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## Improvising GIs significance in fruit crops for doubling farmers income

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**Abstract**

Present study was undertaken keeping in view of exploring alternatives for boosting farmers' income and letting them full realization from their product. Concept of Geographical Indicators has taken into consideration in this study by highlighting the facts regarding importance of geography in determining quality and other parameters in produce. Study has focused on fruits which are given geographical status and aiming for boosting farmers' income. Conceptual framework of study is designed by referring to various past studies on economic, sociologic importance of Geographical Indicators (GIs) to the farming community as whole. Further, conclusions derived that beside having significant place belongs to farmers, direct marketing approach must taken into consideration with the emergence of e commerce. It is imperative to maintain quality standards at ground level with the implementation of good agricultural practices. Just being given GI status to a place does not ensure everything to growers to that area, however, different measures such as providing online platform, basis for implementation of good agricultural practices is the need of hour.

**Keywords:** geographical indicators, farmers income, good agricultural practices, online platform, fruits

**Introduction**

India has rich varieties in terms of natural horticultural goods especially in fruits. A large variety of fruits grown in India, of which mango, banana, citrus, guava, grape, pineapple, and apple are the major ones. Apart from these, fruits like papaya, sapota, annona, phalsa, jackfruit, ber, pomegranate in tropical and subtropical areas and peach, pear, almond, apricot and strawberry in the temperate region are also grown in a sizeable area across various parts of country. In India many varieties of different fruit crops growing under specific climate and in a specific zone of climate. (Rani and Kumar, 2013). This specific type of climate is responsible for acquiring some unique characteristics to that particular variety of fruit crop which is one of advantages Indian fruits can have while approaching international markets. Some examples of varieties of fruit crops which are grown under specific climate includes, Alphonso variety of mango in konkan region, Kesar variety of mango in Gujarat, Banginpalli variety of mango in Vishakhapatnam region of Andhra Pradesh, Shahi variety of litchi in Bihar, Nagpur mandarin of citrus in Nagpur region of Maharashtra, Kinnow variety of citrus in Punjab, Khasi mandarin in khasi hills, etc.

Some fruit cultivars had already popularized its home and also registered under Geographical Indication of Goods (Registration and protection) Act 1999 with individual geographical names which are listed in Table-1. This act provides rights to locality for unauthorized use registered geographical indication by others and avail economic prosperity of producers of goods produced in a geographical territory. (Mishra et al, 2016).

Geographical indication (GI) is a name or indication used for identifying specific trait/quality/reputation of goods specific to geographical region, locality or origin. The popular fruit cultivars can be conserved under GI to avail economic prosperity of producers in their geographical territory. (As per definition by WIPO). Geographical Indications are an integral form of rural development that can powerfully advance commercial and economic interests while fostering local values such as environmental stewardship, culture and tradition. They often align with emerging trade demands since they tend to have standards for quality, traceability and food safety. GIs possess many of the characteristics of an up market brand. They can have an impact on entire supply chains and even other products and services in a region and thereby foster business clustering and rural integration. (Vats N.K., 2016)

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**Table 1:** Fruit crops registered under GI in India

