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The market for lemons from Sorrento and Gouda from Holland: Do geographical Indications certify origin and quality?

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Abstract

Geographical indications (GIs) protect regional specialty foods such as lemons from Sorrento and Gouda Holland. While the EU asserts that GIs certify and protect high quality regional specialty products, the US sees them as protectionist. This article develops a conceptual framework of different quality attributes and analyzes how GIs may certify quality on those attributes. Regional origin may count as a quality attribute per se, or only indirectly through taste. The conceptual framework is illustrated with an exploratory blind tasting of Gouda cheeses. While a majority of consumers prefers Gouda North-Holland PDO to generic Gouda, the same is not true for Gouda Holland PGI. This suggests that not all GIs guarantee better taste for all consumers. The framework and empirics clarify the possibilities and limits for GIs to collectively appropriate the brand value of regional foods.