GIs had been published; however, implementing and valorizing these official quality labels remained a challenge. This guide will therefore focus on stages 3 and 4, respectively concerning the remuneration of regional GI producers and the development of sources of income beyond the GI.

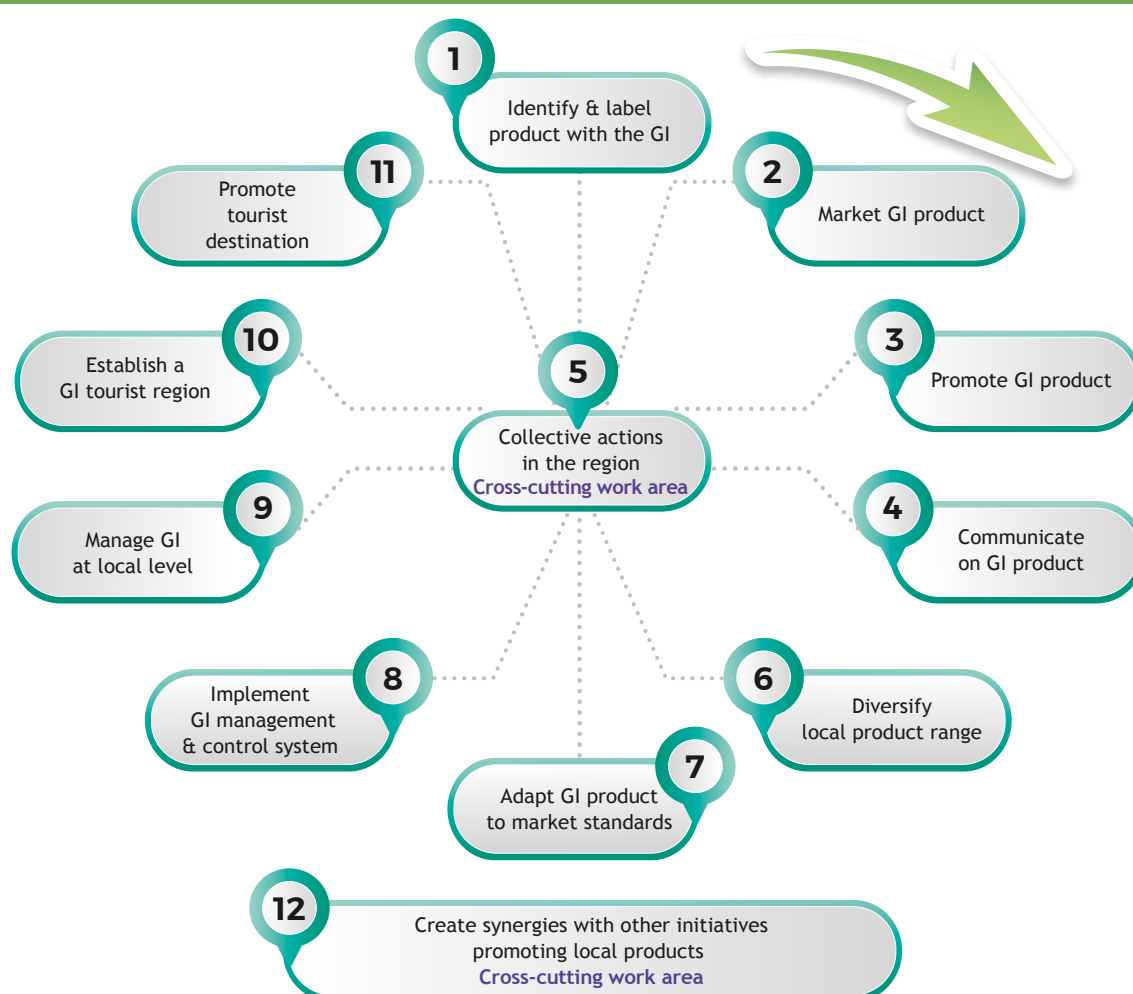
To set in motion a successful local development process around a GI requires working on several axes. It is necessary to start labeling and marketing the flagship product with the GI logo. The GI management and control system at national and local level needs to be set up and the quality of the product according to market requirements needs to be guaranteed. Moreover, the GI product should be promoted in niche markets and in the media. Besides, it is possible to capitalize on the reputation of the GI to develop a new range of typical local products and to promote agri-tourism. At the same time, it is necessary to encourage collaboration and collective actions between the region's actors. Establishing synergies with other initiatives that promote local products should also be a priority.

In theory, establishing a logical sequence of steps to be followed in the process of implementing a GI seems a simple task. It is however difficult to establish a standardized working methodology for GI valorization, as the reality on the ground often requires great adaptations. For example, even though it seems logical to set up an efficient GI control and certification system as a first step, in a rural context where the educational level of producers is relatively low, introducing traceability procedures and filling out related documents is not easy. In addition, specifically in countries where GIs are not known by consumers, effects related to the implementation of the label itself can be slow and thus discourage producers. It is therefore necessary to quickly create income-generating activities beyond the GI through the promotion of alternative tourism or the development of a new product line.

In practical terms, it is necessary to advance simultaneously on different lines of work to promote the GI and the region. These lines are certainly very similar in all successful experiences of GI promotion, but the order of execution should be adapted on a case-by-case basis according to the requirements on the ground. In practice, twelve lines of work need to be completed after the official publication of the GI.

In the following pages, the twelve lines of work implemented in Djebba are mainly presented chronologically to facilitate understanding and reading, even though most actions have been developed simultaneously. The illustration below presents an approximate order of the steps followed on the ground in the process of valorizing the GI Djebba fig.

# ILLUSTRATION 1 | LINES OF WORK FOR THE VALORIZATION OF THE GI DJEBBA FIG



Source : prepared by the author

The implementation of the GI Djebba fig started in 2013, when the topic of agri-food GIs in Tunisia was still new to consumers and the practical application of GI regulations was still challenging. Nowadays, the Tunisian context has begun to change. On this basis and in view of the lessons learned from the experience of valorizing the Djebba fig, chapter 5, which focuses on the replication of the approach, proposes some adjustments to the methodology of developing and adding value to a GI in Tunisia.



## 4. THE EXPERIENCE OF ADDING VALUE TO THE DJEBBA FIG AOC

The scenic village of Djebba is perched 700 meters high at the foot of the Goraa mountain located in northwestern Tunisia, 150 kms from the capital Tunis and far from the main roads. The cultivation of figs is the main source of income for the less than four thousand inhabitants of Djebba. Most producers have small farms of less than one hectare. All in all, the fig trees occupy about five hundred hectares. For generations, the tree farmers of Djebba have passed on exceptional know-how based on environment friendly



*Woman fig producer in Djebba*

fig production techniques and an ancestral irrigation system. The Bouhouli fig variety is specific to Djebba and for this reason has been granted a Controlled Appellation of Origin (AOC) in 2012, becoming the first AOC fruit in Tunisia. The specifications to be met by farmers wishing to use the AOC were published by order of the Minister of Agriculture.

The granting of the AOC was the result of efforts made over several years by producers of Djebba with the support of the Ministry of Agriculture, GIFruits, the Tunisian Union of Agriculture and Fisheries and other national stakeholders. The specifications for the Djebba fig AOC were developed in the framework of a FAO project that ended in 2010.