S.N.	GI	State
1	Coorg Orange	Karnataka
2	Nanjanagud Banana	Karnataka
3	Allahabad Surkha	Uttar Pradesh
4	Laxman Bhog Mango	West Bengal
5	Khirsapati (Himsagar) Mango	West Bengal
6	Fazli Mango grown in the district of Malda	West Bengal
7	Virupakshi Hill Banana	Tamil Nadu
8	Sirumalai Hill Banana	Tamil Nadu
9	Mango Malihabadi Dusseheri	Uttar Pradesh
10	Vazhakulam Pineapple	Kerala
11	Devanahalli Pomello	Karnataka
12	Appemidi Mango	Karnataka
13	Kamalapur Red Banana	Karnataka
14	Mahabaleshwar Strawberry	Maharashtra
15	Nashik Grapes	Maharashtra
16	Gir Kesar Mango	Gujarat
17	Bangalore Blue Grapes	Karnataka
18	Nagpur Orange	Maharashtra
19	Arunachal Orange	Arunachal Pradesh
20	Tripura Queen Pineapple	Tripura
21	Chengalikodan Nendran Banana	Kerala
22	Tezpur Litchi	Assam
23	Khasi Mandarin	Meghalaya
24	Kachai Lemon	Manipur
25	Memong Narang	Meghalaya
26	Vengurla Cashew	Maharashtra
27	Sangli Raisins	Maharashtra
28	Beed Custard Apple	Maharashtra
29	Jalna Sweet Orange	Maharashtra
30	Purandar Fig	Maharashtra
31	Solapur Pomegranate	Maharashtra
32	Dahanu Gholvad Chikoo	Maharashtra
33	Jalgaon Banana	Maharashtra
34	Marathwada Kesar Mango	Maharashtra
35	Banaganapalle Mangoes	Andhra Pradesh

Source: [www.ipindia.nic.in/writeraddata/Portal/IPOJournal/1\\_322\\_1](http://www.ipindia.nic.in/writeraddata/Portal/IPOJournal/1_322_1)

As for the information regarding status of GI registration in fruit crops, details are mentioned in table 1. It can be observed that till date November, 2017 a total of 35 fruit crops have come under the GI registration. Further, it becomes very imperative to understand if GI status has exploited by fetching suitable price in markets, sensitization among consumers for GIs and brand building by government, private stakeholders for GI registered fruit crops. Somehow, there are other dimensions associated with are the database of producers/societies under GI and proper monitoring of quality and compliance of standards/ Good Agricultural Practices is also a major challenge in terms of exploiting market potential of GI tagged fruit crops. By working on ground level with emphasizing on above stated points, there is further requirement of developing e- platform especially for GI registered products/certified producers where direct selling of produce can be sought between consumers and producers along with nodal government agency intervention. Although there are various e-platforms like *farmeruncle.com*, *bigbasket.com* for online selling of fruits but still there is no cohesive strategy behind leveraging e- commerce platform for reaching out to customers and again these fruits are not sold as differentiated GI products on most of these web sites or any special mention of GIs not mentioned with these sites as such. So, suitable e- platform development for GI fruits covering registered/certified growers and covering niche

initially for market development is solicited at present juncture.

### Marketing scenario and efforts for GI promotion

It needs to be emphasized that the mere registration as a GI does not ensure that the product would enjoy all the benefits which come with the GI tag both in terms of market as well as the prestige. The major concern in India is the absence of post-registration activities. The registration has to be backed by a strong protection mechanism on the domestic as well as international front along with adequate marketing initiatives. Another sticking point is quality control and the absence of an inspection mechanism in practice. In the instance of sub-standard products being marketed as GI products, the risk of brand dilution becomes very real. Thus, there ought to be a stringent quality control mechanism in place to assure the consumer of the authenticity and quality for which she pays a premium price. There has been limited effort by the government to promote and advertise these GI products in either the domestic or international market. Without such promotion, it is unlikely that a GI product will achieve its full potential. Uttar Pradesh has high production of mangoes among all states of country however; share to nations' export is below 1% as per data by APEDA, 2016. Even the GI tagged famous Mallihabadi mango is not able to fetch the required market in terms of price as well as quantity. Another concern with fruit varieties is that although particular crop may cover under GI region but quality may not be as per standards. This has to be covered by improving production practices on ground level and emphasizing on improving crop practices under GI region with strict monitoring. This can be the way to achieve the aim of providing economic benefits to growers.