At the start of PAMPAT 1, in 2013, the AOC was not implemented, and no farmers were selling figs with the AOC label. The daily life of the inhabitants of Djebba was very similar to that of other small towns of the Tunisian inlands. At that point, the village of Djebba, the Bouhouli fig and the concept of the AOC were unknown to Tunisian consumers. Often consumers confused the name "Djebba" with that of the island of "Djerba". The ancestral product was well known only to professionals of the fruit and vegetable sector, some specialists, and people living around Djebba.

The immediate goal of PAMPAT 1 was therefore to popularize the Djebba fig AOC among consumers, while the ultimate goal was the generation of income for the local community. The project's intervention strategy took into consideration that benefits could stem from sales of the flagship product itself as well as from related economic activities such as agri-tourism, cultural festivals, gastronomy, and the development of new products around the Djebba fig AOC. The illustration below shows the intervention logic followed in Djebba using the "logical framework", which is a standard working tool for development projects.

The following chapters describe the steps followed by PAMPAT 1 to implement the AOC, valorize the Djebba fig and trigger a socio-economic development process at local level.



*Landscape in Djebba*

## ILLUSTRATION 2 | INTERVENTION LOGIC TO VALORIZE A LITTLE KNOWN GEOGRAPHICAL INDICATION

<b>Objective</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve the socio-economic conditions of producers and contribute to inclusive and sustainable development</li> </ul>
<b>Impact</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased income for producers and inhabitants</li> <li>• Employment creation and new opportunities for economic activities</li> </ul>
<b>Outcome</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enhanced renown of the GI product and its region of origin</li> <li>• Improved marketing of the GI and related products</li> </ul>
<b>Output</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Widespread use of GI label in commercial relations</li> <li>• Improved quality, control, and certification of the GI product</li> <li>• Development of promotional campaigns around the GI</li> <li>• Implementation of new socio-economic and cultural activities related to the GI at regional level</li> </ul>
<b>Activities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Technical assistance, support and coaching for the development of value-adding activities around the GI focusing on coordination at the regional level, public-private partnerships, and the promotion of collective producers' groups</li> </ul>
<b>Baseline</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An ancestral product legally protected by a GI is not valorized and is not promoted on the markets</li> <li>• Producers (men/women) do not use the GI label</li> <li>• The local community does not obtain any socio-economic benefits linked to the GI or related activities</li> </ul>

*Source : prepared by the author*

## 4.1 Identifying and labeling the Djebba fig AOC

At the start of PAMPAT 1, the labeling of figs with AOC stickers was the priority. Before launching a promotional campaign around the Djebba fig, it was essential that consumers would be able to identify and differentiate the flagship product. Illustration 3 shows the importance of labeling the AOC product.


For the farmers, used to selling figs in large crates without prior sorting, the labeling of AOC figs meant an additional effort. They had to put an AOC sticker on each fig and pack the fruit carefully. If previously the farmers considered that the quality of a fig was linked only to its maturity and taste, they now had to conform to the specifications and pay attention to the product's presentation and the required quality without having immediate guarantees of return on investment. The concept of AOC was new in Tunisia and there were no previous success stories to draw inspiration from. In fact, producers from Djebba had to take risks, develop a spirit of entrepreneurship, and commit to building the future by enhancing their traditions.

At an early stage of the project, PAMPAT 1 carried out an extensive awareness campaign among farmers at the local level to encourage sorting and labeling of Djebba figs with the AOC. At first, not many producers were interested in this new approach. In 2014, during the first AOC crop year, only members of the local cooperative called SMSA Djebba Fruits, which had been created with the guidance of PAMPAT 1, were interested in labeling. But as the positive effects became more visible, interest increased and after some time, six producer entities in Djebba sold the labeled figs.



*Djebba figs with AOC logo*

PAMPAT 1 also raised awareness on positive impacts of the AOC label among traders and exporters based in other Tunisian cities. Subsequently, the traders often required the delivery of AOC labeled figs from their usual suppliers from Djebba.

 <b>INDICATORS</b>	
<b>PERCENTAGE OF LOCAL DJEBBA FIGS PRODUCTION LABELED WITH THE AOC</b>	
<b>2013</b>	<b>0%</b>
<b>2014</b>	<b>2%</b>
<b>2017</b>	<b>12%</b>
<b>2019</b>	<b>25%</b>



### KEY TAKEAWAYS

GIs are tools that promote ancestral products and allow the preservation of traditional production methods. Nevertheless, their practical implementation necessitates a well-structured market approach and a spirit of continuous improvement and thus requires building a delicate balance between tradition and modernity.



### LESSON LEARNED

At the beginning, only the cooperative (SMSA), formed by a few dozen farmers, showed interest for the marketing of AOC Djebba figs. The fact that this was a single legal entity made some local producers believe that the AOC was a trademark belonging to the cooperative. This misunderstanding was resolved when other companies and licensed producers in Djebba joined the AOC process. To guarantee inclusion at the local level, it is recommended to ensure that a significant number of producers take ownership of the GI.

## ILLUSTRATION 3 | THE IMPORTANCE OF LABELING THE PRODUCT WITH THE GI

Two imaginary conversations between a client and a fruit vendor

Situation to be avoided ! ❌



Desired situation ✅



## 4.2 Marketing the Djebba fig AOC

Djebba's inhabitants market their figs through different channels. Some farmers also own small fruit marketing companies and buy figs from their neighbors. In addition, the cooperative SMSA Djebba Fruits (see 4.1) takes care of selling the figs of its member producers.



*Truck transporting Djebba figs AOC*

To support farmers in accessing niche markets, PAMPAT 1 has provided small-scale commercial entities in Djebba with several trainings and continuous support in the areas of financial and administrative management, customer identification and follow-up, negotiation techniques, sales and export procedures, marketing, etc.

Numerous efforts have been made to raise awareness of the importance of marketing labeled Djebba figs among supermarkets as well as distribution and export companies. B2B meetings between producers and buyers were organized in Tunis. In addition, exporters could participate in technical field visits to Djebba to take a close look at the quality approach, the traceability system, and the packaging operations of AOC figs.

Capacity building in sales techniques and customer relations has allowed the marketing of the Djebba fig AOC in an increasing number of sales outlets in Tunisia and its export to several countries such as France, Canada, and Qatar. PAMPAT 1 also supported small producers' networks in Djebba to sell processed products (see section 4.9).



*Djebba figs AOC sold in Qatar*

### INDICATORS

#### DJEBBA FIGS AOC CAN BE FOUND

in 2014 : in **a single retail chain** in Tunisia

in 2019 : in **four retail chains** , various local sales outlets  
and six **export** markets



**QUOTE :** *Mohamed Djebbi, owner of the Fruits Djebba Group, specialized in the marketing of fruits and vegetables :*

*"Our flagship product is the Djebba fig, which has gained a lot of value since obtaining the AOC label. The AOC has a great impact on our sales, especially for export. At the international level, the demand for our figs has sometimes even exceeded the quantities we can deliver."*



#### KEY TAKEAWAYS

Small producers of GI products have proven ancestral know-how. Nevertheless, the success of a GI depends on market access skills. Market research and capacity building in sales are essential support activities.



#### LESSON LEARNED

At the start of PAMPAT 1 the project supported the newly created local cooperative (SMSA) to develop its business plan and to find customers and its place on the markets. Later, the project assisted existing fruit companies in Djebba to integrate the Djebba fig AOC as a new product in their range. These businesses already had a portfolio of customers, but needed assistance in upgrading, developing a marketing approach and of course managing the production of figs with the AOC label. It is a good practice to combine the approaches of promoting entrepreneurship (support to new start-ups) and of developing existing businesses.

### 4.3 Promoting the Djebba fig AOC

From the moment Djebba figs AOC were available on the markets, PAMPAT 1 implemented various promotional activities to make them known. All actions were carried out in close collaboration with the producers of Djebba.

A graphical chart specific to the Djebba fig AOC and various promotional tools such as a website, promotional videos, brochures, posters, displays, key rings, caps, T-shirts, USB keys, etc. have been developed over the years. In summer, during each agricultural season, tastings of Djebba figs AOC were organized in the main supermarkets in Tunis. Also, at the start of each AOC agricultural season, a celebration day in presence of journalists and high-ranking government officials was organized in Djebba.

To promote the use of figs in Tunisian cuisine, gastronomic days held in restaurants and starred hotels were organized each year in collaboration with hospitality and tourism academies or associations of Tunisian chefs.

At the international level, promotional activities have also been carried out, for example the participation in trade fairs or the tasting of AOC figs in supermarkets in Doha (Qatar).

Initially, all promotional activities were initiated by PAMPAT 1, but as the Djebba fig AOC became better known and a source of national pride, third parties started promoting the AOC independently in the spirit of either corporate social responsibility or high-end positioning.

For example, a major retail chain and a national telecommunications company prepared videos on the Djebba fig AOC. Gourmet restaurants in Tunis included the "Djebba fig" as an ingredient in their menus. At the same time, several Tunisian public institutions started applying the promotional techniques used by PAMPAT 1 to other GI products.




*Promotional tools,  
tasting of the Djebba figs AOC*



*Cooking show around the Djebba fig AOC*



*Tasting of Djebba figs in a supermarket*

 <b>INDICATORS</b>		
<b>LOCAL SELLING PRICE OF FIGS IN THE VILLAGE OF DJEBBA</b>		
<b>2014</b>	<b>:</b>	<b>1,2 Tunisian dinars</b>
<b>2017</b>	<b>:</b>	<b>2 dinars</b>
<b>2019</b>	<b>:</b>	<b>2,9 dinars</b>

Source : AFKD



### KEY TAKEAWAYS

A professional promotion strategy is essential to position a GI product in niche markets and convey the message that it is indeed an ancestral origin-linked product. Storytelling invites the consumer to dream, to savor the story and to enter the world of the GI region. Even though the GI product itself can sometimes be exceptional in terms of organoleptic properties, a large part of its added value lies in the idea around a "dream region of origin".



### LESSON LEARNED

Marketing and promotion activities require specific skills, significant human resources, and substantial investments to finance promotional tools and events. In areas like Djebba, small rural producers do not have the financial means to implement ambitious promotional activities. To ensure sustainability, the GI product has to become a source of national pride in the collective imagination to encourage as many public and private actors as possible to highlight the product. A good practice allowing to minimize costs is to establish promotional partnerships with many stakeholders that operate in different fields.



## 4.4 Communicating on the Djebba fig AOC

Alongside classical promotion work, PAMPAT 1 made efforts to regularly place news from Djebba in the media. The fact that the valorization of the Djebba fig AOC was a first in Tunisia implied advantages as well as disadvantages in terms of media coverage. Many journalists agreed readily to publish about the pioneer farmers of northwest Tunisia, but at the same time awareness needed to be raised within the media on the added value of the little-known AOC label.

At the very beginning, only PAMPAT 1 issued press releases and organized media campaigns. Subsequently, journalists themselves initiated radio or television programs on the Djebba fig AOC and the inhabitants of Djebba were often invited to speak on TV and radio. Television channels such as Oman TV and Aljazeera filmed on site and many other magazines and international newspapers talked about the Bouhouli fig.



*Radio interview with the producers of Djebba*

### INDICATORS

#### INTERNET PRESENCE OF THE DJEBBA FIG AOC IN SEVERAL LANGUAGES

2013 : negligible number of hits

2019 : 20 000 hits on Google



### KEY TAKEAWAYS

Media work allows to make an origin-linked product known at lower cost. While advertising in the media for private brand products has to be paid for, the journalistic work around GI products is free for the producers. GIs are protected by the state and part of the national intangible heritage and therefore represent topics of public interest for journalists.



### LESSON LEARNED

To ensure continuous media coverage over the years, it is important to always present new topics of relevance to the general public and worthy of dissemination by the media. Press kits dealt with very different aspects such as the management and control system of the AOC, exports of figs, empowerment of women, rural tourism, gourmet cooking with figs, health benefits of figs, etc.

## 4.5 Supporting collective actions

A GI represents an entire region and all the producers and their families. Results cannot be obtained without a broad commitment to the GI approach. But the process of promoting a local product through a GI goes far beyond simple labeling. A GI implies a spirit of collaboration and the desire to spotlight traditions to build a common future. The valorization of the flagship product and of the entire region should indeed be at the heart of the process, not only the GI label as such.

A collaborative spirit already existed in Djebba prior to PAMPAT 1. Producers were organized in two groups that were managing the sharing of water from the ancestral irrigation system and one of these groups was a major player in the process of obtaining the AOC. Also, the Bouhouli variety was undoubtedly already the pride of the village. Nevertheless, collective action specifically targeting the development of the Djebba fig was a new concept. Over the years, PAMPAT 1 assisted the local community to set up formal networks, which aimed at local development around the flagship product.

By 2019, the local producers had already established the cooperative “SMSA Djebba Fruits” (see 4.1), two exclusively female agricultural development groups (GDA) specializing in the production of processed fig products called “Kounouz Djebba” and “Khairat Thibar” and a cultural platform for promoting and managing the AOC called “Association Festival Figues de Djebba” (AFKD).




*Training for women producers of the GDA Kounouz Djebba*

Each entity has different legal characteristics and objectives. PAMPAT 1 developed various trainings and coaching sessions to ensure the good management of each type of network not only at administrative, but also at human level, for example through workshops on leadership or conflict management. A member of the PAMPAT 1 team from UNIDO was in charge of continuously facilitating all collective activities in Djebba.

**QUOTE : Anwer Djebbi, member of AFKD :**

*"Our fig has always been a pride for the population of Djebba, who has produced it for generations. What has changed is that today the Djebba fig AOC has become a national pride".*

 <b>INDICATEURS</b>	
<b>INHABITANTS OF DJEBBA THAT ARE MEMBERS IN GROUPS PROMOTING THE FIG IN</b>	
<b>2013 :</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>2016 :</b>	<b>67</b>
<b>2019 :</b>	<b>148</b>



**KEY TAKEAWAYS**

The development of collective entities and actions requires a high degree of trust and willingness to collaborate among producers. Conflicts of interest need to be resolved, and widely accepted compromises found. The continuous presence of a professional facilitator, who acts as mediator and motivates and guides local producers to enhance value-addition and promote the region, is very important, especially when the AOC concept is still new.



**LESSON LEARNED**

Over the years, several groups were created at local level to valorize the Djebba fig. These entities are on good terms and collaborate in different contexts. At the same time, a healthy competition between these groups has allowed to foster the development of the Djebba fig value chain and gradually increase the range of products available. The establishment of several entities is a good practice, when it can create a spirit of emulation and encourage income-generating activities.