As per literature, another issue raised by some producers is that the definition of the producer in the Act is not specific to the producer and does not distinguish between the retailer, dealer or the real producer. It has clubbed the entire supply chain in the category of producer amidst which the real producer is left in a vulnerable position and intermediaries take advantage and gain wrongful market access. The benefits of the GI protection in turn do not reach the real producer thereby defeating the socio-economic agenda. However, a contrarian viewpoint on this is that if the product is properly monitored and all specifications are met, the real producer should get a premium price for the product. The rest of the players in the supply chain come only after the real producer. One of the major issues with GIs is that consumers are not aware how the GI tag is supposed to convey information regarding the special characteristics, quality or reputation of the concerned product for consumption. At producers' level there may not be sufficient resources to undertake brand building and promotion activities. Therefore, it requires government or private sector efforts to advertise, improving communication between the producer and the consumer and filling in the other gaps created by information asymmetry. Thus, in light of the aforementioned challenges it is pertinent that a streamlined strategy be adopted for tapping the untapped potential of the registered GI products, because unless that is done the previous, ongoing as well as future registrations will have no sustainability.

The branding and marketing strategy therefore needs to recommend key steps/activities which can help producers/traders/exporters of GI products to:-

- Create a distinct identity and awareness for the GI products of India in the domestic/ international markets

- Communicate the unique and superior value of the GI products to customers
- Promote the GI brands through better customer engagement and customer experience
- Provide protection from fake competitors and misuse of GI

Thereby, it might result in increasing awareness of GI brands amongst target customers and trade, protection of market share, increased market penetration/ access to new markets and higher unit value realization to growers.

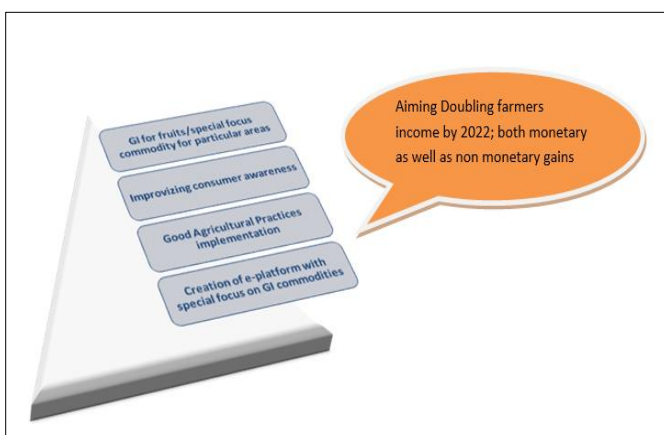
Without some level of standardization, a uniform branding strategy cannot be implemented. But on the other hand, absolute standardization and rigid controls on all aspects, besides being difficult to implement in a scenario of community ownership, can kill incentives to innovate. Therefore, a middle path needs to be followed which allows all authorised users of a particular GI product to leverage a common identity for all authorised users with a flexibility to differentiate within this common identity. For a common identity to be developed and to have some meaning, it is imperative that certain key aspects related to the uniqueness and quality of the GI product ought to be standardized and strictly adhered to. However, as seen from several international examples of GI tagged products, allowing individual members to differentiate themselves through quality enhancements, and build their own brand names in addition to the GI branding, encourages innovation and quality enhancements along with ensuring that minimum GI specifications are met (Barcala et al , 2013).

There is severe need to assess the shortcomings and gaps in efforts made so far towards enhancing the commercial potential of selected GI fruits specially in context of India, and accordingly recommendation of suitable strategies for brand building and marketing of selected GI products in domestic as well as in international market.

### The way forward

If a step by step approach is adopted with clear allocation of responsibilities and timelines, it will not take long to create awareness for GI brands and put in place the desired systems to tap the market potential for these products. Considering many recommendations require coordination among, and joint action by, the State Agriculture/Horticulture Governments, Dept. of Commerce, Ministry of Agriculture, APEDA etc. could consider establishing a GI Nodal officer/ co-coordinator in each of these bodies.

### Conceptual framework of study



Source: Authors' own computation

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