## 4.6 Diversifying the local product range

In accordance with local customs, women in Djebba have always produced fig jams and sun-dried figs for family consumption. But this ancestral know-how was not transformed into an income generating activity. From the start of the project, diversifying the range of marketable products made of Bouhouli fig was a priority for PAMPAT 1. A solution had to be found to the seasonality of AOC figs that were only available in summer. This implied a lack of employment opportunities outside of the agricultural season; moreover, the period for communication and promotion around the Djebba fig AOC was very limited in time. To transform the village of Djebba into a genuine "AOC region", the Bouhouli fig had to be present on the stalls throughout the year and in different forms, and thus constitute a regular source of income for the families of Djebba.

From the first AOC agricultural season in 2014, PAMPAT 1 provided technical assistance to valorize non-compliant figs and develop new local products ready for sale. Thus, the project provided support to women from the SMSA and 2 GDAs (see 4.5) and another small business to turn their ancestral know-how into an income generating activity. During the course of the project, several training cycles in good hygiene practices, the processing of different products and the organization of the production chain were organized for approximately 60 women. Box 4 provides a more detailed analysis of the relationship between the valorization of a GI product and gender.




*Sun-drying of figs and processed products made of Djebba figs*

At the same time, production premises were upgraded and small production tools installed to ensure traditional production in line with market requirements. Two GDAs have received assistance and additional equipment thanks to the support of GIZ. Collective entities have also received support from PAMPAT 1 to create attractive packaging and promotional tools to market their ancestral products through different channels: locally to tourists, online, in delicatessens, in fairs as well as in retail chains.



In 2019 the local products range marketed in Djebba encompassed more than twenty items, from bitter orange jam and floral waters to olive oil and dried figs. These products are offered by various local entities under the brands «Délices de Djebba», «Khairat Thibar», «Kounouz Djebba» or «Les vergers de Djebba».

Today, several retailers that sell processed local products promote the Djebba fig AOC on their websites or sales points to increase the interest of consumers for the whole range of products from Djebba.

 INDICATORS	
LOCAL SELLING PRICE OF DRIED FIGS IN DJEBBA PER KG IN	
2013 :	Self-consumption
2014 :	7 Tunisian dinars
2019 :	18 Tunisian dinars

Source : GDA

**QUOTE :** Ferida Djebbi, president of GDA « Kounouz Djebba » :

*"Before the Djebba fig was not valued and did not generate significant profits. Today our fruit is recognized at its true value and the population of Djebba has begun developing new products made of figs, thus creating a genuine source of income."*



#### KEY TAKEAWAYS

The development of processed products and a diversified product line around the GI concept are essential to increase producers' sources of income and to ensure the marketing of the flagship product beyond the farming season. The existence of processed products on the shelves throughout the year facilitates promotional activities and allows for a continuous increase in awareness of the flagship product and, consequently, of the GI.



#### LESSON LEARNED

Processed local products from Djebba have been very well received by the markets. The demand is much higher than the supply, especially for dried figs. Traditional practices of sun drying do not allow to produce large volumes and the quantities produced vary according to the climate and rainfall. Traditional drying practices will not allow to seize market opportunities and new technologies that are adapted to meet the demand should be developed to generate more income.

## BOX 4 | GEOGRAPHICAL INDICATIONS AND GENDER - LESSONS FROM THE CASE OF THE DJEBBA FIG AOC

To be mindful of gender aspects is a priority in all economic development projects. The vast majority of Tunisian women working in agriculture are involved in the exploitation of family land and do not have employee status. Moreover, women represent less than 10% of landowners. PAMPAT 1 aimed to improve opportunities offered to women to develop their skills related to management, production and sales in order to increase their autonomy in terms of income.

Ancestral local products are usually part of family traditions and their production and consumption cycle often involve both men and women. GI products are sources of intangible heritage and not always related to gender. In practice though, in the regions of origin of a given product, a consensus often exists among the population on who holds and defends the know-how of the village vis-à-vis the outside world: either men or women.

In Djebba, the cultivation of figs is carried out by all members of the family, but it is the men - the plot owners - who are considered the real producers of Djebba figs AOC. On the other hand, the women hold the know-how around the traditional recipes of the processed products made of figs. At the start of PAMPAT 1, the men's agricultural know-how was a source of income for the families, while the women's specific processing skills were not yet valorized.

The priority of PAMPAT 1 was therefore to develop new economic activities that would ensure the remuneration of the know-how traditionally belonging to women, such as the development of processed products (see 4.6) or the preparation of traditional menus for tourists (see 4.10).

The case of Djebba shows that ancestral production practices around GI products, passed down through generations, often involve a tacit agreement at local level identifying the group holding the know-how vis-à-vis the outside world. Depending on the product, this may be either men or women, or both. To promote equality, a development project should aim at developing income opportunities for different groups in the product's region of origin. The socio-economic dynamics that can be created through a GI can further encourage the empowerment of women, even in cases where they are not traditionally involved in the GI production itself.



## 4.7 Adapting the AOC fig quality to market standards

The existence of a GI is synonymous with the recognition of a unique, differentiated, and continuous quality over time. Nevertheless, an ancestral product does not always comply with the requirements of modern distribution. The quality protected by a GI is not necessarily identical to the concept of quality expected by buyers. This was the case in Djebba, where PAMPAT 1 supported producers to collect, package and market AOC figs in compliance with the requirements of the niche market.

The project provided support to companies from Djebba to set up their packing facilities that did receive approval for export after complying with the specifications of the Ministry of Industry. Furthermore, PAMPAT 1 also supported the acquisition of a refrigerated truck to enable the producers to respect the cold chain during transport to either supermarkets or the airport, for export. The collectors and traders in Djebba have also been trained in work organization, good fig packaging practices and the labeling of foodstuffs. Thus, some farmers who were previously only involved in the agricultural production of the fruit have acquired skills in post-harvest operations. Over the years, producers and traders in Djebba also made various investments (construction, development of premises, acquisition of equipment, etc.) linked to the valorization or export of the Djebba fig AOC in the village of Djebba and Greater Tunis.

At the same time, PAMPAT 1 also worked on the improvement of good agricultural practices on several pilot plots in Djebba to disseminate modern agricultural know-how to producers and thus ensure better productivity, reduced losses and a better size and appearance of the AOC fruit.



*Packing of figs in a facility approved for export in Djebba*



### INDICATORS

Between 2014 and 2019, investments made by the producers from Djebba amounted to 500 000 Tunisian dinars.



#### KEY TAKEAWAYS

A GI for a fresh product is awarded primarily to recognize the agricultural skills of the producers. However, the commercial success of a GI depends on the degree of professionalization of post-harvest operations. These require significant investments in infrastructure and human resources. In the framework of a development project, it is important to identify farmers who have an entrepreneurial spirit and solid financial capacities to work on the quality of the GI product according to market requirements.



#### LESSON LEARNED

AOC products are niche products that need to be delivered to final sales points in optimal conditions. PAMPAT 1 organized exchange meetings with Tunisian exporters to better understand the difficulties in exporting quality fruit. To protect the freshness of the fruit as much as possible, improvements of the national port and airport logistics would be desirable. It is good practice to approach the concept of quality of an AOC product from an international value chain perspective, rather than just analyzing practices at the regional level.

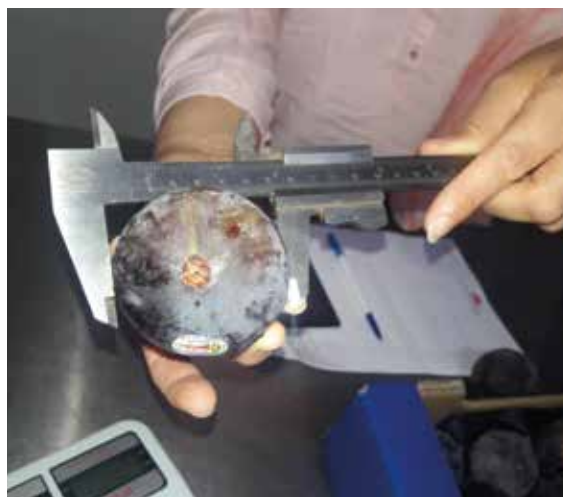


## 4.8 Implementing the AOC management and control system

PAMPAT 1 initially faced a double challenge. On the one hand, the management and control system was not yet in place in Tunisia at regulatory and institutional level; on the other hand, farmers did not see the advantage of introducing costly procedures to officially prove that their figs were indeed produced in Djebba according to ancestral methods. At the time, no fraudulent use of the name "Djebba fig" had been noted on the market and the protection of the geographical name "Djebba" was not yet a high priority.

It is important in this context, that GIs are quality labels for voluntary use and do not represent mandatory certifications related to sanitary or nutritional qualities of the agri-food product. In principle, GIs only certify the local product's authenticity.

As the Djebba fig with its AOC distinction became better known, the value of official certification also became clearer. Illustration 4 shows the importance of an effective management and control system in a context where the income of all local producers depends on the good reputation of the AOC product.



*Compliance control of AOC figs*

PAMPAT 1 trained 400 farmers to meet the requirements of the product specifications and the internal control system. It also supported producers in implementing the registration and traceability system, composed of registers tracing the entire path of the AOC fruit from production to marketing.

Simultaneously PAMPAT 1 collaborated with Tunisian institutions to define the control plan of the AOC allowing to verify compliance with the specifications, and to develop the external certification system. Thus, the National Institute of Standardization and Industrial Property (INNORPI) was designated by the Ministry of Agriculture as the body responsible for the control of the Djebba fig AOC and started the external audits on site during the 2017 agricultural season.



*Box of Djebba figs AOC with the traceability label*

Also, to ensure the acceptance and recognition of labeled AOC products at national and international level, PAMPAT 1 started the technical support of INNORPI to allow its accreditation for the activity of product certification through the implementation of the ISO 17065 system.

The project also provided technical assistance to the Ministry of Agriculture to train its staff as sworn government inspectors who report on infringements of the existing regulations and ensure the proper use of the AOC label on the Tunisian market. Moreover, PAMPAT 1 provided support to the Tunisian authorities so that the AOC "Djebba Fig" could be protected internationally under the Lisbon Agreement managed by WIPO (see Box 2).

#### INDICATORS

The Djebba fig has become the first AOC in Tunisia subject to external certification.



#### KEY TAKEAWAYS

As a flagship product progressively gains renown, the control and certification system also becomes more important. At the very beginning of a value-adding process, the costs of certifying an unknown ancestral product with an equally unknown label outweigh the benefits. In rural areas, a gradual approach is more feasible. Certification of a local product should not be an end in itself, but a practice requested and paid for by clients and consumers.



#### LESSON LEARNED

In the case of the Djebba fig, the specifications were published in 2012, while the control plan, allowing to verify, if the requirements listed are met by producers, was developed a few years later in order to implement the external certification system. The process of preparing the control plan allowed to identify inaccuracies in the specifications. For future Tunisian geographical indications, it would be preferable to prepare the control plan and the specifications simultaneously.

## ILLUSTRATION 4 | THE IMPORTANCE OF GUARANTEEING STANDARDIZED QUALITY

Two imaginary conversations between friends

Situation to be avoided ! ❌



Desired situation ✓



## 4.9 Managing the AOC at local level

Apart from controls at national level carried out by relevant Tunisian institutions to protect the fig, PAMPAT 1 also assisted the producers of Djebba to manage their AOC themselves, on site. Starting from 2018, the association "Festival Figue de Djebba" (AFKD) has been supported for promoting and managing the label (see 4.5).

This local entity centralizes records related to agricultural practices, performs internal controls, distributes AOC stickers to all producers of Djebba who signed the specifications, maintains a monitoring system tracking the number of producers and quantities of AOC figs marketed. It also raises awareness among all local producers on the importance of the AOC, and, as its name suggests, the association also organizes cultural and promotional activities around the Djebba fig.



*Fig market organized in Djebba by the Association*

After the publication of the prerogatives of the Association in the Official Gazette of the Republic of Tunisia, a public-private partnership was formalized between the Ministry of Agriculture, GIfruits and the Association. It recognizes the Association as manager of the Djebba Fig AOC and aims to further improve the management system of the AOC. According to the trilateral memorandum of understanding signed in 2019, the stakeholders are committed to protecting the AOC, ensuring compliance with traceability and the requirements of the specifications of the AOC and promote the production as well as sustainable marketing of the Djebba fig AOC.



*Information point on the AOC specifications set up in Djebba by the Association*

The local Association was also the main partner of PAMPAT 1 for improving the specifications of the Djebba fig AOC in close collaboration with the producers from Djebba. The Association has filed the application for revision of the specifications to the Ministry of Agriculture in 2019.

### INDICATORS

#### NUMBER OF FARMERS THAT SIGNED THE AOC SPECIFICATIONS IN

2014 ..... 67

2019 ..... 142



### KEY TAKEAWAYS

A GI is a distinctive quality label that can be used by all producers that respect the specifications. For the GI to be successful, a critical mass of local farmers should be involved. However, not all producers have the necessary qualifications to join the labeling process effortlessly. In rural contexts such as Djebba, the role of an association entrusted with managing the GI on-site is key to support producers in the practical implementation of the traceability system.



### LESSON LEARNED

The official involvement of local producer entities in the management of the GI is a good practice recognized in the legislation of several countries. Defense and management organizations in France, consortia for product protection in Italy or regulatory councils in Spain all represent the producers of a GI product by law and are in charge of the protection and defense of the certified product. The gradual improvement of GI management systems in Tunisia will have to be linked to revisions of legal texts to officially recognize the role of local entities.



## 4.10 Establishing a tourist region around the Djebba fig AOC

At the beginning of PAMPAT 1, Djebba's enchanting landscape and spectacular panoramic views were not attractive enough to make the small village known. Only a few hikers used to visit the area for mountain walks, but they did not specifically stop in the village of Djebba; hence the idea to increase the tourist interest of the village by highlighting the exceptional qualities of the Djebba fig AOC. Illustration 5 shows the importance of creating a tourist region around the AOC flagship product. PAMPAT 1 worked with the municipality and the new local association (see 4.5) to increase the attractiveness of Djebba for tourists. In the village, everything had to revolve clearly around the flagship product. Street signs were installed in the village in order to indicate to visitors that they had arrived in the Djebba fig locality and a painting campaign of buildings in the color of the Bouhouli fig was launched to position Djebba as the AOC destination. Thus, the local school in Djebba and several houses and premises for commercial use were painted in purple and white.

At the same time, women's groups (see 4.5) were made aware of how to seize the opportunities already offered by hikers' visits to the village. Women in Djebba began marketing local products and offering made-to-order menus featuring figs to visiting groups. Since the local cuisine was initially no different from that of other localities in northwestern Tunisia, PAMPAT 1 organized a gastronomic competition around the Djebba fig to stimulate the culinary creativity of Djebba's women. Today, tourists can taste the lamb couscous with dried figs and Tunisian pastries such as makroudh and samsa filled with the flagship fruit of Djebba and accompanied by a juice made of dried figs that is produced locally by a recently established small start-up.



*The buildings of Djebba painted in the color of the figs*



*Advertising sign at the entry to Djebba*

### INDICATORS

**80 women of Djebba were able to increase their income through the valorization process around the Djebba fig AOC.**





### KEY TAKEAWAYS

To arouse tourists' interest in a region one needs to tackle their imagination. Alternative tourism enthusiasts want to visit inimitable regions, where the landscape, culture, history, community, and the flagship product represent a coherent whole. The fusion of the flagship product with the territory represents a unique selling point for tourism. At the same time, the valorization of the flagship product in all its dimensions can trigger local development processes and generate new sources of income.



### LESSON LEARNED

Promotional campaigns for GI products convey the message of the region of origin being a place to savor and discover - all five senses alert - the flagship product and its historical, cultural, and territorial roots. In reality, this is often not the case. Not all villages offer opportunities to buy directly from the farm and not all have restaurants where one can taste local specialties in an authentic atmosphere ... As shown by the example of Djebba, efforts and investments must be made to create this unique place that lives up to what customers expect from GI products.

## ILLUSTRATION 5 | THE IMPORTANCE OF CREATING A TOURIST REGION AROUND THE GI PRODUCT

Two imaginary conversations between friends

Situation to be avoided ! ❌



Desired situation ✅



## 4.11 Promoting Djebba as a tourist destination

Djebba's geographic location, only 30 kilometers from the well know Roman archaeological site of Dougga, makes the village a high-potential destination that could be integrated into the tourism circuits of northwest Tunisia. Once the first foundations for alternative tourism were laid in Djebba, PAMPAT 1 began working with the Tunisian National Tourism Board (ONTT) to prepare an action plan to promote the destination.

In this context, each site in the village that could be of interest to tourists was identified in order to integrate it into the tourist circuits. In addition, several tours for travel agencies were organized around the Djebba fig AOC to show the potential of this new destination for alternative tourism. At the same time, seminars were held with Djebba's inhabitants to raise their awareness and inform them on investment opportunities in rural tourism infrastructure as well as available public support. The ONTT also began integrating the Djebba fig AOC into the marketing tools for Tunisian tourism.

Besides, PAMPAT 1 assisted the local association (see 4.5) in organizing regular cultural events and festivals, likely to attract even more visitors. Since 2017, the association has been organizing the "Djebba Fig Festival" every summer at the foot of the Goraa mountain. Several artists are present every year to animate events featuring music, poetry, and theater. Simultaneously an exhibition and a figs sales market are organized for the spectators. Moreover, PAMPAT 1 supported the association to expand its cultural and tourism activities through the preparation of sponsorship requests and the development of relevant project proposals.

Although the image of Djebba as a tourist destination has been built around the flagship summer fruit, the hiking season in Djebba begins in the fall when the heat drops. Alternative tourism has thus become an additional source of income outside the fig harvesting season.



*Promotion Day in Djebba  
for representatives of travel agencies*



### INDICATORS

#### ANNUAL NUMBER OF VISITORS TO DJEBBA IN

2015 ..... 6 000 visitors

2019 ..... 15 000 visitors

Source : AFKD

**QUOTE :** *Faouzi Djebbi, President of the cooperative SMSA « Djebba Fruits » :*

*"Before, hikers were coming to Djebba only to admire the beauty of the mountain Goraa, but today visitors are curious to discover the secrets of our exceptional "Bouhouli" fig and our gastronomic products prepared from figs."*



#### KEY TAKEAWAYS

Many tourists travel in search of gastronomic experiences to reconnect with nature, freshness, taste, and authenticity, and to support local producers. The relationship between local products, gastronomy and tourism is well known, but not easy to operate. The development of touristic activities requires targeted public-private collaboration.



#### LESSON LEARNED

Tourism is an economic sector in its own right requiring specific knowledge and skills, as well as a distinct approach. The GI can become the unique selling point around which the region establishes its territorial marketing strategy. Nevertheless, the prerequisites for substantial tourism development are only partially linked to the flagship product. Djebba and the municipality of Thibar have significant touristic resources, but still need to develop infrastructure for tourism: restaurants, accommodation, shops, communication, road signs, etc.

## 4.12 Creating synergies with other initiatives promoting local products

At the start of PAMPAT 1, the topic of valorization of typical products was not on the agenda in Tunisia. The case of the Djebba fig was a first on all fronts, be it in terms of label development or establishment and valorization of a genuine AOC tourist region. The experience of local development around the Djebba fig AOC is considered a success story in Tunisia that will be a source of inspiration for other regions. On the other hand, Djebba's population has benefited of nation-wide activities that have been developed over the years by several Tunisian institutions with the support of PAMPAT 1 in order to promote and add value to traditional products of regional origin.

For instance, the Djebba fig AOC was registered in the first national mapping of typical food products of the Ministry of Agriculture that was published in 2016 and listed 220 products from all over Tunisia. Also, with the support of PAMPAT 1, the local community has participated in various editions of the Tunisian Contest of Typical Food Products that is organized by the the Agricultural Investment Promotion Agency (APIA) under the patronage of the Ministry of Agriculture in collaboration with the Ministry of Industry, the Ministry of Tourism and the City of Science ([www.concours-terroir.tn](http://www.concours-terroir.tn)).



*Producer with medal-winning products made of Djebba figs*

In 2019 producers from all over Tunisia participated in the competition with 645 products such as couscous, bsissa, prickly pear syrup, harissa, floral waters, honey, and olive oil. On this occasion producers from Djebba won six medals for fig juice, dried figs, fig jam and other local products. The national promotion program for medal-winning products set up by APIA and PAMPAT 1 gave great visibility to these outstanding products in Tunisia. As a result, Djebba's medal winners were able to improve sales of their processed fig products.

Implementing the AOC for the Bouhouli fig also allowed to highlight the remarkable integration between agriculture, know-how, landscape, ecology, and biodiversity found specifically in Djebba. This specificity was recognized internationally. On proposal of the Association "Festival Figues de Djebba" and following the request officially submitted by the Tunisian Government in 2019, FAO recognized the mountainous site of Djebba as a "Globally-important Agricultural Heritage System" (GIAHS) in June 2020. This international distinction boosts the promotion of the Djebba fig AOC. Moreover, to protect its unique environment and biodiversity that laid the basis for the obtention of the GIAHS status, Djebba developed an ambitious action plan.

### INDICATEURS

**According to a survey, sales of medal-winning products at the Tunisian Contest of Typical Food Products have recorded an average increase of 30-50%.**



### KEY TAKEAWAYS

Even though communication strategies and territorial marketing should consider each region as a small world of its own, actions on a national scale can and should accompany local efforts. Promoting the theme of origin-linked products on a national or even international level has a direct impact on the effectiveness of marketing efforts made in the region of the AOC product.



### LESSON LEARNED

The unique selling point of origin-based products is that they are derived from the traditions of small inland regions. However, precisely because of their small size, these localities have great difficulties to achieve visibility. They can be more successful by being part of larger initiatives. For example, Djebba was able to position itself by joining the official AOC/IP labeling process. Djebba was also able to benefit greatly from participating in the Tunisian Contest of Typical Food Products and recently the village was in the spotlight because it joined the select group of GIAHS regions in the world. Building synergies and participating in national programs is one of the keys to success.

### TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THE DJEBBA FIG AOC EXPERIENCE:

Website : [www.aoc-figuedjebba.com](http://www.aoc-figuedjebba.com)

Video on the Djebba fig AOC (French):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PESm6MvcXg>

Video on the Djebba fig AOC (English):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-5NSG2jEiK8>

Interview with producer Faouzi Djebbi (Arabic/ English):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C9tAQZEgTz4>

Interview with producer Mohamed Djebbi (Arabic/ English):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R5Ofizcncxs>

Interview with producer Ferida Djebbi (Arabic/ English):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aCZGnFy6Fr0>



## 5. REPLICATION OF THE GI VALORIZATION APPROACH IN TUNISIA

In 2013, when PAMPAT 1 launched its support activities to implement the AOC for the Djebba fig, this was an almost virgin development area. Much remained to be done to put the regulation in practice and transform the promising concept of “GI” into a tangible reality. PAMPAT implemented the twelve lines of work all the while considering the feasibility of each action at each moment and the constraints that arose every day. Nowadays, the context in Tunisia has begun to change. The AOC for the Djebba fig is implemented, the first experiences of marketing the Gabes pomegranate with the GI logo have been developed and the first olive oil company in Teboursouk has passed the external certification audit for the AOC. Normally the path of the next Tunisian GIs to be implemented will be easier.

In this more favorable context, it is realistic to adjust the methodology for developing and valorizing a GI (summarized in Figure 6). With regard to the methodological approach, the following points are worth highlighting:

- It is preferable to develop the control plan even before the GI is granted.
- It is essential to encourage different collaboration models between producers, local actors, and public institutions at local and national level.
- For the GI to succeed on the markets, producers in the region of origin must receive support to promote the development of an entrepreneurial spirit.
- To ensure a good degree of representativeness and inclusion at regional level, it is important that a critical mass of producers and companies follows the GI approach (an approach focused on one or two local companies should be avoided).
- To maintain the interest of producers in the GI approach, the actual implementation of the GI and the activities related to promoting the region must be developed simultaneously to ensure a quick increase of sources of income in the locality.

### GOOD PRACTICES RELATED TO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE GI AS SUCH :

- o *Whenever possible and depending on prior conditions on the ground, it is preferable to initiate the GI implementation process through the creation or designation of a non-profit collective organization that can represent all the producers and assist them in developing the traceability system.*
- o *It is preferable to start with the external certification audits during the first year of GI implementation.*
- o *Strict adherence to specifications by all producers is always paramount. From the moment the product is labeled with the GI logo, consumers can recognize the labeled local product and freely choose to buy it - if it lives up to its reputation - or to stop buying it - if the quality leaves something to be desired. The GI label is a double-edged sword if the specifications are not respected.*
- o *If the GI value chain is integrated by successful medium-sized companies with dedicated marketing and sales departments, it is recommended that they develop a specific commercial strategy for the GI product to access niche markets.*



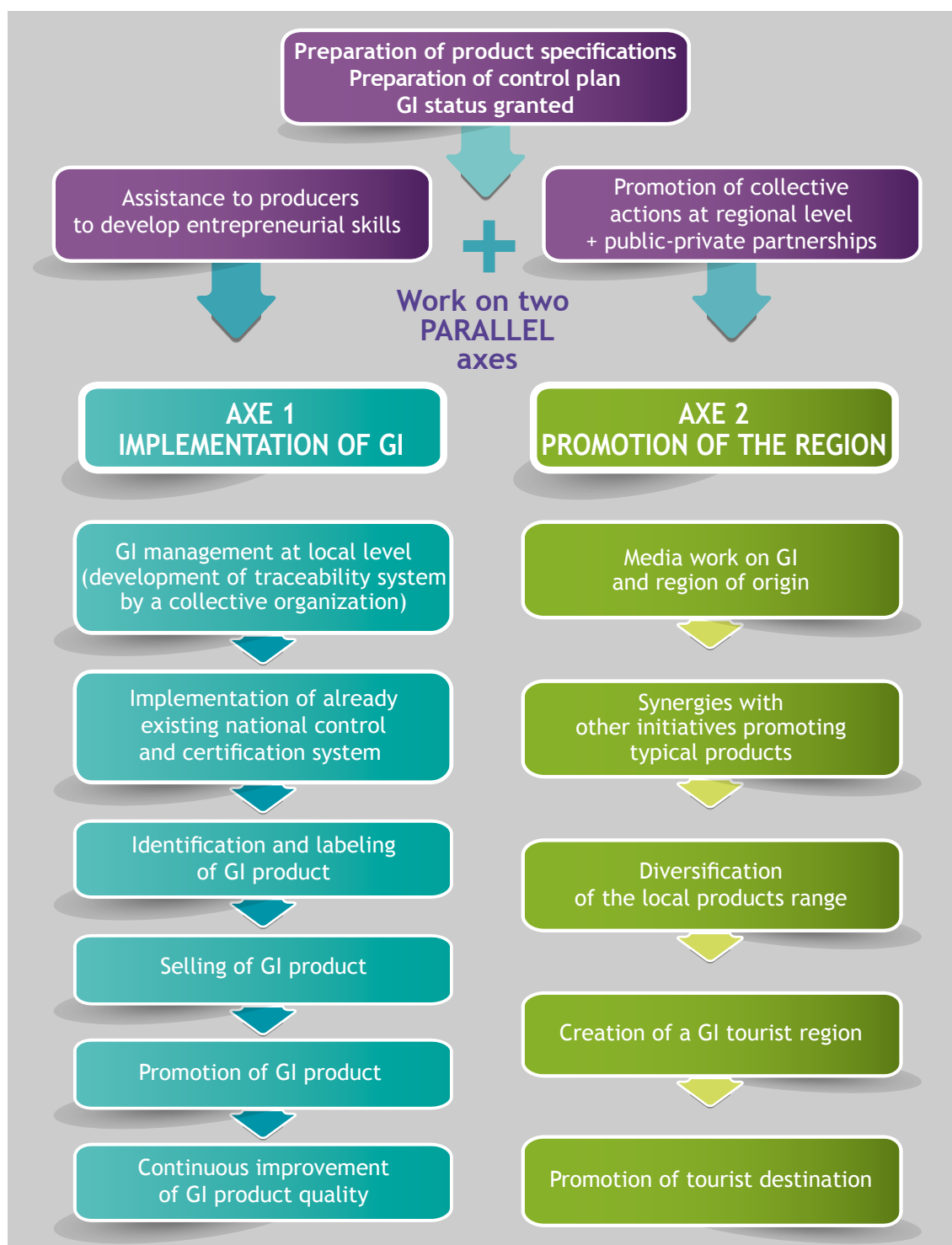
- o *Investments in promotion and marketing around the GI can start once the flagship product is labeled with the GI logo (spending money on promotion for products that cannot be recognized by consumers should be avoided).*
- o *Regardless of the requirements of the product specifications, it is important to follow an approach of continuous improvement of the GI product's quality and to adapt constantly to market requirements.*

#### **GOOD PRACTICES RELATED TO THE PROMOTION OF THE REGION OF ORIGIN :**

- o *The communication and media work around a GI product does not necessarily imply costs for the producers. From the very beginning, it is important to publicize the steps involved in developing a GI to prepare the ground and facilitate the acceptance of the GI product on the markets.*
- o *To minimize costs and give more visibility to the GI approach, synergies with other initiatives promoting origin-linked products are essential.*
- o *Support for the diversification of the range of products linked to the GI product can begin in parallel with the implementation of the label; diversification makes it possible to create more income-generating activities and increase the visibility of the region of origin (for example Djebba figs, Djebba fig jam, Djebba fig pastries, ...).*
- o *In terms of marketing, the idea of a "GI tourist region" refers to regions where the landscape, culture, history, gastronomy, architecture, community, and the flagship product merge into a coherent whole. In reality, however, this dreamed-of tourist region often does not exist. It has to be created through targeted support actions.*
- o *Once the region of origin of the GI product is ready to become a genuine tourist destination, it is necessary to implement an ambitious tourism development strategy that goes beyond the GI initiative. Substantial budgets are needed.*

Proposed methodological guidelines must always be adapted to the reality on the ground. It is important to never forget that rural development is the ultimate goal of a technical assistance project for the valorization of a GI. At least in rural contexts, the working approach should not be focused on perfecting the GI management and control system and then trying to capitalize on this label to obtain results in terms of increased income. This might discourage producers and jeopardize the whole GI initiative. The approach must be oriented towards promoting the region, marketing the GI product and diversifying sources of income.

## ILLUSTRATION | LINES OF WORK FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF NEW GIs IN TUNISIA



Source : prepared by the author

## 6. 6. CONCLUSIONS AND OUTLOOK

Promoting the Djebba fig AOC as a flagship product has improved the village's visibility and encouraged the economic, cultural, and touristic development of the region. For several years now everything in Djebba revolves around the fig. Djebba's inhabitants are convinced of the added value of the AOC label and continue to highlight their flagship product without the support of the PAMPAT 1, closed in late 2019. Despite the especially problematic global economic situation, the 2020 agricultural season played out with a certain normality in Djebba, and the AOC certified product could be placed on the markets. And, as in past years, the AOC product was put in the spotlight on the occasion of the Djebba fig festival. Once again, the Djebba fig AOC could live up to its reputation.

But even in a region that lives by its traditions and authenticity, nothing can remain unchanged. Only innovation, new ideas and continuous improvement can guarantee lasting economic success. A GI product can only be a long-term success on the markets if it continuously adapts to the demands of consumers. The implementation of a GI is not an end in itself, but rather a starting point to leave the traditional agricultural model far behind and start a new approach based on marketing and agri-entrepreneurship.

Moreover, to keep this idea of a timeless region alive in the collective imagination, continuous communication campaigns are necessary. The sustainability of actions must be ensured through continuous public-private efforts. In Tunisia, there is not yet a public fund dedicated to developing and promoting GI or typical products in general. However, international experience shows that agricultural and agro-industrial development models based on the maintenance of tradition, authenticity, and regional anchoring need support to position themselves in a competitive world. Thus, for example, according to a 2018 study by the Spanish Ministry of Agriculture, public funding continues playing an important role in promoting 200 GIs in that country.<sup>2</sup>

The issue of financing GI valorization processes is particularly crucial when conditions on the ground are similar to those in Djebba. First, the geographical area covered by the AOC "Djebba fig" is small and does not even cover the extension of the municipality of Thibar, which makes it achieving high production volumes difficult. In addition, the land in Djebba is fragmented. The majority of Djebba's inhabitants only exploit half a hectare of land, which is too little to create economies of scale. Another impediment to the accumulation of large profit margins is the nature of the AOC product. Consumers are not willing to spend tens of dinars for a kilo of fresh figs, even if it is an AOC product.

The organization of the production chain, the nature of GI products and the geographical delimitations vary greatly between the different AOCs / IPs in Tunisia. Considering all

<sup>2</sup> MAPA (2018); "Caracterización del mercado de productos de calidad diferenciada protegidos por DOP e IGP" [https://www.mapa.gob.es/es/alimentacion/temas/calidad-diferenciada/caracterizaciondop-igpcalidaddiferenciadacorr18mar19connipo\\_tcm30-508219.pdf](https://www.mapa.gob.es/es/alimentacion/temas/calidad-diferenciada/caracterizaciondop-igpcalidaddiferenciadacorr18mar19connipo_tcm30-508219.pdf); p.50

these factors is important to evaluate the support needed for the country's different GIs in the future. The implementation of new GIs will certainly be beneficial for the continued success of the Djebba fig AOC. The emergence of a critical mass of GI products on the Tunisian market will create opportunities in terms of synergies and economies of scale for the institutional promotion of origin-linked products. Moreover, the arrival of new GI products may stimulate healthy competition between the Tunisian "GI regions", which will have to compete ingeniously to maintain the reputation of their flagship product.

The PAMPAT 2 project (2020-2024) - which is the continuation of PAMPAT 1 (2013-2019) - aims at providing support in this regard. Planned activities include the implementation of the management and control system for the Gabes pomegranate GI as well as the development of two new AOCs for the prickly pear from Zelfen and the pomegranate from Testour. Another component that will be addressed by PAMPAT 2 is the improvement of the legal and institutional framework governing the development and management of GIs in Tunisia.

The second phase of PAMPAT in Tunisia is funded by the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs of the Swiss Confederation (SECO) and implemented by the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) in close collaboration with the Swiss Federal Institute of Intellectual Property (IPI) and the Tunisian Ministry of Economy, Finance and Investment Support, the Ministry of Agriculture, Hydraulic Resources and Fisheries and the Ministry of Industry, Energy and Mines.

The project will continue to put the spotlight on typical Tunisian agri-food products. Moreover, PAMPAT 2 will support the Ministry of Agriculture and the Agricultural Investment Promotion Agency to develop the first Tunisian strategy for the promotion of local food products, which will be drafted in a participatory manner with the relevant public and private institutions. Awareness regarding the socio-economic importance of origin-linked products is indeed rising in Tunisia; but for this emerging agri-food sub-sector to fully develop, a targeted national approach must be put in place. Thus, this new strategy will aim at promoting regional development in the various governorates around local flagship products while positioning Tunisia as a gourmet tourist destination. With the support of PAMPAT 2 the strategy will then be implemented in two pilot regions in Tunisia.



*The gourmet destination Tunisia*

As the sector of local food products becomes more visible and climbs higher on the agenda, the issues around GIs will take precedence. The starting point for any GI initiative is the transformation of a generic agri-food product into a premium item. The challenge is to improve the traditional product in all aspects and convert it into a high value product, which meets the expectations of a demanding clientele that is willing to pay for its intangible attributes, such as its authenticity and its association to a specific region. Improving the product, creating a specific image, and obtaining positive acknowledgement in the consumers' minds require large investments in terms of time and money that will have to be coordinated and managed within a national strategic approach.



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